

# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**Basic English**  
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**Lecture - 23**  
**Effective Presentations**

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## **EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS**

Prof. Shreesh Chaudhary



Welcome to this, the next session in our module on Spoken English. Lots of us in perhaps any profession, whether you are in marketing, sales, in human resource management, in teaching, in politics, in administration, in research, in keeping archives in Libraries; lots of us have to make presentations frequently.

And our success in our chosen careers in part, not entirely of course, but in part also depends upon these presentations, are they effective? Did we do such that we convinced our listeners? Did we do such that our listeners understood us? They were not happy; they appreciated our position even if they did not agree, then we have made an effective presentation. But if they did not, then that means we have not made an effective presentation.

Here in this session today, we will be talking about a few aspects of one or two things, a few things to which we can pay attention and make effective presentations all the time. Please join me.

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## STAGE MANNERS



- All conversations are presentations.
- All presentations are stage performances.
- All presenters are performers.



We must remember like all actors do, that all conversations are presentations. Regardless of who you talk to and where, you are in a certain sense, making a presentation. You are either asking for or giving information, sharing new joy, problem, solution.

And in that sense, all presenters are performers. Like actors on stage, their world as Shakespeare says said this world is a stage, and we are all actors, assigned our roles. So even when we are at home with our family, in the club with friends, in college with classmates, we are all making a performance.

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- Whether talking to a friend or a crowd, you perform an act.
- So like all “actors”, you have to follow some stage manners.
- We must be **well-turned out: washed, groomed and dressed.**



So like actors, professional actors, they, when they play the role of a beggar, you have no doubt that you are not watching a beggar. And when they play a king or a queen, a villain, they convince you that they are so.

Maybe we may not become as great as accomplished actors are, but we must remember that like all good actors, we have to remember a variety of things, the words that we speak, the costume, the occasion, the place, the stage, the voice, the props; we will talk about some of these things.

And of all these things, the most important, the first thing is appropriate grooming. Are you well-groomed according to your role, are you washed, are you turned out properly? Because you are going to be, particularly when you talk in public, when it is a formal presentation, you must be well turned out.

That means if you shave, you must have shaved. If you do your hair, if you wear long hair, then it must be done appropriately as the formal situation in your profession and in your community demands. Every community, every profession has certain standards of formality and informality. So you must be dressed, you must be groomed, you must be turned out appropriately for the formal occasion.

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- You need not be over-dressed, you must not be under-dressed, you should be appropriately dressed.



See, look at some manners of dressing. On my left, you have a couple of young people. Well, they are dressed according to fashion, but in my opinion, they are not dressed for a formal occasion where they can make a presentation for, where they can present a proposal for a business project of a couple of million rupees.

They are not, I mean they are wearing clothes in fashion all right. But on my right hand, there are other three people; the lady in saree. Every ethnic community, in Japan, in Iran, in India, in Sri Lanka, in Bangladesh, in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, in Sierra Leone, in Cote d'Ivoire; every country has its own standards of formal dress in presentation; formal dress for presentation.

You should, like actors wear the dress according to the role, we should also be dressed appropriately for the occasion.

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- What is an “effective presentation”?

- You make an effective presentation when listeners listen to you with attention.
- Then you can persuade, or entertain, or inspire, or convince, etc.
- Listeners may or may not always agree with you, but they see your position, your point of view, and they can listen to you.



You make an effective, what is an effective presentation? We have already said when you are heard when your listeners listen to you when you convince them. Even when they do not agree, they see your position; they appreciate that well, this is also possible.

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To achieve this, you must also do the following:

- Relax, make yourself comfortable.
- If you are tense, nervous, sleepy, drowsy, distracted, you may not make an effective presentation.
- People see more than they listen.



So, the next point is a lot of people feel very tensed before they start their presentation. And this is not unnatural; this is not unusual. And this does not happen only with you. It happens with everyone, with all of us.

Talk to any experienced teachers, even the likes of me who have taught for over 40 - 45 years. Even then, before we go live in a class or on camera, we feel a slight perspiration. But there are ways of overcoming them, you smile, you take a deep breath, and you greet your audience with a smile.

