Abstract

Effective Communication requires proficiency in language (LSRW) and reference skills. The ability to find out the required information from a suitable reference source is reference skills. University of Pune has included these skills in Compulsory English at UG level. Present paper highlights the efforts made to find out the relevance of teaching these skills at U.G. level. Survey of teachers, students and librarian pointed that the 60% students can use the dictionary, browse the new book & use the IT, while 40% students found poor. Further, it was observed that the unit included on 'Reference skills' in the TYBA Compulsory English is sufficient & appropriate at UG level; these skills are neither too difficult nor so easy. However, it is the need of hour to teach these skills at U.G. level by providing a separate course book to all faculties. Conventional universities should take initiatives to introduce a course on ‘Reference Skills’ to motivate the students towards self-study.

KEYWORDS – Reference skill, English, Dictionary, IT, syllabi, University

1. Introduction

University of Pune is the hub of higher education in India. It imparts education at U.G., P.G., Doctoral and Post Doctoral levels. It has made English a compulsory Subject for Arts faculty at U.G. level. The proficiency in language skills namely - listening, speaking, reading & writing enriches students’ competence in English. Students also need to learn ‘reference skills’ as they need to refer to different sources to complete their tutorials and home assignments. Finding the required information from a suitable reference book is an important skill and hence these skills are introduced to T.Y.B.A. Compulsory English students from the academic year 2000-2001, in the course book entitled “Enriching your Competence in English”. S.N. Arts, D.J.M. Commerce & B.N. Sarada Science College, Sangamner, Dist-Ahmednagar, Maharashtra (popular name Sangamner College), is affiliated to University of Pune. The unit ‘reference skills' included in Compulsory English course book mentioned above is taught in College to T.Y.B.A. classes. This study is carried out due to the difficulties encountered during the teaching & learning process of reference skills to students studying in third year B.A. classes.

2. Review of literature

Various studies have been conducted on the teaching of reference skills at national & international levels. The studies conducted abroad & in India are alike in many aspects. According to Jordan (1997), in one of the surveys at Manchester University in 1998 analyzed students’ experience in using libraries in their own countries. It reported that 40% of those students used a closed-access library, and 49% had received no formal instruction in using library. This means that a sizeable proportion
of students are likely to have some difficulty in using open access libraries, in which they have to locate books & journals themselves. Jordan also cites a survey carried out by Primrose (1993). Primrose highlights that the major problem of the students is to cope with the wide range of information available in various forms—film and microfiche, magnetic tapes, compact discs, CD-ROM & electronic data. To gain access to this information, students must know, or learn, how to use catalogues, bibliographies, abstracting and indexing journals and on-line networks. The study conducted by Chu & Law (2007) shows that even the research students (preferably Ph.D.) are initially unfamiliar with many source types. Tickoo (2003) conducted two studies in Asian language classrooms. His first study was a questionnaire-based study of 100 graduate teachers of English in India & Southeast Asia. The second study dealt with the use of English dictionaries by 60 graduates majoring in English at the national university of Singapore. Both the studies showed that even though most students were quite proficient in their use of English; only a very small percentage knew how to use the dictionary fully or well. Tickoo also mentions studies conducted by Bejoint and Randolph Quirk. Bejoint (1981) had found that many students are not even aware of the riches that their monolingual dictionaries contain. Sir Randolph Quirk (1974) had noticed the failure of English speaking university students in England to make good use of their dictionaries. Tirth (1977) states that knowledge of how the books are classified; knowledge of basic reference sources and other various services of the library can lead to quicker access to information.

The book *Academic skills* (1995) published by CIEFL (now TEAFLU) include units on using a dictionary & reference skills. Nirmala Bellare’s book *Reading & Study strategies, Vol. 1*, (1997) published by OUP includes units on using a library & reading for study. The book co-authored by Baban Chavan with Rajendra Kumbhar ‘Library & Reference skills’ (2000) (Marathi) under the ‘self learning skills’ published by YCMOU, Nashik is on using a library & reference sources. Vandana Singh’s book *The Written Word* (2006) published by OUP and recommended for B.A. III Punjabi University, Patiyala includes unit on Using dictionary & Thesaurus. The Review of literature & studies conducted so far seems to focus on the need to train the learners in the effective use of reference skills. The Pune University has made efforts towards this end. However, it has been tried to know whether these skills are sufficient & appropriate at UG level or it is easy to students and needs to widen the scope of reference sources.


