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Students and Teachers on Etiquette Behavior: A Comparative Analysis of Notions

Olga I. Danilenko¹✉, Mariia A. Perminova²

^{1,2} Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation

✉ danilenko.olga@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction. Compliance with the rules of etiquette at universities is a prerequisite for productive educational process and beneficial psychological climate. Changes in the system of higher education increase the importance of studying notions of etiquette behavior among educational process participants. The aim of this study is to reveal common and specific features in notions of etiquette behavior of university students and teachers. **Methods.** The sample was comprised of 69 teachers and 141 students from Russian universities. Indicators of etiquette behavior were used for analysis. Data was gathered through the original questionnaire and the Subjective Evaluation of Etiquette Functions Significance questionnaire by O. I. Danilenko. To process the results, descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, and Mann–Whitney U test were used. **Results.** The results correspond with the novelty of this study's aim. Compared to teachers, more students think that students always comply with traditional rules of university etiquette. At the same time, both students and teachers gave high ratings to this indicator of students' etiquette behavior. Compliance with strict dress code is not considered a necessity by the majority of respondents in both groups. At the same time, the desirability of teachers dressing in business style is higher. No significant differences were revealed in attitudes towards the institutionalization of etiquette rules – slightly more than half of the respondents in both groups support including these rules in university charter. All functions of etiquette were rated highly by students and teachers. Similarities were revealed in ranking of etiquette functions subjective significance in the samples. The revealed differences in evaluation of etiquette functions correspond with students' and teachers' age and status characteristics. **Discussion.** The results of the study revealed that there are more similarities than differences in notions of etiquette behavior between the groups of students and teachers. Recognition of the importance of university etiquette was revealed in both groups.

Keywords

etiquette behavior, rules of etiquette, university etiquette, functions of etiquette, etiquette significance, university students, university teachers, status differences, appearance, dress code

Highlights

- Students' etiquette behavior is evaluated positively by the majority of educational process participants.
- Students rate the frequency of students' compliance with rules of etiquette higher than teachers. Rejecting the necessity of dress code, both students and teachers think that educational process participants should only look tidy and dress in business style.
- Both groups do not display a united view on the subject of whether institutionalization of etiquette rules is necessary.
- Implementation of the moral principle of respecting an individual and preventing conflicts between people with different social status are the most significant etiquette functions for both students and teachers.

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Introduction

The current socio-cultural situation in Russia has features of transitivity that manifest themselves through constant transformation and uncertainty of values and norms of behavior. Today the manifestations of the anomie phenomenon, identified by E. Durkheim, are found among students (Argunova & Rus', 2019; Grishchenko & Shchelkova, 2019; Pletnev, 2020). An adverse trend of the commercialization of educational institutions is noted in a number of works studying changes in the education system. Teachers are compared to managers, students – to consumers (Galynskaya, 2021; Eagleton, 2016; Krasinskaya, 2016; Senashenko, 2017). At the same time, as noted by E. Durkheim, it is in the commercial sphere that the anomie phenomenon becomes chronic (Durkheim, 1998). Another inevitable prerequisite for anomie is digital inequality. In contrast to older generation, members of Generation Z, who find network space more comprehensible and less separated from reality, tend to isolate themselves as a group, which "makes it difficult for them to learn common norms and values" (Pletnev, 2020, p. 117).

P. Berger describes anomie as a serious threat that can lead to loss of sense of reality and crisis of self-awareness, while social laws serve as a shield against "anomic horror" (Berger, 1967). Such laws and social directions include norms of communicative behavior for employees as a component of organizational culture. Their importance for the effective teamwork in organizations, including educational institutions, is noted by experts in the field of organizational psychology (Chiker, Pochebut, & Volkova, 2019; Cameron & Quinn, 2001; Adeinat & Abdulfatah, 2019).

Rules of etiquette dictate forms of interaction for communicative situation participants, taking into account status differences (Baiburin, 1988; Danilenko, 2014; 2020). Changes in the system of higher education lead to a decrease in traditional definiteness of educational process participants' status-role relationships, while such relationships, without offending personal dignity, remain a condition for effective educational process. Positive correlation was revealed between the students' acceptability level of etiquette rules and their academic performance (Tamban & Lazaro, 2018). Learning etiquette behavior is considered one of the aspects of developing soft skills, required for graduates' future career (Kovchina, Ignatova, Baranovskaya, & Saprygina, 2019; Chevtaeva,

Nikitina, & Vishnevskaya, 2020; Gasparovich & Kozlova, 2019; Wesley, Jackson, & Lee, 2017). Models for managing etiquette interactions of educational process participants are developed in order to improve the quality of education (Galynskaya, 2021).

