CHAPTER VIII

MODIFICATIONS MADE IN THE COURSE

The try-out of the Course called for certain modifications in it. The different aspects of the try-out taken into account for making the modifications were the test-results, students' performance in the Course exercises, and their reactions as indicated by them in the Response Sheet - all discussed in the previous chapter. The researcher's own observations while trying out the Course were also considered, while a few other factors such as learners' input of time which should be maximally rewarding and the cost of the material were also given due weightage. Timewise it was also kept in view that the Course was not too lengthy. The modifications made and the bases on which they were made are discussed in the chapter.

Modifications in the Course as a Whole:

The Course as originally designed and constructed had ten Units. They aimed to teach certain skills and sub-skills, and to build up certain attitudes conducive to efficient reading. The rationale behind including them in the Course is discussed in an earlier chapter. However, their usefulness for the Course-takers as manifested in their performance and as perceived by them had to be seen. Judging by these two
additional criteria inclusion of two Course Units had to reconsidered. One was the Word Recognition Unit (Unit A I) and the other Dictionary Skills Unit (Unit B II).

(i) Unit A I: Word Recognition: This Unit on Word Recognition called for a second look. It had no Pre- and Post-tests but was evaluated on the basis of the students' performance as discussed in the previous chapter. The two aspects taken into account for its evaluation were speed and accuracy, because it was to increase these two that the Unit was there in the Course. Now as discussed in the previous chapter there was no consistent and significant gain in respect of speed, and no gain whatever in terms of accuracy presumably because the words had to be identified in the absence of contextual clues. Moreover, as many as 40 per cent of students found the Unit too easy, and about 31 per cent found it comparatively less useful. Taking all these factors into account it was decided that the Unit be dropped.

(ii) Unit B II: Dictionary Skills: Another Unit which necessitated reconsideration was the Unit on Dictionary Skills (Unit B II). Not that no learning took place as a result of training provided in the Unit. In fact there was significant gain in the important skill of deciding the most suitable meaning of a word in the sentence tested through the Pre- and Post-tests. However, as regards its utility from the
view-point of the students as indicated by them in the Response Sheet, though about 23 per cent had specifically mentioned it as a Unit not of great use, which, of course, ranked second in the Units mentioned of less use, on the positive side as a reason for finding the Course useful (item 2 of the Response Sheet) it ranked the last. As pointed out in the previous chapter non-availability of a dictionary in the immediate environment perhaps led them to form such an opinion. Further, unlike other Units, the Course did not demand the application of these skills in its final Unit, and the skill had to be acquired only for probable use in future. Moreover, what was provided in the Course was an orientation into dictionary skills; for their re-inforcement more practice was necessary. Without that facility and without a positive attitude on the part of the learners there was not much point in keeping the Unit in the Course, it was thought. Last but not the least the time factor had also to be considered. In the final version of the Course therefore the Unit was omitted.

Modifications within the Units:

In the light of the data obtained during the first try-out and especially what had been observed by the investigator during the try-out certain changes in different aspects of the Course Units were found necessary. They were as discussed in the following paragraphs.
(i) Unit A II: In this Unit on Word Meaning no major changes were made because the Unit worked quite satisfactorily in the first try-out. A couple of minor changes, however, had to be made. One was in the notes at the beginning of the Unit where the reference to the previous Unit on Word Recognition was omitted because in the modified version of the Course the Word Recognition Unit was to be dropped. The other change was in the format of the exercises. In the old version the word or phrase whose meaning had to be indicated was given in brackets after the sentence illustrating that word or phrase. But due to this the get-up of the exercise was spoiled. In the new version therefore the word or the phrase was given first, followed by a colon, and then the sentence illustrating the word or the phrase. One more minor change was the use of the English letters in place of the Gujarati letters, to indicate the numbers of the four alternative meanings of the word or phrase in an item. (See Vol. II, Appendix I, pp. 448-466).

(ii) Unit A III: In this Unit teaching how to decide the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context the last exercise required the learners to think out and supply the meaning of the underlined words in its different items. In the Key to this exercise the words commonly used in Gujarati were given as their meaning. However, on examining the Answer-books of the students with a view to studying their
performance in the exercises, some less common synonyms of those given in the Key were found to have been used by the students. While preparing the final version of the Course such words were included in the Key in addition to those that were already there so as to facilitate the checking. Secondly, unlike other exercises where the appropriate meaning was to be chosen from among the alternatives given, here the learners had to think out the meaning for themselves. In other words the task they had to perform in this last exercise was more demanding than in other exercises. To keep the marks proportionate to the difficulty of the task, the marks per item in this exercise were raised to 5, while in others they were kept 2. No other changes were made in the Unit.

