

## FROM LANGUAGE TO CULTURE: RETHINKING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR A DIVERSE WORLD

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**Abstract:** *Undeniably, the focus on communication skills in the professional and academic fields has never been this pronounced in this era of globalisation. English language proficiency is in increasing demand in specialised fields, which has consequently brought English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to the forefront of research and practice. In the context of Business, Engineering, Medicine, Science, and other specialised domains, the fundamental language skills needed have always been the focus of ESP. Nevertheless, the approach to ESP has been adjusted to reflect changes in the global environment and the growth of cultural diversity. The rise of English in many parts of the world has brought new issues and opportunities to its instruction and use, particularly in the teaching of English as a foreign language. In light of the ongoing diversification of English, the importance of its use in different contexts is increasingly critical. The current model of ESP often neglects the intricate connection between language and culture and the role it plays in communication, especially for domains where intercultural sensitivity is integral to the professional discourse. For instance, in mastering the technical language of a profession, the culture and context that help to articulate the communication are very important in the transfer of knowledge and collaboration internationally. The primary goal of this paper is to investigate the shifting focus of English for Specific Purposes to the increasingly complex integration of language and culture by delving into the intersection of culture, language, and specialised knowledge. This paper endeavours to reconstruct a framework for ESP that not only addresses the linguistic expectations and requirements of learners, but also equips them to appropriately manage the cultural terrains in which their domains of specialisation operate. This study focuses on the significance of incorporating cultural aspects into the ESP curriculum and the application of intercultural communication strategies as part of the teaching of English to handle internationalisation, advocating for the adoption of a more multidimensional perspective on English instructional practices as a tool for teaching and for learning skills needed in today's pluralistic, multifaceted, and globalised world.*

**Keywords:** *Communication skills; cultural diversity; culture; ESP, language skills; non-native contexts; specialized knowledge*

### **1. Introduction**

ESP focuses on aligning teaching outcomes with vocational and professional

career pathways within the broader framework of ELT. Unlike General English classes, which provide a basic command of English for everyday communication, ESP classes cater to the specific needs of students from disciplines such as tourism, law, medicine, business, information technology, aviation, and other vocational and technical fields. This area of research has proven multifaceted in application value and relevance to students from different fields of study. Essential to this point, however, is that any ESP is designed to train a learner in the necessary practical and theoretical language skills relevant to a given field. Frameworks on ESP still seem to give excessive focus to grammar and vocabulary at the expense of the other aspects of communication. In other words, even though there is a consensus that culture and language inform and shape each other, the way culture is taught in ESP is as though there were no culture at all.

Globalisation, indeed, is slicing through geographical boundaries, which further justifies the incorporation of cultural components in an ESP course to enhance communication and intercultural competence. This is not just a more complex perspective in the teaching of a language, but a fundamental change that accepts culture as an active shaper of how a language is used.

Learning some details within a culture can hinder a learner from functioning at a professional level, particularly in relation to communication and relating to other individuals. Changing the focus of ESP to the cultural elements enables and empowers ESP practitioners to provide learners with instruments for multicultural contexts where interacting at a level beyond communication is cultural discourse.

The present study seeks to impressively answer the following questions for the purpose of understanding the culture and language integration better:

- 1) What hurdles do teachers face in integrating culture with instructional content in an ESP class and its impact on teaching effectiveness?
- 2) What techniques should be used in the teaching of the described culture in the ESP courses to enhance the learners' professional interaction skills and competence levels?

The integration of culture and foreign language knowledge is crucial in cultivating and sustaining effective cross-cultural communication. Culture encompasses communication, and it surely has significant language components; and communication is language, so it contains and violates numerous cultural values and parameters. In the context of ESP, it is not sufficient to know the technical vocabulary; it is also necessary to understand the cultural etiquette surrounding its usage, including how, when, and to whom it is appropriate to use the vocabulary. This is especially the case for the business, healthcare, and tourism sectors, in which interactions frequently take place among people from different cultures. In addressing this issue, this theoretical study seeks to advance the framework of language education, providing perspectives that may transform ESP pedagogy to align more effectively with the realities of globalisation. All in all, the paper examines issues surrounding the teaching of culture within ESP and considers some of the pedagogical and conceptual challenges of teaching and learning culture.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. What is Culture?**

Researchers in anthropology, sociology, and even linguistics, have studied culture

from different perspectives due to its complex nature. Kashima, Bain, and Perfors (2019) suggest a population-level, dynamic definition of culture that is particularly relevant for contemporary research in that it views culture not as a static 'heritage' but as an information system that flows and is transformed over time. They define culture as the collection of socially communicable knowledge within a population – specifically, meanings, beliefs, norms, practices, know-how that disseminate throughout a population via communicative processes, learning, imitation, and institutions – and that knowledge can influence cognitive processes, affective processes, and behavioural processes. Such a change in focus encourages analysts to consider the ways in which cultural messaging is created, communicated, maintained, and changed, rather than defining culture in terms of traditions which are closed and bounded. Such a focus encourages the study of which messages persist, the ways in which practices spread, and the ways in which social structures and material objects stabilise or accelerate processes of change. According to Causadias (2020), the term “culture” is often used vaguely. Causadias therefore advocates for a greater specific form of the p-model wherein culture is treated as a system of “people, places, and practices” aimed at a particular objective of “enacting, justifying, or resisting power.” Within this framework, culture encompasses more than simply a static body of traditions; rather, it constitutes a complex system, with 'people' describing the population's demographics, social relationships, and group dynamic processes; 'places' refers to the ecological conditions and institutional frameworks that guide behavioural opportunities; and 'practices' describes communities' behavioural enactments — their agency, routines, and participatory engagement. He highlights the importance of power as an integrating force, emphasising that particular cultural systems are both sustained and contested through the systems that influence domination, control of access to particular spaces, and the ordering of behaviours that are permissible or deemed valuable. To summarise, culture is conceptualised in numerous ways, including, but not limited to, shared meanings and symbols, practices that are observationally acquired, and configurations of systems that result from institutions and power according to various fields of study and academics. A culture can be defined as a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that a group of individuals shares and transmits to one another, and that, as a unit, helps them interpret the world, interact with other individuals, and regulate their actions based on their social environment.

