

LEXICAL PRESENTATION OF IDEOLOGY AND RACIAL BIASES IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of lexical items as ideological links between language, ideology and racial biases in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. The texts for analysis are purposively selected. A total number of fifty-eight (58) sentences generated from eight (8) excerpts were analysed using both Halliday's (2003) model of Discourse Analysis. This model claims that both the emergence of grammar and the particular forms that grammars take should be explained "in terms of the functions that language evolved to serve". While languages vary in how and what they do, and what humans do with them in the contexts of human cultural practice, all languages are considered to be shaped and organised in relation to three functions, or metafunction. This model which Halliday calls, systemic functional linguistics, performs three functions and is categorized as: the *ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*. The analysis of data here reveals that the author uses lexical items in diverse ways to link ideology and the discourse of race. The paper observes that only Ifemelu, the major protagonist used lexical items that depict her love for her African origin. The rest of the characters are portrayed through their choices of lexical items as people who depicted various levels of inferiority complex. They would rather identify with the West through their imitation of accents and behavioural patterns. The paper thus concludes that the study of literature can be made very meaningful and interesting when the use of language of its narrative is studied. It thus concludes that critics and scholars should spend more time in the language of literature as an integral part of the discourse of literary appreciation.

Introduction

Language is one of the most authoritative representations of human behaviour. Fundamentally, human beings use language to communicate and express culture. For this reason language and

culture are found to be mutually dependent as both concepts have a symbiotic relationship. Prasad (57) further defines language as a conception of human actions not realized in the abstract but in the activity of people in situations and linguistic events which are manifested in particular dialects or registers. Language performs a pivotal role in the realization of literature. Halliday (126) uses the term *metafunction* to show the various roles of language. Thus, the term *metafunction* originates in systemic functional linguistics and is considered to be a property of all languages. Systemic functional linguistics is functional and semantic rather than formal and syntactic in its orientation. As a functional linguistic theory, it claims that both the emergence of grammar and the particular forms that grammars take should be explained in terms of the functions that language evolved to serve. All literature exists in the form of language: either as spoken utterance or in writing. Language is therefore the most important element of fiction, since it is language which gives existence to all the other fictional elements—theme, plot, setting and characterization (Okonkwo 45).

A good number of recent studies on Adichie's latest novel (Raboteau 2016 and Sabo 2016) show that critics are majorly preoccupied with thematic analyses. Sabo (2016) for instance, explores the new forms of racism exhibited in contemporary American society as depicted in the novel. A close examination of the text shows that racism which is a major feature of post-colonialism is no longer exhibited through slavery and pain but through stereotypes. *Americanah* is a story that begins with love between two youngsters, Ifemelumma (shortened to Ifemelu) and Obinze. Separated by fate, their lives take different turns in different worlds: America and Britain. Adichie, through Ifemelu, projects the lifestyle, relationship and activities of African immigrants in America. More so, Obinze's experience in London portrays another aspect of the white man's land. Destiny plays its roles: the two characters reunite in Nigeria and the success they sought for in the West is now achieved in Nigeria. This demystifies the American dream which Obinze had been having in the earlier parts of the novel. It is noted that Ifemelu is ignorant of her black colour. She only discovers it on arrival in America: "I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (290). With this statement, Ifemelu highlights the significant role of colour as a form of racism where colour is used to distinguish the various groups of people living in America (Christopher 24). In an essay, "Racism in Literature", Ngugi Wa, Thiongo (135-8) posits that racism is an ideological weapon which comes in many forms: as religion, the arts, the media,

culture, values, beliefs, even as feelings. He also stated that racism is meant to safeguard the entire system of exploitation of the many by the few in one nation and among nations. It is his view that the great divide between the West and the Third world wears a racial camouflage: it is largely the whites of European stock versus the dark races of the earth. Ideology and practice of racism facilitates exploitation. Lending credence to this view, TuenVandijika (33-34) posits that in many respects, contemporary forms of racism are different from the ‘old racism of slavery, segregation, apartheid, lynching and systematic discrimination of white superiority feelings, and of explicit derogation in public discourse and everyday conversation. According to him, the new racism first denies that it is racism. In the new racism, minorities are not biologically inferior, but different. They have different cultures.