In conventional universities of Maharashtra, except Pune University there is no place for reference skills at U.G. level. Swami Ramanand Tirth Marathwada University, Nanded, has objectives to develop reference skills for self study at first year B.A. /B. Com. / B.Sc. / B.S.W. Level. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik has introduced ‘reference & library skills’ at preparatory and U.G., P.G. and research levels. So there is large scope for other universities to introduce this course in UG syllabi.

In following Para the course book 'Enriching your Competence in English' prescribed by Pune University to T.Y.B.A. compulsory English class is reviewed to know the contents of the reference skill syllabi.

This book has been written by A.R.Thorat, B.S.Walke & S.B.Gokhale and published by Orient-Longman, Hyderabad in the year 2000. This prescribed book has been reviewed, as it is part of the present study. In the ‘Introduction’ to the book the
authors stated that after studying this course book, students will be able to enhance their linguistic skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also their reference skills.


The aim of 'reference skills, unit 3' of this book is to make the students acquainted with reference sources & other skills to find out the required information. This unit is in three parts.

2.1.1 Looking up the dictionary: Is in two parts.
   i. **Type of Dictionaries:** Type of dictionaries given are 1) Bilingual Dictionary (English into Marathi or Marathi into English) 2) Monolingual Dictionary (English to English or Marathi-Marathi) 3) Picture Dictionary 4) Subject dictionary 5) Encyclopedic dictionary 6) English-Marathi / Hindi dictionary – (Bilingual Dictionary)

   ii. **Structure of dictionary:** In this part information about looking up a dictionary, its arrangement and type of information it contains, preliminary pages, appendices, etc. is given. At the end list of some important dictionaries is given. Number of exercises are assigned to students to find out the various meanings of given words & answers to the questions i.e. finding out the references.

2.1.2 **Browsing a new book:** Usefulness of new book can be determined through browsing the book. The students are introduced to the parts of the books viz. are 1) Cover page 2) Title page 3) Back of the cover/ title page 4) Preface, Fore word & Introduction 5) Table of contents 6) Body of the book 7) Index 8) Appendix 9) Last page

3.13 **Information Technology:** Students are advised to learn this technology. Learning and using a computer for getting appropriate & nascent information for study is an important skill. Analysis of this unit prevails that more importance is given to first two parts, while less importance is given to third part. Sufficient numbers of exercises are given to students to learn the reference skills. This unit is taught to students of T.Y.B.A.Class. The questionnaires for this study were framed using this syllabi (i.e. the unit reference skills).

3. **Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of this study is to know the teaching of 'reference skills' in Compulsory English at UG level in Pune University with special reference to Sangamner College, Sangamner, Dist-Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. It also aims to find out whether the reference tools i.e. Dictionaries, Browsing the book & Information Technology included in the course are relevant, this study also aims to find out the various problems in teaching and learning reference skills, whether the stage (UG) at which the skills are introduced are appropriate, why the skills are introduced to Arts faculty & not to Commerce & Science and to give feedback to the teachers & the syllabus planners to suggest the solution to the problem.

4. **Scope of the Study:**

The scope of this study was limited to the unit ‘Reference skills’ included in the T.Y.B.A. Compulsory English course book ‘Enriching your Competence in English’ taught in college during the academic year 2003-04.
5. Methodology
The questionnaire-based (on unit 3 i.e. reference skills) study was conducted with the help of survey related to teachers’ experience about teaching, students’ experience about learning and librarian’s experience about providing references to teach & learn reference skills. Efforts were made to collect the data to find out the relevance/appropriateness of the unit reference skills & problems in teaching & learning. For this purpose, the enquiries were made through the three different types of questionnaires to the three types of population i.e. 253 students, two teachers and one librarian, those are geographically close & are the part of Sangamner College, Sangamner, during the year 2003-2004. The questionnaire prepared for students was distributed to all 253 students studying in divisions A&B of TYBA class and the questionnaire was distributed to both the teachers and the librarian.

