

## Selection of responses to Trevor Grimshaw's questionnaire to Bath TESOL students

### Korean Ed D

'Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education?'(If so, why? If not, why not?)

My first reaction to this would be of course, (as you put down in your secondary question) to define what kind of 'standards' are we talking about. This word is so culturally loaded that I wouldn't know where to start. Whose point of view is the 'standard' coming from? That would be the first question to ask. Let me assume that this is a 'standard' that is coming from my context. i.e. the Korean context that I am teaching. At least in the context that I am teaching, the 'standard' to aim for is or course the native language speaker variety. I know that the term native speaker of course is another loaded term but I will use this term simply to refer to the way most people in this context refer it to or understand it as. That is, the English language that is used by people from an English speaking country. Or to be more blunt, American and Canadian. Korea as you know, is not considered as a country that is included in the growing circle of a country that increasingly speaks a sub-variety of English like that of Singapore or India for example. They consider English as a totally foreign language although there are movements here to make English as an official language next to Korean. The goal of the ultimate English is based on the American or the British model and the society requires that a teacher whose purpose is to teach English to the students confer to the American or the British model. I would say, this society is not yet ready to accept any other English standard than that I have mentioned above. It will be some time before they would be willing to accept any other model. Therefore, in this society/context, in order to be accepted and respected as an English teacher, you would need to conform and be trained in the mold of the native speaker standard that I have mentioned above.

However, having said that, my own opinion is that Koreans need to be more exposed to the idea of people who speak a variety of English standards just for the sake of their own learning. There was a recent article regarding why Koreans are not able to speak English as well as they ought to given that they learn this language as long as they do. One hypothesis was that Koreans suffer from a 'model student' complex in which they aim to produce the perfect pronunciation and perfect sentence structure before they allow themselves to speak. In other words, if they can't speak like a 'native speaker', they won't speak at all. I am not saying that they can say and pronounce the words in any way they like but if it is to a certain extent that they can be understood, they should be made to feel adequate about it.

The above sentiments are just my initial reaction to the questions that had been posed. If you have further questions about the issue, I will be happy to clarify or answer in more detail in the future. Hope this helps.

Korean EdD student # 1

## Swedish MA student 1 - standards

Here are my opinions. As you know I am a non-native English teacher teaching in an international school. I have not gone through the English teacher training so my opinions are based on a different cultural background.

'Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education?'  
(If so, why? If not, why not?)

I do think there should be standards. The accent should not interfere with the understanding but opening up to calling English with a 'French dialect' would be refreshing. The vocabulary should be at a good level (What is a good level? Who decides?) I think especially when teaching ESL to both young students and adults that it is an asset to be bilingual. You have a tendency to use fewer and simpler words. Repeating the same phrase instead of changing the words for instance, gives the students time to think. A deeper understanding of why this grammatical concept is hard is always present. I also believe that languages transfer, if you know more than two you can compare and see similarities between languages. The more languages the teacher knows the better.

Some related, secondary questions are:

. What do we mean by/understand by 'acceptable standards of English' in TESOL education in the UK? (i.e. What is an 'acceptable standard'?)

See answers to above questions

- Are we training teachers in terms of what will be appropriate in their own future working context, or in terms of a norm? (i.e. Should we be training people to use English as an International Language / English as a Lingua Franca, or should we training people to use English that is based on a specific model: British English, American English, etc.?)
- With a world becoming more mobile I think the issue with specific models is not appropriate any more. I think it is more important not too mix them up. Maybe English as an international language? I know too little about it to comment on that really.
- How do institutions decide what is an 'acceptable' level of English for applicants for teacher training courses? (viz.. IELTS, TOEFL, etc. Are these adequate indicators of English language proficiency?)
- I have never done a TOEFL test. Bath university accepted me as a Masters student due to the fact that I had been teaching 8 years in an international school
- How much use do/can/should trainees make of human and technological assistance with written work? (e.g. Should non-native-English-speaking students be allowed/encouraged/deterred from asking a more proficient English writer to 'tutor' them through their assignments? Is this fair?)