From what has been said so far, it becomes obvious that most critics are deeply involved in the thematic analyses of Adichie’s *Americanah*. But it is an established fact that literature cannot exist, independent of the language in which it is written. However, much has not been written on the language deployed by the author in portraying the themes of racism and ideology. This paper, therefore, using a discursal approach examines the use of the lexical items to show the depiction of the themes of ideology and racial biases in Adichie’s (2013) *Americanah*.

Theoretical framework: the discourse of racism and ideology

Halliday (57) argues that it was through this process of humans making meaning from experience that language evolved. Thus, the human species had to “make sense of the complex world in which it evolved: to classify, or group into categories, the objects and events within its awareness”. These categories are not given to us through our senses; they have to be “construed.” Halliday describes the logical function as those systems “which set up logical–semantic relationships between one clausal unit and another. The systems which come under the logical function are TAXISandLOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. When two clauses are combined, a speaker chooses whether to give both clauses equal status, or to make one dependent on the other. In addition, a speaker chooses some meaning relation in the process of joining or binding clauses together. Halliday argues that the meanings we make in such processes are most closely related to the experiential function. For this reason, he puts the experiential and logical functions together into the ideational function.

The interpersonal function refers to the grammatical choices that enable speakers to enact their complex and diverse interpersonal relations. This tenet of systemic functional linguistics is based on the claim that a speaker not only talks about something, but is always talking to and with others. Language not only construes experience, but simultaneously acts out “the interpersonal encounters that are essential to our survival”. Halliday argues that these encounters range all the way from the rapidly changing micro-encounters of daily life – most centrally, semiotic encounters where we set up and maintain complex patterns of dialogue – to the more permanent institutionalized relationships that collectively constitute the social bond. Halliday argues that both experiential and interpersonal functions are intricately organized, but that between the two “there is comparatively very little constraint”. This means that “by and large, you can put any interactional ‘spin’ on any representational content.” What allows meanings from these two modes to freely combine is the intercession of a third, distinct mode of meaning that Halliday refers to as the textual function. The term encompasses all of the grammatical systems responsible for managing the flow of discourse. These systems “create coherent text – text that coheres within itself and with the context of situation.” They are both structural (involving choices relating to the ordering of elements in the clause), and non-structural (involving choices that create cohesive ties between units that have no structural bond). The relevant grammatical systems include Theme, Given and New, as well as the systems of cohesion, such as Reference, Substitution, and Ellipsis. Halliday argues that the textual function is distinct from both the experiential and interpersonal because its object is language itself. Through the textual function, language “creates a semiotic world of its own: a parallel universe or ‘virtual reality’ in modern terms”. It is within this intricate labyrinth Halliday’s discourse model that the selected texts in Adichie’s *Americanah* are analysed.

Analysis

The texts for analysis are selected from various pages in the novel and numbered. Thus, the words or phrases are discussed and the contexts of usage that depict ideology and racial biases are also discussed. Consequently, the texts are examined herein:

1(Page 112)

1. *Once, she asked Dike what he had done in school before summer, and he said, “Circles”.*
2. *They would sit on the floor in a circle and share their favorite things.*
3. *She was appalled.*
4. *“Can you do division?”*
5. *He looked at her strangely.*

6. *"I'm only in first grade ,Coz."*
7. *"When I was your age I could do simple division."*
8. *The conviction lodged in her head that American children learned nothing in elementary school, and it hardened when he told her that his teacher sometimes gave out homework coupons; if you got a homework coupon ,then you could skip one day of homework.*
9. *Circles, homework coupons, what foolishnesswould she next hear?*

The adjective "appalled" in sentence three describes Ifemelu's negative reaction to the American education methods as represented in Dike's elementary school. Ifemelu uses the adverb "strangely" to describe the way Dike looked at her. This is significant because it is a modal construction which conveys Dike's attitude and reaction to Ifemelu's question. Dike finds it odd that she had greater expectation of his educational accomplishment than he was used to. Dike goes on to use the lexical quantifier "only" in sentence six to rationalize his educational level. It can be inferred from his use of "only" that the teaching method is the norm for American Elementary schools.

