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Chapter 6
Attitudes towards English as an International Language: The pervasiveness of native models among L2 users and teachers[*]

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1. Introduction

In 1973, a group of people were held hostages for six days during a bank robbery in Stockholm. After their rescue, they experienced emotional attachment to their captors and even tried to help and defend them at the trial. Psychiatrist Nils Bejerot coined the term *Stockholm Syndrome* to describe a victim's psychological identification with their captor. Puzzling as this phenomenon may be, it has been explained as a humane defensive mechanism of a person who somehow needs to form an emotional attachment to the nearest powerful figure, and it has later been applied to

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other cases of person-to-person abuse, such as battered spouses, abused children, members of religious cults, or concentration camp survivors.

My point in this chapter is that non-native speaking English teachers (henceforth, NNESTs) do somehow experience a phenomenon that can be loosely related to that experienced by the victims of the 1973 Stockholm robbery (with all the evident distances between NNESTs and the victims of physically and emotionally abuse) in a world that still values native speakers as the norm providers and the natural choice in language teacher selection.

In this paper, I will attempt to show how NNESTs have accepted formulations, proposals, and attitudes that relegate them to mere spectators and at times executioners of NS norms. I will provide a short review of research on NNESTs and attitudes to English as an International Language (henceforth, EIL) in order to support my claim, and I will conclude by suggesting three lines of action that may be helpful in overcoming the current situation.

2. What research tells us about NNESTs

Speakers of a language are often classified into two great groups, native speakers and non-native speakers. This separation has been used as much in theoretical linguistics (Chomsky, 1965) as in applied linguistics (Davies, 1991, 2003), but such a classification of speakers of a language into natives and non-natives clearly resembles the common division between ‘us’ and

'the others' present in those communities which try to establish a strong allegiance among its 'true members' (i.e., 'us'), thus preventing 'the others' from fully participating in the community activities. Classifying several speakers of a language as 'the others' (i.e., non-native speakers) may be regarded as a case of discrimination, materialized in the form of 'native speakerism', which Holliday (2005) describes as a specific variant of the social phenomenon of 'culturism'. Despite several attempts in recent times to discredit or at least minimize the separation between native and non-native speakers of a language (Davies, 1991, 2003; Rampton, 1990; Paikeday, 1985), the concept of non-nativeness continues to be used as a way of labelling a group of speakers, which in the case of the English language, is certainly much larger than the group of so-called native speakers (Graddol, 2006). Liu (1999), Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001), and Inbar-Lourie (2005) presented evidence against a clear-cut division between native and non-native speakers. However, there has not been any consensus yet in finding a term that substitutes 'non-native speaker', which despite its many inconveniences is still widely used, for lack of a better alternative.

In this context, and mainly due to the established perception of a clear division between native and non-native speakers among linguists, and more importantly among laypeople, a group of applied linguists led by Braine (1999, 2005) began to actively advocate for the rights of non-native teachers in ELT, and took a clear action towards promoting research focused on this

particular group of teachers, which to that moment had almost exclusively been pursued by Péter Medgyes and his associates (Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Reves and Medgyes, 1994). Since then, a growing number of studies have been conducted with the global aim of better understanding the nature of language teachers and what they can specifically contribute to the language teaching profession. I will here review only a few, with the hope of introducing the reader to some of the main topics of research in the area.

I will start with Liu (1999), who conducted a series of e-mail interviews with seven teachers for a period of eight months. One of the insights he obtained from the interviews was that there was no consensus regarding the meaning and implications of the terms NS and NNS, as three participants "expressed difficulty in affiliating themselves with either category" (p. 163). One of Liu's main arguments was the need to think of NNS professionals as being seen along "a multidimensional and multilayered continuum" (p. 163). One year later, Árva and Medgyes (2000) compared the performances of NS and NNS ELT teachers, and their results highlighted the different contributions made by each of the two groups. This study, together with Cots and Diaz's (2005) are to date the only two attempts to conduct research on NNESTs by actually looking at their performance within the classroom. Cots and Diaz (2005) centred their analysis around the comparison of the discourse construction of social relationships by NESTs and NNESTs, as well as their differing ways of using teacher talk as a way of fostering

participant inscription, an approach that would certainly require further studies in the same direction.

