CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a brief explanation of some theories that support the study. The theories are related to intercultural awareness of EFL students in English learning especially in intercultural communication.

2.1 What is Culture?

Culture is how a group of people live by dealing with various things such as communication, language, social, ideas, values, etc. Moran (2001) defines culture as how a group of people lives and develops, with a series of practices and products, also based on a set of specific contexts and a shared perspective on the world. Besides, culture is also associated with social practice and as a value orientation system in a social system (Parsons et al., 1951 cited in Baecker, 1997). In other words, culture is a series of social practices of peoples who share the same views with the prevailing values and norms.

Furthermore, culture is said to be a reflection of the life of a society. That is because culture has two main points; the first is how a group of people represents themselves and other people who are said to be humanities, utilizing their material production that produces works of art and literature. Second, the bond with social science, which refers to the way of thinking and beliefs of social groups (Kramsch C, 1996)**.** In simple terms, culture can also be said as a society's identity in front of the world

Overall, culture can be defined as society's way of life in socializing among community members by adhering to the rules, values, and norms that apply among them. Culture is also an identity or a reflection of a society in front of the world with various cultural products such as art, literature, and even language.

2.2 Elements of Culture

Once the culture is mentioned, one or more important elements will emerge that will be highlighted, product, art, literature, belief, etc. To that end, Brown (1995) details the various elements that have emerged from the culture, as follows:

a. Values are norms, rules, and codes of ethics that have been applied and must be obeyed by members of the community with sanctions for every violation.

b. Beliefs, the shared assumptions that each member of society believes in their practice of life and how they understand the world. This can make it easier for them to reach an agreement and facilitate their communication. However, a belief can also be something that makes them close their eyes to the broader worldview.

c. Attitudes, external display, or implementation of what they believe they can express to fellow community members.

d. Symbols, something that can show identity or social status in society, such as clothes, decorations, etc.

e. Rituals, like a celebration or ceremony. It can also be said as a repeated action at a particular moment with a specific purpose.

f. Heroes, someone who is used as a role model or ideal example for them to behave.

g. Artifacts, physical objects that reflect their culture, can also be physical objects used daily that have meaning, at least for people in their own culture.

h. Stories, the history owned by a culture, or a deck built by a particular culture regardless of the truth.

These elements are an essential part of a culture that will always appear when culture is defined. Additionally, simply the National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project (1999) divides culture into three main elements, as follows:

a. Practice is a behavior or pattern of social interaction in a cultural community that involves using a product. It can also be said as what action, where, when, and how group members conduct social life.

b. Product is work or what is produced from a cultural group that is tangible or intangible.

c. Perspectives are values, norms, or ideas that underlie the cultural practices and products produced. It is also said to be a common perspective on the world.

These three elements are a simplified version of the eight elements previously described. If the two are combined, then the practice element can include attitudes, symbols, and rituals. Furthermore, the product element has artifact and stories. Meanwhile, the perspective element includes values, heroes, and beliefs.

2.3 The Relationship between Culture and Language

The importance of culture in language learning is based on the relationship between culture and language. Brown (2000) argues that culture is part of language, and language is part of culture, both intricately interwoven. Furthermore, foreign language learning has several components: language proficiency, grammatical, communicative competence, and does not leave attitudes towards one's own culture and others' culture (Thanasoulas, 2001). That is why this is such an exciting topic to discuss culture and language. Apart from mastering language and communication competence, learners must also master cultural competence as a part of language learning because of the close relationship between the two.

Additionally, culture and language also have an influence on each other. Bada (2019) describes culture and language as inseparable phenomena and becomes a reflection of society. Both are influential in building framing for a community group. Sun (2013) also emphasizes that "If there is no language, culture would not be known. If there is no culture, the language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots" (p. 371). In other words, the two of

them became a stepping-stone for each other to be recognized and become stronger.

These statements can be the basis for language learners always to include the two together. Apart from the relationship between the two, language also influences the existence of culture by introducing it to the world, and culture influences language by making it a basis or source so that the existence of language is more substantial.

2.4 Intercultural Awareness in English Learning

Awareness of cultural differences can be the basis for the creation of good intercultural communication. That is because cultural awareness can be a means for someone to conceptualize the understanding and skills needed in various examples of intercultural communication (Baker, 2009). Furthermore, this awareness can enable students to be sensitive to cultural differences and target language communities (Hadley, 1993), as well as to better understand the perspectives of native speakers (Stern, 1992). Therefore, an English learner needs to understand these cultural differences as their basis for conducting intercultural communication.

English learners who may be involved in intercultural communication do need a basic knowledge of these cultural differences. However, it is not enough to carry out global communication where various kinds of people are involved in intercultural encounters (Phongsirikul & Thongrin, 2019). Students need to have appropriate and effective communication behavior by considering each

other's cultural identity in different cultural environments, which is said to be intercultural awareness (Chen & Starosta, 1996). This is intended as the ability of someone who realizes the need to adjust communication behavior according to the emerging cultural environment while maintaining the cultural identity of each other with their communication partner. In simple terms, apart from basic knowledge about cultural differences, English learners also need intercultural awareness, which is a person's attitude towards these differences and develop their skills and knowledge to be able to communicate effectively and appropriately and to produce higher quality intercultural interactions with English native speakers.

