

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS' CONFLICTS TOWARD PLOT IN OSCAR WILDE'S "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

Nurul Anam^a, Widhya Putriana^b

(^a nurulanamsyam10@gmail.com, ^bputrianawidhya@gmail.com)

University of Bakti Indonesia Banyuwangi

*Kampus Bumi Cempokosari No.40, Cempokasari, Sarimulyo, Cluring, Kabupaten Banyuwangi,
Jawa Timur, Indonesia 68482*

Abstract: This thesis examines the influence of main characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, using a semiotic approach and psychological analysis. The researcher uses library research and the internet to gather data and analyse the characters and plot, focusing on the psychological aspect of the characters. The researcher uses library research, semiotic approach, and psychological approach to analyse characters, plot, and intrinsic aspects of a drama, using books and internet for data collection. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Jack and Algernon, two characters with different characteristics, create characters like Ernest and Bunbury. They face internal and external conflicts, with Jack attempting to reveal his origin to Lady Bracknell. Algernon's undercover appearance at Manor House reveals their identity, leading to Jack's origin being revealed. These internal and external conflicts influence the plot, with Algernon pretending to be Ernest to meet Cecily and Jack deciding to vanish his created brother, Ernest. Honesty is a crucial moral value in human life, as it is difficult and painful to maintain, even when concealing falsehoods.

Keyword: influence, character, conflicts, being earnest.

INTRODUCTION

Humans, unlike animals and plants, possess unique abilities such as adaptability, survival, and analysis of universe phenomena. Their brains enable them to learn and express emotions, making them more special than others. Literature provides a platform for people's expression.

Literature is the knowledge earned by humans, used to reflect and express experiences. It is a creative and universal means of communicating emotional, spiritual, and intellectual concerns. Humans engage in literature in various ways, such as letters, speaking, and phone calls, regardless of purpose.

Literary works are aesthetically expressed expressions of emotions and thoughts, categorized into imaginative and non-imaginative types. Imaginative works use connotative sentences, while non-imaginative works use denotative sentences for more realistic expression.

This paper analyzes drama as an object, focusing on non-imaginative types like essays and criticism, and imaginative types like poetry, fiction, and drama, which delineates life and human activity. (Reaske, 1966:5). Aristotle introduced drama, identifying six elements: plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle. These elements enhance storytelling, instructive, and aesthetic values of a play.

The analysis of a drama requires two essential elements: plot and character. Plot is the interconnected arrangement of events, while character is the protagonist's struggle to overcome problems. The researcher examines the influence of the main character's conflicts on the plot in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, using their characteristics and plot support.

METHOD

This research uses library research and a psychological approach to analyze drama, focusing on main characters' characteristics and conflicts, revealing their influence on plots. The study utilized library research to analyze the drama, collecting data from relevant books and resources. The data was then analyzed, noted, and concluded through a process of reading, comprehension, and note-taking. Library research is a crucial method for obtaining relevant information, Semi (1993:8). The semiotic approach is used to analyze the main characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, According to Nurgiantoro, (2000: 40). focusing on their conflict, plot, and setting. This psychological analysis involves unfolding the characters through actions and dialogue, examining signs such as body language and color.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The researcher emphasizes the central role of characters in a story, stating that a good story influences the reader's imagination and psychology, and the *Importance of Being Earnest*, featuring Jack Cardew and Algernon, piques the researcher's interest.

The Main Characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

John Worthing (Jack Cardew)

Jack, a twenty-nine-year-old man from Manor House, resides in the country and town for pleasure. He aims to meet Gwendolen, expressing his love, using two names: Ernest in town and Jack in the country. Lady Bracknell asks Jack about his parents, who he doesn't know. Jack admits to losing both parents, shocking Lady Bracknell who views losing one parent as a misfortune. (Wilde, 1959: 20).

Jack reveals he's been cared for by Mr. Thomas Cardew since childhood, who found him in Victoria Station and named him Worth due to his first-class ticket. Jack, a flatterer, tries to attract Gwendolen and express his love in a different room at Algernon's place. Gwendolen expresses her love for Jack, citing his name Ernest as an inspiration. Jack, who has two different names, occasionally lies about his identity, claiming to be a liar and having a brother named Ernest in town, even believing his niece Cecily.

Jack confesses his love for Gwendolen, who has always wanted someone named Ernest. He proposes to her, but Gwendolen discovers Jack is lying. Jack is unaware of his real name and is trying to find his parents. He learns from Miss Prism that Algernon is his elder brother and his father's name is Ernest. Jack realizes the importance of being Earnest and is categorized as a round character due to his many sides.

