



## Language Kingdom in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Edward Bond's *Lear*

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## Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the role of language as a form of political and social control, and a vehicle for power and domination in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Edward Bond's *Lear* on parallel bases. Foucault's famous statement which refers to power as present "everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere" clearly points to the always already presence of power. The issue of power has occupied a central position within his works. In fact, language can reflect truth as false and vice versa to sustain dominant group's desires. Language can both reflect and affect our perception of the world indeed. In fact, *King Lear* and *Lear* are both stages for language game. The paper thus aims to focus on the way language plays a key role in *King Lear* and *Lear* as a vehicle for power and how language makes you powerful or how it throws you away to be a margin. The result shows that there is a dual relation between language and power, so that the voice of king is doomed to silence through the function of characters' powerful language usage. In both plays, King is in the margin and language rules powerfully on socio-political relations. This paper has benefited from library documents and sources by use of a descriptive-analytical method.

## Keywords

Language, Power, Power Relations, Foucault, *King Lear*, *Lear*

## 1. Introduction

By addressing and examining language, one can learn a great deal about how society is structured and the way it functions. The notion of Language is highly worthy for people in that it contributes to their understanding of themselves and their



relationship toward others. It may enable people to make choices in their languages use, which make them feel better about themselves (Thomas et al, 1999, 14). Clearly, the relationship between language and power is complex and language can be a tool of oppression. However, it could also be a weapon in the struggle against dominant power. Language does not determine reality in a fixed way but it does provide dominant frames of reference and dominant meanings, which individuals attach to experiences at any one time. It is recognizable that, Letherby (2003) implies:

Language reflects the centrality of power and authority and that particular groups are able to control specific institutions which are able to construct dominant frameworks of meaning; such as academia, media, government, and the dominant meanings are constructed into theory, into truth. (34)

Michel Foucault highlighted the power of language in reflecting and shaping the world in his texts. Dayle Bagshow in his paper “Language, Power and Mediation” (2007) argues that Foucault’s concept of power is closely aligned to knowledge and refers to the relationship between categories of thought and categories of experience. Systems of definition and codification of knowledge, he demonstrates, are often developed within institutions, such as universities, schools, courts and government departments, whose agents have stakes in defining what counts as knowledge and in codifying knowledge in particular ways (2). All truths and ideas about reality are social constructions, that is, products of social discourses that both shape and emerge out of social processes. People’s lives and identities are formed by the meaning they give to their experiences, which is in turn shaped by and reflected in dominant language, cultural practices in society and their historical condition in the social structures. Symbols or representations of reality are also circumscribed by the limitations of language.

In a society structured along a series of unequal divisions, there are a number of groups like whites, males, managers and professionals who have power in relation to other groups. The forms of domination and subordination are not always identical, therefore, it is crucial to identify the relationship between what is said and who says it when analyzing language. Bagshow continues that language is the most important of all forms of human communication and that it is through the acquisition of language that we become social beings. (2007: 6)



For Foucault, Language as a form of knowledge equals power, thus, language occupies a fundamental situation in relation to all knowledge. It is only by the medium of language that the things of the world are to be known. It seems that dramatists like Shakespeare and Edward Bond knew this power of language and tried to convey such kind of domination and exploitation by language through writing plays. Language has the potential of making communication and constructing the people's attitudes and behaviors. Foucault in *The Order of Things* focuses on the initial capacity of language in representing the world and insists that:

Not because it was a part of the world, ontologically interwoven with it, as in the Renaissance, but because it was the first sketch of an order in representations of the world; because it was the initial, inevitable way of representing representations. (1997: 296)

