

Etiquette

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ABSTRACT

Etiquette simply refers to the customary code of polite behavior in society, or among members of a particular profession or group. There are rules that guide etiquette, but these rules keep changing. Etiquette is the social norms and expectations around how to behave in various interactions in society, which provides the code of conduct and the structure that subtly regulate the expected attitudes, behaviours, and manners of all members of society. The different types of etiquette include social etiquette i. e. the polite code of conduct in social settings, netiquette i. e. online network etiquette, and business etiquette, which is specific to professional settings.

This paper looks into etiquettes and the issues surrounding it.

KEYWORDS: *Etiquettes, manners, save face, lose face, the Golden Rule, governmental morality, justice, politeness*

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INTRODUCTION:

Etiquette is the customs or rules that govern behavior regarded as correct, appropriate, and or acceptable in social or official life, as shown in Figure 1. This could be conventional but unwritten code of practice that is followed by members of any of certain professions or groups. The different types of etiquette include social etiquette, netiquette – as shown in Figure 2, and professional etiquette. Historically, France was the first country that first used the term “etiquette” in court protocol outside Spain (Spanish court protocol), taking Napoleon’s 1806 imperial etiquette as a starting point [1].

HISTORY OF ETIQUETTE

During the third millennium BCE, the Ancient Egyptian vizier Ptahhotep wrote the Maxims of Ptahhotep (2375-2350 BCE), a didactic book of precepts extolling civil virtues as truthfulness, self-control, and kindness towards other people. Others include being mindful of the imperfection of human knowledge, avoiding open conflict whenever possible should not be considered as weakness, and that the pursuit of justice should be foremost. Ptahhotep’s other maxims indicate a person’s correct behaviors in

the presence of great personages (political, military, religious), and instructions on how to choose the right master and how to serve him. Other maxims teach the correct way to be a leader through openness and kindness, and greed is the base of all evil and should be guarded against, and that generosity towards family and friends is praiseworthy.

Confucius (551-479 BCE) was a Chinese intellectual and philosopher whose works emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, the pursuit of justice in personal dealings, and sincerity in all personal relations.

Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529 CE), count of Casatico, was an Italian courtier and diplomat, soldier, and author of The Book of the Courtier (1528) – which dealt with the questions of the etiquette and morality of the courtier during the Italian Renaissance [2].

Unlike manners, the history of which can be traced back to pre-historical times, the idea of etiquette finds its origins among the nobles in early modern France. Etiquette did not develop spontaneously like manners

did, but were originally consciously developed as a set of written rules for social interactions in polite company. The word “etiquette” was derived from the French word for placard, meaning that these rules were printed and posted. The education and sophistication of French nobles certainly a role in their conscious creation of the conventional rules for etiquette, but some historians believe they were simply bored and looking for something to do with their leisure time.

The king of France, Louis XIV (1638-1715) used this development to his advantage, by codifying a set of rules for etiquette to solidify his political position and tame the French nobility which at the time threatened his status as supreme monarch. He printed little cards of or “etiquettes” to serve as reminders to palace visitors of the rules for appropriate behavior. The cards stipulated where people were allowed to sit during dinners, dress code etc. These rules for etiquette spread throughout Europe as dignitaries who visited the palace at Versailles became impressed with these social norms. The development of etiquette in the 17th century Europe was really due to this politicization of manners.

However, during the Age of Enlightenment – in the 18th century – etiquette was consciously adopted in order to signify one’s status among the cultural elite. Therefore, to identify with the social elite, many members of the bourgeoisie adopted the behaviors and social norms of the upper class.