Algernon Moncrieff (Algy)

Algernon, a wealthy and superior-class Londoner, lives with Lady Bracknell's nephew Jack. Despite his piano skills, Algernon is a great pretender, creating an invalid friend named Bunbury to avoid Lady Bracknell's dinner invitation and to travel frequently. He uses Bunbury's name for his own amusement.

Algernon, despite his brother Ernest's death in Paris, is a cheerful and romantic man who finds solace in his brother's presence, especially in front of Cecily, despite his lack of seriousness in his situation. Algernon, a smart character, successfully gets Cecily's love by pretending as Ernest at Manor House. However, Cecily uncovers his undercover,

angering her. Algernon tries to explain his actions and sacrifices, proving acceptable to Cecily. As a round character, he has no choice but to act as Ernest.

The Conflicts of the Main Characters

Conflicts in a story, both internal and external, can enhance its appeal and can occur between the main character and antagonist.

The Internal Conflict

Jack faces internal conflict as he searches for his real name, Ernest, in the Army List for forty years. He fears Gwendolen will lose love if he knows his ambiguous personality. Jack's confession of having no brother angers Gwendolen, highlighting his internal conflict.

Algernon experiences internal conflict when he learns about "Ernest" from Cecily, who has been engaging with him for three months (Wilde, 1959: 46). Unexpectedly, Ernest becomes close to Cecily and is everything for him. Algernon falls in love with Cecily, but worries about his name. Algernon confesses to Bunbury's death, aiming to be an "Algernon" who loves Cecily, fearing Bunbury may eventually interfere with his love for Cecily.

The External Conflict

Jack and Algernon face external conflicts, including a disagreement over proposing Gwendolen, which Algernon denies due to suspicions of Jack's affair with Cecily. Lady Bracknell discovers her daughter, Gwendolen, has been engaged to Jack, who faces Lady Bracknell's questions before marrying her. Despite answering, Jack's consent is not obtained.

Jack is angry about Algernon's presence at Manor House and his intention to flirt with Cecily, preventing him from using Ernest's name to flirt with her. Cecily and Gwendolen reveal Jack's lies, leading to madness and disappointment when they discover their "Ernest" is actually Algernon.

Jack blames Algernon for revealing his secret, Ernest, due to his "bunburying" at Manor House, and as Cecily's guardian, he opposes Algernon's impolite engagement with Cecily. Algernon, Jack's cousin, reciprocates by stating that he does not allow him to marry with Gwendolen.

Jack resists Algernon's proposal to marry Cecily, despite Lady Bracknell's consent. He offers to consent Algernon to marry Cecily if she gives him her consent. Jack and Miss Prism face conflict over Jack's parents. Miss Prism admits to having a handbag with a baby, but Jack believes she's his mother. Lady Bracknell explains his parents' identity.

The researcher suggests that the main characters' approach-approach conflict involves both internal and external conflicts. Algernon and Jack double their selves, using different names in different places. Algernon chooses to become himself, while Jack chooses to become Ernest, ultimately discovering his true identity.

The Plot of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Exposition

The play explores the obstacles faced by Jack and Algernon, including Lady Bracknell's objection to Jack's "origins," which she refers to as his inability to define his family background.

Gwendolen's obsession with Jack's real name, Ernest, is another obstacle, as Jack fears Gwendolen will not love him again if his name is not Ernest. Gwendolen loves Jack's name Ernest, as it suits him and can create a vibration like music, despite Jack's lack of interest in his name. Algernon faces a challenge from Jack, who must clarify Cecily's name before marrying Gwendolen. Algernon faces a challenge as Jack keeps him secret about his country address, potentially leading to a potential love interest.

Rising Action

Algernon discovers that Jack is living a double life and has a young ward named Cecily. Lady Bracknell forbids Jack's marriage to Gwendolen due to the revelation of his undefined life background. Algernon learns Jack's country address from Gwendolen, writes it down, and plans to go there for "bunburying." Algernon, identifying as Ernest, visits Jack's country house and falls in love with Cecily.

Climax

The play's climax occurs when Algernon confesses to Cecily as Ernest, Jack's brother, and Gwendolen arrives, leading to a heated argument between them. Gwendolen and Cecily discover that Jack and Algernon have been deceiving them and that neither is truly named "Ernest." (Wilde, 1959: 53).

Falling Action

Lady Bracknell meets Miss Prism to inquire about Jack's origin, revealing that she took care of a male baby twenty-eight years ago. Jack admits to Gwendolen and Cecily that he doesn't have a brother named Ernest, claiming it's for easy meeting with Gwendolen and Cecily. Miss Prism recounts a twenty-eight-year event where a baby in a handbag was transformed into a literary work.

