

IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

Copyright and terms of use

IIT Madras is the sole owner of the content available in this portal - onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in and the content is copyrighted to IIT Madras.

- Learners may download copyrighted material for their use for the purpose of the online program only.
- Except as otherwise expressly permitted under copyright law, no use other than for the purpose of the online program is permitted.
- No copying, redistribution, retransmission, publication or exploitation, commercial or otherwise of material will be permitted without the express permission of IIT Madras.
- Learner acknowledges that he/she does not acquire any ownership rights by downloading copyrighted material.
- Learners may not modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale, create derivative works, or in any way exploit, any of the content, in whole or in part.

English-1 (Basic English)
Dr. Shreesh Chaudhary
Retired Professor
Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Lecture 70
Power of Simplicity- Words and Sentences

(Refer Slide Time: 0:14)



**POWER OF SIMPLICITY -
WORDS & SENTENCES**



Hello and welcome to this, the next session of the writing module of this course in English. So, far we had nearly half it is in sessions writing about things we know, writing about ourselves bio-notes. Then, looking at photographs describing and that sort of thing. A civic problem near our house, we know some of those things. And in all of this in all of this, we have emphasized, we have said that please as far as possible write simple sentences, use simple words use everyday words, common words.

You will be understood best; you hardly make a mistake or no mistake at all. And you will enjoy writing; your readers will enjoy reading you. Today in this session, we are going to talk about what we mean by simple writing will bring some example of simple writing. And then we will tell you how all of us can write a simple language such that we are understood not just by the experts but by all the readers regardless the what field they come from

(Refer Slide Time: 2:01)

- Simplicity works best everywhere.
- This is true also of languages.
- Best books and talks have happened in simple words & sentences.



So, let us go. Simplicity in anything, simplicity in dress, simplicity in lifestyle as they say simple living high thinking is the secret of a happy life. So, simplicity worth best everywhere if you eat simple food you will stay healthy. If you live a simple life you healthy and happy, if you write simple language, everyone will understand you, admire you. So, what is true of other aspects of nature is true also of language, natural languages all languages not just English or Latin or Sanskrit or Tamil or Hindi any language given a choice, write a simple language.

Why? Because simple language is understood best is read and heard by most people remembered by most people, and therefore the writing survives longer and goes far. You see just imagine some more like Buddha born in a tiny country like Nepal even those days; it was not powerful military power like America or Business power like America, military power like China or Russia, it was a small, modest country of nice good looking people well-meaning people and Gautam Buddha is born there.

What did he say? Such that he within his lifetime, we had followers nearly then all over the known part of the world then and within 500 years he had became the language of the world. There is hardly country today where you do not have Buddhist and almost have all of Asia and a good part of pacific and Indian ocean are continue to be Buddhist even today. What did Buddha say? Buddha said something simple, simple language know thyself, just as Jesus Christ said, just as other Prophet said, he said live a simple life.

And he said that in a simple language Sanskrit was the language of scholars in his time. But he said no, he advised his disciple, his friends, his colleagues to speak and write a simple language and that is why in no time. He became popular; he says if you live a simple life, you will live a happy life, you will have no sorrow. You will be useful to all and like all will be useful to you. So that is the power of simplicity. Please read about the life of Buddha, and you will know look at his sermons, and you will see what is a simple language and what is the power of simple language. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 5:18)

See the following,

From *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Act 1, Scene I.

A desert place.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.



All great writers William Shakespeare hardly educated went to primary school in Britain those days were called grammar school. They are there even today, they just taught Latin grammar a little arithmetic, and that is all about all. He did not go to high school, he did go to university but some 500 years ago but he wrote such that he became popular in his own time. And continues to be popular even today.

If you want to watch a Shakespeare film in the same theatre where he used to perform, or his plays were performed on the stage, you might not get a ticket readily. You may have to book your advanced wait for your chance, spend quite a bit of money and then get in. That is the kind of popularity Shakespeare enjoys even today more than 500 years after he was born and after he wrote.

