

## Lippi-Green's Linguistic Facts of Life

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why is the idea of enforcing a national standard for height and size problematic?
  - a. What about language standards? Are you in favor, against, or you don't really care whether such standards exist or not?
2. If we're hard-wired to learn languages, why is it so difficult to learn a second language? If language learning is all about a gene (the FOXP2 gene), then why do people reach different levels of expertise?
3. What is the difference between linguistic descriptivism and linguistic prescriptivism? Which of these two positions is assumed by most linguists? Who are and where are the prescriptivists? Do you know a person who thinks (or/and act) like a prescriptivist?
4. Dennis Preston believes that people's opinion about language is more important than the linguists' informed opinion on the subject. Why is that?
5. How can you prove that all languages change? Think of possible examples to back up this claim.
6. Consider the rules of grammar as seen by linguists and as seen by prescriptivists. Pinker's taxicab maxim represents these two points of view using the metaphor of two different laws. Which law would correspond to the prescriptivists' views, and which to the linguists? What exactly does Pinker want to imply with this metaphor?
7. Why does Lippi-Green say that evaluating a message in terms of clarity, logic, conciseness, persuasiveness, and delivery is complicated? Which could be the risk when evaluating a persons' language following these standards?
8. According to Lippi-Green, which was the reason that made the adoption of a standardized form of English necessary? Evaluate its pros and cons. Can conformity be considered problematic? Why?
9. Do you know people that usually correct the online language of their facebook/twitter friends? Have you ever been corrected by or corrected others? What do you think about this practice after reading this chapter?
10. How can power issues be connected with this interest in the purity of written language?

11. According to Lippi-Green. Which were the original purposes for which speech and written language were created?
12. Summarize at least five points in which speech and written language differ (You don't have to write this now, only comment your points with your peers).
13. Have you ever received lessons on how to speak? Share that experience if you have? If not, what exactly would you like to do well when speaking?
14. Why do people consider that illiterate societies are more primitive or limited than literate ones? Why does Gee refers to the idea of the superiority of literacy as a Myth?
15. Which are the three main sources of variation in spoken language? Can you think of some examples?