Intercultural Competence: Analysis Of The Report Conducted By The United Nation

The report conducted by the United nation in June 2019 reveals world population is 7.7 billion. In this situation, there are more than "two billion users" (Crystal, 2008, cited in Baker, 2009, p. 569) of English in the world and Noack and Gamio (2015, April 23) reports there are 1.5 billion English learners in the world. Regardless of the global scale, it is indeed that in the proportion of the number of the students, it indicates there are so many English teachers in the world. Though each teacher can do a small thing, if each teacher has the passion to nurture students in English educational settings, that power would influence invaluableness toward English as a Lingua Franca.

No matter where people would be in the world, reading competence is the significant factor to communicating with others, which help understand the message the writer tells. In essence, there is no doubt that it leads to playing an important role in understanding the culture embedded by the language. Williams (1983, cited in Storey, 2018) defines the term culture; firstly "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development", secondly "a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group, lastly "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (pp. 1,2). Furthermore, Kramsch (2011) defines that "culture today is associated with ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, created and manipulated through the discourse of the media, the Internet, the marketing industry" (p. 2).

This report will pay attention to three key concepts: schema theory, intercultural competence and CLIL, which plays an important role of a bridge between culture and reading in English pedagogical practice today. Firstly, Schema theory is denoted as "to give a brief overview of schema theory as part of a reader-centered, psycholinguistic processing model of EFL/ESL reading" (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). "The terms schema and background knowledge will be used synonymously and interchangeably" (Erten & Razi, 2009, p. 61). Schema theory is classified "language schema, content schema, and form schema, which have a great influence on reading comprehension" (Li & Zang, 2016, p.15). Language schema is required understanding of foundation language, such as, lexical and sentences structure to read the text. Content schema is distinguished as "the background knowledge of language" (Carrell, 1987, cited in Li & Zang, 2016, p. 15), which is based on people's prior experience and cultural awareness. As for form schema, it is necessary for leaners to understand a complexed structure in which it is used within diverse genres of context (Li & Zang, 2016). These three types of schema contribute to activating learners' reading capabilities by means of connecting information students will encounter with what they have already understood. If the teachers can provide appropriate background knowledge about the content before reading, it will pave the way for students to be successful readers when schema activates their cultural knowledge. (Burt, Peyton & Adams, 2003, p. 31).

Secondly, the term intercultural competence is the proficiency to understand different cultures and accept cross-cultural diversity from different angles. Sercu (2004) points out that intercultural competence is categorised three different kinds of abilities; "intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness and intercultural skills" (cited in Haneda & Alexander, 2015, p. 151), which aims at improving learners' intercultural capabilities effectively. Developing intercultural

skill is an incremental process for learners to live as a member of a society they associate.

Lastly, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) originated from European foreign language settings in the 1990s, Coyle et al. (2010) articulate "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (cited in Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2014, p. 243). Brown, & Bradford (2014) states that CLIL is a teaching method to give the students opportunities for both input and output meaningfully in second language and worthwhile involvement with text they read. Furthermore, more additional activities can be practiced in CLIL, which is related to the selected texts, such as role-playing, discussion of the situations, and creative writing letters (Rodríguez & Puyal. 2012).

In terms of schema theory, according to research conducted by Erten & Razi (2009) in Turkey, they divided university students into 4 groups, the first group composed of students who read the original material without being provided any background knowledge, second group composed students who read the original material with being provided some background knowledge. The third students' group read nativized text, in which pronouns and proper nouns are transformed into familiar ones in Turkey without any background, and the fourth students' group read the nativized text with activities the same as the second group. As for the result of the research, the fourth group showed the highest average score was the fourth group, followed the 3rd group, then second group and the first group and 79.18, 69.91,64.55 and 60.45, respectively. Nativized vocabularies of the context leads to facilitate students reading overall comprehension to improve. Furthermore, this reveals that the schema theory activates the process of students' reading proficiencies. Without background knowledge, it is assumed to be less effective for students to understand texts in second language settings as autonomous readers.