Students' perceptions about NESTs and NNESTs were studied by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002, 2005) and by Benke and Medgyes (2005). Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002, 2005) conducted two complementary studies on university students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in an EFL context. They used both closed and open questionnaires to elicit responses, and their conclusions were that students tend to prefer NESTs over NNESTs but that they are aware of some advantages of NNESTs, and therefore a majority of students would like to have a combination of both, NESTs and NNESTs. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) also asked students to differentiate their preferences according to level of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) and results showed that students had "an increasing tendency in favour of the NST as the educational level is higher" (p. 226). Benke and Medgyes' (2005) study involved 422 Hungarian learners of English. The instrument was a questionnaire consisting of five-point Likert scale questions with statements about NSs and NNSs based on Medgyes' (1994) list of characteristics of NS and NNS teachers. The authors concluded that students, on the whole, considered NNS teachers more demanding and traditional in the classroom than their NS colleagues, who were regarded as more outgoing, casual, and talkative.

A new perspective was offered by Nemtchinova (2005), who elicited host teachers' opinions regarding non-native student teachers doing their practice teaching in an MA TESOL program. NNESTs were generally perceived as well prepared and able to build good relationships with their students. However, several host teachers perceived a lack in self-confidence by NNESTs, generally visible through their excessively tough self-evaluations.

Bayyurt (2006) focused on cultural aspects in the teaching of EIL by NNESTs, and dealt with the perceptions of non-native EFL teachers towards culture, as well as whether and how culture should be included in the foreign language curriculum. Bayyurt's conclusion was that "a successful non-native speaker model of a foreign language might help learners to overcome linguistic as well as cultural barriers in their language learning process" (Bayyurt, 2006: 244).

Finally, Llurda (2005) conducted a survey among TESOL program supervisors in North-American universities, in which participants were asked to give their views on the performance of non-native MA TESOL students in their practice teaching, in comparison to their native counterparts. Non-native students appeared to be rather well considered, although a small group of them stood out as clearly lacking language proficiency. In a follow-up to that study (Llurda, unpublished manuscript), fourteen supervisors were interviewed and most of them agreed on the lack of self-confidence experienced by many NNSs. The reasons given for this lack of

self-confidence ranged from their own language skills to the environment, especially in ESL settings, which were regarded as being more demanding on NNS teachers than EFL settings.

3. The connection between NNESTs and EIL

In Llurda (2004a), I discussed the strong connections and interdependence existing between the teaching of EIL and NNESTs, as it was argued that only NNESTs are naturally suited to promote EIL, and only the choice of EIL as the target paradigm can really empower NNESTs and set them in the right context for conducting their teaching task without having first to prove their competence, and so discard all possible doubts and criticisms by students, program administrators, and fellow teachers. As Jenkins (2007) pointed out, my approach at that time suggested a vision of EIL as though it consisted of a single uniform variety that could be described and taught in a prescriptive way. My current position refuses any prescriptivist approach to EIL and acknowledges the wide diversity among users. So, my point is that placing diversity embodied by EIL at the centre stage is clearly going to give NNSs a great deal of authority to teach the language. One may argue that NNSs have always had the right to claim ownership of the language (Widdowson, 1994), but repeated and diverse evidence shows that even now many people take the native speaker as the best teacher of a language. And certainly, as long as a native variety of English is used as a model, there will be NESTs who may look down on any NNEST. If, as Cook (2007) notes, none of the goals of ELT is to become a NS, it all falls on the teaching skills

and capacities of the corresponding teacher, which will necessarily be a NNEST of that particular 'nativeless variety'. In that situation, NSs and NNSs will be on the same ground, with one extra advantage for NNSs, which is their multilingual experiences. NSs may of course share this condition and be multilingual themselves, but they will need to have some L2 learning and using experience (Ellis, 2006).

