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**The Impact of Transnationalism and Cultural Exchange on  
Postcolonial Identities in Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi  
Adichie**



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**Abstract**

With a particular focus on *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the present research highlights the complex relationships between transnationalism and cultural exchange as catalysts for the development of postcolonial identities. The aim of this research is to investigate how characters especially Ifemelu who navigates through various cultural landscapes and engage with identity crisis against the backdrop of globalization. By utilizing a postcolonial theoretical framework, focus will be placed how historical legacies that mould the identity formation in a globalized world. The intention is to highlight Adichie's portrayal of transnational existence and transformative power of cultural exchange through character analysis and language dynamics exploration. While shedding light on identity formation in a global society, it also contributes to the broader discussion on postcolonial literature.

**Keywords:** Post-colonial, globalization, transnationalism, cultural exchange, hybrid identities.

**Introduction**

In the realm of contemporary literature, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Americanah" emerges as a profound exploration of postcolonial identities within the dynamic tapestry of transnationalism and cultural exchange. As Homi K. Bhabha argues in his seminal work "Location of Culture," individuals in postcolonial societies grapple with a sense of "hybridity," where their identities are shaped by the confluence of their original culture and the cultures they encounter (Bhabha, 2012). Through the lens of its protagonist, Ifemelu, the novel delves into the intricate landscapes of self-discovery, migration, and societal expectations. Adichie's narrative prowess shines as she deftly intertwines personal narratives with political undertones, inviting readers to navigate the complexities of postcolonial identities in a rapidly globalizing world. As we embark on a journey through the pages of "Americanah," the narrative unfolds to reveal the nuanced ways in which characters grapple with the enduring legacies of colonialism while being profoundly shaped by transnational experiences and encounters with diverse cultures. The novel serves as a poignant reflection of how individuals negotiate their identities amidst the evolving currents of globalization, shedding light on the transformative power of cultural exchanges and the complexities of navigating multiple worlds.

The thematic tapestry of "Americanah" extends beyond individual experiences to illuminate broader implications on relationships, societal roles, and the construction of postcolonial identities in a world marked by interconnectedness and cultural fluidity. Through a meticulous analysis of characters, themes, and narrative techniques, this study aims to unravel the multifaceted layers of postcolonial identities as portrayed in the novel, offering fresh insights into the evolving nature of identity formation in a globalized context.

By delving into Ifemelu's journey from Nigeria to the United States and back, the narrative unravels the intricate ways in which cultural exchanges and transnationalism shape her evolving sense of self. Themes of hybridity, mimicry, resistance, and the enduring impact of colonial legacies intersect to create a rich tapestry of individual struggles and collective experiences, challenging conventional notions of identity and inviting readers to reflect on the fluidity of cultural boundaries in a rapidly changing world. Scholars like Aihwa Ong have explored the concept of "transnationalism" and its impact on identity formation, highlighting the ongoing negotiation of cultural belonging in a world of increased mobility (Ong, 1999).

In the broader context of postcolonial discourse, "Americanah" emerges as a seminal work that not only captures the essence of individual struggles but also serves as a mirror to society, reflecting the complexities of human experiences in a world marked by diversity and interconnectedness. By situating Adichie's narrative within the larger framework of postcolonial literature, this study aims to shed light on the ways in which literature can illuminate the nuances of postcolonial identities and their enduring relevance in contemporary discourse.

Through a comprehensive analysis of "Americanah," this research endeavor seeks to uncover the layers of meaning embedded within the text, offering a nuanced understanding of postcolonial identities and their implications for contemporary debates on migration, cultural exchange, and identity formation. By engaging with the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques in depth, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on postcolonialism in literature and offer a fresh perspective on the complexities of identity in a globalized world.

Expanding further, we delve into the intricate nuances of postcolonial identities as portrayed in "Americanah," examining the intersections of race, gender, and cultural identity within the novel. Through a detailed analysis of key scenes, character interactions, and narrative devices, we aim to uncover the underlying themes of power, agency, and resistance

that shape the characters' experiences and inform their sense of self in a postcolonial context. By exploring the complexities of identity formation in a globalized world, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of postcolonial identities and their relevance in contemporary literature and society.

### **Literature Review**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Americanah" captivates readers with its exploration of modern African and African-American experiences in an increasingly interconnected world. Transnationalism and cultural exchange emerge as pivotal factors shaping the formation and negotiation of postcolonial identities. Nwanyanwu 's (2017) insightful analysis underscores how characters like Ifemelu navigate diverse cultural spaces, forging hybrid identities that transcend geographical and cultural confines. This fluid movement and interaction with varied contexts weave a tapestry of experiences, shaping their self-perception into a dynamic fabric.

Building upon this framework, Rita Gola (2019) delves into the concept of transnational belonging amidst globalization's flux. By underscoring the fluidity and dynamism inherent in postcolonial identities, Rita Gola 's perspective enriches Nwanyanwu's analysis. This theoretical lens offers deeper insights into the evolving notions of identity and belonging, particularly pertinent to Ifemelu's struggle to find a sense of "home" across cultural landscapes. Landry (2018) provides a nuanced examination of cultural exchange, shedding light on underlying power dynamics. Amidst opportunities for growth, Landry elucidates the cultural conflicts and misunderstandings encountered by Ifemelu and her counterparts. This emphasis on power dynamics enriches our understanding of how cultural exchange shapes postcolonial identities within *Americanah*.

