GRAMMAR POLICE AMONG NEWLY-GRADUATE ENGLISH TEACHERS

by:
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By whose authority one is ascribed to be perfect – in grammar, in conversation, in intellect? If none, there is a problem either in the way a teacher teaches; or how the student consigned their learning.

As a neophyte graduate with less than a year of qualified experience, it is just right to correct our students’ grammar. Is it not why we are here? To correct each phrase that connects to a sentence; each sentence that connects to a paragraph. And so on.

With every good-sounding words or phrases, we give each student an applause from the class. With each sentence composes an idea – of which the teacher complimented with a good grade. And when, at the end of the class, those who can accomplish English as a second language receives commendations; and sorry for those who are not good enough to converse fluently. But these are wrong - an improper decorum among English teachers. How much trouble has been given to their students? How well have they learned – or not at all? It has been so because teachers acted as if the so-called Grammar Police.

These people seems to have an academic Checkpoint: one that would stop anyone from driving (speaking or conversing). In the same way, these teachers would ‘stop’ anyone from expressing thoughts and ideas just because of wrong grammar! And for each wrong grammar, the grade declines, the student cries. Until the student becomes too weary, depressed, de-esteemed, and ‘bullied’ at some way.
On the other hand, this is not the way a teacher should be doing in the class. Though a teacher is tasked to correct and guide, they are not tasked to attack and bout with the students’ capacity. Correcting one’s grammar should be approached with sincerity and respect. Teachers should not look like police in front of the classroom whose very presence invites fear and discomposure. But should be a model of an esteemed and respectable person where corrections are meant not to destroy but as an enlightenment that construct self-esteem and confidence.

When these students are able to feel respect, it encourages belongingness. If one feel they ‘belong,’ they will not feel fear that the teacher would mock them and bring out the emotions off them; not discomposure because of the confidence they felt. A teacher should learn all these manifestations of a good classroom management. If only English major teachers would learn to cease from being grammar police, students would not have the angst to speak. The anguish they felt will be replaced with confidence; and at the end the teacher will realize how they taught.

To wit, a good and effective English major teacher is not the one who know everything but the one knows how to teach the class with respect and establish confidence among the students. There will be a double win – the students win because of the child-friendly and student-centered academic set-up; and the teacher wins the learning but captures the heart of the class. Though some teachers deflect from this basic educational goal, most of the teachers would learn about these as years of teaching go by. It is quite beautiful to see how happy one’s class is when everything is done with principle and love. For even a newly-graduate teacher can learn from the experiences, and others well-experienced teacher should learn from their students furthermore.

Teachers should and can, once again, correct their students’ grammar but with respect. As the old saying goes, respect begets respect. By the way, no one is perfect.
References: