CONCLUSION

Our study began with an examination of the English language situation in India. We noted that while the statutory position of English has been strengthening, its learning and quality has been weakening. This is lamentable since the national importance given to English requires that its study be made meaningful as well as accessible to those who desire proficiency in it. Our meagre and scarce resources and resistance to any radical changes necessitate a pragmatic view of the situation wherein changes become possible without involving too much cost or many people.

It is advisable, therefore, that we abandon Western educational principles that treat language as a habit divorced from thought, revert to the grammar method of learning-teaching the language and work in the perspective of our own tradition of language teaching through a grammar and a suitable text.

We recognise the text, then, as the prime instrument of teaching the language, the pivot around which the entire pedagogy is built. Inappropriate texts, hence, can frustrate both the teacher and the learner. Paradoxically, on a review of the last 50 years of the English syllabi of the Central Board of Secondary Education at the Sr. Sec. (+2 stage), we find that with respect to the text, the changes in syllabi have accommodated lowered goals. There has been a qualitative and quantitative reduction in the number of
texts prescribed for study necessarily resulting in a dilution of standards over the last 30-40 years. Besides, the uneven teaching of English in school and English as the only medium of instruction in higher education has the effect of restricting power to the elite class. This again calls for the need to strengthen the teaching of English in order to correct the social limitation inbuilt into the system. A beginning needs to be made at the school stage so that by the school leaving stage the students' English proficiency does not become a limiting factor in the openings for him in higher studies. Hence the decision to study the Core English texts prescribed for Class XII students of the various types of schools in Delhi - Government, Government Model, Government Undertaking, Central and Public (including missionary) schools.

The last fifty years syllabi reveal a movement away from an overwhelming stress or focus on the study of languages in general and of English in particular. The syllabi woefully fail even to express clearly the aims and objectives of studying English. There is a want of understanding, a lack of clarity and no direct statement on the aims and objectives of the sort that the English syllabus for the Certificate of Secondary Examination, 1983, of the Southern Regional Examination, Board, England, displays.

The progressive reduction in the number of texts prescribed in the syllabi reflects the changing perception of the goals of English teaching. The concept of detailed/non-detailed texts,
introduced in 1946 is a pointer towards this as it undervalues some texts suggesting that they need not be read intensively. Since the situation can be corrected only through a realisation of the inadequacies of texts, we focus in the present study on the appropriateness or otherwise of the prescribed texts.

We determine the pedagogic appropriateness of texts from the point of view of language and content. The first, the linguistic aspect, concerns language of the text -- its lexis, its grammar and the clause-composition of its sentences. The second, the socio-cultural aspect, concerns ideas, persons and events described or discussed in the text. These are text-internal features involving two parameters: cultural content and linguistic features. Cultural content helps determine cultural affinity or otherwise of the texts in relation to the cultural content of the learners. Linguistic features help determine the textual (or, formal), syntactic, lexical and conceptual level of difficulty of the texts. Text-units that are not culturally alien and whose linguistic complexity is low are the ones that are likely to be more suitable as reading/learning materials.

For the purposes of our analysis we selected nine samples of approximately 500 words each from three text-books -- three from each taken from three different positions in the text units -- the beginning, the middle and the end. The samples have been chosen thus to represent different permutations of three factors -- the
author, the theme and the mode of writing. The sample text-units are also subjected to a more intensive analysis by dividing each text-unit into propositional content units and then judging each propositional content unit along the same matrix as was employed for the whole text-unit. The two can be purposefully correlated. Such a correlation between propositional content units of the sample and the text-unit as a whole along the four parameters of cultural valuation -- socio-cultural setting, belief system, value system and contextual framework -- enables us to develop a typology of text-suitability. However, we first determine the suitability of the text-units along the cultural dimension. If text-units are not suitable according to this, linguistic complexity will not be crucial. However, it is possible that culturally suitable texts may still be linguistically difficult.

We recognise that cultural content sought to be taught through the text-books should be oriented to cater to the needs of students born and brought up in the Indian cultural milieu. The suitable texts are, one, Indian texts with an Indian framework (IA) two, neutral texts with a neutral framework (NN), three, alien texts with an Indian framework (AI) and four, alien texts with a neutral framework (AN). On the other hand, the unsuitable texts are one, Indian texts with an alien framework (IA), two, neutral texts with an alien framework (NA), and three, alien texts with an alien framework (AA).
Thus, we find that texts on Indian themes even by alien writers could qualify to be culturally appropriate. The reader's culture and socio-economic conditions will be important irrespective of authorship. We note thus, that 'Captain Patch' by T.F. Powys (an American writer), an alien text with a neutral framework is suitable culturally. Students have rated it positively and it has a linguistic complexity score of 148. Students' performance in this text on Cloze is not very poor though in Comprehension they make a lot of errors. The neutral framework because of its alien setting may be the reason for this. It may be noted that a text by an Indian writer on an Indian theme may yet be culturally alien. Here we have an interesting example of Kushwant Singh's 'Mark of Vishnu' which despite its being an Indian text has an alien value system built into it. This text also provides an interesting example in which the Public school students -- who perform generally better -- have performed poorer than the other school groups as they are unable to appreciate the cultural content of the text -- its several allusions to Indian mythology. We have already discussed this at length in Chapter IV and also noted that a more appropriate choice could have been R.K. Narayan's 'The Snake in the Grass'. As noted earlier, elements of culture, indigenous or alien, which are congruent with the patterns or norms known to the student should be preferred in the selection process. Anything unfamiliar, remote or incongruent is to be subordinated since it would distract, baffle or bemuse the young learner instead of aiding
learning. It may even provide a 'cultural shock'. This is not to say that students need not be taught about other cultures at all. There are universal elements of human culture and also there are positive elements in other cultures as well, and the students must be exposed to them. What we are arguing is that these things may be introduced at a suitable age, and that the English teaching texts may not any longer be the appropriate medium for this, that is, texts of Indian languages and subjects like Sociology, etc. may be more appropriate for this.