In sentence eight Ifemelu then uses the clause "the conviction lodged in her head" to orient the reader towards her point of view. Since Ifemelu is the major protagonist, the reader tends to favour her convictions and beliefs.

The predicate "learned nothing" carries the proposition about the American elementary school's trifling teaching methods. It is also a paradox crafted to provoke deeper reflection of the irony of American elementary schools' not engaging students in more tasking academic pursuits like division. The phrase "it hardened" refers back to Ifemelu's conviction adding to the cohesive structure and also the personification of her "convictions" is a conspicuous attempt to draw attention to Ifemelu's bias against the American elementary school's teaching methods. The reader is made aware that an Abstract concept "conviction" is ascribed animate characteristics of being tangible enough to harden in Ifemelu's head. Sentence nine portrays Ifemelu's evaluation of American elementary school teaching methods as "Foolish". This assessment is a critique of the west and it serves to demystify the popular myth that anything foreign is good.

This excerpt portrays the reality of the American education system as opposed to mythical representations in imperialist discourse. The information is focused on American elementary school teaching methods. The excerpt is thematically structured on cultural criticism. The context is at Auntie Uju's apartment in America.

Ifemelu is surprised to find that Dike cannot do math division at his age and realizes America does not have the superior and advanced educational system as the popular American discourse leads one to believe.

Excerpt 2(Page 116)

1. *Ifemelu should not have spoken, but there was something about Bartholomew that made silence impossible, the exaggerated caricature that he was, with his back-shaft haircut unchanged since he came to America thirty years ago and his false, overheated moralities.*
2. *He was one of those people who, in his village back home, would be called lost.*
3. *He went to America and got lost, his people would say.*
4. *He went to America and refused to come back.*

The first sentence is a complex one with several clauses depicting the complexity of Bartholomew's character. Ifemelu passes judgment on Bartholomew's character using the evaluative adjective "Exaggerated caricature" The adjectival phrase "false overheated" qualifies his state of morality .Hence Ifemelu has a negative attitude towards Bartholomew. An attitude the reader is inclined to align to because of Ifemelu's portrayal as protagonist in the novel and her interlocutor in this case an antagonist. This alignment also signals a subtle ideological persuasion for the reader. The analysis depicts Ifemelu as the agent passing judgment on the "patient" Bartholomew .Adichie ascribes Ifemelu a mental process in this excerpt and this allows the reader privy to her thought process as enshrined in Halliday' (1973) interpersonal metafunction of language. It is through this metafunction which connects reader to writer that the reader is privy to Ifemelu's judgments on Bartholomew's character traits. The third sentence then links his personality deficiencies to his moving to America. This cross reference between his personality and his immigration is defended by the propositional content of the excerpt as action and consequence. Bartholomew is insecure because he went to America and got lost. The use of the auxiliary in the following text: "would be called lost" in the second sentence depicts Adichie's attitude to the proposition that Bartholomew no longer represents African values. The auxiliary verb "Would" displays a certainty in favour of Ifemelu's assertion and signifies Ifemelu's stance on the classification of Bartholomew as a lost person. In the final sentence the verb "refused" signals Bartholomew's complicity in his acculturation this helps to single him out as a willing participant in his alienation from Africa and Adichie writes this in the active voice giving him agency and responsibility for his actions.

This excerpt portrays the personality traits some immigrants adapt to enable them endure life as cultural aliens in America. The information is focused on the manifestation of Inferiority complex immigrants deal with in a foreign land.

The excerpt is thematically structured on identity crisis and cultural criticism. The context is at Auntie Uju's home in America where her boyfriend, Bartholomew, Ifemelu and Dike came for a dinner. The setting allows Ifemelu to observe Bartholomew with his guard down, in his natural element as the dinner table allows social conversations and Bartholomew airs his views on Nigeria and America.

