CHAPTER 4

EXPERIMENTS IN THE TEACHING OF THE COURSES IN SPOKEN ENGLISH

4.1 Introductory.

Chapter 3 dealt with the objectives of the courses in Spoken English at the Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels and the development of the course materials. Chapter 4 will discuss the actual teaching of the courses. More space will be given to the Basic Course round which most of the experimentation was centred. The newly revised Intermediate Course was also given a complete try-out. As the materials for the Advanced Course have not yet been used, nothing will be said about them in this chapter.

4.2 The Basic Course in Spoken English for B.A. Part I.

The following experiments were conducted in the teaching of the three versions of the Basic Course:

(i) The first version of the course (44 lessons): An intensive course of twenty days duration was conducted in April 1977. The batch consisted of 18 students, almost all of them from S.N.D.T. College Bombay, who had appeared for the B.A. Part I examination.

(ii) The second version of the course (48 lessons): The course was taught to the B.A. Part I students in 1977-78 for two tutorial periods a week for twenty-four weeks covering the entire academic year. Six colleges located in Bombay
participated in the experiment with ten selected groups each consisting of 30 students. Thus the total number of students was 300. The experimental groups did not study grammar or composition. They were matched with control groups which studied grammar and composition but not spoken English. Four additional groups, not restricted to 30 students and not matched with control groups, also studied the course.

(iii) The third version of the course (60 lessons): In 1978-79 the course was taught as a compulsory course-unit to all the B.A. Part I students studying as regular students in the conducted and affiliated colleges of the University. The total number of students was around 1900. Two tutorial periods a week for thirty weeks were required but could not be provided as the term started extremely late. The course was therefore taught in two sections as follows:

Lessons 1 to 40 in B.A. Part I in 1976-79 and
Lessons 41 to 60 in B.A. Part II in the first term of 1979-80.

The number of students in a group was restricted to 26.

(iv) The third version of the course: In 1979-80 all regular students of B.A. Part I studied the course for two tutorial periods a week for thirty weeks. The total number of students was around 1200. The number of students in a group was restricted to 26.

The method of teaching proposed when planning the course will first be described. A brief account of the intensive course will follow. Next a full account will be given of the
1977-78 experiment, as this was the major large-scale experiment conducted in teaching the course, with an orientation session as well as feed-back from the teachers. As the course was revised as a result of this experiment, the experience of teaching the revised course in 1978-79 as well as in 1979-80 will also be reported. The new development in 1979-80 was the experiment in the use of audio-aids. This will be discussed in detail.

Next an account will be given of the programme of teacher orientation undertaken in order to equip teachers for the teaching of the Basic Course. The orientation was carried out at a workshop conducted in April 1978 and attended by almost all the teachers of English at the conducted and affiliated colleges of the University.

After teaching the revised course for two years, a few new points have arisen for consideration when the course is to be revised yet again. The section will conclude with a short summary of the directions in which revision may be undertaken.

4.2.1 The methodology proposed.

The method of teaching to be adopted in the classroom must obviously be in keeping with the theory of language-learning on which the course is based, as well as with the principles of course design. As the original hypothesis to be tested was that competence in a language is acquired through a process of habit formation, naturally the emphasis was on repetition and practice. The habit formation theory demands
that the learner should be made to repeat sentences to the point of over-learning, so that assimilation of the patterns may take place. The students must not be afforded opportunities for free conversation till the basic patterns have been assimilated.

The maximum use of time for practice, and strict control, are then the points to be emphasised in the teaching. The instructions to the teachers included in the June 1977 edition of the course and elaborated on at the one-day orientation session for the teachers involved in the 1977-78 experiment, laid stress on these aspects. The teaching procedure was basically to consist of two stages:

(i) The teacher was to read the dialogue aloud and the students were to repeat it line by line imitating the teacher as closely as possible.

(ii) The students were to practise simultaneously in pairs, going through all the substitutions and continuing till the teacher had gone round the room and listened to each pair in turn.

The course materials are such that explanation of the situation or the lexical items is rarely required. A short time may be set aside in each period or as frequently as possible for pronunciation practice. Only in a few lessons is attention drawn to intonation patterns, word stress and sentence stress, and phonemic contrasts. But as all these represent problems for
the learner, the teacher needs to revert to the phoneme contrasts in subsequent lessons. Ear-training practice is often necessary to assist the students to discriminate the sounds. Production must also be practised repeatedly. Stress is marked in the lessons, but the teacher needs to check whether words are in fact being stressed by the students as they are marked. A few words from the lesson and from earlier lessons may also be put up on the board, with books closed, for the students to place the stress on the right syllable.

The June 1977 edition gives an indication at the beginning of each lesson of the grammatical items which the lesson is intended to practise. It was left to the discretion of the teachers to decide whether they wished to draw pointed attention to the item every time it appeared and whether they wished to offer any explanation or comment.

It will be noticed that the instructions regarding teaching procedure in the introductory note for the teacher in the June 1978 edition depart in certain significant respects from the instructions in the earlier edition. Grammatical explanation is now ruled out, since it was found from observation of teachers during the workshop that time was frittered away on explanation. More scope is now given for the composition of independent dialogues since these are now introduced earlier in the course. Variations in the type of practice are suggested. Many teachers favoured the procedure in which pairs of students read the dialogue with the rest of the class listening. Hence
this was included as a stage in the practice although the course-designer neither favours it nor follows it (the reasons will be given in Section 4.2.3). Some teachers favoured memorization. This too has been given a place. Teachers may ask girls from opposite ends of the class to address each other. Good students may go around and listen to weaker students and help them to improve.

The introduction of independent dialogues at an early stage had, it will be remembered, resulted from the observation that assimilation of the patterns and internalization of the underlying rules was not taking place merely through repetition with substitutions. The conclusions that may be drawn from this observation regarding the theory of habit formation will be discussed in Chapter 9. The researcher still believes that habit formation has an important role to play in learning a second language even if language learning cannot be explained entirely in terms of habit formation. Hence pattern practice was not abandoned as a method. What was attempted was to build transfer into the lessons from the very outset by making the student use even the simplest of patterns in an independent dialogue. The maximum use of time for oral practice still remains extremely important. Whether the students are reading aloud, making substitutions, or making up a new dialogue, it is they who must be talking for at least three-quarters of the time. They must not be silent listeners.

Pattern practice, then, will continue to take up a
substantial proportion of the class time in the Basic Course. Yet repetition of this nature can easily become both boring and mechanical and consequently may result in an absence of learning. This has been one of the main criticisms of the audio-lingual method making use of structural materials, as was pointed out both in Chapters 2 and 3. The course itself seeks to prevent monotony through a variety of substitutions and a variety of situations. Its success, however, depends on the teacher. The teacher has to exploit the opportunities provided for lively and imaginative teaching. The students' response must be alert and intelligent, not mechanical.

The attention of the students is not to be drawn to the underlying patterns as it is hoped that they will be assimilated through repetition followed by use in independent dialogues. But a distinction must be made between conscious attention to the underlying patterns and conscious attention to what is being said. The student must be aware of the situation, the subject being discussed, the relations of the speakers, the feeling expressed. If, for instance, a speaker says that a novel or film is interesting, she must, through tone and facial expression, convey interest. If the situation calls for the expression of concern, excitement, annoyance, boredom, dislike, the speaker must convey these emotions. Dialogues which tend to resemble drills, may be made to resemble actual conversations, by means of varied expression depending upon the relationship between the participants. For instance, in Lesson 28 (June 1977 edition) there is the following exchange intended to practise.
the use of the Present Perfect Tense:

(i) 'Drink your medicine.'

(ii) 'I've already drunk it.'

The exchange could be repeated several times, the response expressing varied emotions, ranging from gratitude for a helpful reminder to irritation at being nagged.

Where the situation lends itself to role playing of an elementary nature, advantage must be taken of this. Girls must pretend that they or their partners are clerks, shop assistants, guests at a party. They must pass things, point to things, examine the goods at a shop, enter a restaurant, sit at a breakfast table. Once again the dialogue can be repeated in varied tones of voice. Shop assistants, for instance, ought to be helpful but are all too often unhelpful and the girls are sure to have encountered both types. They can therefore enact both roles in succession. The atmosphere of an actual conversation must always be maintained rather than of a learning experience in a classroom.

When students are required to supply their own substitutions or construct brief dialogues based on a model, they should be encouraged to talk about things that interest them and with which they are familiar. They may, in some dialogues, talk about their friends and classmates. When mistakes are made, the teacher may sometimes make a quick correction. At other times she may quietly make a note of a few persistent errors and point them out at the end. The students should be concentrating on the
content, not the structure of the utterance. Thus the course seeks to preserve the advantages of pattern practice and avoid its drawbacks.

4.2.2 The first version of the course. The first experiment: the intensive course in April 1977.

The first experiment may be regarded both as an experiment in the teaching of a speech course based on a grammatical syllabus and as an experiment in studying the advantages of intensive training as against an extended form of training spread over a year. Conditions were extremely favourable. The group consisted of only eighteen students and since they had enrolled voluntarily, they were highly motivated and fairly regular. As they had completed the B.A. Part I course (under the old scheme) their level of proficiency was expected to be somewhat higher than that of the students for whom the course was intended. A second teacher was present throughout. Hence it was possible for the teachers to listen much of the time while the students were practising. As the class met for two hours at a stretch, variety was introduced by the allotment of time for listening to Linguaphone records and looking at pictures of British life.

At this stage of the investigation the researcher was firmly committed to controlled production and there was little scope for independent conversation in the earlier lessons. The total number of independent dialogues was around twenty. Not till Lesson 11 did the students have to make up a conversation of their own, though the substitutions in earlier lessons were
sometimes to be supplied by them. The students were eager and keen to improve and practised diligently. They certainly made some improvement in fluency by the end of the course though not as much as had been hoped for. But there was not much improvement in grammatical accuracy. One conclusion to be drawn from this experience was that more practice in selected patterns should have been provided, even if it meant a consequent reduction in the total number of patterns. Hence in the revision of the course, greater intensification of practice was provided. To facilitate fluency, more independent dialogues were added.

Another contributory factor resulting in the relatively limited gains may have been the short duration of the course. The tentative conclusion was that an intensive course in speech did not have any advantage over a more protracted course. In fact, by reducing the time for practice at home, it reduced the opportunity for assimilation. A full year's course in which the student also underwent greater exposure to the language through reading and listening might yield better results.

