

English grammar is now almost anorexic. For would-be English speakers and writers to be confidently in control of their native language should reflect a loftier goal than merely to secure passing grades from some picayune, nit-picking English or foreign language teacher. Ages ago, one such teacher, the supervisor of Spanish teaching assistants, berated me in front of my students for omitting one out of eleven uses of the Spanish *se* as listed in Ramsey and Spaulding's Spanish grammar—her bible, evidently, but with more commandments. I was told never to repeat such faux pas. I have taught French, German, Russian, and Spanish grammar at seven American universities and English grammar at Yunnan Normal University in China. I commend Spain for naming 1492 its *annum mirabile*, or “miracle year,” commemorated for marking the expulsion of the Moors, the discovery of America, and last, but not least, the publication by Elio Antonio de Lebrija, or Nebrija (1441–1522), of a Castilian grammar credited as the first published Romance language grammar. It was said that as a scholar Nebrija suggested to Columbus that he capture the New World by way of the language of the place rather than by arms and weapons.

With English our task is not insurmountable. At least know when a noun or pronoun is the subject or object of verbs and prepositions. Don't say *between you and I* when you'd never dream of saying *between he and she*, *between I and they*, *between they and we*. Unlike Anne Curzan, I prefer for stylistic reasons not to use *hopefully* as an exclamation, when it essentially is an adverb desperately looking for a verb to hitch itself to. We use it in the sense of the Spanish interjection *ojalá*, meaning “I hope so,” “Let's hope so,” “God willing.” The Germans have besides *hoffnungsvoll*, our *hopeful*, a similar term, *hoffentlich*, listing it as an adverb, when it rather plays the role of an interjection. I also believe that semantically speaking, with regard to their etymological origin, all adverbs are not created equal. Stylistically, I don't have a problem with *Presumably my lottery ticket will win*. However, etymologically the German *hoffen*, “to hope,”

is related to *hüpfen*, “to hop.” Given this original semantic relation, a sentence that begins, “Hopefully,” suggests to me an image of someone jumping up and down in hopeful, wildly excited expectation. Hence, for stylistic rather than strictly grammatical reasons I find *Let's hope, I hope, God willing* preferable to *hopefully*. Admit it! *I hope to fall in love with her* is better than *Hopefully I will fall in love with her*. “The style is the man” and, I might add, “the woman.”

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TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to take exception to Anne Curzan's decision to allow students to, as she says, “choose not to follow the prescriptive usage rule that forbids treating *they* as singular as long as they demonstrate” what she calls “audience awareness in explicitly recognizing their choice . . .” (870). She apparently has them footnote this choice, citing herself as their referential authority. However, when she goes on to discuss “[d]escriptive grammar” as “what speakers actually do” and “prescriptive grammar” as “language etiquette” or what she claims other linguists call “table manners,” she negates her own argument (871).

What is wrong with table manners, particularly at a university, where the students in question are doing their writing? Students, in fact, come to a university to obtain table manners. Curzan seems imbued with a kind of misplaced empathy with speakers whose use of language she thinks reflects that of their communities. She even admits that “the teaching of grammar and usage conventions should follow an additive model—an expansion of students' repertoires—rather than a replacement model” (873). Accordingly, it ought to be incumbent upon those in a university who are in a position to do so to expand and not restrict a student's language repository.

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