(iii) Unit A IV: When the students' Answer Sheets on Unitwise Tests were checked, it was observed in respect of Unit A IV where the students had to group words into phrases, that they tended to make very small phrases, particularly in the Post-test. This suggested an overconsciousness on their part as far as phrase reading was concerned. And though overlearning of a skill is not harmful in most cases, in this respect the learners should not be bogged down at short phrases which would hamper their speed, it was felt. Therefore in the later READ-AND-LEARN type of exercises of this Unit, some of the shorter phrases were replaced with longer phrases,
and a note to the effect that as one advances in the skill of reading, he reads in longer phrases, was added in the notes at the beginning of the Unit.

(iv) **Unit A V**: In this Sentence Meaning Unit the first exercise was on finding out the referents of the pro-nominals. Though in most items of the exercise the referent of only one pronoun was to be thought out and indicated, in some of the later items the referents of more than one pronoun had to be given. This made the task somewhat complicated, as the students' query during the try-out suggested. To eliminate this complication even in these later items of the exercise only one pronoun was kept to find out the referent of. (See Vol. II, Appendix I, pp. 500-502).

Another change was made with regard to the marking scheme of Exercises 3, 4 and 5 of this Unit. In these exercises a sentence was followed by three statements, one or two of which were true and the rest false. The students had to mark as true or false, as the case may be, all the three statements and also assess each response while evaluating their work. This made the assessment laborious, the researcher had felt, while giving the Course in the first try-out. To somewhat simplify the task, in the modified version the learners were asked to mark in the Answer-book only those statements which were true according to the sentence given. For each item (not for each statement) there were now 2 marks. If there was only
one statement out of the three true, it carried 2 marks, and if two were correct, the 2 marks were to be divided between them and each carried one mark. A separate note to this effect was prefixed to the exercises. (See Vol. II, Appendix I, p. 509).

(v) Unit B I: This Unit on Formation of Words called for certain major changes. In the first place it occupied as many as 37 pages of the total 213 in the Course - almost a lion's share. Secondly, as many as 27 per cent of students had indicated this Unit as too easy which ranked third, the first two being the Word Recognition and Dictionary Skills Units, both planned to be dropped in the modified version of the Course. Further, on investigation it was found that in the New S.S.C. Examination there was a question on word-formation that carried two marks, and the schools taught word-formation, though with varying degrees of emphasis. All this meant that looking to its usefulness the Unit should be kept but its costwise and timewise input should be reduced. It should be so designed that instead of teaching prefixes and suffixes at the knowledge level first, then giving the read-and-learn type of practice through tables, and then sentence-level exercises for application, straightway sentence-level exercises are given. Some explanation of the affixes along with a few examples and a little practice could be provided for those who needed it, it was thought. Accordingly,
the following changes were made in this Unit:

(a) Detailed discussion of affixes along with illustrations in the various exercises of the Unit was omitted. Instead, in the notes at the beginning of the entire Unit a few examples of word-formation were discussed.

(b) The read-and-learn type tables for practice in the use of affixes and in finding out the root word without the affixes were also dropped.

(c) The sentence level exercises in the application of knowledge of affixes were kept. Since this was the only kind of practice the learners were now getting, the quantum of these exercises was increased. Instead of only eight exercises with 10 items each in the first version, now there were ten exercises, with the first five having 15 items each. Some necessary reshuffling of the items was also done.

(d) For those who needed some help, a kind of remedial teaching, if not the sophisticated kind of branching, was provided. Here it was indicated as to what affix was there in a particular item of a particular exercise for the perusal of the learners. Some more examples of the same kind were also provided for re-inforcement. (See Vol. II, Appendix, I, pp. 546-547.)
(e) A minor change was made in the marking scheme: instead of one mark each for all the items of all the exercises in the first version, two marks were kept for each item of the last two exercises because in them the students had to remove two affixes in the word and find out the root word. In other exercises, though there were a few words with two affixes, the learners were required to remove only one.

(f) The reference to dictionary use in the notes at the beginning of the Unit was omitted, the Unit on it having been dropped.

(vi) Units B III and B IV: In these final Units of the Course the learners had to read with understanding passages - in the former with the help of guiding questions, in the latter without such help. However, in both these Units the meanings of certain unfamiliar words were given after the words in brackets. This was to help the students to concentrate on grasping the ideas without experiencing the difficulty of facing unfamiliar words. Another reason, and a more important one, was that in the original division of the Course planned for the first try-out where the Course was to be tried on two separate groups, the group which was to do these later Units of the Course was not to have done the earlier Units including the one on getting the meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context. But in the final version where the learners
were first learning the skill of using contextual clues to get the meaning of unfamiliar words, it was felt that scope should be given for the application of the skill in the Course itself. Therefore in this version of the Course the meanings of many of the words in these two Units were not given.

