

# Face-to-Face and Online Communication and Etiquette in Secondary Education

Ena Martinčević\* and Violeta Vidaček-Hainš\*\*

\* Faculty of Organization and Informatics, Varaždin, Croatia

Email address:

[martincevic.ena@gmail.com](mailto:martincevic.ena@gmail.com)

[vvidacek@foi.unizg.hr](mailto:vvidacek@foi.unizg.hr)

**Abstract** - Good communication is the key for succeeding in any aspect of our lives, meaning it is essential for education as well. Besides communication, the significance of etiquette plays an important part in providing a sense of belonging to a certain community. The aim of this research paper is to investigate and shine new light on communication and etiquette among high school students and teaching staff in Varaždin County. This paper has been divided into theoretical and empirical part. In the theoretical part of the paper, the emphasis is on communication and etiquette and their significance in secondary education. For the empirical part of the work, research has been carried out and obtained data have been statistically analyzed and interpreted. Results showed that there are no gender differences in etiquette behavior in face to face student communication, but in online environment female students know more etiquette rules than male. Students find professors' nonverbal expression as important part of communication, particularly those who are attending more complex programs. Students' disagreements in per communication and the frequency of disagreements are not dependent.

The findings of this research will serve as a base for determining the quality of communication and etiquette in the aforementioned high school.

**Keywords** - component; communication, etiquette, education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Face to face and online communication are becoming important elements in teaching and learning process. According to research results [1], there are authoritarian and authoritative teachers. Authoritarian teachers usually take the floor themselves and do not involve students in discussions, while authoritative teachers regularly involve students in the very process of teaching and setting rules. An important aspect of teaching is active listening [1]. Students can enrich their vocabulary through active listening and this can ultimately have an impact on the development of literacy, which increases success in school and raises the students' self-confidence. Active listening enables the teacher to create better relationships with students, encourages innovation, and helps in decision-making [2].

Non-verbal communication is also important part of everyday communication. Special attention should be paid to the facial expressions of teachers and students, the movement of the teacher through the classroom, the tone of voice, as well as a dose of humor that can create a relaxed atmosphere, although it should be used only within certain limits. Already upon entering the classroom, the teacher can evoke various feelings in the students with his or her non-verbal cues [3]. For example, if students do not look the teacher in the eye, show signs of nervousness or have a shaky voice, they can show fear and discomfort. [4].

With the constant development of technology, teachers and students are faced with increasing and modernizing school standards. Social networks can help create greater student motivation, enable easier access to school materials and information as well as offer help with homework [5]. According to the research conducted by [6], students use Instagram most often while they most often communicate via the mobile application Viber. Distance learning has been made interesting and interactive by the Kahoot platform designed for learning in a fun and more engaging way where students are also involved in the teaching process. The platform allows repeating the material, but also checking students' knowledge, where students answer the questions individually or in teams, and those who answer correctly the fastest get the most points [7].

Information communication technology (ICT) refers to all technical means that help in handling information. E-learning, with the help of new technologies, enables students to spread and transfer knowledge outside their educational institution [8]. Usage of ICT is helpful for teachers and their lecturing and enables students to have access to teaching materials in one place and to search for them faster. Research conducted by [9] showed that ethical issues are becoming progressively more important by increasing usage of social media in education. The new information and communication technologies, particularly social networks such as Facebook, have had a significant impact on psycho-social adjustment of young people [10]. Teachers can provide assignments and instructions to students in various ways, such as recording sound on an existing PowerPoint presentation, sending students useful

links, creating quizzes, compiling instructions in PDF format, and the like [11].

