



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**Basic English**  
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**Spoken English Preliminaries**

Welcome to this module on spoken English as part of your course, in English for this program at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. Today, we are going to begin the module on Spoken English. And in this first session, we will talk about some preliminaries what is it we must remember, while learning English, while learning speaking in English, while learning speaking in global English, in global standard English. And we will also set our priorities is everything in spoken English, all parts of all aspects of the language called spoken English, equally important, or there are things that are more important than some other things. So, we will also set our priorities, here we go.

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### Why Spoken English?

Global Language



The first thing that we must remember is that English is no longer and not only the language of a small island, between Atlantic and Mediterranean. It is now; it has been so ever since perhaps the Second World War ever since 1945, the language of the world. It is used in all domains in India and in Pakistan, in many other countries of South Asia, Eastern Africa, West Indies, and elsewhere it is used in many domains from home to office. A more important fact here is that

English today is spoken in all sorts of accents only because all sorts of people who speak it from Argentina to Zaire, from Australia to Zaire, from New Zealand to New England, it only means that we should expect to speak to a variety of people who may have difficulty understanding us unless we speak in the global standard language.

It also means that unless we speak the global standard language, we will not understand many speakers who come from different cultures, different disciplines, and different countries. There is a very important factor, remember that here is a language, which is a mind-boggling variety of accents of the vocabulary of grammar. And in the middle of all this, we have to find a stick to that standard, which can take us to everyone, even if they sound to us, slightly different from us, and we sound to them slightly different from them. Let us go.

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## VIDEO CLIP



**Video link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I36Nistc9wE>

Please watch the section 00.00- 5.21

**Source:** Josh Sterling (YouTube)

**Video description:** Mother Teresa's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. We are using 5.21 minutes of this video for academic purposes.





## VIDEO CLIP

**Video link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63J0hITppjk>

Please watch the section 00.00-7.27

**Source:** Asia Society (YouTube)

**Video description:** Indira Nooyi in conversation with Asia Society Vice President wherein she discusses about her work and life. We are using 7.27 minutes of this video for academic purposes.



The point I am making is, if you want to speak good English, you must take care of all sorts of accents and yet speak in a manner as Mother Teresa does, you know so that you and I are understood by all of us, number one, number two, if you really want English that is of global standards, it is also important that you listened to, you read, you know things that are of global reach, that are have a global impact. We hope that at least some of you will find time to listen to the entire speech by Mother Teresa, she was an Indian by choice, she lived and worked here for over 50 years. And when she died, she had only a bucket, and a couple of saris and soap or something in a room, all the money that she got by the Nobel Prize was as she says in this speech since she had accepted it for poor it was there for the poor please discover you know other aspects of her personality, a great communicator.

To give you a flavour of the kind of global English you know, the kinds of people that speak not just in India, not just in America, we saw Mother Teresa born and brought up in Albania in Eastern Europe. And she took a vow, became a nun at the age of 16 and came to work in India first as an English teacher and later as a social worker at a school in Darjeeling, then Kolkata.

But you know there are the traffic is also the other way. There are children from Chennai, Kolkata, small and big towns in Asia and Africa, who made it big at the global level, one person of that kind is somebody called was Indira Nooyi born and brought up in India educated in India.

She joined Pepsi Co, looked after her large family, her uncles and aunts, her husband's relatives, her own relatives, bringing up two wonderful children. And she became the head of a global company like Pepsi Co. Listen to her, please.

One of the many reasons you would like to hear this speech is how did this lady make it to the top, answering all her obligations to family to friends to community and to her company. As she says, it is not impossible. So long as you know, what you want to achieve and you are willing to work for that it is listening to people like them, that not only your personality, not only your values and priorities but also your English will become of a global standard.

So, that is why we have selected it, and we are going to talk further about why you should listen to a variety of things you know, to have wonderful, globally intelligible English. Next.

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## INTRODUCTION



In learning to speak, remember the following:

1. Have something to say.
2. Politeness is more important than even pronunciation and grammar.



So, how do we, what must we have? Such that our English is of a global standard, above and before anything else. We must have something to say, after you have said, Good evening, Good afternoon, Good morning. After you have said Namaskara, Namaste, Vanakkam, Sastriyakal, Assalamualaikum, after you have said all this, what next? Do you have something to say?