## **2.2. Obstacles to Integrating Culture in ESP Classes**

Until recently, an absence of references to culture in ESP was due to the perception that ESP was culture-free, as commented upon by Strevens (1977, p. 89) when he argues that ESP is based on the idea of teaching and learning the language in its bare form, devoid of cultural context. In her contribution, Omaggio (2001) discusses the rationale for the absence of culture in ESP classes and attributes it to the lack of time, noting that educators are burdened with an overloaded syllabus to address. Moreover, she points out that numerous instructors feel lost when it comes to culture due to their inadequate knowledge of the target language, as well as which aspects to include in the ESP syllabus. In this regard, Gonzalez (1995, p. 58) remarks that English is used exclusively in specific areas such as science, technology, and business. Therefore, in LSP, culture is less important and given less emphasis. Indeed, the incorporation of

culture in an ESP class poses a range of difficulties that teachers need to solve. Such difficulties may hinder the importance of instruction on culture and the learning experience in totality. In an ESP context, the relevance of culture is, more often than not, overlooked, particularly in teaching situations. According to Byram (1997), 'communication in a second/foreign language involves much more than a question of grammar and vocabulary'. They may focus on language instruction without the critical cultural components that are necessary for successful implementation in professional contexts. In addition, the lack of culturally relevant content is a problem of many, if not most, professional syllabuses. The problem is perhaps easily explainable by the overly rigid framework of certain ESP programmes. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) highlight how the structural framework of certain ESP programmes may severely limit the incorporation of culture. This poses a major problem for educators while selecting culturally relevant themes and practices to accompany the lessons.

With regards to retraining, teachers may experience a lack of materials, tools, and organised advancement opportunities for the integration of culture into teaching and professional development. As Kramsch noted in 1993, instructors sometimes lack confidence in their teaching abilities because they have not received adequate training in what we call the 'culture'. This absence might hinder students from working interactively with culture. Also, students' different backgrounds in an ESP class can be an additional hurdle to integration. Hinkel (1999), for example, talks about the different interpretive and communicative cultural issues of fragmentation. In addition, it might become next to impossible to derive the right answer to the set of issues without the requisite help.

Some educators, unfortunately, refuse to implement new methods in changing their teaching strategies. Sullivan, (2006), states, "The inability to change one's teaching practices is a barrier to curriculum innovation." Such closed-mindedness is likely to affect a teacher's ability to embrace a broader, more inclusive philosophy of education anchored in culturally responsive teaching.

Last but not least, assessing cultural competence is challenging because conventional methods of evaluation often overlook students' comprehension of cultural intricacies. As Scarino (2014) observes, there is a shift towards focusing on linguistic accuracy and away from teaching culturally integrative approaches, which further neglects the integration of culture in ESP courses.

As mentioned earlier, incorporating culture into ESP courses poses difficulties that demand thoughtful reflection and intricate design. Overcoming the hurdles mentioned will be instrumental in formulating a more effective and culturally considerate ESP curriculum that equips students for the demands of cross-cultural communication.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

In this study, the research approach is qualitative, revolving around the analysis of literature and the documented trends of English for Specific Purposes, and in the case of this particular study, the Language for Specific Purposes area. This study employs a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the growth of ESP in connection with culture in different specialised areas. The focus of this research paper is to try to understand the evolution of ESP, particularly concerning the ESP

cultural components. This evolution is characterised by shifts, challenges and the integration of new, ESP-related paradigms. The paper does not claim to present primary, empirical data, but aspires to create a conceptual structure that can be used to direct future empirical investigations. This method allows for a deep study of the responsive evolution of English for Specific Purposes due to globalisation and cultural diversity, which, in turn, provides a basis for other institutional studies on intercultural communication in particular domains. This inquiry updates the theory of English for Specific Purposes by adding the historical and current interrelated trends and gaps the inquiry has discovered, in particular, for the countries where English is a foreign language.

### **3.2. Scope and Limitations**

This study revolves around the evolution and history of ESP, concentrating mostly on the intersection of language and culture in Business, Engineering, Medicine, and Science, among other domains. This paper investigates the ongoing changes being made to the traditional ESP model with respect to the increasing emphasis on culture and intercultural communication. This study will examine literature on the teaching of English for specific purposes in different contexts and analyse the way English teaching in specialised disciplines has evolved due to the demands of globalisation and pluralism. By examining major theories and the distinct evolution, this research will show how ESP curricula focus more on the skills learners require to operate within the intricate cultural contexts of their domains.

Regardless, this study does have some limitations to note. In the analysis of the topic "Qualitative Research" and the body of literature relevant to it, the conclusions of the study are restricted to the emphasised literature, which is not necessarily all-inclusive or the most recent in the area of research. Moreover, this study has not carried out primary empirical research, and therefore is not able to offer first-hand perspectives from practitioners at the grass-roots level, both educators and learners, who engage with ESP in active practice. Hence, this paper, while attempting a broad theoretical mapping, is not able to articulate situational specifics, nor present evidence of the implementation efficacy of cultural elements within the context of ESP instruction.