In America, both George Washington and Benjamin Franklin wrote codes of conduct or “rules of civility” aimed at establishing and propagating certain rules of etiquette in American society. During the 19th century, etiquette had come to include guidelines about how even children should behave to each other, to their teachers, to their parents, and as well to other adults. It also came to bear on every aspect of life and including a number of rules and guidelines which, to the modern person, would be deemed rather absurd. Robert Louis Stevenson in 1894 wrote an essay on the “Philosophy of Umbrellas” in which he argued for what he considered the proper use of umbrellas. The following year, Lady Constance Howard wrote her “Etiquette of Dinners”, in which she argued that it was not appropriate to discuss politics, religion or even music or art during dinner parties, as shown in Figure 3. At the time – the late 19th century – common etiquette guidelines also included avoiding even smiling for too long. One of the notable contributions to the literature of etiquette was by Emily Post’s 1922 book, “Etiquette – In Society, In Business, in Politics, in Home”. Through this work

she achieved renown as the pioneer of modern etiquette.

In contemporary times, etiquette forms an important part of all cultures, but society has now relaxed it as when compared with the strict and set attitudes that characterized its early history. However, etiquette is certainly here to stay, but will continue to be subjected to change by the society [3].

POLITENESS

Politeness is the practical application of good manners or etiquette so as not to offend others but to put them at ease. It is a culturally defined phenomenon, such that what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context. The most important thing to guide your manners is the “Golden Rule”: Treat others as you would want to be treated [4]. The four kinds of politeness as identified by anthropologists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson from their politeness theory based on efforts to redress the affronts to a person’s self-esteem or face (as in “save face” or “lose face”) in social interactions [5-7] (even though the theory is being criticized as it is not universally valid), derived from Erving Goffman’s concept of face are [8]:

1. Negative politeness: this is the act of making a request less infringing, e. g. “if you don’t mind...” or “if it isn’t too much trouble...” i. e. giving respect to a person’s right to act freely.
2. Non-assertive politeness: this is when a person refrains from making a comment or asserting his beliefs during a discussion so as to remain polite to others present.
3. Assertive politeness: this is when a person offers an opinion in a positive and constructive way to be assistive and helpful during an interaction.
4. Positive politeness: this seeks to establish a positive relationship between parties, and respects a person’s need to be liked and understood.

WHAT IS ETIQUETTE?

This is the customary code of polite behavior In a society or among members of a particular profession or group, as shown in Figure 4. The rules of etiquette are changing. The synonyms of etiquette are: protocol, polite behavior, good manners, manners, acceptable behavior, accepted behavior, proper behavior, code of behavior, rules of conduct/behavior, decorum, form, good form, courtesy, politeness, civility, propriety, formalities, niceties, punctilios, custom, customary behavior, convention, conformity, conventionality, politesse, the thing to do, couth.

Etiquette refers to the social norms and expectations around how to behave in various interactions in society [9]. These norms provide a code of conduct and a structure that subtly regulate the expected attitudes, behaviors, and manners of all members of society. Some examples of etiquette behaviors are the use of proper greetings in conversations, thanking service personnel in shops or restaurants, proper dress code, and being punctual. Following the rules and principles of etiquette is significant for healthy social interactions, as shown in Figure 5, for many reasons, such as:

1. It provides a system through which each member of society can show and expect respectful behavior.
2. It enables the expression of empathy and consideration for the rights and boundaries of other people.
3. It helps people avoid unnecessary tension and conflict, and therefore helps to maintain order, peace, and harmony in a community.

Basic etiquette has to do with: “Be yourself – and allow others to treat you with respect.” A few etiquette rules are [10, 11]:

1. The use of proper greetings.
2. Say “please” and “thank you.”
3. Practice good table manners.
4. Be mindful of your language.
5. Respect personal space.
6. Dress appropriately.
7. Listen before speaking.
8. Put your phone away.
9. Practice good communication.
10. Be punctual.
11. When someone sneezes, we commonly say “bless you” – this practice dates back to the 6th century AD, when Pope Gregory commanded that anyone who sneezed be immediately blessed as a prayer of protection against possible contraction of a plague [12].
12. Give genuine compliments.
13. Don’t be boastful, arrogant or loud.
14. Speak with kindness and caution.
15. Do not criticize or complain.
16. Do not embarrass others.
17. Act and look your best.

