CHAPTER X

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research, when started, had a very moderate-looking aim of developing a course that would increase the reading efficiency of those who had done the high school level course in English in the state of Gujarat and had a certain level of achievement in the subject. The welcome realization that the apparent simplicity of the task undertaken was deceptive and in essence the work was quite challenging came close behind. Or, may be, that was just the beginning of the realization because the magnitude of the task in all its different aspects kept revealing as the work progressed, sometimes necessitating a compromise, sometimes entailing delay, and sometimes even making it necessary to drop the bright idea that might have appeared on the mental horizon because of the constraints under which the work had to be carried out. Thus, for example, no diagnostic survey could be made initially of the students' difficulties in reading in English because the work to be really enlightening had to be of considerable magnitude or else it would not serve any purpose. Similarly, entry norms in terms other than of marks in the public examination could not be established nor could a diagnostic test be prepared for prospective Course-takers to counsel them whether training in a particular component of reading was
necessary for them. The try-out also was limited to the city of Ahmedabad, which, ideally should have been carried out in different parts of Gujarat.

Of course, for all these things which ought to have been done, but could not be done for practical reasons, there were substitutes, and not very inferior ones at that. For example, to decide what the difficulties of the post-S.S.C. students were in reading in English, the researcher had with her considerable direct and indirect experience as a teacher and teacher-trainer as also an insight gained from her association with certain programmes related to the subject. This was further supplemented by theoretical knowledge acquired from the study of relevant literature. Similarly, though entry norms in terms of one's reading ability or knowledge of the language were not established to decide whether a person was qualified to take the Course, the norms were established in terms of marks in the public examination at the end of the high school stage. In the same way though the Course was tried out in Ahmedabad only, the sample was sufficiently large and it reflected a cross-section of the society.

While taking note of the limitations of the research, what was achieved should also not be underrated. To
carefully determine the skills and subskills that would develop the reading ability of the Course-takers, with its subject matter to suit the age-group, and more pertinently to the learners' limited knowledge of the language, to arrange the material in such a way that the learners get adequate learning experiences, to validate the programme on a sizeable sample of students in the face of so much difficulty, mainly arising out of the fact that it required a number of class-hours - all this called for not only hard work but also diligence and perservence, as the detailed account of the work in the foregoing pages reveal.

What this final chapter contains is the major findings of the research, recommendations on the use of the material developed, and suggestions for further research.

Major Findings.

Discussed below are the major findings of the research.

In the first place the Course providing training in different components of reading and then giving integrated practice in reading as such has been highly effective in developing the reading efficiency of the students. No claim is being made of teaching each component in the Course from scratch because as the results of different Pre-tests indicated and as would be quite natural to expect the
students did have in varying degrees familiarity with different components of reading and they did have a certain level of reading proficiency also. What is being pointed out is that most of what they had acquired in the class-room was a result of chance-learning while the Course imparted a systematic, intensive training in each component which went a long way in developing the reading proficiency of the Course-takers.

Regarding the controversy between the holistic approach and skills approach to developing reading ability the researcher subscribes to the latter in which the learner develops his reading ability by keeping one sub-task in focus and practising it, and then engaging in the task of reading in an integrated way. The research supports the stance taken by this investigator, though no claim is made that this would be the only approach. All that is claimed is that the skills approach also produces results and that it does not prove dry and drab as an upholder of the psycholinguistic or holistic approach would fear. In fact after both the try-outs of the Course a majority of the learners have expressed the opinion that the work was interesting and they would do such work for more than an hour a day.
A very pertinent question, once having seen that the Course developed the reading proficiency of the students, would be, who precisely would benefit from the Course and for whom it would not be of much use. In other words the range of applicability would have to be specified. The results of the two try-outs indicated that it was the middle range of students that gained significantly from the Course. To be more specific the Course was more advantageous to those students whose achievement level in English was in the range of 35 to 60 per cent marks in the Secondary School Certificate Examination held by the Gujarat Secondary Board of Education. To mention once again the results of the try-outs, the CRs of differences between the Pre- and Post-tests of different groups within this range were highly significant at .01 level, and hence the great degree of confidence with which one can say the Course would benefit the students in this range. On the other hand the CRs of differences of the means of the group with more than 60 per cent marks were significant at .05 level only in both the try-outs (taking into account one of the Post-tests so far as the first try-out is concerned) and the usefulness of the Course cannot be claimed with the same degree of confidence in the case of students falling in this range.
An interesting phenomenon of the study was the high gain in comprehension of the lower ability groups—those with 35 to 40 or 41 to 45 marks. There are two probable reasons for this phenomenon in the opinion of this researcher. One is, that the skills approach on which the Course is based is perhaps very suitable to these low achievers whose linguistic equipment is limited, because it demands attention to one thing at a time before the stage is reached in which the learner is engaged in the task of reading in its entirety. Another probable reason is that the low achievers (not below a certain level, of course) especially in a subject like English are always keen to make up their deficiency and are therefore highly motivated. Because of their high degree of motivation they worked diligently and derived great benefits from the Course.