Children first learn about the rules of good behavior from their parents, where parents are obliged to devote themselves individually to the child's needs and prepare them for social life so that they acquire the necessary social skills. Enrolling children into school is important for their social development, as children get to know their peers and are confronted with new situations or challenges. It is teacher's duty to encourage children to cooperate with each other in a supportive manner and guide them towards acceptable behavior [12]. For example, environmental topics could be presented in the curriculum, which would awaken student's awareness of the environment and influence their perspective on the environment [13]. Teachers reported that students' misbehavior has a negative impact on their job satisfaction and student achievement. Specific problems with students' misbehavior are situations where students are not following teachers' instructions and are not paying attention during lessons [14]. In order for both parts, teaching staff and students, to feel comfortable during class, it is essential to achieve a positive working atmosphere that enables a pleasant stay at school. Teachers are the ones who can establish the same with their skills, and encourage students to accept diversity and mutual respect so that they can successfully overcome all the changes of the modern school [15]. Authors [16] reported that school misbehavior often leads to peer violence. Their research results showed that nearly half of teenagers were victims during schooling and that bullying happens increasingly in the classroom (58,1 %). Additional prevention programs need to be created and implemented in schools which aim to raise awareness of this problem and to help students develop communication competences and appropriate behavior patterns [16]. Sometimes a lack of etiquette appears in communication as individuals unnecessarily express their opinion towards others, say things they would never say in face-to-face communication and forget about good manners.

In the online environment, each individual must know how to publish personal information, and be careful what kind of comments they leave on other people's posts. Every post in the online environment leaves a digital trail; it is preferable to avoid unkind posts because this can eventually affect the reputation of individuals [17]. Some of the advantages of using the Internet in education are certainly the increase in student motivation, engagement and cooperation, which also increases students' technological skills. However, there are also negative aspects of the Internet such as violent behavior that can consequently lead to the psychological and emotional decline of individuals [18]. It is important to teach students how to communicate in the virtual world, how to recognize the electronic violence, which is most often associated with sending offensive messages to peers [19]. There is a gender difference on social network behavior among high school students; girls are more exposed to virtual violence and boys participate more often in virtual

violence. Virtual addiction is more often among male students [20].

The general goal of this research is to examine the quality of communication between students and teachers in the selected secondary school. In addition, the aim is to explore how students are familiar with school etiquette, i.e. whether students behave politely during school face to face communication and in the online environment.

Specific goals are to explore if there are gender differences in terms of online an face to face communication, as well as to explore if there are potential difference between students attending three and four years of high school programs.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

### A. Respondents

Respondents are students attending one high school in Varaždin region. Total number of respondents are N=90 students, 45,56% are male students, 48,89% are female students and 5,56% of students did not want to reveal their gender. Students are between 17 and 18 years of age.

Respondents are attending three and four years programs, such as general high school program (26.67%), computerized numerical control operators (21.11%), economists (20.00%), sales (15.56%) and others (16.67%).

### B. Research

For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire Communication skills (CS) has been designed. The questionnaire consists of 30 items divided in demographic part and Likert scale items. Likert scale items consist 1 to 5 and express agreements with the statements form strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The research was conducted in March 2022. The written approval from school authorities and parents was issued. The questionnaire was completed anonymously and voluntarily.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

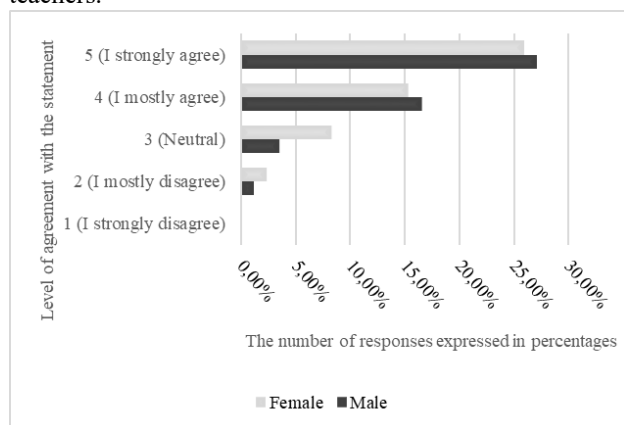
The results for the conducted research are shown below. Respondents were asked about the quality of communication between them and teachers.