4.2.3 The second version of the course. The major experiment: the teaching of the course to selected groups in 1977-78.

The first experiment had been a preparation for the major experiment and had provided an opportunity to try out course materials, teaching techniques and testing techniques. In the light of that experience the materials were revised and suitable techniques for teaching and testing determined. It was stated
in Chapter 1 that the main experiment was designed to test certain hypotheses regarding language learning. It was for this purpose that control groups were used. The experimental groups learnt Spoken English but not grammar and composition, while the control groups learnt grammar and composition but did not learn Spoken English. This aspect of the experiment will be discussed in Part II of the thesis. Here the concern is only with the experimental groups and the gains made in fluency and grammatical accuracy through a course in speech based on a grammatical syllabus and using the method of pattern practice in natural situations.

At a one-day orientation session, the teachers were introduced to the principles on which the course was based. The course-designer went through the first twelve lessons in great detail, pointing out the underlying grammatical patterns, the method to be used for presentation and practice and the aspects of pronunciation to be taught. By reading out these dialogues it was hoped in an unobtrusive manner to provide a model for pronunciation. The tests to be administered for internal assessment were also discussed.

At the end of the year the teachers met again and reported both on their experiences in teaching the Spoken English course and in conducting the experiment with matched groups. The report that follows is based on their replies to
the questions asked by the researcher. It is supplemented by comments based on the researcher's experience with her own speech group from S.N.D.T. A Division and the written reports submitted by teachers from two colleges.

The method of practice adopted.

The material in the later lessons proved to be too much for completion in one lesson. So in the latter half of the course the teachers had either omitted some dialogues altogether or run through them quickly with all the substitutions, allowing no time for individual practice. Thus one of the basic principles underlying the course was not consistently followed. Lack of time was not the only reason. Almost all the teachers had followed a method different from the one proposed in the orientation session, namely, that all the pairs should continue to practise simultaneously while the teacher went round the class and listened to each in turn. Instead they had made each pair repeat the dialogue aloud turn by turn with the rest of the class listening. Naturally for much of the time the opportunity to practise was wasted. The researcher visited a class in one college and watched a good teacher with a good class (a much better class than her own) conduct the lesson in such a manner that the class spent most of their time listening rather than speaking. When she herself took over and conducted the lesson according to the method she favoured, the girls
responded very well and the class-teacher agreed that it provided far more scope for practice. None the less she appears to have continued as before.

Some of the teachers at the final meeting argued that the method they followed was satisfactory since the rest of the girls benefited by listening and pointing out mistakes. Others admitted that the rest of the girls were often inattentive but maintained that simultaneous practice was unworkable since the girls only practised when the teacher came round and chatted about other things for the rest of the time. But the experience with S.N.D.T. A division shows that whereas the method originally proposed at least provides the earnest students with the opportunity to practice, the other method undermines the very basis of the course by cutting down practice. A simple calculation will drive home the point. If 30 girls are present and the period lasts for 45 minutes, if the pairs practice turn by turn, each pair will actually be speaking English for only 3 minutes. If time for choral practice and listening to the teacher is also taken into account, the time available for individual practice will be even less. On the other hand when the pairs practice simultaneously they have the opportunity to speak English for the better part of 45 minutes, allowing some time for listening to the teacher and choral practice.

All the students in S.N.D.T. A Division practised each dialogue twice right through with all the substitutions. Depending on the number of substitutions required, they might
have repeated the dialogue from six to eight times. Admittedly several girls wasted their time when they thought they were unobserved and their poor progress was the result of their lack of attention. But the earnest students used the opportunity to continue till the teacher had made the round of the class. Of course the teacher cannot listen to any one pair working through all the substitutions and it is possible that mistakes go undetected. But the students always began by repeating the entire set of substitutions after the teacher so if they were even moderately attentive and receptive, there was no reason for them to make mistakes.

The value of memorization of dialogues was disputed by most teachers. One teacher, however, made the students memorize one dialogue each time and contended that students concentrated better as a result and could better assimilate the patterns.

The use of the mother tongue.

The use of the mother tongue for directions and explanations varied from teacher to teacher. Eight teachers had not used it at all, two had used it, one teacher reported that the students used it on occasion when they did not comprehend. In S.N.D.T. A division it was used occasionally for both directions and explanation when the students had not followed what had been said in English. The object was to save time, but it may not have been a wise policy, since it offered the students an easy way out and they did not make the effort to understand and speak
English which they would have been forced to make with a teacher who either did not know their mother tongue or consistently refused to use it.

**Difficulties in comprehension and expression.**

Difficulties in the comprehension and expression of parts of the dialogues will next be discussed. On the whole vocabulary did not present any problems. The few unfamiliar words that the course contained could quickly be explained, though in S.W.D.T. A division it was observed that students stumbled when saying these words. What some teachers pointed out, however, was the difficulty in comprehending and using conversational phrases such as 'I'm afraid' (to express regret), 'I'd rather...', 'You'd better...', 'I couldn't catch that' (for difficulty in hearing something). The difficulty experienced in saying the abbreviated forms of auxiliaries may also be pointed out here. It was observed that many students either substituted the full forms, saying: 'I have finished', 'I shall come', instead of: 'I've finished', 'I'll come', or left out the auxiliary altogether: saying 'I finished', 'I come'. It appeared that they found the abbreviated forms difficult to pronounce.

**The teaching of grammar.**

As one major objective of the course was to enable the students to acquire control of the language as a system, the next question to be considered is to what extent the students were aware that specific grammatical items were being practised through each dialogue and to what extent the teachers resorted
to explanation of grammatical points. In spite of the fact that there were specific indications in each lesson (June 1977 edition) regarding the grammatical item being practised, the students on the whole had not realized this. Only one teacher had consistently drawn their attention to the grammatical pointers. On the other hand a few teachers had resorted to grammatical explanation from time to time. In S.N.D.T. A division, contrastive features in systems such as the system of articles or the system of tense were briefly pointed out in dialogues designed to teach them. When frequent break-downs occurred in structure, notably in the question form, which the students had to use in independent dialogues, the question transformation was worked out on the blackboard. With more complicated patterns, such as relative clauses or noun clauses, elaborate explanations would have reduced the time devoted to oral work. So the students were left to assimilate as much as they could through repetition.

The teaching of pronunciation.

The teaching of pronunciation is an important aspect of spoken English but limitations of time prevented teachers from paying adequate attention to it. Most teachers not only dealt with items specifically introduced in the lessons but tried to set aside some time for subsequent revision. With S.N.D.T. A division enough time could not be spared for adequate pronunciation practice. The students evinced marked interest, but it is most unlikely that this interest extended so far as
to lead them to revise or practice at home. When learning syllable stress and sentence stress, both recognition and production were good but there was no retention. In the case of individual sounds, consonant sounds could be identified during ear training practice but production was not satisfactory. With vowel sounds even identification proved difficult. No systematic attempt was made to teach intonation, except where it is introduced in the course, namely in the first two lessons and in the lesson on question-tags. The students became conscious that the English sound system differed from that of their mother tongue and from the sort of English they had been speaking. Most teachers reported only slight improvement in pronunciation and most felt that greater improvement would have been possible if more time had been available for practice. The teacher who had given a lesson-by-lesson written report frequently noted that students seemed to be distinguishing sounds and producing them fairly satisfactorily but retention was poor. The teacher who had given a consolidated written report stated that she could not provide as much practice as she wished, owing to lack of time.

**Language games.**

Language games are a new feature in the teaching procedures followed at the University and they were not discussed at any length in Chapter 3. They will therefore be discussed at greater length here. Teachers varied in the response they had obtained to different types of games and
consequently in the type they favoured. Several games in the latter half of the course had to be dropped for lack of time. Some games required movement and most teachers agreed that in their cramped classrooms it was not possible to play them. It is possible that the older, more staid teachers found the games difficult to handle, while the younger, sprightlier ones handled them better. This is not a reflection on their general capability as language teachers, but it may explain why many teachers suggested that while games should be included, their number should be reduced. As one would expect games to be a valuable teaching technique in oral work, it might be worthwhile to consider the success of each type of game in more detail, illustrating each type by referring to a few games. All references will be to the June 1977 edition. The lesson-by-lesson report from one college will be of value as well as the experience with S.N.D.T. A division. When games were omitted for lack of time in 1977-78, reference will be made instead to the experience with the intensive course in April 1977 or with the class taught in 1978-79.

Broadly one may group the games as:

(i) miming games, all of which require guessing;
(ii) other guessing games which do not require miming;
(iii) memory games;
(iv) team competitions;
(v) games requiring movement.

The miming games will be discussed first. There were five
of these. On the whole the students from the two colleges from which detailed reports were available enjoyed the games, though in the case of S.N.D.T. A division the girls were a little self-conscious. As facial expression is more difficult to manipulate than gesture, the game miming grades of the same feeling such as 'annoyance', 'anger', 'fury', proved rather difficult. Where a teacher had substituted feelings which were more clearly defined and easy to mime, such as 'fear', the game had been more successful. The games in which actions with intransitive and transitive verbs are mimed were conducted successfully. The girls were amused and intrigued and tried to act as well as guess. Unfortunately in all the language games, the moment the class enjoyed the game as a game, they tended to shout single-word responses such as 'eating!' so that the whole purpose of utilizing the game for language practice was defeated.

The next set of games were also guessing games. The first was a very simple game intended to drill adverbials of place. One player is imagined to have hidden an object in some corner of the room and the others guess where it is. The S.N.D.T. A division girls enjoyed the game, made guesses and themselves thought of ingenious places to hide objects. But at the other college the girls appear to have found the game difficult. The well-known party game 'Coffee Pot' was adapted to drill adverbial phrases. This was not very successful as it is difficult to think of a variety of answers. The question 'How do you coffee-pot?' cannot in fact be answered sensibly.
with many verbs. 'who am I?' was another common party game, adapted to give practice in reporting 'if-clauses'. When the player who has to guess who she is asks, say, 'Am I an Indian?' the girl questioned has to turn to the teacher and say, 'She asked if she was an Indian' and then turn back and reply. The S.H.D.T. A division girls enjoyed the game though they had to be reminded every time to report the question.