In the case of the high achievers with more than 60 per cent marks in English whose gain was significant only at .05 level, the converse of what is stated above might be true: the componentwise practice did not have much use for them and their motivation also might not be very high.

That the students' speed of reading can be considerably increased by developing time-consciousness in them while they practise different skills and sub-skills has been established in this research. Of course, it is difficult to
point out any pattern of the development of speed. By and large, it was seen that speed was commensurate with the linguistic equipment of the learners. Better knowledge of the language resulted in greater facility to read and grasp ideas, making speeded reading possible. Conversely, poor knowledge of the language required greater effort and more time to grasp the ideas even after training, and hence the limited speeds of the lower ability groups. However, this is a broad generalization because there is great variation in respect of speed as the SDs of even different ability groups, particularly in the Post-tests, suggest. The conclusion can therefore, be drawn regarding the development of speed that though the training provided through the Course helps in developing the speed of reading, the amount of development depends on how well the learner is equipped with the knowledge of the language and also his or her style of work in general.

When considered from the view-point of reading efficiency which is a composite of comprehension and speed obviously the Course was found effective because in the two aspects taken separately the gain was there. To mention once again the gain in reading efficiency in the second try-out where test-passages with higher difficulty value were used and which had resulted in less gain in speed as
measured by the test than in the first try-out, the gain in the reading efficiency of the entire sample was almost 90 per cent and that of different groups was between 58.51 and 109.68 per cent. Of course, this gives an overall idea of the efficacy of the Course, still perhaps it is quite in order to mention it at this juncture.

Recommendations:

When the research is almost concluded, a few recommendations, given below, are thought to be in order.

A. Recommendations regarding the Course: While using the Course one would do well to bear in mind the following:

(a) The Course is based on the Syllabus which came into force in June 1975. When the syllabus is changed, and the students have learnt English based on a different syllabus, the linguistic component of the Course prepared and tried out in this research might not be suitable for the learners. In that case it might be profitable to use it for students in lower grades if the syllabus is upgraded, and for students of higher grades if it is simplified.

(b) As pointed out earlier in this report and as psychology of learning would emphasize, motivation to improve one's reading efficiency is the sine qua non for getting benefits from the Course. Without proper motivation a
learner may not do the work the way it is suggested and may try to find short-cuts. There would be no point therefore in taking the horse to the water if he is not willing to drink the water.

(c) Like in any other auto-instructional course the present Course expects the learner to read carefully the Introduction, the notes, the instructions for doing the exercises and so on. Just doing the exercises one after the other would not result in insightful learning, and the benefits of the Course would be very limited.

(d) In the approach followed in the Course where the learner is to learn not only by making correct responses but also from incorrect ones by rectifying their mistakes and gaining an insight, the follow-up work becomes an integral part of the Course and a Course-taker must do it the way it is suggested if he is to realize the benefits.

(e) Extra reading of little story-books and other materials by a student while taking the Course may increase the amount of benefit from the Course by providing further insightful and right kind of practice of the skills and by consolidating the gain.
B. Recommendations in General: A few recommendations could be made regarding class-room practices and examinations.

