CHAPTER IV

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before embarking upon the task of developing a reading proficiency course it was necessary to have a very clear idea of what efficient reading is, what its constituents are, what the processes are involved in the act of reading and what factors play part in its development. It was also necessary to consider what approach to adopt for the preparation of the material. The researcher gave thought to each one of these problems while being enlightened at the same time by the stored knowledge of experts and specialists. However, she had constantly to bear in mind while turning to the views of experts the fact that what she was concerned with was reading in a foreign language and not reading in the mother tongue. This sometimes entailed adaptation of established theories and practices.

WHAT IS READING? PRODUCT vs. PROCESS

In the vast literature on READING it is only natural that there should be some divergence of views, apparent at least, on what reading is. To the present researcher in her first in-depth study of the literature the range of opinion of the experts in the field seemed so wide and varied that the efforts at reconciliation seemed almost futile. However, much of the confusion died away and clear
lines of thinking emerged when she began to differentiate between the outcomes or end-products of reading and the reading process itself as described by experts. That such confusion does prevail is also a view held by Pearson and Johnson (1977, p. 4). Ruth Strang (1967, p. 11) is also of the opinion that the two, viz. the product of reading and the process of reading should be considered separately. Charles Fries (1965, p. 118) is more emphatic on this point when he warns us against mixing up the 'use of reading' and what 'constitutes the reading process'. On the basis of all this the researcher thought it more appropriate to consider separately the product which would give the goal of the programme and the process which would suggest the nature of the material to be prepared.

Comprehension: the Product of Reading:

Defined in terms of product unique to reading, comprehension, getting meaning from the printed page is the heart of the reading activity. For whatever purpose one reads - for information, for appreciation or just for recreation - understanding the meaning of what is read is the most fundamental thing. Without understanding the meaning there can be no information, no appreciation, and no recreation - except a special kind of recreation generating from the misunderstanding of the text read!
That comprehension is the most essential outcome of reading is inherent in many definitions and views of reading. Hodgson's definition (1968, p. 32), for example, which has the overtone of the process of reading, states this fundamental thing because according to it "reading is the process by which the reader receives through the medium of the word the message which the writer intends to convey". Thus when the reader engages in the act of reading, the end-product aimed at is getting the message of the author.

In many discussions of what reading is, it is stated to be comprising either two or three broad aspects. The first is word recognition, and second, getting meaning. Of these two getting meaning is the outcome, word recognition being a necessary process of that outcome. Where a third aspect is mentioned, it is thoughtful reaction to and the use of ideas, which, strictly speaking, would not fall within the purview of the reading act. W.F. MacKey (1965, p. 278), for example, mentions two aspects - one referring to the process, and the other product - when he says, "Reading involves skill in (1) the visual recognition of words, and (2) the comprehension of their content." Recognition, he further states, is a mechanical skill, and only a means to the goal of comprehension.

In some definitions reading is viewed as an active
process. For example, according to Marion Jenkinson (1973, p. 45) reading is "Bringing meaning to the printed page". According to DeBoer and Dallmann (1963, p. 20) it is "a searching for meaning." Even in these definitions the outcome is thought to be comprehension because by remaining active what the reader tries to obtain is meaning.

The fact that comprehension as the product of reading is not a debatable question finds expression in Ruddell quoted by Quandt (1977, p. 107) according to whom "No one denies that one ultimate aim of reading instruction is to produce readers who comprehend what they read."

Levels of Comprehension:

Comprehension, the outcome of the reading act, may take place at different levels. An eight-year old boy may understand only the direct meaning of what is stated, while a mature reader may not only see the direct and implied meanings but also evaluate the statement in the light of his knowledge and experience. There is no uniformity of opinion about the levels of comprehension: Barrett, as cited by Clymer (1968, pp. 19-23), in his taxonomy lists five levels, while Nicholas Ferguson (1973, pp. 29-34) proposes a distinction of four levels. A more common view (e.g. of Ruth Strang, 1967, pp. 11-12, Marion Jenkinson, 1973, pp. 45-47) is that there are three levels of comprehension.
First is the literal level comprehension which is basic to other higher levels. Here the reader derives the literal meaning of what the author has stated. This may necessitate understanding the semantic meaning of words, recognition and understanding of groups of words that are meaningful as units, understanding meaning that generates from the syntactic relations of words in sentences, meaning of paragraphs and of longer discourses. Apart from these language units there is another dimension to comprehension which may be called mental processes. Even at the level of literal comprehension the reader undergoes certain mental processes. In the case of stories he understands the theme, visualizes the characters and follows the sequence of events. In other expository material he follows the line of argument, recognises the main idea explicitly stated and understands the details. All this enables him to grasp the complete meaning of what is read.

