Having decided to adopt the skills approach it was necessary to determine the specific skills and sub-skills in which to give insight and practice to the learners so as to develop their reading proficiency. This chapter discusses how these skills and sub-skills were selected, what was their relevance to the course envisaged, and how the sequence was decided.

THE METHOD OF SELECTION

Selection of skills and sub-skills could be made through one or more of the following:

(i) use of a diagnostic test;
(ii) a questionnaire given to a sample of students asking them about their own deficiencies;
(iii) a study of literature on the subject; and
(iv) the researcher's own insight into the problem gained from experience.

As regards diagnosis of students' weaknesses in reading, there was no test suitable for the student population in question, and an unsuitable one would not have thrown any light on the problem. Similarly, a questionnaire given to the students
would also not have served the purpose simply because they would not be capable, especially before taking any such course, of analysing their ability and spotting out their strengths and weaknesses.

The only alternatives left for this investigator were to get enlightened by researches and other literature on the components of reading, and to make a selection from among them using her own knowledge of the situation, common sense and insight. This approach was adopted for determining the component skills. It was supplemented by informal discussions with colleagues and experienced teachers in the field.

**Breaking down Comprehension into its Component Parts.**

A study of the attempts made to separate the components of reading revealed different approaches, the two main among them being factor analysis and taxonomical listing. Below is a brief description of the two.

**Factor Analysis:** In factor analysis certain factors which together might constitute reading efficiency are hypothesized and on the basis of their statistical value their relative weightage is determined. Several factorial studies of reading comprehension have been made, the best known among them being the two studies made by F.B. Davis. In his later study of 1968 Davis found eight distinguishable factors out of which five
accounted for 87 per cent of comprehension, thus being more significant than others. These five are knowledge of word meanings, ability to draw inferences, ability to follow the structure of a passage, ability to recognise the writer's purpose, attitude and tone, and ability to find answers explicit in the passage. Again, out of these five knowledge of word meanings, according to Davis' study, accounts for the greater part of the variance which is as high as 32 per cent (Berg, 1971 pp. 38-39). Later re-interpretations of Davis' data (e.g. by R.L. Thorndike, by Spearitt, and by Davis himself) are all in agreement as regards the knowledge of words; but about other skills their degree of agreement is less. In fact Thorndike and Spearitt are of the view that other factors are not so much distinguishable and that factors other than word knowledge largely measure reading as reasoning (Harris and Sipay, 1975 pp. 472-473).

**Taxonomical Listing**: When the skills considered to be making up reading proficiency are put down in logical, orderly categories, the listing is called taxonomical listing. One such taxonomy is Barrett's 'Taxonomy of Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Reading Comprehension' 'the most widely used in college reading courses and workshops' (Pearson and Johnson, 1978). In this taxonomy reading comprehension is divided into five major categories: literal comprehension, reorganization,
inferential comprehension, evaluation and appreciation. Within each of these categories Barrett lists specific tasks a reader performs while engaged in a particular type of reading. The five categories, as also the tasks within a category, are listed in a hierarchical order. However, a task appearing earlier in the list may sometimes be more demanding than the one appearing later, and to that extent the listing may not be called hierarchical.

Certain other lists of 'Levels of Comprehension' given in Chapter 4 are also examples of taxonomical listing.

Unsuitability of Factor Analysis and Taxonomical Listing:

As can be seen from the above brief description, it was difficult to accept the list of factors: based on either factoral analysis or taxonomical approach for the development of the Course. The results of factorial studies are still inconclusive (Berg, 1971, p. 41) and there is no agreement among the studies done so far. Taxonomical listing, on the other hand, makes a fine distinction between different aspects of comprehension, making it difficult to construct teaching and practice material on each of them. It can be of great value to a class-room teacher who can prepare a check-list based on such an analysis and ensure that no aspect appropriate for the class is left out.
Some reading specialists drawing in varying degrees upon researches in the field and using their own insight and judgment list the skills and subskills involved in reading. Thus, for example, Chinna Chacko lists nine 'factors involved in comprehension' which include knowledge of word meaning, ability to select the appropriate meaning or a phrase in the light of its contextual clues, ability to select the main thought, and ability to answer questions on points that are specifically mentioned in the passage (1966, pp. 141-142). Paul Berg mentions seven factors as important with a note that 'there are a variety of other factors that aid comprehension' (1971, p. 41). DeBoer and Dallmann have a slightly different approach because they list the skills involved in reading comprehension on two parameters: skills according to the reader's purpose, and skills related to words in relationship, i.e. linguistic skills. As the skills related to words in relationship are mentioned phrase meaning (which includes phrasal reading), sentence meaning, paragraph meaning, and comprehension of longer selections. Word recognition, which includes word meaning as well as word attack skills, however, has been considered separately as a skill related to comprehension. Under the skills grouped according to the reader's purpose are listed finding out the main idea, selecting significant details, reading to answer questions, reading to arrive at generalizations, reading to predict outcomes,
reading to evaluate critically etc. (DeBoer and Dallmann, 1963, pp. 124-126).

The System Adopted:

For the present research the linguistic component being an important factor to be taken into account, DeBoer and Dallmann's two-pronged analysis seemed to be a useful one. Harris and Sipay (1975, p. 472) also, quote Simons as suggesting that a more promising approach to comprehension might lie in the application of linguistic principles.

However, before adopting and adapting DeBoer and Dallmann's two-dimensional classification of skills involved in reading comprehension, it was necessary to examine it critically so as to have more clarity in designing the Course. When this was done, applying Charles Peters' useful division of enabling skills and skills which are outcomes (Peters, 1977 pp. 241-244), it was found that whereas most of the skills listed by DeBoer and Dallmann as 'words in relationship' were enabling skills or subskills, those listed as 'skills according to the reader's purpose' were not. For example, reading to find the main idea is a skill by itself and not an enabling skill as sentence-meaning is. Considering this aspect of DeBoer and Dallmann's listing on one hand and the practical limitation of the situation in terms of students' linguistic equipment on the other, the investigator thought it worthwhile to be selective and
include only a few skills pertinent to the level of the learners, but all the relevant enabling skills or sub-skills which were mainly in terms of language units.

In the picture that emerged as a result of these deliberations following were to be the enabling skills in the programme: word recognition, accurate meaning of known words, finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words, reading in meaningful phrases, and sentence meaning; whereas the comprehension skills to be developed through the programme were reading for the main idea, and speed reading of longer passages. The skill of reading to answer specific questions sometimes considered to be a comprehension skill (e.g. by DeBoer and Dallmann) was to be treated as an enabling skill for the reasons discussed at the relevant place in the following section.

The list thus developed by the present researcher to a great extent coincides with K.R. Narayanaswamy's programme of improving the college students' word-recognition skills, their reading vocabulary, and their knowledge of meaning-bearing structures - all enabling skills, so as to improve their comprehension skills of locating the main idea, locating important details, answering specific questions, and finding out relevant implications and inferences, as also skimming, and reading at average speed (Narayanaswamy, 1973, p. 57).
The Skills Not Included:

A pertinent question with regard to some of the skills might be why they were not planned to be included in the course—especially those listed by DeBoer and Dallmann whose two-dimensional approach was mainly to be followed. To answer the question briefly, it might be said that some of the comprehension skills listed separately by DeBoer and Dallmann as also the others were not altogether to be excluded; only that they were not to be given as much weightage and practiced separately. E.g., the skill of making generalizations—this was to be implicitly there in the main idea passages, because in order to get the main idea one has to generalize sometimes, and occasionally in longer passages. So also the skill of following the sequence. This skill is also basic to understanding anecdotes, stories, and fiction, and had to be developed, again, not separately, making the learners conscious of it, but covertly or implicitly. This approach was necessitated for two reasons: the practical consideration of the length of the course on the one hand, and the feasibility of surreptitiously including the skills as part of general comprehension on the other.

