

English Proficiency Programme at IIT Kanpur

Module 1: 10-28 March 2014

Poor background of English among our educated youth is a major problem in the field of higher education as well as in the work-place. For a person with weak English, opportunities of productive higher study/employment are extremely difficult to achieve, no matter how many refresher courses in different areas he/she adds up in the CV. We can address a number of pitfalls of our education system if we can improve the teaching of English in our schools.

The poor education of English in childhood has a number of reasons. After all, English is a foreign language which is not used by children in their homes, schools and playgrounds as the normal medium of speech. And, it will remain so. Therefore, special systematic study of English is needed to make the students capable by the time they complete 10th standard - and for that, solid groundwork is needed much earlier.

There are two major reasons why this is difficult at present for majority of students, teachers and schools. First, many of the teachers, being the product of the same system, have a number of weaknesses and confusions in their own command over English. Further, even where the teacher has commendable proficiency in English, he/she is typically faced with the difficulty that there is no systematic scheme and study material with which one can seriously go about teaching English in a planned manner to students for whom it is a foreign language and is going to remain so. A language is not learnt through 'textbook' alone. On the other hand, if hard and dry formal grammar is initiated, it is not very productive.

At IIT Kanpur, this bottleneck has been seriously analyzed and a comprehensive scheme and study material has been developed which can be confidently executed to give a firm foundation to the English training. In this plan, the essential knowledge of the English language and training has been organized in three modules.

In order to deliver this scheme and the study material, we are going to conduct three successive orientation courses of three weeks duration each - primarily for school teachers, though others also can join the courses. By involving school teachers in this programme, on one hand the flaws and weaknesses in their own command over English will be removed and on the other they will be offered a comprehensive methodology of teaching English, which they can implement on the students of their schools and thereby render a valuable service to the society.

The first such course is to be conducted during 10-28 March, 2014.