The problem of students' and teachers' appearance gained considerable attention in empirical studies (Labunskaya & Bzezyan, 2018; Siyukhova & Kubova, 2017; Gurung & Vespia, 2007). Students' assessment of teacher's work is revealed to largely depend on the latter's appearance. The topic of students' attitude towards etiquette when using mobile devices in business communication is discussed (Towner, Everett, & Klemz, 2019). Unfortunately, other aspects of teachers' etiquette behavior, as well as teachers' attitude towards various aspects of etiquette regulation of behavior remain underexplored.

Sections about university etiquette are included in normative documents of some educational institutions (Regulations on..., 2017; Corporate Code..., 2017, etc.). However, even the most detailed list of rules cannot cover all situations that require etiquette behavior from communication participants. Not being institutionalized, rules of etiquette are 'unwritten rules', adherence to which is determined by individual internal consent to behave accordingly. In present conditions consistency of students' and teachers' notions of the importance of university etiquette, the relevance of certain rules, educational process participants' compliance with these rules is a prerequisite for accepting university etiquette and its effectiveness. It can be assumed that due to differences in status-role position and age notions of educational process participants', etiquette behavior has significant differences between students and teachers.

The *aim* of this study was to reveal common and specific features in notions of etiquette behavior of university students and teachers. The following *hypothesis* is tested: there are significant differences between indicators of notions of etiquette behavior of university students and teachers. Notions of students' compliance with the rules of etiquette, attitudes towards dress code of educational process participants, attitudes towards the institutionalization of university etiquette rules, and evaluation of etiquette functions significance are considered such indicators.

Methods

The sample comprised 210 respondents – 141 students (34 males, 107 females) and 69 teachers (32 males, 37 females) from Russian universities, including federal and regional universities with programs for different fields of study. Mean age – 21 years for students and 44 years for teachers.

To measure indicators characterizing notions of etiquette behavior, we used the original questionnaire and the Subjective Evaluation of Etiquette Functions Significance questionnaire by O. I. Danilenko. The original questionnaire consisted of three items. In the first one the respondents were asked to assess the frequency of students' compliance with five traditional rules of university etiquette in their university. The second item, that served to assess the importance of dress code, required to choose the preferred form of appearance and clothing for students and teachers. The third item presented a question about the necessity of institutionalization of etiquette rules in charter of educational institution; positive answer was interpreted as recognition of the importance of etiquette. The idea of etiquette functions multiplicity and the A. N. Leontiev's concept of meaning and sense was used as a theoretical basis for O. I. Danilenko's questionnaire. Basing on literature analysis, 9 functions of etiquette were identified; these functions were presented in the questionnaire. The respondent was asked to specify his/her attitude towards each function on

a 10-point scale from “For me this is not important at all” to “For me this is very important”. The questionnaire allows to calculate significance values for each function and also overall values for all listed functions (Danilenko, 2015). The questionnaire was validated (Li, 2017). Empirical data were gathered either through Google Forms or paper forms.

Results

Table 1 presents the respondents’ answers to the first question in the original questionnaire as a percentage. The following answer options were presented: always (4 points), frequently (3 points), occasionally (2 points), and never (1 point). Mann–Whitney U test was used to compare differences between groups.

Rule	Group	Percentage of respondents who chose the answer (%)				p-value
		Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	
a) when entering a room, the student lets the teacher go first	Students	60.3	32.6	6.4	0.7	0.000
	Teachers	30.4	47.8	21.8	0	
b) the student greets the teacher first	Students	51.8	35.5	12	0.7	0.269
	Teachers	42	44.9	13.1	0	
c) the student stands up to greet the teacher	Students	56.8	26.2	14.9	2.1	0.008
	Teachers	42	24.6	21.8	11.6	
d) the student waits for the right moment to ask the teacher a question	Students	54.6	41.8	3.6	0	0.000
	Teachers	36.2	37.7	26.1	0	
e) in electronic communication with the teacher the student adheres to rules of business correspondence	Students	77.3	22	0.7	0	0.000
	Teachers	49.3	36.2	14.5	0	

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents in both groups believed that students always or frequently comply with the listed rules. In students' group, the 'always' option percentage was higher than 50 % for each rule. The 'occasionally' option was chosen rarely, the highest percentage was 14.9 %, for rule 'c' ("the student stands up to greet the teacher"). For two rules (rules 'd' and 'e'), none of the respondents chose the 'never' option. For the rest of the rules, the highest percentage for this option was 2.1 % (rule 'c').

