CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, research methods, the clarification of related terms and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

By the end of 20th century, there are many authors of literary works who write, compose or discuss things with the theme of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) to describe these kinds of people's sexual orientation or gender identity. Literary works that come up with LGBT theme are now widely circulated, as in novels, short stories, magazines, even on films. For example in novel *Call Me by Your Name* written by Andre Aciman in 2007, and in a collection of short stories *Am I Blue? Coming Out From The Silence* published in 1994, the gay issue is raised. Meanwhile, it is undeniable that the theme of LGBT also appears in most popular genre of art – films. For example gay theme appears in *Brokeback Mountain* in 2005 directed by Ang Lee and *Shelter* in 2007 directed by Jonah Markowitz, and for lesbian theme in *Better Than Chocolate* in 1999 directed by Anne Wheeler and *Loving Annabelle* in 2006 directed by Katherine Brooks.

The term of gay changes overtime from ancient times, and it has been a controversial issue across nearly all countries since the existence of gay people is typically shunned by most people. The word gay, one who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men (American Psychological Association, 2008), can be used to refer generally to lesbian, gay and bisexual people but women prefer to be called lesbian. In ancient times, before the term "gay" appeared people were more familiar with the term homosexual. Homosexual refers to people who have the same-sex interest, it can happen in both of women and men, for women it is known as lesbian and for men it is known as gay. According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, "gay" that means 'homosexual' was established in the 1960s as the term preferred by homosexual to describe

themselves. Most gay don't like to be referred to as homosexual because of the negative historical associations with the word and because the word gay better reflects their identity.

In literary theory, gay is a part of gender studies. Jagose (1996) states that queer theory is often used to describe the term of gay and lesbian and the queer theory involves the study about gender performativity. According to Wood (1994), gender or psychological sex refers to how an individual sees himself or herself in terms of masculine or feminine tendencies. Being masculine or feminine is attached to an individual through a variety of cultural understanding towards this gender. Gender is a social construction which means that gender develops through values within society, beliefs and preferred ways of organizing collective life. The view of masculinity and femininity are taught to individuals through various cultural means, so that people are encouraged to follow the gender rules that society prescribes for them. APA (2006) argued that one's gender identity refers to whether one feels male, female or transgender (regardless of one's biological sex), gender expression refers to outwardly expressing one's gender identity. For example, transsexual people live or wish to live full time as members of the gender other than that assigned at birth. Transsexual people also can seek medical interventions, such as hormones and surgery, to make their bodies fit as much as possible with their preferred gender. The process of transitioning from one gender to another is called gender reassignment.

The notion of LGBT in literary works and films today also can be traced in stories intended for young children, one of which is found in *Spongebob Squarepants*. *Spongebob Squarepants* is an American series intended for children that shown in many countries which content arguably has gay elements. This animated series created by Stephen Hillenburg and officially premiered on July 17, 1999. It is the story of a male sponge character named Spongebob, this movie tells Spongebob's daily life with his friends from the various species of creatures living under the sea. For a cartooned sponge which lives in a pineapple-shaped house under the sea, *Spongebob Squarepants* lives a remarkably controversial life. According to a study by the National Commission for the protection of morality in

Ukraine, *Spongebob Squarepants* character is gay (eitb.com, 2012). Furthermore, in some episodes of *Spongebob Squarepants* movies, there are some stories that indicate gay elements, for example in the episode *49b Season 3: Rock-a-Bye Bivalve*. In this episode, Spongebob and Patrick assume the roles of mother and father to a baby clam who was left abandoned, with Spongebob as the Mom and Patrick as the Dad. Then the gay element shows in the episode *16a Season 1: Valentine's Day*. In this episode, we are told that on Valentine's Day, Spongebob has a surprise Valentine's Day gift for Patrick, and when his secret plan is disrupted and Patrick thinks he is not getting any presents, he goes rampage. Since *Spongebob Squarepants* is an animated series, the gay representation can be identified from its visual mode. There are many methods to analyze visual mode; one of them is using Barthes' semiotic (1964). Barthes researched how audiences interpret what they see, they look for signs to help them interpret the narrative. We can apply the theory of semiotic Barthes' to this animated series by looking for deeper meanings in what we see as audiences.

As such, the researcher attempts to analyze further about this gay issue in *Spongebob Squarepants*. There are two episodes have significant content on gay issue, which become the object of this research, episode *49b Season 3: Rock-a-Bye Bivalve* and episode *16a Season 1: Valentine's Day.* Through characterization of the two characters that has been indicated to be gay, Spongebob and Patrick, the data employs descriptive textual analysis and analyzes using the framework of gender and queer theory, as well as Barthes theory of semiotics.

1.2 Research Questions

Because this study concerns with the content of gender issue, it tries to answer the following questions:

1. How are the two characters (Spongebob and Patrick) portrayed in perspective of queer theory and gender performativity in the selected *Spongebob Squarepants* episodes?