From my own experience I had big trouble with my first assignments due to that I had never written an English academic paper. I would not have gotten through the first essay if I had not had the support from the other Masters students. This is not only about English but also the form in you write an essay in different countries. How will you know if you don't ask. I think they should have a mentor through the first couple of essays for that reason. Self confidence is not high in that position and you need someone that you feel confident to ask in the small things as well. Which is the most appropriate word in this setting? You can't find these answers in a book.

### **British MA student # 5**

'Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education?' (If so, why? If not, why not?)

I think accepted norms of speech can be helpful, both for novice teachers and more experienced practitioners, but insisting on a regimented and recognised correct pronunciation (whether that be RP, American standard, or whatever) seems to be rather naive in the face of developing World Englishes and does not even give a fair reflection of what the majority of native speakers in those countries produce. Leading all students to believe that all British people speak with RP does a disservice to them, even if they were learning English purely to speak to British people (which they don't seem to be).

I do, however, think that ELT education requires much more than a basic command and understanding of the language not necessarily related to nuance of pronunciation or regional differences in grammar. My feeling is that there should be standards, for the protection of all involved in the "profession", but I do not know what that should be.

- What do we mean by/understand by 'acceptable standards of English' in TESOL education in the UK? (i.e. What is an 'acceptable standard'?)

In terms of the language produced by non-native speakers, my feeling is that an acceptable standard is one which gives them the ability to perform the tasks for which they are learning the language (travel, business, continued study etc) without undue strain upon themselves or the listener/reader. That's a very vague definition, but the field is so vast that I think pinning down acceptability will be extremely difficult.

- Are we training teachers in terms of what will be appropriate in their own future working context, or in terms of a norm? (i.e. Should we be training people to use English as an International Language / English as a Lingua Franca, or should we training people to use English that is based on a specific model: British English, American English, etc.?)

In my experience of teacher training programmes (CELTA, DELTA and MA ELT), they seem to be training teachers in terms of a very generalised context, not related specifically to the use of a lingua franca, nor in the use of a specific model of language. In fact, little attention seems to have been paid to these concepts at all, rather on theories and methods which the student then applies within their particular context.

My feeling is that, so long as they have been educated to a sufficient level, teachers should teach the English that they know (although some schools may want "American

English" for example). As native speakers, the language they teach ought to be the one that they know. That said, I have encountered many teachers who refuse to acknowledge that other forms exist or are in everyday use. Perhaps teachers should be trained to teach what they know and have encountered, but should be encouraged to encounter wider varieties (as we have little idea of the contexts in which some of our students will eventually need the language).

This does pose difficulties in production of materials, of course.

Phonemic charts don't correspond to the language produced by some legitimate native speakers of English, for example.

- How do institutions decide what is an 'acceptable' level of English for applicants for teacher training courses? (viz.. IELTS, TOEFL, etc. Are these adequate indicators of English language proficiency?)

That's very difficult.

Acceptable might mean a level which meant that comprehension and assimilation of ideas was the issue and not understanding or producing the requisite language. Regardless, my feeling is that the accepted level is not high enough at this time, but that test scores (like IELTS, FCE, TOEFL, TOEIC, etc) do not accurately reflect the understanding and ability to teach a given language. Tests can be crammed for, techniques can be learned, but at the end of the day, a teacher needs different levels of English depending on the courses they will be teaching. The PGCE doesn't prepare teachers for all levels, and neither should TESOL qualifications.

However, I don't think appropriate levels of English should be the only criteria. Just because someone knows their subject, doesn't mean they can teach.

The difficulty of finding a benchmark is for native and non-native teachers alike, but I am not sure how centres could differentiate between an appropriate student and an inappropriate one, bar testing and a general "feel". Even if they could, I doubt that institutions would turn away some students, because of the financial aspect.

- How much use do/can/should trainees make of human and technological assistance with written work? (e.g. Should non-native-English-speaking students be allowed/encouraged/deterred from asking a more proficient English writer to 'tutor' them through their assignments? Is this fair?)

