CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The ability to read is not only the basis of education but also an essential prerequisite of a civilized society. Reading provides experience through which an individual can expand the horizons of his knowledge, enhance his interests and gain deeper understanding of himself and of others. Through reading, it is possible to build sound values and to arrive at means and methods for creative living in this age of machines. While providing the means to satisfy man's emotional and spiritual needs reading provides enough recreation also to fill one's leisure time.

It is, therefore, imperative that adequate importance is given to reading in school curriculum, for mastery of reading is essential to the learning of nearly every other school subject. Continued guidance is essential for the development of reading skills in the primary and upper grades and even in high school and college.

Teaching reading in mother tongue is practically easier than in a foreign language like English. The important role English is playing in the educational structure of India has been well acknowledged. Besides being the lingua-franca, English is our library language and the medium of instruction in some types of schools and in almost all branches of higher education. Therefore, developing reading skills in English and preparing a reading-oriented English syllabus require great attention.
The activity of reading has been variously defined by experts. Some consider reading as the sounding out of printed words or decoding graphic symbols. But to some others, it is far more than decoding graphic symbols; it is the assimilation of the author's thoughts and ideas. While some have described reading ability as a unitary trait, some others hold the opinion that it is a composite of various skills.

In India research work in the field of reading ability has already been undertaken. A number of test instruments have already been prepared and administered to identify the dimensions of reading ability of Indian students in their mother-tongue as well as in English. Still, there may be some facets of their reading ability yet to be uncovered.

8.1 Problem

A thorough perusal of related studies has revealed the fact that some studies have pointed out that reading ability is a unitary trait. On the contrary, some have tried to establish that reading ability has several factors. So also many research studies have established that reading ability is essentially a mental ability and differentiation of abilities takes place as children grow older. The investigator could not come across any study on the problem whether the reading ability in English is a unitary trait and whether differentiation of abilities takes place with increase in age and educational experience with regard to the ninth and eleventh grade Public school students. Hence the investigator proposed to undertake the present study entitled:
8.1.1 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

1. Reading ability is not a unitary trait, it has different facets.
2. Differentiation of abilities takes place as children grow older.

8.1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To secure or construct reading ability tests to form a Reading Ability Test Battery.
2. To test the reading ability of children by administering this battery of Reading Ability Test.
3. To identify different factors of reading ability through multivariate analysis of data secured from the tests.
4. To test the differentiation hypothesis of reading ability by administering the tests upon the students of the ninth and eleventh grades of public schools of Delhi.

8.2 Construction of Reading Ability Tests

Since the present study was aimed at measuring the reading ability of students the tools required were reading ability tests consisting of vocabulary and comprehension tests. In an effort to cover all the areas of word
knowledge and comprehension, there was need to use a battery of tests. The investigator constructed ten tests on her own and took five tests from Grover (1990). The Reading Ability Test Battery was divided into two parts - Part A consisting of 8 Vocabulary tests and Part B consisting of 7 Comprehension tests - in the pattern shown below:

Part A  Vocabulary Tests

1. Vocabulary Test I. Recognition of Word Meaning.
2. Vocabulary Test II Synonyms.
3. Vocabulary Test III  Antonyms.
4. Vocabulary Test IV Identification of a Word to Replace a Phrase or Idea.
6. Vocabulary Test VI Recognition of the Keyword for a Proverb.
7. Vocabulary Test VII Identification of a word to Replace a phrasal verb.

Part B  - Comprehension Tests

1. Comprehension Test I Recognition of the paraphrase of a Keyword.
2. Comprehension Test II Recognition of Idiomatic expressions.
5. Comprehension Test V Reading for Inference.
6. Comprehension Test VI Reading for General Significance.
7. Comprehension Test VII Reading to Note Details.

Of these Vocabulary Test II (Synonyms), Vocabulary Test III (Antonyms), Comprehension Test V (Reading for Inference), Comprehension Test VI (Reading for General Significance) and Comprehension Test VII (Reading to Note Details) were taken from Grover (1990).

The test items were scrutinized by a few experts. Items and distractors which were found to be defective were either modified or redrafted. Then, the pre try-out was carried out on a small sample with a view of getting a rough estimate about the working of each item and also to find out the inadequacies in the general directions. On identifying deficiencies or irregularities, necessary alterations were made in the test format.

8.3 The Try-out

These tests were next subjected to a try-out so as to select items of appropriate difficulty and discrimination values. The try-out was administered to a sample of 185 girl students of grade X of the Public schools of Delhi. Item analysis using the dichotomous criterion with the top and bottom 27 percent cases was proposed to be done.

The decision for selecting the 10th grade students for try-out was taken firstly, because the administration of the reading ability test battery being a long process of nearly three hours, the school authorities were unwilling to spare
the students of both the ninth and eleventh grades for both
the try-out and final administration of the tests. They
were willing to spare the tenth grade students for the
try-out and the ninth and eleventh grade students for the
final administration.

Secondly, the try-out was proposed to be conducted in
August, when the students of the tenth grade would be
neither far advanced nor far behind with their reading
ability. The item analysis criteria applied for item
selection would account for the difficulty level and
discrimination level of each item. Therefore, items which
were suitable for the tenth class students could be
presumed to be suitable for both the ninth and eleventh
class students as well.

Thirdly, if the try-out was to be given to the ninth
and eleventh class students separately, there would be the
practical difficulty of co-ordinating the performance of
the students of these two classes with regard to the
difficulty and discrimination levels of items and reaching
a conclusion on the selection of items suitable for both
the classes.

