

## Digital Appearance in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to analyse the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the connection of its knowledge in the modern education system. It deals with the popularity of the English language and digital literacy among the students of language and literature and the use of technology in the modern education system. It has changed the whole scenario in English studies because everything is digitalized by modern science and technology. Digital literacy is required in the modern education system of language and literature teaching, learning, and writing. The article claims that this concept of technology and communication also was there in the Renaissance period of the 14th and 15th centuries in some forms which is available in Renaissance texts. The *Tempest* by William Shakespeare. Keith Green and Jill Lebihan's concept of 'Writing back' is adopted to study classical literature to form new perspective and knowledge. The paper concludes that there was digital literacy and the concept of technology and communication in Renaissance times' texts too as it is widely used in postmodern times.*

**Keywords:** ariel, aerial, digital literacy, digi- modern, renaissance

### Background

The English language is becoming popular because most of the content-based knowledge is recorded in this language and available in the modern virtual world of ICT. This world is the best space for reading, researching, writing, and publication and the most useful space for scholarly activities in every field from language, literature, Management, science, and technology. Due to the advancement and popularity of ICT, the virtual world, and public media the popularity of the English language and literature is growing all over the world. The use of Information technology and dependency on the English language is getting popular in the present world. The article also reads back Renaissance literature of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and claims that there is the inclusion of science, technology, information, and communication. This paper claims that the character Prospero in the drama is a Renaissance scientist who has digital literacy and can handle technology. About writing back about literature forms a new perspective Keith Green and Jill Lebihan write; "the tradition of 'writing back' to the cultural heart of the empire, of rewriting literary classics from an alternative point of view illustrates clearly how opinions are formed" (277). When we read the classical texts from modern perspectives we can

discover new knowledge and information.

Digital literacy has become highly popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as some of its forms are also found in Renaissance literature like in *The Tempest*. It is a drama in which Prospero is presented as a magician and this paper's claim is that this magic is the magic of science and ICT. With the advancement of information and technology in the present context the teaching and learning process has also got revolutionary changes. The use of ICT has shifted teaching learning from teacher to student-centred. The internet and electronic equipment have created a space of multilingual environment but English is the most dominant language everywhere. Most of the teaching-learning materials are available in this language. James Simson and Aisha Walker write; "Wikipedia offers over 3681000 articles in English while the closest competitor language (German) has around a third of that number (over 1355000). French (over 1208000) is the next language with more than a million Wikipedia articles" (478-479). The number is changeable but it only shows a figure of how popular the English language popular and it occupies the digital space.

The World Wide Web and the internet have created fertile space for doing every scholarly activity like reading, listening, writing, and publication. Both standard and nonstandard varieties of world English equally get space on the internet, and readers from every part of the world get access to those academic materials. English in the 21st century is not only in the grip of English-speaking countries but equally popular and accessible in non-English-speaking countries. English is taught not only by native English-speaking teachers but by non-native English teachers in the world. English in China's context it is said; "With an increasing emphasis on strengthening students' learning initiative and adopting a "student-centered" teaching concept in FLT, language teachers and researchers in China have resolved to explore effective and appropriate teaching models both in theory and practice" (Lu, et. al. 101). There have been remarkable reforms and changes in the English language in China with the advancement of Information Technology. China is a country that did not prefer the English language in its history but now the situation has changed along with the development of Information and communication technology.

The literacy and formal study of ICT courses are growing rapidly in the world. With the growth and popularity of ICT study, the English language's horizon also is growing. The use of ICT in English language and literature studies is a new revolution today. Literature is not to be read now but it can be viewed and watched on the screen. Teachers and students both practice this method of viewing and listening in their teaching-learning process. In this context, Hidayati writes: "In several literatures, ICT has been referred to as the greatest innovation in every

aspect of human life. In fact, in the field of education, it is viewed as a reason for the shift in the way learner” (36). New technologies are widespread among language and literature learners nowadays. The popularity of email, the Internet, smart mobile phones, text chat, messages, writing, and the use of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram among common people is increasing the space and use of the English language in the world. This revolution in technology in the world is associated with the use of new technology in language and literature education alongside. There has been a focus on the study of ICT literacy and language competency in English in every discipline of study. This means that a student from the science stream or the management stream studies English language and computer science as their compulsory demanded subject.

### **Methodology**

This article is an analytical article on literary text *The Tempest*. About digital literacy and ICT, it deals with the articles “English and Digital Literacy Practices” by Colin Lankshear and Michele Knoble, and “New Technologies for English” by James Simpson and Alisha Walker. Digital and ICT knowledge are supposed to be Digi-modern literacy concepts and this study attempts to explore digital and the use of technology in Shakespeare’s character Prospero in the drama *The Tempest* published around 1611/12 AD.

### **The use of ICT in Education**

The 1960s and 70s were the time of the audio-visual method in developed countries too. During the 1970s audio language laboratories were in practice. In the last decades of the 20th and recent decades, there was a fast growth in the use of computer applications in language teaching. The recent decades of the 21st century and the last decades of the 20th century were the time of fast-growing development in computer technology and application in language and literature teaching. In modern schools and university classrooms, the use of PowerPoint, digital slide presentations, smartboards, etc. is popular. With the popularity of electronic devices like smartphones iPods and computers, small children and students are habituated to listening to songs, and stories, and watching videos in the English language. Language performance is getting better for those small children who have internet access at home in our context of Nepal too. The children of preschool level are learning English, Hindi, and Nepali language simultaneously through the digital media along with their mother language if they are from the ethnic community. So, digital technology has a keen impact on language learning and teaching. The rise of the internet has brought a new revolution in language use, teaching, and learning. James Simson and Aisha Walker write, “The development recognized English with the global scope with interaction online” (476). In this regard, technology is

becoming an agent of radical change in literacy, language learning, and teaching.

Since Renaissance, every change of historical period has been happening (taking place) with the association of technology. In the Renaissance, there was the invention of four technological instruments; the compass, printing press, firearm, and telescope. The compass is a very simple instrument but it was great excitement at that time and it helped a lot to construct new knowledge. So technology comes with new excitement, new methodology, and new knowledge too. The rise of computers in the 20th century also came as a great revolution in knowledge construction and language transformation. Digital technology in language and literature teaching has brought new concepts like Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) Computer Managed Instruction (CMI), and Computer Based Instructions (CBI) such pedagogies in language and literature teaching are popularly used in modern classrooms. The use of chalk, blackboard, pen, copy, books, and ink is gradually being replaced by typewriters, keyboards, internet-connected computers, and smartboards in the classrooms. Language reading, writing, and teaching through computers is a revolution in itself. Language typing, editing, self-grammar setting, and spelling correction by computer software are revolutionary changes in language learning and teaching. Simson and Walker further write, “Digital tools are more useful in the language learning process as a whole” (478). The teachers and students need not meet in the physical classroom today. The English language is getting popular among the new generation in education, in social media, in communication, and others. Lancaster and Knobel write, “...young people and adults interacting with others online in a language other than their own (native) language” (454). Digital technology in modern education has made the English language popular among non-native speakers too. In virtual classes, teachers and students can meet face-to-face from their own homes and practice teaching-learning activities. Student’s activities are monitored and controlled by teachers from a far distance through computer technology as Prospero controls the ship and people there in the sea and controls the spirits on the Island. Whatever subject is taught or read through the computer is in the English language. This practice of the English language in many other subjects is developing and increasing the literacy and competency of the English language in the context of Nepal too. They further write, “Computer or network of computer provides a real or virtual space in which learners can interact with each other or with programmable items” (478). So, a computer network is functioning and connecting learners from various places with the help of the internet.

The internet is a very rich resource for English teachers, learners, and researchers because it provides standard resources of the world for learners. The English language has crossed any geographical, cultural, and political boundaries

through digital media. Most of the countries in the world practice and follow the English language more or less. Countries like China and Japan where the English language is not used much also have a craze towards this language among the young generation and academics. Computer literacy is closely connected with English language literacy because every computer literate should have the literacy in English language as computer software is designed in the English language. Every instruction and information comes in the English language so illiteracy in language also makes illiterate in technology too.

There has been the use of a wide range of networked digital technologies and services such as text messaging, YouTube, photo-sharing sites, wikis, and online newspapers (Lanksher and Knobel 455). The popularity of such ICT apps and technologies has made the English language popular as well as contaminated. Every technology comes with a revolution but over time, it loses its excitement. Simpson and Walker write, “As technology becomes normalized, it loses the “wow factor” and newer devices or applications become exciting” (477). Because of digital media English has got many shapes, styles, and varieties. Standard English like; British, American, Australian, and Indian got a chance to flourish in the internet world. But again English language has lost its originality, purity, and correctness in the present digital equipment and communication. They give the example of how standard English loses its quality as, “ILY = I Love You, Omfg = oh my fucking god; and emphasis by reproduction of letters (Soooo) (480)”. ‘How are you?’ in standard English has been changed into ‘how r u?’, ‘I am going to Pokhara’ is being used as ‘m goin 2 pkr’ and many more like this. Language no longer is only morphemes and words nowadays but it is symbols and icons also and its purpose is just to communicate. For the preposition ‘to’ number 2 also is used in social media communication.

In such a way language has been modified badly in digital media which is the dark aspect of English language use in the digital world and it is the study area. Another dark aspect is the accessibility of technology by people. Many people in the world do not have access to technology and the internet and also the use of language. This has divided the human world into ‘digital haves’ and ‘digital haves not’ (481), digitally literate and digital illiterate, digital competence, and digital incompetence. So in the academic world, the English language is getting popular through digital technology. The concept of digital classes, digital libraries, and paperless administration are becoming popular which has made the English language study more popular and strong. But in the non-academic space that is digital media like Facebook, Twitter, E-mail, text chat, and text messages have destroyed the quality of English even though it has tremendously increased the

popularity of English in the world. Digital literacy and ICT have reached a great height in the 21st century in every field of science, technology, education, business, medical science, astrology, and every field. Though it does not have so long history in the present context in the classical texts centuries ago too we can observe the use of ICT and technology in another form. This article tries to reread William Shakespeare's drama *The Tempest* in which the character, Prospero knows science and the like of modern ICT. It is the argument here that Prospero is the father and teacher of his daughter Miranda and the spirit character Ariel, so teaches language along with technological knowledge.

### **Digital Prospero**

Prospero is the main character in William Shakespeare's drama *The Tempest*. The drama was performed in 1612 AD. In the introductory part, it is written that "A play called *The Tempest* was acted before James I on Hallowmass night (i.e. November 1), 1611. It was acted again during the winter of 1612 – 13(7)." Prospero is a character with wonderful knowledge in the drama. He is the king of the country Milan and during his tenure of kingship, he always spent his time in the library. He was under a conspiracy by his brother Antonio and happened to be an outcaste in an island of spirits with his daughter Miranda during a terrible tempest and she was only 3 years old then. Prospero tells his story to his daughter about his stay in Milan and his brother who cast him on the uninhabited island. His country's nobleman Gonzalo secretly knew the plan of Antonio so he put his lovely and needed materials secretly in the boat. Among them, some books were lovely and important for Prospero. Prospero speaks about Gonzalo and his love of library and books:

Prospero: Did give us; with  
Rich garments, Linens stuff and necessaries  
Which since have stead much; so of his gentleness,  
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me  
From mine own library with volumes that  
I prize above my dukedom (35).

The above dialogue of Prospero to his daughter Miranda is most important regarding his love for the library and books. This proves that Prospero was a man of good academics in the text and wants to transform that culture and legacy for his daughter too. During his stay in his country Milan, he only studied the books in his lovely library and learned every theoretical knowledge of art, philosophy, science, and magic. But after his outcast from his kingdom by his brother leaving him and his 3 years daughter Miranda in the sea during a tempest in a newly made boat, he happened to arrive on an uninhabited island which was the island of spirits ruled by Sycorex (Mother) and Caliban (son), the spirits.

Prospero was a man of great literacy having knowledge in art, science, and magic. He used and practised his theoretical knowledge over those spirits on the island controlled everyone and suppressed Sycorex and Caliban. H.G. Wyatt writes, “Prospero and his daughter lived in a cave where the old man kept his books and studied magic. This art he found very useful to him on the island for by it he freed many good spirits who had been imprisoned in trunks of trees by Sycorex” (85). This sort of ability to challenge the native rulers of spirits and free the captive was only possible with his power, knowledge, or ability in the name of magic.

The argument here is that Prospero had the knowledge of science and technology which is said in the drama as the knowledge of magic. The skill and knowledge of Prospero are like the knowledge and invention of today’s science and technology. Magically in the 20th and 21st -century science and technology have brought a magical revolution with the magical machines of spacecraft, speed airplanes, and weapons that can be controlled from a far distance and can perform their activities in the distance. Science in the 20th and 21st centuries can control the biggest machines from a room with wave and computer technology. Pilotless spaceships and driverless vehicles are some of the examples of these things which are controlled through a computer and the machine works in the field. Prospero is a man of knowledge with high techno-literacy as he has one very devotee spirit character from the same island Ariel who always is ready to serve Prospero.

Ariel is a character like of 21st century’s digital wave technology-visible/invisible, flies in the air, and walks in the remote distance. The use of the World Wide Web(WWW), communication technology, information, and communication technology also has a similar nature of Prospero’s disciple Ariel. The word ‘Aerial’ is a homophonic word with the word ‘aerial’ almost similar and aerial is a device in machines that captures invisible radio waves. Likewise, the name Prospero also is homophonic with the word ‘prosperous’ in English. ‘Prosperous’ means rich in quality and the character Prospero is very rich in his qualities of knowledge. He is a very rich man in his knowledge, skill, magic, and property too as he is the king of his state. The word ‘cannibal’ is close to the character ‘Caliban’ and the meaning almost matches as Caliban is a vampire-like character in the drama and ‘cannibal’ means flesh-eating vampire by its meaning. By the name itself, Ariel also is a symbolic representation of the modern object ‘aerial’ which is a piece of equipment made of wire or long straight piece of metal for receiving or sending radio and TV signals by its dictionary meaning (Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary 24). In Shakespeare’s drama, Prospero performs every action and activity in and out of the island through the character Ariel. The argument here is that Prospero or Shakespeare’s Ariel is the unfamiliar presentation of the modern equipment aerial

through which radio, television, internet, robot, and ICT tools get the digital signal to the device. The dialogue speaks:

Ariel. All Hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I came  
 To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,  
 To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride  
 On the curl'd clouds: to thy strong bidding task  
 Ariel and all his qualities (36).

Shakespeare's Ariel is an unfamiliar presentation of modern aerial which captures (flying, swimming, dive, cross the fire, ride, cross the cloud and catch) the digital web from server to the modern equipment like computers. Throughout Prospero's stay on the island, the most intimate is the character Ariel. So we can strongly argue that Prospero's magical activities on the island are not magic in simple meaning but the digital magic of today's digital signals, WWW signals captured and sent by modern device aerial. So Prospero is a man of immense digital literacy and a teacher to Miranda and Ariel like scientists of the time of 2000 AD. We also get some language deviations in modern language in the digital world like, 'be't,' 'curl'd' and others in the drama. It might be like 'how r u?' in the modern deviated informal language use in the digital field. Letters are missing and we readers need to understand accordingly. It is the argument that such language deviation from Standard English also was there in Shakespeare's time.

In the drama, Prospero creates an artificial tempest in the sea as he is on the island. To create it, he uses his knowledge of magic. This magic is not magically shown in the street by the magician but scientific magic created by a scientist or digital technology. Every scientific instrument is magic in itself. Today's science has created an artificial moon in the sky which is magic in itself. Modern Wikipedia explains that by 2020 china is planning to have artificial moons in the orbit of the earth. These will shine many times brighter than the natural moon. As today's science is planning to create an artificial moon in the sky, Prospero has created an artificial tempest in the sea in the drama. So, Prospero's artificial tempest is not any magic like that of a magician but scientific magic and it is done through the device aerial in modern science and Ariel by Prospero in the drama. Prospero orders to Ariel in the drama;

Prospero: Hast thou spirit,  
 Perform to point The Tempest that I bade thee? (36).

After this order, Ariel creates The Tempest in the sea and Ariel speaks;  
 O' the dreadful thunderclaps, more momentary  
 And sight – outrunning wore not: the fire and cracks  
 Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune



Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,  
Yea, his dread trident shakes (36).

In this way, the artificial tempest is created by Prospero through Ariel in the sea to capture a boat there in which his brother, Antonio and the enemy country Naples' king and the prince were on the voyage. Ariel again says;

Ariel: Not a soul  
But felt a fever of the mad and play'd  
Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners,  
Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel,  
Then all a fire with me: the king's son Ferdinand  
With hair up straight – then like reeds, not hair –  
Was the first man that leap'd; cried, 'Hell is empty,  
And all the devils are here' (37).

Seeing this terrible storm in the sea created over the boat by her father, Miranda requests her father, "...ask him to use his magic power to stop the storm. Prospero claimed his daughter's fears, assuring her that all would be well and that the sailors would be saved (Wyatt, 86). In this way, Prospero controls and captures all the people including Ferdinand, the prince of Naples by using the magical knowledge that he learned through books in the library. This knowledge of magic is symbolically the knowledge of modern science, digital technology, the WWW, information, and communication Prospero is a man who belonged to 1612 AD but he also is a modern man of 2000 AD around with much knowledge of digital literacy.

### **Prospero as a Renaissance Technocrat**

Renaissance was a cultural movement in Europe that appeared in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The movement appeared in Italy and spread all over Europe. V. N. S. Chowdhary and Dr. S.C. Mundra write, "...it began in Italy almost two centuries earlier and the two most famous names associated with its beginning are Petrarch (1304 – 74) and Boccaccio (1313 – 75) (58)." Italian scholars migrated to France due to political reasons and the term Renaissance itself was coined by the French historian Jules Michelet in his book *Historie de France* published in 1855. Renaissance was a period of rapid expansion in commerce, new scientific discovery, intense political nationalism, and religious controversy (57). The Renaissance movement has three quests among people. Those quests were a quest for knowledge, the quest for adventure, and the quest for beauty. A type of new awakening appeared in Renaissance man. New scientific discoveries took place. William J. Long states, "It is an age of dreams, of adventure, of unbounded enthusiasm springing from the new lands of fabulous riches revealed by English explorers" (100). The discovery

of the printing press, telescope, compass, and firearm brought a great revolution in the field of science, politics, navigation, education, travel, and others. Renaissance humanism began to develop which emphasized the dignity of man, their language, literature and thoughts, art, the architecture of humans, which were taken at the centre. Science came up with experiments and reason which opened a new path of knowledge for the whole world. New knowledge was established from geocentric to heliocentric concepts. The scientific evolution of Law of Gravity, Law of Inertia, the study of the planets and Universe began. The god-centric view was transformed into a human-centric one.

Such characteristics had really influenced the writers, philosophers, and scientists of that time. William Shakespeare's character Prospero in the drama *The Tempest* is one of such characters who hold many qualities of a Renaissance scientist. It is said that Prospero is a man of magic, power, science, politics, and diplomacy. Frances A. Yates says, "...in the lower elemental world, he studied a number of technology and applied science" (177). Prospero read all the theoretical books in his lively library in the country Milan and applied those principles in the new island over Caliban, the natives. We also can see and analyse a colonial character in Prospero but this article's argument is to show Prospero's knowledge in science, technology, and information technology. It is said in the drama and elsewhere that Prospero is a magician but this article's argument is that Prospero's magic is science magic. Prospero had a "magic – scientific tradition between the renaissance and the seventeenth century" (177). Prospero is the best example of Renaissance man who had the quest for knowledge and quest for adventure as he always is near with *The Tempest* and the spirits. The quest for beauty seems to be passive but still, the presence of young and beautiful Miranda in the Island with Prospero might be an example of Shakespeare's quest for beauty too. Prospero was gifted with many scientific and ICT knowledge of a man of modern world. Which is clear by "Prospero has a conjuring power, and he performs his operation through the spirit, Ariel, whom he conjures" (176). This magical power of Prospero in the drama shows that he is a man with scientific knowledge and power. He is prosperous in the knowledge of science, technology and in ICT. The magical power of Prospero as portrayed in the drama is the Renaissance men's hunger to be scientists and magicians like the discovery of science. D.J. Palmer argues, "...the nature of Prospero's magic is further distinguished from the power of his current of Renaissance scientific thought" (21). Renaissance thought in man opened a new avenue of knowledge and skill in science and information. Prospero communicates with nature, with spirits there and he sees each and every activity that happens in the distant sea like the 20th live telecast. Prospero sees the boat of his brother Alonso with Ferdinand and others in the sea in a far distance which is Prospero's telescopic