Another modification in these Units was made with regard to the order of the passages. It may be recalled that Passage 3 of Unit B III (Theft in the Night) was thematically a little difficult; its locale and characters were also unfamiliar to the learners. Simultaneously with this passage the style of giving the guiding questions from the viewpoint of their distribution was also changed: instead of giving them scattered over the passage, from Passage 3 onwards they were all given at one place. These two factors together as discussed in the previous chapter increased the difficulty of the passage resulting in their comparatively low score in the passage. To eliminate one of the two factors, namely, thematic difficulty and introduction of the new style of giving questions, the passage was shifted from where it was and put at the end of the Unit while the last passage of the original version which was thematically much simpler was put in its place. Thus the places of Passages 3 and 6 were interchanged.

In Unit B IV there was no such issue. Nor was there any such passage in which all the groups might have obtained a low
score. But to have a more systematic approach instead of an arbitrary one the passages were arranged according to their length with shorter passages to precede the longer ones in an ascending order. Two passages of the original version of the Course, one entitled 'Not Bad Air but Mosquitoes' and the other, entitled 'Kangaroos!' were dropped because they were comparatively less liked by the Course-takers as discussed in the previous chapter.

A somewhat important change was made in the Speed Chart for Unit B IV. In the old version of the Course the Speed Chart began with 3 minutes as the minimum time taken for reading a passage and speeds at intervals of one minute were given. The students, while using this Chart to find out their own speed of reading a passage, had to cancel the seconds if they were less than 30, and count them as one minute if they were 30 or more than 30. But during the first try-out it was observed that the students had become tremendously time-conscious and speed-conscious, and some of them worked at speeds beyond expectation. Not to dampen their spirit but to boost it up a two-fold modification was made in the Speed Chart of the final version. In the first place it began with 2 minutes as the minimum time taken for reading a passage, and secondly, it indicated speeds with 10 seconds' intervals with the dividing line being 5 seconds. (See Vol. II, Appendix I, pp. 609-610.)
The above-mentioned modifications in various Units were accompanied by corresponding changes in the Answer-book, Record-Sheet and Key to the Exercises.

Modifications in the Format:

When the Course was first developed, different Units of the Course and the ancillary materials such as the Answer-book and the Key to the Exercises were in the form of loose bunches of separate booklets. The main reason behind it was that for almost every Unit there was a Pre-test and a Post-test, and through the Pre-test on a Unit was to be assessed the students' skill in question, as it was, without training obtained from this Course. Had the Units been in a book-form even out of curiosity the students would have had a look at and even tried their hand on some of the exercises or parts of exercises before taking the Pre-test. To avoid this eventuality it was thought more advisable to keep the Units separate, so that the students had no chance to get familiar with a Unit until taking the Pre-test on it.

In the final version of the Course there was no need as such to keep the Units separate. Not that they could not have been kept separate in booklet forms - perhaps that would have been more attractive and easier to handle. But giving these booklets of the final version of the Course even a reasonable durability would have involved considerable
cost. Therefore it was decided to have all the Units together in one book and give it a more durable shape. This was to be the Self-study Book (Vol. II, Appendix I) of the Course and it was to be reusable. Another reusable material was the Key to the Exercises, and this was also included in the Self-study Book. The Key naturally was to be at the end of the Book; while the Introduction to the Course which was a separate booklet in the old version was to prefix the Units in the Self-study Book of the new version.

Two Units of the Course having been dropped, and all the Units now being in one book without any division among them, they were now to be numbered again, this time serially. The old numbers of the Units and the new numbers in the modified version were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old No.</th>
<th>New No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A II</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Word Meaning - Known Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A III</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Meaning of Unfamiliar Words - Use of Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A IV</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Reading in Meaningful Phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Sentence Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A VI</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Finding out the Main Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B I</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Formation of Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B III</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Guided Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B IV</td>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Speed Reading with Comprehension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The non-reusable materials in the Course were the Answer-hook and the Record Sheet. Separate when the Course was first developed, they were now to be bunched together (Vol. II, Appendix I) to facilitate use and preservation, and to keep the cost down.

Some modifications were made in the format of the Record Sheet because as observed by the researcher during the first try-out, its use was rather inconvenient. In the first place, it had a column for noting the time taken in doing an exercise. But how were the students to count the time? There was no provision for it. The students taking the Course were seen writing their beginning and ending time on palms, on pieces of papers and in corners of the note-books. This mistake of not providing space to note the beginning and ending time was rectified by adding two columns in the Record Sheet, one to note the beginning time, and the other to note the ending time. (See Vol. II, Appendix I, pp. 620-622.)