Consultation with peers about ideas and checking of spelling in dictionaries is about as much as I think is fair or appropriate. If a student requires more, including assistance from lecturers or language support staff, I am inclined to feel that their language skills are not appropriate to the level of the course they are studying.

### **Austrian MA Student 3**

If you had asked me some years ago, I would have said that standards only restrict language. But as I've been working with a lot of bilingual pupils during the last years, I would now say standards are necessary in any case not only as language is concerned. You need them for assessment and preparing your lessons.

As people do no longer spend their lives in one particular place and many of them move to other continents, it is necessary that there is a language that is spoken and understood everywhere. This language seems to be English nowadays. If there is a standard it is much easier for everybody. 500 years ago Martin Luther created a standard German language (without knowing it) by using a certain dialect for his interpretation of the bible. If he hadn't done so, Austrians wouldn't be able to communicate with people from Berlin nowadays.

I think there should be standards of English in teacher education, too. Twenty years ago it was obligatory for English teachers in Austria to use British English only – the better you were in imitating Queen Elizabeth's pronunciation the better were your marks. During the last decades this has changed and American English expressions can be found in our English books. This is because A.E. has become quite common by the use of the internet. In my opinion teachers should be trained to use English as an International Language. But don't ask me what would be an acceptable standard for the UK.

Some of the teachers of international schools, especially those who have taught in different schools, have told me that they would be pleased if there was a standard for all international schools. They have complained about the "Americanization" of international schools.

I'm not quite sure whether IELTS, TOEFL etc. are adequate indicators of English language proficiency. I'm not very much in favour of standardized tests - especially those where a stopwatch is used - but you will have to use some. Otherwise each institution will set its own standard.

I also think that non-native-English-speaking students should be allowed to ask a more proficient English writer to tutor them through their assignments. I think it's fair, because we even do this in our native language. There is a tutor, too and there always is a friend who is going to read your assignment and correct your mistakes.

Austrian MA student # 3

## **British MA Student 2**

Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education?'  
(If so, why? If not, why not?)

I believe there 'should be standards of English for English language teacher education', as without them the English that is taught and then replicated by students is in danger of being below standard.

Some related, secondary questions are:

. What do we mean by/understand by 'acceptable standards of English' in TESOL education in the UK? (i.e. What is an 'acceptable standard'?) I understand 'acceptable standard' as a standard of English equivalent to that of a native speaker who possesses at least a grade C at GCSE or above in English Language. Furthermore, this means grammatical rules should be clearly adhered to, vocabulary should be wide ranging and accent of spoken English should be clearly understandable to any sympathetic native speaker.

. Are we training teachers in terms of what will be appropriate in

their own future working context, or in terms of a norm? (i.e. Should we be training people to use English as an International Language / English as a Lingua Franca, or should we training people to use English that is based on a specific model: British English, American English, etc.?) As a current CELTA trainee we have been taught to replicate the pronunciation and grammatical structures of British English rather than American English. This is possibly due to both; the location in which we are training, Berne Switzerland and because CELTA is a British qualification.

. How do institutions decide what is an 'acceptable' level of English for applicants for teacher training courses? (viz.. IELTS, TOEFL, etc. Are these adequate indicators of English language proficiency?) On the CELTA I am undertaking, students who are non-native speakers of English must prove their competence in English, e.g. 'Non-native speakers are required to hold a CPE Grade B or proof of similar level of language competence. Both language awareness and competence will be checked at the time of the interview.'  
accessed from CELTA COURSE PDF <http://www.up-vhs.ch/index.php?id=85>

. How much use do/can/should trainees make of human and technological assistance with written work? (e.g. Should non-native-English-speaking students be allowed/encouraged/deterred from asking a more proficient English writer to 'tutor' them through their assignments? Is this fair?) I think that trainees should be able to use such assistance as by using such means students are only improving their overall command of English which has to be the ultimate goal anyway.

British MA student # 2

#### **Chinese MA Student 4**

I think there should be standards for English in English teacher education. Though I would rather believe that efficient communication is enough, teachers' inconsistent use of English will confuse students. At least there should correctness, appropriateness.

I don't think the MA course I am doing distinguish different teaching contexts, such as different countries and different institutions. I think the end point of language learning is being able to communicate orally and literally. But there are certainly differences across different cultures and institutions.

I don't think IELTS or TOEFL is adequate for deciding if an applicant is qualified for a training course. Perhaps a face-to-face interview is needed. And I think some years of teaching experience should be seen as essential for teacher training course. Many applicants simply rush to the course blindly, like myself. This certainly increases the possibility of encountering difficulties even failure during the course.

Non-native speakers certainly will be in inferior position when having to use the target language for expressing their ideas. Sometimes they fail to communicate efficiently simply because they are not quick enough in reaction in the target language, i.e. could not think of the appropriate language to express their ideas. But I don't think the help from proficient English writer is a thorough solution. For non-native-speakers, the learning of language itself is as important as the learning of teaching theories.

Chinese MA student # 4

## Chinese MA student # 6

I think there are standards of English for English Language Teacher, which can be easy for the assessment.

1. Acceptable standard English has correct grammar and can get the meaning through the text.
2. In terms of future working context. English as an international language
3. Yes, it is often examined through IELTS, TOEFL, etc. But I doubt whether they can really test one's language proficiency, as some part of them can be memorized.
4. It will be of great help if trainees can get the assistance with written work.  
Meanwhile, I think it is fair for non-native-English-speaking students to get such help, as the final works are marked by the same requirements for both native and non-native English speakers.

## Greek MA Student 1

1. What do we mean by/understand by 'acceptable standards of English' in TESOL education in the UK? (i.e. What is an 'acceptable standard'?)

I believe that by "acceptable standards of English" we mean the qualifications that a person should have in order to be able to teach.

An acceptable standard of English in Education, could be different for each group of students. For example, if someone wants to teach at a school, a BA and/or an MA is an acceptable standard. Of course schools in the UK require a PGCE as well. On the other hand, people who teach English at Universities or Colleges should be required to have at least an MA, if not a PhD.

However, all trainees should take courses on child psychology and methodology of teaching.

2. Are we training teachers in terms of what will be appropriate in their own future working context, or in terms of a norm? (i.e. Should we be training people to use English as an International Language / English as a Lingua Franca, or should we training people to use English that is based on a specific model: British English, American English, etc.?)

In my opinion people should be trained to use English as an International Language. I have asked a lot of my students why they are learning English and they all gave me the same answer: "Because it's the International language, it is spoken all over the world and we want to be able to communicate with people when we go to a foreign country". They don't mind if it's British English or American English.

3. How do institutions decide what is an 'acceptable' level of English for applicants for teacher training courses? (viz.. IELTS, TOEFL, etc. Are these adequate indicators of English language proficiency?)

No, these are not adequate indicators of English language Proficiency. A person may be good at grammar and vocabulary- generally in the written part but may not be good in the oral part and may not have the proper accent (if he or she is a non-native English speaking). This may have as a result the students' incorrect pronunciation of words once he or she starts teaching.

4. How much use do/can/should trainees make of human and technological assistance with written work? (e.g. Should non-native-English-speaking students be allowed/encouraged/deterred from asking a more proficient English writer to 'tutor' them through their assignments? Is this fair?)

In my opinion, trainees should not be assisted with written work, as this is not fair. It is important for them to learn to cope on their own.  
Greek MA student # 1

Korean Ed D

'Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education? (If so, why? If not, why not?)

