Mirroring: Focusing on Thought Groups

When you are preparing a talk for presentation you can divide it into ‘thought groups’ – that is, units that express a key piece of information, delivered in a single breath.

Each thought group will usually have between 2 and 4 main stresses or ‘beats’, and the main intonation shift (usually a falling tone) will be on the final beat in the group.

For illustration, I have taken the opening of a TED talk by Jennifer Doudna, ‘We can now edit DNA, but let’s do it wisely’

http://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer\_doudna\_we\_can\_now\_edit\_our\_dna\_but\_let\_s\_do\_it\_wisely/transcript

A few years ago, with my colleague, Emmanuelle Charpentier, I invented a new technology for editing genomes. It's called CRISPR-Cas9. The CRISPR technology allows scientists to make changes to the DNA in cells that could allow us to cure genetic disease.

You might be interested to know that the CRISPR technology came about through a basic research project that was aimed at discovering how bacteria fight viral infections. Bacteria have to deal with viruses in their environment, and we can think about a viral infection like a ticking time bomb -- a bacterium has only a few minutes to defuse the bomb before it gets destroyed. So, many bacteria have in their cells an adaptive immune system called CRISPR, that allows them to detect viral DNA and destroy it.

Part of the CRISPR system is a protein called Cas9, that's able to seek out, cut and eventually degrade viral DNA in a specific way. And it was through our research to understand the activity of this protein, Cas9, that we realized that we could harness its function as a genetic engineering technology -- a way for scientists to delete or insert specific bits of DNA into cells with incredible precision -- that would offer opportunities to do things that really haven't been possible in the past.

Divide the transcript into thought groups, and highlight the beats in **bold** and the intonation shifts by **underlining**.

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1. Choose your own presentation to mirror. You might wish to choose a different presentation from www.ted.com. A section of a talk of 1-3 minutes is sufficient.

2. Start by watching the video of your model with the sound off. Pay attention to the gestures, facial expressions and other features of non-verbal communication

3. Revise the transcript of the video into thought groups, with primary stresses and the intonation shifts marked.

4. Record a trial version, but look up at the camera to deliver the thought groups. Get feedback from your friends.

5. Practise and practise until you have memorised the monologue. Focus systematically on issues like rhythm, intonation, emotion.

6. If you struggle to express the emotion, use method acting – think of or imagine a time when you felt this way.

7. If you struggle to memorise the script accurately – improvise.

8. When you are happy with your performance, upload a recording of it to moodle.