

Speech and Silence: The Colonial Linguistics Study of *The Tempest* by Shakespeare

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Abstract

This study investigates colonial practices through the lens of linguistic power structures and their impact on the colonized, with a specific focus on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2008). Grounded in post-colonial theory, the analysis emphasizes the role of language as a tool of domination and control. Particular attention is given to Prospero's speeches, examining how his use of language reflects and reinforces colonial hierarchies. The study highlights the discursive strategies Prospero employs, especially in his interactions with Caliban, to assert authority and maintain hegemonic control. Through this focus, the article explores how language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an instrument of power and colonial influence. Despite Caliban's acts of resistance, the linguistic and psychological impact of colonization remains pervasive. Ultimately, the play portrays a colonial order in which all characters, either by force or persuasion, come to accept Prospero's dominance. This article seeks to uncover the mechanisms by which Prospero's discourse sustains colonial power and silences opposition through language.

Keywords: Linguistics colonialism, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Domination, Colonization, Linguistics Hegemony

Introduction

This article introduces the features of linguistics colonialism in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, with special reference to the language that is used in the play. The colonial effects are visible through its language. The researcher's focus will be on the linguistic elements used by Prospero, being the central figure of the play. Colonialism is a practice that is characterized by hegemonic dominance of strong nations over the weaker ones. Colonialism is universal phenomena; it has been practiced from the time of immemorial. Colonialism has been practiced through using different means to subjugate the colonized. Such as power, technology economy, literature and language. Language is one of the most important and powerful tools used by the colonizers to maintain and sustain their power upon colonized. According to Calvet (1987) linguistic colonization unfolds in two distinct phases. The first, known as the 'vertical step', involves the language's penetration into the social hierarchy. Initially, the European language is adopted by the elite or upper classes of the colonized population those aligned with or representing colonial authority, before gradually filtering down to the lower social strata. The second phase, termed the 'horizontal step' refers to the language's geographical expansion, spreading outward from the capital city to smaller towns and eventually reaching rural villages. Postcolonial is generally referred to the time after the Second World War.

The pioneers of the post-colonialism are Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Homi Bhabha. Their purpose was to introduce their own culture, language and literature as distinct to colonizers but in any case, not inferior to them. There are three different types of Language power. The first is influential power which is known as power in discourse. This power is obtained or possessed by literate, educated and intellectual people. The second one is instrumental which is known as power behind discourse. It is possessed by government or other persons who have any power through which they can subjugate other. The third one is known as power behind discourse or media power. Media discourse is not meant for a single person but for all the people. It is the most powerful form of discourse nowadays. We find first and second types of power are present in *The Tempest*; power in discourse and instrument power or power behind discourse. Prospero enjoys his power; he is the resident of an island where he has migrated after leaving his dukedom of Milan. Through the power of magic, he subdues everyone. He uses this power to make everyone his conformity. In order to conduct the study, the following research objectives have been formulated: To analyze the character of Prospero with particular emphasis on his speeches and to examine Prospero's speeches that constitute colonialist discourse. In order to reach the objectives at the end the research questions have been constituted; How is the character of Prospero depicted in the play as embodiment of colonizer through his language? How do different discourses show power relations in the *Tempest*?

Review of Literature

Calvet (1981) examines linguistic phenomena throughout history to reveal the ideological groundwork that legitimizes colonial discourse and enables destructive outcomes such as 'glottophagy' the cultural assimilation and eventual disappearance of languages. This process stems from the belief in a hierarchy of languages, where 'superior' languages dominate and suppress so-called 'inferior' ones, thus facilitating linguistic colonialism. Calvet's analysis uncovers a system of ideological dominance embedded within communities, which supports and sustains these colonial practices. For him, it is no accident that linguistic theory has often served the interests of colonial expansion and control. Pennycook (1998) explores the cultural discourses of colonialism, arguing that colonial narratives surrounding English and English culture, through Anglicism and Orientalism, may have served to justify or rationalize colonial and imperial economic activities. However, he emphasizes that these discursive constructions, which promote the superiority of the colonizer and the inferiority of the colonized, are not merely "reflexes of the material domain" (p.38), but active components in the production and maintenance of colonial power. Clark (1985) stated that Antonio Gramsci considered 'Language Domination' as sovereignty because of content. It is believed that colonization was systematically implemented to give rise to new language hierarchy wherein the colonizers' language was considered as the sublime language and regulated to dominate the mercantile and administrative structure of the colonies. Since Davesne (1933) considered "les dialectes africains ne sont pas des langues de civilisation" this was the language policy of Francophone Africa, used to prescribed the exclusive use of French. However, on the other hand Britishers used divide and rule policy where they supported the dominant languages in their colonies. Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* has been read by many critics for a long time. Most of the focus of the critics has been on the text of the play in which Shakespeare has highlighted colonialism. Shakespeare was a great proponent of colonialism and he used different categories like hegemony, language and periphery The colonial features are highlighted and revealed to us as dominant issues in the play. In his discussion of the play Stephen Greenblatt (1990) calls this process 'linguistic colonialism' Colonialism is based on unequal power relation. Class distinction is the major concern of *The Tempest*; it causes the colonialism. Colonial features are revealed to us through the relationship of the superior and inferior characters. Prospero the protagonist of the novel is superior in power and knowledge he undermines Caliban, Ariel and Ferdinand. Prospero's speech has the effects of colonization. Brown (1987) says; It enables the other characters to be familiar with the power of Prospero and identify themselves inferior to him" On different occasions Prospero