My first reaction to this would be of course, (as you put down in your secondary question) to define what kind of 'standards' are we talking about. This word is so culturally loaded that I wouldn't know where to start. Whose point of view is the 'standard' coming from? That would be the first question to ask. Let me assume that this is a 'standard' that is coming from my context. i.e. the Korean context that I am teaching. At least in the context that I am teaching, the 'standard' to aim for is or course the native language speaker variety. I know that the term native speaker of course is another loaded term but I will use this term simply to refer to the way most people in this context refer it to or understand it as. That is, the English language that is used by people from an English speaking country. Or to be more blunt, American and Canadian. Korea as you know, is not considered as a country that is included in the growing circle of a country that increasingly speaks a sub-variety of English like that of Singapore or India for example. They consider English as a totally foreign language although there are movements here to make English as an official language next to Korean. The goal of the ultimate English is based on the American or the British model and the society requires that a teacher whose purpose is to teach English to the students confer to the American or the British model. I would say, this society is not yet ready to accept any other English standard than that I have mentioned above. It will be some time before they would be willing to accept any other model. Therefore, in this society/context, in order to be accepted and respected as an English teacher, you would need to conform and be trained in the mold of the native speaker standard that I have mentioned above.

However, having said that, my own opinion is that Koreans need to be more exposed to the idea of people who speak a variety of English standards just for the sake of their own learning. There was a recent article regarding why Koreans are not able to speak English as well as



they ought to given that they learn this language as long as they do. One hypothesis was that Koreans suffer from a 'model student' complex in which they aim to produce the perfect pronunciation and perfect sentence structure before they allow themselves to speak. In other words, if they can't speak like a 'native speaker', they won't speak at all. I am not saying that they can say and pronounce the words in any way they like but if it is to a certain extent that they can be understood, they should be made to feel adequate about it.

The above sentiments are just my initial reaction to the questions that had been posed. If you have further questions about the issue, I will be happy to clarify or answer in more detail in the future. Hope this helps.

Korean EdD student # 1

## Taiwanese EdD student 1 - standards

'Should there be standards of English for English language teacher education?'  
(If so, why? If not, why not?)

Yes, in this case, we can assure the quality of English language teaching. But it's really hard to say what "standards of English" are. Should we evaluate teachers' language ability or should we be more concerned about their knowledge of teaching?

Some related, secondary questions are:

. What do we mean by/understand by 'acceptable standards of English' in TESOL education in the UK? (i.e. What is an 'acceptable standard'?)

I really don't know. I guess English teachers need CELTA to teach English as a second language in the UK. Is it a kind of "standard" measurement?

. Are we training teachers in terms of what will be appropriate in their own future working context, or in terms of a norm? (i.e. Should we be training people to use English as an International Language / English as a Lingua Franca, or should we training people to use English that is based on a specific model: British English, American English, etc.?)

I think you are training teachers in terms of a norm. But I guess it's unavoidable. If you are training teachers based on their own future working context, it makes "training" a difficult task. Besides, language is closely related to "culture". Even sometimes you are trying to teach English as a Lingua Franca, but some words are meaningless when directly translated back to L1 because of its lack of cultural background.

And I don't think training people to use a specific model of English is a good idea. Like in Taiwan, only American English is taught, which makes students have no knowledge of British English at all.

. How do institutions decide what is an 'acceptable' level of English

for applicants for teacher training courses? (viz.. IELTS, TOEFL, etc.  
Are these adequate indicators of English language proficiency?)

It's really an issue how to measure a teacher's language proficiency because I don't think a test can accurately measure one's language proficiency. Furthermore, there are a lot of different cram schools in Asia to teach people how to get high scores in IELTS or TOEFL, etc.

Maybe IELTS or TOEFL could be the first indicator to select applicants with certain level of English language proficiency, say maybe IELTS 6.5 or TOEFL 250, but an interview is necessary as well in order to see if applicants can use the language to fully express themselves. In my opinion, if one cannot use the language to fully express themselves, he is not qualified to be a language teacher, no matter how high scores he gets in IELTS or TOEFL.

. How much use do/can/should trainees make of human and technological assistance with written work? (e.g. Should non-native-English-speaking students be allowed/encouraged/deterred from asking a more proficient English writer to 'tutor' them through their assignments? Is this fair?)

Yes, and I think it's necessary. When we write in another language, we learn to think in a different way. For example, English writing is different from Chinese writing. For Chinese students, we need to be taught (or told) that English writing is straighter and clearer in styles. Having a proficient English writer to tutor us through assignments would be very helpful not only in correcting grammatical errors but also in developing English ways of thinking and writing.