A similar argument is presented by Modiano (2005), in relation to cultural aspects associated with language learning. Modiano focuses on the Swedish context and criticizes the excessively British orientation in Swedish EFL materials. He further argues for a perspective that incorporates notions of interculturality, transculturalism and biculturalism, for which NNSs can take full responsibility. In many European countries, teachers of English are trained through their participation in programmes that incorporate language training, linguistics, literature and cultural studies. However, as shown in Llurda (2004b), those programmes often rely excessively on a monolingual and monocultural vision of the English speaking world, giving little heed to cultural and linguistic diversity. NNSs can do a lot to move the language beyond the exclusive domain of NSs' ownership. In fact, the implementation of an approach that focuses on English as an International Language depends on teachers' exposure to the different forms in which English may appear in international contexts, and their total support to the acceptance and use of EIL in English language classrooms. Unfortunately, that is not a frequent condition among NNESTs, as it will be shown along

the next two sections. So, we must be cautious not to simply call all NNESTs fit to incorporate an EIL vision in the classroom just because their condition of non-native speakers makes them an optimal choice. We need therefore to consider what attitudes towards EIL are held by learners and teachers of English.

4. Attitudes of learners towards EIL

Studies looking at the attitudes of learners of English towards different varieties of the language have yielded a set of diverse results, depending on the particularities of the local settings. However, a common feature among learners of English from such distant contexts as Hong Kong (Luk, 1998), Italy (Pulcini, 1997), Denmark (Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006), or Austria (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck & Smit, 1997) was that they all showed a preference for RP accented British English over their local accents.

Kachru (1981) argued that negative attitudes towards foreign accented English by NSs may not be due to language factors but to stereotyped mental systems, and Trifonovitch (1981) further explained that many competent NNSs identify themselves with NSs rather than with other NNSs, adopting a rather strict and derogatory attitude towards fellow NNSs. The power of stereotypes was observed in many other studies, like Delamere (1996), who studied attitudes by American NSs toward different non-native varieties through the use of the matched-guise technique, which involved a two-time reading of the same text by the same person with the only

difference that one of the readings had some grammatical errors. It was observed that grammar errors affected evaluations of readers in different ways depending on their accent, either French, Malay, Farsi, Arabic, or Spanish. Llurda (2000) also illustrated the power of accent stereotypes on personality evaluations, and Lippi-Green (1997) provided a thorough discussion of accent discrimination and attitudes related to different English accents.

In their study involving Austrian students of English, Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck and Smit (1997) found that students showed a preference for native varieties over their own accented variety. They explained these results by means of the constant encouragement on learners to imitate native norms. Additionally, participants with extended periods abroad appeared to be more willing to interact with accented speakers, thus suggesting a detachment of the native variety bias associated to increased contact with the native variety and increased competence in the language. The same results were found in a more recent study involving Catalan teachers of English (Llurda, forthcoming).

Attitudes towards different varieties of English have sometimes been associated with higher or lower degrees of intelligibility of those varieties. However, as Kachi (2004) notes:

> "Even though the intelligibility of nonnative speech is lower than that of native speech, it is not very low in itself, in

> comparison with perceived comprehensibility. That is, listeners seem to be able to understand nonnative speech better than they say they can, while nonnative listeners tend to claim that they understand native English better than they actually do." (Kachi, 2004: 61).

Attitudes towards a language are dependent on several factors, among which the learner's mother tongue (Baker, 1992; Lasagabaster, 2003) and attendance to language classes (Huguet & Llurda, 2001). In the Catalan city of Lleida, Llurda, Lasagabaster and Cots (2006) contrasted the attitudes towards the minority language (Catalan, which is strongly protected by the Catalan educational authorities), the majority language (Spanish, which is the language most massively used in the media and mainstream leisure activities), and a third very powerful but rather external language (English, taught to more than 90% of primary and secondary school students, but with very little presence in students' everyday life and social relations). The study used a Likert-scale questionnaire based on Baker's (1992). Overall attitudes towards languages were divided into three categories: favourable, neutral, and unfavourable. For all three languages, unfavourable attitudes were minimal (around 2% for Catalan and Spanish, and nearly 8% for English). However, more important differences appeared when favourable attitudes were taken into account. Spanish was the language that received the widest support, with 68% of students showing favourable attitudes towards it, followed by Catalan (43%), and English trailed at the very end of

the ranking (16%). Thus, even though attitudes towards English were not negative, they weren't positive either. The high proportion of neutral attitudes (76%) showed a certain degree of indifference towards it. Students probably hear too often that one needs to learn English in modern society in order to succeed in their professional lives, but it looks as though they really do not care much for that language.

Another interesting insight arising from the same study was provided by the analysis of the effect of students' L1 (Catalan, Spanish, others) on their attitudes to the three different languages. Attitudes towards Spanish were rather positive for L1 speakers of Spanish and L1 speakers of other languages. And these two groups held rather low attitudes towards Catalan. In contrast, L1 speakers of Catalan showed rather low attitudes towards Spanish, and very high attitudes towards Catalan. Attitudes towards English were the lowest in all groups except for L1 speakers of other languages, who ranked English between Spanish (the most positively rated) and Catalan. In sum, attitudes towards English were rather low for all students, with the particular remark that students of immigrant origin (whose L1 was neither Catalan or Spanish, nor English) rated English a little more favourably than students born and raised in Catalonia. Llurda, Lasagabaster and Cots (2006) attributed these results to the low presence of English in Catalonia, and more particularly so in a mid-size city like Lleida. This is a rather relevant statement for the purposes of our present discussion, in which we will look at how English is presented in schools in the Expanding

Circle (Kachru, 1983), either as an international language or as a native (*i.e.*, British or American) language.

A very similar questionnaire was used by Huguet and Lapresta (2006), who analysed attitudes towards five languages (Catalan, Spanish, Aragonese, French and English) in the Spanish community of Aragon. Although only Spanish is recognised as the official language in that community, in some parts of its territory the population are bilingual (Catalan/Spanish or Aragonese/Spanish). The study took into account a set of independent variables: area of residence (monolingual Spanish, bilingual Catalan/Spanish, bilingual Aragonese/Spanish); age of students (1^{st} vs 4^{th} ESO); social professional status (high, medium, low); and home language. Differences regarding attitues towards English only appeared when the social professional status was considered, as 'high status' showed more positive attitudes than 'medium status' and 'low status'. No differences appeared between 'medium' and 'low'. Interestingly, this factor only influenced attitudes towards English, as no other language was affected by it.

5. Attitudes of NNESTs towards EIL

Graddol (2006) convincingly argues that the traditional model of EFL teaching based on nineteenth century premises has failed in many aspects, and only a new approach based on English as a Lingua Franca can contribute to the improvement of English language learning worldwide. But given the preference for native varieties of English encountered among a

great deal of learners of the language discussed in the previous section, one might wonder whether non-native teachers of English would fall for the same attitudes as other non-native speakers, or would rather embrace the new paradigm and change of attitude entailed in the international dimension of English.

The current trend in applied linguistics plus the extra beneficial status that NNESTs could gain from this new paradigm might suggest the existence of a complete support to EIL and lingua franca models (Seidlhofer, 2004). However, as Jenkins (2007) pervasively demonstrates, language teachers in general, and NNESTs in particular, hold attitudes towards EIL that are far from being enthusiastic. Tsui and Bunton (2000) analysed over a thousand electronic messages sent by both NS and NNS English teachers in Hong Kong to conclude that those teachers looked for external sources of reliable information and their model for teaching was exonormative, as they never considered the possibility of turning to Hong Kong English as a possible model. In Sifakis' (2004) terms, they were norm-bound, and they looked for the norm in external, rather than domestic, sources. The majority of NNESTs "either explicitly or implicitly accepted the NS as a source of authority" (Tsui & Bunton, 2000: 294), and they often had to "cite codified sources and other sources as supporting evidence before putting forward their own views", and they as well had to "preface their own personal opinions with hedges and qualifications, and to solicit views from fellow teachers as a signal that they did not consider their own words final" (Tsui

& Bunton, 301). NESTs, instead, often relied on their own judgment, and "they quite often overtly identified themselves on the network as native speakers as if to stress that this is the source of their authority" (Tsui & Bunton, 298).