Before item analysis was conducted, the formula for
correction was applied to each item in order to minimize
the chances of blind guessing. Harper's item analysis
chart was used to reach indices of difficulty and
discrimination for each test. Item analysis provided
information about implausible distractors which were either
dropped or improved. Further, the try-out provided data
for determining the time limits which were set so as to
provide time for 90 percent of the testees to complete the
tests.
8.4 Final Administration of the Tests

The final test was administered to 400 girl students - 200 girls of the ninth grade and - 200 girls of the eleventh grade - drawn from three Public schools of Delhi. Their answer scripts were scored by the researcher herself according to the pre-determined scoring key. The raw scores were transformed into T-scores with a view to normalise the scores which would preclude the possibility of error entering into further computations. The raw scores and T-scores were then entered in tables specially prepared for that purpose.

8.5 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In order to test the hypotheses formulated for the present study, the investigator adopted the technique of factor-analysis. The assumption underlying this method is that a battery of intercorrelated variables has common factors running through them and those factors could be identified through factor analysis.

To discern the intercorrelations among the fifteen variables, the T. Scores of Group I (9th Grade students) and group II (11th Grade students) were fed into the computer. All correlations were positive and significant and factor analysis of the intercorrelation matrix could provide meaningful factors to explain the variance of these tests.

In the present study factor extraction (with a criterion that factor extraction would be stopped as and when eigen value drops below 1.00, revealed the presence of only one factor in the case of Group I and two factors in the case of Group II.
In the case of Group I, all the comprehension tests and vocabulary tests emerged on the single factor with 'excellent' to 'good' factor loadings. Therefore, the variance in the fifteen tests could be accounted for by one factor and this factor was named as the Reading Ability Factor. Thus, in the case of Group I, reading ability did not emerge as a differentiated ability; rather it emerged as a single unitary trait. Hence the first hypothesis of the present study, i.e., reading ability is not unitary, but it has several facets, remained unsustained, as far as Group I comprising the ninth grade girl students of the Public schools, is concerned.

In the case of Group II, reading ability emerged as a differentiated ability. Here two factors of reading ability were identified—Factor A and Factor B. On the basis of the defining marker loadings of Vocabulary Test VII (Recognition of the Meaning of a Phrasal Verb), Vocabulary Test V (Recognition of Words in Context) and Marker loadings of Vocabulary Test III (Antonyms), Vocabulary Test IV (Recognition of a word to replace a phrase or idea), Vocabulary Test VIII (Recognition of Diction and usages) Vocabulary Test II (Synonyms) and Vocabulary Test VI (Recognition of a keyword for a Proverb), as well as those of Comprehension Test II (Recognition of Idiomatic expressions) Comprehension Test I (Recognition of paraphrase of a word), Comprehension Test III (Recognition of Sentence Meaning) and Comprehension Test IV (Recognition of the Meaning of Proverbs), Factor A was named as Word Knowledge or Vocabulary Factor.

In view of the excellent defining marker loadings which Comprehension Test VII (Reading to Note Details), Comprehension Test V (Reading for Inference) and
Comprehension Test VI (Reading for General Significance) had on factor B, and the good loadings Comprehension Test I (Recognition of the Paraphrase of a keyword) and Comprehension Test IV (Recognition of Meaning of Proverbs) and fair loadings of Meaning of Proverbs) and fair loadings of Comprehension Test III (Recognition of Sentence Meaning) had on this factor, Factor B was identified as Verbal Comprehension Factor.

Thus in the case of Group II, as two factors of reading ability could be identified, viz. Word Knowledge or Vocabulary Factor and Verbal Comprehension Factor, the investigator's first hypothesis that reading ability is not a unitary trait, but it has several facets could be sustained.

In the present study, Group I consisted of ninth grade students who belonged to the age of group of 14-15 and Group II consisted of eleventh grade students of the age group 16-17. Since reading ability emerged as a differentiated ability consisting of two factors in the case of Group II, the investigator's second hypothesis that differentiation of abilities takes place as children grow older has been substantiated.

In the case of Group I i.e., 9th grade students, it was noticed that all the comprehension tests emerged with very high loadings whereas the vocabulary tests emerged with not so high loadings. This is to say that a higher proportion of variance in comprehension is accounted for by the Reading Ability factor as compared to that of the vocabulary tests. So the mental operations involved here revealed that even if children did not achieve a higher
level of word knowledge, they could comprehend the given passages.

8.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

Since educational research has not advanced very much in the field of reading ability, there is a wide scope for further studies and investigations. Some broad suggestions regarding the lines on which further studies may be undertaken are given below:

1. Owing to the paucity of time at the disposal of the researcher, the present study was conducted on a limited number of girl students of a limited number of public Schools of Delhi. More studies in this field covering large number of schools and pupils including boys also may be conducted.

2. The present study was limited to the Public Schools only. Other categories of schools viz. Government, Central and Private schools may be undertaken.

3. The same study may be extended to different states considering the different attitude of states towards English, and the reading ability of students of different states could be compared with each other.

4. The present study confined itself to students of classes IX and XI. Similar studies may be conducted with other grades also and the results studied in the light of background factors.

5. The present study compared the reading performance in English only. The same may be done in regional languages for the students of Public, Central and Government schools.

6. In the course of the present investigation the investigator came across three tests - Comprehension
Test I (Recognition of the Paraphrase of a Word), Comprehension Test III (Recognition of the Meaning of a Sentence) and Comprehension Test IV (Recognition of the Meaning of Proverbs) as lying on the border areas of both the vocabulary factor and Comprehension factor. Further studies on this gray area may be undertaken.

7. As the population for the present study comprised only of girl students the relationship between gender difference and differentiation of reading abilities of public school students could not be probed into. Further research might throw light upon this aspect also.

8. An investigation into the factors and conditions that influence the reading achievement at different grade levels can be carried out.

9. Cross sectional studies from classes sixth to eleventh may be taken up in order to study the differentiation of reading ability intensively.