

## **Lecture One: Teaching Culture in ESP Context**

### **Background**

Debates over the relationship between language and culture, at the theoretical level brought controversial thoughts into language teaching pedagogy. Although it has become a common consensus among educationalists that language teaching is culture teaching, the discussion still opens doors to many controversial topics. The topic under investigation stems from the conviction that no matter what we did to separate both culture teaching from language teaching, all we could gain were unsuccessful approaches and failing methods. The present research is concerned with the pedagogical claim that even linguistically highly competent learners in EFL classes, fail to communicate at their very first socio-cultural experience. Thus, the present study aims at shedding lights on current pedagogical worries as far as, language teaching and cultural teaching are concerned. The focus of concern is to be on the importance of teaching the target culture in the English language classrooms, not only as an additional element within the communicative approach but rather as a target objective in its own. Clearly set objectives would entail regular and systematic work on cultural teaching practices. The sample under investigation is the best example of this conflict situation. The exploration of secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices of the intercultural dimension is meant to locate Algerian teachers of English on those worldwide inquiries. This investigation comes from the shared conviction that teachers' awareness of the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is primordial. Gaining deep insights into teachers own beliefs about cultural teaching and cultural teaching practices would certainly help clarify why learners of English cannot achieve successful socio-cultural communications.

### 1. Why Teaching Culture in ESP?

Researchers claim that the concept is that knowledge about culture helps discourse and enables people to communicate (Brown, 1990, Byram, 1997). Inevitably, there is a strong demand for linguistic fluency but cultural fluency is also needed (Byram, 1997). Also, According to Mckay, teaching, regardless of the relationship between language and culture, different views arise concerning the integration of culture. Some find that the acquisition of language requires an understanding of culture while others look at the cultural content as only a motivating process for students; therefore, “It can be questioned whether the teaching of culture is necessary to integrate in teaching English, which has become the international language”. However, some scholars claim that teaching an international language does not need an integration of culture. Gonzalez, for instance, maintains that in the teaching of English as an *International Auxiliary Language (EIAL)*, “English is deracinated or uprooted from its original cultural soil; only special registers of science and technology, business and geopolitics are used”, he enhances “teaching EIAL is nothing more than teaching English for specific purposes (ESP)

So globalization requires people to learn EIAL to fit their needs, the ability of using the language appropriately permits to individuals to communicate easily and achieve communicative goals. From this opinion, it is taken for granted that the individual learns English only for specific purposes such as technology, science, biology, or business, and no need to know the cultural side of the language; thus, only specific registers achieve the individual’s communicative goal for some. Others find that, to reach effective communicative goal whether the individual is learning English for specific purposes (ESP) or for other

purposes, learners need to fit their needs; therefore, using the language requires both learning the language and its culture.

By way of conclusion, culture is important in ESP classes, offering students the opportunity to behave correctly whenever they meet a member of another culture and to mediate attitudes and viewpoints of their own culture and those of the target culture. The cultural content in language teaching should involve materials related to the learner's own culture and the target culture to be able to compare and exchange information with others. Therefore, it is worth considering the teachers and students' cultural background and the types of cultures included in the textbooks to select which cultural contents fit the needs of students learning English for Specific Purposes.