6. Discussion
Data Collected through questionnaire was analyzed, In first part of questionnaire, the general information about the students were collected to know the number, class, division, year of study, special subject, faculty and the college in which they are studying. Analysis shows that the students studying in third year Arts class of Sangamner College in the year 2003-2004 having Compulsory English subject were 253. 69 students responded this study have a specialization in English -19, Hindi- 4, Marathi -6, Politics- 6, Geography -20, and Economics-14. The response received from Geography students was more & less from Hindi students. In part II of the students' questionnaire enquiries were made on the unit 'reference skills' to know the amount of learning by students i.e. different skills (like linguistic skills, reference skills) reference sources (dictionaries & their types i.e. lingual, bilingual, monolingual, pictorial, encyclopedic dictionaries, thesaurus), browsing the book, Information Technology, necessity of reference skills. It was observed:
1. Students know the dictionary, its content, arrangement and types. They also know (skills) how to find out the required information of words from appropriate dictionary i.e. which dictionary is to follow to find out antonyms, synonyms, pronunciation, picture & names of objects and the meaning of the word. On an average 60 % students were good in dictionary skills whereas 40 % students were poor.
2. To select the proper source or book to find the required information one must know how to browse the book i.e. the parts of the book like preliminary pages, contents, reprint, cover page, revised edition, preface, index, last page and the nature of information these parts contain. Browsing a book is a skill and 60% students on an average were good whereas 40% students were poor and needs to be improved.
3. To use the computers and 'IT' in getting the required information, enquiry was made. It was found that students were aware of handling computer and understood the concept of information technology
4. In knowing the necessity of 'Reference skills', it was found that students don’t know the difference between language skills & reference skills. However they know what the dictionary is, how to refer it for finding the meanings of the words. They also say that, these skills are appropriate at UG level than Junior & PG level and 50% students say that all reference sources must be included in syllabi. 99% students have their own dictionaries.
In teacher's questionnaire the opinion regarding the level reference skills to be taught, inclusion of practical sessions, other reference sources, library expertise in designing the syllabi, student's performance, and overall opinion about the reference skills were sought. After analysis it was found that according to all teachers these skills are
sufficient & the level i.e. UG is appropriate. However, teachers & researcher i.e. librarian are also in favor of inclusion of practical sessions, library work and all other reference sources i.e. encyclopedia, biographies, etc. in syllabi i.e. syllabi must be redesigned & a separate course book for reference skills must be kept at U.G level for all faculty. Further they mention that library science expertise should be used to design the syllabi. According to 50% teachers, these skills must be also taught at Junior, & P.G. level.

7. Results
1. Teaching Reference skills at UG level are appropriate. However these skills are neither too difficult nor so easy.
2. Reference skills among students needs to be improved by giving more attention because 40% students are poor in these skills. Students needed to be more attentive to classes & must show interest in learning.
3. Syllabi of these skills needed to be improved and library expertise must be used to design the syllabi and more sources must be included in syllabi i.e. encyclopedias, year book, electronic sources etc.
4. There should have a separate course book for reference skills at U.G. level for all faculties.
5. These skills must be taught to all faculties at junior, U.G. & P.G. level.

8. Conclusion
The researcher would like to suggest that there is a need to have a research in designing the syllabus of 'Reference Skills' at UG level in conventional universities. He also suggest to widen the scope of this study to know the teaching, learning problems of teachers & students at the university, state & national levels. To conduct the research on this line this study will be helpful for researchers in future. Neena Singh (2006) has also suggested in her paper that the traditional universities should take initiatives to introduce user education course following the example of agricultural universities in the country. These skills are neither too difficult nor so easy because 60% students know these skills and teachers are of the opinion that there is need to improve this percentage by applying more teaching aids, so that excellency can be achieved. Finally, addition in teaching aids, increase in the attendance of students and their interest in learning & also the improvement in teaching material could help to make the teaching of reference skills at UG level effective.

References