Language is an object of knowledge, living beings, wealth and value, and the history of events and men. As mentioned before, one of Foucault's interests was the relationship between language and power. In his view, every institution controls the sort of language used for a particular discussion and thereby, it essentially controls the course and outcome of that discussion. Power and language are intimately interconnected, where those who have the power are in control of the language we use and the very concepts we employ to organize sensory data to make sense of our world (Booker, 1996: 189). Foucault argues that language from the nineteenth century began to "fold in upon itself, to acquire its own particular density, to deploy a history, objectivity, and laws of itself" (1997: 296). It may possess its own concepts, but the analyses that bear upon it, have their roots at the same level as those that deal with other empirical forms of knowledge. Foucault writes: "To know language is no longer to come as close as possible to knowledge itself, it is merely to apply the methods of understanding in general to a particular domain of objectivity" (296) and continues that:

All knowledge is rooted in a life, a society, and a language that have a history; and it is in that very history that knowledge finds the element enabling it to communicate with other forms of life, other types of society, other significations. (373)



Language in its primary sense is a device for making relationships between people, but it is, in its political sense, used to manipulate people's thinking, especially politicians apply it for regulating their special aims. George Orwell describes this kind of political language very clear, he states that "political language is largely the defense of the indefensible" (Thomas et al, 1999: 38).

This mode of language use is magnified in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Edward Bond's *Lear*; in other words, all characters of the plays have their own language to defend their deeds and policy. According Thomas et al (1999) it might be possible to employ language to manufacture an ideology, which would steer the way people think. Language can be thus used for controlling the way people think; consequently, the kind of language people use to represent something would alter the way in which it is perceived by people (36). It is language that teaches people how to behave and what to value and about the world in general. However, language often serves the interests of dominant social groups like politicians, lawyers, owners and so forth because they have the most control over it. The political language is distributed in all different situations; according to Thomas et al, "political language is in use all the time, all around us" (1999: 33). They additionally state that political language is designed "to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (39); that is to say that the political use of language functions as the manipulative tool for the dominant power.

## 2. Literature Review

Shakespeare's works have been widely argued through different comparative studies. Edward Wheatly's "Voices of Violence: Medieval French Farce and the Dover Cliff Scene in *King Lear*" (2009) is an example of comparative study of *King Lear* in which the author "discusses surprising analogues to the so-called Dover Cliff scene in *King Lear*." Wheatly explains, "in these plays blind men are victimized by their sighted guides, who disguise their voices in order to rob and/or inflict physical violence on their disabled masters." Also [Meredith Skura](#) (2008) in the essay titled "Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children: Warring Generations in *King Lear* and Its Sources" claims that "the old *King Leir* play was more evenly balanced than Shakespeare's *Lear* between Leir's experience and Cordella's." In fact, the author of



the mentioned paper believes that “Shakespeare traced a generational history as well as an individual’s experience, and, as in Greek tragedy, suggested forces beyond individual conscious awareness. The emphasis on generational change also made the play particularly relevant to the new King James at the beginning of the seventeenth century.” The present paper’s focus, on the other hand, rests on a comparative study of Shakespeare’s play with its modern adaptation *Lear* by Edward Bond.

### 3. Methodology

The process of the research is descriptive and qualitative based on library research using primary sources and frequently used secondary sources. This study first reviews Foucault’s opinion about power-language relation and interpretation on his idea as well. Then it shall investigate the relation between language kingdom and characters’ weakness or strength, focusing on Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Edward Bond’s *Lear* on parallel bases, to conclude that the powerful language possesses the real kingdom.

## 4. Exploring Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Bond’s *Lear*

### 4.1. Language Power

Language in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Bond’s *Lear* conveys power, deceit, and flattery among the characters. In any Shakespearean play the sort of language the characters use, unveils the underlying distinctions between them. This idea is evident in the first scene of *King Lear* in which all characters in a way try to speak and state their ideas by their own language. King Lear is the assertive, feudal lord, just like Lear in Bond’s *Lear*. Their utterances are commanding and imperious. The first presence of King Lear and Lear in the first lines of the plays implies strong lords. King Lear uses a powerful and kingly language; even after losing his power, he orders to the wind and to the rain. As a king he uses the pronoun ‘we’ instead of ‘I.’ In fact, he is the only one in his diction and his speech. He believes that he is the all-powerful and others are his subversives. King Lear addresses himself by pronoun of ‘we’ and states:



Lear: Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester (Act 1, Scene 1, 35).