Is that something interesting to your listeners? Is that something relevant for them? Is that something that is going to help them? And are you going to say it in an interesting manner, such

that they will sit down and listen? If you have these things, in all else can follow the accent, grammar, vocabulary, all else can follow.

If you have something to say, if you look at great prophets, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad before these two people, Gautam Buddha, whether or people knew their language or they did not, we do not even know what you know, many of us do not know what language Jesus Christ spoke or what dialect of Arabic Prophet Muhammad spoke or what language or dialect Gautam Buddha spoke, but they are all popular around the world because they had something to say.

So, with great business leaders, IndraNooyi or anyone else, they are there not only because of the accent of English, that is also an asset, of course, you should have that, but also because of something else. So, I am saying this upfront, that only a good accent in English will not take you far that will be a great help, but a greater help will be to cultivate the habit of learning to acquire knowledge with which you manage your business.

Next important thing in learning to speak in English is politeness; you know, people will, your listeners will, your friends, your colleagues, your family, will pardon you for mistakes of grammar, for mistakes of vocabulary for a variety of other things, they will pardon you very easily with a smile. You just say sorry, and you get across, but they will not pardon you for being rude, you know, what is that? How do you sound polite?

How does a language like English, which unlike many Indian languages, does not have, two kinds of verbs *ukarunga*, *ukaru* which does not have two kinds of *Betiye*, *Beito*, *Kuchandi*, *kucho*(14:24 *Speaking regional language*). How do they sit say, how do they express politeness? In English you do not say sit you, sitto, sitting you do not have things like that.

So, is, does that mean? Is English a rude language? No, it is not. English makes up for these two paradigms, these two kinds of expressions for the same Word, same verb or even if they used to have two nouns, though was for more intimate informal, you was for more formal, more respectable, respectful, but it is nearly 100 years ago that in the English language moved with democracy it moves to one pronoun for all.

So, now King or king's driver, the queen or her helper, they are all you. So, it goes like that, and they have only one sort of verb now. So, how do they express politeness? They use words like please any request is either preceded or followed by, any request even to friends, even to family, even to business partners, even to colleagues you joke with are preceded and followed by please or thanks or excuse me, or sorry or pardon me.



So, things of this idiomatic expression of this kind, help you sound polite. Then also integration, there is a difference between, come, sit down and saying come on, please will you mind taking the chair will you please sit down. So, intonation and then all requests in English all commands in English actually, except those by the army commanders are given through a question sentence interrogative sentence; you do not say, Tell me time, please. You say, will you tell me the time, please?

You do not say tell me time please, you say, will you tell me time please, you do not say stop now? You say will you please stop now. That is English that is politeness; we will have a session on that. And you should on your own when you watch English documentaries, feature films, video, audio, anything, listen for these things, and you will learn in no time these things are so easy to learn and so easy to use, that it will change your class, it will get you more friends, more business partners, more clients, more happy customers, than you may have just now, next.

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### 3. SLOW TEMPO IS A MARKER OF POLITENESS.

- Slow tempo helps both, speakers and listeners.
- English is a slow tempo language.
- English speakers pause after phrase, clause & sentence.



A slow tempo is also a marker of politeness. If you speak very rapidly, then you have a lot of people do not understand you, and you have difficulty in understanding them, they have difficulty understanding you. Moreover, people think you are not very polite. Should you speak that way? Or should you speak, come on, please. Let us talk in a manner that I am understood by my listeners. My listeners get time to understand and appreciate what I might say. In the

beginning, you might think it is a bit too slow. It may also sound artificial, unnatural to some people. But please, believe me, this is natural.

This is good. It is possible that in the beginning, people may laugh at you. But soon they will imitate you, and soon they will also learn to speak this way because this is your best guarantee to be understood worldwide. Nobody will ask you to pardon me. What did you say please repeat? We will look at some of these things as well. So, slow tempo, as we have said helps both speakers and listeners and English; particularly it is slow tempo language. In English, you have a pause not only at the end of the sentence, but you have a pause also in the middle of a sentence.

Unlike many Asian languages, which pause only at the end of the sentence, in Hindi or Tamil, you might say you only at the end of the sentence you might pause you will say, there was a king who had three daughters. Well, not in English in English, you should say, there was a king, and he had three daughters. They were all highly accomplished. But the king had not yet found suitable matches for them. So, English is a slow tempo language; here it is obligatory for you, you do not have a choice.