And with that smile, your tension, your stiffness disappears because remember, if you are drowsy, if you are tired, if you are not enthusiastic, if you are not alert, if you are not relaxed, your audience will notice all these things.

You might not realize it, but your listeners see you before they listen to you and they see everything. They see the inside and out of you. Are you well prepared, are you relaxed? Only then can they be relaxed, only can they take you seriously.

There are researchers who have said we have found out that even your listeners are more influenced by what they see than by what they listen. And one experiment, I saw it at the website of Toastmasters International, you can also check it there. But it said very extremely telling experiment in the power of visual medium against all other media, against verbal in particular.

So join me in an experiment as the experimenter in Toastmasters International says. Have your fingers this way, make it round, like I have done. Ready? And then slowly anti-clockwise; moving it anti-clockwise, slowly bring it to your chin.

How many of you took it to a chin, which is what I said? And how many of you took it to your cheek, which is what I did. Live classes have shown that maybe two or three students took it to the chin, which is what I said. But out of 50, over 45 students took it to the cheek, which is what I did. Nothing explains the power of eyes more than this experiment. So we must remember to relax, to smile, and then to communicate.

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## SITTING POSTURES



Relax. Now, relax does not mean, you know, go in a sleepy mood like you are going to, about to fall asleep. Relax, you know, easy posture rather than stiff, tense. It looks as if you are going to be executed at any moment, no.

Neither is, oh God, I do not care; not even that. As Gautam Buddha said, truth is at neither extreme. Truth is somewhere in between. Business-like posture, sit easy, sit relax, but alert so that you look at your audience, you have very good eye contact with them.

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## STANDING POSTURES



Or if you, as you stand, you do not really have to stand like a soldier; not this way. Your belly, stomach muscles inside, your breast swelling outside, your hands held fast behind you, no; not that way. It is only armed forces and their commanders who do that way because they have a purpose.

But ordinary speakers, ordinary people like you and me, excuse me, let me take the chair. We can also, we sit erect rather than slumping, rather than drowsy; we can sit erect, our shoulders straight, eyes in contact, and then even then we can relax and talk.

So for standing, do not slump, do not stand this way. Do not stand on one leg and then talk. Some of these postures, researchers have found do not help you win the confidence of your listeners. Your listeners take you more seriously when you are in total control of yourself and yet relaxed, and when you talk to your listeners in that position.

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- Greet your audience with a friendly manner.
- Use your hands in a meaningful manner..



Must wear, must have a smile. Greet your audience before you begin. That greeting with a relaxed smile will take the tension away. So do not just start saying, today we are going to talk about a civic problem, no; just say, good morning, today, we are going to look at a problem that has bothered us all for a long time and in which area we already have a lot of knowledge, but we will check how much of it we use. So begin with that kind of smile, a greeting, and you will see.

Similarly with your hands, what do you do when you speak? There are many positions, some people you know, lock their hands this way to the front, or lock their hands behind them. Or various parts of the body resting their hands, or some also keep it in their pockets or clutch the podium, hold it.

None of these postures by itself is good or bad but mindless flailing of hands going up and down with everything you said all the time. I mean, there is a civic problem in the city, which all of us have faced, all of us face but nobody is doing anything. This mindless movement of hands is not only a waste of your energy; it is also distracting to your audience; it does not take them anywhere.

On the other hand, you can use your hands in a meaningful manner. You can say that all cities in the world can have fresh air, they have a choice; they can either decide to go for mass transport, invest there, and breathe clean air to go wherever they like. Or each person can have the false comfort of having their own vehicle and breathing polluting air. So each, other; one, two.

On the one hand is the question of cost, on the other hand, is the question of time. What is more important to us? The management says to do so much in a limited time, the account says cost is important. You can use your hands in a meaningful manner, not in a mindless flailing of air. Then you make an effective presentation, that is like a good actor.

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## HAND GESTURES



Successful public speakers; here is one. Look at the hand, the way the hands are being used, right?