The memory games all started off in a lively manner but dragged as the items to be remembered increased in number. This was the experience in most colleges. The girls in S.H.D.T. A division were prompting all the time with the result that nobody ever got 'out' and the game took even longer. The first game of this type is in Lesson 1 and practises the S + be + S.O. pattern. The students stand with their partners in a circle. The first pair says to the second: 'he are teachers. What are you?' Each successive pair has to remember what all the previous pairs are. The girls in S.H.D.T. A division thoroughly enjoyed themselves, partly because it was the first time that they were playing a game in class. At the other college the response was fairly good. Two memory games drilled the S + V + I.O. + D.O. pattern. One drilled the definite and indefinite articles. As each girl in this last game had to add the name of a flower, the game entailed the learning of new vocabulary. The girls from S.H.D.T. A division would have enjoyed learning it if there had been pictures (or actual flowers) to help them to identify the flowers or if there were Gujarati names for the flowers.
They were allowed instead to use Gujarati names for flowers with which they were familiar. To practise determiners there was the game: 'I went to Delhi. I packed my bag and put in it both my/all my/one of my...' The use of the complicated determiners proved to be highly unnatural. The natural response was to use a numeral (two saris), a possessive (my comb), or the indefinite article (a towel). When memory games are played in future years it would be preferable to play them with only one-third of the class at a time.

Some language items could only be practised through games which were more in the nature of team competitions, each team getting a mark for a correct sentence. The S.N.D.T. A division girls found the competitive element stimulating and were anxious that their team should win. One such game practises articles:

(i) There's a hungry dog outside.
(ii) But I gave the dog a bone.

The girls enjoyed thinking of different animals and suitable (or unsuitable) items of food to give them. But they were rather disappointed when they did not get points, as the sentences they constructed were far from correct.

Of the games involving movement, the first was a team competition, 'Her Majesty wants...'. It could not be played for lack of time in 1977-78. The girls in the Intensive Course had thoroughly enjoyed it and had got quite boisterous. But the attempt to modify this game to practise complicated
determiners such as 'one of these', 'two of these' was much too artificial to succeed. A game practising relative clauses: 'All those who... are out', requires the girls to run round in a circle. It could be played with the 1978-79 batch because there was a broad verandah adjoining the classroom. It should be played if possible as students enjoy it. The adaptation of 'Simon Says' to practise the catenative construction 'Simon wants you to...' is another game that should be played. If space is restricted the girls need not leave their seats.

From the experiences described, one may conclude that the games did serve to enliven the class and the adaptation of common games to practise grammatical patterns was successful except with the complicated determiners. Modifications in some of the games were made in the revised version and it is now for the teachers to decide how many games they wish to use.

**Student response and progress.**

The most important issue is that of student response and progress. Two points must be made initially. In the first place, in all the groups there were individuals who made considerable progress and, secondly, these were the ones who had been earnest and responsive. When taking groups as a whole, two colleges reported that the students had been enthusiastic throughout. Elsewhere they had started off with great enthusiasm but interest waned in the second term. The reason was the fear that they would not perform as well in the examination as the control groups which were studying grammar
and composition. This problem will be discussed in Chapter 7 which deals with the experiment with control groups. In S.H.D.T. A division those who were indifferent remained indifferent throughout while those who were interested remained interested. Progress was closely linked with interest as reflected in terms of attendance. The girls who attended regularly were also the ones who concentrated in the class, utilized the time available for practice, suggested substitutions, built up dialogues and spoke with expression when reading.

The teachers were asked whether the students had gained in fluency and in confidence, whether they were able to construct independent dialogues, whether their command over the structure of the language had improved and whether, when speaking spontaneously, they avoided mistakes in concord, question forms and negatives, the aspects in which they had had most practice. The teachers were unanimous in agreeing that the students had gained considerably in confidence and no longer felt nervous about attempting to speak English. In this respect, then, the course had been of considerable benefit. As regards fluency some teachers reported greater gains than others. The teacher who presented a consolidated report was not satisfied with the progress but felt that large classes, lack of time and the examination-oriented attitude of the students were the factors responsible. The teacher who presented a lesson-by-lesson report was also not satisfied. Her comments indicate fluctuations; she records remarks such as 'slowly picking up'.
not much progress', against different lessons. In S.A. T. A division one girl who was already fairly fluent continued to make progress, another six who were regular and interested gained considerably. If under fluency one includes the ability to repeat or read smoothly without stumbling, several more improved in the course of the year. Almost all had begun by reading aloud in a fumbling manner; some could scarcely read at all. Even later, long sentences or unfamiliar words led to hesitation in several cases. At S.A. T. College the four groups not included in the original experiment showed much greater interest and made much more progress in fluency and command over structure than the four that had been included. As no pre-test had been administered, evidence concerning their progress cannot be supplied in terms of marks. But the teachers were very definite about it. Everywhere it was only the good students who were able to construct independent dialogues.

As regards structure, it was generally reported that the better students had improved, that there was a slight improvement in the handling of simple patterns and that students corrected themselves when they made mistakes. One teacher noted a slight improvement in concord, another in questions in the present tense.

Evaluation of the course.

Finally the teachers were asked about their assessment of the course. All felt that the students had gained and th
structural grading had proved valuable. Some who had previously conducted conversation classes for which students had enrolled on a voluntary basis felt that free conversation led to greater spontaneity and liveliness. Others with similar experience preferred the control and grading provided by the Basic Course. It must be pointed out that since students enrolled voluntarily for the conversation classes, this would in itself lead to more effort at participation. All the teachers agreed that Spoken English must henceforth be treated as a compulsory course component. They pleaded for more periods and smaller numbers if the course was to be successful. They also agreed that a larger proportion of independent dialogues would increase the effectiveness of the course.

The researcher’s own observations on the success of the experiment now follow. A more detailed analysis of the marks will be provided in Chapter 9. From that it will be evident that the progress in the skill of speech is revealed as greater after the marks have been subjected to statistical treatment than is indicated by raw scores. Three factors could contribute to the success of an experiment of this nature: the course itself, teacher attitudes and proficiency, student attitudes and proficiency. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Regarding the course itself it must be insisted that
the method of pattern practice, on which a structurally
graded course depends for its success, did not really get
enough scope. Most of the classes spent far more time
listening than speaking. Hence the relatively limited gains
cannot be attributed to the nature of the course materials.
Even in S.H.C.T. A division, where all the time possible was
devoted to practice, repetition to the point of over-learnin
could simply not be provided and few girls were sufficiently
motivated to make up for this at home. Assimilation of
structure did not take place as had been hoped for but the
practice was far below the point at which such assimilation
can reasonably be expected. However some changes in the
course materials also appeared desirable. Personal experience
led the researcher to agree with many recent books on
methodology which insist that 'skill-using' activities must
commence almost simultaneously with 'skill-getting' activities.
Hillers and Temperley, for instance, regard the kind of guided
independent conversations that have been introduced in the
Basic Course as 'pseudo-communication', a kind of skill-getting
process which bridges the gap between skill-getting and
skill-using. They insist that such conversations be introduced
early.\footnote{Independent conversation was therefore introduced
from the very first lesson when the course was revised.}
The attitude of the teachers involved was one of
meekness and co-operation. Some of them were highly proficient
in English, others made an occasional error in structure and many certainly did not possess the proficiency in pronunciation which would justify one in according high priority to the teaching of pronunciation. It has already been pointed out that the teachers did not consistently follow the method advocated and this might have had an adverse impact on the success of the experiment. More teacher training and orientation were obviously called for. Later in this chapter there will be a section on the workshop that was organized for the purpose.

Student attitudes were adversely affected by the fact that they were participating in an experiment in which they did not receive the training which other groups received. They consequently became anxious about the examination and it has been mentioned how motivation was thereby affected. One very important point remains to be made about student proficiency. The course had been designed for students entering B.A. Part I after passing the Higher Secondary examination. This would mean that they had studied English as a compulsory subject for eight years. It so happened, however, that in the year of the experiment scarcely any students belonged to the Higher Secondary stream. The vast majority in all the colleges had passed the Pre-University examination under the old course. Although the Pre-University students used to study English as a compulsory subject, they
were not required to have passed in English at the old S.S.C. examination in order to be admitted to the pre-university class. Hence their initial level of proficiency was not equal to what had been presupposed.

4.2.4 The third version of the course. The teaching of the course as a compulsory course-unit in 1978-79.

The conditions under which the course was taught in 1978-79 differed in the following respects from the original conditions, thus making further investigation desirable.

(i) the course itself had been revised;
(ii) it was now a compulsory course-unit and there could no longer be any reason for students to feel that there was any discrimination between groups;
(iii) the students taking the speech course were also taking courses in grammar and composition;
(iv) it was expected that the B.A. Part I classes in 1978-79 would have a larger intake of Std.XII students than the classes in 1977-78. The initial level of proficiency in English would consequently be higher;
(v) the researcher's own group (Group C I at S.N.D.T. college) came from a social background which was different from that of the group taught in 1977-78. Attitudes and motivation might consequently be different.

The first point to be discussed will be the effectiveness of the revised course, concentrating on the features which
were newly introduced (see Section 3.3.11). All references are to the researcher's own group. The new topics introduced roused the interest of the students. They found it easier both to provide substitutions and to make up dialogues based on a model when they were thoroughly familiar with a subject. Even in these cases not all the students could make contributions. Independent dialogues often had to be built up on the blackboard; they could not be left to each pair to write out. Perhaps as a result of the effort made to compose their own dialogues, however, even the weakest students made an effort to speak in the final post-test and occasionally produced a complete correct sentence. Concord and word order were often correct, particularly when based on topics practised in class. Several students made an effort to sustain a conversation.

The increased emphasis in the revised course on appropriate facial expression, gesture and movement helped to make the course more interesting. For instance in Lesson 1 the speakers have to show nervousness or concern in certain dialogues, in Lessons 3 and 4 they have to look around and search for things. The new humorous dialogue in Lesson 31, where the speaker has to act out the manner in which she made a fool of herself, also proved to be a success. Students likewise enjoyed playing the role of a teacher in the dialogues where the teacher is one of the participants.
On the whole the method followed for classroom practice was that originally proposed, rather than the modified form preferred by the other teachers. However, sometimes, for the sake of variety, two students from different corners of the class were made to address each other. Or two students acted out a scene while others watched.