### **4. Approaches to Cultural Integration within the Framework of ESP**

Wang (2008) asserts that the teaching of foreign languages equates to the teaching of foreign cultures, which means foreign language teachers are, in reality, foreign culture teachers. Moreover, Agar, an American anthropologist, introduced the term 'languaculture' in 1996 to describe the connection between language and culture. Actually, this issue has provoked a great deal of discussion. Ouakrime (1992) mentions several reasons for integrating culture into ESP programmes. The most critical reasons are outlined below:

Comprehending the structure of culture, its concepts, customary beliefs, and its members' behavioural patterns;

- Understanding the personal and organisational aspects of culture;
- Attaining adequate knowledge and comprehension of the culture;
- Developing the ability to understand the actions of community members or the outcomes of those actions as behaviours and their intended meanings;
- To use cultural knowledge as a motivating factor to advance proficiency in

the other language.

Integrating cultural knowledge within the framework of ESP can certainly improve learners' ICC by preparing them to handle different types of interactions mindfully and empathetically. This entails the employment of some particular techniques which enable the teachers to instil an appreciation for cultural pluralism among learners. This introduction talks about the aims of adding culture-related topics to ESP classes and aims to guide learners towards success in a diverse setting.

#### **4.1. Needs Analysis alongside Cultural Goals**

Within the scope of ESP, a systematic NA specifically tailored to the learners is required for the development of the language programme. This includes assessing the learner's skills in English, the objectives in English they wish to set for themselves, the English-related activities they plan to pursue, and conducting a discourse analysis of their profession for the pertinent language skills and gaps. This consideration stems from the premise that the English language is taught for Specific Purposes for the sake of students, aiding in the realisation of teaching English for practical utility. In their book, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) provide an extensive treatment of systematic needs analysis. These are the principal steps that they outline:

- Consider the students in relation to their background, their mastery of English, and the contexts in which they will apply their English language competencies.
- Collect information through surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and observations about learners' goals, motivations, and language competencies.
- Study the professional or academic domains in which the language will be used and understand that the learners' activities, contexts, and socio-cultural dimensions are critical.
- Based on the collected information, identify the relevant skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and components (vocabulary, grammar) of language that are necessary for the intended group.
- Organise the identified needs based on their importance and immediacy. This assists in designing the curriculum in the areas that are most needed by the learners.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders: employers, educators, and specialists from relevant fields, to confirm the results and gather further information regarding the learners' requirements.
- Design a curriculum utilising the results of the needs assessment, paying particular attention to the gaps in skills and competencies and ensure that the curriculum incorporates both language skills and cultural competencies.
- To ensure the desired outcome is achieved, implement the curriculum system, assess, and evaluate its efficacy continuously. Then, collect feedback from the stakeholders as well as the learners to implement the necessary changes and improvements.

As a matter of fact, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) define NA as a systematic method of defining what learners must know in terms of language and culture within particular settings. It involves the collection of data about learners' backgrounds and the professional contexts in which they will function. This step is

critical in the design of the ESP curriculum aimed at meeting learners' needs so that they are able to function linguistically and professionally in their fields.

Along with emphasising linguistic skills, traditional NA lacks cultural aims, which are important for developing ICC. Effective communication, as Byram (1997) explains, goes beyond knowing how to express oneself in a different language and involves understanding the culture in which the communication takes place. Understanding different norms, values, and modes of communication is essential for avoiding misunderstandings and facilitating positive relationships in a multicultural context, which is the focus of cultural objectives. In this regard, Nechifor & Dimulescu (2021, p. 83) explain that integrating culture into teaching alongside developing students' intercomprehension and intercultural competences is crucial in preparing students for engagement in the contemporary globalised professional context.

Integrating this cultural dimension into a needs assessment framework comprises a sequence of steps. Primarily, educators ought to delineate the cultural parameters of the learners. This may require comprehending the cultural disposition of the learners, as well as the culture that they might encounter in the course of their future professional practice. Educators can gather information via surveys, interviews, and focus groups regarding a learner's culture, prior experience and expectations. The next step is to delineate specific cultural competences that learners need to attain. For example, in the business field, the ability to analyse and interpret business negotiations or non-verbal communication can facilitate the smooth conduct of a business meeting.

Incorporating this specific set of cultural competencies into the curriculum fosters language acquisition alongside workplace situations dealing with cultural interactions. The case study, role-play, and simulation methods, which mirror authentic situations are all effective strategies for achieving culture-related goals in the teaching of ESP. These activities allow learners to develop their language skills while they engage with cultural materials. Through real-life examples and situations, learners understand how deeply culture influences communication.

#### **4.2. Contextual Learning and Authentic Materials**

When teaching ESP, two methods that enhance the learning experience by embedding real-world relevance and context into the learning process are the use of authentic materials and contextual learning. Indeed, authentic materials in the context of ESP teaching are not designed with the purpose of language instruction in mind. Instead, they are extracted from contexts and settings that learners in specific fields would engage. The importance of materials is that they capture the language and the specific situational contexts learners will encounter in their occupational or academic fields. Such materials are described as reports, letters or correspondence, and technical manuals, among others, which are tailored to the learners and which immerse the learners in the field's language (Drinovac Topalović & Ljubas, 2024, p. 171). Authentic materials are important in the classroom and are often used in the field of ESP because they provide a real-life context that is pedagogically useful for students. Moreover, the purpose of using these kinds of materials is to foster a genuine connection between the text and the learners, which aids in improving situated literacy skills and language proficiency (Borucinsky et al., 2020, p. 31-44).

