

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the background of the study, limitation of the study, problem statements, objectives of the study, benefits of the study, and thesis organization

#### **A. Background of the Study**

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is a drama comedy written by Oscar Wilde on 1895. This drama was first staged on Valentine's Day February 14, 1895 in St. James' Theatre, London in English language. Script of this drama consists of 83 pages in three act on drama is a tool to express our feeling that performed in a stage before audiences and combine with music, dance, or something art that support the drama.

In BBC (2014), Wilde was an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright, poet and critic, and a celebrity in late 19th century London. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854. His father was a successful surgeon and his mother a writer and literary hostess. Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. While at Oxford, Wilde became involved in the aesthetic movement. After he graduated, he moved to London to pursue a literary career. His output was diverse. A first volume of his poetry was published in 1881 but as well as composing verse, he contributed to publications such as the 'Pall Mall Gazette', wrote fairy stories and published a novel 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' (1891). His greatest talent was for writing

plays, and he produced a string of extremely popular comedies including 'Lady Windermere's Fan' (1892), 'An Ideal Husband (1895)' and 'The Importance of Being Earnest' (1895). 'Salomé' was performed in Paris in 1896. Drama and tragedy marred Wilde's private life. He married Constance Lloyd in 1884 and they had two sons, but in 1891 Wilde began an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, nicknamed 'Bosie'. In April 1895, Wilde sued Bosie's father, the Marquis of Queensberry, for libel, after the Marquis has accused him of being homosexual. Wilde lost and, after details of his private life were revealed during the trial, was arrested and tried for gross indecency. He was sentenced to two years of hard labour. While in prison he composed a long letter to Douglas, posthumously published under the title 'De Profundis' . His wife took their children to Switzerland and adopted the name 'Holland'. Wilde was released with his health irrevocably damaged and his reputation ruined. He spent the rest of his life in Europe, publishing 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' in 1898. He died in Paris on 30 November 1900.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is phenomenal drama by Oscar Wilde with the genre comedy drama or known as dramedy. This drama which tells about how important the meaning of a name in this life. This is Wilde's one of the great works of the many works that get high appreciation from the public audience. Ernest is the pseudonym of Jack, one of the actors that exist in this drama. He wears the name of Ernest when travelling to the city, and Jack when he stay in the village, their home. At the beginning of the story, Jack does not know of where

exactly he came from, who his family and where he was born. He just found and cared for by Miss Prim, teachers German from living with his foster children.

In this story, Jack fell in love with her offspring nobility, Gwendolon. He is the cousin of Algernoon, Earnest`s friend that frequently he visited in the city. One day, Ernest go to the town wanted to apply Gwendolon. When Gwendolon asked about what kind of man is desirable, Gwendolon replied that he had a dream to married to a man named Ernest. Since then Jack intends to change its name to Ernest, he plans will be back soon baptize him with the name Ernest.

Gwendolon, as the girls of the nobility family, her mother Lady Bracknell has a lot of criteria and requirement for someone who would be a law. These criteria such as material and lineage because her nobility only fitting married with a family who also had blood nobility. But the Jack`s intention to marry Gwendolen does not stop there, Jack was forced to try to find out about the origins of his family.

On the other hand, Algernoon also fell in love with Cecily. She is Jack's foster children who lives at home with his uncle. One day, Algernoon was forced posing as Ernest, Jack`s brother is usually visited in the city, only to meet Cecily. When Algernoon intends to apply Cecily, a young girl 16-year-old said that she aspired love a man named Ernest. This is where the raising action of the story. Where two men, Jack and Algernoon fought to change its name be Ernest, a name that is equally coveted by Gwendolon and Cecily. The climax of this drama is when lies and disguises of Jack and Algernoon revealed. Gwendolon and Cecily know who exactly their names. Moreover, it turns out the two friends, Jack and

Algernon are brothers. Children of Lady Bracknell's sister, Gwendolen mother. They separated when he was small after their father died. And in the family circle they are the descendants of noble families. Ernest is the Christian name of their father, Ernest John.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* drama receives enthusiastic reception from the readers, either good or bad response, for examples as below:

Good review from Daniel (2014). He state that "Was just in Paris visiting Wilde's grave, which also inspired me to buy his finest creation. This play is a perfect example of how people in society portray themselves as dignified individuals while keeping the realization that they play an important role in society. They adjust themselves to fit their own standards, and live up to their character and gender roles of their class and time".