In the sample of teachers, the "always" choice had the highest percentage for only two rules ('c' and 'e'). At the same time, the percentage for this variant does not rise above 49.3 % (rule 'e'). For the three remaining rules the most common answer was 'frequently'. The highest percentage for this option was 47.8 % (rule 'a', "When entering a room, the student lets the teacher go first"). For the 'occasionally' option, the percentage is also higher than for students in relation to all rules. At the same time, in the sample of teachers the 'never' option percentage is higher than 0 % only for one rule out of five (rule 'c', 11.6 %).

Comparison of indicators using the Mann–Whitney U test confirms the results of frequency analysis. Statistically significant differences in students' and teachers' answers were revealed for all rules presented in the questionnaire, except for the rule "The student greets the teacher first", as differences for this rule do not reach the level of statistical significance.

To assess attitudes towards dress code of educational process participants, we included the second item in the questionnaire, which required to choose one of the following options: "a) dress code ought to be dictated by rules of educational institution" (4 points), "b) the student should dress in business style" (3 points), "c) the student should look neat and tidy" (2 points), "d) I have no strong views on the subject of appearance" (1 point). Then the same choice was presented regarding teacher's appearance. The results of data processing are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of answers of educational process participants on the subject of university students' and teachers' appearance

Options	Respondents		
	Students (n = 141)	Teachers (n = 69)	
	%	%	
a) Dress code ought to be dictated by rules of educational institution	for students	8.5	5.8
	for teachers	5.7	2.9
b) One should dress in business style	for students	15.6	15.9
	for teachers	30.5	37.7

Table 2
Distribution of answers of educational process participants on the subject of university students' and teachers' appearance

<u>Options</u>	<u>Respondents</u>		
	Students (n = 141) %	Teachers (n = 69) %	
c) One should look neat and tidy	for students	63.8	60.9
	for teachers	48.9	46.4
d) I have no strong views on the subject of appearance	for students	12.1	17.4
	for teachers	14.9	13

The analysis of students' answers showed that the majority of respondents believed that students should look neat and tidy (63.8 %). This is also the most common answer regarding teachers' appearance, but the percentage is lower (48.9 %). Some respondents are more critical towards teachers' appearance, believing they should dress in business style – 30.5 % for teachers, as opposed to 15.6 % for students. A small percentage of students have no strong views on the subject of students' (12.1 %) and teachers' (14.9 %) appearance, while the desire for strict dress code is the least common option – 8.5 % for students and 5.7 % for teachers.

Teachers prefer students (60.9 %) and teachers (46.4 %) to look neat and tidy, while being critical towards their colleagues, as 37.7 % chose the option "The teacher should dress in business style". The same option regarding students' appearance was chosen only by 15.9 % of respondents, while the answer "I have no strong views on the subject of students' appearance" was the second most common (17.4 %). In relation to both groups of educational process participants, the option "Dress code ought to be dictated by rules of educational institution" was the least popular regarding both students' (5.8 %) and teachers' (2.9 %) appearance.

According to Mann–Whitney U test no significant differences between the groups were revealed regarding attitudes towards dress code values ($p > 0.05$).

Educational process participants' attitudes towards including etiquette rules in charter of educational institution was chosen as another indicator of etiquette behavior. The corresponding item in the original questionnaire required to answer whether institutionalization of etiquette rules is necessary: a) for students; b) for teachers. Attitudes towards institutionalization of etiquette rules were measured using 3-point scale, where recognizing the need to institutionalize etiquette rules for both students and teachers equals 3 points, only for students or only for teachers – 2 points, neither for students nor for teachers – 1 point. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparative analysis of educational process participants' attitudes towards the institutionalization of university etiquette rules

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage of respondents who chose the answer, %</u>			
	for both students and teachers	only for students	only for teachers	neither for students nor for teachers
Students	52.5	0.7	2.8	44
Teachers	52.2	2.9	2.9	42

About half of the respondents in both samples were revealed to support including etiquette rules, regulating interactions between educational process participants, in the university regulations – 52.5 % of students, 52.2 % of teachers. Slightly less than half of the respondents are against it (44 % of students and 42 % of teachers). Only a few respondents in both groups supported institutionalization of etiquette rules only for teachers or only for students. In addition, the distribution of answers in the samples is similar. Comparison of the results using the Mann–Whitney U test also revealed no significant differences between the groups ($p > 0.05$).