However, some of the high-level comprehension skills such as reading to predict outcomes or reading to evaluate critically were to be excluded from the programme considering primarily the learners' utter lack of habit of reading in English and
secondarily the self-instructional nature of the Course in which the responses of the learners should, as far as possible, be simple, so that checking would not be much of a problem. The skills mentioned in this category, after all, involved both, creativity and therefore responses which may not be uniform and straightforward. They could be taught, it was felt, once the learners have acquired relatively simpler skills of reading comprehension, and in classroom situations rather than through distance teaching.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE SKILLS AND SUB-SKILLS SELECTED FOR THE PROGRAMME

The relevance of the skills and sub-skills planned to be included in the Course is discussed below.

(1) Word Recognition:

Pointing out the importance of word recognition in reading W.F. Mackey (1965, p. 278) says, "The skill of reading is based ultimately on the recognition of written symbols". The statement hardly needs any comment because it is obvious that accurate word recognition is highly essential for efficient reading. If the printed word is not recognised properly, either the message is misconstrued, or not being able to derive any meaning from the text, the reader realizes
that he has misread something somewhere, and to rectify it he backtracks the whole chunk which results in slow and inefficient reading.

Mistakes in word recognition do not always lead to misunderstanding, however, Kenneth and Yetta Goodman, after studying through the technique of oral reading mistakes, or what they call 'miscues', in reading conclude that roughly speaking there are two types of miscues: one, which do not interfere with getting meaning (e.g. 'told' read for 'said'), and second, which interfere with getting meaning (1978, p.129).

As every language teacher knows the first kind of mistakes mentioned by the Goodmans do take place in reading where the word substituted has semantic resemblance to the original word but this happens when there is a certain amount of linguistic competence and familiarity with the language. In that case 'the information contributed by the brain' might be 'very much greater than the information it receives from the eye (Frank Smith, 1971, p.82), and the 'inward out flow' and the 'outward in flow' of information almost simultaneous. But when the contact of the learners with the language in question was extremely limited, to conceive of reading as a two-stage process in which the first stage is identification and second comprehension was thought more reasonable. Nasr in his adaptation of Miller on reading by
non-native speakers states the same thing when he says "the act of recognition and the act of knowing the meaning are both necessary to the understanding of the written word" (1972, p.85).

That mistakes of word identification, not only those sensible kinds of mistakes, but even outrageous ones, especially those arising out of visual similarity, occur in the reading of students is noted by Narayanswamy (1973, p.57) who mentions the students confusing the words like 'wondered', 'early', 'strange', 'tried' and 'sound' with 'wandered', 'yearly', 'strong', 'tied' and 'round'. It was noted by this researcher also that readers do commit mistakes where the words substituted had no semantic resemblance to the word in the text. All this led her to decide word recognition as a sub-skill to be included in the course and it being basic to other skills, to give it the first place. However, she was aware of the view stated by Heaton (1975, p. 25), Roger (1976, p.67) and others that recognition of words is easier in context than in isolation and mere perceptual exercise in recognising the key-word in a group of words is of little help for improving one's reading proficiency. The researcher, however, thought it worthwhile to give the idea a try and see how far the exercise was effective. For this she decided to adopt Webster's criterion of time (1972, p. 64) and see if the
learners' speed of word recognition increased progressively when they proceeded from exercise to exercise.