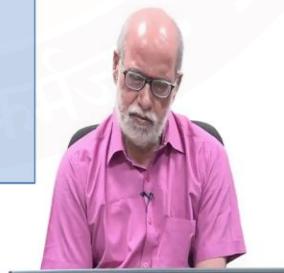
How did he write, he wrote a simple language, simple sentences? Look at this randomly take any text from anywhere in Shakespeare does not matter; he wrote about 32 plays more than 150 poems, short poems 2 very long poems. And all in this span of about 50 to 20 years at the max, at the most. And but look at his language, all simple pretty simple sentences. When shall we three meet again? Can we imagine a planner question in thunder, lightning, or in the rain?

And the second witch answers this is the opening scene of Macbeth people are settling in taking their places in the theatre, a lot of noise in the theatre already. So, they take scenes of this kind, so that even those who come a few minutes late do not miss much, but the play begins here. When the hurlburly's done, when the battle is lost and won. Perhaps you do not understand what is hurly-burly otherwise there is no difficulty.

You understand everything that will be ere set of sun ere today is gone out of English dictionary, but in Shakespeare times it was a common word. It meant before the sunset will meet in a place where a lot of people do not live after the battle is over. And battle is lost and won, somebody wins somebody losses. That is the nature of the battle. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 8:27)

First Witch Where the place?
Second Witch Upon the heath.
Third Witch There to meet with Macbeth.
....
ALL Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air.



Like that you go on where do we meet, where are the place upon the heath. Why? There to meet with Macbeth. Can you imagine something simpler and this and it goes on for a few more dialogues the among which is and finally they all sing together to say; fair is foul and foul is fair; Hover through the fog and filthy air. Maybe it complex a bit metaphysical enough to attract the

attention of their audience that is the power of simple language that Shakespeare audience those that went to watch Shakespeare place we are not learner people. Just as Shakespeare himself was not a learner, there were mostly commoners, mostly worker daily wage occurs. Who works 12 hours a day occasionally had some money happens or 2 when bought a ticket is stood in the theatre and watch the bombastic dialogues in rendered in a loud voice with a lot of flair.

But simple words such that everyone will understand later, of course, some scholar also went and watch, later of course queen Elizabeth invited Shakespeare to perform I mean that company to perform in her palace. But that is the later story when Shakespeare become both popular and successfully made money. But initially, so simple writing is successful writing is effective writing is what people called great.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:20)



- All are simple sentences, and nearly all words are of one syllable.
- Many other writers and speakers in all ages wrote in this manner.



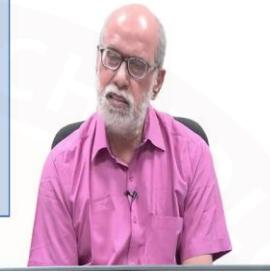
Not just Shakespeare look at anyone else other literacy artist. Go on. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:23)



Composed upon Westminster Bridge
by William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;



Wordsworth, William Wordsworth, at the onset of the industrial revolution at the end of the 10th century, at the beginning of the 19th century when man stopped working with his hands, began using machine more and more. Power-driven machines using coal later steam when all skies of all cities where darken with dark clouds of dirtiest smoke. Then one morning Wordsworth standing upon a bridge on the river Thames in London looks at the sky and find it surprisingly clean the sun rising.

He being a romantic poet cannot stop himself, and he sings of that morning. But look at the words in which he sings of that morning except for maybe a word like here or there. Maybe 2, 3 words there is hardly in the thing you and I would not understand. Earth has not anything to show more fair, this is the most beautiful thing. Dull would he be of soul who could pass by a sight so touching in its majesty or majesty.

By could also rhyme as be or by as just as majesty could rhyme as majesty or majesty that is another matter. But look at the words, simple everyday common words the city, now, does, beauty of morning, silent, bare all understood by people who live in that community, who use that language. Britain is an island so everyone knows what a ship is and ship has its own vocabulary anyone who lives in the city knows what a tower is, anyone who lives near church knows what domes are, what theatres are, what temples are no problem. That is the language that is understood best, and that is easy to write. Next. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:46)



- Except perhaps for words like “splendour”, “glittering” and “glideth”, nearly all other words in this poem by a poet laureate of England are monosyllabic words of common use.



There may be 1 or 2 words in even in Wordsworth perhaps are not daily common words like splendour, glittering or glideth. Today we do not say glideth in English we say glides it meant the same thing. That is why Wordsworth became a poet laureate of England of his time they have a tradition following which the king has a poet laureate. The queen has a poet laureate one person who is the official poet of that country that is position came to William Wordsworth. Why? Because he wrote about the common things, in a common language that could be understood by all.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:46)



- So is the power of Charles Dickens. He wrote about the joys and sorrows of the poor, the weak and the meek, and made “Novel” a popular literary form.



