Language: You Need to Have Standards

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech... And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” – Genesis 11:1-4

The primary function of language, and by association writing, is to communicate ideas between sets of individuals. That said, among the seven billion people who live on this planet, there are quite a few unique spoken languages. Unless two people from separate backgrounds are both relatively fluent in the same secondary language, there would be little chance of their being able to communicate. Fortune has it that this issue has been resolved through the introduction of a *lingua franca*, or a language that bridges communication for individuals who do not share the same primary language. Individuals who need to interact are able to do so through learning a common, shared language that will allow them to communicate outside of their cultural box.

Standardized rules for English, simply put, mean that English speakers, native or non-native, will have the opportunity to learn a single language that will allow them to communicate across cultural and geographic boundaries. Teaching standard English means that a student could reliably go to any part of the world *where English is spoken*, officially or otherwise, and expect to be able to communicate. Furthermore, it means that a student would be able to partake in academic, professional, or legal discussions that are conducted in formal English.

But this, as a rule, only serves to justify why we should learn English. If you’re reading this, you likely already speak relatively fluent English, and there isn’t dire need to convince you of the merits of learning the most widely-spoken language. But the issue is more why should we master *formal* English, specifically? As noted before, standardized rules mean reliable
communication. It will suffice to say that anything that facilitates better communication will have positive results. Having one set of English rules that all English speakers have learned means that those people will be able to express their ideas to other people, and have their opinions understood. The ability to verbalize opinions is not enough if we are unable to do so coherently. The ability to communicate effectively is a necessity to succeed in any part of the international professional world.

Formal English is a vehicle to communicate intelligently in an academic community. Standard rules mean that individuals will be able to understand others and be understood by others when they vocalize their ideas. Technology has progressed to the point where international communication can take seconds. This means that today, the seven billion people who are alive are more interconnected than any other people at any other part of history. As communication becomes easier, it is more important that everyone is able to articulately express their ideas. I started this post out with a part of the story of the Tower of Babel because it expresses a key part of this idea: Communication is vital to our existence. It allows us to interact with other humans. Furthermore, when communication is facilitated by technology, such that many people across the world are able to communicate with each other in one language, we are able to aspire to greater things than we could dream of alone.