That goal makes intercultural awareness greatly needed in learning English. This is in line with Genc & Bada (2005), emphasizing that second language learning is inaccurate and incomplete without cultural understanding. This arises due to the fact that language learners who are not at all exposed to the cultural elements concerned tend to experience significant difficulties in communicating meaning to native speakers (Bada, 2019). The effect is apparent that intercultural awareness is one thing that every language learner needs to have, including in this case for EFL learners.

The importance of intercultural awareness in learning English is not unfounded. With the development of technology, wider communication can even be carried out easily without having to meet face-to-face, including with people who have different languages and cultures. In the process, there may be

misunderstandings that occur due to ignorance of cultural differences (Ye Zi, 2015) and can have a negative impact on social relationships. This case can also occur in English learners who may improve their language skills by carrying out intercultural communication by communicating face-to-face or through social media with native English. Therefore, to avoid this misunderstanding, it is necessary to have intercultural awareness and knowledge of the target culture to make it easier to understand the intended meaning and in the choice of language use.

The overall conclusion indicates that learning English requires a positive attitude and high sensitivity to the cultural differences that arise, and develop these skills and knowledge to achieve success in communicating with native speakers, which are said to be intercultural awareness. Making intercultural awareness a necessary thing because it aims to improve the quality of English learners in their attitudes and communication. Besides, intercultural awareness can also be a solution to avoid misunderstandings that often arise when someone communicates with people who have cultural language differences.

2.5 Conceptual of Intercultural Awareness

The notions of intercultural awareness have been defined by several experts including knowledge of differences, sensitivity, to developing the ability for successful intercultural communication. Furthermore, Baker (2011) also expressed his opinion regarding intercultural awareness, which is said to be "conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to

put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication" (p. 9-10). Besides, Baker (2011) also adds that to understand the concept of intercultural awareness, it is necessary to reach 3 levels including Basic Cultural Awareness (BCA), Advanced Cultural Awareness (ACA), and Intercultural Awareness (IA). The three levels are described in detail, as follows:
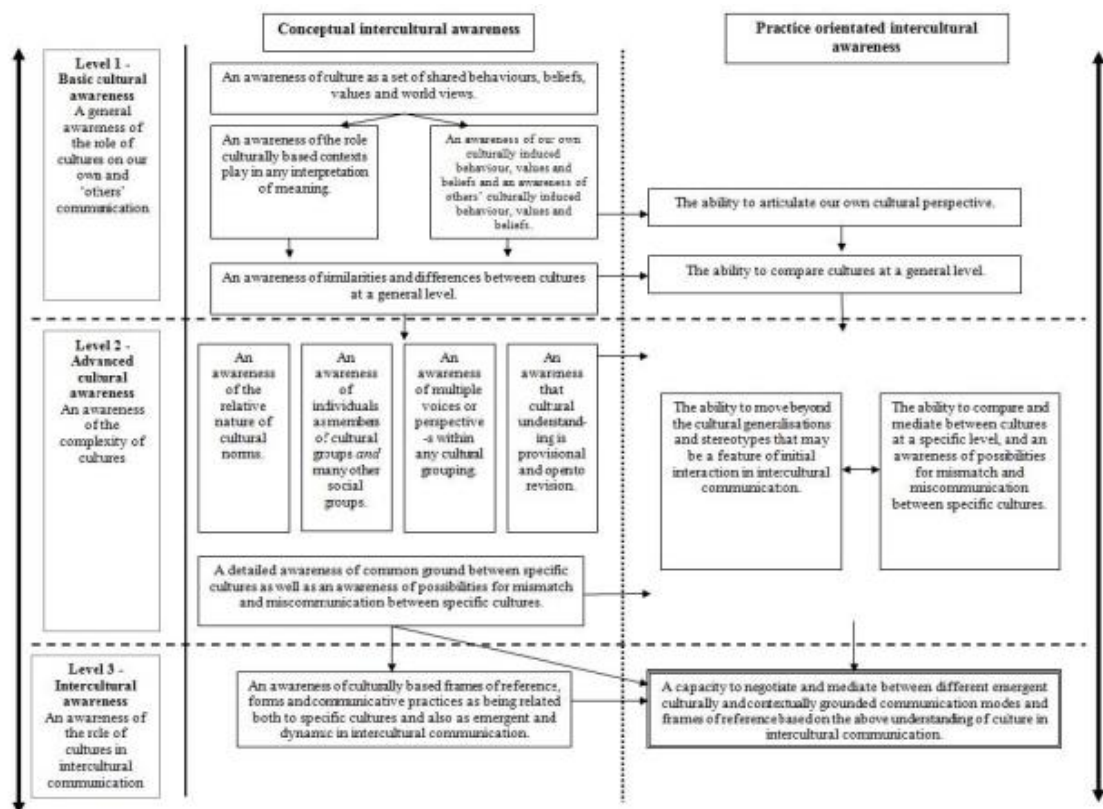

Figure 2.1 a Model of Intercultural Awareness

Based on the figure 1 above, the first level for the concept of intercultural awareness indicates that students are able to recognize their own culture and

know that there are other cultures that must be respected and studied. Classified into awareness of:

a. The definition of culture as a set of shared behaviors, beliefs, and values and worldviews.

b. The role of culture in various contexts

c. Our own culturally induced practices, products, and perspective and others' culturally induced practices, products, and perspective.

d. An awareness of similarities and differences between cultures at a general level.