(2) **Word Meaning:**

Mere recognition of a word is not enough when comprehension is the goal. The meaning of the word should also come to the mind once the word is recognised. In some literature on reading meaning is treated as part of recognition (e.g. Ruth Strang, 1967, p. 226). This view of word recognition is appropriate so far as reading in the mother tongue in the early stages is concerned because in that case the words the learner meets in print in carefully designed basal and other books are already there in his listening and speaking vocabulary, and all that the child has to learn is the graphic representation of the word. The graphic form recognised, the child immediately recalls the meaning of the word. This is not the case, however, when the language in question is a foreign language. Here even before one has reached advanced stages of reading there are occasions — and the less the contact with the language, the more such occasions — even in the case of 'known' words, that neither the visual memory nor the auditory memory triggers meaning, and one has to activate his semantic memory in order to obtain the meaning. The investigator thought it more proper therefore to distinguish the conceptual skill of getting meaning from the perceptual skill of recognising a word.
Should word meaning be included as a sub-skill in the Course when no new language material was intended to be taught through it? - was a question duly considered while determining the components of the Course. In this connection the importance of word knowledge as mentioned in Chapter 4 and so unequivocally indicated in Davis' and other factorial studies was, in the first place, taken into account. Secondly, in line with Jenkinson's suggestions for increasing the rate of reading through unsophisticated techniques such as familiarity with words (1973, p. 56), it was also felt that instant identification of meaning of known words was necessary when speed reading was a goal. Knowledge of words was thus considered important from two points of view: accuracy and speed.

On the other hand, the fact is that the vocabulary of high school students and high school leavers is lamentably poor, as certain studies (e.g. the one undertaken by the H.M. Patel Institute of English, Vallabhbh Vidyanagar quoted by S.D. Desai (1977, p. xix)) reveal. This suggests a sort of indifference, if not total neglect, on their part, to this important language aspect. It is paradoxical that students and even adults mention difficult words encountered as their greatest handicap in reading English - and this is perhaps a universal phenomenon because in Yorio's (1971, p. 109) study of the Spanish-speaking students of an American university
also the problem of vocabulary ranked the highest - while their attitude to word study is almost casual. It was with this two-fold aim of creating an awareness of the importance of vocabulary and cultivating an attitude of accuracy in word-meaning that word meaning as an enabling skill was included in the Course. This being the purpose and in accordance with the research design no new words were aimed to be taught; it was the words in the syllabus which they were supposed to know that were planned to be included in the exercises.

(3) Meaning of Unfamiliar Words.

"It would be a strange world if nobody attempted to read anything unless he knew all the words". - says Kenneth Goodman (1969, p. 629) in his article 'Do you have to be smart to read? Do you have to read to be smart?' Luckily the world is not strange at least in that respect and people do read things which contain unfamiliar words. That the learner should not encounter a word in print unless he has learnt it in the aural-oral form is a principle held valid only for the early stages of language learning sooner or later a stage comes, as it undoubtedly should, both in the first language and in the second or foreign language, when a person begins to meet in print, lexical items which he or she has not heard before or has not been taught. When this
happens, the reader has three ways to get the meaning:

(1) guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar word from the context; (ii) structural analysis of the word, i.e. finding out the prefix, suffix and the root word; and (iii) use of a dictionary. There need not be an either-or approach to learning or using these skills, however. An efficient reader makes use of any of them as the situation demands and hence their inclusion in the Course. A detailed discussion follows.

(a) Use of Context: For a school-boy an unfamiliar word is something to be 'explained' by the teacher and for an adult it is something to be looked up in a dictionary. That there is an efficient and economical way of getting the meaning from the context in which it is used is hardly, if ever, realized by an average reader in a foreign language and very seldom by students, thanks to the language teaching practices prevailing in schools and colleges. To mention the current scene in the state supplementary readers containing simple but interesting stories, fables, anecdotes and such other materials, which provide for incidental learning of the skill of getting meaning from the context have still remained a distant dream in spite of students' craving for such material as seen by this researcher while working on certain projects. As regards the vocabulary aspect of the syllabus, it does make a distinction between active and
passive vocabularies to be acquired by the students but this distinction is not maintained in the teacher's approach with the result that the students to a great extent remain dependent on the teachers for the meaning of unfamiliar words. Jean Forrester, thoroughly familiar with the kind of situation prevailing in the country therefore rightly advises the college teachers to wean the students from that dependence, "to show them how to guess meanings from the context, and how to check their guesses" (1968, p. 18). The need for teaching this skill has similarly been stressed by Bright and McGregor (1970, p.56) and Rivers Wilga (1968, p. 232) in the context of the second or foreign language; and by Harris and Malmquist quoting H. Alan Robinson (1973, p. 198), Ruth Strang (1967, p. 230) and DeBoer and Dallmann (1963, p. 81) in the context of the first language.