2. What meanings can be derived from this portrayal?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study is aimed to uncover how two characters (Spongebob and Patrick) are portrayed in perspective of queer theory and gender performativity in the selected *Spongebob Squarepants* episodes and also seek what meanings can be derived from this portrayal.

1.4 Scope of the Study

To answer the research question, the writer analyzes two episodes of *Spongebob Squarepants* series, that are *49b Season 3: Rock-a-Bye Bivalve* and episodes *16a Season 1: Valentine's Day*. These two episodes expose many indications of the portrayal of gay. Such as in episode *49b Season 3: Rock-a-Bye Bivalve,* Spongebob and Patrick assume the roles of mother and father to a baby clam who was left abandoned. In episode *16a Season 1: Valentine's Day,* Spongebob has a surprise Valentine's Day gift for Patrick but Patrick thinks he is not getting any presents, and then he goes rampage. In terms of textual analysis, this study uses Judith Butler's Gender Perfomativity (1990).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research analyzes the portrayal of gay and the kind of features that indicate the characters as gay in the *Spongebob Squarepants* series, episode *49b Season 3: Rock-a-Bye Bivalve* and episode *16a Season 1: Valentine's Day* and. By analyzing these two episodes, the writer expects to reach an education purpose that is to be critical to view tv series, especially tv series which are intended for children and the writer also expects that this study can enrich the studies of LGBT.

1.6 Research Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with textual analysis approach. Fraenkel and Norman (2006) explain that the descriptive qualitative method is designed to provide a picture of an event, condition, or situation by using data in the form of words rather than number. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative method is appropriate for describing the current research which concerns with the analysis of the portrayal of gay in Spngebob Squarepants selected episodes.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. According to Alwasilah (2002), in descriptive qualitative research the data analyzed are neither to be gained by using statistic procedure nor to accept or to reject the hypothesis, but the result of the study is the description from the analyzed indication. In this research, the analysis will be in the textual analysis where the texts and images will be described in the form of description. According to McKee (SAGE, 2003), when we perform textual analysis on a text (films, television programmes, magazines, advertisements, etc), we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative method used. The collected data taken in a textual and visual form and are analyzes by describing, elaborating, and interpreting the data.

1.7 Clarification of the Terms

To avoid misconception and misunderstanding, some significant terms have to be clarified here:

1. **LGBT**

   According to APA (2008), the term of LGBT is shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. The "LGB" in this term refers to sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined as an often enduring pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction of men to women or women to men (heterosexual), of women to women or men to men (homosexual), or by men or women to both sexes (bisexual). The "T" in this term stands for transgender or gender non-conforming, and is an umbrella term for people

whose gender identity does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth.

2. **Gay**

According to Psychological Theories (1995), the word gay is now standard in its use to refer to people whose orientation is to the same sex. Gay is distinguished from homosexual primarily by the emphasis it places on the cultural and social aspects of homosexuality as opposed to sexual practice. So, gay is a term that is usually addressed not only for male but also for female as well. However, in now days, the term gay is used to specifically name male who are same-sex lover.

3. **Queer Theory**

According to Bressler (2007), the queer theoreticians argue that heterosexual and homosexual are socially constructed concepts that do not define who exactly we are. Bressler also says that queer theory challenges the assumption that human nature cannot be changed and can be defined by a finite list of characteristics. Bressler's statement is indeed appropriate in accordance with the meaning of queer theory itself, i.e. to discuss about homosexuals. In dealing with queer theory, Jagose (1996) says that queer is not always visible. However, it is an acceptable extension or abbreviation for 'lesbian and gay'. Although many theorists welcome queer theory as 'another discursive horizon, another way to think of sexual', Jagose's explanation can be a general description of the understanding of queer theory itself.

4. **Gender Performativity**

Gender performativity is a stem from the concept of 'performativity' which refers to someone's decision to take a role as a particular gender which is performed in the sequence of actions (Salih, 2002). And according to Butler (1990), there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender itself and gender is a performance we did on certain moments. Felluga (2002) also

explains that gender performativity refers to gender which is shown by someone's repeated action. Therefore, gender is not determined just by looking at a person's sex, but also views of the actions he or she did (Felluga, 2002).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

This research consists of five chapters. It is organized as follows:

CHAPTER I

This chapter focuses on the introduction of the research including the background of the research, research purposes, research questions, the scope of the study, the significant of the study, and the organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II

The second chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and the literature reviews to support the research.

CHAPTER III

In the third chapter, the discussion revolves around the research methodology describing the steps and procedures of the study also the data resources in conducting the study.

CHAPTER IV

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the research. It will be the part where the discussion of the research is elaborated.

CHAPTER V

As the last chapter, this section becomes the conclusion of the research and the suggestion for further research.