makes other characters to know his power and consider themselves inferior to him. Ariel and Caliban are well aware about his power. They remain under his command. Even Ferdinand; the prince also acknowledges power of Prospero and obey his orders obediently. Prospero colonized all the inhabitants of the island. The native of the island lost their identity and overcome by him. Sal way says; "Prospero has colonialist mission" The colonial attitude of Prospero is revealed to us through the way in which he responds to Caliban and uses Ariel for the fulfillment of his colonialist purpose. Ariel proves an obedient servant on other hand Caliban has rebellious attitude against Prospero but ultimately, he is also enslaved by him. Ariel proves very faithful to Prospero who accepts his power and wants to preserve his higher status.

Discussion

Post colonialism deals with both colonized and colonizers, theorist, like Homi K Bhabha (1994) focuses on cultural differences. According to him, difference in culture is the result of colonialism; as a result, colonial power takes hold over the culture, economy and politics of the colonized nations. Franz Fanon (1967) refers the language that is used by the colonizers has great effect on the colonized nations; it loses its identity and as consequence follow the colonizers. The colonized nation is forced to adopt the language and culture of the colonizers. Post-colonialism explores cultural, linguistic, and literary dynamics that emerge in the aftermath of colonial rule. From a linguistic perspective, the theory examines how language becomes a tool of domination. In *The Tempest*, Prospero, the colonizer, asserts control over other characters by wielding language as a form of power. He teaches language to Caliban, whom he views as uncivilized and incapable of expressing himself without it. Although Prospero claims his intent is to civilize Caliban, his true motive is to enslave and control him. Language, whether spoken or written, plays a crucial role in colonial interactions, functioning as a fundamental medium through which control is exerted by the colonizer over the colonized. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* vividly illustrates how language becomes a mechanism of dominance. Prospero's speech reflects the attitudes and ideologies associated with post-colonial discourse. By teaching Caliban English, Prospero enforces a power dynamic where communication is used not for mutual understanding but for subjugation. The colonizers, represented by Prospero, are often prejudiced against the colonized, whom they suppress and manipulate to maintain authority. Prospero exemplifies these traits as he uses both language and magic to assert dominance over the island and its inhabitants. He enslaves Caliban, the island's original inhabitant, forcing him into servitude. This imbalance is captured in Prospero's own words, where he outlines Caliban's duties and position, further reinforcing the hierarchical structure of colonial power.

He does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood; and serves in our offices
That profit us. -What, ho! Slave! Caliban!
Though earth, though! Speak". (1, ii, 310-13)

Prospero forces Caliban to bring wood, light fire and do other useful work for him. Prospero considers Caliban an inferior creature. For him Caliban is no more than a lump of earth. Prospero assigned him many pieces of hard work to do. In the same act Prospero calls Caliban;

Come forth, I say; there's other business for thee:
Come, thou tortoise! When?" (1, ii, 316-17)

Prospero uses the word tortoise for Caliban. Prospero orders him to come out there is other work for you to do. Do hurry, when will you come? You are slow moving creature like tortoise. Prospero imposes his dominant nature over the colonized. He forced him to fulfill his orders at once. Caliban is the native of the Island but has no authority over there. Prospero has snatched all of his power and made him helpless on his own territory. When Caliban comes to know that Prospero is interested

to take hold on the island. Caliban promises that he will be alert from now onwards and would show his love and his ownership for his island. As Calliban says;

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me" (1, ii, 331-332)

Prospero gives no importance to his claim and does not give any value to his existence on the island. When Caliban has intentions to rape Miranda Prospero says;

Thou most lying slave,
Who stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee
Filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honor of my child" (1: ii; 345-49)

Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda shows Caliban's resistance to colonizer. Prospero has completely forgotten that he has destroyed the lives of the inhabitant of the island. Here Prospero threatens Caliban that he is a lying slave and deserves no kindness he must be treated harshly. Caliban is terrorized to live in the cave because of his evil intentions. Prospero further says;

Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thin own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could abide to be with; therefore, wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison" (1, ii, 354-63)

Prospero calls him the most hateful slave, who has no sense of goodness. Prospero claims that he has taught his servant Calliban how to speak. Prospero explains the condition of Calliban that he did not know how to speak he was quite savage. He produced senseless sound like animals. Prospero taught him how to behave and speak like human beings. Before this he was not able to join the company of human beings. Prospero does not want to give him equal status. Calban is no more than a beast for him. He was imprisoned in dark cell. According to Prospero he deserved more punishment than imprisonment.

The description of sexual scene between Prospero and Calliban has great importance as well as the theme of post colonialism is concerned. When Calliban tries to rape Miranda, Prospero threatens him and makes his attempt unsuccessful. It shows Caliban's weakness, that he belongs to inferior class he has desire for Miranda but cannot get her. According to Trevor.R.Griffiths, the attempt to rape Miranda is "intolerable offence, but it was in the fate of Caliban" The inferior class is colonized and degraded by the superior, as Caliban is helpless and cannot defend himself Prospero reminds Caliban that he has released him from the cruelty of Sycorax. Colonial speech of Prospero highlights the difference between colonizers and colonized. Although Prospero and Sycrox are belong to different races but they are both conjurers. Through their black art they want to depict differences between colonizers and colonized. Prospero sustains his power over Caliban, he tortures him physically and bullying him. Calliban claims that he is owner of the island because he has inherited it from his mother Sycrox. Prospero does not accept it at any rate that Calliban enjoy his power over this land. Prospero threatens him to give corporal punishment;

For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall for that vast of night, that they may work
All exercise on thee: thou shalt be pinched (I, ii, 326-29)

Here Prospero warns Calliban that he has no right to claim that he is the owner of the island. For saying so he will be punished with painful contraction of his muscles. Mischievous spirits; that are

wandering during the night will punish you more severely. Their punishment will be more painful than the sting of the honey bees. Prospero's speech is so powerful that Caliban is helpless before the colonizer. Prospero keeps Caliban under his control and compels him to do hard work for him and also threatens him if he failed to fulfill his orders he will be punished severely;

If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at thy din." (I, ii, 368-70)

Caliban continually resists against Prospero's colonial approach. Prospero calls Caliban savage and uncivilized. Caliban has no right to survive on his own native land. Caliban retaliates to all the charges, which breaks the silence of the colonized imposed by the colonizers. The thing which aroused the anger of Prospero for Caliban were the curses which he gave to the colonizer. Caliban misused the language which he learnt from Prospero. Caliban says;

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse; the red plague rid you
For learning me your language"! (I: ii; 364-66)

Caliban's speech reveals his hatred for the colonizer. Caliban shatters all the restriction of the colonizer and uses the language that is taught by the colonizer for his own use. Caliban comes to know how to curse the colonizer through the language he has taught him. Prospero teaches him language and keeps him under his control. The ability to compel others to learn one's language is also a feature of colonization. Prospero uses the language power to compel Caliban into obedience. Prospero has no right to force him to live like a slave on his own native land. Caliban is not only a student and servant of Prospero; he is also their colonial subject. Prospero called all the inhabitants of the island savage and primitive and enslaved them. Prospero becomes the lord of the island. Although he has given back the island to Caliban, but he has done so for the sake of dukedom. Till he was on the island, he subdued everyone through his magic. Prospero's use of power is authoritarian; he enforces Caliban and Ariel to obey him. He knows very well that without their help, he cannot accomplish his mission. Through their help, he has got back his dukedom. In fact, he has used his power for his own advantages. He has seized the native land of Caliban, then makes him his servant.

Prospero has resemblance with Columbus, as Columbus was welcomed by the Native Americans, when he visited America and discovered the new world. Columbus colonized the same people. In the same way, Prospero was welcomed by Caliban to his island, but Prospero has colonized Caliban. Like Columbus, Prospero treated them well at the beginning, but very soon the relationship becomes bitter.

It appears to us that Caliban uses his power for virtues as he releases Caliban from evil spirit and he has overcome the savage nature of Caliban. The storm ordered by him does not harm anyone. But he has done so for his own personal advantages. He has controlled everyone through his powerful magic in order to colonize them. He releases Caliban to keep him under his control and to use him for his personal services. It is true that Caliban has a savage nature, but it is cruelty to enslave him and to snatch from him the lands of his forefather. Prospero is very successful to overcome everyone through Ariel, who is invisible to everyone except Prospero. He appears to us in the play seventeen times. It is he who raises the storm and creates shipwreck and tempts Ferdinand to Prospero's compartment so that he can see Miranda. He can change his shape according to different occasions.