In ESP pedagogy, contextual learning centres on the premise that students learn

best when the language being taught is connected to the contexts and scenarios they will encounter in their future employment or academic endeavours. In this regard, it can be said that contextual learning is the process of designing exercises, instructional materials, and learning experiences that integrate the application of language skills in the relevant real-world contexts. Research demonstrates that contextualisation has a positive impact on learning efficiency in ESP classes because students are able to relate to and utilise the language skills they acquire in their workplaces. Johns (1991) highlights the importance of incorporating authentic materials in ESP. She points out that learners interact with the language in their particular fields of interest, which enhances motivation and the utility of the language. When learners encounter the practical relevance of their training, the instruction becomes more meaningful for them.

In terms of cognitive engagement, Swales (1990) outlines the idea of genre and how recognition of the conventions of particular texts within a discipline aids learners in negotiating their career contexts. Thus, contextualised texts not only teach a language, but also help learners get to know the communicative practices in a particular field, which fosters deeper cognitive involvement. In his part, Byram (1997) insists on the significance of culture in language learning as a component of language competence. Contextualised texts contain the culture and practices that are relevant in a particular profession. Through these texts, students understand the culture that surrounds their professions, thus improving their communication abilities.

In summary, integrating contextualised texts within an ESP course has proven to help learners acquire the necessary skills, as well as serve to contextualise the importance of the instruction. The works of many scholars strongly underpin this approach, focusing on authenticity, mental involvement, learner appropriateness, and culture. Through the usage of contextualised materials, ESP practitioners can greatly improve the learners' motivation and esteem for their education. All in all, utilising authentic materials and contextual learning strategies enhances the effectiveness and engagement levels of an ESP curriculum by integrating theory into practice with regard to the learners' actual communication and sociocultural needs.

### **4.3. Cultural Awareness through Collaborative Learning in ESP**

Incorporating culture into the ESP curricula helps learners acquire the skills necessary for dealing with diverse professional environments. Cultural project exchange and project collaborative learning serve as a means to develop both language skills and intercultural competence. Group projects and conversations as means of collaborative learning can enhance cross-cultural exchange among learners of different cultures. In the domain of ESP, Wang (2015) has implemented several strategies to encourage collaborative writing through wikis. Besides, Agustina (2022) describes how focused, well-designed ESP collaborative learning sets have considerable benefits for developing learners' oral skills necessary for professional mobility. Moreover, collaborative learning promotes engagement among the students which in turn fosters both communication and teamwork skills. This is particularly evident in the manner one speaks, plans, and conveys one's thoughts by communicating across varied contexts and advocating for the use of language. Apart from others, Vygotsky (1978) articulates the importance of sociocultural interaction in the development of reasoning abilities. He argues that

doing things together enhances comprehension and memory of information.

Working within collaborative teams enables students to engage with multiple points of view informed by diverse cultural frameworks. This diversity of ideas contributes to the deepening of class discussions while also enriching the participants' understanding of cultural nuances.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), in many professions, interdisciplinary collaborative groups are more creative and better at problem-solving, which is another fundamental aspect of many professions. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaborative work within simulations can mimic real-life relevant activities associated with particular professions, such as group reports, case presentations, and role plays. Such application of practice reinforces the importance of integrating language and culture education, as suggested by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) regarding NA in ESP.

Learning through cultural exchanges can be achieved by participating in cultural immersion programmes - be they actual or virtual in nature. Engaging with locals as well as specialists of the area fosters language learning and provides a perspective on the area's culture, customs and communication styles.

Byram (1997) emphasises the need for the framework of IC to include cultural immersion. Moreover, cultural interaction allows students to achieve a broader perspective within their field. Take, for instance, students learning in a business English class. They might be given group work with peers from other countries to analyse case studies of international markets. This kind of international exposure helps students understand the cultural dynamics of business and equips them to function in a highly globalised scenario. Moreover, intercultural relations positively cultivate empathy and understanding, and this form of empathy is crucial for communication.

Deardorff (2006) states that gaining intercultural competence is more than just understanding a culture; it is also having an empathetic engagement with a culture, which is an outcome of cultural interaction. To achieve such aims in an ESP class, one needs to perform cooperative tasks in which learners analyse relevant cultural issues and articulate their thoughts. Consider examining some of the aspects of culture that deal with the communication of business, negotiation, or business etiquette. Also, teachers can take advantage of the newly developed technologies to promote international virtual exchanges with colleagues abroad. These virtual collaboration platforms enable students to interact by sharing their ideas, discussing topics, working jointly on projects, and engaging in cultural sharing. Last but not least, educators can facilitate workshops whereby students can share and learn about different types of cultures. This creates an enriched learning atmosphere where diversity is embraced and nurtured.

#### **4.4. Contrastive-Comparative Approach**

There are some instructors who may recognise the importance of teaching culture in the classroom but remain uncertain regarding the methodology to use, and this is a phenomenon that is not peculiar to ESP, but the teaching of English in its broader context as well. Indeed, "the Contrastive Comparative Approach" is a viable methodology when it comes to the integration of culture in ESP classes.

This approach involves cross-cultural analysis of the learners' native culture and that of the English-speaking culture. Such contrasting can enhance learners' cultural sensitivity and their communication effectiveness. To put it differently,

within the context of ESP where the language is learned for performing certain professional activities, it is relevant to deeply value the cultural nuances. This viewpoint considers the person's work experience and prepares him/her for the management of several cultures (Byram et al. 1994). The following are the key benefits of this approach:

- Investigating different cultures aids learners in grasping much more deeply the role of different cultures in shaping behaviours and modes of interaction. This type of knowledge is vital in any professional environment in order to mitigate the possibility of making erroneous assumptions or having misunderstandings.
- The ability to appreciate the differences between the two cultures allows students to adjust their styles of communication. For example, knowing that in some cultures people prefer to be addressed in a more direct manner, while in others the approach is more nuanced, aids students in focusing their communication.
- This approach, in turn, helps learners acquire the necessary competencies needed for their future career. For example, studying cultural differences with regards to business negotiations provides students with the necessary skills to deal with those particular challenges that they will face in their future professional activities.