To identify and compare subjective significance of etiquette functions, the Subjective Evaluation of Etiquette Functions Significance questionnaire by O. I. Danilenko was used. Respondents were asked to rate the significance of each of the nine etiquette functions using a 10-point scale.

Since the variable distribution for both samples was not always normal, the median was chosen as a measure to analyze the results. The sum of all points the respondents attributed to each function was also used in the analysis. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Evaluation of etiquette functions subjective significance and their ranks values for university students and teachers

<u>Functions</u>	<u>Students</u>			<u>Teachers</u>		
	Median	Sum	Rank	Median	Sum	Rank
1. To show one's belonging to a particular cultural and social community	8	1044	9	8	510	9
2. Not to think about forms of communication, following generally accepted rules	8	1061	7	8	511	8

Table 4
Evaluation of etiquette functions subjective significance and their ranks values for university students and teachers

<u>Functions</u>	<u>Students</u>			<u>Teachers</u>		
	Median	Sum	Rank	Median	Sum	Rank
3. To make human interaction more convenient and effective (by being able to predict the participants' behavior)	9	1165	4	9	569	3
4. To show one's competence (knowledge of 'good manners')	9	1184	3	8	524	7
5. To prevent conflicts between people with different social status	9	1205	2	9	589	2
6. To preserve cultural traditions	9	1137	6	9	549	5
7. To show respect for those who you interact with	10	1278	1	9	614	1
8. To develop the ability to control oneself by following rules	8	105	8	8	525	6
9. To maintain order in public life	9	1153	5	9	558	4

The analysis revealed that both students and teachers believe all etiquette functions are highly significant – median values for all functions are 8 or higher.

The presented functions were ranked according to their importance. In the sample of students, the function "To show respect for those who you interact with" was the most significant (median – 10, sum – 1278). A number of functions had median value of 9. These functions were ranked according to sum value as follows: the function "To prevent conflicts between people with different social status" was the second most significant (sum – 1205), the function "To show one's competence (knowledge of "good manners")" – third (1184), the function "To make human interaction more convenient and effective (by being able to predict the participants' behavior)" – fourth (1165), the function "To maintain order in public life" – fifth (1153), and the function "To preserve cultural traditions" – sixth (1137). The last three functions with median values of 8 were ranked as follows: the function "Not to think about forms of communication, following generally

accepted rules" – seventh (1061), the function "To develop the ability to control oneself by following rules" – eighth (1054), and the function "To show one's belonging to a particular cultural and social community" – ninth (1044).

In the sample of teachers, five functions had median values of 9. Ranks were distributed according to sum value. For teachers, the function "To show respect for those who you interact with" was also the most significant (median – 9, sum – 614). The function "To prevent conflicts between people with different social status" was ranked the second (sum – 589), the function "To make human interaction more convenient and effective" – third (569), the function "To maintain order of public life" – fourth (558), the function "To preserve cultural traditions" – fifth (549). Four functions had median values of 8. The function "To develop the ability to control oneself by following rules" had the sixth rank (525), the function "To show one's competence (knowledge of "good manners")" – seventh; (524), the function "Not to think about forms of communication, following generally accepted rules" – eighth (511), and the function "To show one's belonging to a particular cultural and social community" – ninth (510).

As Spearman's rank correlation coefficient showed, there was a significant correlation between rank indicators of the presented etiquette functions ($r_s = 0,80^*$). To identify significance of differences between the results in the samples, Mann–Whitney U test was used. Significant differences were revealed only for the function "To show one's competence (knowledge of "good manners")" ($p \leq 0.05$).

Discussion

Comparative analysis indicates that a significantly larger number of students believe that their peers follow the listed rules always or frequently. The results may be explained by teachers paying more attention to compliance with etiquette rules during interactions with students. However, we should not rule out the possibility that choosing the 'always' option by the majority of students in the sample is related to ingroup bias phenomenon (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

The differences between the groups are statistically significant for all rules included in the original questionnaire, except for the rule "The student greets the teacher first". However, we should note that despite these differences, in the group of teachers options 'frequently' or 'always' were the most popular. Therefore, the students' compliance with rules of university etiquette is assessed positively by the majority of respondents in both groups.

