

Etiquette Learning and Public Speaking: Early Etiquette Learning and Its Impact on Higher Education and Working Professionals

Simran Ballani

Abstract—The purpose of this paper is to call education professionals to implement etiquette and public speaking skills for preschoolers, primary, middle and higher school students. In this paper the author aims to present importance of etiquette learning and public speaking curriculum for preschoolers, reflect on experiences from implementation of the curriculum and discuss the effect of the said implementation on higher education/global job market. Author's aim to introduce this curriculum was to provide children with innovative learning and all around development. This training of soft skills at kindergarten level can have a long term effect on their social behaviors which in turn can contribute to professional success once they are ready for campus recruitment/global job markets. Additionally, if preschoolers learn polite, appropriate behavior at early age, it will enable them to become more socially attentive and display good manners as an adult. It is easier to nurture these skills in a child rather than changing bad manners at adulthood. Preschool/Kindergarten education can provide the platform for children to learn these crucial soft skills irrespective of the ethnicity, economic or social background they come from. These skills developed at such early years can go a long way to shape them into better and confident individuals. Unfortunately, accessibility of the etiquette learning and public speaking skill education is not standardized in pre-primary or primary level and most of the time embedding into the kindergarten curriculum is next to nil. All young children should be provided with equal opportunity to learn these soft skills which are essential for finding their place in job market.

Keywords—Etiquette learning, public speaking, preschoolers, overall child development, early childhood interventions, soft skills.

I. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Etiquette Learning

MOST students are not exposed to or trained in business protocol and etiquette. Furthermore, manners are identified as job selection attribute and considered important by campus recruiters.

During a recent visit to one of the most prestigious institutes of India, author found that senior professors often struggled with basic etiquette of university students. While their grades in technical subject were flawless, social mannerism remained questionable. A senior professor quoted (name not listed for anonymity) "My Students sometimes forget to even knock on my office door even though they are well aware that I'm on lunch break – it would really help if they had some learning of basic etiquettes". Such instances only go to signify gap in

social skill training of pre-primary to higher school level. While some prestigious institutes have done their best to excel the academics, not much is done where imparting such skills are concerned.

'Research has shown that half of a person's intelligence potential is developed by age four and that early childhood interventions can have a lasting effect on intellectual capacity, personality, and social behavior. Integrated programs that target children in their very early years are therefore critical for their mental and psychosocial development' [1].

Investment in early child education can increase the return on investment in their later education by making that education more effective. It can also enable participants to earn more and can raise their productivity in the workforce. [1].

'Young children are much more capable in acting, thinking, reasoning, and understanding than is commonly recognized. The report "taking children seriously" presents the research evidence on children's interest and ability to understand dimensions on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.' [2]

Most students are not exposed to or trained in matters of business protocol and etiquette. Furthermore, manners are identified as job selection attribute and considered important by campus recruiters. Reference [3] indicates that many top executives believe that some of organization's problems are deep rooted in lack of proper business etiquette knowledge and skills. For example, it is estimated that 12% of recent MBA students have proper etiquette skills compared to 40% of mid-management level and 88% of senior-level managers. Further study indicated that members of younger generation lack competency in etiquette skills. One study found that over 43% of responding business professionals believed that business etiquette skills of college graduates had gotten worse over the last decade [3].

Research [4] indicates that a moment of rudeness was reported to decrease a doctor's performance by more than 50% in an exercise involving a hypothetical life-or-death situation. 7 out of 10 employees reported rudeness in the work place as the number one reason for their unhappiness and resignations. However, majority of people do not give much importance to the idea that manners, etiquette training and anything that is branded as soft skills can actually contribute to profit and image of the company. Reference [4] further indicates how lack of empathy, cultural awareness and good manners was not only overlooked but hidden behind a culture of reporting

Simran Ballani is Educationist, Early Childcare Pedagogy with the LittleMillennium, India (phone: +919323852999, e-mail: sballani@gmail.com).

that started from the top and completely took the HUMAN factor out of the Human Resources department.

Importance of Starting Etiquette Learning/ Soft Skills at Pre-School Level

Hebei Teacher's University- presented a study in September 2014. The study excerpt is as follows:

[5] 'Etiquette is an ethical code of conduct. Etiquette education tells us how to develop civilized habits. If you see a teacher and ignore or enter a room without knock or open a parcel etc. are some signs of etiquette distaste. Instead of someone else making us understand the etiquette aversion – its best to master etiquette, harmonious interpersonal relationships etc. during one's lifetime. Early childhood is the best of the early development of intelligence; it is an important period to develop good habits and etiquette education'. [5]

This study is further supported by Hebei Teacher's University, Hebei – Shijiazhuang in [6].