Excerpt 3 (Page 117)

1. *Later, she read his online posts on Nigerian Village, all of them sour-toned and strident, under the moniker Igbo Massachusetts Accountant, and it surprised her how profusely he wrote, how actively he pursued airless arguments.*
2. *He had not been back to Nigeria in years and perhaps he needed the consolation of those online groups, where small observations flared and blazed into attacks, personal insults flung back and forth.*
3. *Ifemelu imagined the writers, Nigerians in bleak houses in America, their lives deadened by work, nursing their careful savings throughout the year so that they could visit home in December for a week, when they would come bearing suitcases of shoes and clothes and cheap watches, and see, in the eyes of their relatives, brightly burnished images of themselves.*
4. *Afterwards they would return to America to fight on the Internet over their mythologies of home, because home was now a blurred place between here and there, and at least online they could ignore the awareness of how inconsequential they had become.*

Here the reader encounters the confusion playing out in the mind of Ifemelu following the various responses to her. But it is the reply from Bartholomew that sparks off the above excerpt. The conspicuous use of adjectives projects the author's attitude towards the subject, in this case, Bartholomew. The adjectives: 'sour-toned' and 'strident' set the pace for a negative portrayal of Bartholomew's character which betrays the author's bias against Africans who relinquish their cultural values for a foreign one. This is epitomized by Bartholomew's character. The adverbs, "profusely" and "actively" in the context of the first sentence show Bartholomew's propensity for aggression over trivial issues. He is deficient in character. He does not accept the views of others. He spends his time on fruitless pursuits like arguing with strangers who have no bearing on his life. Ifemelu's use of the modal signifier "Perhaps" in the second sentence implies an objective perspective as the author does not project the possibility that she has intimate

knowledge of the workings of Bartholomew's mind. This reassures the reader that Ifemelu is an objective observer.

Bartholomew is depicted as a character so weak that he needs an anonymous internet group to reassert his own identity. With the use of the verb "imagined" in the third sentence, the author describes Ifemelu's character as a mental process. The sentence goes on to portray the reality of immigrant life for some Nigerians in America using adjectives: "bleak" and "deadened" to show the grim reality of their existence. Nigerians abroad "nurse" their earnings as this has become the most important motivation for their lives abroad to make money.

The use of the verb "nursing" attaches human emotion to the inanimate object, money, to show their attachment to money and this is rationalized as a result of the reward they get when they return home to "see" "brightly burnished" images of themselves in the eyes of their relatives. The verb "see" also projects the identity crisis Nigerian immigrants deal with as they need to see a better image of themselves to compensate for their bleak existence. The word "mythology" classifies and relates the feeling of alienation they experience as they slowly lose touch with their homeland. The repetition of the word "home" and cross referencing with a "blurred place" is a cohesive device which focuses on the Nigerian attachment to their homeland and how life in America distorts their identities through its culture and customs. The use of the verb "ignore" represents the identity crisis they face as they deny the reality of their lives as it becomes "inconsequential" in the racial hierarchy of America.

This excerpt portrays the disenchantment of immigrant life in America. Some Nigerians in America use an internet forum as a coping mechanism to enable them endure life as cultural aliens. The information is focused on the manifestation of inferiority complex immigrants deal with in a foreign land. The excerpt is thematically structured on identity crisis and cultural criticism. The context is at Auntie Uju's home in America where Ifemelu ponders the character of Bartholomew after reading his comments on the Nigerian village website. The website posts reveal the inferiority and hypocrisy of men like Bartholomew pretending to live an extravagant lifestyle when they go back home to Nigeria.