.....Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent

To shake all areas and business from our age... (Act 1, Scene 1, 37-40)

...Which of you shall we say doth love us most,

That we our largest bounty may extend... (Act 1, Scene 1, 52-3)

...We make thee lady. (Act 1, Scene 1, 67)

There is an even more significant difference between the language used by the sisters, Goneril and Regan on one hand, and Cordelia on the other. Goneril and Regan's speeches are careful utterances giving the effect of having been composed for the occasion. Goneril after announcing that language cannot do justice to her love, "I love you more than word can wield the matter" (Act 1, Scene 1, 56) launches into a polished rhetorical account of her feelings for her father, designed to do her the utmost credit. Regan is equally specious, fulsome and pious. Her speech is also noticeable for a kind of irony that Shakespeare uses frequently. The speeches of Regan and Goneril, in their elaborate and formal quality, are in complete contrast to the brief, compact statements of Cordelia. Cordelia speaks simply and truly' however, she is not believed; they speak with complicated, florid dishonesty and are believed. The flattery language, which Goneril and Regan use, let them be powerful, absorb their father's protection and even get their sister's portion. Goneril answers to her father's question by words:

Goneril: Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;

Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;

As much as child e'er loved, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable.

Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (Act 1, Scene 1, 57-62)

Regan adds some words to her sister's and says:

Regan: I am made of that self mettle as my sister,

And prize me at her worth. In my true heart



I find she names my very deed of love;  
Only she comes too short, that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear Highness" love. (Act 1, Scene 1, 70-75)

As observable in the play, these are Goneril and Regan win the power game at the first scene of the play. They made the King satisfied by their love speech in tongue and got Cordelia's heritage too. People in certain social positions will speak in certain ways as Goneril and Regan treat throughout the play. Their flattery speech before getting father's power and their violent talks to father after he lost his power are worth instancing. Thomas et al point out that speakers will change their speech, adopting more or less prestigious styles, in accordance with the perceived demands of a given situation. (1999, 133) Cordelia's silence does not help her in such dominant political circles; it made her be disgusted by father and thereby by the King. She now is a rebellious person against the King and he, therefore, excludes her from wealth and power. Indeed, language and policy of language use that works as vehicle for power.

In King Lear's territory, power bends to flattery as Kent points out to "when power to flattery bows?" (Act 1, Scene 1, 149) Kent's faithful language, like Cordelia's silence, is useless in obtaining the King's favor to them. From the very first scene of the play the relation between language and power, and thus the power of language work as important means to convey power among men of power. Goneril and Regan's long speeches approve their way of life and their policy to power. They know how language makes them powerful and therefore they use the language of flattery when addressing their father.

In addition, Cordelia is completely aware of the power of language, however, she is proud not to have such a "glib and oily art to speak" (Act 1, Scene 1, 225). Unfortunately, in her father's country her tongue is inapplicable. The King accepts and prefers Regan and Goneril's language and consequently they get successful in achieving their goals. Cordelia does not much with words. Lear asks her to speak and to "draw a third more opulent than her sisters" (Act 1, Scene 1, 87), but she believes her own actions display her true sincerity to the King. She thinks there is no



need for a speech and she says 'nothing' in answer. Being an honest person has no seat when individuals fight for more and more wealth and power. In the realm of *King Lear*, it is necessary to use special kinds of language depending on situations. For example, Goneril and Regan's language were accepted by the King but not Cordelia's, because her naked and sincere language led her to lose both her power and wealth. Additionally her sisters' flattery language on the contrary made them powerful.

Cordelia: Nothing, my lord.

Lear: Nothing?

Cordelia: Nothing.

Lear: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

Cordelia: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love you Majesty

According to my bond, no more nor less.

Lear: How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,

Lest you may mar your fortunes. (Act 1, Scene 1, 88-96)

The Fool figure and his use of an ironic language reflect the power of language in the Shakespearean society. He points out that the true language is "a dog must to kennel. He must be whipped out" (Act 1, Scene 1, 114-117). In his speech, the Fool repeatedly refers to king's mistake of rejecting Cordelia and believing Regan and Goneril's flattery. The Fool constantly alludes to the fact that language is so powerful that it can affect a King or a father to lose his absolute power and finally leads him to be a fool. Moreover, it is the power of language which promotes the king to lose his favor to Cordelia for her saying of 'nothing.' The language of truth is unbearable for all characters in power; Goneril, Regan and Cornwall. They cannot let Fool talk ironically; his language is harmful for their power. They only love the language of lies and flattery as Edmund's.

Goneril asks her servant, Oswald, to write a letter to Regan, explains her fear of the number of King's knights, and wants him to add even some reasons: "and thereto add such reasons of your own as may compact it more" (Act 1, Scene 4, 341-42). It is not significant if these additions are true or false because it is necessary for more impact. This is the political use of language; however, it does not necessarily mean that the politicians and those in power always tell lies. They sometimes use



exaggerations or understatements for more impact to get their aims. Here, Regan and Goneril use this mode of language in their letters and speeches in a way to take power in their hands, and in order to be more powerful. Language in their life is turned into means for power, in serve of power. In act two, scene two, when Kent informs Cornwall that my occupation is to be plain (96), Cornwall becomes angry at his speech and announces that he is a knave who has corrupting ends. Cornwall fears his plainness and his truth because this kind of speech weakens them. So Kent is doomed to stocks, he must be silent:

Cornwall: this is some fellow  
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect  
A sausy roughness, and constrains the grab  
Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he;  
An honest mind and plain-he must speak truth.  
And they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.... (Act 2, Scene 2, 99-105)

This assertion by Cornwall echoes the nature of Goneril and Reagan's society in which the truth must be doomed. They want language to be in favor of their side and reflect their own aims and goals. Kent's reaction to Cornwall's statement on his honest mind and his plainness is another evidence to show that Goneril and Cornwall's society or politics would forbid Kent or Cordelia to speak. Kent and Cordelia's speech offends them; it is a great danger for their maintenance in power. Aware of Cornwall's fear of his plainness, Kent mockingly states:

Kent: Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,  
Under th' allowance of your great aspect,  
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire  
On flick'ring Phoebus' front-  
Cornwall: What mean'st by this?  
Kent: To go out of my dialect, which you discommend  
So much. (Act 2, Scene 2, 109-114)

Edmund's speech to his father and brother, and his use of words in his letters are worth considering. During the play, he uses a kind of language game and plays his role very good until the last scenes. What he had in his hand was the power of language; he played a great trick on his father and brother by his letters -written



language- and on Goneril and Regan by his verbal language. He meets his father in the castle and pretends that he was reading a letter. He suddenly puts it up in his pocket and invokes his father to ask for it. Gloucester then understands that it was a letter from Edgar about his conspiracy. Edmund speaks like an innocent person who is in his father's obedience and has no doubt in his brother's faithfulness. The language people choose has the power to shape perceptions of reality. Therefore, Edmund makes Gloucester accept his sayings about his brother as reality and assures him that the letter has been written by Edgar. In fact, he did this by his unique way of speech:

Edmund: I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter  
From my brother that I have not all o'er-read;  
And for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit  
for your o'erlooking.

...The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blam.

...I hope, for my brother's justification, he  
Wrote this but as an easy or taste of my virtue.

Gloucester:...Who brought it?

Edmund: It was not brought me, my lord; there's  
The cunning of it. I found it thrown in at the  
casement of my closet. (Act 1, Scene 2, 36-63)

Language is the agent of power and a device for threatening power groups, especially in political realm, and it has a very vital role in circulation of power. The significant scene of such a language use in Edward Bond's *Lear* is reflected in Bodice and Fontanelle's order for cutting Warrington's tongue out. Bodice wonders herself that, "I couldn't risk him talking about my letter" (Act 1, Scene 4, 12). Fontanelle is also aware of this danger though less than her sister. Bodice does not end in his tongue cutting out; she thinks that he has now another language to speak or writing, so he must be killed. He cannot, though, "talk or write but he is cunning- he'll find some way of telling his lies. We must shut him up inside himself" (Act 1, Scene 4, 15) Bodice announces. Warrington is a very dangerous character even in his silence. According to Bodice, he is "silent storm" (Act 1, Scene 4, 15) that must not have a chance for reaction: "Now I must be careful. He didn't attack my sister's men, so I couldn't risk him talking about my letter. I had his tongue cut off. (Act 1, Scene 4, 12)



Language plays a crucial role in circulation of power among men of power as well as among family members. When Fontanelle is captured with Lear in the same cell, she begs him to talk, to negotiate because she thinks Lear's conversations, leading them to get rid of prison and thus lets them have their power again. She knows language can be helpful in their redemption, so she forces Lear to speak with Cordelia's commanders.

Fontanelle: Talk to them! Say you know something the government ought to know. Promise them something. Anything. Make them-negotiate!-put us on trail! O father, you must think! (57)

While one of the prisoners in Lear's cell extracts Lear's eyes explains about his scientific device for digging Lear's eyes, he states that "this isn't an instrument of torture, but a scientific device" (Act 2, Scene 4, 63). He represents his savagery as simple and plain act by power of language. Therefore, people accept so many things as realities of the world and life through language even though those things would not be real. Language has the power to dictate people false as truth and vice versa just as this device of eye extraction is introduced as a harmless scientific device for their comfort. Language lets Bodice advertise against Lear and subvert him from power.

In politics, by mixture of lies and facts, language acts as a kind of power game. Many politicians are succeeded in their intentions; their language makes you think in a way they desire. It is important to see who speaks which language and therefore the attitudes of people towards that language are further issues inherently connected to the concepts of power and society. Thomas et al (1999) consider language as a system, or rather a set of systems because there are variations in the language usage. Within these systems, there is a scope for creativity and invention. Depends on who the speaker is, how they perceive themselves, and what identity they want to project, the individuals' usage of these systems varies. Accordingly, each situation has its own language usage. It is necessary to estimate weather it is public or private, formal or informal, who is being addressed, and who might be able to overhear. (10)

Lear in the seventh scene of the second act plans to write Cordelia to avoid her from cruelty and rebuilding his wall. He states, "Cordelia doesn't know what she's



doing! I must tell her-write to her!...I can't be silent!...I must stop her" (Act 7, Scene 2, 67). He knows that being silent makes his enemy powerful and him weak. Lear believes that his letters and speeches to Cordelia have such power to stop her rebuilding the wall and continuing cruelty in the society. Language is the only device he uses to show his power. This is the language that conveys his letter, his talks, and all in the head of power are aware of magical power of language. Therefore, they do not let their rivals talk in public and convey their ideas.

In Bond's *Lear*, there are scenes that the powerful figure does not let the rivals talk and make them be silent. Cordelia, as the head of power, also wants Lear to be silent and not to speak in public against them, she knows Lear's words surely have their own impact and therefore he can affect the public taste. Bodice and Fontanell also invite their husbands and Warrington to be silent. Even the hearsay between people is related to language power. Sometimes hearsay among different groups of power helps them to get their intentions, or makes one group be stronger or more popular among people, and in this way they do what they desire. This is why Cordelia comes to Lear and wants him to stop speaking in public. In the first scene of the last act of *Lear*, a small man runs away from the dominant government soldiers and goes to Lear's residence:

Lear: What did you hear in the camp?

