



ISSN 2348 – 6937 (Print)
ISSN 2348 – 6945 (Online)

Scholar Critic

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE,
LITERATURE AND CULTURE STUDIES

(TRIANNUAL REFEREED, OPEN ACCESS, ONLINE & PRINT JOURNAL)

Volume-1 Issue-1 April 2014

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www.scholarcritic.com

Etiquettes in English: Where? and How?

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“Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction:

Techno savvy generation would conduct themselves in a commendable manner if they dwell on the works of A.G.Gardiner. The impressions that one gains by reading such an author should last a life time. The word ‘etiquette’ is the most significant aspect in one's personality finding expression in almost all facets of one's disposition towards disparate issues.

Etiquette, one aspect of decorum, is a code that governs the expectations of social behaviour according to the contemporary conventional norm within a society, social class or group. Usually unwritten, it may be codified in written form. Etiquette usually reflects formulas of conduct in which society or tradition has invested. Etiquette may reflect an underlying ethical code.

This paper evaluates the various areas where etiquettes play a major role in the civilized world.

Etiquettes –What?

Etiquette is defined as those rules that govern social behavior, and they include socially acceptable rules of behavior to be used by all members of a given society on every social interaction, from saying excuse me when you cough to handling unruly children in the classroom.

Naomi Polson, who received her etiquette certificate in Washington DC and is the Founding Director of The Etiquette Company, says, “Etiquette has to do with good manners. It's not so much our own good manners, but making other people feel comfortable by the way we behave. So it's more or less thinking of others and how others perceive us: So that everyone knows the rules for doing things and everyone is in a very comfortable position in society.”

Etiquettes – Why?

"He who observes etiquette but objects to lying is like someone who dresses fashionably but wears no vest." – Walter Benjamin

Etiquette is essentially presenting oneself in a fashion that conveys a fine civil sense. These are not legal rules and they don't have to be followed, but it is these rules that help to keep order in society. It is important to understand that social skills are important to create the right impression on the person with whom we are likely to have business dealing or just to have interaction.

Etiquette is the underlying factor in every expression of one's temperament, of all its aspects the etiquette of speech is the most significant as it is the speech which is the clear exhibition of one's character. Everyone is affected by your etiquette skills whether they are good or bad, so let's begin to polish them. Etiquette is much more than just minding one's manners – it requires outward action as well.

Etiquettes-Where? & How?

Business Etiquettes

Etiquette, in a general sense, refers to conventional rules of social behavior or professional conduct. In a business context, etiquette means a set of rules that guides personal interaction to ensure a comfortable atmosphere that invites mutual respect and communication and helps one through the social dynamics of the job search process.

Survival in the workplace depends on many attributes of the

employee, one of them being office etiquette. Etiquette is a combination of many various attitudes of a person, all of which combine to the final outlook which creates an impression which can make or break a person. The following tips are worth reflecting upon:

Punctuality -

- Be on time. Arrive early, but never be late. Set an example for those who arrive late.
- If traffic jams always cause delays, plan ahead and set out early.
- If you use public transport, also plan ahead and set out early. Hitch a lift from a colleague or friend on days you cannot find public transport.
- Remember, rainy days always indicate heavy traffic, and if you do get stuck in traffic, call the office and let them know that you will be late.

Dress Appropriately -

- While getting dressed for the office, look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself if you can go to a party in these clothes after work. If your answer is NO, then rest assured that you are dressed appropriately for work.
- Always remember to abide by the professional office dress code. Wear clothes that fit properly, too tight or too loose are not options.

Stay away from gossip-

- Most of us believe that it is okay to indulge in gossip about each and every colleague in the office. Remember, there is no place for gossip mongers in the work environment.
- If you gossip about a colleague, please keep in mind that the same colleague might gossip about you. So even if you habitually gossip, make a concerted effort to stay away from gossip.

Respect one another -

- Learn to respect your seniors and colleagues. Remember, your behavior can take you a long way.
- Respect others in order to gain respect for yourself.
- Avoid speaking loudly. Control your vocal pitch.

The success of a business depends on the manner in which we conduct ourselves. Let others speak and refrain from interrupting them, especially your seniors. If you want to be heard, you must be ready to let others speak as well. We should display the ability to project ourselves into the lives of our counterparts at the negotiation table, trying to understand their needs and perspective. (Pfeiffer,2007)

Techno Etiquettes

It has assumed great importance in today's world. Technology is a disguised curse and speed is the concomitant result of technology. We are literally inundated with communication tools –fax, tele-conferencing, e-mail, mobile and voice mail etc

A few E-Mail Etiquette Tips:

- Be Concise and to the point. Avoid long sentences.
- Answer all Questions.
- Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation.
- Make it personal.
- Answer swiftly.
- Use active instead of passive.
- Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.
- Do not send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.
- Do not forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.
- Keep your language gender neutral.
- Do not reply to Spam.

The human element of 'connectedness' is lost in the labyrinth of technological sophistication. This can lead to a major communication break down and it is imperative that etiquette is given its due to avoid disasters.

The need of the hour is to be conscious of cell phone etiquettes for it has invaded the privacy of every human being. To communicate effectively in the digital age, we need to be masters of techno-social etiquettes to stay ahead of the pack.