The second level of comprehension is the interpretive level. A mature reader, in addition to understanding the direct meaning, also recognises the implied and inferential meanings. This level of comprehension necessitates further mental activities. The reader must understand the nuances of meanings between words and recognise and interpret figurative language. He must recognise the author's purpose
and interpret his thoughts. At this level of comprehension the reader should also be able to identify the tone of the author, see his motives and make predictions.

The third level is the level of critical reading. This is the highest level of comprehension and requires a high degree of maturity and ability to think critically. Reading at this level the person evaluates the passage for its ideas, purpose and presentation. He assesses the relevance of what has been said. He separates his own ideas from those of the author, and distinguishes between fact and opinion. In all this he maintains an objective attitude. He also detects conflicting statements and makes critical judgements.

The Level Pertinent to the Present Research:

It will be seen that comprehension at higher levels is "a form of thinking triggered by printed symbols" (Marion Jenkinson, 1973, p. 48). It requires not only cognitive maturity on the part of the reader but also knowledge of the language beyond the elementary level, and greater facility in literal comprehension. If his linguistic competence and contact with the language are limited, and when literal comprehension itself is a problem, to aim to teach critical or evaluative reading would be absurd. Not that reading comprehension at higher levels should not be taught to secondary school
pupils but a foreign language in which the level of attainment is so low, could not be the right medium for it. It could be better taught through the mother tongue. The researcher therefore decided that the course be so designed that the emphasis would be on the development of literal comprehension. However, interpretation of ideas or inferring meaning is sometimes part of basic understanding as stated in Harris and Sipay's definition of reading as "the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal symbols" (1977, p. 5), and to that extent it was planned to be included in the course.

THE PROCESS OF READING

The product of the reading activity, if it is not just deciphering, is comprehension. But how does comprehension take place when one reads? What are the mental processes involved in it? What mental operations enable one to transform the marks on paper into meaning? In short what is the nature of the reading process? The answer is not so simple, not only because reading is a complex activity involving many factors but also because of the fact that the mental operations being covert the process of reading has only to be inferred on the basis of manifested behaviours of skilled readers (Charles Peters, 1977, p. 239). It is only
natural therefore that despite general agreement about the outcome of the reading act "the means for moving efficiently toward that end are not yet very well understood" (Otto, 1972, p. 43). Thus there are different views about the nature of the reading process. Some of them are discussed below followed by a statement of the view adopted in the present research.

Reading as Decoding:

That reading is a process of decoding is a view held by structural linguists according to whom language is primarily speech and only secondarily writing. In the process of language learning, the linguist would say, one first learns the aural-oral aspect, that is, he learns to respond to and produce language signals in their auditory shapes. When it comes to reading, the language code is the same but there is difference in modality: the message is encoded in the graphic shape, and if one is to receive that message, he should first convert the graphic shapes into auditory shapes, that is, decode the visual symbols to sound, which would enable him to obtain meaning. Carl Lefevre (1967, p. 201) states the linguistic view thus: "--- we cannot get meaning directly from print. We go first from print to sound, and then from sound to meaning." Charles Fries (1965, p. 119) states the same thing when he says, "--- one can 'read' in so far as he 'can respond' to the language signals --- as completely
and as efficiently as he has learned to respond to the same language signals formerly represented by contrastive sound-patterns.

This linguistic view of the reading process springing from the contention of primacy of speech is difficult to accept for various reasons. In the first place if reading is not a direct thought-getting process, and if all reading is what Frank Smith (1971, p. 142) calls 'mediated' reading, how can one account for the tremendous speeds of reading achieved by some people? Secondly, the view of reading as a passive activity runs counter to the psychologically sound observations of most authorities on reading who consider reading to be an active process. Thirdly, expecting a reader to re-code the message into auditory shapes, this view of reading negates the distinction between a person's active and passive knowledge of words and sentence-patterns: the fact that there are in one's repertory of language material things which he understands when he meets them in print but never uses in speech. Its pedagogic implication would be that even for training in reading at any level a person should be taught the skills of listening and speaking and these in turn would enable him to read at a pertinent level. This is neither economical nor necessary because as discussed earlier in Chapter II after a certain amount of contact with
the spoken form of the language initially, reading can go ahead of the speaking skill.

For the above reasons, the view of reading as decoding was not accepted for the purpose of the present research.

Reading as a 'Psychological Guessing Game':

That the process of reading is something like a guessing game is a view held by psycholinguists. For a psycholinguist reading is only marginally a physiological process. To a great extent it is a process both psychological and linguistic, in which the reader makes an active use of three sets of information: information of meanings and concepts, information about language, and information about the physical aspects of reading. These three, according to this view of the reading process, enable the reader, to predict, to anticipate, what he has yet not read, on the basis of what he has already read. This he verifies by selecting cues from the visual information, that is, the text, as he goes on, making further guesses and verifying them. Because he has certain hypotheses about the incoming information, the reader needs minimal visual information to recognise a word. Rapid reading is thus possible. It is because of this view of the reading process that reading is making guesses and verifying them - that Kenneth Goodman (1967, p. 126) described reading as 'a psychological guessing game'.
Frank Smith, borrowing the term from theories of communication and information, calls the same entity 'reduction of uncertainty' (1971, p. 12):

On the face of it the psycholinguistic view gives a satisfactory account of the reading process. It looks upon the reader as an active contributor to the process. It also provides a logical explanation of fast reading by saying that an efficient reader needs very little visual information for testing his hypothesis. As regards the anticipation of what follows, it is a common experience of all good readers that many a time there is even at the conscious level a correct guessing of what follows. But the question is whether all reading is this kind of guessing - a chain of hypotheses and their verification. Again, it is difficult even for a good reader to anticipate actual words. What one can predict is meaning: "what ideas or thoughts might logically follow" (S. Jay Samuels, 1977, p. 35) and not the actual words used by the author. From the pedagogic point of view the major criticism of the psycholinguistic view of reading, as Duffy, Sherman and Roehler (1977, p. 16) point out, is "that psycholinguists have not yet operationalized their thinking - that is, they have not yet been able to demonstrate how their ideas should be put to work---" for reading instruction. Encouraging pupils to make predictions
on the basis of the information available - a procedure similar to the *cloze* technique more frequently used for assessing the readability of the text and for testing comprehension - is sometimes suggested (e.g. by Hittleman, 1978, pp. 227-235) to help the cognitive processing of the language and thus reconstruct the author's meaning. But on the other hand a very serious objection is also raised against training the students to use minimal language cues and make guesses because as Spiegel (1974, p. 374) says it may develop an attitude of undermining accuracy and being "content with half-formed understandings and interpretations".

**The Automaticity Model of the Reading Process**

The automaticity model of the reading process developed by LaBerge and Samuels is one of those information processing models which explain reading behaviour in terms of the process that probably takes place between visual input and comprehensional output. Following is a summary of the description of this model given by Jay Samuels (1977, pp.16-32).

The main components of this model are attention, visual memory, phonological memory, semantic memory and episodic memory. By attention is meant internal attention and according to this model it is not always required in the act of reading. When attention is not called for, the process or part of the process is called automatic. Attention
and automaticity are inversely related.

The visual and phonological memory systems are hierarchical and their hierarchy is from features (such as lines and curves) to letters, to spelling patterns and finally to words in the case of visual memory and from features (represented by contrasts such as /d/ and /t/) to phonemes, to syllables and finally to words in the case of phonological memory. In the process of reading sometimes synthesis of smaller units into larger units takes place while sometimes analysis of larger units into smaller units takes place. Two additional features of the visual memory are word-length and word-configuration which enable the reader to bypass analysis and synthesis and view the word as a whole. Again, when the word is common and familiar, not only is it recognised automatically but its meaning is also obtained without activating the phonological memory, that is, without sub-vocalization or inner speech. When the meaning is not directly obtained, the phonological memory is activated, which, in turn, activates the semantic memory to get the meaning.

Semantic memory is that memory which enables the reader to get the meaning of words in the written message. When familiar words like "dog" are decoded, the meaning is obtained directly and automatically without attention.
When a less familiar word such as "patriotic" is decoded, the reader searches through his episodic memory and tries to obtain the meaning through its association with some event or experience stored in the episodic memory. If this happens, the information flow is slow and non-direct and requires attention.

For sentence-level comprehension the degree of automaticity, according to this model, is less because the reader must decide the grammatical units within the sentence, the meaning of each grammatical unit and the meaning of the sentence as a whole. This process is viewed as an active, constructive process, and one that requires attention.

On the whole the LaBerge-Samuels model of the reading process seems to be a satisfactory one. In the first place it does not suggest one single process of reading or a straight flow of information from input to output. It represents the variability of reading behaviour by suggesting different options. Secondly from the viewpoint of reading in a foreign language also the description is satisfactory because it accounts for the less familiarity with the language which requires attention and effort and affects the speed. By describing reading as a two-step process of word-recognition and comprehension and by suggesting an inverse relationship between attention and automaticity it has inherent
suggestions for better reading strategies where recognition is instant and automatic so that attention is free to deal with comprehension improving its quality and making the process more rapid.

However, the model fails to provide any explanation of highly fluent reading where the reader anticipates things yet not read. Also, one does not find a satisfactory explanation of how the meaning of unfamiliar items obviously not stored in one's memory is obtained. The question of highly fluent reading can perhaps be kept out since it is not very pertinent to the present work. As regards the processing of unfamiliar items, a modification may be suggested to include problem solving type of thinking in which a person faced with a problem analyses the situation, generates a hypothesis, tests it, and then either accepts it or rejects it.

The View Adopted in the Present Research:

Having considered different descriptions of the reading process the following view was adopted for the present research:

(i) That there is some amount of inner speech in the act of reading depending on one's familiarity with the language and its graphic representation.

(ii) Efficient reading is one in which the reader gets the meaning straight from the print without resorting to sub-vocalization.
(iii) For a highly efficient reader it is possible to anticipate at the idea level or sometimes at the level of actual words, what might follow. This, however, depends not only on language competence but also on one's cognitive level. Their development being beyond the scope of the present work, prediction strategies were not aimed to be taught.

(iv) Attention and automaticity being inversely related, the decoding part (not decoding to sound) should as far as possible be made automatic so that attention can be directed toward processing the meaning of the message.

(v) Even if some kind of inner speech is involved in reading, especially in reading done by a not very efficient reader, listening and speech along with their phonological aspects are not necessary to be taught in the hope that they might facilitate the process of reading or improve the quality of comprehension.

THE SPEED ASPECT OF READING

Importance of Speed Reading:

Speed is an important aspect of efficient reading. It not only enables one to read more in the same amount of time—a skill tremendously useful in this age of explosion of knowledge—,
or to cope with his professional work, but also, enables one to read more efficiently by reading actively, with better strategies, and with full attention if comprehension is not to be sacrificed.

**Flexibility of Speed:**

Distinction is sometimes made between a person's speeds of reading. The best known is the one made by Fry (1963, pp. 48-53). According to Fry there are three speeds of reading. First is the study speed used for reading difficult material such as text-books and to obtain a high degree of comprehension. The second speed is average reading speed appropriate for the reading of things like newspapers, magazines and novels. This speed is higher than the study speed but when reading is done at this speed, comprehension is less because reading is done only to follow the train of thoughts of the passage or the book. The third speed of reading is the skimming speed. This is the highest speed of reading and is used to survey the material in order to have a rough impression of what it covers, may be, to do closer reading of useful portions later on. It may also be used to search a passage for certain specific facts, or to check certain points of the material previously read.

This kind of flexibility of approach would certainly benefit a reader because conscious of his purpose he would read the material with an appropriate degree of closeness
and save time which he would have otherwise wasted in reading all things in great detail.