Dress code desirability values are low in both samples. At the same time, while rejecting dress code that is dictated by rules, the majority of both students and teachers recognize the necessity to look neat and tidy and dress in business style. In addition, more respondents in both groups tend to think that teachers should dress in business style in comparison to the results regarding students' appearance. The distribution of answers may be determined by teacher's status of an educational institution employee and professional, who has to follow stricter dress code. However, we should emphasize once more that only a part of respondents chose this option, while the majority of students and teachers in the samples do not consider strict dress code necessary. This position coincides with researchers' conclusions about the dual functionality of dress code for university teachers and consequent preference against introducing it as a strict rule (Siyukhova & Kubova, 2017).

Slightly more than half of the respondents in both groups support including of etiquette rules for both students and teachers in the university charter; slightly less than half are against it.

Students and teachers think that etiquette rules can be institutionalized either for all educational process participants or for none of them, thus agreeing they have equal rights in relation to university etiquette.

As the results of comparative analysis show, there are significant similarities between values of the presented etiquette functions significance in both groups. The same functions have first and second ranks. Showing respect for those who they interact with is the most important functions for both samples, indicating importance of ethical principle of respecting human dignity for students and teachers. The 'pragmatic' function of preventing conflicts between people ranks second. We should note that in previous studies these functions were revealed to have higher priority among students (Danilenko, 2015, 2019).

The most significant differences in evaluation of etiquette functions subjective significance by students and teachers is shown in the analysis of the function "To show one's competence (knowledge of 'good manners')". In the sample of students, it ranks third, while in the sample of teachers – seventh. We may assume the differences are determined by age and status of members of the groups. For teachers, compliance with the rules of etiquette is an undoubted competence. Therefore, they consider etiquette a less important tool for showing competence during communication. This is not yet the case for students. The higher significance of etiquette as a way to make communication easier in students' group also serves as evidence. Compliance with the rules of etiquette helps "Not to think about forms of communication, following generally accepted rules"; this function ranks seventh in the group of students and eighth in the group of teachers. At the same time, the subjective significance of etiquette as a tool for preserving cultural traditions is higher for teachers.

As indicated by similarities between values of separate etiquette functions, both students and teachers recognize the importance of etiquette rules as regulations explicating moral imperative of respecting the individual and principles of optimizing communication. Content differences in evaluation of etiquette functions correspond with students' and teachers' age and status characteristics.

Our hypothesis that there are significant differences between indicators of notions of etiquette behavior of university students and teachers was only partially confirmed.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed there are more similarities than differences in notions of etiquette behavior between the groups of students and teachers. On the whole, students' compliance with rules of university etiquette is rated highly in both samples, although students rate the frequency of their peers' compliance with rules of etiquette higher than teachers. Functions of university etiquette are characterized by versatility, as indicated by high significance of these functions for both students and teachers. Significant similarities were revealed in ranking of functions subjective significance in the samples. Content differences in evaluation of etiquette functions correspond with students' and teachers' age and status characteristics. Recognizing the importance of etiquette regulation of behavior, the majority of respondents expect educational process participants only to dress in a neat and tidy manner. Strict dress code is not considered necessary. Slightly more respondents in both groups support institutionalization of etiquette rules for all educational process participants in comparison to a number of respondents who are against it. Similarities between attitude towards dress code in the samples and the fact that only

a small number of respondents supported institutionalization of etiquette rules either for students or for teachers indicate the intention to have equal requirements in relation to compliance with university etiquette rules for all educational process participants. This may indicate commitment to mutual respect between students and teachers shown through etiquette behavior.

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Author Details

Olga Ivanovna Danilenko – Dr. Sci. (Culturology), Associate Professor, Professor, Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation; Scopus Author ID: 56809250300, ResearcherID: P-2900-2015, SPIN code: 3689-4219; e-mail: danilenko.olga@gmail.com

Mariia Andreevna Perminova – graduate from master's program, Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation; e-mail: mar.a.perminova@gmail.com

Author Contributions

O. I. Danilenko – made the main contribution to the research design, wrote the literature overview, and interpreted findings.

M. A. Perminova – prepared the manuscript, collected the empirical data, analyzed and interpreted findings.

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