Llurda and Huguet (2003) and Llurda (forthcoming) attempted to discover NNESTs self-perceptions regarding aspects of language proficiency, language teaching methodology, and socio-political aspects related to the NS/NNS debate in the context of EIL. Those two articles analyzed the responses of 101 EFL teachers in Catalonia to a questionnaire dealing with their perceived language proficiency, language teaching ideology, and socio-political concerns regarding EIL and the role of non-native teachers in language teaching. In Llurda and Huguet (2003), some clear differences appeared between primary and secondary teachers, whereas Llurda (forthcoming) observed different patterns between teachers who had spent long periods in English-speaking countries and those who hadn't. Combining the results of both studies, we find that primary school teachers tend to be more insecure regarding their level of proficiency in English, at the same time as they are more enthusiastic about endorsing the native speaker as the ideal teacher, and they are more willing to consider native varieties as the target variety in language classes. Similarly, teachers who had never visited or who had only spent up to three months in an English-speaking country, were more supportive of native norms and models. In any case, differences in self-perceptions seem to be somehow related to

aspects of professional self-confidence, which I think is a powerful factor in defining non-native teachers' personalities and teaching practices.

On a more anecdotal level, I have heard some NNESTs praising other non-native speakers whose English accent sounded very close to native. When asking those teachers why sounding 'native' was such a good thing, provided they would never become British citizens with a British identity, they often answered using expressions such as how 'beautiful' or how 'better' a British accent is. Sifakis and Sougari (2005) point in the same direction, as Greek teachers in their study identified NSs as "the rightful owners of English" (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005: 481). Besides, they also found that primary education teachers were more prone on giving feedback on pronunciation than secondary teachers, a pattern that is very coherent with primary teachers' stronger dependency on native speaker norms found in Llurda and Huguet (2003).

In Llurda (2004b), I attempted to provide a rational explanation of why English teachers in Spain were so strongly governed by 'native models', and I traced it to the influence exerted from university English departments while training those students. My claim was that those university departments do typically take a native speaker orientation (be it British or American) by making them the undisputed model and object of study. The results reported in Llurda and Huguet (2003), Llurda (forthcoming), and Sifakis and Sougari (2005), while not directly dwelling into the reasons for

NNESTs perceptions, do actually minimize the training factor, as it is self-confidence which appears to be more responsible of the ultimate perception of oneself with regard to the native speaking community.

Teachers' position with regard to EIL is also expressed through their overall attitudes towards the teaching of culture in the English classroom, and their choices regarding what particular cultural information is selected for the classroom. Many English teachers do not feel comfortable with the inclusion of cultural aspects in their language lessons, and are even more reluctant to incorporate any cultural contents that are not related to the UK and the US. Suggesting a way to incorporate a more international cultural component in EIL classrooms, Dogancay-Aktuna (2006) argues for "greater discussion of crosscultural variation in learning and teaching" as part of a "comprehensive paradigm shift" in the TESOL curricula (291), and Sifakis recommends interspersing "material that is culturally informed (...) in sensible doses", as well as "using learners' metacognitive knowledge and raising their awareness on EIL-related matters" (Sifakis and Sougari, 2003: 66-67), whereas Bayyurt (2006) suggests there is still a lot of work ahead before NNESTs do naturally incorporate the concept of EIL in their classes.

6. The need to overcome NNESTs' subordination to NS models

And here we reach the closing section of this paper, which incorporates its most relevant argument, namely that NNESTs suffer from a severe self-confidence problem, which at times is translated as fear of students catching

them ‘in fault’, or at times it is simply expressed through an excess of fervour in defending the values of the NS, which may eventually lead to instances of self-hatred (Macaulay, 1975). Let us first visualize a situation in which both NSs and NNSs have the right to claim ownership over a particular good, namely the English language (Widdowson, 1994), but only one can get the real benefit of this property, especially in terms of getting well-paid jobs and enjoying professional status and prestige within their community. As stated above, the only way this situation can ever change is by NNESTs finally embracing a non-centred vision of the language, which they can really claim their own. However, many NNESTs do still remain attached to the old values and hierarchies establishing the NS as a model and a symbol of perfection in language use, reducing NNSs to perennial language learners and depriving them of recognition as legitimate language users (Cook, 2002, 2005). If non-native speakers of a language are regarded as permanent learners, they are denied any voice in determining their use of the language and they are naturally often invited to imitate NS models, which become the ultimate target of the learning process.