### A. Etiquette at school and online

Students were asked about the etiquette in communication and gender differences were explored. The gender difference for the item: "I always greet

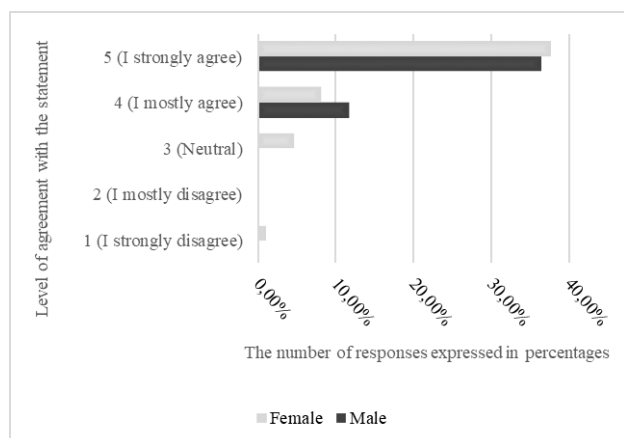
teachers and other school employees when I meet them in the corridor or outside the school and I do not wait for them to greet me first" was explored. Results showed that there is no statistically significant difference in values regarding greeting teachers in school or outside of school between male and female students. By calculating the t-test ( $t = 1.630$ ), the degrees of freedom ( $df=83$ ) and  $p=0.1069$ , as well as  $p>0.05$  it can be confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference in greeting teachers at school or outside of school between male and female students.

This result showed that high school students pay attention on some elements of etiquette such as greetings their teachers.



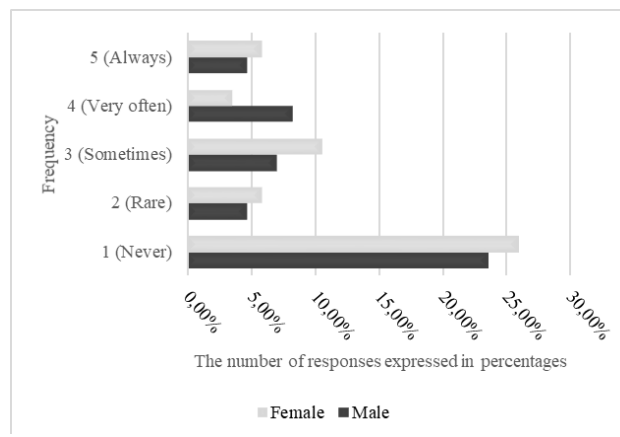
Graph 1. The difference between male and female students in greeting the teacher and other school employees

The following statement: "When I address a teacher via email or some other online tool, I address them with respect (e.g. I start the email with Dear Sir or Madam, when I address them I use capital letters for words such as You, Yours, etc.)" was explored in terms of gender differences. It was confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference in mean values in expressing respect for teachers via e-mail between male and female students ( $t=0.7998$ ,  $df=83$ ,  $p=0.4261$ ).



Graph 2. The difference between male and female students in showing respect to teachers via email or other online communication tools

The next statement that was explored in terms of gender difference is related to the online school etiquette: "When I address a teacher or another student via email or another online tool, I use capital letters (e.g. *ETIQUETTE IN SCHOOL*)". Results showed that there is statistically significant difference in means of values for usage of capital letters in emails or other online tools between male and female students. Statistical method of t-test ( $t=2.355$ ,  $df=83$ ,  $p=0.0287$ ) confirms that female students pay more attention to etiquette in online communication and use capital letters for the whole sentences and words less often than male students.