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- Eye-contact keeps the listener with the speaker.



Eye contact. Unless you look at your listeners, look at your audience; unless you have good eye contact with them, how do you keep them with yourself, how do you keep them together? And imagine in a large auditorium, where you have a couple of 100 people, or sometimes, successful teachers have even hundreds of students in a class waiting to listen to them or successful public speakers, how do they do? Hundreds of people gathered to listen to them.

So, it is not that they look at only one person and embarrass her or him, go on looking at her for that person until that person feels terribly embarrassed, no. For about 30 - 40 seconds, you look one way and start telling them the story.

More than two-thirds of India had forest cover when the British left. In the Himalayas I mean, more than two-thirds of the Himalayas in India had forest cover when they left. But in the name of development since Independence, we started cutting those trees. Today, the result is that all waterfalls are gone, rivers hardly flow in the Himalayas, and that it is a nude range of hills causing frequent landslides there.

So you know, you have looked at all, and you can then again turn and do it again; go from left to right, right to the left, but not quickly; not in this manner.

When the British left, Himalayas has had about two-thirds of the forest cover. Most of their peaks were covered. Though, of course, they started killing the tigers and felling the trees but the Indians, rather than stopping it, they started continuing this kind of thing, no.

Not that way. Easy, slow, panning; pan, talk to everyone for a few seconds, 30 - 40 seconds. When the British left, Himalayas has had already begun losing their forest cover. Yet, almost two-thirds of the Himalayas still had a green cover. But when India became independent, and we started building roads, buildings, houses, hotels, tourist spots, then we started mindless felling of trees without regard to ecology.

As a result, today, we have no waterfalls in the Himalayas, no rivers flowing. What do we want? Do you want the Himalayas, the rivers, the water, the greenery? Or do we want wonderful roads where we drive without a pause? That is the choice we people at large have to make today. So you can use your eyes in a meaningful gesture.

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- You lose eye contact, and you lose your audience.



If you lose eye contact with your audience, go to the next, you lose your audience. Be it a class, be it assembly, be it a meeting hall. So talk to them while looking into their eyes.

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- Voice is an important tool for presentations.
- You can have loud and soft voice, rapid and slow voice, confident and doubtful or confused voice, giving a variety of signals to the listener.
- You must learn to modulate your voice.



Voice is an important tool; a very important tool. You can move mountains with your voice. You can bring tears into the eyes of our listeners. Then the body was brought home; the father had to call his daughter because the daughter had to cremate that body. How would the father tell the daughter, here is your beloved killed in a road accident on a highway when the driver was not careful enough?

You can also make people angry; you can inspire, you can make them laugh; you can do anything with your voice that you like. Remember, great leaders Netaji Subhash Bose? Voice played wonders. How did Gandhi Ji move and an entire country, a subcontinent actually? The British had conquered the world in the First World War, 1919. In 1922, Gandhi said India must have complete freedom.

Here is a man of 5.4 inches, weighing only 42 kilograms or 44 kilograms but there is something in his voice; the power of voice. So your voice can be loud or soft, can be rapid, can be whispered, can rise to a crescendo. Come on all of us, our motherland our fatherland, our village needs your help.

So the voice is a very important tool. You must learn to modulate your voice. How do you learn that? While watching next time a good film, not only pay attention to the words, also pay attention also to the voice. See how great actors use their voice; everything else is given to them.

Somebody else gives them words; somebody else gives them a costume, somebody makes them up like young or old, king or queen, beggar or emperor, but the voice is their very own. And that is what makes them successful or a failure. We can learn from them.

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**VIDEO CLIP**

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**Video link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2DHzlkUI6s>

Please watch the section 2.53-3.49

**Source:** Nobel Prize (YouTube)  
**Video description:** Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered by Malala Yousafzai.  
We are using 96 seconds of this video for academic purposes.



Slow speech. Even when you do not have standard pronunciation, even when you make an occasional mistake of grammar or vocabulary, people will listen to you, will respect you if you are relaxed if you speak with appropriate pauses, appropriate tone, and appropriate tempo if you control your voice.