Two factors may be considered responsible for the students' inability to make greater progress. The first was their low initial level of proficiency. Contrary to expectations, once again almost all the students were from the Pre-University stream. A few instances will give an indication of their level. Both the lack of control over structure and the failure in listening comprehension are demonstrated in the following responses made in writing by the weaker students in a listening comprehension test:

Question: How do you come to college?

Responses: I study; I come to college for study;
I am coming to the college in the 1976; I;
I am come to learn college; This stede.

It was when teaching this group that the researcher came to realize how often failure to respond is the result of failure in listening comprehension. Students, as is evident from the above example, frequently misunderstood Wh-questions. 'You're coughing rather a lot this morning' was taken to mean:
'Have you had coffee?' The word 'empty' in 'It's difficult to find empty classrooms' was interpreted by one student as 'M.T.' meaning 'Mother Tongue'.

As a result of this experience it was felt that the aural aspect of the aural-oral skills should receive more attention when the course was again revised. In the meantime supplementary materials were prepared for use with the 1979-80 batch.

It must also be pointed out that the final test was administered after only 40 lessons out of 60 had been taught. This was because the academic year had commenced unusually late. Naturally the students could not reach the terminal level aimed at, since the course remained incomplete. It was decided to complete the remaining 20 lessons in the first term of the following year when the students joined B.A. Part II.

Two respects in which the group differed from the researcher's 1977-78 group remain to be discussed. One was that the group was studying grammar and composition as well as speech. This made no difference in the final level of attainment, probably because of the low initial level of proficiency. Similarly, although the 1978-79 class belonged to a lower income group and were older and more mature, the different social background had no effect on the final level of attainment in spite of the fact that slightly greater regularity and seriousness of purpose were in evidence.
When the students joined the B.A. Part II class, the original group could not be kept intact. Only 8 of them remained with the researcher. The researcher's new group contained several students from the Higher Secondary stream. The response was therefore much better. The students took a keen interest and several contributed to the building up of dialogues. It had been hoped to administer an end-of-term test to the original 8 students to measure their progress. This could not be done. But the recordings of their interviews in their B.A. Part I pre-test and post-test were replayed soon after they were tested at the end of the second year after completion of the Intermediate Course in Spoken English. Those who had been regular had improved considerably.

4.2.5 The teaching of the Basic Course to the B.A. Part I class of 1979-80. Experiments with hardware and software.

A short account will now be given of the experience of teaching the Basic Course to the B.A. Part I class of 1979-80. The major new factor was the experiment in developing supplementary teaching materials for use with the cassette-recorder, the tape-recorder and the language laboratory. The main emphasis in this section will therefore be on the use of hardware (the audio-aids just mentioned) and of software (lessons recorded on cassettes and tapes). But some account must first be given of the classroom teaching.

This is necessary because for the first time the
researcher felt that the new course was being given a fair chance. The groups taught in 1977-78 and 1978-79 were below the level even of the normal S.N.D.T. intake. Hardly any of them had undergone the eight years of English study that is now to be the regular norm after the introduction of the Higher Secondary pattern. Thus their poor progress could be attributed to their low initial level and their low academic ability rather than to any inadequacy in the course. Such a plea could only be made with any justification, however, after the course had been used with a more representative group. This has now been done. The 1979-80 group which the researcher taught consisted of twenty-five Marathi-medium students, all but one of whom belonged to the Higher Secondary stream. They thus represented the kind of student who may be expected in future and for whom the course was intended.

The 1979-80 group was younger, more lively and more interested in the course work. From the outset several girls made their own contributions when they were required to suggest substitutions or build up new dialogues. New dialogues could be spontaneously composed by at least some of the pairs, whereas in earlier years they had had to be built up with the whole class together or first written out by the girls and then read aloud. After the introduction of the system of continuous assessment in the second term, whereby marks were awarded for the student's performance in
every period, even the weaker students made a great effort to speak. About half the girls had greater control over sentence structure than the students from the earlier batches. Unfortunately their progress cannot be indicated in terms of test scores. Although a pre-test was administered, it became impossible to find time to record a post-test, as the last two weeks of term were crowded with sessions in the language laboratory. But the recording of the pre-test interviews was played while impressions of the final end-of-term test were fresh in the mind of the researcher. It was obvious that most of the students had made progress in overall communicative ability, aural comprehension and command over sentence structure. The tests used have been discussed in Chapter 5 which is concerned with the testing of Spoken English.

The experience of other teachers of the college supports the above findings. All of them reported that the students evinced greater interest and registered greater progress than the 1978-79 class. Two other teachers besides the researcher adopted the system of continuous assessment. (See Chapter 5 for a fuller account of this system.) In all three groups students concentrated much better and made a much greater effort to speak as a result.

Experiments with hardware and software.

The experiments with hardware and software will now be discussed. Lessons on cassettes and tapes had specially to be
prepared as a supplement to the Basic Course. Many courses are available on cassettes and tapes, some of which, such as the C.I.E.P.L. course on Accent, Rhythm and Intonation, may be fruitfully used for the teaching of pronunciation. But those materials which are not exclusively meant for the teaching of pronunciation are designed to accompany specific course-books. A complete set of materials to accompany the S.N.D.T. Basic Course had therefore to be designed.

To determine how the hardware available could be exploited to the maximum advantage, a variety of lessons were designed. The English Department of S.N.D.T. University possessed an easily portable cassette-recorder as well as a tape-recorder which was too heavy to carry to the classroom. In addition the P.V.D.T. College of Education had recently set up a language laboratory in the same building as the S.N.D.T. College, the use of which had been promised to all the S.N.D.T. colleges and departments. The equipment turned out to be so defective, however, that it was not till February 1980 that laboratory sessions could be scheduled. Even then booths constantly went out of order and the defects could not be discovered till the student attempted to replay her recording. The defective working of the laboratory will be left out of account in the discussion that follows, as what is of greater importance is not the actual experience of the sessions in the laboratory but the potential uses and benefits of a language
laboratory. When designing lessons, the needs of the affiliated colleges were also kept in mind. Some of them might possess cassette-recorders or could acquire them. They were unlikely to possess the more expensive kinds of hardware.

Dakin, when considering the role of the language laboratory, is of the view that it is primarily a practising device for use at the second stage of the teaching-learning process. (This would apply equally to the other forms of hardware.) He identifies three stages in teaching — presentation, practice and development. Corresponding to these are the three stages of learning — understanding, learning and control.²

While designing the units the researcher wished to consider what the use of hardware and software could accomplish which could not equally satisfactorily be accomplished in the normal classroom situation. The lessons had to fulfil a definite function and not merely to arouse temporary enthusiasm because of their novelty. When evaluating the materials, this criterion was again applied. The aim was to produce a variety of lessons, intended to fill the lacunae in the regular course materials and procedures or to reinforce and supplement the materials in a more effective manner than could be done in class. Some types of lessons might be better suited for use with a cassette-recorder, or at least a cassette-recorder might be adequate for the purpose
without recourse to more complicated equipment. Other lessons might lend themselves better to use with the tape-recorder or the language laboratory. So the preliminary question was: what were the lacunae in the course?

In the first place, if one takes the entire teacher population of the University, it is obvious that many teachers of English will not be able to provide a satisfactory model of English speech. This then is one obvious need which can be met through cassettes. Another problem is the inadequacy of the time available for practice. Here is a second function that the software might perform, providing additional material for spare-time practice. In the third place the point has been made earlier in this chapter that testing indicated that failures in communication were often the result of failures in aural comprehension. While some training in aural comprehension could be and was actually introduced in the regular class, it might be better to reserve the time available in the tutorials for practice in speech and to use the tape and cassette lessons in part for training in aural comprehension.

A final point relates to our ultimate aim throughout the course, the increase in communicative ability. If the cassette and tape lessons could add to the opportunities for spontaneous conversation, they would be making a very valuable contribution. But the dangers of open-ended exercises of this nature were obvious. Without feedback it would be impossible to judge how
far the students were learning. As Dakin points out, however, even when there is only one correct form and that is provided on the tape, there is the possibility that the student may not notice the difference between her own performance and the master-tape. 'Input', therefore, may not be the same as 'intake'.

The discussion of the course materials will be related to the needs which have just been outlined. It was decided to cover the lessons from the course booklet in the following manner:

- Lessons 1 to 20 - lessons for the cassette-recorder.
- Lessons 21 to 40 - lessons for the tape-recorder.
- Lessons 41 to 60 - lessons for the language laboratory.

Twenty units were prepared for the cassette-recorder, and these were played to the class in the first term. Circumstances permitted of the production of only four lessons for the tape-recorder and four for the language laboratory.

A preliminary distinction must be made between more mechanical and more creative tasks. A great effort was made to try and provide more creative tasks than was customary in the taped materials that the researcher had been able to scrutinize. Many of the courses scrutinized made considerable use of repetition or recall. Many tasks were in the form of structure drills based on the content of the lessons in the course booklet. For example:
Did Mr. Brown go to Italy? No, he didn’t.
Did he go to France? Yes, he did.

The problem in attempting to construct more creative exercises is that these tend to become ‘open-ended’. A variety of answers or responses are possible and hence there is no way in which the student can check if her answer is acceptable. The teacher has to listen in, collect all the responses, and discuss them subsequently with the class. If exercises can be constructed where only one response is possible and the situation makes this obvious, self-correction can be built in. The more creative type of tasks will be discussed in due course.

The repetition of familiar dialogues.

The more mechanical tasks will first be examined, including the cassette lessons, the taped lessons and the language laboratory lessons. The first type of exercise consists simply in repeating a dialogue from the book sentence by sentence after the tape. It is a four-stage process: Listen—repeat—listen again—repeat again. The advantage of repeating each sentence twice is that the learner gets an opportunity to compare her reading with the master-tape and endeavour to improve. The fact that, till the end, some students stumbled when reading long sentences aloud, indicates that even such simple exercises are required.

Practice of this nature can be very beneficial when the
class teacher's own pronunciation is not such as can serve as a satisfactory model. But the question arises as to whether it serves any useful purpose when the teacher herself can act as a model. Does it not simply duplicate what is done in any case in the class? What were the benefits of such lessons when the researcher played cassettes with her own voice recorded on the master tape to a class which she herself taught?