Regarding the application of this method in the ESP classes, case studies can be used to demonstrate cross-cultural issues related to certain professions. Students will analyse the influence of different cultures on business relationships, decisions, and problem-solving, along with exploring various dimensions of a business environment. In addition, students could organise role-playing games and act out stories with characters from different cultures. This focus on practice allows them to refine their adaptability to culture-bound communicative behaviours. Most importantly, instructors could devise academic assignments where students examine and contrast different aspects of their own culture, and the culture being learned. The principles of work ethics, leadership styles, and negotiation approaches may constitute possible themes. They may also help to organise classroom discussions aiming to motivate students to express and analyse their encounters with cross-cultural issues. Some of the reflection questions are more open-ended and promote dialogue, enhancing their comprehension of the topic.

Overall, this approach serves as a useful framework for teaching culture in an ESP class. By employing systematic cultural comparisons, instructors can foster students' cultural understanding, communicative abilities, and critical thinking. Such an approach not only enriches learners in many ways, but also broadens the scope of language education in the current era of globalisation, in which students need to be trained in comprehending and valuing multicultural differences in order to succeed in any discipline.

### **5. How can Culture be Integrated into ESP lessons?**

Many language educators appreciate the importance of integrating culture into the process of language teaching. However, agreement on how to incorporate this idea into lessons remains elusive. Moreover, some educators feel that they need specialised instruction to teach culture and, further, there is still no prescribed handbook or actual textbook available for use in culture teaching (Frank, 2013).

The lack of consensus may stem from the fact that culture encompasses a wide range of subcategories, such as traditions and customs, food, clothing, history, architecture, artistic expression, and moral codes. Moreover, English is a language that has wide different varieties, such as British English and American English; Which one should be taught? Therefore, fully addressing the scope of culture that would prepare the learner to use English without turning the session into an anthropological or historical discourse on the language could be considered one of the culture-related fundamental influences to be a primary concern of the instructor (Bakić-Mirić et al, 2023). What follows describes teaching culture in the ESP classroom, which consists of four stages.

### **5.1. Teaching Source Culture**

There is a need for teachers to define culture in simple terms because there are various definitions. Having a simple definition allows students to participate in dialogues. Tylor (1871, p. 1) states that culture is a 'complex whole' which encompasses several features. In his part, Snowden (2017) defines culture as behaviour patterns which show some degree of stability over time among certain groups or populations, differing among individuals but remaining relatively constant within each group. Broadly speaking, when someone considers specific elements of culture, they will likely think about food, clothing, forms of music, artwork, or literary works. Culture may be associated with beliefs, values, worldviews, attitudes, or non-visible aspects of culture. Thus, students need to realise how their own culture shapes their thoughts, interactions, and communication. The ability to consider questions informed by one's culture helps to bridge connections across cultures. In the context of ESP, Byram (1997) points out that culture shapes individuals, which means ESP instructors may assist students in activating their prior cultural knowledge by making them aware of certain important aspects of their culture, whether visible or non-visible. All in all, through source culture, teachers can build cultural awareness that enables students to think about their identity. This level of self-awareness is crucial for communication because self-reflection helps learners to identify how their culture, in multiple ways, shapes their behaviour and engagement during professional interactions.

### **5.2. Teaching Elements of Culture**

The fundamental aspects of culture include language, norms, beliefs, symbols, values, and history. Such aspects may be more challenging to identify and recognise because they tend to be more enmeshed within culture, and they pertain to non-visible manners (Frank, 2013). This helps students learn how communication takes place in context, considering customs, idiomatic expressions, and nonverbal communication. Understanding such phenomena deepens students' comprehension of language and enhances their ability to connect with the realities of the world. A culturally relevant resource that helps ESP learners grasp the various components of culture may best be illustrated through Hall's (1976) cultural iceberg analogy. The iceberg analogy not only helps to support the notion of the equal importance of the invisible but also illustrates their relevance. The Hall Iceberg of Culture is a construct created by the anthropologist Hall to demonstrate the tangible and intangible features of a particular aspect of society.



**Figure 1:** Hall's Iceberg Model  
 Source: (Garcia, 2014)

In fact, understanding and interpreting behaviours and expressions within the confines of one's culture can result in conflict and profound misunderstanding. Such a phenomenon is often brought to light as a primary reason for misinterpretation in cross-cultural interactions (Hofstede, 2011; Hall, 1976; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). An example of an effective activity is "Cultural Dimensions Reflection," in which learners contemplate and analyse cross-cultural issues like individualism versus collectivism. They have the ability to create a chart that shows the comparison of the relation of these dimensions with their own culture versus the English culture. As an example, a teacher may explain that most Western cultures tend to focus on individual achievements, whereas collectivist cultures pay more attention to group harmony, consensus, and agreement. Students are invited to address these differences with reference to the more hidden cultural dimensions, including hierarchy, respect, conflict management, and forms of showing esteem. The goal is to shed light on their often-overlooked differences to aid learners in grasping the guiding arguments and principles that underpin actions in various cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). While identifying and analysing these cultural attributes, educators can initiate discourse that showcases the distinctive aspects of the students' cultures alongside the attributes of English-speaking cultures, thereby enhancing the value and understanding of the complexity of multicultural relations and interactions.

