



CODE OF CONDUCT

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Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union under agreement n° 2022-1-IT02-KA220-SCH-000087602. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Introduction

Counteracting accent discrimination pRactiCes in Education (CIRCE) is an ERASMUS+ project co-funded by European Commission under the programme “Cooperation partnerships in school education” (KA220-SCH).

CIRCE intends to address the issue of accent discrimination in education. The school environment is a hotspot for addressing this issue: students are exposed to different accents and they form and reinforce their attitudes and beliefs towards them also on the basis of peer pressure.

Indeed, teachers are confronted daily with regional and non-native accents of the national language, and are at risk of unconsciously falling into prejudice and negative evaluations of non-standard varieties. The literature shows how these phenomena can occur even in people with high sensitivity to linguistic diversity and multilingualism. They are extremely risky because they can result in censorious and hypercritical attitudes toward students already at risk of dropping out of school. Hence, CIRCE wants to bring more awareness in the school environment about the topic of accent discrimination, and to develop in students and teachers a greater tolerance towards accent variation. It is indeed a phenomenon that is still little known, and the social tolerance that surrounds it hides its danger. It is actually a powerful discriminatory mechanism, and it is essential to unhinge its mechanisms by promoting knowledge of how it works.

CIRCE's approach is

- a) transnational: by involving partners from different countries, it will offer a broad vision of the phenomenon, and above all it will produce the opportunity for a mutual comparison of linguistic prejudices related to the languages of the project partners in different countries;
- b) integrated: it addresses all the actors in the school environment - students, teachers, families;
- c) sustainable: it develops tools that can be reused by students and teachers but above all it teaches a method to bring out the phenomenon, discuss it, and deal with it; moreover, CIRCE works to ensure that the data collected are FAIRified and hosted on the CLARIN-IT archives
- d) inclusive: CIRCE believes in the importance of communicating science to citizens, and to include them in the scientific investigation not as passive but as active participants in the study of phenomena. For this reason, CIRCE wants to work hand in hand with students and teachers in order to reach a better understanding of accent discrimination.
- e) respectful of data: in the knowledge society, data represents a value. CIRCE is aware of this and develops a workflow that is fully GDPR compliant.

The project will develop tools and resources to innovate school curricula and offer materials that enable teachers and educators to accommodate accent variation in their classrooms and other learning settings.

CIRCE Members are professors, senior researchers, post-doc researchers, university student trainees, administrative and technical staff working at each institution. They uphold a self-imposed obligation to professionalism and commitment.

The coordinator is UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SIENA (UNISI, Italy); the Partners are CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE (CNR, Italy); WESTFAELISCHE WILHELMS-UNIVERSITAET MUENSTER (UM, Germany); UNIVERSITAET HAMBURG (UH, Germany); VISOKOSKOLSKA USTANOVA INTERNACIONALNI BURC UNIVERZITET-INTERNATIONAL BURCH UNIVERSITY (IBU, Bosnia and Herzegovina); UNIVERSIDADE DE EVORA (UE, Portugal).

1. Objective

The CIRCE Code of Conduct provides general ethical principles on how CIRCE Members should operate during fieldwork, meetings, publication, conferences, events, committee and other work, mentoring relationships, and in all online spaces including (but not limited to) CIRCE social media accounts and website.

The purpose of the Code is to provide the CIRCE members with a clear set of guiding principles during the life cycle of the project and, thereafter, for related scientific research and dissemination, as long as necessary.

Whereas the Code sets out guidelines for the ethical conduct of all CIRCE members, it cannot deal specifically with all circumstances that may arise.

Nonetheless, each CIRCE Member shares the responsibility to ensure that individual and collective conduct is appropriate.

2. Responsibilities to colleagues

- CIRCE Members will encourage and support colleagues in their professional development.
- CIRCE Members will act with integrity towards colleagues and fellow members.
- CIRCE Members believe in the free sharing of knowledge and experience to aid the development and growth of its members and the development of knowledge in the field of language discrimination with particular attention to accentism.
- CIRCE Members will act in a spirit of collaboration, not competition, with fellow members and colleagues.
- CIRCE Members should not knowingly misrepresent the work of others. They should never present other people's work as their own; they should acknowledge in full all those who contributed to their research and publications; and they should clearly identify and reference any material that comes from other authors' publications or from personal communications (Guidelines for suggested acknowledgments are provided in the *CIRCE Project Handbook*, 6.3).
- In CIRCE project responsibilities are shared, and it is important to *try* to ensure that work and duties are distributed fairly, through careful and explicit processes of negotiation.
- Since CIRCE project is a collaborative and transnational research project, with professors, researchers, research assistants and students from different countries and different background, CIRCE members should make everyone's ethical and professional obligations clear. Care should be taken to clarify the roles, rights and obligations of team members in relation to:
 - access to and rights on data and fieldnotes;
 - access to travel and conference expenses;
 - publications;
 - co-authorship in publication.

CIRCE does not condone the undisclosed use of Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT) in the academic writings of its members. If their involvement is deemed as necessary, they should never be credited as co-authors, but always reported in dedicated methodological or acknowledgement sections depending on the individual rules of the publishing house.