(a) Training in efficient silent reading which should be an integral part of programmes of education is almost non-existent in our class-rooms (and the learning is only chance-learning as pointed out earlier) as the scope left for improvement even in the basic reading skills, leave aside some of the advanced skills necessary for high school students, suggests. At least a modest beginning should be made in this area. Some training in the skill of silent reading appropriate for the grade-level should be imparted in the class-rooms.

(b) For the idea of teaching the silent reading skill to percolate to the class-rooms, it should be abundantly stressed in the programmes of teacher education - both pre-service and in-service.

(c) In the examination-ridden system of education that prevails in the country, whether one likes it or not, only those skills, abilities etc. get attention, which have a place in the examination. Therefore in addition to the productive skill of writing, or knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, the receptive skill of reading comprehension should also be tested at all levels so that the students get an impetus to learn the skill, and the teachers to teach it.
(d) At the class-room level it may not be possible to impart training in different components of reading. Yet skills of reading in meaning-bearing units, inferring the meaning of words from the context, finding out the main idea of a paragraph etc. can be taught occasionally with the help of the usual teaching-learning materials.

(e) Out of a multitude of extra reading materials now available in simple English such as story-books with stories both ancient and modern, books on science, biographies and so on, those appropriate for the students in view of their age-level and linguistic equipment can profitably be made use of. As has already been discussed the need is to break the psychological barrier which keeps the students away from the treasure-house of joy and knowledge that exists in the world today.

(f) Reference materials such as illustrated dictionaries, bilingual and simple monolingual dictionaries, children's encyclopaedias (which are not always for small children) and such other materials which go a long way in arousing and satisfying curiosity of learners and also enable them to become self-reliant in acquiring new knowledge should form a necessary part of the class library or at least the school library, and more importantly, be easily available to the students. A teacher would do well not only to
encourage the use of these materials but even induce the students surreptitiously for its use when such a desire is lacking.

**Suggestions for Further Research:**

It would be a truism to say that a single research can cover only a small ground and even if the work has appeared of great magnitude to the researcher, before the vast area that still remains untouched by research, it would be just a small patch. On the other hand what requires attention is seen more clearly only while carrying out a research.

A few areas of researches identified during the course of the present study and thought to be of considerable value are listed below. They are all with reference to teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

(a) The Course developed through the present research was intended for average students. A course for post-S.S.C. students with a higher achievement level in English could be developed after identifying the needs of such students.

(b) For advanced students, such as college-entrants or undergraduates, programmes based on the SQR (Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review) approach directly related to their studies might be prepared and tried out.
(c) A comparative study of the effectiveness of the holistic approach and the skills approach for the development of the reading ability could be made.

(d) An investigation could be made into the effectiveness of different methods of teaching reading at the initial stage with a view to determining the best among them from the viewpoint of developing reading efficiency at a later stage.

(e) Based on effective approaches of teaching beginning reading, modules can be prepared for teachers providing them with the materials and guidelines for the use of the materials in the first year of learning English. These should be prepared scientifically and tried out empirically.

(f) A diagnostic test for disadvantaged readers at different grade-levels could be constructed for identifying their deficiencies.

(g) Hypothesizing that it would be easier for the students to learn the skill of efficient reading in the first language, a study could be made of the impact of training in speed reading in the mother tongue on reading in English.
(h) Conversely, a study could be made of the impact of training in speed reading in English on reading in the mother tongue.

(i) Reading efficiency courses for undergraduates of different disciplines could be prepared and tried out. These courses would be based on the registers and vocabularies of respective disciplines but their starting point would be the limited linguistic equipment of the students.

(j) In view of the role now assigned to English - the role of a library language, implying the development of reading, reference and such other skills in the learners - the possibilities of reading-oriented programmes of English language teaching both at the higher secondary and college level should be explored.

(k) Research to explore the possibilities of teaching in the class-room or through auto-instructional courses sentence construction and other grammar points for comprehension purposes alone could be undertaken. If such an idea materializes, more ground can be covered in the same amount of time than when things are aimed to be taught at production level.

(l) Certain psychological researches related to reading
could also be conducted. These would include subjects like motivation for and actual learning of the silent reading skill, span of attention of different age-groups and ability groups in silent reading, areas of interest of lower and higher ability groups in English etc.