Excerpt 4(Page 117)

1. *After he left that Saturday, Auntie Uju asked Ifemelu, "What did you think?"*
2. *"He uses bleaching creams."*

3. "What?"
4. "Couldn't you see? His face is a funny color."
5. He must be using the cheap ones with no sunscreen.
6. What kind of man bleaches his skin, biko?"
7. *Aunty Uju shrugged, as though she had not noticed the greenish-yellow tone of the man's face, worse at his temples.*

Aunty Uju in the above excerpt introduces her boyfriend, Bartholomew to Ifemelu. But the latter is not impressed at all. Bartholomew is not the kind of man that impresses Ifemelu. He is not proud of being an African because he bleaches his skin. Adichie uses this excerpt to highlight one of the manifestations of Cultural Imperialism, skin bleaching. The communication of the proposition in Ifemelu's voice relays her value judgment; men should not bleach their skins. Bartholomew the antagonist in this context bleaches his skin. In the fifth sentence, Ifemelu uses the clause "his face is a funny colour" to ascribe negative connotations to a man who bleaches his skin. This is emphasized by the use of the adjective "funny". This adjective in this context depicts her mockery of the colour of Bartholomew's face. Ifemelu's tone is exasperated signalled by her rhetorical question and answer sequence in sentence five in response to Aunty Uju's question about what she thought. This negates Grice's (1975) conversational maxim of relevance and coherence. However, the rhetorical question sequence implies a dialogue between reader and writer. This tool provokes thought and orients the insinuation that reader and Aunty Uju should come to their own assessment of a man who bleaches his skin. Ifemelu nevertheless insinuates that it is wrong by relating antagonistically to Bartholomew's bleaching of his skin. She uses the native Igbo language "Biko" which translates "Please" to punctuate her exasperation in the seventh sentence. Her lexical choice establishes the state of affairs in the framework of her interpersonal values and relational language. Ifemelu's final rhetorical question links back to Aunty Uju's first question about what Ifemelu thinks giving the excerpt cohesion.

This excerpt portrays the identity struggles of immigrant life in America. Some Nigerians in America bleach their skins to achieve lighter complexions believing it will gain them more social acceptance. The information is focused on the manifestation of inferiority complex of immigrants in a foreign land. The excerpt is thematically structured on identity crisis and cultural criticism. The context is at Aunty Uju's home in America where she asks Ifemelu's opinion of her boyfriend Bartholomew.

1. *In Nigeria, a man like him would not even have the courage to talk to you.*
2. *We are not in Nigeria, Ifem.*
3. *Before Aunt Uju went into the bedroom, tottering under her many anxieties, she said, Please just pray that it will work.*
4. *Ifemelu did not pray, but even if she did, she could not bear praying for Aunt Uju to be with Bartholomew.*
5. *It saddened her that Aunt Uju had settled merely for what was familiar.*

This is a continuation of the previous excerpt. Aunt Uju is quite happy with her relationship with Bartholomew. She even wants Ifemelu to pray for the relationship. But Ifemelu does not like the man Uju has chosen. She feels that back home in Nigeria, Uju should not go for a man like Bartholomew. She sees the whole relationship as a mismatch. The repetition of the noun 'Nigeria' in the first two sentences links them cohesively and also establishes the contrast between life in Nigeria as opposed to their present situation in America. The use of the adjectival phrase "a man like him" insinuates that Bartholomew is unworthy of Aunt Uju as the reader draws on the earlier negative character representation of Bartholomew. The modal construction "would not" depicts Ifemelu's certainty to the truth condition of her proposition. The use of the noun 'courage' cross-references the Adjectival phrase "a man like him" and also classifies Bartholomew as a person lacking of courageous qualities. This reemphasizes his feeble character. The adjective "tottering" symbolizes the instability of immigrant life and the lack of confidence immigrants battle with in a foreign culture. Ifemelu projects the negative emotion of sadness in evaluation of Aunt Uju's choice of Bartholomew. The final sentence is written in the passive voice depicting the subject's resignation to her fate as an immigrant in America as opposed to being an active participant in her life's course. Ifemelu describes this by using the verb 'settled' to describe Aunt Uju's choice. This relays the passiveness of her existence in America. The choice of the adverb "merely" in her settling for the familiar conveys undertones of her resignation to the machinations of insecurity and identity crisis in immigrant life. The mood is pensive marked by the participants in the text's mental processes

This excerpt portrays the identity struggles of immigrant life in America. Aunt Uju is settling to marry a man she would not have considered marrying in Nigeria. She believes that he is the best she can get in America. The information is focused on the manifestation of inferiority complex of immigrants in choosing life partners in a foreign land. The excerpt is thematically structured on identity crisis and cultural criticism. The context is at Aunt Uju's home in America where she asks Ifemelu's opinion of her boyfriend Bartholomew. The excerpt

insinuates that there is something wrong with social relations of immigrants in America that alters their perception in taking life decisions. This is attributable to a negative racial hierarchy and cultural imperialism in America that drives immigrants to modify their behaviour.