### 5.3. Teaching Particular Cultures

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of intercultural education is teaching particular cultures. On one hand, one of the most important steps in the process is familiarising students with the theory of Hall as well as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2011). These theories of cultures will matter a great deal to students in ESP classes as they offer systematic methods through which varied cultures and their behaviour and communication techniques can be understood in a constructed manner. In the case of Hall's theory, he distinguishes two categories of cultures: low-context and high-context cultures. The first tends to be more direct and prefers

oral or written communication, including the use of speeches or texts. Germany and the United States can be used as case studies for this as they greatly appreciate decisiveness and unambiguous communication. On the opposite side, high-context cultures like Japan and several Arab nations tend to be more indirect and rely on contextual and non-verbal cues. These cultures are context-based; therefore, most communication is indirect and nuanced. Teaching students such differences assists learners in understanding how everyday behaviours across cultures might be perceived differently. This understanding of the cultural sociological aspects of communication is essential for grasping and preventing possible communication blunders and other interactions in professional settings. Each dimension reveals how different societies place varying levels of importance on different values and behaviours, and how that, in turn, modifies relationships and decisions both within and outside the workplace. Through these aspects, teachers can further prepare ESP learners to dissect and contextualise the actions of individuals interacting within a particular culture. This will increase their chances of getting a job, thus helping to advance their ICC. Integrating these theories into the curriculum enables educators to facilitate learners' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity at a deeper level. Such understanding and appreciation are vital for respectful and effective communication in a globalised world, function professionally, and assist learners in navigating through cultural pitfalls (Bakić-Mirić et al, 2023).

#### **5.4. Teaching Intercultural Communication**

IC is defined as the form of communication practised by people from different cultures. This phase of teaching is important because it focuses on the fact that communication is not simply the transfer of information; it is also enshrined in culture and is about the contexts in which the information is given and received. Students need to appreciate at this stage of their learning that IC is always culture-bound. Each culture possesses its own set of rules, values, and expectations, all of which influence the way it communicates. Some behaviours viewed as polite and respectful in one culture could, in another, be simply ignored or considered quite inappropriate. Considering that understanding the gaps and the shortcomings in the communication of the students is the cornerstone of the culture, the teacher has the responsibility to explain the gaps in the flow of information pertaining to culture. In addition to that, students need to realise that the flow of information within intercultural contexts is complex and multidimensional. Every culture possesses distinct systems of both verbal and non-verbal communication, and these systems may vary immensely from culture to culture. To illustrate, every culture attaches some meaning to different actions, including touch, facial expressions, and eye contact, and their meanings may be quite different. For example, something that may be considered an act of friendliness in one culture may be an act of insult in another culture. Such complexity highlights the need to take the culture into account when studying the phenomenon of communication. Then, individuals often neglect the wider context of culture as the framework within which communication occurs. Furthermore, these misunderstandings are often magnified due to preconceived notions and stereotypes, as well as prejudices about different cultures.

For example, let's take someone from a low context culture and imagine how they are thinking about someone from a high context culture who is communicating with

them in a very indirect manner. Such a person would likely respond incorrectly if they do not take into account the encasing culture. In this respect, teachers should emphasise the value of cultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity in the context of communication. Students' understanding of the ways in which varying cultures perceive and understand communication helps them devise ways of overcoming challenges. This includes promoting that they engage in intercultural contact with an open mind, listen to the relevant audio constructively, and pose questions to clarify the matter at hand. To conclude, fostering effective intercultural communication enables students to work collaboratively with individuals from different cultures. Through understanding cultures, students will be motivated to respect and understand the nature of communication, thereby reducing the chances of misunderstanding, especially in global contexts.

Teachers need to be aware of students' motivation for learning ESP. In most cases, English will be used for communicating with individuals who are not native speakers; therefore, the ultimate aim is to equip learners with the ability to function efficiently, not only in terms of language, but also in the skills associated with the language, as familiar cross-cultural communicators (Tomalin, 2010). This is a productive approach to ensuring that the classes aim to teach ESP in a way that makes the lessons interesting and educational at the same time, and one of the methods of making lessons meaningful is to ensure that students enjoy the learning process.

## **6. Strategies for Enhancing Intercultural Communication**

In professional contexts, the lack of instruction on culture within the ESP classroom becomes problematic, particularly in the area of IC. Addressing this concern requires prioritising culture within the ESP curriculum. Given that even the most basic English, such as greetings, tenses, and pronouns, involves cultural considerations (Jackson, 2020), culture should be integrated from the outset of instruction. Taking this into account, Liddicoat et al (2003) identified five essential strategies that relate to teaching culture within the contemporary ESP classroom, which are the most useful:

- **Active construction:** This allows learners to build knowledge about their culture and the culture they are studying, which will help them identify the differences between the source culture and the target culture. The teacher's role here is to guide students in noticing, exploring and understanding the differences.
- **Social Interaction:** The objective of this is to help learners appreciate the differences that can occur in communication due to the cultural background of the interlocutors.
- **Making connections:** The strategy helps learners to relate their culture to the new one through a comparative lens.
- **Reflection:** This approach closely resembles the first one and aids students in recognising the differences that exist among cultures and the way in which the differences are communicated.
- **Responsibility:** The last strategy fosters the understanding of cultural appreciation and empathy among students.

Another fascinating strategy is what Cohen et al. (2013) propose learning about cultures by developing students' observation skills through authentic materials

related to the cultures. These may comprise films, books, cuisine, manners, periodicals, or even prose and newspapers from English-speaking countries, tailored to student and course objectives. By exposing learners to tangible elements of a culture, instructors can bridge theoretical ideas with practical understanding, helping students grasp life in that culture. This, in turn, helps learners grasp the more abstract and complex aspects of culture dealt with previously. In the context of ESP, mastering the culture of a specific language, especially for informal business meetings and meals, benefits their professional career by facilitating interaction with people from various cultural backgrounds. Students may also be assigned the task of preparing a presentation on the experience, real or virtual, of residing in English-speaking countries, focusing on cultural differences and elements such as verbal and nonverbal communication, active intercultural listening, and related stereotypes and prejudices. Other students then critique the “experience” in an English-speaking country and provide appraisal based on not just intercultural behaviour but also understanding of the culture. Furthermore, students may reflect on their own culture, seamlessly building from what they have undertaken in the preceding stages. The endeavours outlined in this article help teachers know the first steps to take in guiding their learners towards greater cultural awareness.