Bad review from Baron (2011), He stated that "Sometimes I had to wonder about the stupidity of the personages, I mean they act in such a stupid manner.", "In other works, when characters are impossibly witty or erudite, we scoff at the writer's artificiality. In Wilde, we call it genius. Why?". "After reading this I came up with the theory that Comedy cannot be timeless. Comedy always was and can only be commentary on contemporary society, or based on the basic and general knowledge assessed up to that time."

According to Nikita (2013), *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of the world's most popular comedies of all time which is very proud of the comedy industry. In 2003, *The Importance of Being Earnest* aired again with lots of welcome and praise. Tickets sold out for three weeks this drama was launched, the drama won three awards from the 2010 Life! Theatre Awards for Best Production, Best Supporting Actor (Chua Enlai) and Best Costume Design (Frederick Lee). Two other nominations for Best Director, among others (Glen Goei) and Best Supporting Actor (Ivan Heng).

According to Holden (2014), this drama has been adapted for cinema on three occasions, for the first on 1952 was directed by Anthony Asquith, who also adapted the screenplay, and was produced by Teddy Baird. In this first film, *The Importance of being earnest* received a BAFTA nomination for Dorothy Tutin as

Most Promising Newcomer and a Golden Lion nomination for Anthony Asquith at the Venice Film Festival. Second on 1992 was directed by Kurt Baker used an all-black cast, and the third on 2002 directed by Oliver Parker, this film is a British-American comedy drama in this shows the film grossed about \$8.3 million in North America.

There are four reasons why the writer study this drama is as follows: *The first* is setting. *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama is criticize Victorian`s life at that time. During the Victorian age, Britain was the world's most powerful nation. Though not always effortlessly, it was able to maintain a world order which rarely threatened Britain's wider strategic interests. *Second*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama has an attractive plot. Oscar Wilde makes the story in the drama alive and funny. The story of *The Importance of Being Earnest* is told in detail. The story is the real event that happened in Victorian society in 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Third* is language. The author uses the right choice of words so it is easy to understand. This drama also has much fresh humor and creates a sense of curiosity in each of its scene. *The last reason* is educational factor. The writer wants to know the Victorian`s life in depth watching and reading the script. Then, these situations can be used as the additional reference for the writer when faces the material- oriented life. The researcher hope with sociological perspective can open the eyes to see that differences between lower class and middle or higher class are not importance. Economic class differences should not be a barrier to interact, humans are social creatures which cannot live alone without ever worked together and not all of it can be measured by wealth. The writer will be a lecture

later and this project is necessary to be cried out to widen, enlarge, and insert more knowledge to her professional competence as a lecture.

Based on the previous response, the writer will observe material - oriented life in *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama by using sociological perspective. So, the writer construct the title “Criticism Against Material - Oriented Life Reflected In Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* Drama: A Sociological Approach”.

## **B. Problem Statement**

The major problem of the study is how material - oriented life is reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama”. The writer breakdowns further in following research questions:

1. What is the social historical background of the English society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
2. How is the play related to the English society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
3. How is the material - oriented life reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama?

## **C. Limitation of the Problem**

In this study, the writer focuses on material - oriented life reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama.

#### **D. Objectives of the study**

The major objective of the study is to explain material - oriented life reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama. The writer breakdowns further in following:

1. To describe the social historical background of the English society at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
2. To describe relationship between English society at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama.
3. To describe the characteristics of material - oriented life reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama.

#### **E. Benefit of the study**

There are two kinds of benefit in this research, the first is theoretical and second is practical benefit. From this research, the writer hopes that this study has the benefits are divided into theoretical and practical benefit as follows:

##### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

This study is projected to give references, contribution and additional information to the larger body of knowledge especially for the literary studies.

##### **2. Practical Benefit**

This study is expected to enrich the knowledge and experience of the writer.

## **F. Thesis Organization**

This thesis organization of criticism against material - oriented life reflected in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama: A Sociological Approach. Chapter I presents introduction. This includes the background of the study, limitation of the study, problem statements, objectives of the study, benefits of the study, and thesis organization. Chapter II presents the review on related literature. It describes previous studies, theoretical review, and theoretical framework. Chapter III offers the research method. It consists of type of the research, object of the research, data and data source, technique of collecting data, and technique of analyzing data. Chapter IV Analyze the social background of Victorian society in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chapter V analyze of material - oriented life in Oscar Wilde`s *The Importance of Being Earnest* drama. It consists of the characteristics, and effects of material - oriented. Chapter VI is conclusion, suggestion and pedagogical implication.