Miss Prism is revealed as the governess who mistakenly abandoned Jack as a baby, and Jack is revealed to be Algernon's elder brother. Cecily and Gwendolen forgive Jack and Algernon, and Jack reveals his real parents through Miss Prism's explanation.

Resolution

Jack is curious about his original name, which Lady Bracknell reveals is Ernest John Moncrieff, a son named after his father. Jack, now knowing his real name Ernest, feels meaningful in sharing it with others and having a brother.

The Influence of the Main Characters' Conflicts Toward Plot in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

This thesis aims to analyze the influence of two variables on the main characters' conflicts and plots through a detailed discussion. The researcher analyzed characters, conflicts, and plots, finding they supported each other and influenced the plot. Sequences of the plot show conflicts primarily stem from the main characters.

Jack's internal conflicts, including his confusion between being Ernest in town and Jack in the country, lead to various events, including fearing Gwendolen's disapproval of his new name and planning to kill or disappear his brother Ernest, who died from cold. Jack's internal conflicts lead to the plot's climax, revealing his true identity as Ernest, causing Gwendolen to become angry and unwilling to engage with him.

Jack struggles with inner conflicts and seeks a clue about his origin. Miss Prism's statement and Lady Bracknell's revelation lead him to believe he is Ernest, and he is surprised to discover Algernon is his brother. Algernon and Jack face internal conflicts due to their dual identities. Algernon's friend, Bunbury, refuses Lady Bracknell's dinner invitation and uses Ernest's name to flirt Cecily, causing him to choose Algernon over Ernest, as Cecily is charming and crazy about him.

The plot climaxes due to Algernon's internal conflict, Cecily's revelation of his character, and Gwendolen's appearance at Manor House, where Cecily clarifies Ernest's identity as Gwendolen's cousin, (Wilde, 1959: 53). Jack confesses to having no Ernest brother, revealing Algernon and Jack's identities, causing Gwendolen and Cecily distress and disappointment.

The plot begins with the conflict between Jack and Algernon, primarily fueled by the cigarette case, where Algernon suspects Jack has another woman, Cecily. The plot begins with a conflict between Jack and Algernon, involving Jack and Lady Bracknell, who refuses to consent to their engagement, Jack and Gwendolen.

Lady Bracknell views Jack as a misfortunate man, demanding his parents' return. Algernon faces internal conflicts with Jack, who refuses to disclose his address to Algernon, fearing attracting Cecily. (Wilde, 1959: 9). Algy, a smart man, discovers Jack's address when Gwendolen meets him. Algernon's conflict escalates, leading to a plot involving "bunburying" at Manor House. Jack's secret about his brother Ernest is revealed, leading to Jack's madness. Gwendolen discovers Ernest is not named Ernest, as Algernon and Jack have been lying about their names, (Wilde, 1959: 54).

The climax in the story is due to the conflict between Jack and Algernon, who reveal their true identities. Miss Prism, who abandoned a baby at Victoria Station, is revealed to be Lady Bracknell, Jack's aunt, and Algernon's brother, revealing their true identities, (Wilde, 1959: 71).

Jack discovers his original name, Ernest, on army lists, claiming it from his aunt, Lady Bracknell, and proudly proclaims it, (Wilde, 1959: 73). The researcher argues that Jack's falling action and resolution are influenced by the conflict between him and Miss Prism, who revealed his origin and name.

CONCLUSION

The research analyzes the impact of main characters Jack and Algernon's conflicts on the plot. They find that they are intentionally created as "duplicates" with different names, allowing them to navigate both urban and rural environments. Their double identities create both internal and external conflicts, affecting their ability to achieve their goals.

Jack, in the country, is his brother, while Ernest is his town name. He wants to meet Gwendolen frequently, and Gwendolen loves Ernest's name. Algernon is Algernon in town, and Bunbury is an unlucky friend in the country.

The drama's plot revolves around Jack and Algernon's double identities, causing anxiety about their future recognition. Jack, who acts as Ernest, faces Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell, who refuses to love him due to his indistinguishable family background. Algernon, disguised as Bunbury, avoids Lady Bracknell's dinner invitation and becomes interested in Jack's double character, Ernest. He convinces Cecily, a charming girl, to love Ernest. Despite attempts to convince Cecily, Cecily refuses to love another name instead of Ernest.

Jack finds Algernon pretending as Ernest in Manor House, leading to a mess. Jack demands Algernon leave, but Algernon refuses. Gwendolen and Cecily reveal they are not Ernest, angering Jack and Algernon. They eventually forgive them after confessing their guilt.

Jack discovers his origin through Lady Bracknell's explanation of his mother's sisterhood, unaware of his brother Algernon, and proudly declares himself Ernest.

The drama reveals that some individuals may not be honest, as the main character's change names to gain the affection of their loved ones, revealing their true intentions in the end.

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