If you use them like a tool, like we do in the kitchen, we use a knife. Sometimes we take thick slices; sometimes, we take paper-thin slices with the same knife. So voice is like that knife, that tool which can help you get a fit of the desired kind.

Look at this speaker; very young but look at her confidence, look at the training, and look at the effect she makes, all of us can do that.

So sometimes Malala does not get the standard pronunciation of all words, the pronunciation of F A C T. And later, if you listen to the entire thing, you will also find an occasional mistake of grammar or vocabulary, but that hardly matters. Look at what she has to say.



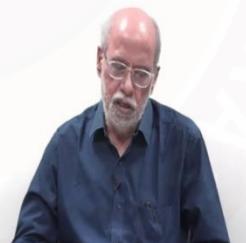
Here is a young girl in her teens telling the entire world that we can no longer be unfair to half the humanity by denying them a chance which God and religion and everyone gives them. And such wonderful stories, such powerful, such courage. And the way, in such a relaxed manner, what a sense of humour, how much wit. Here is a Nobel Peace Prize winner who still fights with her brothers, should also get a Nobel Prize for a sense of humour. That is what makes for an effective presentation.

You must entertain your listeners not in a vulgar manner, not in a superficial, not in a shallow manner but in a substantial, in a deep, profoundly philosophical manner which comes to you only when you are adequately prepared, relaxed, speak slowly with a smile, and when you have something original, something new to say.

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- Do not overload your **PPT slides**.
- They lack adequate display time.

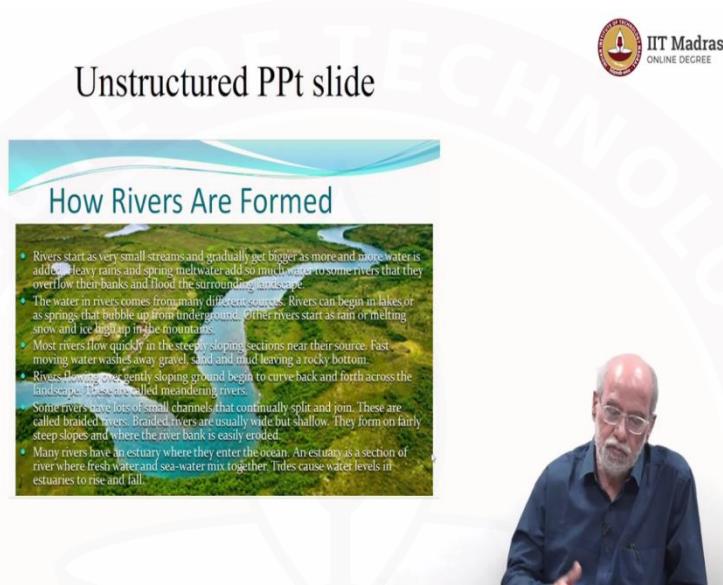


PowerPoint slides have become very popular aid, help in making presentations truly so. You can bring the entire world like we are doing. It would have been unimaginable for me to watch, to present a clip from a film or a documentary in my classroom.

And if at all I tried, I would have had to move mountains to do that. The entire fun of using it will have been lost into the preparation for the same. Well, not today; today, it is as easy as picking up the book off your shelf.

So PowerPoint slides have become very popular and a great aid to all presenters. But a lot of presenters, a whole lot of them do not pay attention to things like how much can we say in one slide, what can we say best through these slides, what colour should that two slides be in. There is a lot of mindless use of slides, which rather than help your presentation, they harm your presentation.

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The image consists of two parts. On the left is a screenshot of a presentation slide with a blue header and footer. The main title is 'How Rivers Are Formed'. Below the title is a photograph of a river flowing through a landscape. To the right of the photo is a bulleted list of six points about river formation. On the right is a video frame showing a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark shirt, sitting and speaking.