Difficulties Involved in Teaching Speed Reading and Flexibility of Speed:

Speed reading and flexibility of speed, like critical or creative reading, can be better taught first in the mother tongue, especially where the mother tongue is also the medium of education. As Michael West (1960, p. 7) says about increasing the rate of reading, "If such practice is needed it should obviously be given in the mother-tongue for preference." However, in India, as in many other developing countries, reading has still not attained its due place in the programmes of education, and speed reading has still remained a far cry.

The reason why the importance of speed in any activity is undermined in our country is not difficult to understand. We have just entered the technological age and technology has yet to make its impact felt on the lifestyle of the millions. 'Time is money' is a slogan that adores the black-boards in the class-rooms but not practised in life - and reading cannot be an exception. Speed is thus something that is still alien to our culture.

Coming to speed reading in English this is greatly limited, besides other things, by nonavailability, at least in the immediate environment, of books which boys and girls
can read with ease. J.C.Ruddl (1969, p. 235), with his first-hand knowledge of the situation holds this factor greatly responsible for the scourge of slow reading so widely prevalent in developing countries. According to him efficient readers could develop their speed because of the availability of large numbers of books which they could read with ease and enjoy. "Limit the availability of books and the incentive to read fast disappears. Where a book is a rare commodity it is natural to take one's time over it, to sound each word with loving care, to read slowly."

According to Paul C. Berg (1971, pp. 5-6), associated with some high level reading courses in India, there is one more factor that limits the speed of reading in a foreign language, particularly when the degree of competence in that language is low. This factor is the tendency to translate the word into its spoken form in the mother tongue in order to obtain its meaning. Though this investigator could not find any research evidence to supports Dr. Berg's contention, its possibility cannot be ruled out looking to the class-room practices of teaching English through translation in varying degrees.

As regards training in flexibility of speed, the difficulties were three-fold. In the opinion of this investigator it was necessary for this purpose that (1) the learners have attained a certain level of academic maturity;
(2) comprehension is not a problem for them; and (3) the training is spread over a long period. Whereas the first two conditions could not be met in the prevalent circumstances, the third could not be fulfilled from the practical point of view. Teaching flexibility of speed was therefore not included in the course.

A Moderate Goal Adopted of Speed Reading:

Taking into consideration the importance of speed reading on one hand and the difficulties involved in teaching speed reading on the other, the researcher had to take a very moderate view so as not to set the targets of speed reading for her subjects very high. Highly significant gain in reading speed would definitely be a welcome thing, she thought, but even moderate gains in speed accompanied by an awareness of the value of speed reading and the skill as an attainable one would be a significant gain in her view. To accomplish this goal it was necessary to keep speed as an all-pervading factor and associate it with all the components as suggested in Helen Robinson's model interpreted by Clymer (1968, p.26).

Eye-movement and Reading:

Ever since Javal, the French psychologist, studied eye-movements in reading about a century ago, there have been many researches on this aspect, obviously with better and more sophisticated instruments. The results of these studies in terms of descriptions of eye-movements of good,
average and poor readers have now become common knowledge and may be briefly stated here in general terms.

First of all, in the reading process the eyes do not move steadily. They move in a kind of jerks along the line, that is, they move, and then stop, again they move, then again they stop and so on. The moving of the eyes is called saccade and the stopping is called fixation. The words are recognised not during the saccade movement, but during the fixation. The number of words recognised in a fixation depends on one's skill as well as the difficulty of the passage. This span of recognition of adults in continuous reading (as different from flashed reading) is, according to Gray (1960, p. 1099), 2.15 to .93 words per fixation. Obviously the span of recognition of good readers is wider than that of the poor readers. The length of fixation, during which the words are processed, also varies, the average length being one-fourth of a second. This again is less in the case of good readers and more in the case of poor readers. There is another feature of eye-movement, which is called regression. In regression the eye goes back to pick up along the same or the previous line, words that might have been missed the first time. Obviously, a poor reader makes more regressions than does a good reader.

In short, from the view-point of eye-movement, an efficient reader has larger eye-span and takes in more words.
in one saccade, his fixations are shorter, and he makes fewer regressions than a less efficient reader.

