

## Comparative Essay 2

~~Shakespeare and Achebe emphasize the influence of language over individual cultural heritage and social hierarchy including different power dynamics.~~

Shakespeare and Achebe emphasize the power of language through the influence made on individual cultural heritage and social hierarchy including different power dynamics.

The Tempest holds social hierarchy as one of the major themes with the notion of "sea-change". This signifies a total change made within a character that fundamentally modifies the character. Shakespeare uses in media res to create a more dynamic opening for the play. The opening scene presents a sea-change of social hierarchy. The nobles on board the ship speak prose instead of verse since they are in panic. "I do not see a drowning mark on him. His perception is perfect gallows". Gonzalo's remark of Boatswain is spoken indeed in prose but still is rich in metaphor and imagery. The drowning mark refers to the rebellious manner he speaks. Since the Boatswain is authoritative and protective of his mark Gonzalo imagines he is good at his job. Shakespeare uses this layer to show that language can trigger different power dynamics because although other nobles such as Sebastian and Antonio dislike Boatswain and his official social status is below them, he gains the trust of Gonzalo that considers him as a man who is good at what he does. On the other hand, Gonzalo uses a rich metaphor to impose his social position. "gallows" means that he will be hanged for insolence. However this is not due to his working performance but his "perception" which signifies his overall attitude. Thus we see even from indirectly



the most humble member of the nobles on board, Gonzalo still seeks to protect his social status.

This is similar to Ferdinand that is separated from the others and alone meets Miranda. In love at first sight and wanting to impress Miranda he states that he is "the best of those who speak this tongue". This hyperbole is alarming because according to social hierarchy, Ferdinand cannot say he is the "best" considering his secondary position as a prince. The playwright uses this device in order to represent Ferdinand's assumption that the king is dead. However as readers or the audience through dramatic irony, it is clear that Shakespeare is highlighting the powerful nature of language and the influence that made Ferdinand make modifications to his speech. This change is not uniquely noticeable to the public since Prospero immediately makes a remark about his rudeness in a rather threatening tone. Given that Ferdinand's speech undermines the king, he could be punished or even accused of treason by Prospero. Once again, the power of language shows that due to this one sentence, Ferdinand could lose his social status of crown prince, jeopardizing his social stature.

In Things Fall Apart, the author <sup>also</sup> presents the social prestige of the clan's orator. Acknowledged by eloquence and charismatic features, Umuofia's orator is rewarded with high respect and a honorable burial. It's especially significant given that social status in Umuofia is mostly gained through physical attributes such as wrestling or being a "mighty warrior". Thus Achebe presents the underrepresented African clans and the universality of language's influence and power on social structure. Furthermore, in Zho culture storytelling plays a large role in establishing gender roles or future social positions. For example in Okonko's obi compound, his wives tell "stories of



investing champions and forming "am" whereas girls are told stories with dolls and cleaning. Given that Ophelia's power is held between men majorly with the exception of the Oracle which is chosen by the Goddess herself, it is logical of the construction to draw a conclusion that the storytelling is a powerful tool that social hierarchy influences children to pursue those roles. That one thus a large part is played by language.

Language is also a device that is linked deeply with one's culture. It represents values of a society and Shakespeare uses it to revolve the values of Prospero along with his personal point of view. Throughout the play, the playwright often uses diction of theater. This is executed through Prospero, a parallel character to himself since he is the "playwright" of the whole situation. The repetition of "perform" is often used when he commands Ariel "Has thou spirit performed to the point" refers to Ariel as an actor. Shakespeare has famously said "The world is a stage and we are actors in it." His perception of the world is shown through his choice of words. It is interesting since Prospero is the character that uses diction of theater most often. Shakespeare also presents it in a more subtle manner using rich metaphors such as "Three curtains cover three eyes". Used while speaking to Miranda, the "curtains" is a metaphor for referring to her eyes closing. Since afterwards Miranda is put to sleep by magic the playwright compares this to the closing scene of a play when the curtains are closed. Thus Shakespeare creates the island's "culture" through Prospero who uses diction of theater. This reinforces the superficiality of the situation, given that it was planned by Prospero in advance ergo omnipresent.