**How Rivers Are Formed**

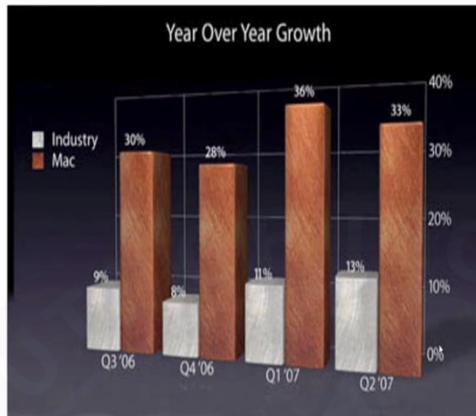
- Rivers start as very small streams and gradually get bigger as more and more water is added. Heavy rains and spring meltwater add so much water to some rivers that they overflow their banks and flood the surrounding areas.
- The water in rivers comes from many different sources. Rivers can begin in lakes or as springs that bubble up from underground. Other rivers start as rain or melting snow and ice high up in the mountains.
- Most rivers flow quickly in the steeply sloping sections near their source. Fast moving water washes away gravel, sand and mud leaving a rocky bottom.
- Rivers flowing over gently sloping ground begin to curve back and forth across the landscape. These are called meandering rivers.
- Some rivers have lots of small channels that continually split and join. These are called braided rivers. Braided rivers are usually wide but shallow. They form on fairly steep slopes and where the river bank is easily eroded.
- Many rivers have an estuary where they enter the ocean. An estuary is a section of river where fresh water and sea-water mix together. Tides cause water levels in estuaries to rise and fall.

So there are some simple principles. Say, for example, look at this slide. You need half an hour to read this at least though it is on a wonderful subject. Almost all rivers in developing countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China are dying. We must do something, and we must do something fast to save these rivers. But who can read them cluttered?

So there are questions like how much can you say in one slide, what colour can you use. Look at this, faint creamish white on green or olive green, or yellowish-green sort of thing, or really pale blue. Is that the best colour combination you could get? Or are you deliberately trying to create a situation so that your readers, your viewers do not understand you?

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## Structured PPt Slide



Your slides ought to be clear. Your slides are the best instrument for making statistical presentations. No matter how many times you say without the slides that, my business has started growing by, it began at 3.06 per cent, but in no time we reached 4.06 per cent. And then in the next two years, we were more or less static at 1.07 - 2.07. But then again, we peaked. We, our business rose by about 40 per cent.

You do not have to do all that; you do not have to lose anything; you do not lose your listeners. All you do is put your histograms clearly together. So here is a, here is a histogram or a bar chart with two bars; white, giving you the rest of the industry, and brown giving you Macintosh.

How they grew, the X-axis, the Y-axis, the information given. You do not have to say all these things, you just put it there and make one or two general remarks. Look at the growth; Macintosh grew faster than the rest of the industry. And this point is very well made through these slides.

So your PowerPoint slides are wonderful tools for making these points which a verbal presentation won't, a visual presentation can. But they are not the best medium to print a page from a book and put them there.



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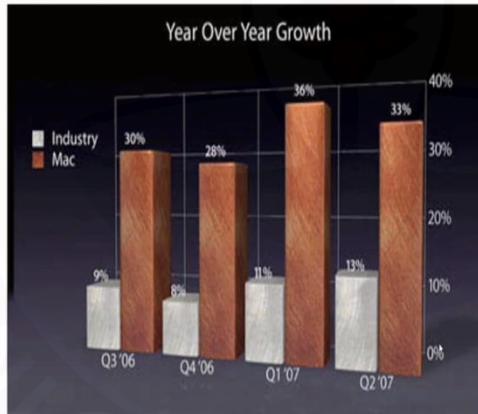
## Unstructured PPt slide

How Rivers Are Formed

- Rivers start as very small streams and gradually get bigger as more and more water is added. Heavy rains and spring meltwater add so much water to some rivers that they overflow their banks and flood the surrounding landscape.
- The water in rivers comes from many different sources. Rivers can begin in lakes or as springs that bubble up from underground. Other rivers start as rain or melting snow and ice high up in the mountains.
- Most rivers flow quickly in the steeply sloping sections near their source. Fast moving water washes away gravel, sand and mud leaving a rocky bottom.
- Rivers flowing over gently sloping ground begin to curve back and forth across the landscape. These are called meandering rivers.
- Sometimes rivers have lots of small channels that continually split and join. These are called braided rivers. Braided rivers are usually wide but shallow. They form on fairly steep slopes and where the river bank is easily eroded.
- Many rivers have an estuary where they enter the ocean. An estuary is a section of river where freshwater and sea-water mix together. Tides cause water levels in estuaries to rise and fall.