Along with these aspects, cultural issues and cultural similarities and differences among countries can be incorporated into the ESP class. Moreover, when the ESP instructor focuses on teaching the other skills, particularly speaking and listening, 'throw-away cultural information,' as illustrated in the table below, serves to draw attention to cultural issues.

**Table 1: Culture Integration through Language Skills**

<b>Listening skill</b>	Intercultural competence can be fostered through listening skill activities like video-recorded cultural dialogues, audio or video-taped cultural misunderstandings, interviews with native speakers, songs and other relevant materials.
<b>Speaking skill</b>	Intercultural components may be integrated into speaking skill activities like face-to-face tandem learning, asking questions to a native speaker, or role-playing.
<b>Reading skill</b>	A diverse set of activities such as writing and reading critically, as well as writing and reading about culture, can be incorporated in interdisciplinary classes with reading skills and the intercultural dimension in mind.
<b>Writing skill</b>	Undertaking tandem email learning, designing comparative cultural stories and essays, and other such activities emphasise the writing skills with an intercultural dimension.

## 7. Discussion

The current work strengthens what is arguably one of the most prominent arguments in the field of ESP today. It states that one cannot adequately teach a language for a specific purpose in isolation, as even the most specialised discourse is a resource of a particular culturally informed professional communication. This is

why Wang's (2008) position, that the teaching of foreign languages is also the teaching of foreign culture, and Agar's (1996) understanding of Languaculture, remain indispensable to ESP to this date, as they emphasise that meaning is not restricted to grammar and vocabulary, but also in the use of language in context, in culturally congruent manners. In this light, Ouakrime (1992) argues for the inclusion of culture in the study of ESP (i.e., explanatory beliefs, behavioural habits, and culture of the institution) which closely relates to acquiring Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) whereby one is able to communicate effectively only if actions and purposes are decoded through culturally valid lenses (Byram, 1997).

Nonetheless, one of the most pivotal implications of the 'culture-in-ESP' argument is the need for systematic and not incidental cultural integration. This is where needs analysis (NA) transcends a mere diagnostic tool for language deficiencies, and becomes a tool for planning the culture-related communicative requirements of particular professions. Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) NA Model is dependable due to placing contextual relevance. Although the discussion suggests cultural goals are often under-added to the NA, professional success often has to do with it (Byram, 1997). The recommendation of incorporating cultural elements into Needs Analysis through surveys, interviews and document analysis, suggests that the objectives of an ESP curriculum should also specify what the learners should be able to communicate, as well as the socially appropriate timing and context of utterances in given professional settings (Nechifor & Dimulescu, 2021). Effectively, this involves breaking down overarching cultural goals (e.g. "understand different cultures") into measurable behaviours, such as reading and addressing non-verbal communication, controlling dissonance, and professional circumvention where required.

Integrating culture can be achieved in the classroom by using contextual learning and authentic materials. The use of materials such as emails, manuals, reports, meeting scripts, etc. contains the actual language of the area of study and as such will aid cultural integration. In this respect, Johns (1991) argues that the authenticity that pertains to the material being taught enhances the relevance and motivation of the learners. The analysis, however, suggests an additional dimension: an authentic genre allows learners to participate in the discourse of particular disciplinary communities and learn the communicative cultures of those fields as to what is considered persuasive, polite, professional, and credible. This aligns well with Byram (1997), who argued that mastery of a language is linked with cultural knowledge and interpretive skills. However, realia can also present a problem, such as exhibiting a professional 'gaze' where the materials neglect some voices, or where materials promote a 'one-best-way' argument about professional communication. For this authenticity to have an impact, it must be coupled with some degree of analytical guidance to empower students to pose more critical, open-ended questions. For instance, who is the speaker? Why are they speaking? What are the power relations that shape this particular genre, etc., rather than merely replicating superficial form.

In the same way, collaborative learning opportunities are yet another means for acquiring an ICC because of the applicable perspective-taking and the negotiation of meaning, both of which are emphasised within the sociocultural framework of Vygotsky (1978). Research with wikis and collaborative assignments within English

for Specific Purposes (Wang, 2015; Agustina, 2022) supports that aspect of group work helps develop professional communication (planning, collaboration, and reporting) and provides a relatively safe space for learners to experience different cultural schemata. The discussion centres on and extends this line of reasoning in stating that intercultural learning is cognitive as well as affective and relational and this is also in line with Deardorff (2006) and the attitudes of openness and empathy. Despite these important aspects of collaborative learning, particular aspects of collaborative learning are unlikely to result in achieving an outcome of intercultural competence. For instance, without intentional moderation and structured critical reflection, collaborative group learning may provide opportunities to reaffirm stereotypes, ignore minority perspectives, and privilege “fluent dominance” over inclusive participation. This is why the inclusion of specific intercultural objectives, role switching, feedback forms, and reflective post-exercises are the best combination for collaborative tasks.

The contrastive-comparative approach allows learners to make connections from new cultural insights to their own “source culture” (Byram et al., 1994). This significantly diminishes the risk of conceptualising the target culture as the only legitimate norm. Analysis of communication styles, workplace ethics, leadership approaches, and negotiation tactics enables students to refine their ability to customise rather than just imitate. This strategy, however, comes with a classic caveat; if approached too superficially, the act of comparison can degenerate into essentialism (i.e. Culture A is uniformly direct; Culture B is uniformly indirect). Although it is possible to begin observing patterns through the use of models, such as Hall (1976) and Hofstede (2011), it is suggested in the discussion to use the models as heuristics and not to apply them as rules that are not to be broken. ESP instruction should help students see cultural frameworks not as stereotypes to apply, but as hypotheses to be explored, since, in professional life, communication differs according to organisation, geography, generation, and individual characteristics.