Three advantages were noted. In the first place an exercise in which each sentence is repeated twice becomes a drill rather than a natural conversation. Such repetition, however, serves a useful purpose, as was pointed out above. If the teacher resorts to this kind of repetition in the classroom, it becomes a structural drill and nullifies the very careful attempt to treat the classroom as a place where people are actually conversing in English. The drill element is much less destructive of the atmosphere of naturalness if the cassette recorder is used for the purpose. The second advantage is that the teacher is free to go around the classroom and listen to individuals practising, whereas when she herself acts as a model she listens at that point only to a chorus (though of course subsequently she does listen to pairs of students). Her dual role of model and listener can be divided between the machine and herself.

What has been said above applies when the cassette-recorder is used with a whole tutorial group and the students
have no opportunity to record their own voices. Even in these circumstances such lessons are of use. When the lessons are used with a tape-recorder or in the language laboratory, the students have the very great benefit of recording their own voices, replaying the tape or cassette and comparing their rendering with the master-tape. All the students participating in the experiment were highly appreciative of this opportunity and found the comparison very helpful. It must be pointed out, however, that most students could not notice specific errors and point them out, although several improved at the second repetition. They were trying to imitate without being really conscious of the nature of the difference.

One important conclusion from this experiment was that discussion, follow-up and further repetition without the tape are essential if the students are to receive the full benefit. The teacher has to train them to notice differences in vowel and consonant sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation, as between their reading and the master-tape. They must be asked to repeat the sentences again and again till they approximate to the correct pronunciation.

Many researchers have found that mere production of the correct form on the tape is not sufficient to ensure that learners will acquire correct phonetic or phonological habits. Van Teslaar, for instance, points out that the learner will react in terms of the L1 perceptual and discriminatory
repertory, failing thereby to perceive the collection of distinctive features that are significant for speakers of the target language. 4

Finally one may note a further benefit from such lessons. If some earnest students desire extra practice and facilities can be provided to give them access to the taped lessons, they may make use of them at their convenience. During the first year of the experiment with software, however, such opportunities could not be provided.

As compared to the very simple drill discussed above, the next task is slightly more demanding. Here the student reads out familiar dialogues from the course-book as before. But the four-stage process is now: speak—listen—speak again—listen again. The task is slightly less mechanical, as the student has to produce the sentence herself the first time without a model. She still gets two opportunities for comparison though only one for imitation. But it was observed that learning was greater, since the initial effort to produce the sentence with accuracy and fluency led the student to focus more attentively on the differences between her reading and the master-tape. Several lessons of this type were successfully used with all three types of hardware.

The reading aloud of unfamiliar dialogues.

The next stage in order of difficulty was the reading
aloud of unfamiliar dialogues. The script was handed to the students a few minutes in advance so that they could read it aloud first to themselves. Only two lessons followed this approach, but in future more such can easily be introduced. As the entire course is based on a firm commitment to a structural approach, any new dialogues prepared had to be rigidly confined to the sentence patterns taught so far, with an attempt to introduce a large number of instances of the particular sentence pattern introduced in the lesson which the unit was intended to accompany. This was successfully done. Cassette Lesson 6 contained a short conversation in which a girl talked about the unpleasant time she had had in a crowded train on a rainy day. The conversation was absolutely natural yet was rigidly confined to Linking Verb patterns. It has been included in Appendix C as a sample of the type of unit which can be designed. The students have to read it out sentence by sentence, following the order: Speak — listen — speak again — listen again. The students' voices were not recorded.

The other lesson of this type came as the final lesson in the set as Language Laboratory Lesson 4. Much more freedom was available in the use of sentence patterns, so a variety of complex sentences could be used. As the unit accompanied the final set of lessons in the booklet containing dialogues based on adverbial clauses, the language laboratory lesson also introduced a large number of adverbial clauses. The theme of
conversation was the Open University programme recently introduced by b.a.d.t. University. This was a pioneering project and the students had not heard of it, so they read out the dialogue with genuine interest. In consonance with the attempt to try various approaches, on this occasion the entire dialogue was first read out by the students, they then listened to the master-tape and recorded their own version once again. The entire unit was then replayed. Such an exercise was more difficult than sentence by sentence repetition but it was also more natural. This dialogue too has been included in Appendix C. Stress was not indicated in either of these units. The students were instructed to stress the words correctly and read as if they were speaking to someone. Most read in a lively manner and most improved on the second reading. They did stumble over long sentences however and some errors remained even in the second reading.

The repetition of unfamiliar dialogues heard on the tape.

The next stage in difficulty was reached with the lessons which involved aural comprehension. Here unfamiliar dialogues were first presented on the tape. Students found this distinctly more difficult than reading out an unfamiliar dialogue. They had to listen to the entire dialogue once through. They then repeated the dialogue sentence by sentence after the tape. Finally only one participant's words were heard on the tape while the students had to recall and reproduce the words of the
other participant. A large number of such units were
designed for all three types of hardware. Once again the
structure-patterns were rigidly controlled. As two speakers
were not available when recording, it proved difficult for
the students to distinguish between the two participants in
the dialogue. Hence all the later conversations were between
a teacher and a student, with sufficient clues provided
within the dialogue by which the speakers could be identified.

The exercises were made progressively simpler and
shorter as experience revealed that the students continued to
find them difficult. On revision they will have to be graded
in order of difficulty. Many will have to be rewritten. The
availability of a second teacher will make the construction
of dialogues easier and will add to their naturalness when
heard on the tape. The final stage of the exercise, where
the student has to recall and reproduce, was always
unsatisfactory. Such tasks form part of many of the taped
courses which the researcher has heard. But they veer too
much in the direction of a memory test. They will be omitted
during the revision, as they appear to serve no useful purpose.

As was stated earlier, improvement in aural comprehension
appeared to be very important. When a course consists entirely
of printed lessons, supplementary materials must be provided
for training in this aspect of communication. The very
difficulty experienced with the lessons demonstrates the
necessity for regular practice of this nature. If these units can be made available to the students to listen to and, in the case of the tape-recorder and language laboratory units, to record and replay, whenever they have free time, it will constitute a very valuable supplement to the course. Some of the more successful units of this type will be found in Appendix C.

Pronunciation practice.

The next point to be considered is the use of software for pronunciation practice. In the experiment that was conducted, either a short unit was provided specifically for discrimination between problem sounds such as [ο], [οː] and [ου], or else in a particular dialogue the student's attention was directed to one, or at most two, sounds which they were asked to produce with care, listen for with attention and note on replay when their own voices were recorded. In the units specifically meant for pronunciation practice, if the list of words was given in advance, the order followed was: Speak — listen. If the words only came on the tape naturally the order could only be: Listen — speak. In the latter case the words had to consist of more than one syllable, as monosyllabic words often proved difficult to recognize, sometimes even by the researcher herself when listening to her own recording.

Tape Lesson 4. (reproduced in Appendix C) sought to
direct attention to the contrast between falling and rising intonation. It includes two rather similar dialogues practising question-tags, verbs following 'nor' and short answers. The first dialogue makes use of anomalous finites, the second of verbs which require the auxiliary 'do'. The first dialogue uses rising intonation in the question-tags, as the speaker is not certain that what she says is correct and so requires confirmation. The second dialogue uses falling intonation as the speaker is confident of the truth of her statement and requires no confirmation. The length of the tone groups also varies. Identical responses in the two dialogues are said differently. In the first dialogue one response is broken up into two tone groups, thus making it more emphatic, while in another response the second tone group is indicative of an after-thought. The parallel sentences in the second dialogue consist of only one tone group.

Before the tape was played to the students they were asked to try and note these features and reproduce them. Before the replay of the student's recording the student was shown the written dialogue and the contrasts and what they signalled were pointed out. The majority of lessons providing pronunciation practice emphasize stress or individual phonemes. The lesson dealing with intonation was appreciated by the students who were exposed to it and more such units will be prepared.
Creative tasks.

The more creative types of exercises will now be discussed. The researcher attached particular importance to this aspect of the use of software as she did not wish to confine the scope to mere mechanical practice. At first a dialogue from the book was used as a model so that the range of responses would be restricted. Two exercises of this nature are included in Appendix C as examples of what was attempted. But it was found that students did not catch on to what was expected of them and tended to be confused. So the attempt at using a model was abandoned and creative tasks of an 'open-ended' nature were set instead. As a variety of responses were now possible, the teacher had to make a note of them and discuss with the students which were acceptable.

When the lessons were for the cassette-recorder, the students spontaneously gave their responses and the teacher overheard as many as was feasible. Sometimes the students were asked to write down their responses. Alternatively at the end of the unit they were asked to recall what they had said. On one occasion a cyclostyled sheet with multiple-choice alternatives was provided. (See Appendix C).

All the tasks of this nature naturally demanded aural comprehension as well as the ability to compose a suitable response. The variety of tasks designed will now be described. A simple task required the student to answer a question or respond to a statement. The early cassette lessons made
use of questions such as:
Is your father a graduate?
How many people are there in your family?
The teacher of course had to check at the end of the lesson whether the questions had been understood. (See Appendix C for the complete list of questions.)

Language laboratory lesson 3 followed a similar pattern. As the responses were recorded, the teacher had a much better opportunity to judge whether the statements and questions had been understood and the student could think of an appropriate response. The unit has been included in Appendix C. The responses were definitely unsatisfactory. Partly this was because of the faulty working of the laboratory equipment. But repetition of the exercise in the classroom showed that failure to comprehend quite common English expressions had persisted till the end of the course and this was not merely a failure in 'aural' comprehension but in comprehension of the language.

For instance in response to the statement: 'I wish this language laboratory equipment would work better', some girls said that the laboratory lessons had helped to make their English better while some made no response. Not a single girl responded to the statement: 'Next year you will have an intermediate Course in Spoken English'. The word 'Intermediate' turned out to be the stumbling-block. The statement: 'I hope you are all going to work after leaving college' was taken by
the best student in the group to refer to the homework or housework she did after leaving college every evening.

Another type of exercise in which students had to speak spontaneously was a variant of the listen and repeat type of exercise discussed earlier. Students listened to a new dialogue, repeated it sentence by sentence after the tape, then listened to it again but produced a different utterance in place of the last utterance on the tape. This as well as further exercises of a more creative nature will be discussed in Section 4.3 in connection with the Intermediate Course.