This word-attack skill because of its great value for a reader at any stage was planned to be included in the Course.

(b) Structural Analysis of Words: The meaning of certain words can be understood if the elements of the words which make them are recognised. These elements are prefixes, appearing at the beginning of a word; suffixes, appearing at the end of a word; and roots, making up the main part of
the word. This kind of division of words into their constituent parts is sometimes called structural analysis. However, because the term structural analysis is also used to include analysis of compound words (e.g. something) and polysyllabic words (e.g. chocolate) and because it was expedient to use simple terms as far as possible, the sub-skill was labelled word-formation, i.e. a study of how certain words are formed.

The skill of understanding the meaning of a word by recognising its constituent parts is mentioned as an important skill by many. For example Harris and Sipay, pointing out the relative importance of prefixes, say, "----- a person who knows the meanings of the more common prefixes can frequently make a fairly close guess as to the meaning of a new word, particularly when it is met in a meaningful context" (1977, p. 452). DeBoer and Dallmann are also of the opinion that the learners should be provided specific training in the skill and that "it cannot be left to chance" (1963, p. 92).

An additional advantage of learning word-formation is that once the common affixes are learnt and an insight in them is gained, it has a snow-ball effect and the learner can experience his own vocabulary growing which gives him confidence and further impetus to learn more affixes.
This sub-skill was therefore planned to be included, not only with a view to increasing the learners' reading proficiency as measured at the end of the course, but with a view to creating in them an interest in word-study, and equipping them with a skill that would pay rich dividends even at later stages.

(c) Using a Dictionary: The importance of the use of a dictionary to determine the exact meaning of a word can hardly be over-emphasized. Finding out the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the context is a useful skill in as much as it saves time and doesn't interrupt the flow of thought. But the exact meaning or meanings of the word, as also the one appropriate in the context should be acquired by the reader instead of having a vague idea of the word and its meaning all the time. Sometimes the word may have to be looked up at the first encounter because the clue in the context may not be sufficient or the reading may be for exact information. In that case the reader should be willing and able to make use of a dictionary. Sometimes it is not so. As Marion Jenkinson says, "Frequently, learning how to use a dictionary is left to trial and error, with the result that the reader rarely uses a dictionary--" (1973, p. 44). Harris and Sipay have the same opinion because they say, "Many have never learned how to find what they want quickly and easily and refer to a dictionary only as a last resort."
(1977, p. 448).

Coming to the situation prevailing in our educational institutions, the observation of this investigator is that with a few exceptions the use of reference material including the dictionary is very meagre at all levels. Leave aside students, even teachers hardly use a dictionary, and very few with any high degree of efficiency. To many, a dictionary is something which should be used for checking the spelling when there is some doubt. It is little wonder that no training, no guidance is given to the students in systematic use of a dictionary, not only for spelling, but also for meaning. The high school syllabuses of the state (Government of Gujarat, 1961, p. 15; 1974, p. 5 ) do mention the skill of using a dictionary as an objective to be achieved but because of its impracticability to be included in the examination, and because of the general apathy to things which are not included in the examinations, it is hardly taken with any seriousness. The result is that only those who have a conducive atmosphere at home ever learn to use a dictionary and even their learning is through approximations. In fact as Harris and Sipay say, "A dictionary is a complex work, and in order to get children use it willingly, it is advisable to prepare a planned sequence of lessons to teach elementary dictionary skills" (1977, p. 448).
Convinced of the dictionary as an important tool for making the learners self-dependent in reading, the researcher planned for the inclusion of dictionary skills in the Course envisaged.

