Letter of Information

Understanding Each Other: Perceptions of Accent and Authority Among Classroom Instructors At Queen’s University – Part I (online survey)

Dear Queen’s Educator,

“Understanding Each Other: Perceptions of Accent and Authority Among Classroom Instructors At Queen’s University” is a research project developed as a collaboration between the Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS), the Queen’s University Human Rights Office (HRO) and PSAC Local 901. The researchers collaborating on this project are Stephanie Simpson (HRO) and Erin Clow, PhD.

The primary aim of “Understanding Each Other” is to determine if and how educator accents affect teaching experiences at Queen’s.

In Part I of the project, we invite educators at Queen’s (faculty, TFs, TAs, post docs, or academic assistants) to answer a survey to determine if and how accented English affects teaching. As part of the survey, we ask you to share any experience you may have had regarding accent and teaching or pedagogical authority in your classroom. We are interested in knowing more about any instances in which you felt accent resulted in positive or negative reactions, affected communication, resulted in biased or discriminatory treatment, etc.

In responding to this invitation, a participant is assumed to have read this Letter of Information in its entirety and to have had any questions answered to their satisfaction. All participants should also keep a copy of this letter for their records. Responding to this invitation to take part in our survey is understood as consenting to take part in the project.

Information submitted as part of the survey will be used to guide subsequent focus group discussions in Part II of the project. An important aim of this research initiative is to make information about the experiences of Queen’s educators with accented English more widely accessible. To this end, we would like to be able to share some examples of these experiences with the wider Queen’s community while protecting the anonymity of participants. By participating in this research you will be giving consent to have information you submit used, without personal identifiers, in a report on the project’s research findings and in future development of educational/awareness-raising initiatives around accented English at Queen’s. You consent to have your submissions amended for the sole purpose of protecting anonymity (i.e. hiding revealing descriptors such as names, genders, and departments).

The researchers recognize that we are asking participants to share personal experiences or submit information that might be personally upsetting (e.g., experiences of being the target of discrimination on the basis of accent). For this reason, participation in Part I is entirely voluntary and anonymous. All educators at Queen’s will receive an invitation to participate, so there is no implicit urging on the part of the researchers that any specific individuals choose to do so. Participants are free to withdraw from the part one survey at any time. Participants may exit the survey at any time without completing it and any data provided as part of their incomplete survey will not be used. Participants who submit a completed
survey but decide later that they wish to withdraw may do so by informing researchers by email of their wish and indicating the experience they submitted, at which point their submitted information will not be used as part of the research project. No reason for choosing to withdraw is expected or required.

Should you choose to participate in this stage of the project, the only time commitment asked of you is the time it takes to answer the survey. Upon completing the Part I survey, via FluidSurvey, you will be redirected to a completely separate Part II survey. The Part II survey will invite eligible participants to register for participation in focus groups.

Researchers will have access exclusively to information a participant shares with them through completed surveys. We are committed to maintaining the anonymity of our participants. If identifying information is provided within the survey, the researchers will delete descriptors and/or use pseudonyms to protect participant anonymity.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to ss33@queensu.ca or erin.clow@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Letter of Information. We look forward to potentially hearing from you.

Sincerely,

The Understanding Each Other Research Team