A comparison of the usefulness of the three types of hardware.

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the three types of audio-aids used may now be considered. The same types of lessons were used with all the three and the researcher did not find that any particular type of software was more suited to any particular type of hardware. In all cases the novelty certainly added to the interest of the lessons. On the other hand it was felt that nothing very substantial could be achieved unless the group had the opportunity to use the equipment over a period of time. Another point to be emphasized is the necessity for follow-up discussion.

The cassette-recorder is, of course, the easiest type of hardware to handle. It can be carried to class and the whole group has the opportunity to listen. As stated earlier it can
be used for several types of exercises which the teacher could conduct without it but only at the cost of naturalness. Besides, once the teacher has switched on the recorder, she is free to listen carefully to individuals. The major drawback is that the cassette-recorder does not allow of simultaneous listening and recording as only one track at a time can be played. Entire conversations by students can certainly be recorded and subsequently replayed to them. This could be a useful exercise, but it would then restrict the use to two students at a time instead of a group.

The major advantage of the tape-recorder is that the student can listen and record sentence by sentence and then replay. Only one student at a time can record, however, though others may gain something by merely listening. This is the major drawback. Moreover the recorder is so heavy that it cannot possibly be carried to class. Arrangements had to be made for students to come to the English department room for their recordings, causing considerable disturbance to adjoining departments. The noise from the neighbouring department rooms in turn caused disturbance when recording. Although the intention was to afford an opportunity to an entire group of 26 students to listen and record for each of the four units, only 8 girls actually recorded, taking all the four units together, though a few others listened. There was no doubt that the girls found the lessons useful. In spite
of the fact that the whole process is a laborious one, it seems worth-while to organize a series of lessons, spaced out over a year, with short units, allowing for time for two replays if necessary and immediate discussion of the student's performance. Once a second student records, the first student's recording is automatically erased.

The language laboratory possesses this advantage over the tape-recorder that ten students at a time can listen and record. The teacher, however, cannot listen to each girl's replay along with her, at most she can listen in to booths turn by turn. Hence the teacher must spend several hours subsequently in the laboratory listening to all the students' cassettes, before they are used again and the earlier recording is erased. The recording equipment in the laboratory provides for the simultaneous playing of two tracks, so that the student may hear the master-tape on one and record on the other. A cassette with this type of recording cannot be replayed on an ordinary cassette-recorder, so the teacher cannot take the cassettes away and listen to them at leisure. Small practical problems such as these greatly limit the use of the laboratory.

The laboratory offers a further facility which could not be utilized on this occasion. Separate programmes can be prepared and students can select their own programme and proceed at their own pace. The greater privacy proves a
benefit to some students who stumble far less in the laboratory than in the classroom. Again lessons spaced out through the year would ensure greater benefits. It is doubtful whether just four lessons, with little opportunity to get adjusted and improve, serve any useful purpose. The view taken here is not far from Dakin's, that a laboratory may be most fruitfully used as a combination of a listening library and an individual repetition trainer. This would be equally true of the tape-recorder.

One may conclude by proposing that extensive use of the cassette-recorder should form part of the compulsory course. A batch of 10 or 20 students who opt for an enrichment course may simultaneously attend a series of about twenty sessions either with the tape-recorder or the language laboratory.

4.2.6 Teacher orientation.

The teaching of Spoken English in a systematic manner on a large scale is a new development not only at S.N.D.T. University but in the field of higher education in India as a whole. The entire scheme depends for its success on the efficiency and enthusiasm of the teachers. Initially only selected teachers had been involved and there had been no direct check on what went on in the classroom. To prepare the entire body of S.N.D.T. teachers of English, an eight-day workshop on methods of teaching and testing Spoken English was
held in April 1976. The researcher acted as director of the workshop and experts from the British Council and the Central Institute of English participated as the other two members of the faculty.

The programme was so designed as to be of practical use and also to involve the teachers themselves in the process of decision-making. Therefore, apart from lectures, the programme included teaching practice, pronunciation practice, practice in the preparation, administration and scoring of tests and discussion sessions. Even the lectures were closely related to actual problems of teaching and testing.

Teaching practice sessions were an important feature of the workshop. Some Arts and Commerce students who had passed the X1th standard examination came for seven days and were tested on the eighth day. Three batches were formed, each consisting of 20 students and with 15 teachers attached to each. The teachers formed teams of four. The members of a team jointly undertook the preparation of a set of four lessons and taught half a lesson at a stretch. Team teaching worked well as it gave the teachers an opportunity to change their approach next day in response to suggestions. Often two teachers together read out a dialogue. The teachers who were observing the lesson went round the class and listened to the students. After each session the group discussed the
lessons and made suggestions regarding the course content and teaching procedures as well as the manner in which the lesson had been handled by the teachers concerned.

Some teachers adapted themselves to the new method much more easily than others. Most had a favourable attitude to experimentation and an open mind, though a few were resistant. With several teachers one observed a marked tendency to lecture and to give elaborate, and not very lucid explanations of words, grammatical concepts and situations which in most cases needed no explanation at all. Many of them came to accept that their explanations had been unnecessary and had reduced the time left for oral practice, but in some cases one is not sure how they will actually conduct the lessons. The tendency of college lecturers to 'lecture' needs constant curbing if language teaching is to succeed. It was because of this tendency that it was finally decided to cut out references to the grammatical framework in the body of the lessons.

It was also observed that several teachers had not grasped the contrasts between vowel sounds and were unable to articulate the sounds correctly themselves. Nor could they always stress sentences correctly even when the stress-marks were shown in the course booklet. The course-designer always went through the lessons with the teams preparing for the next day. The teachers heard the lessons recorded on a
cassette and read out the dialogues aloud. In spite of this careful preparation errors in individual sounds, stress and intonation continued to be made. It was as a result of observation of the faults in the teachers' own pronunciation and, even more, their lack of awareness of their faults and sensitivity on this issue that the course-designer decided to reduce the importance attached to the teaching of pronunciation.

The proposals made at the workshop regarding revision of the course, teaching procedures and testing techniques were all implemented as far as seemed possible and desirable and have been discussed elsewhere. As a follow-up to the workshop, it seems necessary to maintain contact with the teachers, sit in on lessons if possible, send for reports and organize a workshop specifically for training in pronunciation. An offer was made to provide the teachers with the lessons recorded on cassettes. None of the teachers appeared to feel the need. Now that supplementary materials have been prepared to accompany the lessons, these may be supplied to those who are interested.

4.2.7 Suggestions regarding further improvement of the course.

As a result of all the experience obtained, a few points may be considered when a new edition of the course is required. The success of the Intermediate Course, which was designed on
functional lines, may lead one to question whether the Basic Course itself should be completely redesigned. The researcher however is convinced that it was because of the foundation laid in the Basic Course with the observance of grading and control that students had acquired the competence which enabled them to benefit from the Intermediate Course. Hence structural grading should not be abandoned.

It has been suggested that since discussions on social problems and on subjects of specialization were successfully conducted in the Intermediate Course, greater interest would be aroused if, in the Basic Course as well, such topics were introduced. But the students at that stage are not linguistically equipped to conduct such discussions. Experience in an earlier experiment with Part III students described in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.7) bears this out. Besides the majority of Part I students do not possess the intellectual maturity to discuss these topics.

The most important modification when revising the course will be in the direction of greater emphasis on the aural aspect of communication. As has been done in the Intermediate Course, more aural cues may be introduced. Suggestions for dialogues to be initiated by the teacher made be provided in a separate handbook. Apart from this the main attempt must be to rewrite dialogues which still, in spite of all the efforts made, do not seem quite natural.
4.3 The Intermediate Course.

An account of the design of the course and the rationale underlying it was given in Chapter 3. Something must now be said regarding the classroom teaching as well as the extensive experiment with audio-aids. The course should have been spread over the whole year in 1979-80 but had to be confined to the second term as the Basic Course had to be completed in the first term with the Part II students. The researcher continued with the same group as in the first term, a mixed group of Gujarati and Marathi medium students, containing some students from the Higher Secondary stream and a larger number from the Pre-University stream.

4.3.1 The teaching of the course in B.A., Part II in the second term of 1979-80.

The first point to be noted is the generally enthusiastic response on the part of the students in all the tutorial groups at S.N.M.U. college. Both attendance and attempts at active participation improved considerably in the second term in Group II A 3 (the researcher's group) with the switch-over from the Basic to the Intermediate Course. To what extent the increase in interest should be ascribed to the different nature of the course materials and to what extent to the system of continuous assessment that was simultaneously introduced, is difficult to determine. Since a similar
improvement in efforts at active participation was observed in the second term when taking the Basic Course with group IC1 where the system of continuous assessment was likewise introduced (see Chapter 5) it may be that this was the more important factor. Be that as it may, the course materials definitely interested the students and seemed to them relevant to their needs.

The simplest feature of the course was the reading aloud of dialogues from the book. Initially the same method was followed as in the Basic Course, but at a later stage preliminary repetition line by line after the teacher was dispensed with. The students read out the dialogue aloud and other students commented on the appropriateness and naturalness of their tone and manner. Stress, being marked in the booklet, was indicated to the students. As no other guidance was given, students gained facility in natural speech with unfamiliar material, learning to speak in phrase-groups instead of word by word and to read with appropriate expression.

The fluent reading aloud of dialogues from the course booklet does not in itself ensure fluent independent speech. Knowing this, why were such dialogues included in the Intermediate Course? Partly this was because models were required, introducing students to the forms of expression suitable for each micro-function. But experience in the language laboratory revealed that even as late as the end of
the second term of the second year, there were students — and some of them were extremely conscientious and diligent students — who had difficulty in saying English words in sequence. Even with the course booklet open in front of them, even when repeating a sentence after the teacher, such students stumbled over long sentences, paused, repeated words, omitted words, altered words and introduced meaningless sounds or else words like articles and prepositions where they could not possibly occur. Thus experience demonstrated that the retention of such exercises was amply justified.