power of viewing. He as a man of scientific knowledge has an instrument like a telescope or camera which helped him to see the distance. Palmer further claims that *The Tempest* is an allegory of Shakespeare's artistic genius which has no boundary between art and life and he is the supreme master of vision (19). Here the drama also is an allegory in which the situations and characters resemble the qualities of situations and people in the real world.

Prospero is a character who represents the real person in the real world of every time. Characters in allegory represent the man of every time who always moralizes the people in the real world. So Prospero the 17th-century character also represents a real man of skill in science, and machines and full of ICT literacy in the 21st century. He also teaches this knowledge of science and ICT to his next-generation daughter Mirinda. ICT and science have the nature to gain theoretical knowledge in the library or classroom and do practical in the lab or field. For Prospero, his country Milan, and his lovely library there the places to gain theoretical knowledge and the Island of Spirits is the field where he practiced his theoretical knowledge. William J Long also writes about Prospero, "Prospero, in *The Tempest*, with his control over the mighty powers and harmony of nature, is only the literary dream of that science which had just begun to grapple with the forces of the universe" (101). So, Shakespeare's Prospero is a man of great scientific and ICT skills of his time.

Francis A. Yates writes, "Prospero has learned that 'occult philosophy' which Agrippa taught and knows how to put it into practice" (176). So Prospero has the character of a man of the 21st century with the knowledge of science, technology, art, and ICT. Prospero has a good and positive motive for reformation. He reforms the island from evil spirits like witches, rewards and frees the good spirits, and punishes the wicked as a judge of "his magico-scientific powers of good" (176). Prospero is an intellectual scientist of all time. "Prospero's magic is then a good magic, a reforming magic but what is the intellectual structure or system within which his magic works" (176). So we can argue that Prospero was a student of ICT at that time too. The modern students of the 21st century should not read Shakespeare's Prospero only as a traditional magician but as a talented student of science, technology, and ICT education. The knowledge and popularity of ICT are so high not only in science and technology but also in the education system, language, and literature.

Prospero is a scientist and a teacher of ICT in the drama. He teaches ICT and his English language to the native character Ariel from that island. Ariel is a very loyal and best student of Prospero who learned from Prospero very soon. As the

best student of Prospero, he helps every time on the island. Prospero also teaches so many languages and knowledge skills like a modern teacher. Prospero's importance in ICT knowledge and language for communication is getting more important and practised well in the 21st century.

### **Conclusion**

Digital literacy is a popular modern concept with a long history in various forms. This article concludes that the Renaissance was the time and movement in Europe that opened the door of science and technology along with many other new dimensions of education and knowledge. This knowledge of science and technology also is reflected in the literature written at that time. The drama, *The Tempest* is an example of the artistic inclusion of science and technology in an interesting, beautiful, and magical way. Many activities are conducted in the drama by Prospero from one island to the next with the help of a character Ariel who is like a modern 'Aerial' which is found in each electronic and ICT device. This character Ariel is the de-familiar representation of Ariel a most important part of the electronic device. ICT education is most popular in modern education, language and literature teaching, and reading. The popularity and its worldwide network of the internet have made most of the activities possible from a distant place. The whole world is narrowed down and is brought in the screen of the computer and we can see most of the events in the world on our screen of the electronic device as Prospero performs in the drama with the help of Ariel. The drama is a literary piece through which language and literature are taught and studied. A modern reading of classical literature is a reading back of literature. So, when reading and writing back a classical drama, it is found that there is a strong reference to science, technology, use of ICT in the name of magic.

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