## Structured PPt Slide



Like we saw in this slide. Here, the presenter seems to have taken an entire page from a book or paragraphs from a book and pasted them on a photograph which otherwise might have been good so that you lose both the photograph and the text.

That is not the way; the way is the next. Go next. This is the way. Have clear, telling slides to present some information, which otherwise will not go well verbally.

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- Don't put too much in one slide. Ordinarily, it is good to mention only a few bullet points in one slide, and only a **few words in each line**.
- Read each slide silently and give as much time for each slide as at least you take to read one.



So the principle is do not do much, do not put too much in a slide. Have a few words, few lines. And when you have put them up, you do not necessarily need to read them all aloud unless of course, you have a visually challenged guest among you.

Or even, otherwise, if you want to emphasize something, you can read one or two; few words in each line. So you can pay attention to them, you can draw your viewer's attention to the highlighted words. Go on.

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- **Colour combinations** are not unwelcome in PPt slides .



Colour combinations are not unwelcome, but they must be imaginative and must keep communication in mind. You cannot, yellow-green on the dark green does not mean anything; must be kind of black and white, you see it best.

Or like the Indian Railways did. Ever since its inception, black; jet black on bright yellow, turmeric yellow. So even from a long distance, after the train crosses the first signal, you can see the railway station signboard, and you can make out, okay, this is Chennai Central, this is Secunderabad, this is Patna junction, this is Mohammadpur junction; you can very clearly see no matter how long or how short the name of the railway station be because the colour combination does it.

If you know the script, you have no difficulty reading it because of the colours. But imagine Maroon on red, imagine turmeric yellow on mustard yellow or mustard yellow on turmeric yellow. Only Picasso can read it, ordinary individuals like you and me will have great difficulty understanding them. So keep that in mind. Next.

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Effective presentation requires an intelligent combination of creativity, language and data.



Finally, an effective presentation is not a mechanical act, is not like printing a page by computers; it is like creating a page that you do. You ask yourself a variety of questions, what size of font, what paper, what space between two lines, what margins.

Similarly, an effective presentation requires an intelligent combination of these three things. Creativity, using old things can you say something new. Language, you should have good control, good command on language but your language should be simple, easy, conversational like a good conversation between a mother and her son, between a father and his son, between a family and friends; easy, relaxed, exchanging ideas, information, news, and views on a given topic.

And data, whatever you say should not be mere prejudice. We are a wonderful country, but we are not the best country in the world. There are other countries, which are also equally good. If we want them to respect us, logic says, we should also respect them. So you should have data, you should be creative, and you should have language. All of these things can be acquired, and my colleagues and I hope that on this course, we will help you acquire these things. Go on.

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Thank You!



Finally, before I say bye, speaking is a skill. Nobody can teach you a skill. Nobody can teach you eating or walking or washing or shaving or doing your hair or cycling or swimming. Remember, the first day you rode a bicycle, you fell down, and you did it again. It is true that some coach, some friend, or family ran behind you, but you were determined to do it.

So for swimming, what is there to learn in swimming, you knew that; you knew swimming, you knew how to throw your hands and feet and how to stay afloat. But the first day you were scared, and when your coach told you go on, you would not drown, you trusted yourself, and you threw



your hands and legs in the right manner in the right direction, overcoming your fear. And in one day, you learn swimming.

It is just like speaking. Prepare, trust yourself, have practice. Speak whenever you get an occasion even if you make mistakes, even if you feel embarrassed in the beginning because in no time will you feel that you have become, in no time will you accomplish. That accomplishment which will make you the top person in the field, which is what God has made you become. Thank you. Have a good day.