A far more important element in the course is the construction of independent dialogues. The aim was to get students to converse spontaneously along the lines suggested. Of several such dialogues the following may be cited: conversations about a painting or a table-cloth which both participants like or which one likes and the other doesn't (Lesson 4); a conversation with a person one meets for the first time at a party (Lesson 5); directions as to how to reach one's house (Lesson 8); apologies (Lesson 11); an explanation regarding the use of a household gadget (Lesson 16); persuading the teacher to sing at a function (Lesson 20); a complaint to a neighbour (Lesson 25); a consultation with a specialist (Lesson 28).

In the initial stages the students found it impossible to converse spontaneously and so they were asked to write out
the dialogue, show them to the teacher and then read them aloud. In the later stages the better students were able to speak spontaneously, though they required a few moments for thought. The weak students, however, could not say anything on the more difficult subjects, though they could manage a few sentences such as: 'Do you like this table-cloth?'. When writing out the dialogues many students had something to say but the weaker ones could not proceed at all to write it down in English unless they had a better student as a partner. Some enthusiastic students were struggling to write but simply did not have the requisite knowledge of vocabulary and syntax to begin to frame a sentence. They constantly needed to tell the teacher what they wanted to say, making use of the mother-tongue for the purpose. The teacher then helped them to make the same point in English. The students were very keen to learn and sought to grasp and retain the phrases they were taught. Even the better students occasionally required such help but on the whole they proceeded to compose quite long conversations on their own with a variety of ideas and sentence-patterns. However, errors in syntax and agreement and gross misspellings of simple words occurred quite frequently in their writing.

The other teachers at S.N.D.T. College reported that after about half the course was completed, students started speaking spontaneously. Even at this stage many had to write
out the dialogue first and required help in doing so. All the topics interested the students and they made an effort to speak and write. Till the end most spoke in broken English but all had become bolder in the attempt to speak. One teacher felt that as regards grammatical accuracy, there were hardly any cases of improvement; those who were good had been good from the outset.

As each lesson contained a large number of suggestions for new dialogues, it was found that one lesson tended to take up two periods. In order to conform to the time schedule of one period per lesson, some dialogues were set as homework. Several students used to write out the homework, occasionally jointly with their partner, generally by themselves. Perhaps the greater seriousness regarding homework could be attributed to the system of continuous assessment under which they obtained a mark for every homework task completed. One kind of homework assignment, (it might more appropriately be termed an out-of-class assignment), which they were reluctant to carry out was the performing of real-life tasks such as making inquiries from the clerk in the college office or delivering a message from the English teacher to the teacher of their own subject of specialization. Most of them were nervous about these quite simple tasks and hesitated to carry them out. Possibly they found them unnatural, as they were being asked to speak in English to a person whom they
would normally address in their mother tongue or in Hindi.

Importance was attached when designing the course to providing opportunities for the teacher to initiate a conversation. All these conversations or short exchanges were quite successful.

Two discussion sessions, Lesson 21 (Women are treated as inferiors in our society) and Lesson 24 (The relations between parents and children) were highly successful. The class was divided into four groups with one or two good students assigned to each. They were not formally appointed as group leaders but they took the lead, keeping the discussion going, raising one point after another and encouraging every member of the group to contribute. The students were interested in the topics and had plenty to say, as the topics were related to their own experience. The danger in such a situation was that they would become so absorbed in the subject that an animated discussion in the mother tongue would replace a rather halting discussion in English. This did not happen, although occasionally the teacher was asked how to express a point in English.

The teacher at first listened in to each group in turn but, since this seemed to have a rather inhibiting effect, subsequently decided to remain in the background. The group discussions took up almost the whole period, so apart from a
rather hasty summing-up of the views of each group and a noting of difference of views, there was no class discussion apart from the group discussions. On one or two issues, however, such as whether men should share in the housework and the extent to which parents should control their children, some argument took place.

As regards the theme of social service by students (Lesson 27), as none of the students in this particular group had any experience, the teacher began with a short account of her experience of N.S.S. camps, purposely leaving openings for the students to ask questions or ask for further explanation. The students were keenly interested and took the opportunity of asking questions.

As regards the play-reading sessions from A Doll's House, the second session was much more successful than the first. None of the students had come prepared on the first occasion. The scene was the one in which Krogstad extracts from Nora a confession that she had forged her father's signature and threatens to reveal the secret to her husband if she does not use her influence to enable him to retain his job. It is a very tense scene in which the two characters, Nora in particular, experience and express a wide range of emotions. Even the fluent readers tended to make the conversation sound like a cosy chat between friends,
discussing a film, say, or making arrangements to go out together. When this was pointed out, they improved, but felt rather awkward and embarrassed at having to express emotion.

The scene selected for the second session of play-reading was the final scene in which Torvald, appalled at learning about the forgery, rejects Nora and Nora decides to leave him. This is an even more powerful scene than the first one and allows for the expression of more intense feeling. The students had come prepared and several read the lines effectively though some were still tentative.

One teacher organised very fruitful play-reading sessions. She asked the students to come up on the dais and act out sections of the scene. If others thought they could improve upon the performance, they came up and gave their rendering of the role. Sometimes a section was repeated several times with improvement at each successive rendering.

The course was so packed that no time at all could be devoted to pronunciation practice. An attempt was made to rectify this in the taped lessons. No time was spent on drawing attention to grammatical patterns as it had been decided to avoid doing so in the spoken English course. Errors in both pronunciation and grammar were corrected from time to time but not too frequently or insistently lest
this should inhibit the students.

The entire experience of teaching this course was a fruitful one. The only problem was that the amount of material in many lessons was too much to cover in one period. The setting of homework solved the problem to a large extent. On the whole the course-designer was satisfied with the materials and the teaching techniques and would not wish to make any significant alterations when revising the course.

4.3.2 Experiments with hardware and software.

A full account has been given in Section 4.2.5 of the objectives sought to be achieved in using the cassette-recorder, the tape-recorder and the language laboratory. The experience gained as a result of preparing a variety of materials to accompany the Basic Course contributed to the preparation of more effective materials to accompany the Intermediate Course. The materials have been included in Appendix C. Only one kind of exercise was introduced in each unit as students tended to get confused if a variety of tasks had to be performed. As far as possible it was sought to provide 'open-ended' tasks rather than mechanical ones. Pronunciation practice was also given importance as it had been neglected in the classroom.

Lessons for the cassette-recorder.

Four short units were prepared instead of two longer
ones so as not to cause confusion through a difference in procedures in the two halves of the unit. Unit 1 covered Lessons 1 to 5 and made use of dialogues from the book. It was divided into two parts, Unit 1(a) and 1(b). In 1(a) the pattern followed was: Listen - repeat - listen again - repeat again. Two dialogues were repeated in this way. The pronunciation practice followed the same order. The \([i:] - [i:\] \) contrast was practised with words from the lessons written up on the blackboard. In 1(b) the pattern followed was: Speak - listen - speak again - listen again. Three dialogues from the book were repeated in this way. The pronunciation practice too followed this order. The \([\text{e}] - [\text{ei}] \) contrast was drilled with words from the lessons written up on the blackboard.

Unit 1(b) was less mechanical than 1(a) as the student had to speak first. None the less, as it was the first time the cassette-recorder was taken to the class, it was decided to begin with the simpler and more familiar form of repetition in 1(a), the form to which the students were accustomed in the classroom. As the cassette-recorder was used for the first time, the students were keen and attentive. They said they had enjoyed the lesson because of the novelty and had therefore listened more carefully than usual. The repetition of each sentence also made them more aware of the need to improve. The pronunciation practice revealed that the students
were very poor at producing the sounds that were being drilled. Follow-up drill in pronunciation is essential if the cassette lesson is to be exploited to the maximum extent.

Unit 2 covered lessons 6 to 10. This time the students had to listen to new dialogues either on the same topics or involving the same situations and functions as in Lessons 6 to 10. The dialogues were as follows:

(i) A conversation with a teacher in the train.
(ii) Making plans for a play-reading.
(iii) Directions as to how to reach the Juhu Campus of the University.
(iv) A recipe for caramel custard.
(v) Inquiries with the Principal regarding the late payment of fees.

In order that there should be no confusion as to which speaker says what, all the conversations were between a teacher and one or more students, except the last which was between a student and the Principal. The utterances were so framed as to make it quite clear to a listener which of the participants was speaking. During their second year of Spoken English, it was felt, students should become accustomed to comprehending utterances spoken at normal speed with the consequent employment of weak forms of auxiliaries, prepositions etc. Consequently all five dialogues were spoken at normal speed and the use of weak forms followed as a natural result.
The entire unit was divided into two halves, 2(a) and 2(b). In the two dialogues in 2(a) the procedure followed was: Listen to the entire dialogue twice. Repeat each sentence after the tape once. Listen again to the first part of the dialogue but, when the student speaks at the end, substitute a different response instead of the response on the tape. In the three dialogues in 2(b) the initial stages of the procedure were the same as in 2(a) but in the final stage the girls had to say the students' words from memory while the teacher's (or Principal's) words were on the tape. Care was taken to ensure that the students' queries or responses followed so obviously and naturally from the previous utterance that they should have no difficulty in recalling them. Both parts of the unit had a concluding section of pronunciation practice. Words from A Doll's House were written up on the blackboard for practice in stress. They were repeated after the tape.

The experience with these units revealed that students require far more exposure to normal speech and many more such units should be played to them through the year. Even the best students found it difficult to comprehend because of the speed and the use of weak forms. Few could even repeat the sentences after the tape, and, as they had not followed the dialogue, they could neither change the final response in 2(a) nor recollect and reproduce the student's words in 2(b). The length of the sentences also made retention rather
difficult even when the sentence was understood. The students
were considerably taken aback at their lack of comprehension
and were keen to have much more practice of this nature.
Difficulties with vocabulary were not a major problem. The
main problem was with weak forms. For instance a very simple
sentence such as: 'Are you on the way to college?' when
spoken as (əjuənəwəeitəkəlidʒ) could not be understood
in spite of several repetitions till it was broken up into
separate words and the weak form related to the dictionary form.

Lessons for the tape-recorder.

Two units were prepared, one for the weaker and the
other for the better students. As it happened, the students
themselves thought of another kind of unit, which was probably
the most useful of the three and which had the great advantage
that it did not require a tape-recorder; a cassette-recorder
would have been sufficient. It will be discussed in due course.