Another very important study indicates that positive early experiences promote optimum brain development which in turn impacts all areas of development such as emotional, physical, social, cognitive and language. Both social and emotional development influences all other areas of development [7].

An article on 'The Contribution of Early Childhood Education to a Sustainable Society published in January 2008' cites that 'ECE has a vital role in promoting awareness, good habits and caring attitudes, which can promote Social Development' [8].

Etiquette education tells us how people live in a society and develop civilized habits for the same. Hence early childhood is an important period to develop good habits and etiquette education for all round developed development of a child.



Fig. 1 Picture of Advait age 5 years

Public Speaking

Public speaking is crucial skill to have in today's competitive age. More importantly in corporate environment- excellent communication skills, articulating the information and presenting it well is key to any job success.

Early and continuous training in public speaking and social interaction can go on to become as one of the most important learning for interview success. Chances of student succeeding in a job interview with proper training in Public speaking or

presentation skills is much higher than a student just having good grades and lacks in presenting the information well. It is well known in today's fast paced world that communication is backbone of any society. It allows people to form connections, motivate change and influence decisions. Furthermore, cultivating the public speaking skill at early age can add to overall confidence building. Children can be encouraged to express their thoughts and articulate better. This makes their social interaction experience positive. Same training on public speaking can continue during their journey to primary, middle and higher school years. Training on public speaking and etiquette during middle school and higher school tenure can add more value than just working only technical skills. Such trained students when required to appear for interviews can have better chances of presenting themselves with confidence.

Early childhood is best time to cultivate skills such as dramatics, vocal variations and presenting in front of an audience. Early childhood educators have to work hard to educate and encourage the development of public speaking in preschoolers. Moreover, timely intervention programs and additional encouragement of public speaking by early childhood educators could help with speech delay or perhaps autism too in some children. [9] 'Impairments in social attention play a major role in autism, but little is known about their role in development after preschool. In this study, a public speaking task was used to study social attention, its moderators, and its association with classroom learning in elementary and secondary students with higher functioning autism spectrum disorder (HFASD)'. [9]

One of the basics of kindergarten is to develop the verbal ability of children. More often a young child's ability is judged by this more than anything else. A child's self-image is greatly influenced by his ability to communicate his thoughts [10].

While some children might take naturally to art of public speaking, many tend to be more fearful of standing and talking in front of a crowd. Early childhood education can include embedded programs encouraging children to develop conviction and flair in their communication. Storytelling, role play and mind play can be some of methods that can be used to achieve this. This can help children with increased self-esteem, power of persuasion and improved communication skills.

Parents Testimonial

"It was a proud moment for us to witness the extraordinary loud and continuous applause and cheers for our daughter Aarohi's speech performance on stage during public events in our apartment. Compliments were pouring in from all corners for Aarohi for her confidence of speaking well on public events at this early age. We have seen remarkable growth in her vocabulary and presentation skills by the encouragement from her teachers and our contribution in pushing her to develop confidence of speaking in public events. We really appreciate Little Millennium Etiquette Learning and Public Speaking curriculum. Our heartfelt gratitude for

mentoring and grooming Aarohi "We are happy and proud little millennium parents". Mr. Khem and Mrs. Gargi, parents of Arohi, age 4.5 years

"Little things can instill great confidence in children. Vihaan has developed a good command over reading & public speaking. He can read complex words and sentences easily. We thank Little Millennium to Identify and encourage these qualities in kids. Developing Self-confidence at early age is foundation of success". Mrs. Preeti Rusia mother of Vihaan, age 4.5 years.

"We are really glad that we had taken admission at Little Millennium Whitefield about 2 years back. It is clearly noticeable how Advait's socializing skills improved. His tenure at Little Millennium Whitefield really helped to reveal his abilities those were hidden inside him. Stage fear is something that we don't see in him. I would also like to share a photo of him performing in the stage without any ask or compulsion. He just snatched the mike to sing a song and surprised all of us. We are really thankful to Little Millennium's Etiquette learning and Public speaking curriculum for shaping his behaviour in such a way". Fig. 2, Mr. Anil Chandran father of Advait, age 5 years

"Our daughter's first step towards the school for which we were more concerned but we found the best school i.e. Little Millennium. What she learns at school, she tends to execute at home. We like how she has learned to speak well, sit properly and eat on her. Also, we find an exponential growth in terms of her vocabulary and how well she speaks. Thanks to this school who sees all the children with one prospect and help them to learn more things which are very essential in their day to day life". Mrs. Beena Saini mother of Hriydashini, age 3 years.

