

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KANPUR
Department of Mechanical Engineering
PROPOSAL FOR A NEW COURSE

Course No.	: ME 601A
Course Name	: Language and Style of Scholarly Communication
Units	: 2L-0T-2P-1A (9 credits) [Preferably a single 2-hour slot for Practical.]
Course Type	: Elective (PG), can be offered to UG also as OE.
Semester	: I/II
Department	: Department of Mechanical Engineering
Instructor	: Bhaskar Dasgupta
Estimated Student Enrolment	: 100
Other Faculty Members Interested	: A. Guha, N. Sinha
Departments which may be Interested	: All

Objectives of the Course

The purpose of this course is to examine and improve (if necessary) the general English proficiency of students, then acquaint them with standard strategies of the art of persuasion and convincing. Finally, the correct and effective styles, norms and ethics of scholarly and professional communication and modern computer tools will be covered to orient them towards better written and oral communication.

It is found that a large number of institute students possess an extremely low level of training in English comprehension and expression. Without a directed and thorough training, they find it very difficult to imbibe effective style and norms of professional communication. Many otherwise potentially good careers are severely disturbed due to this single damaging predicament. The proposed course is intended to fulfil this long-felt need in the training of students, particularly **PG students**.

Course Contents

A quick revision of basic English grammar, vocabulary and usage from an operational and functional standpoint, avoiding references to formal grammar to the extent possible. Strategies and tactics of comprehension, expression, formal composition, elaboration, summarising and oral presentation.

Elements of persuasive style and diction in professional communications. Style, norms and ethical issues of drafting technical articles, reports, dissertations etc and techniques of effective presentations. Practice of computer tools in publication and presentations.

References

- “English Grammar, Composition and Usage” by *J. C. Nesfield*.
- “The Elements of Style” by *Strunk and White*.
- “On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction” by *William Zinsser*.
- “Basic Communication Skills for Technology” by *Andrea J. Rutherford*.
- “Handbook of Science Communication” (compiled) by *Anthony Wilson*.
- “<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>” and other similar sites.

Note: No textbook is prescribed. Texts/sites like the above, and manuals or tutorials available online for software tools, can be consulted by the students and instructors, according to convenience.

Course Proposer

SPGC Chairperson

DPGC Convenor

Outline of the Course

Language and Style of Scholarly Communication

Note: The course outline here uses grammatical terms for brevity. The actual delivery of the course to students should avoid them to the extent possible.

Introduction and Overview: Necessity and importance of the course; Objectives; Outline and Planned activities. (1-2 lectures)

Module 1: Techniques of 'Interpretation' and 'Expression'; Words with basic spelling and vowel-sound patterns; Basic sentence forms; Correct usage of verbs 'do' and 'will'; Basic rules of capitalization, articles and punctuation. (3-4 lectures)

Module 2: Words with two-vowel patterns; Participles; Verb 'be'; Sentence structures in passive voice and continuous tense ('be' as supporting verb); Rules and conceptual threads of logic to avoid typical Indian patterns of mistakes in English; Strategies for composition and summarising. (3-4 lectures)

Module 3: Further word-families with two-vowel patterns; Special spelling patterns; Special sentence structures of English; Perfect tense in active/passive voice; Perfect continuous tense; Phrases and Prepositions; Connecting words, Compound sentences and Connection of meaning *across* sentences; Special verbs; Punctuation (revisited); **Complete tense structure of the English language.** (4-5 lectures)

Module 4: Advanced methods of vocabulary building: Etymological connections; Semantic connections; Prefixes; Suffixes; Phrasal Verbs; Use of words in different meanings and as different parts of speech. Parsing and Analysis of sentences; Clauses; Complex sentences; Mixed (Complex-Compound) sentences; Transformation and Synthesis of sentences. (4-5 lectures)

Module 5: A technical paper (article): Typical structural layout, sectioning, formal language style and organization of its elements; Dissertations and Reports; Aspects of professional ethics; Professional presentations: planning, display material and delivery. (4-5 lectures)

Module 6: Aid of technology in modern professional communication; Systematics of literature review; Internet tools; Text-processing (e.g. L^AT_EX) and other softwares; Softwares for presentations. (3-4 lectures)

Module 7: Elements of Style and Diction: Paragraph structuring; Clear and effective expression of thoughts; Choice of words; Avoidance of exaggeration/understatement; Emphasis and Attenuation; Suggestions etc; Proofreading, (Objective/Impersonal) Review and Revision. (4-5 lectures)

Comment: A course of this nature should be available to *all* IIT students. Students with weak English will get what is essential. Others, well-versed with English, will get what is desirable. Judicious sectioning (for practical) and scheduling of activities is important.