If you want to speak global English, then you better pause after phrase, after clause, and after sentences, brief pause maybe a couple of seconds or even less. But you know, an audible pause, I am saying an audible silence, which is a contradiction in terms. But you know, when you speak continuously, and you go silent suddenly for a couple of seconds like I did now, then people notice it you need that kind of pause, and this also does not take a long time to learn you learn it in no time. Provided you have a mind to provide you pay attention to. Go next.



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- In English, different words are stressed differently.
- Vowels sounds in English are very long or very short.



English has a peculiar problem; no other language has that. That the question of variant word stress. You pronounce one Word one way. Where is the capital of the United Kingdom? And you say London, main stress of the initial syllable. London, where is the main stress? London, not on the second syllable. You do not say London. Not towards the second Word. You do not say London, you say London but, where is the capital of Germany? Berlin, you do not say Berlin, you say Berlin is on the second syllable. Which country has the city called Buenos Aires? What we in India generally call Buenos Aires.

So, Argentina is Argentina, India is India but Nepal second syllable, Japan, end of the Word Nepal, end of the Word, Brazil end of the Word, but Pakistan end of the Word but not India, we do not say India in English, we say India, we do not say united, you say united. So, you know somewhere it is on the first part union, we do not say union. So, in English word stress varies from Word to Word. And that makes it a slightly difficult language a little more difficult language to learn for pronunciation, especially for those of us who have not been born talking this language. But if we pay attention, we can learn.

Similarly, there is just another, not too many, only one or two. English does not have a problem of Hindi; it does not have grammatical gender, you do not have to learn whether a table is a masculine and chair is feminine, and tea is masculine, sugar, sorry, tea is feminine. In Hindi, sugar is feminine; in Hindi, the salt is masculine. In English, you do not have to learn these

things. Even in French in many other European languages, you have to learn, even articles can be feminine and masculine.

In French, you have one kind of article for a boy, and another kind of article for a girl (Speaking French). In English, you do not have this problem. The girl, the boy, the bus, the end, you go on. But this is the problem in English. That is, this word stress varies from Word to Word. Then some of its vowels are very long, almost twice as long as vowels as some sounds in many Indian languages. They do not say the car; I come to the office daily in a car. No, that is not English. English is, I come to the office daily in a car, they open their jaws wide. I come to the office daily in a car. That is English. They do not go to market. They go to market, very long.

Sometimes so long, that it becomes two vowels in how do you cross the river? And the English men answered you, in a boat? Not in a boat. In a boat. So, that can maybe we do not have to make it as long but definitely longer than it is generally in our accents. On the other hand, some vowels in their accent are very short, hardly heard it is bought, where you hardly hear, ago, away, a rise, a for, a miss is hardly heard before but is hardly hear before, behind, below, beneath, hardly heard but for his long, low is long below, between tween is long, but Be is hardly anything. These things are learned with a drill in no time; we will have some session there next.

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- Good spoken English is a product of good listening habits.



## VIDEO CLIP

**Video link:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3zyVW\\_SMbA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3zyVW_SMbA)

Please watch the section 00.00-4.09

**Source:** Eros Now Music(YouTube)

**Video description:** Manhattan song from the movie *English Vinglish*. We are using 4.09 minutes of this video for academic purposes.



Good English will not come to you only from the classroom. Classroom and your teacher, including my colleagues and me, are like coaches to you. We can tell you what you should learn first, and how you should learn, but you have to do the learning. That is your responsibility, just as I cannot walk for you, no matter how much I respect you, how much I love you, like you. No matter how much your mother likes or loves you, she cannot walk for you. She cannot speak for you; you have to do that. Similarly, here, you have to cultivate certain habits.

And one of these is the habits of good listening. Do not be happy only listening to what entertains you go beyond look at the variety. Look at, of course, listen to songs, of course, watch movies, of course, watch documentaries, Of course, you watch football and cricket matches in any other game that you like. But sometimes, while watching part of the time, pay attention also to the manner of speech, not just to the matter of speech, not just to the meaning. But also, the language. See how they pronounce, how they use which Word. And in no time you will learn that and soon you may also be speaking that way. I would like you to pay attention only to two words and both the names of a place, a big city called New York. It is not New York; it is New York and a part of that city called Manhattan. But you will hear these two words Manhattan and New York in a variety of accents.

Listen to it pause after one first play and make a note in how many different tones how many different accents you heard the same words and then played again to check if you heard them right? that is the practice you need to do yourself need to give yourself, first time listen to it for

the song enjoy this song, this is all right for young people, not for the likes of me. But then I thought I might entertain you to give you a break from the likes of me. Okay.