When our son is excited to go to school, Little Millennium Whitefield, that itself explains everything! An institution which teaches not just theories, rather focus on social and moral values as well, is the best place where someone would wish to engage their kids. We remember when our Son was shy and hesitant to open up in front of anyone. After he joined Little Millennium, we have seen a steep learning curve. He greets people, he maintains the surrounding clean and is sincere towards studies as well. Thanks for nurturing our Son and making us feel proud that he is growing ethically very well! Mr. Ashish Pratap Singh and Mrs. Ekta Singh, parents of Ranveer, age 6 years

"Small little things make a big difference in our lives. I want to thank Little Millennium for instilling such good etiquette within our kids, teaching them how to speak and treat others with respect. My son Hetaaksh was very shy, but this school has given him lots of confidence that he can do anything without fear. With the help of social etiquette and public speaking curriculum, he is able to express his thoughts easily. I really want to thank the little millennium family for making my son blossom into a wonderful flower. Three cheers for all the teachers who have been a part of this wonderful 4 year journey". Ms.

Namita, mother of Hetaaksh, age 6.

"Words alone cannot express our gratitude for all the time spent by Little Millennium Whitefield. Our daughter Annika was really struggling in academic and social skills and we felt completely lost and discouraged. All thanks to LM Whitefield's Etiquette Learning and Public Speaking curriculum - she has now firm understanding of basic concepts and social skills. Although she repeated the class we found her on much firm ground. Thank you so much for skilled teaching and patience. Little Millennium's has special teachers and curriculum, that in the future we and Annika will look back and remember with appreciation. Thank you for the great year..!" Mr. Deepak Patel and Mrs. Amita Verma, Parents of Annika, age 5 years.

II. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In a study that we conducted in our school, we gave an exercise to each class to list down their favorite topics along with help of class/course facilitator. As part of their research, we then gave them an assignment to prepare on the following:

- What they wish their topic to be about?
- Why they liked it?
- What was so good about it?
- How does it help to enhance their knowledge on subject?
- How will they like to share their viewpoint with their class?

Once they had prepared for it, we gave them an opportunity to present the same first to the class and then during monthly assembly.

The activity was quite fun filled in itself given the research and group discussion on the same. They had time to research and practice their narrative with the facilitator added to their overall confidence of presentation. Our objective behind this was quite simple, yet focused. The children were quite enthusiastic about their chosen subjects and when they presented it, we observed that they were quite at ease while communicating their thoughts to the audience.

We used similar exercise to incorporate etiquette learning firstly by adding some polite words such as "please" and "Thank You" amongst other words, simple but necessary. Furthermore, the process was to educate them with social mannerism, restaurant manners, table manners, expressing gratitude etc.

Our learning was that early childhood years is absolute grass root level of observations, curiosity and absorption. This is such perfect time to imbibe this crucial social learning and public speaking. Upon interview of 30 parents on the impact of etiquette learning and public speaking on their children, 90% parents were able to submit their written testimony/progression on the changes they observed in their child's overall social interaction - over the course of the academic year. Children were greeting their friends and family, used mannerism for social interaction and there was significant demonstration of their etiquette learning in their day to day communication with whoever they engaged with.

Sample study in 2018 and 2019 are indicated in Table I.

TABLE I
FINDING OF STUDY

Type of Study	Initial	Ongoing
Program	Summer Camp	Academic Year
Year	2018	2019
Duration	6 weeks	28 weeks
Batch Size	27 students	60 students
Age Group	2.5 years to 6 years	2.5 years to 6 years
Total Training hours	11 hours	40 hours
Analysis	50% of the students in the age group of 2.5 to 3 years were able to present 'show and tell'. 80% of students from age group (4 to 6 years) could effectively demonstrate classroom and dining etiquettes via role-plays at the end of the summer camp. 75% could present 4 lines on any given topic during weekly presentations.	80% of the students in the age group of 2.5 to 3 years were able to introduce themselves and present 'show and tell'. 70% of students from age group (4 to 6 years) can effectively demonstrate classroom and dining etiquette via role-play during weekly sessions. 75% of students in the age group (4 to 6 years) are able to present on given topics confidently during monthly assemblies.
Conclusion	The level of interest, regular attendance and parent appreciation for this program was significantly higher in comparison to summer camp programs of year 2017 and 2016.	While this study is ongoing – there is a significant improvement in children with speech delay as well. However they are given close attention by facilitator during classroom training – these children are now able to present during monthly assemblies as well.

