



**Department of Spanish Studies, General Linguistics and Literature Theory  
University of Alicante**

*Undergraduate level*

## **LINGUISTICS 8806**

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### **Task Sheet 7**

**Academic year: 2009-2010**

#### **PART I. BEGINNING LINGUISTICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE**

**KEY TOPIC(S):**

- **Prescription vs. Description.**

#### **READING ASSIGNMENT 2**

The purpose of this session is to get you to reflect on the idea of language as an emotional subject and the prescriptive tradition.

#### ***PAIR ACTIVITY – Language as an emotional subject***

According to Crystal, “language belongs to everyone; so most people feel they have a right to hold an opinion about it. And when opinions differ, emotions can run high”. Working in pairs, give examples of polemic arguments people usually give on:

- language use
- major policies of linguistic planning
- education

Report/Summarise the most important points raised in your pair work session back to the class, and then discuss ‘tertiary responses’ people usually give to these arguments.



**PAIR ACTIVITY – Prescription vs. Description**

1.- Working in pairs, define the term *prescriptivism* using your own words:

2.- Discuss George Orwell’s attempt to halt the decline in the language by following six basic rules.

3.- Do you agree with the view expressed in the text that “grammarians should ‘discover’ and not ‘invent’ linguistic rules”? Remember that to give your opinion alone is not enough; you must back it up with some facts or evidence from the text you have just read.



4.- Discuss how popular ideas about the existence of languages of excellence discussed in Task sheet 5 relate to issues discussed by the author in this second reading assignment.

5.- Using Crystal's text as a guide, discuss your own views about the widely held belief that change necessary means deterioration and decay. Give examples or describe situations from your own personal experience.



6.- Imagine that one of you is in favour of language change and the other is against it. Decide which side you would like to speak for and prepare a speech 'for' or 'against' this topic. Quickly write down as many points and examples for or against it as you can think of and then state your own position.