There is a proposed order in the later sections concerning pedagogy: teaching source culture, then culture as a whole, then specific cultures, and finally teaching intercultural communication. This is coherent because it moves from the self to greater levels of cultural understanding and then other cultural engagement. This also addresses the practical issue pointed out by Frank (2013): while teachers appreciate the need for teaching culture, they frequently do not have any handbook to refer to. By outlining cultural learning and combining it with techniques such as Liddicoat et al. (2003)'s purposeful construction, reflection, and responsibility, the framework makes culture teaching and learning attainable as well as evaluable. However, the question of which “English culture” to teach a global community of English speakers remains open and unresolved. While ESP students will work and communicate with non-native speakers, more emphasis will be given to adapting flexible, respectful, and authentic intercultural approaches instead of merely replicating British or American behaviour (Tomalin, 2010; Jackson, 2020). Considering this, the term ‘teaching culture’ within the scope of English for Specific Purposes should pay more attention to the instruction of learners in relation to dealing with and interpreting the complexity and plurality of culture, in addition to being able to communicate with others in a respectful and ethical manner across cultural divides.

The discussion yielded the conclusion that the use of culture in ESP instruction is

not an added enrichment component to be considered, but rather is essential to preparing students for a career in the global marketplace. This conclusion supports the recommendation of having an integrated approach to instruction, wherein (1) needs analyses identify culture and language, (2) culturally-responsive authentic materials are used to demonstrate the different professions and the genres associated with them, (3) students practice intercultural collaboration and enactment of culturally-responsive experiential modular tasks, and (4) students are guided to use structured and comparative reflection in order to assist them in avoiding generalisations that are shallow, superficial, and/or stereotypical. In the future, this area would greatly benefit from improved evaluation techniques pertaining to ICC in ESP (for instance, performance rubrics, reflective portfolios, and scenario evaluations) and from the development of training programmes for educators which would enable teachers to confidently approach the teaching of culture, avoiding the pitfalls of turning ESP classes into general anthropology and avoiding the perpetuation of stereotypes.

## **8. Recommendations**

The forthcoming recommendations specify some directions for further research to consolidate the integration of culture within the ESP framework, as well as to enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence within the profession.

- ✓ Assess how traditional needs analysis and needs analysis with explicit cultural goals differ with respect to the enhancement of ICC in ESP learners.
- ✓ Conduct longitudinal studies over an entire semester or an internship period to assess how integrated Culture ESP courses change the learners' professional discourse practices.
- ✓ Determine which of the following genres best cultivate intercultural communication and professional pragmatics: authentic emails, reports, minutes of meetings, manuals, and negotiations.
- ✓ Assessing indicators such as empathy, perspective-taking, conflict resolution, and the understanding of meaning beyond mere words and grammar can be used as measuring points for evaluating cultural integration.
- ✓ Analyse the group work, wikis, role playing, and simulation exercises to determine which of the cooperative activities develops the greatest intercultural consciousness in the context of ESP.
- ✓ Investigate the impact of global virtual collaboration on the development of intercultural skills and employability, particularly in business, engineering, and medical fields of study.
- ✓ Evaluate approaches that mitigate stereotyping and focus on differences within cultures (i.e. vertical, geographical, intergenerational, and occupational).
- ✓ Develop and confirm instruments such as thematic practical exercises, analytical portfolios, conversation analysis, and work-situated evaluations, that are consistent with the reality of the workplace.
- ✓ Examine the types of training that ESP practitioners need to teach culture with confidence and ethical responsibility in the absence of guidance from

their textbooks.

- ✓ Examine the usefulness of AI-assisted simulation technologies, digital case studies, and online platforms while tracking potentially damaging harms, such as bias and the oversimplification of cultural categories.

## 9. Conclusion

Although cultural information is typically minimal or even absent in an ESP course, it is in fact essential. This is because learning a language is inextricably linked to understanding cultural context, which is vital for effective IC. Regardless of how one views a student's abilities upon completing a language course, either from the perspective of the student's competence or societal expectations, the role of culture remains pivotal, particularly in the context of ESP courses. Consequently, it has become crucial in teaching methodologies to consider the relationship of culture within the context of language. In this respect, ESP practitioners must use a paradigm that allows learners to grasp the intangible elements of culture which were discussed in this article. It has long been recognised by many language specialists that fluency in the vocabulary and grammar of a language does not equate to proficiency in the language from the perspective of the student. This suggests that learners must also grasp the sociocultural contexts in which the language is used.

To foster greater student involvement in culture-specific language acquisition in ESP, ESP practitioners may consider assigning research-based and reflective activities. Such activities will motivate students to engage with the ongoing learning processes by reflecting on the personal experiences and the expectations that they bring to the learning environment, including hopes about how acquiring English and the corresponding cultures will aid them in their future personal and professional pursuits. This article aims to provide foundations that will help ESP instructors enable students to analyse both the target culture and the source culture. Such reflection fosters the efficiency of the students as intercultural communicators, fully prepared to enter the professional workforce upon completion of the ESP course. In summary, the perspective and research works articulated in the paper build towards the integration of culture in the ESP syllabus because in today's globalised world, communicating successfully across cultures is more essential than ever. Thus, a contrastive-comparative approach in addition to other approaches to the teaching of culture is beneficial to the ESP learner in that it enables the learner to acquire the foreign culture and advance towards genuine intercultural communication.

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