The two units between them covered Lessons 11 to 20.
In Unit 1, which was for the weaker students, conversations
from the book already practised in class were to be read
aloud. The order was: Speak — listen — speak again — listen
again. The attention of the students was directed to a
particular problem sound, [θ] and [ð] in one dialogue, [ɔː]:
in another, [t] and [d] in a third. They were asked to
notice when replaying the tape whether they had made these
sounds correctly and also whether they had stressed the words correctly. A part of the conversation from *A Doll's House* taken up for play-reading in class also formed part of this unit. In the final section on pronunciation practice, some words were given for practice in stress from the comments in the course booklet on the scene from *A Doll's House*.

Experience with this unit revealed that a shorter unit would have been much more useful. The playback could then have been repeated if necessary and promptly discussed. More effort could have been made to lead the students to notice their errors and repeat words, phrases or even entire dialogues once more. Only then would the students get the full benefit of the opportunity to hear their own voices side by side with the model on the tape. It was the extract from *A Doll's House* which made the unit too lengthy. It was too difficult as well and should only have been used with the good students. The omission of this extract would have resulted in a compact better-designed lesson. Some way must be found of giving each student more lessons of this kind. Within a unit it should be possible to include three dialogues, leading gradually from simpler vocabulary and shorter sentences to more unfamiliar vocabulary and longer sentences.

Unit 2, intended for the better students, was similar to cassette Unit 2. It consisted of five new dialogues based on the language functions dealt with in the lessons already
studied in class. These were: congratulations; the expression of purpose; conveying sympathy; explanation; discussion. As the students had asked for more practice in listening to utterances at normal speed, all five dialogues followed this pattern. The procedure was as in Cassette Unit 2.

The unit was used with six students. Although they were good students they missed a great deal of the dialogues. Some sentences were not comprehended even when heard for the third time. Hence, when repeating, the students omitted whole sentences. They were too unnerved to recollect the students' lines and reproduce them as required in the first two dialogues or to make up a new response at the end as was required in the next three dialogues. They had not grasped the dialogue as a whole. Sometimes, they explained, they had understood a sentence but could not retain it mentally because of its length and so stumbled when repeating it. Two of the girls tried to improvise when they could not recollect the exact words.

This type of lesson is obviously necessary; the very fact that it was too difficult demonstrates the need for such lessons. But it may be wiser to lead up more gradually to utterances spoken at normal speed. More preliminary practice may be given in class so that the tape lessons, opportunities for which are rare, should not prove wasteful and frustrating.

The students suggested at this point that they might
simply be allowed to record a conversation between two of them and then listen to it. This turned out to be a very good idea for a lesson. Three conversations were recorded between three different pairs of girls. A conversation on the topic, 'Should men share in the housework' was sustained and animated and sounded like a genuine conversation with different points of view expressed with conviction. One of the two participants was more at ease than the other and did not let the discussion flag. If her partner hesitated, she repeated a question in a different form or raised a new point. The other girl also made several points and contributed to the discussion. The girls benefited from listening to the replay of the discussion; it gave them a sense of achievement and enabled them to notice their errors in grammar and pronunciation.

The second conversation was between two students whose subject of specialization was music. They exchanged impressions about a recital by a classical singer at which they had both been present. As both were students of music, they had plenty to say and were enthusiastic about saying it. One of the two girls showed greater ability to keep up a conversation than the other. She asked for her friend's reactions to the programme, gave her own comments on different 'ragas' and their rendering and also raised more general points about other singers and the ragas in which they specialized.
The second girl also made an effort to keep up the conversation. Here too the girls benefited from the replay. It increased their confidence that they could speak in English on their subject of specialization. They thought of other points they could have discussed and asked how some of the technical terms of Indian classical music could be rendered in English.

Compared to these two conversations, the third was less successful. The students had written out a dialogue on a consultation with a specialist, similar to one of the dialogues in the course book. Neither participant was really interested in the theme. More attempts at this kind of conversation should be made in future however. Students can, on replay, examine the fitness of their manner of speech to the occasion and also note obvious points which may have been omitted. Topics related to subjects discussed in the course book as well as topics of special interest to individuals can also form the basis for conversations.

Lessons for the language laboratory.

Four units were prepared, Units 1(a) and 1(b) for a group of ten weak students and Units 2(a) and 2(b) for a group of ten fairly good students. All the units were short, allowing about ten minutes for recording and ten for replay. Each unit consisted of only one type of exercise followed by
pronunciation practice.

Unit 1(a) was made very simple as it was the first experience that the students had of the complicated equipment of the language laboratory. Three dialogues from Lessons 21 to 25 of the book were to be read out, following the sequence: Speak — listen — speak again — listen again. For pronunciation practice words from the book containing the problem sounds [ɔ], [ɔː] and [ou] were given to the students in advance. Again the sequence was: Speak — listen — speak again — listen again.

It was found that most of the group stumbled, distorted, omitted words, even when reading out familiar material from their own coursebook. Most of them improved the second time, after they had heard the master tape. [ɔ], [ɔː] and [ou] were said correctly by a few. But the general tendency was to make [ɔ] and [ɔː] too close and not to diphthongize [ou]. Besides the girls were straining so hard to say the problem sound correctly that they did not notice that their rendering of the other sounds in the word did not correspond at all to the master tape.

Unit 1(b) was more difficult. It consisted of two new dialogues on topics related to the topics in the lessons. The first was a complaint made by a customer to a shop assistant in a confectionary shop. The other was a telephone conversation
with a doctor. As the entire group consisted of weaker students, the sentences were read at slower-than-normal speed with each word distinctly enunciated. The students first listened to the entire dialogue once and then repeated it sentence by sentence after the tape. No more exacting tasks were set. For pronunciation practice the students repeated words containing the problem sounds [æ] and [ɔː] after the tape. The words were from the course booklet and had been supplied in advance.

After the poor performance of the students in Unit 1(a) they were not expected to fare well in 1(b) and they did not. From the researcher's point of view it was worth-while to try out this type of lesson as part of the experiment. From the students' point of view it was also worth-while as they must sooner or later learn to follow unfamiliar speech. The only modification in the programme would be to lead up more gradually to this type of lesson through preliminary work in class and to have much more practice of this nature in the language laboratory till the students' aural comprehension of simple spoken dialogues had reached an adequate level. The initial set of lessons would have to consist of shorter and simpler dialogues with absolutely no unfamiliar words.

Unit 2(b) for the better students was similar. Three new dialogues, based on the concepts of possibility and probability, lack of knowledge and blame, were to be heard once,
repeated sentence by sentence after the tape and an additional sentence was to be added. Even with the better students this time it was decided to use slow clearly articulated speech owing to the difficulty they had earlier experienced in following utterances at normal speed. The pronunciation practice was based on the problem sounds [t] and [d], [θ] and [ʒ]. The group had much more difficulty in repeating the dialogues than was anticipated. Partly this was owing to the faulty equipment, as they comprehended quite well when the dialogues were later read out in the classroom. [t], [d], [θ] and [ʒ] were sometimes mispronounced throughout, while some girls gradually approximated to the correct sound. Once again the lesson demonstrates that the need for training in aural comprehension is urgent and more such practice is essential.

A different approach to aural comprehension as an essential component of Spoken English was attempted in Unit 2(a). The students had discussed the position of women in modern Indian society. The Research Unit on Women’s Studies (S.N.D.T. University) had shortly before arranged a session in which a teacher from the Gujarati department gave a summary of the findings of her research on a related theme. She had studied the fiction of six Gujarati women novelists, concentrating on the women characters. Her summary was followed by a discussion. Unit 2(a) began with a short conversation between a teacher and a student in which the
teacher told the student about this project. The students listened to this conversation twice. They were then asked to record any questions they might feel like asking if the teacher were actually present in the class and had been speaking to them face to face. It may be asked why this was not attempted in the classroom itself. More such lessons may be designed for use in the classroom. The laboratory facilities made it possible to ensure that each member of the group thought of questions or made comments.

Most of the students found the lesson difficult. They did not ask obvious questions such as: Who were the six novelists studied? On the whole they made general observations on the position of women. They did not seem to grasp that this was an account of a research study. One girl, however, responded by talking about a similar study on a small scale which she as a psychology student had been asked to carry out.

The various activities covered in the entire set of units all appeared to the researcher to serve a useful function and to be suitable for use with any of the three audio-aids. In all cases, however, the designing of a series of lessons seemed desirable, with simpler and shorter tasks leading to longer and more taxing ones. Greater attention to follow-up discussion was also indicated.
4.3.3 Suggestions for further improvement of the course.

Experience of teaching the course in its latest version has been confined to one academic year. Besides the entire course had to be crammed into the second term. In the light of this limited experience, no changes in the course materials appear necessary at present, although with further experience it may happen that alterations in lay-out, or ideas for new dialogues and improvement in existing ones, may suggest themselves.

4.4 Concluding remarks.

The chapter has dealt at length with the teaching of the Basic Course in successive years, as a result of which the course was revised and improved upon in order to achieve more effectively the goal of communicative competence. The nature of the decisions made and the revisions undertaken was outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 has dwelt on the classroom experience and student response by means of which the materials were tested and in the light of which they were revised. The Basic Course in its present revised form was successfully taught in 1979-80 to students from the Higher Secondary stream, the type of students for whom it was intended. As the course was based in the main on a grammatical syllabus, the activities in the classroom were largely 'skill-getting' activities, though, in the revised version,
from the very first lesson, the bridge to 'skill-using' activities was also introduced. With the Intermediate Course, which was based in the main on a functional syllabus, the focus in the classroom was more on 'skill-using' rather than 'skill-getting'. This course likewise proved to be successful.

With both courses it became obvious that the students required more training in aural comprehension and more opportunities for practice. More time was required for pronunciation practice, for speech practice of a simple mechanical kind, as well as for practice in 'skill-using'. Extensive experimentation with software was carried out at both the Basic and Intermediate levels to meet these needs. A variety of units were prepared and tried out. As a result of the experience obtained, an entire series of such units can be designed, leading gradually from simpler to harder tasks. Many of the more successful units already produced can be incorporated, others adapted and new units prepared. These lessons may be made available to students for use in their spare time as well as in enrichment courses. By means of such supportive materials the teaching of speech in the classroom can be strengthened and still better results obtained.
References.