However, it is not always possible and practical for teachers to provide students with nativized stories in the classroom. Rodríguez & Puyal. (2012) mention the drawbacks of course books made for English exercises, which seem impersonal, arbitrary and grammar-oriented, most teachers don't consider them as useful intercultural communicative materials. Besides, Yang (2017) warns there have been main 3 types of issues that prevent the teachers from the efficient attempt of cultural approach in the Chinese educational environment. The first issue attributes to the English examination; is teachers and students tend to neglect cultural knowledge because exam paper doesn't contain cultural context. The second is a lack of communication circumstance and the time pressure; students don't have enough opportunities to communicate with teachers and classmates in English even in English lessons. English is a mere school subject so they mainly pay attention to memorizing words and phrases. Over and above that, the English teachers don't have enough quality and literacy accomplishment toward cross-cultural consciousness. Sherlock (2016) also states the problem of English textbooks in Japan, which is there is no doubt that the White North American standpoint dominated on it used as cross-cultural communication.

Regardless of these controversies in strategies of schema theory, Yang (2017, p. 371) indicates that many teachers advocate the advantages of two aspects to improve students' reading skills; "the first one is the degree and speed of brain's perception of word symbols, it means the reader's linguistic knowledge in other words; the other one is the effect of "something behind the eyes", it applies to students' background knowledge of the text. She also expounds that it enforces students' long-term memory held by empathy and intellectual perceptions they meet.

The effective literary materials will support in the area of both linguistic acquisition and content and then which broaden students' interculturally ability when they read content from foreign viewpoints (Rodríguez & Puyal, 2012). Interestingly, it is plausible that adult language learners are superior because when they have already had high possibility to encounter the story related to their past experiences (Richards, 2015).

With regard to intercultural competence, Murai (2016) clarifies it to develop English competence as follows.

1. "empathy / imagination": attitude of putting someone's shoe and imagination the situations, such as if I were a refugee or evacuee
2. "relativizing": subjective attitude as a third party
3. "attitudes against discrimination and prejudice"
4. "cross-cultural tolerance"

*4 is defined by Byram?1997?"Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (cited in Murai, 2016, p. 119). Moreover, Rodríguez & Puyal (2012) consider intercultural competence as proof of cross-cultural values not provide simple attitudes but dictates how students can behave as a member of society they belong to.

Notwithstanding in terms of its assessment, there are some arguments on how to evaluate students' intercultural competence appropriately. Sinicrope, Norris & Watanabe (2007) delineate the way teachers can define students' intercultural communicative ability, identify people's quality or attitude, and assess specific area's culture in both good and bad norms (p. 10). Furthermore, they also point out the difficulty of how to adapt individual skills toward an unknown culture and describe the seven kinds of dimensions of the norms, such as, "about the respondent, personal characteristics, motivation and options, language proficiency, communication style, intercultural areas, and Intercultural abilities" (p. 21).

Following the various practice, much attention has been drawn to cultural understanding in current English educational settings. CLIL plays a new role "as a holistic approach which engages students intellectually and cognitively in both language and content" (Martyniuk, 2008, cited in Rodríguez & Puyal, 2012, p.109). The practice of CLIL aims at nurturing students' accurate academic comprehension of the literacy used real-world materials when they make use of their background knowledge and cognitive abilities (Rodríguez & Puyal, 2012).

It is my view that teachers should give their students culturally familiar texts to a significant extent, because "students' reading comprehension competence will have great improvement if they are well known of the cultural background knowledge" (Lia, 2001, cited in Yang, 2017, p. 374). Concerning the case if teachers provide students with culturally unfamiliar text, it is inevitable for teachers to give efficient background information effectively and intentionally before students deal with the topic. In order to achieve this goal, teachers are required to pay the closest attention to providing pertinent background information taking into account not only the text but also students' age, ability, curiosity, classroom settings, family and social relationships and so on. As Elie Wiesel's saying goes, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.", teachers cannot be indifference toward the literacy they share with the students, moreover have a great responsibility to improve leaners' well-balanced qualities as well as enrich their cultural open-minded awareness.