Charles Dickens, the great writer. He made the art of the novel, the most popular literary form; the novel-writing began maybe 50 years before he did. But the kind of popularity the novel got through Dickens had not happen before has not happen since then, and what did he write? He wrote about the joys then sorrows of common people the poor people the week, the meek and he said that there could be, their life could also be worth reading.

That there could be joy and sorrow in their life as well, there could be fun even their life. And the way he wrote the journals, serialized it one chapter in this issue and next chapter in the next issue. So, people bought journals to read what happened next to read Charles Dickens. So, Dickens not only wrote novels and made novel as a popular literary medium. He also made literary journals popular journals, popular medium of communication. He made them mass media almost single-handed, and how did he write? He wrote a simple language. Go to the next.

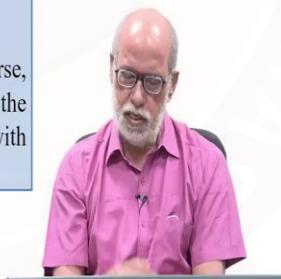
(Refer Slide Time: 15:27)

See the following from his novel *Oliver Twist*.



The surgeon had been sitting with his face turned towards the fire: giving the palms of his hands a warm and a rub alternately. As the young woman spoke, he rose, and advancing to the bed's head, said, with more kindness than might have been expected of him: "Oh, you must not talk about dying yet."

"Lor bless her dear heart, no!" interposed the nurse, hastily depositing in her pocket a green glass bottle, the contents of which she had been tasting in a corner with evident satisfaction.



This is his language. I have randomly taken a paragraph so one of his many novels this novel is called *Oliver Twist*. The hero here is a boy whose mother died soon after giving birth to him in a workhouse. A workhouse was sort of go down in 19th century England where men and women were made to work 12 to 14 hours a day in very inhuman conditions. Cold, hungry, dark, numb without a break and there this boy happens to be born, but he grew up did not die though his mother did.

So, this is the story of that orphan, and this is the scene from near his birth, look at Dickens language the surgeon who was attending the birth, the surgeon has been sitting with his face turned towards the fire; giving his palms of his hands a warm and a rub alternately doing this. Showing it to fire and then rubbing it to keep itself warm rather than pay attention to the patient he was paying attention to himself.

And then he had a nurse who was no longer self, no who was no less self-centred. Look at the way Dickens describes it. As the young woman spoke, he rose, the doctor rose and advancing to the beds head, said with more kindness than might have been expected of him. Doctor spoke harsh language those days. But for some reason, this doctor this time was kind, and he says, oh you must not talk about dying yet.

And the nurse there, no less self-centred, lord bless her dear heart, no. I mean they both say god mercy be upon you, you would not die. Interposed the nurse hastily depositing in her pocket a green glass bottle, the content of which she had been tasting in a corner with evident satisfaction. She had something to drink privately rather than share it with the patient. Share it with others there. She frequently went into a corner open the bottle took a drink, took a gulp or shape in came.

But you see the language; you see the sentences the words they are all simple—mostly common words of everyday use. So, the point I am making is the writing by all great writers happens almost always in simple sentences in simple words. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:37)

See the following from Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*: Chapter 2, P. 10

Our present ideas about the motion of bodies date back to Galileo and Newton. Before them people believed Aristotle, who said that the natural state of a body was to be at rest and that it moved only if driven by a force or impulse. It followed that a heavy body should fall faster than a light one, because it would have a greater pull toward the earth.



And not just in sciences, sorry not just in literature but also in sciences, also in business, all great writing regardless of where they appear are simple in writing simple prose, simple sentences most and simple words as long as possible. This is a frontier in Astrophysics, Stephen Hawking's a book called *A Brief History of Time*. The website says only Shakespeare and the bible has sold more copies.

Otherwise, it is the third most popular ever published in the English language; you should read this book if you have not. This book alone will teach you more English, more Physics, more of Sciences, more of arts than any other book otherwise but look at the language, our present ideas about the motion of bodies date back to Galileo and Newton. Simple one, once and does one verb, our present idea about the motion of bodies date back to, date back is the verb.