Small Man: Yer wan'a get rid a the army an' blow up the wall, an' shut the camps an' send the prisoners home. Yer give money to a deserter. (Act 3, Scene 1, 71)

Maybe Lear does not really have such an intention, but these words among people are main reason why they, peasants, obey him and listen to his speech. Lear tries constantly to write Cordelia, to avoid her by his language or, say, by his words. Thomas, Susan's husband, also insists that Lear's speech is dangerous because it leads them to death.

Thomas: Hundreds of people come to hear you now. The government can't let this go on, and they could crush us like that! (Act 3, Scene 2, 75)

He informs Lear 'it's dangerous to tell the truth' to people because the government stops him at last, it does not let him be free and tell what he wishes. When the new



government's soldiers come to arrest Small Man, it takes a struggle between Lear and Councilor who was Lear's councilor once and now he works for the new government. He alerts Lear not to interfere in the politics; since Lear is now an enemy for new government and he is known as treacherous. This is political tactic to make the rival be silent.

Councilor: Lear, every word you say is treason.

.....Out of respect for your age and sufferings Cordelia has tolerated your activities, but now they must stop. In future you will not speak in public or involve yourself in any public affairs. Your visitors will be vetted by the area military authorities. All these people must go... (Act 3, Scene 2, 78)

They clearly invite him to silence and oppress him; even his speech. The Small Man was taken out by soldiers, and Lear cannot help him. Now he understands that he cannot do anything for them and he has been stopped by government and cannot have political activities. His speech has been forbidden by government and was considered harmful for their policy because his language has the power to change people's taste. Government knows that his language is his sword to rebel against them. Therefore, Cordelia has banned his speech in public. All languages must be silent but the language of power. This is the language of power speaks loudly as Lear states:

Lear: Send them away! The government's given its orders. Power has spoken. Get out! What are you doing here? What have I been telling you? There is nothing to learn here! (Act 3, Scene 2, 79)

Cordelia goes to meet Lear to ask him again for being silent, and stop speaking against her government. However, Lear answers her to stop people from listening. Both Cordelia and Lear are aware about the unique role of language. Lear is old and weak now, but he has a powerful sword to fight and that is language. On the other hand, Cordelia is powerful and she is in the head of power too, but Lear's sword is more dangerous and destructive than her realm of authority. He says truth to people and truth destroys their State. Truth is the dangerous form of language that acts as sword of the power. Therefore, she decides to shut him up. Cordelia cannot stop



people hearing Lear because his language is powerful as Cordelia says: I can't. You say what they want to hear. (Act 3, Scene 3, 83)

## 4.2. Language and Power Relations

Language has a vital role in domination and exploitation in the political atmosphere. One of Lear's presentations in Bond's *Lear*, illustrates this power of language. Many people have gathered in the gravedigger boy's house to listen to Lear. They watch him with respect and are eager to his speech. He starts to tell them a story about a man who had lost his voice. The man, after searching, found that there is a bird in wood stolen his voice. He put it in a cage, for he thought he could sing beautifully by use of the bird's song. He went to king to sing for him but as the bird was in the cage, it groaned and king whipped the man. He let the bird out of the cage in the wood and because he was angry of king's behavior with him, he constantly repeated that the King was a fool and treated him unjustly. Yet the bird had his voice, so it started to sing these words of man; the king is a fool. All the birds learnt to sing it too. When the king went to the wood, he saw all the birds singing the same thing on his madness. He caught the bird and nailed to a branch as a warning to the other birds. The forest was silent then. And just as the bird had the man's voice, he now had its pain. Lear states the man's sorrows: ...He ran round silently waving his head and stamping his feet, and he was locked up for the rest of his life in a cage. (Act 3, Scene 2, 75)

By this story, Lear implies to people that he is actually imposed to be silent in that the ruler has ordered him. He must live like a bird in a cage, no singing, no speech, and no activity. If he wants to speak in public and informs people that the government is mad, he would be arrested and nailed like that bird. By talking to people, they learn his tongue and all people, like birds, pronounce by his language. Therefore, it is observable that such language has the very effect in encouraging people to rebel against the established state. By narrating this story, Lear uncovers the government's hidden intention and its exploitation. Thus, it is common that they stop him talking in public because, as Cordelia mentions, he says the truth, and truth is the powerful language and harmful device for their government.

Language also functions as forms of social control over women during the centuries. Most contemporary feminist linguistic scholars view language and gender



as social and cultural constructs. Language influences our attitudes and behaviors and can be used to reinforce harmful or hurtful stereotypes; such as those that are ageist, sexist, racist and so forth. Bagshow (2007) asserts that feminist scholars have highlighted women as the victims of male oppression in both communication and interpretation in discourse; for example they are frequently interrupted or their contributions are trivialized or ignored. Many languages have an underlying pattern whereby male is positive and female is negative, a social construction which is often taken for granted as reality. (7)

Foucault's work proves important for a number of feminist critics in that sexuality has been constructed by social relations and by power relations. Many feminists have been critical of the way language is constructed and have argued that language is man-made in that, through language men have been able to dominate knowledge production in the arts and in culture in general. This means that our understanding of the world, what we know as reality, is based on the male view, on certain men's experience. The dominant ideas in any society are mediated through language, both in written texts and through verbal communication.

Hence, women have been excluded from the making of knowledge and culture, their experiences, interests and ways of knowing the world are not represented. This means that women have not been able to make sense of the world through their own experience, but only through the experience of men. In other words, ways of knowing have been made for women, not by women; women have not been at the centre of power. They were always in the margin. Therefore, they have not been in a position to have their meanings taken seriously enough to represent a genuine challenge to dominant representations. Language is not neutral and not simply a means of ordering and classifying the world; rather it is a powerful method of manipulating and creating reality (Letherby, 2003: 30). Thus, men's monopoly of authorized knowledge has meant the silencing of women. It has also meant their exclusion from public life, science, art and literature, politics, law and economics, and historically any occupation where they might challenge the authority of men. It would seem that language is exclusive, powerful, and man-made; meanwhile its realities are socially constructed. Language does exclude, trivialize and demean women because of the sexist norm of the patriarchal society. (2003: 32-33)



Unlike the dominant discourse of women's exclusion from social norms, Goneril and Regan in *King Lear* and Bodice and Fontanell in *Lear* no longer obeyed their society's laws of representation but those of their own development. The reign of male representation seems to come to an end in these plays, and women speak the loudest of all. In both Shakespearean and Bondian culture, the utilized language of their society is written by male and in a patriarchal society female language is not the powerful language. Letherby (2003) confirms, "women's experiences and concerns were not seen as authentic but as subjective, whereas men's were seen as the basis for the production of true knowledge" (24). Women are marginalized by words and language is a domain reserved for men. Historically, men have dominated academic settings and created a male scientific culture characterized by male concerns.

Yet women are in the head of power as daughters, wives and as political figures in *King Lear* and *Lear*. Their society did not accept women participation in male defined realms; males play female roles on the stages in Shakespearean society. Women then must stay at home and work by knitting-machine as Bodice in the first act of *Lear* is constantly knitting. When Lear makes his army ready to war, Bishop prays for his victory and states that God "has nothing to do with women who make war" (1, 2, 9). That is, as it is structured, women must be at home, and they must not take part in war and in male dominated realms. In their language, women are marginalized having no language for themselves and must obey masculine language. However, these are women characters in the plays whose language is dominant and powerful on the contrary to the language that belongs to men in Shakespearean society and even in 1970s society of Edward Bond. Feminine characters of *King Lear* and *Lear* are not in margins but they have their own active and powerful language, they order and their language rules powerfully through the plays.