Graph 3. The difference between male and female students in the use of capital letters during online communication

### B. Satisfaction with school and online communication

The second research question is: "Are students more satisfied with mutual communication at school or in an online environment?". Statements from the questionnaire related to satisfaction with mutual communication at school and online environment were taken into account, with  $N=90$  students responding to both statements. According to the value of the t-test ( $t= 0.724$ ,  $df=178$ ,  $p=0.4700$ ), it could be concluded that there is no difference in mean of values related to satisfaction with communication between students in face-to-face communication comparing with online communication.

### C. The importance of non-verbal communication from teachers towards students

The third research question is: "Does teachers' non-verbal communication affect the students more than teachers' verbal communication?". In order to find out the answer to the mentioned research question, t-test was calculated for two statements from the questionnaire.

According to the value of the t-test ( $t= 2.514$ ,  $df=88$ ,  $p=0.0138$ ), it can be concluded that there is a difference in the mean values related to the influence of the teachers' tone of voice as the element of non-verbal communication on students between three- and four-year courses. More precisely, the teachers' tone of voice has less influence on

students who are attending three-years of high school compared to students who are attending the four years high school program.

Additional item "The teachers' facial expression during the lecturing is important to me" was analyzed in terms of potential differences between students attending three and four years of high school program. Results showed that there is a difference in the mean values related to the influence of the teachers' facial expression on students who attended three years of high school compared to students enrolled in four years' education. T-test ( $t=2.604$ ,  $df=88$ ,  $p=0.0108$ ) confirms that there is a difference in means of values related to the influence of the teachers' facial expressions during lecturing/ presentation of the material on the students between students enrolled to the three year and four-year high school programs. More precisely, the influence of the teachers' facial expression is lower on students of three-year courses compared to students of four-year courses. It could be concluded that non-verbal communication is more important for students attending more complex, four years of high school programs.

#### *D. Dependence of disagreements resolution on the frequency of disagreements*

The additional research question is: "Do students' ways of resolving disagreements depend on the frequency of encountering disagreements?". In order to get an answer to the research question, two variables were taken into account. A critical value with a significance level of 5% and  $df=12$  was found in the table of degrees of freedom for Chi-square test ( $X^2=0.2021$ ). The critical value for Chi-square is 21.0261. As the value obtained for the Chi-square is 0.2021 and Chi-square value in this research is significantly smaller than the critical value, we concluded that the variables linked to the different ways of resolving disagreements and the frequency of encountering disagreements are not dependent.

Although, the obtained results are interesting, it needs to be mentioned certain limitations appear during the implementation of the research itself. It is important to mention that relatively small number of respondents, only the graduates of one high school, were considered and have participated in research. In order to get the entire picture of the development of communication and adherence to etiquette in the selected high school, bigger research sample could be considered. Likewise, if one would like to get an overall picture of communication and etiquette in high school education, students from other high schools should also be included in the research. Another limitation could be the objectivity and honesty of the students when giving answers. A relatively small number of respondents can be mentioned as a limitation of the research. Likewise, the research was conducted on a convenient sample of respondents, i.e. available students or graduates of the selected high school who were present

at the time of the research. Therefore, the representativeness of the sample is limited.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Etiquette is important part of everyday communication between students and teachers in high school.

The research results show that there are no statistically significant differences in the answers between male and female students in terms of school etiquette. The only difference occurred in the statement related to the usage of capital letters in online communication. This has shown that female students are more familiar with online etiquette and the correct use of capital letters compared to their male peers. It was found that female students pay better attention to the use of capital letters in an online communication, compared to male students, meaning that female students pay slightly better attention to online etiquette.

It was also shown that students are equally satisfied with face-to-face communication and online communication, and that the same is considered for teaching. Likewise, students attending three-year high school program are less influenced by non-verbal communication from the teacher compared to students attending four-year high school program. In addition to the above, according to the obtained results, it was concluded that the variables ways of resolving disagreements and the frequency of encountering disagreements do not depend on each other.

Results of this research could be used for creating the communication training programs for online and face-to-face communication in high schools. Further research could be extended to other high schools and different student body.

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