(4) Reading in Meaningful Phrases:

When the characteristics of good comprehenders and poor comprehenders are listed, it is generally said that poor comprehenders do word-by-word reading whereas good comprehenders read in thought units or meaningful phrases. (e.g. Harris and Sipay, 1977, p. 461). Carl Lefevre (1964, p. xii) also calls perceiving single words or grouping words in 'structureless pattern-fragments' serious reading disabilities. That reading in thought units or meaningful phrases is the better kind of reading hardly needs to be elaborated because it is evident that meaning is contained not in individual words but in groups of words and it is when the groups are perceived as wholes that the meaning becomes clear.

To mention the students' reading habits on the other hand as revealed by their oral reading - and oral reading has a high diagnostic value so far as phrase reading is concerned (Cushenbery, 1969, p. 47) - sometimes heard, sometimes overheard by this investigator during her visits to
schools as a teacher-educator, they read either in small units of individual words or with faulty phrasing, i.e. they combine in a phrase words which do not go together. It is little wonder that their habit of not reading in meaning-bearing structures persists because the teachers hardly, if ever, are seen to correct them or insist on proper phrasing. The researcher therefore strongly felt that the learners, if they were to increase their reading proficiency, must be given practice in phrase reading as suggested by several authors (e.g. Menzel, 1966, p. 50; Forrester, 1968, p. 42; Rivers, 1968, pp. 224-225; Wright, 1972, pp. 273-274). This kind of reading, she felt, would not only improve their comprehension but also increase their speed of reading by enabling them to see more words in a fixation. There was some research evidence also to support her hypothesis that training in phrase reading improves reading proficiency. For example, Harris and Sipay quote Amble as saying on the basis of the latter's investigation that "phrase reading can be improved with training ----- and that improvement in phrase reading is durable" (1977, p. 463).

(5) Sentence Meaning:

A sentence is not the sum total of the words comprising it and it is possible that a reader who can understand every
word of a given sentence does not understand the meaning of the sentence as a whole. This is because, as stated earlier in Chapter 4 meaning comes not from words but from the arrangement of words. The limited number of structure words also signal meaning which a reader would do well to recognize. On the other hand longer selections are made up of sentences, and though the context within the passage helps getting the meaning of a sentence, very often understanding a sentence by itself is crucial for understanding the passage. As DeBoer and Dallmann say, "Because sentence comprehension is more than word recognition and because an understanding of sentences is essential to the comprehension of longer selections, the reader should become skillful in reading sentences as whole units" (1963, p. 125).

Sometimes it is suggested that the native speakers of a language seldom have any difficulty with the grammatical structures, especially at the recognition level (e.g. Yorio, 1971). This can be a point of dispute because as revealed by certain studies (e.g. Wason's study quoted by Schlesinger, 1968, pp. 45-46) even the native speakers find certain types of sentences difficult to understand and take more time to evaluate them and also make mistakes in responding to them. It is evident that in the case of readers of English as a foreign language sentence level comprehension would pose
a greater problem. The reason is sometimes attributed, and perhaps rightly, to the fact that in structural syllabuses most of the items listed are grammatical systems which can occur in various syntactic patterns and combinations many of which are never taught to learners (D.A. Wilkins, 1976, pp. 9-10) though they are used in a variety of patterns by speakers as well as writers. To quote an example from Wilkins the learners would practise the comparative through syntactic structures like 'John is older than Peter'. But it would never be brought to their notice that the comparative also occurs in sentences like 'Older than the discovery of electricity was the invention of the steam engine' (pp. 9-10). Likewise there would be many such grammatical items which would not be sufficiently manipulated by the class-room teacher. Not only this but as is common in teaching practices in schools such sentences when they occur in the Reader would not be discussed by teachers through probing questions which might perhaps enable the students to see the relationship of their constituent parts and have a thorough grasp of the meaning. The result is that when the learners encounter such sentences in reading situations they find them difficult even at the recognition level though the grammatical points involved in the sentences are known to them. This necessitated that students be given practice in comprehension.
of sentences which contain grammatical points of the syllabus but have different syntactic patterns.