Prospero uses four spirits in the play, the spirit of fire, water, air and earth. All the spirits are used to control everyone. Through the spirit of fire, fire is created on the ship and Ferdinand is forced to jump into the sea. The spirit of water moves Ferdinand upon water. Song of the spirit of water creeps Ferdinand upon water.

You sunburned sickle men, of august weary,
Come hither from the furrow, and be merry:
And these fresh nymphs encounter everyone” (IV, I, 155-57)

The spirit of earth is used by Prospero as an instrument of punishment. Prospero says;
Fury, fury! There, tyrant, there! hark, hark!
Go charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps; and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard, or cat o’ mountain”. (IV; I; 225-259)

Prospero orders Ariel go and tell my spirits to trouble the joints of Calliban, Stephano and Trinculo (who planned to kill Prospero) with sore ripples and tie their muscles with pain which are normally affecting the old people. Let their bodies be strained with full strength that they have more scripts on their bodies than a wild animal. These spirits of earth appear in the shape of dogs and chase Calliban and his fellow planners about the island. The spirits of air are used for entertainment; these spirits sing beautiful songs and suggest pleasant ideas. As Prospero says;

Spirits which by mine art
I have from their confines called to enact
My present fancies” (IV, I, 120-23)

Prospero calls these spirits through his magic and orders them to give form to his imaginations. All the above-mentioned spirits are in the service of Prospero. But he achieves most of his goals through Ariel, a spirit of the air, who loves and obeys Prospero blindly. Ariel has huge supernatural power; he has command over all the spirits. Through his power he compels the spirits to obey him. Through his magic he has control over the minds of everyone. He got complete control over the entire island. Everything is in his control that comes in contact with him. Prospero is a man of genius who has an ability to control others through his intellect. Calliban is owner of the island and wants to lead natural life whom Prospero manages to subdue to his services. He forces Ferdinand who is in love with Miranda to do physical labor. By describing Prospero intelligent and powerful and Calliban savage and inhuman, Shakespeare wants to depict difference between colonizers and colonized. Because of this difference colonized are treated badly like Calliban. Prospero gives more importance to his books of magic; even he prefers them over his dukedom. Through magic he is able to have power over the island. Nothing can make happy Prospero more than his magic books. Prospero has planned to perform many important pieces of business to fulfill his desire to subdue everyone that he accomplishes through his magic. Prospero is a great colonial, magician, administrator and teacher. He expands education for everyone without any class distinction. Through education Prospero keeps his authority over everyone. European sovereigns ruled not only through their parliament but also through education. Prospero preferred the knowledge of magic over dukedom and rules through education. As Prospero says to Miranda;

Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom”. (I, ii, 166-9)

When Prospero was duke of Milan he failed to rule on the mind of the people. Therefore, he left the dukedom for the sack of knowledge. He got the knowledge of the black art and used the power of magic on the island in order to get hold over Caliban, Ariel, the island and its visitors.

And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed.

In dignity, and for the liberal arts
Without a parallel; those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother,

And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies". (I, ii, 72-77)

Prospero wants to show Miranda the dignity of his dukedom. He explains that no other duke has reputation like him. He also has complete hold over liberal arts. No one can access him in this field. Prospero the colonizer wants to overcome everyone through his intellectual power. Here he has used another trick to take Ferdinand, the prince; under his control. He has arranged marriage between Miranda and Ferdinand and enables Ferdinand to know his power as a magician, administrator and teacher. Prospero proves himself head and ruler of the island. He is successful in his mission; he controls Ferdinand through his magic. Prospero tests his conformity by ordering him to accomplish difficult tasks. Ferdinand himself acknowledges the superiority of Prospero and his daughter.

Conclusion

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare intricately weaves the theme of colonialism through both narrative and language, using the relationship between Prospero and Caliban to reflect the power dynamics of colonizer and colonized. Linguistic colonialism becomes a central tool in this relationship, as Prospero's ability to control, teach, and manipulate language allows him to assert dominance over the native inhabitant of the island. While Prospero claims to civilize Caliban through language, his true intention is to suppress and enslave him, demonstrating how language can be weaponized to maintain colonial power. Caliban's resistance, though limited, exposes the oppressive nature of this linguistic imposition. Ultimately, *The Tempest* not only highlights the cultural and class-based hierarchies inherent in colonialism but also reveals how language functions as both a symbol and instrument of control. Through its portrayal of linguistic domination, the play becomes a profound commentary on the colonial experience and its enduring impact on identity, voice, and power.

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