TYPES OF ETIQUETTE

The followings are the types of etiquette [13]:

1. Workplace etiquette.
2. Table manners and meal etiquette.
3. Professionalism (professional etiquette).
4. Communication etiquette.
5. Meetings etiquette.

RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF ETIQUETTE

By far, the most important thing to guide our manners is the “Golden Rule”: Treat others as you would want to be treated.

Etiquette is made up of two parts, which are [14, 15]:

- Manners are actions such as saying “please,” “thank you,” holding doors,” holding doors, chewing with our mouths closed, dressing appropriately, shaking hands etc. they are important because they give us confidence, allow us to focus on the substance of our interactions, and tell us what to do and what to expect others to do in return.
- The principles of etiquette are embedded in consideration, respect, and honesty – which are the three qualities that stand behind all the manners we have. They are timeless and cross cultural boundaries, unlike manners that can change over time and differ around the world, as shown in Figure 6.

IMPORTANCE/BENEFITS OF ETIQUETTE

The use of correct etiquette serves several essential functions [16]:

- First impressions matter or count
- It is a boost to confidence and self-esteem
- It enhances strong friendships
- It enhances increased happiness
- Offers one opportunities above one’s peers
- It helps learners arrive at a deeper understanding of the local culture
- It avoids misunderstanding and offence, and
- Learning etiquette is fun

CHALLENGES FACING ETIQUETTE

Despite etiquette been seen generally as a positive aspect of social behavior, there are some disadvantages associated with it, which are [17]:

1. Rigidity – this is caused by strict adherence to etiquette which can lead to rigidity in social interactions. People may feel constrained by a set of rules and may be hesitant to express themselves authentically.
2. Cultural insensitivity – etiquette norms can vary significantly across cultures. By strictly adhering to one set of etiquette rules may lead to

unintentional cultural insensitivity or misunderstandings when interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

3. Exclusivity – some etiquette practices, especially those associated with certain social classes or elites, can create a sense of exclusivity. This could cause feelings of alienation or exclusion for those who are not familiar with or can't afford to adhere to these norms.
4. Gender stereotypes – this is where traditional etiquette often carries gender-specific expectations, reinforcing stereotypical roles and behaviors. This leads to limit to individual freedom, perpetuating inequality by imposing certain expectations on people based on their gender.
5. Overemphasis on formality – excessive emphasis on etiquette and formality can hinder genuine connections and personal relationships.

Furthermore is how etiquette and ethics are a growing problem in the workplace, some of which are highlighted as in [18], and while how to improve etiquette is as stated in [19]:

- Inappropriate use of cell phones
- Wearing of unacceptable clothing to work
- Complete lack of courtesy and respect for others
- Failure to say please, thank you and you're welcome
- Being untruthful to a caller over the phone

CONCLUSION

Etiquette is essential in all aspects of human relationships or interactions, hence the need for us to embrace it in all our daily dealings. The import of etiquette can't be overemphasized, as it helps to increase our personal happiness, boosts our confidence/self-esteem, etc. Etiquette should however be inculcated even from childhood till death. There is the need to strike a balance between good etiquette and allowing for genuine, authentic interactions.

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Figure 1. Etiquette

Source: https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUJ5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGB5IQQO6L3JyJJclJuzBP112qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEl7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHFyYMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiYyPfF2N-JAxU5TKQEhb-dGZEQtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=tflikj0exopt9M&vssid=mosaic



Figure 2. Etiquette in Technology.

Source: https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUj5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGGB5IQQO6L3JyJJclJuzBPI12qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEI7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHFyYMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiYyPff2N-JAxU5TKQEhb-dGZEOTkgLegOIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=SoEcj55cy7YC5M&vssid=mosaic