(6) Reading for the Main Idea:

Reading to get the main idea of a paragraph or a story or a longer selection is a comprehension skill rather than a language skill or an enabling skill leading to comprehension. Whether such a skill should be included in the course when other comprehension skills such as reading to predict outcomes or reading to evaluate critically were not planned to be included was a question duly considered by the investigator. The decision in favour of its inclusion was taken mainly on these grounds:

In the first place the reason why a reader reads is getting information, or may be pleasure, when he reads, say, things like fiction. Now there is always a limit to how much one can hold in his memory system. A person would be trying to attain something which is not possible, if he tried to store all the information in his mind, and it would result into a chaos. If one really wants to benefit from reading, he should try to read and remember the general idea. Reading for the main idea would thus enable him to see order in and make sense of the mass of information that the material he reads contains. It would enable him, in the words of Duffy, Sherman and Roehler (1977, p. 67) "to see
both the forest and the trees and know which is which."

Secondly, practice in reading for the main idea of a selection also provides a point, a focus to the reader who would otherwise drift as he reads.

Thirdly, the ability to get the main idea is basic to certain other comprehension and study skills such as to summarize what is read.

Finally, it was also felt that this kind of exercise would train the learners in 'reading between the lines' because the main idea is not always explicitly stated and one has to find out the implied meaning and infer conclusions.

Convinced of all this value and utility of the skill, the investigator found DeBoer and Dallmann's proposition, that it should not be left to incidental learning but should be given specific practice in, agreeable, and planned to include it in the Course envisaged, though other comprehension skills such as skimming were not to be included.

(7) Reading to Answer Specific Questions (Guided Reading):

In view of the mature and purposive kind of reading where the reader himself raises questions as he reads, this is sometimes considered to be a reading skill. However, in
the context of this course this was to be an enabling skill with a double purpose: it was to serve as an aid to comprehension; to help the immature pupils 'to read more perceptively' (Bright and McGregor, 1970, p. 86); and secondly, it was to create in the learners what Michael West calls a 'searching attitude' (1960, p. 23).

That questions are an aid to comprehension is an established fact supported by research (Paul C. Berg, 1971, p. 41). Quandt (1977, p. 114) also discusses questions under the sub-title 'Techniques for Guiding Comprehension'. Jenkinson describes questions as "one of the most effective ways of stimulating children to think as they read about what they read" (Jenkinson, 1973, p. 48). Michael West (1960, p. 23), however, distinguishes between two types of questions: pre-questions and after-questions. It is obvious that the questions expected to help comprehension would be pre-questions, which, in the first place would give the learners some idea of what the passage contains, and second, the learners would keep them in mind while reading, and with their help try to understand the matter read. These questions would also create in the learners what West calls, 'a forward urge' (1960, p. 23). Such pre-questions, even though they may serve as crutches, were necessary for the learners for whom the course was to be
designed, because of the fact that they were never trained to read independently in English.

What is more desirable regarding questions is that they should arise in the mind of the reader and he should have a thoughtful, inquiring attitude as expected in the SQ3R technique, for example where S stands for SURVEY, Q for QUESTION and the three R's for READ, RECITE and REVIEW. But again this could be taught through discussion in face-to-face teaching, not very effectively through a self-instructional course. So all that could be suggested to the learners, the researcher concluded, was to continue to ask questions whenever they engaged themselves in the task of reading and read in order to answer those questions.