This is true that power is exposed through language but as Thomas et al (1999) refer to, this relationship has not been limited to public sphere and there are such relations in family life as well. (11) For example, parents often talk to small children in a way that makes quite clear the power relationship between parent and child. Since children are weak and parents are powerful their language is the dominant language in family. For example Parents have more physical, legal and economic power than



their young children. Parents even maintain their power of language to their children until their young adulthood or middle age, “they sometimes find that their parents still use some of the same features of language as they did when their offspring were very young, recreating and affirming the original power relationship” (11). Although Lear and King Lear are father figures of the family but they have lost their language of power. Their daughters misuse their father’s oldness and try to have more control over them.

In general, King Lear and Lear had no power from the very first scenes of the plays. Their daughters do not care much for their orders; have no fear of their father’s harsh orders and his dominant language. Their language has no powerful effect over their daughters. On the contrary, there are children who apparently break the family norms and by use of language power, develop the events in their favor. The father is now powerless and as Goneril says he is an “idle old man, that still would manage those authorities, that he has given away” (Act 1, Scene 3, 16-18), he is like a child who must obey his daughters. “Old fools are babes again, and must be used, which checks as flatteries, when they are abused” (Act 1, Scene 3, 19-20). The roles have changed, now the old father has to listen to his daughters,

Power is frequently demonstrated only through language; it is also actually achieved or done through language. In other words, political power exists by means of language, through speeches, debates, through the rules of how may speak and how debates are to be conducted. Laws are written and discussed in language, and individuals give orders through language. *King Lear* and *Lear*, therefore, were stages for language game. The more one speaks powerfully, the more she or he gets power in his or her own hands. Moreover, depending on different conditions everybody has his or her own language to convey meanings, or control others. The flattery language was, especially for daughters in *King Lear*, a powerful means of domination, a device that made daughters get all father’s wealth and power in their own hand. In addition, since language, especially political language has been known dangerous for those who are in the power, so Lear was stopped talking for people and became silent in *Lear*.

Both plays clearly demonstrate how language and power are engaged with each other and whenever it was felt that language could be harmful for the dominant



groups' intentions it was stopped, by inviting Lear to silence or by cutting Warrington's tongue for example. At last, female characters of the plays actually represent their own language in turning the masculinized language of their societies. They played the roles that were against the male structured norms; they rebelled against their fathers, their society's taboos, and they fought as commanders of the army and afforded the roles of men. If men had the power of language once, it is now in the hands of women and their language represents the representations of their society in both *King Lear* and *Lear*.

## 5. Conclusion

Foucault considered language as the main part of power relations and argues that power was exercised through language. What is written and narrated is accomplished by means of language; even history is a construct of language and especially of discursive practices. Language can thus convey truth as false and vice versa to sustain power or dominant group's desires. Depending on the conditions of use and the field of experience, language plays a vital role in power struggles. This importance of language is evident in both, *King Lear and Lear*, as echoed in the character's words and speech.

The language which Goneril and Regan used in Shakespeare's *King Lear* or Lear's political language in Bond's *Lear* were all examples in confirming the existence of a strong relation between language and power. As discussed in this paper, their powerful language has given them the power of property and leadership. Political institutions use their own special language and they are more exact in selecting words and statements to have their supposed impact on people. In fact, the language used by different groups of people affects their personal and social life. If the state silences one group, the resistant groups should give voice to silence. Lear as a resistant group speaks loudly against Cordelia's government in Edward Bond's play. For this reason, Cordelia invites Lear to silence, because his voice does not let people hear her government's voice. There must be no voice louder than hers as the head of power. In fact, any voice louder than the dominant group's is an alert for its power territory. Language kingdom is here dominant compared to the king's powerful character, As if language is the king of social, family and political realms not King



Lear or Lear. Even Edward Bond omits the word 'king' from his play's title to show Lear is no a king anymore. It seems he wants to insist on Lear's marginalized situation in his era from the very beginning of the play. In the plays, both King Lear and Lear are sent from the center of power away by their daughters; the women characters.



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