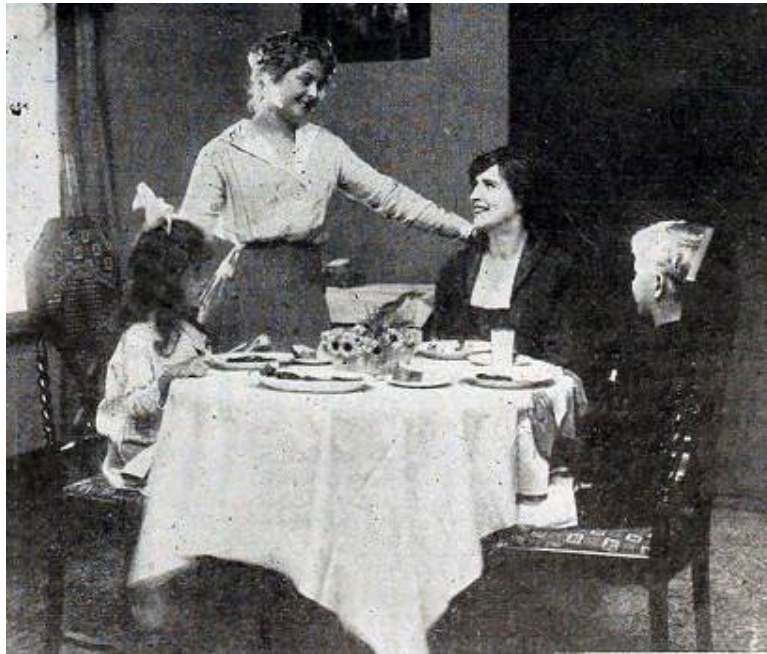


Figure 3. Table manners.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUj5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGGb5IQQO6L3JyJJclJuzBP112qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEI7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHfYyMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiYyPfF2N-JAxU5TKQEHb-dGZEQtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=qQj9LAmokxfPmM&vssid=mosaic

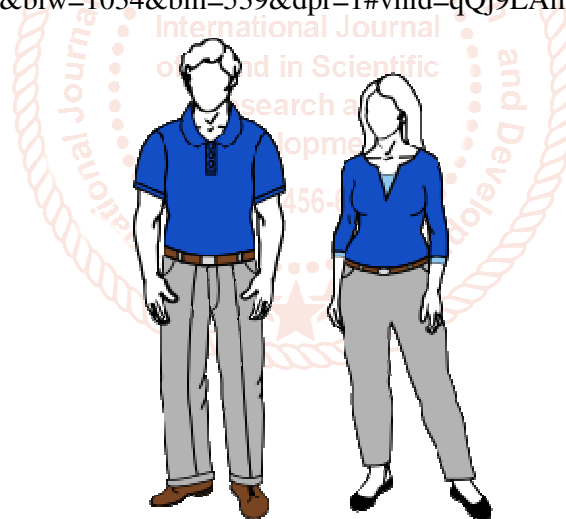


Figure 4. Work etiquette.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUj5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGGb5IQQO6L3JyJJclJuzBP112qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEI7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHfYyMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiYyPfF2N-JAxU5TKQEHb-dGZEQtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=kGkYO1yG5PAxJM&vssid=mosaic



Figure 5. Ten simple rules for editing Wikipedia.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUj5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGGb5IQQO6L3JyJclJuzBP112qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEI7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHFyYMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiYyPff2N-JAxU5TKQEHb-dGZEQtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=5n0Et8hxuvGRSM&vssid=mosaic



Figure 6. Etiquette in Africa.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=cd9ae887f40522c5&sxsrf=ADLYWIL-Hxpv30ENUj5yqx0_KFqV6FRLJQ:1731720222996&q=images+on+etiquette+by+wikipedia&udm=2&fbs=AEQNm0Aa4sjWe7Rqy32pFwRj0UkWd8nbOJfsBGGb5IQQO6L3JyJclJuzBP112qJyPx7ESJehObpS5jg6J88CCMRK72qUv4GOvBp3LxAsC35pUAVd1mVJIz_kJEI7OpW0Y42rOM96fEVibRmxJCzmEqh53sBnJMLdHFyYMnh1J8SLKdTBIS0c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiYyPff2N-JAxU5TKQEHb-dGZEQtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1034&bih=539&dpr=1#vhid=Fl_Xc80j2GzVYM&vssid=mosaic