I can recommend this movie to you. This film to you, you know it shows how determined housewife who spoke no English until about she went to New York and one evening decides to learn and within a few weeks she has starts speaking, of course, initially she makes mistakes, she's hesitant, but she overcomes her hesitant, overcomes her shyness and becomes a very effective and fluent speaker of English. All we need to do is to decide that we want to have it and we have it. Okay?

So, coming back, learn to listen, listen for tone various kinds of voices in which the same thing is spoken and said and once you have your ears are tuned to them once your ears start getting various tunes, your mind will immediately catch the tool you should use in a particular situation you do not require special training that way. Therefore, we have said learn to listen good spoken English is a product of good listening habits it goes with the rest of nature, you and I know no language, which we have either not heard first or not read first is not that speaking precedes listening, listening precede speaking. In some cases, the reading precedes writing it just like that, next.

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10. See the following books and sites for more . .  
a. *Better Spoken English* by Shreesh Chaudhary, Vikas Publishing Co., New Delhi



- b. *Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English*, any edition  
c. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w71Hj7i4eg>>  
d. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNuC0B1ffRs>>  
e. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARvrvJV4th4>>



Finally, there are resource books English; that way is a very rich language of all languages in the world today. English can very easily claim the largest number of publications of books, papers, newspapers, news articles, millions of mails, millions and billions of messages, crossing the world from one phone to another.

Books, newspapers with standard book numbers, feature film documentaries, there is so much to read so much to learn, that one life does not seem enough, no other language that we can come even remotely close to the number of publications that the English language gets every year worldwide. India alone produces more than 50,000 books of Standard Book Number in English every year.

Then think of countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, they also produce books for learning languages, you have a variety of dictionaries, different kinds of them, one company alone has 28 different kinds going in markets in India. Which dictionary would you buy? There are of course advice if you like search net and see which dictionary you would like to buy. But some of these dictionaries advanced learner's dictionary, not necessarily Oxford, who I mentioned it I show you the cover page of this because I happen to have a copy of it. But any advanced learner's dictionary from any company, Collins, Cambridge, Long man, they all have advanced learner's dictionary.

They give you pronunciation and usage, meaning, nearly everything other than etymology, nearly everything other than the origin of the Word. So have an advanced learner's dictionary these days, you know, you have E-versions, electronic versions of these dictionaries, you can have them on your phone. So, that you know you can check pronunciation and usage anytime you are in doubt, like I do, you know, whenever I am in doubt, I check my phone. So, have a dictionary handy. And then some of these books, like this book better is spoken English.

Unfortunately, it has my name; I feel embarrassed. But then you know, it has a claim upon you the claim is; this book was prepared after listening to a set of undergraduate students at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras over a few years, the presentations they made, their teachers, their colleagues, their friends.

So, we recorded those things, we listen to them, and we found that there were about 6 to 700 words, long words, by long words I mean, more than one syllable, not a cat, not a rat, but words

like a monkey, we will have a session on long syllable words, monkey, elephant, University. So nearly 6 to 700 long words, which are frequently used and wrongly pronounced. So, we collected those words together in this book. And I taught courses with this book for almost 30 years at IIT Madras, and all my students were very happy with this book with the course they came back and said, Thank you, sir.

It had changed me; it has helped me change my accent. Of course, the book cannot change your accent. The book can help you change your accent. So, that is how I recommend this book. But you need not buy this book; you can have your own list. Think of the words to frequently use, check with the dictionary, see where you go wrong. And make a list of those words where you go wrong, get correct pronunciation from the dictionary. But the important thing is to do some drill in correct pronunciation, not for too long, for 10 minutes, maybe every day in the morning, and other 10 minutes in the evening, before you go to bed after you get up; when you are fresh when you really give your mind to it.

And you will find that within a few weeks, you are getting all your words right. Not only those with which you have practised but also those others, which follow the pattern of this Word just as you know, if you get the vowel in a cat, all right, you will get vowel in rat, sat, mat, that, hat. All right, as well. A mind is a wonderful machine, you give it a chance, and it programs and reprograms and re reprograms itself. The important thing is, give it exposure, give it a chance, give it time. Thank you very much. I hope you will enjoy other sessions also just like this in the coming days. Thank you very much for your attention.