To develop these abilities, and especially to widen the eye-span sometimes mechanical devices such as pacer and tachistoscope are used. In these the reader is exposed to units of increasing length in sometimes increasingly shorter time durations. Though significant improvements are claimed as a result of use of these devices, their real value is sometimes doubted mainly on the ground that the apparatus may widen one's perception and the person may be able to see larger units in flashed reading but this may not improve his speed of continuous reading where the reader is required to further process the information (Berg, 1971, p. 22).

According to this school of thought the size of eye-span is not a perceptual problem but a conceptual one, that is, the question is not that more words cannot be seen by the reader but that the interrelated meaning of words cannot be grasped quickly. Therefore if people are helped to develop comprehension skills, the eye-span will automatically widen (Patricia Wright, 1972, p. 273).

The View Adopted of Eye-movement and Reading:

To the present researcher it appeared more reasonable to treat the problem as both: perceptual and conceptual. In operational terms she thought it necessary to impress upon the
minds of the learners not to do word by word reading but to read in larger units, and to give them insight and practice in reading meaning-bearing structures so as to enable the learners to see the interrelationship of words, which would improve their comprehension. No use of any devices like pacer was, however, suggested.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING READING**

The factors which influence one's reading performance are many and varied. Though some experts choose to list serially the main among them, there are others who classify them into certain groups. Thus DeBoer and Dallmann (1960, p. 27) suggest four groups: mental, physical, social and emotional, and educational. According to Ruth Strang (1967, p. 16) five kinds of "prerequisites underlie both product and process" of reading and an individual must possess them "if he is to realize his reading potential." These prerequisites are physical, mental, linguistic, those related to personality, and environmental. Harris and Sipay (1977, pp. 238-312), however, analysing the causes of reading disability state three kinds of factors as correlates of reading disabilities. They are cognitive factors, physical and physiological factors, and cultural factors. Pearson and Johnson (1977, pp. 9-10) presenting a psycholinguistic view of reading and basing their classification on Frank Smith (1970) group the factors into two categories: the 'inside'
category, that is, things that a reader possesses, which include linguistic competence, motivation and accumulated reading ability, and the 'outside' category which includes factors such as the characteristics of the text and the qualities of the environment both past and present.

A close study of the factors thus listed by different authors revealed that the grouping was largely a matter of convenience in the first place and secondarily of emphasis. The individual factors listed did not have much significant difference. However, the inventory being a long one, the researcher decided to consider only those factors which had special relevance to and a direct bearing on the course she aimed to design. These, she thought, could, for her purpose, be better grouped as linguistic and non-linguistic.

A. Linguistic Factors:

The linguistic factors which influence reading in a foreign language are mainly two: semantic knowledge or knowledge of vocabulary, and syntactic knowledge or knowledge of sentence-patterns. A knowledge of the writing system would also facilitate the process of reading. Phonological knowledge, "seems not to play so major a role in comprehension as do the syntactic and semantic systems" (Pearson and Johnson, 1977, p. 11) was therefore not considered.

(1) Semantic Knowledge: Semantic knowledge is the knowledge of word-meanings. To say that knowledge of
words is important for any meaningful reading would be stating the obvious. Message is encoded in words and in order to understand the message one should understand what the words stand for. If there are too many words which are outside the vocabulary of a reader, reading becomes strenuous and meaningless; it "bears no resemblance to reading and is not conducive to the establishment of good reading habits." (Bright and McGregor, 1970, p. 19).

Conversely, if the words are known, reading is pleasant, smooth and enjoyable. Novels, short stories and other kinds of books simplified and rendered to a limited word-level are all but a recognition of this important linguistic factor.

A word regarding the level of knowledge of words might be in order: the knowledge of words called for in the act of reading is not active knowledge; one can read and understand even with a passive knowledge of words. However, an active knowledge of words would highly facilitate the reading process.

