THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH?

Posted on April 12, 2012 by Sue

Category: Languages in Africa

The Guardian has a fascinatingÂ article on the way English is spoken in Ghana. It seems that there is a debate going on in Ghana between those who believe that Ghanaians should speak 'the Queen's English' trying to mimic so-called 'received pronunciation', because they think that sounding English is prestigious, and those who value being multilingual and prefer to sound Ghanaian when they speak English:

> *"The idea that intelligence is linked to English pronunciation is a legacy from colonial thinking," said Delalorm Semabia, 25, a Ghanaian blogger. "People used to think that if you speak like the British then you are as intelligent as the British. But now we are waking up to the fact that we have great people here who have never stepped outside the borders."*

It is great to see that Ghana (in contrast with some neighbouring countries) takes pride in its own languages:

> *Ghana has nine indigenous languages that are officially sponsored by the government, including Akan languages spoken widely in the south. A further 26 languages are officially recognised and at least double that number are also spoken. Unlike its francophone neighbours, which were forced under colonialism to teach only in French, Ghana has always maintained the use of African languages in its primary school education.*

And at the same time Ghanaians want to make English their own, as Semabia says:

> *"For us, English is our language â€“ we want to break away from the old strictures, to personalise it, mix it with our local languages, and have fun with it. The whole point of language is that it's supposed to be flexible and it's meant to be fun."*

Amen to that!