In the valuation of the linguistic features, sentence length has been used as a rough and ready measure for determining text-suitability. Here our finding is that not only average sentence-length, as pointed out by earlier researches, but sentence-clause ratio can also be an approximate index of linguistic complexity. This is an important finding for it has not been used so far. Also, it is one of our findings that sentence length, sentence-clause ratio and word-syllable ratio must be worked out representatively for the text rather than separately for the samples selected for analysis.

The text-difficulty scores worked out for the textual (or, formal), syntactic, lexical and conceptual difficulty of texts together give us the total linguistic complexity score for each text. The total linguistic complexity scores vary for the different
texts—obviously 'text difficulty' is a relative concept, that is, it varies in degree from text to text. Thus texts are more or less difficult only relatively. However, texts differ from each other internally in the nature of complexity and this difference is very significant. Only arbitrarily, we may postulate a point beyond which the text may be considered 'difficult'. This examination helps us determine how individual text-units contribute to their difficulty.

The cultural appropriateness of texts (Chapter IV) and linguistic complexity (Chapter V) form our Text-Internal Analysis (TIA). We have correlated the findings of Text-Internal Analysis (TIA) with those of Text-External Analysis (TEA) involving considerable field work. TEA concerns learners — their response to and performance in the prescribed texts and is based on both (1) Independent and (2) Dependent variables. Independent variables concern the learners' background: economic class, age, type of school, family background, languages exposed to etc. The dependent variables are: Comprehensibility and Readability of the texts as measured by the learners' performance (Chapter VI). Readability determines the reading difficulties of text-material while Comprehensibility determines the learners' ability to decode and interpret the material. Information on the Independent Variables has been collected with the help of five Questionnaires. For Dependent Variables we have used two kinds of texts - Cloze and Comprehension.
For TEA we took nine groups comprising 175 students from seven
different schools. The students filled three Questionnaires on
their personal data, their reading and general interests and text-
ratings. Their teachers filled two Questionnaires on students' 
language habits and school factors contributing to student learning.
The students also answered five Cloze tests and five Comprehension 
tests of approximately 150-words each, based on the nine sample text 
units chosen for TIA. The Cloze tests were marked for deleted 
grammatical categories and the Comprehension tests for the items -
detail, vocabulary, inference and global understanding. The performance 
sheds light on Indian students' learning problems with reference 
to English.

We find that in traditional comprehension tests, where thought 
content is tested, students tend to make a larger number of errors. 
In Cloze tests, on the other hand, where language is isolated from 
ideas, the students make fewer errors. Students do better in Cloze --
Comprehensibility, -- where they can use synonyms, than in Cloze --
Readability. We find that Cloze reconstruction is only a test of 
linguistic familiarity and not such a valid test of understanding. 
Thus, a traditional Comprehension test may be a better test for 
understanding. Also, the two tests -- Cloze and Comprehension --
provide different indices of text suitability. We find that Public 
school students perform well in language even if they do not do 
equally well in Comprehension. This may be because of the emphasis 
on language in these schools.
We also find that text-units rated positively, as for instance, 'Mark of Vishnu' by Kushwant Singh and 'Captain Patch' by T.F. Powys have a lower linguistic complexity (TIA) score than the other three text-units analysed for TEA (see p. 364). The students performance in Cloze (Comprehensibility) and Comprehension tests provides interesting corroboration and emphasises the validity of both TEA and TIA as being independently objective.

In TEA we have also used sociolinguistic variables that could possibly influence performance. From amongst the three sociolinguistic factors -- age, sex and linguistic background -- only age correlates positively with performance. Maturer students as in the case of Government Boys School, Andrews Ganj, who are on the average two years older, do better than their counterparts in other corresponding Government schools.

Students' learning is also aided by pedagogic practices such as medium of instruction, use of audio-visual aids, number of hours allocated for English and provision of remedial classes. These are related to school types. Schools with better resources show better performance. In the case of a foreign language, it seems the right pedagogic practices are crucial in the teaching - learning process even when the texts are culturally and ideationally familiar.

As there is a meaningful correlation between TIA and TEA, it is indicated that our judgements about the texts ought to be
based on them. From our analysis based on these we find that the ratio of suitable to unsuitable texts is 1:1, that is, of the forty text-units from the three prescribed texts only twenty (50%) are suitable by our first parameter of cultural suitability. This definitely points to the need for application of the necessary parameters to determine text-suitability in order to render the study and learning of English more meaningful.