

# Teaching Etiquette to Graduate Students in the English Classroom to Accelerate the Onboarding Process at their Future Workplace



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### ABSTRACT

*A study was conducted to determine if teaching etiquette to graduate students in the English classroom would accelerate the onboarding process at their future workplace. The methodology adopted included aggregation of common ten etiquette requirements across three divergent work places, setting up of a questionnaire that identified if a particular etiquette in a work place was a pre-requisite to joining the work place, was taught from basics as part of onboarding process and if it was mandatory for continuance of the fresher at the workplace. The study revealed that etiquette is considered important by 62.91% of the participants and communicating with verbal, non-verbal, written and listening etiquette with a score of 66.44% is the most sought after etiquette proving that etiquette need to be taught in the English classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Etiquette, Onboarding acceleration, Future workplace*

## Introduction

Etiquette is a code or rules of social behavior that is expected of an individual within a society. Etiquette comes from French that literally means tag or label or ticket. This word was later used to denote politeness and good behavior and taught from a young age. Etiquette is both verbal (linguistic) and non-verbal (social). While the word itself is recent dating back to a few hundred years, the codes of behavior have been in use for

thousands of years, right from the time of the early man when people started settling in communities, having food together and for rituals.

## Why teach etiquette to graduate students?

The first role change in life happens to a student on graduation wherein the student is scrutinized not only for educational capabilities but also on professional behavior and is

deemed to be mature in interacting with the society. It is therefore imperative that a graduate student formally learns about etiquette so as to act with confidence and civility. Teaching etiquette to graduate students would not only enhance their behavior but also help them to become compassionate and loyal individuals and can greatly reduce future problems they may develop or encounter in life or at the workplace.

### **Why teach etiquette in the English Classroom?**

In a world where English has emerged as the global language and, therefore, the language of opportunities, it is the responsibility of teachers to teach their students not only to become fluent in English but also to be elegant and becoming experts in etiquette so that students can interact confidently worldwide and also appreciate the etiquette of other cultures.

### **What is a future workplace?**

Graduation is one of the most important phases in life for an individual during which the student takes the first, independent and major decision on what to do next. The paths generally taken are

i. Pursuing Higher Education: Options include Master degrees, Research and Business schools and can be within the country or abroad. A student of higher education is considered to be matured and well versed not only in knowledge and skills but also in personal attributes and should know on how to interact with professors and others.

ii. Earning a Living: Many students opt for this path as it provides for financial stability and independence almost immediately. The path can still be difficult to follow since companies have a stringent screening process that not only tests the knowledge and skills but also the personal attributes of the student.

iii. Following a Passion: Some students are more willing to follow their passion and this could lead them to a vocation of their own and could include public services and individual interests. Students pursuing this path also need to diligently follow the systems and conventions of the profession.

### **What is an onboarding process?**

A fresher to an organization is required to go through a process called onboarding. It can also be called orientation or training and can range from a couple of hours to months depending on the expectations of the organization on the individual.

### **Research Objective and Hypothesis**

The objective of this study was to determine if teaching etiquette to graduate students in the English classroom would indeed accelerate the onboarding process at their future workplace.

### **Research Questions**

- i. Is etiquette common across all workplaces?
- ii. Is etiquette a pre-requisite to join a workplace?

- iii. Should etiquette be taught before a graduate student joins a work place?
- iv. Does a fresher with knowledge of etiquette enjoy an advantage?
- v. Is the English classroom the best place to learn etiquette?

### **Research Methodology**

The study was divided into four phases namely Identification, Formulation, Test and Analysis. The identification phase categorized the etiquette in each identified work environment and the top ten etiquettes common in the identified work environments. The formulation phase drew up the study parameters, quantitative measures and the form design with questionnaire for use in the survey. The test phase defined the sample universe and the data collection process. In the analysis phase, the collected data was compiled and analyzed using statistical and visualization tools.

To ensure practicability and limit the scope of this study, three work environments were identified for conducting the survey. They were Corporate work environment (software, banking, manufacturing, etc.), Armed Forces (military, police etc.) and Academic (higher education, research institutes etc.). The reasoning for identifying the above workplaces is due to the varying degree of etiquette requirements demanded and the consequence for not adhering to etiquette in each environment even though sourcing of new recruits in each environment is done from the same set of graduate students.