(8) **Speed Reading With Comprehension:**

This was to be the end-product of the course where the learners were to read with understanding longer passages without the help of guiding questions. Here they would use in varying degrees the sub-skills learnt in the rest of the course they would recognise the precise meaning of known words; they would also understand the meaning of unfamiliar words by using word attack skills; they would understand the meaning of sentences; and some would even raise questions as they read. All this would enable them to
comprehend the passages in their different aspects: the significant details of the passages, the cause-effect relationship in them; the sequence of events in the case of anecdotes; the main traits of characters in the case of stories and so on. The speed aspect also which was to remain in the background until now—with students only noting the time required for doing a particular exercise—was to come to the forefront with learners measuring their speed of reading in terms of number of words read per minute.

Inclusion of this practice material in the course may seem redundant in view of the fact that no new skill was to be taught in it. However, as can very well be understood, teaching the sub-skills without ever giving practice involving application of the sub-skills would be almost unprofitable. After all the sub-skills were to be taught not just for the sake of sub-skills but to be put to work in the act of reading. Duffy, Sherman and Roehler rightly warn the reading teachers against emphasizing skills and neglecting development of readers; against producing "learners who can perform the skills in isolation but cannot or do not use them in reading" (1977, p.303). To combat this eventuality therefore it was necessary to give "practice that involves timing how long it takes to read selected passages and testing how much of the passage has been
understood" (Patricia Wright, 1972, p. 276). This was to be attempted in the last unit of the Course.

**THE SEQUENCING**

Almost as much important as the selection of the skills and sub-skills was their sequencing because if not practised in proper sequence they would not lead to the achievement of the goal of reading proficiency and thus would not be fruitful.

The sequencing of the skills and sub-skills was not much of a problem. It was obvious that some of the sub-skills or enabling skills should be mastered by the learners before attempting to master any of the comprehension skills. Now there was a unitwise hierarchy so far as the enabling language skills were concerned. For example, there were word recognition and word meaning exercises, phrase reading exercises, sentence meaning exercises and so on. Evidently, this hierarchical arrangement should be maintained in the Course - even if one goes by common sense. However, there was some research evidence also to corroborate this view. For example, Chapman's findings were that training in sentence comprehension also improved paragraph comprehension but training in paragraph comprehension did not improve sentence comprehension (Chapman, cited by Harris and Sipay, 1975, p. 473).
Even in Cromer’s study of the effects of using material grouped in phrases it was found that those who were good in word recognition benefited from the phrasing practice, but those who were poor in word recognition did not benefit. There is thus a hierarchy of language-based skills in which the more complex ones include wholly or partially those which are more basic. The application of this hierarchy gave this sequence of the first four sub-skills: word recognition, word meaning, reading in phrases and sentence meaning.

The language hierarchy criterion could not be the only criterion, however. Equally important was the criterion of interest. If the learners had to practise small language units almost till the end of the course, their interest would diminish and that would have an adverse effect on their over-all achievement. It was necessary therefore to include somewhere in the middle of the course longer stretches like paragraphs which would interest the learners who would begin to feel they were getting the reward of their effort. With this end in view the comprehension skill of finding out the main idea of paragraphs was placed immediately after sentence meaning. This also fitted the over-all pattern because lengthwise next to sentences were paragraphs.

As regards the three sub-skills of dealing with unfamiliar words, namely, use of context, word formation, and dictionary
skills, it was felt that the first one could be placed immediately after the meaning of known words because in both the use of context was there, though in different degrees; whereas word formation and dictionary skills could be placed a little later but before the longer passages. As far as the guided reading of longer passages and unaided speed reading of longer passages were concerned, guided reading had of necessity to precede the independent reading of passages. All this consideration gave the following final picture of the sequence of the skills and sub-skills: (1) word recognition; (2) meaning of known words; (3) meaning of unfamiliar words - use of context; (4) reading in meaningful phrases; (5) sentence meaning; (6) reading for the main idea; (7) word formation; (8) dictionary skills; (9) guided reading (of longer passages); (10) speed reading with comprehension.