Excerpt 6 (Page118)

1. *Because of Obinze, Manhattan intimidated Ifemelu.*
2. *The first time she took the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan, her palms sweaty, she walked the streets, watching, absorbing.*
3. *A sylphlike woman running in high heels, her short dress floating behind her, until she tripped and almost fell, a pudgy man coughing and spitting on the curb, a girl dressed all in black raising a hand for the taxis that sliced past.*
4. *The endless skyscrapers taunted the sky, but there was dirt on the building windows.*
5. *The dazzling imperfection of it all calmed her.*
6. *It's wonderful but it's not heaven, she told Obinze.*

Here the author decides to give a detailed description of the environment. Setting is an important element of fiction. A good number of people especially Africans have idealized the streets in the cities of America. Adichie's aim in the above excerpt is to make the setting look like any other street in Africa—a mixture of the good and the not-so-good. She makes use of Halliday's (1973) Ideational Metafunction of language to describe and comment on an external state of affairs in Manhattan that the reader will ordinarily not be privy to. Adichie uses Ifemelu's striking visual perspective of the city of Manhattan as a metaphor representing the influence of the West over Africa. This metaphor is marked by the personification of Manhattan attributing such qualities as the ability to "intimidate" and its skyscrapers 'taunting', ascribing the animate quality of the ability to "taunt" to an inanimate object, foregrounds Ifemelu's experience of Manhattan in such a way that the reader is directed to share Ifemelu's assessment of Manhattan. The effect is that the reader through Ifemelu's perspective can feel an atmosphere of Manhattan's threat to a foreigner which she later debunks.

Manhattan encompasses the pinnacle of western perfection for Obinze who only knows about the city from reading western books and believing all the positive portrayals of the city in imperialist discourse. Ifemelu describes her first encounter with Manhattan, a city Obinze had talked to her about endlessly in Nigeria. The use of the verb 'intimidated' establishes Ifemelu's character as apprehensive of her first experience. This also lends her observation credibility as

she enters the new experience anticipating the best. However the author hedges the claim of Manhattan intimidating Ifemelu by reasoning “because of Obinze”. Responsibility for Ifemelu’s feeling of intimidation is given to Obinze. This implies that Ifemelu can only be influenced by Obinze as opposed to just saying Manhattan intimidated her. The nominalization of Manhattan as opposed to mentioning an animate agent in the sentence also implies that it is the myth of the city that made her apprehensive not an actual real life experience. The adverbial phrase “palms sweaty” is an interpretative one which cross-references the verb “intimidated” linking sentence one and two.

Adichie uses the clauses “she tripped and almost fell” and “coughing and spitting” to describe the mundane life in Manhattan. She describes these everyday activities to show that people in Manhattan are not perfect. She uses a ‘side-by-side’ comparison (antithesis) of modernity and mundane human activity to establish the contrasting facets of Manhattan life exemplified by the use of “skyscrapers taunting the skyline” but yet the windows were dirty.

Ifemelu’s choice of verb in “skyscrapers ‘taunting’ the sky” depicts a bias against the west. This is because the word “taunt” implies that the skyscrapers are so close to the skyline. This is an unnatural occurrence as opposed to her simply stating for example; “There were beautiful skyscrapers reaching the skyline.” Her word choice positions her in favour of a more natural skyline. This also subtly orients the reader in favour of her views. Ifemelu’s words: “dazzling imperfection” and “calmed” summarize Adichie’s evaluation of Manhattan as nothing to be intimidated by. The reader is made aware of Ifemelu’s internal feeling marked by the use of the pronoun “her” thus externalizing Ifemelu as the one being observed and the use of the verb “calmed” drawing the reader into experiencing Ifemelu’s feeling.