So as to gather information for creating the survey, the researcher identified the most common etiquette practiced in each work environment by previous studies, discussions with practitioners in the field and a review of the literature, consolidated them and identified the common ten etiquette across the work environments. They were:

1. E01 - Always wear Uniform / Formal Dress / Business Casuals
2. E02 - Communicate with verbal, non-verbal, written and listening etiquette
3. E03 - Avoid conflict / liaison with seniors / peers / juniors
4. E04 - Know how, when and what to eat during official dining
5. E05 - Respect people by greeting / saluting / addressing with the right title
6. E06 - Adhere to organization guidelines while using electronic equipment (own and official)
7. E07 - Ensure discipline and hygiene
8. E08 - Follow procedures / rules / traditions while attending meetings / gatherings / classes
9. E09 - Ensure positive impression through body language / gentlemanly behavior / honesty
10. E10 - Be polite and act professional even when socializing

The survey response instrument (questionnaire form) was divided into two

sections. Section-1 gathered information about the participant that could be used to define and profile the subject. Section-2 listed the survey items (the top ten etiquette common in the identified environments) and probed the subject on each item using quantifiable measure so that a scientific and statistical analysis could be done on the survey response.

Considering that there were an unequal number of responses from each environment, a non-weighted analysis would have posed the majority environment an unfair advantage and would have skewed the results heavily in its favor thereby not

providing a level playing field. However, once a measure was provided a weight, the analysis was performed evenly across measures, across etiquette and across environments. Also note that the numerical values were not randomly assigned but assigned with the objective that the more it is necessary for etiquette to be known before hand, the more its weightage. For example, the value of Yes for joining prerequisite is 30 but the value of Yes for onboarding training is only 10. This ensured that the more the total values for the etiquette, the more the need to learn etiquette before joining a work place.

Measure	Value for Yes	Value for No	Value for Partial	Value for Not Applicable
Joining Prerequisite	30	10	20	0
On-Boarding Training	10	30	20	0
Instructions Documented	10	30	20	0
Strict Enforcement	30	10	20	0

Measure	Value for 1-Warning	Value for 2-Punishment	Value for 3-Dismissal	Value for 4-Not Applicable
Non-Compliance Outcome	10	20	30	0

The analysis phase included examining the surveys for correctness and completeness, compiling the data, incorporating quantitative measures and creating the analytics and derivations. Each analysis consisted of a narration, an aggregated table, an analysis chart and an inference. The list of analysis done included environment distribution, etiquette distribution, environment weighted average,

etiquette weighted average, environment weighted average – consolidated, etiquette weighted average – consolidated, etiquette by environment weighted average – consolidated and etiquette weighted average - environment vs measure.

For the study, participants from across the identified work environments were randomly selected with the only criteria that they

needed to head or earlier headed or should be or should have been a part of the team that formulates, trains and monitors etiquette in their respective work environments. Of the seventy-five questionnaires sent (twenty-five for each work environment), responses were received from forty-two including twelve responses that were unusable (responses that were either blank or were only partially complete or the response being undefined such that the data could not be entered without serious interpretation and alteration) and therefore discarded. With thirty usable responses, the response rate was 71% with seventeen from Corporate, eight from Academic and five from Armed Forces.

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis had brought out the following observations:

- i. Joining Prerequisite with a score of 91.22% indicated that students need to be knowledgeable on etiquette before joining a work place.
- ii. Onboarding Training with a score of 49.11% indicated that etiquette may not be taught comprehensively during the on-boarding process
- iii. Strict Enforcement with a score of 76.11% indicated that the students not only need to be knowledgeable but also constantly practice it.
- iv. Non-Compliance Outcome with a score of 46.22% indicated that while the reaction to non-compliance may have a

score of less than 50%, it can still be noted as an observation and could impact one's career.

- v. Communicating with verbal, non-verbal, written and listening etiquette with the highest score of 65.89% amongst all etiquette across environments emphasized the teaching of etiquette in the English Classroom.

The study also ensured that the research questions were answered as below:

- i. Is etiquette common across all work places? Yes. While there had been variations in certain etiquette scores, etiquette was considered essential in all work environments.
- ii. Is etiquette a pre-requisite to join a workplace? Yes. Due to an overwhelming "Yes" by all participants across work environments.
- iii. Should etiquette be taught before a graduate student joins a work place? Yes. Since it was considered as a prerequisite and also due to non-comprehensive teaching during onboarding
- iv. Does a fresher with knowledge of etiquette enjoy an advantage? Yes. Due to strict enforcement at all work environments
- v. Is English classroom the best place to learn etiquette? Yes. Due to the etiquette E02 - communicating with verbal, non-verbal, written and listening etiquette being the top scorer and also since this

etiquette could only be taught in the English classroom.

### **Conclusion**

Communicating with verbal, non-verbal, written and listening etiquette being the top most etiquette required and every environment voting for an overwhelming “Yes” to the joining prerequisite measure has helped in proving that teaching etiquette to graduate students in the English classroom accelerates the onboarding process at their future workplace. The research hypothesis had been positively and successfully proved.

### **References**

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