III. CONCLUSION

- Etiquette learning helps young children to understand appropriate, polite and considerate behavior. This enables them to form good manners and become more socially attentive as they get older.
- Educator plays a crucial role in imparting social skills to kindergarten children. Polite behavior and social skills are as much important as other academic learning.
- Parents testimonials and positive feedback are a testament of our successful implementation
- Topics such as waste management, recycling and learning about rich culture of India and speaking about them during monthly assemblies was an enriching experience for these young learners.
- As per the evaluation register remarks by facilitators and observation notes, children show far more recognizable influence of etiquette learning when learnt via role play i.e. by enacting and later putting it in practice in their normal behavior; thus making it easy for them to understand and survive the worldly environments. Such learning as a part of ongoing kindergarten curriculum enhanced their social economic development.
- Some children needed more one on one attention than others and such remarks were noted in the evaluation registers.
- During the course of this ongoing research, there is a significant change in terms of how children have learnt to present themselves, overcome stage fright and depict good mannerism.
- Parent's feedbacks indicate that children are better at

human interaction, are polite, respect diverse culture and have learnt basic table manners, etc.

- This research has evolved from teaching children basic etiquette via role plays and presentations on stage to overcome stage fright. This in turn ensures equal opportunity to all children – irrespective of their home or social environment. Most of the children these days come from nuclear families and parents find it difficult to impart this crucial social skill training at home. Kindergarten's inclusive curriculum on training of etiquettes and public speaking can provide each child this enriching experience of self-expression.
- Lesson plans with role play and monthly assembly presentation are used to implement this curriculum. Lesson plans can be submitted on request.
- Educators who have the ability to design kindergarten curriculum now possess the capacity to lay a foundation which can be made strong with the right learning and teaching.
- Inclusion of life skills programs at early childhood level can help children achieve and enhance their experiences and also bring about a part of their personality which typically is not given much importance to in early learning years.
- The author's future vision is reaching out to educators and policy makers in primary, middle and high schools for inclusion of this program as part of academics.

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Simran Ballani is a Strategist/Change Maker/Training Specialist/Curriculum Innovator. She has 22 years of total experience in US and India. Simran presently works with Little Millennium School as an Associate

Director/Vice Principal/Chief Learning Officer from May 2016 till date. She is responsible for entire gamut of leading a reputed preschool. She has hired and retained staff of more than 20 highly qualified teachers and assistant staff. In her current role she is responsible for assigning tasks, leading staff meetings and organizing special events for the children and their families. Her expertise is in training, orientation for new staff regarding the operational procedures, health and safety, policies of school.

She has bagged several awards for curriculum development for Early Childhood program and has completed one academic life cycle of implementation of etiquette learning and public speaking curriculum which emphasizes on social quotient of children at their crucial developmental age.

Simran is currently pursuing Post Graduate Diploma in Education Leadership from Asian college of teachers – Asia. She has bagged gold medal for her Diploma in Early childhood care in 2014. Additionally, she has completed her Fundamentals of Human Resources, from NCHRA CA, USA and Project Management from Primavera USA. Adding more to her educational background is completion of Second Year Law and Bachelors of Commerce and Diploma in Software Application from Mumbai University, India.

Simran's research paper has been accepted by CCE Finland on topic of 'ABC of Online Training – Netiquette for Teachers'. Another, Research Paper on topic of 'Etiquette Learning in Pre-School' has been recently accepted by Asian Conference on Education – Japan. She is an invitee speaker at various ED Tech conferences and premier institutes in India. Simran recently delivered a talk on impact of 'Early Etiquette learning on Higher education' at BITS Pilani (Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani is counted amongst the country's most prestigious private higher education institutes). She is an Invitee Speaker to present her vision statement on 'Early Childhood in new normal' at IIT (The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are an autonomous public technical and research university located in India) Her presentation topics of webinar have included: STEM in Early Childhood, Teachers Etiquettes, Parent Management etc.

She has bagged several awards such as:

- Best Chief Learning Officer Award Karnataka – 2018 – Little Millennium, India.
- Innovation Research Award for Best Practice – 2019 – Little Millennium, India.
- Chief Learning Officer Award – Excellence in Product Knowledge - 2020 – Little Millennium, India