(ii) **Synthactic Knowledge**: Knowledge of syntax, not necessarily at the productive level, is another important factor influencing reading. Meaning comes, especially in a marginally inflected language like English, not only from words but also from the arrangement of words, known as syntax. But this syntactical form, if it is not one of the
kernel sentences, has a surface structure different from the deep structure — arrived at by application of certain operations or transformations to the base. Thus two sentences may have undergone different transformations and have different surface structures, though their deep meaning may be the same. e.g. the hungry cat ate the rat and the rat was eaten by the cat that was hungry. Conversely, two sentences with similar surface structures may have different deep structures. e.g. I like growing cabbages may mean (i) I like to grow cabbages and (ii) I like cabbages which are growing. Understanding the deep structure that specifies the basic syntactic relations and is close to the basic underlying meaning of the sentence is of crucial importance. As Charles Peters (1976, pp. 240-41) quoting Simons says, "in order to understand a sentence such as 'What was taken?' the reader must be able to retrieve the following information:

1. that something was taken;
2. that something was taken by someone (unspecified);
3. that the person producing the sentence seeks information, i.e. is asking a question;
4. that the sentence refers to a past action;
5. that the person asking the question is more interested in what was taken than in who took it.
Discussing the average East African students' knowledge of English when they enter secondary schools, Bright and McGregor (1970, p. 55) say that these students may not be clear that *If I had* -- does not refer to the past time or that there is a difference between *He went to the market and bought some meat* and *He went to the market to buy some meat*; and that a teacher would do well to bear this in mind while deciding the level of supplementary readers for them.

All this suggests the importance of syntactic knowledge on the part of the reader.

(iii) Knowledge of the Writing System: Written symbols or graphemes represent language; they are not just marks on paper; their direction in the case of English as in many other languages is from left to right; again in the case of English there is no one-to-one relationship between grapheme and phoneme; punctuation marks used in written language also carry meaning in them. Knowledge of all this, sometimes called the mechanics of reading, on the part of the reader helps him in acquiring reading ability. If this knowledge is lacking, reading proficiency cannot be attained.

B. Non-linguistic Factors:

Non-linguistic factors influencing reading in general are many; e.g. visual perception, level of intelligence, or even health. However, they do not have a very special
significance for reading in a foreign language. Things which are relatively more important for success in reading a foreign language are motivation and experience background.

(1) **Motivation**: Motivation is that non-linguistic factor which activates a person and directs his efforts towards the desired goal. It also enables a person to persevere in his efforts. Interpreting Holmens and Singer's substrata studies Ruth Strang (1967, p. 22) opines that motivation together with one's value-system and self-concept perhaps "accounts for the 24 per cent of the variance not accounted for by all the forty to fifty factors measured" in the studies. Whereas motivation is necessary for success in any learning including reading in the mother tongue, it has special relevance for reading in a foreign language because attaining a certain level of reading proficiency in a foreign language requires greater effort. According to Bernard Lott (1978, p. 87) "the degree and nature of the learner's motivation are vital factors in any component for an ELT programme, and should powerfully influence the teaching strategies involved."

There is no definite answer to the question, what is it that motivates a person? Its sources are many; some of them temporary and superficial, others more lasting and deep-rooted. As the less pervasive sources may be mentioned
praise by others (e.g. teachers, peers, parents), success and knowledge of success, and increased competence. Those with more pervasive and lasting effects are satisfaction of certain needs (e.g. the possibility of getting a job or a rise in the job), one's self-concept, and curiosity and interest (of which very weak readers of lessons in the textbook reading efficiently sports magazines is a glaring example). In the words of Ruth Strang (1967, p. 22) "the desire to read is the resultant of present needs, past experience and future hopes".

(ii) Experiential Background: Reading being not only a linguistic process but also a cognitive process, what the reader brings to the printed page assumes great importance. For a reader with a rich experiential background it is easier to grasp the meaning of the material read than a reader with a poor background. Sheila Hollander as quoted by B. Archanareeswaram (1976, pp. 140-141) says about the role of this factor as well as some of the factors mentioned earlier that the reader "brings to the act of communication with an author his past experience with the reading process, with language, and with life situation which serve to predispose him toward certain responses."

The experiential background may be the result of home environment, which, in turn, may be the result of the family's
socio-economic status (Pearson and Johnson, 1977, p. 18), or it may be the result of prior school environment, or both. In the case of readers who have completed a certain number of years of schooling, the influence of school environment in providing indirect experience, if not direct ones, in providing them with the knowledge of the world, and in giving them a conceptual base for understanding things, cannot be ignored. However, all this would be reflected in the student's attainment, especially in his attainment in the language in question.

APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING PROFICIENCY

In the reading courses examined by this investigator at the initial stage of her research two different approaches were found: in one comprehension was aimed to be developed through passages followed by comprehension questions; in the other language units were of different lengths varying from words to passages. In the latter type the mental operations called for in different sets of exercises were also different. The investigator tried to understand the underlying idea behind these two approaches and the theoretical support that they might have. Two opposite views were found in this regard: the holistic approach and the skills approach.
The Holistic Approach:

In the holistic approach to reading there is no subdivision of the skill of comprehension. Comprehension is taught as a unitary process and through longer discourses. This approach is mainly propounded by psycholinguists according to whom to subdivide comprehension into different skill categories is to fractionate the process. They also deny that there are identifiable components of the skill of reading or that these components can be arranged into sequential steps which would ultimately promote reading efficiency. Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith are the main spokesmen of the holistic approach. Goodman (1975, p. 630), for example, says, "Teachers should not worry about skill development as long as the process is whole and meaning is kept in focus."

The Skills Approach:

The basic rationale of the skills approach is that reading proficiency is the sum, or rather, the fusion of its component parts, and for increasing his proficiency in reading one should focus on each component part in sequence. Thus the approach is based on a sound principle, viz. the principle of specific practice. The specificity principle should hold good for any complex skill because its basic assumption is that focussing on one sub-skill at a time is better than attempting to learn the whole jumble together.
which would entail long periods of effort induce the learner to give up, in frustration. Emphasizing the need for the skills approach, Durrell (1949, pp. 198-199) says, "High mental ability alone does not insure successful reading, nor does highly motivated practice guarantee high achievement in all skills. The teacher's task is one of provision for systematic practice in particular skills." DeBoer and Dallmann (1963, p.37) are also of the same view because according to them, "Most children can be materially aided by specific instruction in reading skills". A word may be added about both the sources quoted here that in what they call reading skills they are referring to the constituent sub-skills or enabling skills, and not skills which are the end-products of reading.

Objections are sometimes raised (e.g. by Johnson and Pearson, 1975, pp. 757-764) about the skills approach on the following grounds: (i) whether the components of the reading skill are identifiable; (ii) if they are identifiable, whether there is a definite hierarchy of order of these components; (iii) whether integration of the component skills would take place; and (iv) whether the learner's interest would be maintained in practising the sub-skills separately.

As regards the components of the reading skill the researches done by F.R. Davis and others (Berg, 1971, pp.38-40)
suggest there are identifiable components. However, the question of the number of these components and the hierarchy in which they should be arranged is yet not resolved. But it does not mean that for this reason the approach should be discarded. As Carroll (1978, p. 103) suggests it is possible to construct reasonable orders in which the various components may be taught.

The third objection, namely, the possibility of practising each sub-skill and leaving it at that without applying it to the act of reading longer discourses is a question of planning the programme. If the programme is planned carefully, there should be enough scope for the integration of the sub-skills learnt. The same could be said with regard to interest. The practice material could be so prepared that the learner's interest is maintained. DeBoer and Dallmann (1963, p. 97) rightly warn materials designers and teachers when they say, "In no case must there be neglect of either the factor of interest or the factor of skill in reading."

The View Adopted:

After a careful study of the two approaches the researcher found it difficult to accept the view that reading proficiency could be better developed through the holistic approach. This was especially in view of the fact that the programme being contemplated was not for exceptionally
bright boys and girls for whom the skills approach would not be beneficial (DeBoer and Dallmann, 1963, p. 37). About the average students who were going to be her clientele she was convinced that they would benefit more from guidance and practice in specific skills. For them she found Kenneth Goodman's proposition cited earlier that "Teachers should not worry about skill development as long as the process is whole and meaning is kept in focus" too outrageous to be accepted.

Moreover, it was necessary to take into account the fact that her clientele were mature enough to understand the components of the reading skill and could subsequently apply their understanding to the task of reading when the situation so demanded. She therefore decided to follow the skills approach for the development of the course.