The use of the verb “calmed” also referring to her initial feeling of intimidation ties the excerpt cohesively. Ifemelu’s final statement “it’s wonderful but it’s not heaven” demystifies the Manhattan myth and debunks the myth of Manhattan’s perfection.

Adichie uses this excerpt as experimentation in demystifying myths of perfection propagated by imperialist discourse. She uses Ifemelu’s character to venture into an American city and then reports back that it is not what the West want people to believe it is. Ifemelu visits Manhattan and realizes it is not the magical city Obinze idealized. She says “it is wonderful but not heaven”.

Excerpt 7 (Page 119)

1. *I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair.*
2. *Kemi told me that I shouldn't wear braids to the interview.*
3. *If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional.*
4. *So there are no doctors with braided hair in America? Ifemelu asked.*
5. *I have told you what they told me.*
6. *You are in a country that is not your own.*
7. *You do what you have to do if you want to succeed.*
8. *There it was again, the strange naïveté with which Auntie Uju had covered herself like a blanket.*
9. *Sometimes, while having a conversation, it would occur to Ifemelu that Auntie Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place.*
10. *Obinze said it was the exaggerated gratitude that came with immigrant insecurity.*

A substantial quantity of the narrative took place in a hairdressing salon. African women take it as a thing of pride when they wear beautiful braided hair. But in the above excerpt, Ifemelu is being tutored on the dangers of wearing her braids if she must get anything in America especially on the job market. Halliday's (1985) Transitivity analysis specifies the different types of processes that are recognized in language and the structures by which they are expressed. A transitivity analysis of this excerpt depicts Auntie Uju as an agent under the influence of a nominalized super-agent. The system of transitivity expresses the reflective and experiential aspects of meaning. In the first sentence Auntie Uju says I "Have to" take out my braids. Even though she is the agent carrying out the action, the auxiliary verb "Have to" signals the influence of an external influence on her activity. Syntactically, the main action in the sentence is encoded by a nominalization of who is making her take out her braids thus implying her passiveness. In sentence two the modal construction "shouldn't" reaffirms her passive agent status; again someone else is influencing her decision.

The "If" conditional in sentence three signals who is responsible for the decision but the nominalization of "they" somewhat obscures the super-agent influencing Auntie Uju's action. In sentence four Ifemelu emerges defying the status quo questioning why Auntie Uju is conforming to social preconditions. The contrast of Ifemelu's mental process of questioning and Auntie Uju's material process of doing raises Ifemelu's character higher in the scale of character confidence. Thus, Auntie Uju is represented as only allowed to do what is demanded of her, a situation Adichie relates to being a result of 'Immigrant Insecurity.'

Adichie uses this excerpt to critique social relations in America whereby Africans are expected to change their physical appearance to conform to a more western look. Aunt Uju who has been subdued by America's racial hierarchy believes she must conform to western standards of beauty but Ifemelu disagrees with this. When Aunt Uju passes her exams she says that she has to relax her hair for interviews, thus conforming to European standards of beauty. Obinze says Aunt Uju is subdued because of the exaggerated gratitude that comes with immigrant insecurity.

Excerpt 8 (Page 120)

1. *She sat by the window somebody had stuck a blob of chewed gum on the pane and spent long minutes looking again at the Social Security card and driver's license that belonged to Ngozi Okonkwo.*
2. *Ngozi Okonkwo was at least ten years older than she was, with a narrow face, eyebrows that started as little balls before loping into arcs, and a jaw shaped like the letter V.*
3. *I don't even look like her at all, Ifemelu had said when Aunt Uju gave her the card.*
4. *All of us look alike to white people, Aunt Uju said.*
5. *Ahn-ahn, Aunt! I'm not joking.*
6. *Amara's cousin came last year and she doesn't have her papers yet so she has been working with Amara's ID.*
7. *You remember Amara? Her cousin is very fair and slim.*
8. *They do not look alike at all.*
9. *Nobody noticed.*
10. *She works as a home health aide in Virginia.*
11. *Just make sure you always remember your new name.*
12. *I have a friend who forgot and one of her co-workers called her and called her and she was blank.*
13. *Then they became suspicious and reported her to immigration.*