NNS teachers have typically spent many years learning the language and pursuing that unassailable NS model, often developing a kind of secret admiration for the person they will never be. On realising the impossibility of that goal, NNESTs have an important choice ahead, they can either turn to an EIL-based conception of the language, or they may stick to the old values. It is up to them to decide what side to go. If they stick to the old

values, they will find themselves constantly looking for NESTs to assert their authority and give them a slight sign of appreciation. For many teachers of English in the world, being a NNEST has been an unavoidable fate they had to live with, the negative side of which they have tried very hard to minimize. Admiring the others' native condition and secretly hating their own non-nativeness is a sure bet for suffering from lack of self-confidence.

Only by acknowledging this inferiority complex can we account for the story provided by Medgyes (1994: 40) in which a group of Hungarian teachers attending a lecture given by a native speaker respectfully remain silent after the talk until a senior teacher says that "non-native speakers had better not contaminate the air still resonant with the voice of a real native speaker". Thus, NNESTs find themselves immersed in a schizofrenic situation (Medgyes, 1983), by means of which they find themselves hating what they are and loving what they can never be. This can actually explain why several NNESTs who have made an entire life career out of teaching English would answer that they would never hire a NNEST (that is, one of their kind) to be their personal teacher were they able to choose between a NEST and a NNEST (Llurda, forthcoming).

Fortunately, teachers do appear to show a reversal in this attitude when their self-confidence increases. Thus, an important question needs to be raised: How may a teacher's self-confidence be increased? I propose that the

following three lines of action will help NNESTs increase their self-confidence and their appreciation of their own status as language teaching professionals:

(1) Teachers need to have a great number of opportunities to develop their language skills, and they need to be exposed to the target language long enough as to feel comfortable when speaking it. Teacher training must include a strong language component, and must as well develop teaching skills. Too often, there has been a tendency to believe that no special skills are required in teaching, and this has negatively affected both NESTs and NNESTS. For instance, many ELT jobs have been filled by monolingual NESTs with no particular training, or NNESTs with a degree in language teaching but insufficient language skills and no opportunities for using them. It is about time that all teachers (both NNESTs and NESTs) are given credit for the complexity of their profession, and that teaching is regarded as a serious business which requires intensive training and strict quality control.

(2) A high level of critical awareness regarding what it means to teach a language needs to be developed so as to avoid repetition of customary practices inherited from past experiences as language learners and established as the dominant commonsensical practices. In that sense, reading and discussion of books which critically

discuss the implications of teaching English as an international language (*e.g.*, Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2007; this volume) is a necessary condition for developing a critical sense of the complexities inherent in the teaching of such a global language as English. New approaches to teacher training need to be tried. For instance, following Ellis' (2006) claim that language teachers' content knowledge must include experience in learning and using an L2, it seems rather necessary for teacher training programmes, and especially those mainly addressed to NSs, to incorporate foreign language learning modules. Also, as Sifakis (2007) shows, a transformative approach to teacher training that goes beyond a "mere description of the established theories" can result in teachers' increased awareness of EIL characteristics and may enable them to "open up to change by realizing and transforming their worldviews and perspectives about ESOL teaching" (Sifakis, 2007: 370).

(3) Engage in discussions regarding EIL, and their own role as NNESTs in promoting a vision in which it is acceptable and desirable to use different non-native varieties of the language. European learners for instance, tend to think of England as the place to go in order to learn the language, and Standard British English as the model to follow and imitate. This generalised perception is shared by many teachers of the language, despite the fact that they have often experienced the paradox of interacting with some native British English speakers

> who may speak a fairly unintelligible variety of the language. Only by actively engaging teachers in discussions regarding the role of EIL and the re-nationalization of the language (McKay, 2003) can the idea that English is not restricted to one single country become a new paradigm in ELT and have an effective presence in the model of language taught in English language classrooms around the world.

Following these lines of action might hopefully liberate NNESTs from the burdening paradox of feeling downgraded for not being native speakers of the language, while at the same time they 'happily' set themselves as the guardians of purity of language use among other NNESTs who don't comply with native speaker norms.

If a teacher can (1) personally experience the diversity of English language usage, (2) reflect critically on language learning and teaching, and (3) perceive the current turn in society towards multilingualism and the international acceptance of English as a language for international communication, rather than as a culturally loaded national language, they will successfully overcome the paradox of being denied the right to own the language and still love it. They will become rightful and powerful free users and teachers of English as an International Language.

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