

## Audio script

### Podcast- *Who owns English? It's not who you think!*



Source: <http://www.tefltraininginstitute.com/podcast/2016/7/8/who-owns-english-its-not-who-you-think>

**Ross:** Tracy, what is English as a lingua franca or what does that mean to you?

**Tracy:** I think it's just a language which is used by different people who speak different languages and they use this language... (interruption) And they use the same language to communicate.

**Ross:** So it's basically this idea that... I think if you go back, maybe 50 years or something, there was a British empire, all the world was learning English, but they were learning English from this point of view that, like, you know, the British, who were the masters and the controllers of the whole world were forcing people to speak English, right? And you have the Second World War, and in the 1950's and in the 1960's a lot of these countries India, Burma, etc, etc, get their independence, but if you move on to the present day... And it's the same with a lot of Africa as well, right? A lot of African countries were under British rule. If you move on to now, we have the situation where a lot of the world is using English to communicate with each other and, all of a sudden, this idea of English as being owned by Britain has changed, right? Because over the years the number of non-native speakers, right, non-British, and non-Americans and non-Australians who speak English has gone bigger and bigger and bigger. So, now we are in the situation of saying: Who owns English? What counts as being right or being wrong? So, for example, if you have, and I don't know how many ... (to say, it's erm?), three hundred million people in India who can speak English, can someone British say that their English is wrong?

**Tracy:** I think it's the same situation in China because it's very common for the teacher and then... being asked by a student: "OK, teacher, I'd like to improve my English. I want to study American English or British English only". Now you think about the number of people who speak British English or American English is much smaller than the non-native English speakers.

**Ross:** And the people who speak Chinglish\*.

**Tracy:** Yes! Exactly! It's quite interesting, like, last year I attended a meeting or conference and there was a Chinese professor talking about, you know, something similar, like, we shouldn't teach British or American English, you know, we should teach them, like, even Aussie English\*\* or New Zealand English or Chinglish to the students. Because in the future they will not only talk to the people from those countries, they're talking to people from all over the world.

**Ross:** So, I think this is an interesting point to consider as teachers. Well, what do your students want to sound like and why do they want to sound like that. I remember years ago meeting some professors from... I think they were from

Cambridge or from Oxford or something... and they'd come to China, to Shanghai, to do some Q&A session\*\*\* with a bunch of directors of studies and they'd gone to this topic and I think one of them was from Greece or France, I can't remember, and she said: "I don't want to sound British or American when I speak English? Do you know why? Because I'm not British or American! I'm from Greece! I want to sound Greek when I speak English!" Right? I think what's one of the interesting things about students choosing an accent is your accent says so much about you. When I speak English or, I think when British people speak English, it says not only about where you're from, but it also says where you were educated possibly, and the class that your parents are from. So, there's a lot, kind of, in your own identity that's wrapped up in your accent.

**Tracy:** Oh! Interesting!

**Ross:** I read about a study a long time ago... Someone did some research and they played these Japanese learners of English a bunch of different accents and they said, you know, here's twenty accents, twenty different people speaking English and they are all from different places. Which one of these people would you most like to sound like? Can you guess which accent they chose?

**Tracy:** I don't know... Japanese?

**Ross:** Yeah! They chose a Japanese person speaking English!

\*Chinglish: Chinese English

\*\* Aussie English: Australian English

\*\*\* Q&A session: Question and answer session