Then for the second level, students are able to know the cultural details that must be understood to avoid conflicts due to cultural misunderstandings and have sensitivity to them. Classified into awareness of:

a. The relative nature of cultural norms.

b. Individuals as members of cultural groups and many other social groups.

c. Multiple perspectives within any cultural grouping.

d. Cultural understanding is provisional and open to revision.

e. Common ground and possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures.

As for the third level, students are able to integrate their abilities, sensitivity, and attitude to be able to communicate interculturally with speakers of other languages. Classified into awareness of:

a. Culturally based frames of reference, forms and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures also as emergent in intercultural communication.

b. Capacity to negotiate and mediate differences in modes of communication and emerging terms of reference based on the above cultural understandings in intercultural communication.

These three levels must be passed by English learners as their achievement for their learning process especially in intercultural awareness. In other words, although the most important aspect is at the third level, students need to go through various stages at the first and second levels to be able to reach the final stage and are said to have good intercultural awareness.

2.6 Relevant Study

The study of intercultural awareness has received a lot of expert attention to be associated with various aspects. Included by Baker (2009) in "Intercultural Awareness and Intercultural Communication through English: An Investigation of Thai English Language Users in Higher Education". Baker (2009) conducted his research on English learners in Thailand using a qualitative study with the aim of exploring how intercultural awareness plays a role in intercultural communication. His study revealed that intercultural awareness is a valid construct in the context investigated for explaining the skills and cultural knowledge needed by students to achieve success in intercultural communication through English.

Yilmaz & Ozkan (2016) in "An Investigation into English Language Instructors and Students' Intercultural Awareness" also conducted the same research. Using mixed methods and semi-structured interviews, the results showed that both instructors and students had an awareness of the importance of intercultural awareness in learning English. Furthermore, their study results also suggest developing an intercultural curriculum, textbook, and syllabus to increase intercultural awareness in the process of learning English.

In other studies that focus on intercultural awareness in English learning, they have even developed their research using various methods and approaches that are suitable for implementation in the classroom. One of them is by Mighani et. al. (2020) in "Developing Intercultural Awareness and Skills in English Majors: A Constructivist Approach". Their study is an attempt to propose a teaching framework using a constructivist approach to develop intercultural awareness and skills in EFL students. Using a qualitative study, the intercultural syllabus is developed and implemented using a constructivist approach in one academic semester. The results show a positive direction, intercultural syllabus and constructionist approaches are effective in assisting students in implementing critical thinking strategies, developing their intercultural awareness and skills. In addition, this study is also a suitable reference for instructors, and various people in the field of education who have a goal in developing intercultural awareness and skills in students.

The three relevant studies show that intercultural awareness has an important role in the success of intercultural communication, which is also part

of learning English. Therefore, it is necessary to have a curriculum, syllabus, and textbook that includes intercultural awareness into it so that later it can be implemented with any method or approach that is considered effective and appropriate in increasing students' intercultural awareness and skills.

2.7 Framework

Based on the literature review, culture is how a social group lives their life, by adhering to the norms and values that have emerged from generation to generation. Culture is also said to be a social practice that produces various elements that can become a particular social group's identity. One of the most prominent aspects is language as a symbol and a reflection of their culture. Therefore, in language learning, culture must always be involved, including learning English, because it will affect learning effectiveness, especially in communication. One of the possible engagements is having knowledge, sensitivity, and developmental ability to adjust intercultural differences called intercultural awareness, which is also classified into three main indicators, namely Basic Cultural Awareness, Advanced Cultural Awareness, and Intercultural Awareness.

Intercultural awareness is also defined as someone's knowledge of another country, sensitivity, positive attitude towards speakers of other languages, as well as the ability to develop these skills and knowledge to be able to achieve success in intercultural communication as part of learning English. This certainly has an impact on learning English because it allows students to be more sensitive and tolerant of cultural differences. However, in this study, intercultural

awareness is intended as knowledge of EFL students about the cultural differences that arise with English speaking-countries and can adjust their attitudes and abilities to communicate effectively and appropriately with native English speakers.

This study focuses on EFL students at higher education level who specifically study English as a foreign language to improve their proficiency in that language. Furthermore, higher education here is intended as Education at the undergraduate level provided by a college or university in Indonesia. Meanwhile, in this study, EFL learners are intended as students from one of the universities in Indonesia who choose English as their interest in learning the language. Therefore, this study explores how the intercultural awareness of EFL students in intercultural communication uses a qualitative approach to obtain a wider and richer data coverage.