Social Networking and Netiquettes:

While staying ‘connected’ with proper etiquettes in face to face communication is important, the absence of proximity of the human element might have been apparent with email, sms and talk on the mobile. But with web 2.0 making its way into the social closeness of people across time zones and cultures the importance of netiquette is increasing. Be it a chat or a live event on Elluminate, Adobe Connection or an event at Second Life or any other social networking tool netiquettes are important. Netiquettes and techno-social safeness in the academic and professional scenario have to be discussed in classrooms quite often because of immediacy of information, available just a click away and the active probing of virtual participants. If open social networks are to be used, it makes sense to develop a respective “netiquette.” Furthermore, teachers need to create awareness of privacy settings (Panke, Stefanie 2010).

In a virtual class or in a live presentation in a web conference if one uses capital letters, Example: ‘HELLO EVERYBODY’ in the chat then it would be considered as shouting. The language expressions and emoticons that are used convey subtle nuances of meaning. So it is imperative to be conscious of what we think and type in order to convey the same meaning.

Can one laugh out loud – ‘lol’ in the cyberspace? Yes, but again it is always in a friendly manner that one has to use ‘lol’ and when you have really understood the point of view in the chat. The words, phrases become acronyms in the chat language and best netiquette way is not to use them if you don’t understand them. The list goes endless, *lol*: laughing out loud, *rofl*: rolling on the floor laughing, *brb*: be right back, *afk*: away from the keyboard, *ty*: thank you, *thx*: thanks, *np*: no problem. Courtesy demands one to know that language of this kind also has its own nuances of meanings behind the screen and when an avatar starts a formal interaction in Second Life.

Netiquettes in Second Life

Second life affects real life to a considerable extent according to a research conducted by Bailenson, J. at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab (VHIL) (Dell, Kristina 2008).

Though one can behave and talk in any manner in the virtual world words like *afk* have lot meaning in terms of the presence of the person

behind the avatar. So 'generic' etiquettes need to be practiced and does influence the real world. Well the tips for SL etiquettes perhaps closely associated with the social aspects of knowing how to pick up conversation with a total stranger. As mentioned in the website <http://www.sltriptips.com/etiquette> one has to learn the tricks of the game in the SL world because there are thousands of sub-worlds. Being polite will kill you in City of Lost Angels (Vampyre-Demon battleground). The old axiom "when in Rome...", and you should be fine is the same in the virtual and real world. This social aspect does affect our real world conversations as well so the basics of one's etiquettes will be built on openness in thought, showing curiosity and a casual approach.

Social Etiquette

Etiquette is a comprehensive term, for it embraces not only all observances connected with social intercourse, but such as belong particularly to the home circle. Family bickering and strife; a lack of politeness, good-breeding and etiquette, would turn the loveliest Eden into a barren waste. Etiquette is essentially presenting oneself in a fashion that conveys a fine civil sense. It is important to understand that social skills are important to create the right impression on the person with whom we are likely to have business dealing or just to have interaction. Social skills comprise of the ability to converse intelligently and transact purposefully with an individual or a group of individuals. (Deepa, 2005)

Society programs men and women to act differently. Gender, race, age and religion and many other factors affect our behaviour. These factors are like operating systems that programme us to behave in certain patterns (Guffey, 2005). Wordsworth said, "A child is the father of man." It is worth remembering that the early impressions a child receives last a life time. Since childhood, etiquettes play a vital role in the life of every individual. The common expressions like 'Please,' 'Thank you,' and 'sorry' are the three pillars on which we build a civilized world.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures. This ability can exist in someone at a young age, or may be developed and improved due to willpower and competence. The bases for a successful intercultural communication are emotional

competence, together with intercultural sensitivity.

According to one international authority, “English has emerged as the lingua franca of world commerce in much the same way that Greek did in the ancient world of the West and China did in the East.”(Naomi Kameda, 1996)

Some words can be used in different ways in different cultures. For example, “The Chinese *yes*, like the Japanese *yes*, can often be understood by Americans and British as their English *yes*. But the Chinese *yes* often means ‘I am listening. ’Or it may be understood in English as the opposite.” (Jensen J Zhao,2000)

In order to acquire intercultural competence, we need to know more than one language well. But the competence required is beyond the reach of many of us. The best course is to be aware that translation problems exist and then to ask questions to determine what the other person understands.(Lesikar ,Flatley, 2005)

Conclusion

In the Preface to a book entitled “Today’s Etiquette”, published back in1941 by Double Day Doran and written by Lillian Eichler,it is written: “Good manners are not only indispensable in society, but they have a very practical value in the business world. Breeding is an essential part of the equipment of anyone who wishes to go far in his particular work or profession.....There is, indeed, nothing that costs less and at the same time is of more value to you than good manners.”

Although the spirit of etiquette remains always essentially the same, the expression of etiquette- the rules of conduct which govern social life and our associations with one another- is forever adjusting itself to new conditions. So, in other words, learn the definition of etiquette early. Take in all the basic knowledge that we can now, so that we too can adjust to our ever changing world.

“There's nothing in the world like etiquette,
In kingly chambers or imperial halls,
As also at the race and county balls.”

- Byron

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