One verb only before them people believed Aristotle, and then there is qualifying, who said that the natural state of the body was to be at rest et cetera. To make the same point again, simple writing is the best writing, go on.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:29)

- Many people write messages through internet everyday.



Sometimes among friends, it is okay when you are using jargon nobody would mind you. Actually, group membership will depend upon jargon. But when you write for the public, when you write for not just friends, not just your family, then your language must be formal. You cannot use expressions of kind like lol, rofl or other things. I do not understand half of them; I have take help from my colleagues to understand.

And there may be more people like me who might not understand some of these things, and unfortunately, it is this people the older ones who judge you applications for jobs for project funding, for fellowship for other kinds of things. So, it is best to write formal, simple language. Go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:37)

ACTIVITY

1. Write a note inviting your friends to meet you for a party in the new semester, after the reopening of the college after complete lockdown for nearly a year.



I am going to give you some assignments. Some interesting activities, some interesting task. Say, for example, wrote a note inviting your friends to meet you for a party. Imagine corona has ended, the world is safe once again we back to normal studying with friends, partying with friends having fun generally so the day. What kind of note would you write? Try and write simple sentences, simple words and yet make it weighty, and that is where you will discover the hidden in you and the power of your language. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:21)

2. For the photographs and/or situations given below, write a caption in simple words or sentences.
 - Write a caption, in no more than 5 words



a)



b)



You can also check your own English, check your creativity if I asked if you were asked to write a caption for this photograph. What would you write for a, what would you write for b? A very

simple thing would be to say women by the river or a boy or poor boy. Or can there be more write and check you can also check with us. You can also check with other experts, but this is where simple writing begins when you start thinking differently from the crowd. And you start thinking for what you have to write and next.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:19)



- c) Write a new and witty birthday greeting.
- d) Invite your college teachers to your wedding.
- e) Invite your friends to join you in a weekend walking excursion.
- f) Complete the following sentences.
 - 1. God created friends to make up...
 - 2. Home is ...
 - 3. More money ...
 - 4. Real power...
 - 5. Beauty lies...



I have also given you some other simple tasks to do. Doing this thing will help you develop your flair for language, your language skill say for example write a new and witty birthday greeting everyone says happy birthday, hi have a great birthday, hi enjoy your birthday have fun I have heard those things. Can we come up with something new, something interesting or an invitation card for a wedding or asking you friends to join you for an excursion where you walk to another city during the weekend.

You start on Friday evening or Saturday morning four o clock and Sunday evening you come back invite your friend for that kind of thing believe me it is not madness. It is discovering your hidden strength, and it is discovering the power of your language, and it is also discovering who among your friends is worthy of being your friends. So, this is how we develop our flair for simple language complete the following sentences.

I have given you half the sentences god created friends to make up. Why? To make up what? Complete it, and you will discover that you have a flair for writing well and writing simple

language. Similarly, complete the other sentences, I have given you half of them, one phrase of them, home is, more money, real power, beauty lies, complete them. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:13)



3. Write a short paragraph of about 150 words on one or more of the following.
 - a. Home cooked food vs Ready to eat door delivered food
 - b. A dream holiday
 - c. What I like about online classes
 - d. Social Media – good or bad



Finally, after you have done that kind of thing, do them on a daily basis take one or two photographs to write a caption for them, write a witty caption not just when I was in Ooty or not just when I was in Hong Kong. Something more, something different, something which describes all the contents of a photograph but is witty even then. So similarly, I have given you topics to write a paragraph or two maybe in 150 words this is where the challenge lies. Can you write a simple language and can write so much? Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:58)

HOW TO WRITE SIMPLE SENTENCES

1. Do not write sentences with more than 10 words.
2. Write with only one verb.
3. Write only one or two syllable words, unless unavoidable.
4. Do write more than one draft.
5. Use a dictionary and thesaurus when in doubt.



How do you write a simple language? I have only been telling you to write simple, write simple I have not told you how you can write a simple language. This is the mantra; this is the clue, this is how all of us who wants to write a simple language can do. Number 1; do not write very long sentences 6, 7 words 8 words maximum of 9, 10. Do not go if a sentence gets longer than that there is something wrong with you.

Try and break the sentence into 2. Start afresh and then in each sentence, make sure you have only one verb, one verb means a simple sentence; two verbs means either complex or compound. Three verbs can be anything. So, make sure your sentences not only small they have only one verb. Third, words as far as possible use words of one syllable just as I said as far as possible as three syllables. I cannot find another word for possible.

If I say feasible, it is still three. So sometimes it is inevitable you cannot help it. But as long as possible use words of mono one syllable with one verb write one or two-syllable words unless unavoidable. And be prepared to write more than one draft as I have been telling you all the great writers have done more than one draft. Some people say Shakespeare did not do two drafts; maybe, he did not.

Some people say it should have been better for him if he had also done it. I do not know. I am not such an expert. I will say that Shakespeare is perfect, but it is like an exception to a rule. If you are among the exception, you do not need to revise, but if you are not be prepared to write more than one draft. And you will find that with each draft your writing gets better it becomes

simpler. When necessary when in doubt, use dictionary-thesaurus as per your requirement. You know what a dictionary is and what a thesaurus. Next.

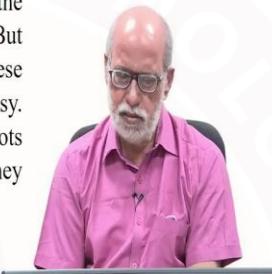
(Refer Slide Time: 28:47)

ANSWERS

3.a. Home cooked food.

Draft 1

Home cooked food is the best. It suits your taste. It saves time and money. It is good for health. In a family, it creates bonding. We should share home work. The best conversation in a family mostly happens in the kitchen, sometimes arguments also happen there. But then you know and understand one another better. These days all members of most families are always busy. They hardly get to sit, work and be together. Such spots are occasions of great education for the young. They learn skills, they learn about family traditions.

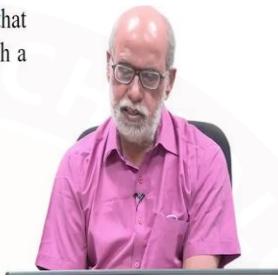


Here is an example. I have got for you who wonder the first draft is a rough draft talks about home cooked food. Go Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:05)



More importantly this is the best place for value education. Not the best universities can compete even with an ordinary family in this aspect of education. There is however only one problem in cooking at home. We have to spend time buying and storing stuff. But then that is a managerial problem. With some effort, that can be managed. Besides, for such a gain that is such a small investment. (164 Words).



But rather than I have 150 words, it has 164 words many examinations spin a lies you for exceeding words. So, what can you do? You can do several drafts even at the examination hall you can do more than one draft. That is possible. Look at the final draft. Next.

(Refer Slide Time 29:32)

Draft 2

Home cooked food is the best. It suits your taste. It saves time and money. It is good for health. In a family, it helps bonding. All can share home work. The best conversation in a family mostly happens in the kitchen, sometimes arguments also happen there. But then you know and understand one another better. These days all members of most families are always busy. They are hardly ever together. But such spots can be education for the young. They can learn skills, they can also learn about family traditions. More importantly this is the best place for value education. There is however one problem. For cooking at home, we have to spend time buying and storing stuff. But then that is a managerial problem. With some effort, that can be managed. Besides, for such a gain that is such a small investment. (144 Words.)



Here you have only 144 words so with a little care, with a little attention all writers you including you and me including you and I can write better. Can write simple sentences and ordinary words. Look at it here, home-cooked food is the best. No problem understanding it suits your taste; it suits our taste. Its saves time and money, it is good for health in a family it helps bonding, binding is already there the family.

We are all related through that bind father has two men are related as father and son, or as bothers or as uncle and nephew that is the binding. The relationship but the bonding is the way we feel for one other. You feel strongly for your mother then you have a greater bond with her. You feel strongly for your brother then you have a greater bound for him. So that is what I mean by bounding.

So, home-cooked food promotes bonding, go and read it, and you will find that almost entire say has monosyllabic words simple sentences, sentences with only one verb. The advantage is then you make no mistake everyone understands you, and you enjoy writing more than you do when you are writing complex words. And you have fun generally.

Next, the final mantra is once again practice, revision, reading and then revision again of whatever you write will lead to perfection in your writing. Try it and enjoy it. Have a good luck.
Bye.