power of language <sup>asserted</sup> in all the events.

and these are a performance of languages

On the other hand, the influence of language is much more evident and powerful in *Things Fall Apart* compared to *The Tempest*. Achebe displays the gradual intervention of Western forces in Umuofia starting from language. People such as Reverend Smith undertake Ibo culture including its rich proverbs. In a oral-focused civilization, expressions always contain identity or cultural heritage. For example, "when a man says yes, his chi says yes also" shows the important notion of fate in Umuofia. The parallel structure highlights the bond between an individual and its chi. This understanding can help readers comprehend certain decisions such as the clan refusing to go to war with the Westerners and Okonkwo's choice to beat one of them to death. Achebe displays the strong connection between these cultural concepts and the language that represents it.

That being said,

Nevertheless, Achebe also highlights the importance of language on a personal scale. During an interview, Achebe said "Often people consider Ibo or African culture as uncivilized. I wrote this book to better represent my heritage". Thus the author is reclaiming the power by writing a story about his clan in English. This not only is extremely powerful for his community but also educates future generations about his culture. This directly opposes to Reverend Smith who writes a book called "The observations on the uncivilized lower negro". The use of derogatory terms and the comparative "lower", he feels his superiority while refusing Ibo culture. Also the use of an epigraph is noticeable since the title "Things fall apart" is apart of the poem. Focusing on cultural transition and the chaos that follows it.

more



peaked

Similarly, Caliban also reclaims power over Prospero by insulting him with the language <sup>Prospero</sup> ~~he~~ taught him: "May the South-West blow on ye and blister ye" is one of many creative insults Caliban makes. Shakespeare uses a diction of nature during Caliban's lines. This shows that as the son of Sycorax, the original owner of the isle, he is asserting power over Nature, something that his mother controlled. Also as the reader or **audience** public, it's interesting to guess whether Caliban's lack of magical strength is linked with the absence of cultural heritage. When Caliban presents himself, he speaks in verse and masters rich sensory imagery. During his soliloquy "The isle is full of noises but few are wit. I - I", he is extremely eloquent using alliteration of [t] to better explain the beauty of the Nature. However, we never see Caliban speak his mother tongue. Considering the heavy influence of language asserted in Caliban's heritage, it is possible that he was unable to connect with his mother's roots due to the cultural and linguistic barrier.

good transition

This phenomena is more directly displayed in Achebe's novel in scenes such as where Okonko's eldest son hears hymns sung in English and eventually decides to convert. The power of the Western language multiplies as it grows <sup>its</sup> influence in other cultural aspects such as discussions made face to face and religion. Okonko and other leaders are taken hostage while they were participating in an originally peaceful discussion. In the culture, discussion is almost ceremonial requiring a mat and traditional wine most oftenly carried by the eldest son. Given that the meeting was to discuss the conflict between two cultures with a translator in place, the disrespect and violence held by the colonizing powers shows brutal power

example,



in which originated by language. The end result is the acceptance of defeat by Unofia, complete surrendering its cultural heritage.

This opposes the first opening scene in the Tempest where a new cultural act is put in place. Since it's a situation of extreme danger and emergency, a hierarchy of knowledge is put in place. The Boatswain controls the boat, deciding the fate for both nobles and the crew. Although through dramatic irony, the readers or public are ~~aware~~ However considering that the nobles continue to disrespect Boatswain and the crew, this hierarchy doesn't contribute in an actual modification of social status,

the ~~er~~ hand, ~~that~~ \* ~~that~~ also means that the crew isn't subject to cultural formalities or the power of language. This is noticeable when Sebastian curses Boatswain by referring his boat to a "wench". Regardless, Boatswain isn't affected and his status as the commanding officer ~~stays~~ remains the same. If this wasn't a disastrous situation, Boatswain could've faced serious consequences. Thus Shakespeare shows the limitations as well when it comes to asserting power via language. ✓

In conclusion, Shakespeare and Achebe both emphasize the power of language on ~~culture~~ social hierarchy and cultural heritage, nuances to its influence.

explaining the difference