

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is a work of art, which uses language as its medium to express the author's idea. The use of language in literature is special because it is different from the language that is used by scientists or people in every day speech. Each person who reads a literary work has his own goal, such as to get pleasure, to enrich his experience of life or to add his knowledge about literature.

Literature is an expression of human life and men are the objects of literature. William Hendry Hudson in "*An Introduction to the Study of Literature*" says that;

"Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life what they thought and felt about those aspect of it, which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language (1965: 10)."

The author of literature often raises the social matters as theme of their works. They can be love, family relationship, deviation, religion, the struggle of someone to gain his success, satire for political matters, etc. These problems are very interested if they are poured out through work of literature, because literature concerns with aesthetic, moral, social and culture values.

There are three literary genres: prose (short stories and novel), poetry and drama or play. The study of the analysis concerns with drama. Drama is the most natural of the arts; being based on one of the most fundamental of the human and

animal faculties-the faculty of imitation. There are so many aspects that can be seen in drama. Pickering and Hooper (1981:221) states,

“It combines the use of language with representational arts involving scenery, costuming, and the actors’ physical appearance. It also makes use of vocal emphasis and tone of voices, along with such nonverbal forms of expression as physical gesture, facial expression, and sometimes music and dance. Thus, a drama only becomes a complete work of art when it is seen on the stage, and the written text of the play is only its skeletal frame-looking flesh, blood, and a life of its own”.

People can reveal all idea through drama because its content is universal. The theme of love, misery, education, society, nature, philosophy, psychology, and biography can be found. Shortly, it can be concluded that drama is the reflection of life. Unsurprised, the similarities between the characters in drama and the characters in our society are described. So, understanding drama is not only to see what is performed on the stage. People may experience the thinking process in comprehending the real idea of the author about life, or possibly himself. However, it depends on the people’s interpretation. For some people, watching drama means to divert, comfort, relax, procure the life aspects, and of course, analyze, to whom on having the high arts sense. This drama also can stimulate the imagination and creativity of the students, especially those who study literature.

The writer is interested in analyzing the drama entitled *The Importance of being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. This drama is very popular in 1895. Oscar Wilde writes this drama in Victorian Era, while in this era the importance of social changing happens along with the development of economy and technology. This

condition makes good and bad effects. One of the bad effects from this condition causes the differences among the high class, the lower class and the working class.

Oscar Wilde writes *The Importance of being Earnest* to criticize all of serious opinion in society, but all of them are written with soft intonation and funny so no body else feels offended. The kind of this drama is comedy of manner or satire. The character of Lady Bracknell in "*The Importance of Being Earnest*" represents a person from high class. She rejects John Worthing, the less conceited descent man, to marry with her only daughter, Gwendolen. However, besides the high status in the society, the man's origin is very important as consideration to choose her son in law. It is absolutely "a satire" to the high class' point of view when finally Lady Bracknell knows that John Worthing is her own nephew who is lost when he was a child.

In this thesis, the writer has formulated the title: *Social Criticism in Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of being Earnest"*. It is one of the plays which is talking about social life and refers to criticism. It can be concluded that social consciousness represents a basic element in the play. According to the statement above, the writer wants the reader understand more about the problem in the drama.



## 1.2 Statements of the Problem

Human life in the society has same problems. In this case, there are two problems that are discussed:

1. What are the social criticisms presented in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
2. What are the effects of the social criticism on the main character John Worthing, in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are aimed to analyze the problems, there are:

1. To describe the social criticism presented in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
2. To find out the effects of the social criticism on the main character John Worthing, in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

## 1.4 The Limitation of the Problem

It is important to limit the problem in order to get detailed information about the Social Criticism that happens in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. To avoid more complicated discussion and unimportant matters, the writer only discusses the social criticism in *The Importance of Being Earnest* Drama and the effects of the social criticism on the main character John Worthing.

### 1.5 The Significance of Study

The thesis discusses social criticism in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of being Earnest*. By analyzing this thesis the writer hopes that the readers can understand what Oscar Wilde wants to reveal by presenting social criticism in the drama. The writer expects that the reader will get the advantages of the result of this study and hopes that this thesis will be useful to improve some information about Oscar Wilde's plays. Furthermore, it will hopefully be input for other further studies concerning this work.