Two more columns in addition to those for time were added in the Record Sheet. One indicated the total number of responses in an exercise while the other indicated the maximum score for an exercise, with the maximum score for the entire Unit at the bottom. This was to facilitate computation and to give a more complete picture of one's performance.
Modification of the Evaluation Tool:

To measure the improvement in students' reading ability and thereby the efficacy of the Course two sets of passages were used in the first try-out. The three test-passages in the Pre-test and the three test-passages in the Post-test in the opinion of this investigator as well as the experienced teachers teaching English in the classes concerned, matched each other in their difficulty value. However, when actually used in the first try-out it was felt that the passages of the Post-test were slightly more difficult than the passages of the Pre-test because the Pre-test passages were also used as Post-test passages as a check on the Post-test results, and though gain in reading proficiency was found in both the Post-tests, that in the actual Post-test was consistently less than that in the Pre-test used as a Post-test. The possibility of the former being of greater difficulty value could not be ruled out. This being the case it was thought more desirable to develop two equivalent forms on the basis of the difficulty value to be checked empirically rather than to be estimated arbitrarily so that the results could be interpreted with greater confidence and without reservations.

Further, it was also felt that the high initial score in the test left less room for improvement that can be seen in terms of test-results. Therefore it was also decided that
after checking the difficulty value of different passages those passages which had higher difficulty values should also be included in the Pre- and Post-tests.

Ten passages were prepared for estimating the difficulty value with a view to ultimately selecting four of them suitable for use in the evaluation. (See Vol. II, Appendix H, pp. 939-942.) These included with certain modifications - mainly omission of word meanings at several places - the test-passages already used in the first try-out. Obviously it was not possible to try out all the ten passages on the same group of students because that would have resulted in lack of sustained interest, effort and co-operation on their part. This would not have given a proper estimate of the difficulty values of passages, thus defeating the very purpose of the try-out. Therefore the 10 passages were decided to be tried out on four different but equivalent groups, taking care that no group had to do more than 3 passages. The size of the groups was fixed at 100. The students were to be of standard XI who had just passed their New S.S.C. Examination and entered this class. They were included in the sample on the basis of their marks in English in the S.S.C. Examination. The range of marks, to match the range of marks of those for whom the Course was constructed was kept 35 per cent to 70 per cent. A fairly good proportion of different achievement levels in English was maintained in each group. Thus 25 per cent
of students had between 35 and 45 marks in English, 50 per cent of them had between 46 and 60 marks, and another 25 per cent had between 61 and 70 marks in the subject. The test was given in the respective schools of the students and the procedure followed was the same as in the first try-out of the Course discussed in the previous chapter. The achievement levelwise and groupwise distribution of the test passages is given in Table 8.1 while the mean scores obtained by the groups in the respective passages and the difficulty value obtained of the passages on the basis of this try-out are given in Table 8.2. The difficulty value of the passages was calculated by using the formula (Harper, p.72).

\[
\frac{MU + ML}{2(Max. Marks)} \times 100
\]

where \(MU\) is the mean score obtained by the upper 20 per cent and \(ML\) is the mean score obtained by the lower 20 per cent.

It may be mentioned that Passages 1, 2 and 3 of this try-out were the passages used as the Pre-test in the first try-out of the Course while Passages 4, 5 and 6 were used as the Overall Post-test of the Course. Of course, when used in this passage-wise try-out there was some modification in Passage 1, its length having been increased by adding an incident, and in both Passage 1 and Passage 4, the number of
TABLE 8.1

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL- AND GROUPWISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TEST PASSAGES FOR ESTIMATING THEIR DIFFICULTY VALUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Level as per Marks(%) in English at S.S.C.</th>
<th>Achievement Levelwise Number of Students in Each Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group I Passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>51-55</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-65</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

test-items was raised from 8 to 10 - the same kind of modification in both the passages. Examined against this background it was gratifying to note that as seen in Table 8.2 Passages 1, 2 and 3 used as Pre-test passages, and Passages 4, 5 and 6 used as Post-test passages matched quite well so far as their difficulty value was concerned. This, of course, disproved the assumption that the Post-test passages were somewhat more difficult than the Pre-test passages.
indicating the role played by memory on account of which the students had higher scores when they took the pre-test again as the Post-test. But what is being pointed out is the rough equivalence of the two sets of passages, though not statistically established at that time.

Seen in the light of the above discussion the same two sets in their modified form could have been used in the second try-out of the Course. However, as mentioned earlier, to have more room for improvement perceptible in terms of scores in the tests, passages with slightly higher difficulty value were selected. Thus Passages 1 and 4 which had almost
equal and slightly higher difficulty value were selected, and Passages 7 and 9 again with almost the same and still higher difficulty value were kept. Of these Passages 1 and 7 were to be used as Pre-test passages, while Passages 4 and 9 were to be used as Post-test Passages. After establishing their statistical equivalence even two passages in the Pre-test and two passages in the Post-test would suffice, it was thought.