The above exchange occurs when Aunt Uju gives Ifemelu a fake ID card to work with in America. Ifemelu observes and contemplates the issue of immigrant identity in America. She is supposed to assume a new personality. A new name is to be evolved for her. This is the name of Ngozi Okonkwo who left the States months before Ifemelu came. The Identity card is a symbol for immigrant identity in America. The phrase "spent long minutes looking" communicates a state of affairs—of uncertainty. The commentary on this state of affairs shows that Ifemelu is bothered by the issue of Immigrant identity. The phrase in the second sentence "was at least ten years older than she was" bears Ifemelu's value judgment about the absurdity of the situation. Adichie writes "at least ten years older than she was" as opposed to simply saying Ngozi

Okonkwo was older than Ifemelu. The use of the quantifying adjectival Phrase “at least” ascribes Ifemelu’s attitude to the situation, she finds it absurd. In sentence three, Ifemelu asserts that she does not look like Ngozi Okonkwo. The lexical items “even” and “at all” are modal constructions which depict her attitude to the propositional content of “looking like Ngozi Okonkwo”. They represent the degree of Ifemelu’s disposition which is in negation to her resemblance to Ngozi Okonkwo. In Ifemelu’s point of view, she does not support the idea of being represented in another person’s identity. This is in agreement with Adichie’s portrayal of her protagonist’s character as that of a strong confident personality not one to cower in the face of imperialist powers.

This is strongly contradicted with Auntie Uju’s character which is portrayed as a passive character. In sentence four, Adichie portrays the continued repression of the Agency function for Auntie Uju’s character thus depicting her passivity. This reduction in the strength of her will shows the characteristic changes some immigrants are faced with in foreign lands. Auntie Uju simply says “All of us look alike to white people”. Auntie Uju’s speech is unmarked by any modality, she is merely stating the situation without inserting any attitude or degree of commitment to the propositional content hence accepting passively the status quo.

In the discourse of Post-colonialism many immigrants from Nigeria migrate to America in search of a better life. This is portrayed by the imperialist popular discourse as “The American dream.” The information is focused on the degrading anonymity of immigrant life in America. Adichie scrutinizes the issue of racial identity. Ifemelu contemplates having to use Auntie Uju’s friend Ngozi Okonkwo’s social security card and driver’s license as identity to work. The social problem of immigrants being undermined is highlighted as Auntie Uju tells Ifemelu that all blacks look alike to white people. Adichie uses this opportunity to criticize the condescension of white people who do not consider black people as important enough to have their own individual identity but rather group blacks as minorities undeserving of this quality. Adichie pitches Ifemelu’s character as actively questioning and fighting this status quo while Auntie Uju’s character is passively resigned to what she considers her fate and is unwilling to effect a change. Auntie Uju’s will to influence the course of things is diminished as a result of her feelings of insecurity. Again this is an opportunity for Adichie’s protagonist to ply an ideological leaning in favour of Africa.

CONCLUSION

The author used language to propagate pro-African cultural ideologies to the detriment of foreign cultural influences. This was achieved through the speeches of the protagonist which are characterized by the use of modal verbs, phrases and commands to project authorial voice, attitude and point of view. Major events were often relayed from Ifemelu's point of view. Her character is portrayed as a confident and intelligent African. Ifemelu often spoke in the active voice. The text is narrated in either Ifemelu or Obinze's voice thus giving their views ideological agency.

In the analysis of the novel, one notices a preponderance of thematic representation of cultural imperialism. Recurring themes of racism, identity crisis and cultural criticism featured as aspects of context of situation in *Americanah*. Thematic depictions revealed what the author considers relevant to an understanding of the discourse. An anti-cultural imperialist ideology underlies the themes as the author's resolutions on conflict issues often lean in favour of pro-African values. This ideology advocates resistance of foreign cultural influences while subtly criticizing western culture. The author carefully chooses her language as a literary element to achieve this feat.

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