These issues are the subject of dedicated agreements (1) and of rules detailed in the CIRCE Project Handbook.

3. Responsibilities to the project

- CIRCE Members will at all times behave in a respectful manner. Acts of discrimination based on age, race, colour, language and accent, gender identity, sexual preference, religious belief or lack thereof, political persuasion, or national origin will not be tolerated.
- CIRCE Members will not knowingly be party to the dissemination of false or misleading information, and will not deliberately withhold information (except where the confidentiality of a third party is involved) relating to their data or areas of expertise.

- CIRCE Members will not misuse information or materials supplied to them in the spirit of the cooperation described above. Unauthorized copying of CIRCE collected data, unattributed or unacknowledged use of the results of CIRCE collected data, and breaches of confidentiality are deemed to be serious violations of professional standards.
- CIRCE Members will not engage in conduct that will bring the profession and/or CIRCE into disrepute.
- CIRCE Members will not speak in the name of the CIRCE project without the consent of the CIRCE Project Management Board (cf. *CIRCE Project Handbook*, 2.2).
- CIRCE Members should attend to a wide variety of perspectives on the issue of accent discrimination, to the diverse claims made about it, to its context and history.
- No party among CIRCE Members should have privileged access to the data, the right to wholly determine the focus of the fieldwork and linguistic analysis, sole access to project reports, or a unilateral veto over their contents.
- All CIRCE Members should have the right to comment on the fairness, relevance and accuracy of project reports.

4. Responsibilities to students and informants

- CIRCE project should respect the rights, interests, sensitivities, and privacy of the informants. It is important to try to anticipate or to solve any harmful effects or disruptions to informants' lives, and to avoid any stress, undue intrusion, and detrimental exploitation. Researchers have a responsibility to be sensitive to cultural, religious, gender, age, language and accent differences: when trying to assess the potential impact of their work, they may need to seek guidance from members of the informants' school communities and informants' own communities.
- In case a CIRCE member draws on a student's research, or on a student's contribution to a larger research dealing with CIRCE, this should always be fully acknowledged in publications. Where students are needed as research informants, they should be invited to participate without coercion. Unless volunteering for it freely, students should be rewarded if there is a substantial amount of work involved. The nature of their involvement should be properly explained to students.
- Relationships with informants should be founded on trust and openness via **obtaining informed consent**.
- Informants have the right to refuse to participate in CIRCE research. At the same time, CIRCE members need to be aware that the power relations between themselves and their potential informants in schools and universities can sometimes be inadvertently misused to put pressure on people to participate. In addition, informants have the right to withdraw from the study, particularly if it is not conducted in the way explicitly agreed in advance.
- CIRCE members should respect confidentiality, and should make an attempt to anticipate potential threats to both anonymity and confidentiality (e.g. by anonymising the data, making it secure, and sometimes even destroying it). At the same time, CIRCE members should let informants know that it is not always possible to conceal identities completely, and that anonymity can sometimes be compromised unintentionally (cf. CIRCE Data management plan)
- In a relevant part of CIRCE research (i.e., attitudinal research towards accents) there are compelling methodological reasons for informants not being fully informed about the precise objectives of the survey. In Verbal Guise Technique, distraction is generally accepted as ethical, and it can be illustrated in, for example, the introduction of contextualisation information in the experiment to prevent informants monitoring themselves. In any case, debriefing sessions will be conducted by the CIRCE researchers in order to make participants fully aware of the whole process of the inquiry.

- Wherever possible, final CIRCE project reports should be made available in an accessible form to informants and school communities, and informants should have the right to comment on them.

5. Responsibilities to schools

- The collaboration with secondary schools is fundamental inside CIRCE project. Collaboration is meant to be voluntary, for the common purposes of investigation against accent discrimination. Preference will be given to schools that give their adherence spontaneously, driven by an interest in the topic. Extreme care will be taken to return the research within the school communities involved, and the contribution of individual schools will be publicly acknowledged on the project web site and the project documents, in the section 'CIRCE partners schools'.
- CIRCE members should comply with school communities' wishes regarding access, archiving, and distribution of results. In all cases in which the schools have an investment in language discrimination research, the aims of the investigation should be clearly discussed with the schools members and representatives and schools involvement sought from the earliest stages of project planning.
- CIRCE members should acknowledge and honour the expertise in the school communities and never imply that the university or scholarly experience is more valuable than that of school communities.
- CIRCE members should listen and learn from the school community experts, and challenge themselves to build new understandings and perspectives.

6. Responsibility to the public

- Accents discrimination research has relevant social and political implications.
- CIRCE members should make the results of their research available to the general public, and should endeavour to make the empirical bases and limitations of their research comprehensible to non-professionals.
- CIRCE members should give consideration to possible misinterpretations of their research findings, especially in school settings, anticipate the damage they may cause, and make all reasonable effort to prevent this.
- It is important, for CIRCE members, to consider disseminating one's work both in specialist publications and in more diverse and accessible formats. Relations with the mass media require particularly careful thought (cf. *CIRCE Project Handbook*).