Mavrinac, G. (2019) exploration of cultural exchange extends to the neo-colonial impact of Western media on postcolonial societies. This perspective offers valuable insights into how characters like Ifemelu navigate Westernized environments while preserving their cultural heritage. Mavrinac's analysis elucidates power dynamics and the challenges inherent in traversing cultural spaces dominated by Western media hegemony. Moreover, examining *Americanah* through a postcolonial feminist lens allows for a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. Scholars like Lyle (2018) argue that Ifemelu's experiences as a Nigerian woman navigating America highlight the complexities of identity formation within a patriarchal society. This perspective expands our comprehension of how

power structures intersect and shape individual experiences.

Additionally, the diasporic experiences depicted in *Americanah* resonate with broader discussions on globalization and diaspora studies. Karin Rosenqvist (2023) contextualizes Adichie's work within the broader discourse on diasporic literature, emphasizing its contribution to understanding the complexities of identity, belonging, and diasporic consciousness. This perspective broadens our appreciation of how literature serves as a conduit for exploring transnational experiences. Furthermore, postcolonial theory offers valuable insights into the historical legacies and power dynamics that shape characters' experiences in *Americanah*. Fanon's (1961) seminal work on the psychology of colonization provides a foundational understanding of the effects of colonialism on identity formation and resistance. By applying Fanon's theories to characters like Ifemelu, one can discern the lingering impact of colonialism on postcolonial subjectivities.

Moreover, Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism illuminates the Western construction of the "Other" and its role in perpetuating stereotypes and power differentials. Analysing how Ifemelu is perceived and positioned within Western societies through an Orientalist lens enriches our understanding of the dynamics of cultural hegemony and resistance in "Americanah."

In addition to theoretical frameworks, historical and socio-political contexts play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and themes of "Americanah." Adichie's depiction of Nigeria's postcolonial trajectory and its implications for diasporic communities resonates with broader discussions on decolonization and nation-building. Scholars like Mbembe (2001) provide insights into the complexities of postcolonial governance and resistance, enriching our understanding of the socio-political landscape depicted in the novel.

Further, the reception of *Americanah* within literary and cultural circles offers further avenues for exploration. Critiques and reviews from diverse perspectives contribute to ongoing dialogues about the novel's significance and impact. Analysing the reception of "Americanah" through the lens of literary criticism and cultural studies allows for a comprehensive understanding of its multifaceted themes and implications.

### **Theoretical Background**

Prominent scholars such as Arjun Appadurai and Homi Kharshedji Bhabha have extensively researched transnationalism and its profound effects on identity formation. Appadurai (1996) in his seminal work on cultural globalization, emphasizes the significance of transnational

flows in shaping individual identities. He argues that globalization has facilitated the movement of people, ideas, and cultural artifacts across borders, leading to the emergence of hybrid identities that transcend conventional national boundaries. Bhabha (1994), on the other hand, focuses on postcolonial theories, highlighting the complexities of identity formation within the postcolonial context. He introduces the concept of hybridity, suggesting that individuals negotiate their identities through a process of mimicry and ambivalence, navigating between dominant and subaltern cultural discourses.

Building upon these theoretical frameworks, scholars such as Edward Said and Stuart Hall have investigated cultural exchange as a subset of transnational dynamics. Hall's (1991) views on cultural identity provide valuable insights into how individuals negotiate their identities amidst diverse cultural contexts. He argues that identity is not fixed but fluid, constantly shaped and reshaped through interactions with others. Said (1978), in his seminal work on Orientalism, examines the power dynamics inherent in cultural exchange, particularly the ways in which Western representations of the "Other" serve to perpetuate colonial hierarchies and stereotypes. An analysis of cultural exchange within the postcolonial setting offers a framework for comprehending the experiences of the characters in "Americanah," as they navigate the complexities of identity in a globalized world.

Moreover, scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe have laid the foundation for discussions about postcolonial identities in the field of African literature. Thiong'o (1986) in his book "Decolonizing the Mind" emphasizes the linguistic aspects of identity, arguing that colonialism has imposed foreign languages and cultural norms onto colonized peoples, leading to a rupture in their sense of self. He calls for a decolonization of the mind, urging Africans to reclaim their linguistic and cultural heritage. Achebe's (1958) exploration of colonialism's effects on African societies makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of postcolonial experiences. Through novels like "Things Fall Apart," Achebe exposes the destructive impact of colonialism on indigenous cultures and identities, highlighting the resilience and agency of African peoples in the face of oppression.

These foundational works provide a contextual backdrop for analyzing postcolonial identities in "Americanah." With a special focus on Adichie's contribution, scholars who have studied the themes of migration, identity, and cultural negotiation in "Americanah" include Larasati and Kasih and Claudia Sadowski-Smith. Larasati and Kasih (2014) feminist analysis of the novel sheds light on gender dynamics, examining how gender intersects with race,

class, and nationality to shape characters' experiences of migration and identity formation. She argues that Ifemelu's journey from Nigeria to the United States exposes the gendered inequalities embedded within systems of power and privilege. Similarly, Sadowski-Smith's (2016) investigation of transnationalism and citizenship offers insights into the broader implications of identity negotiation in the novel. She examines how characters like Ifemelu navigate the complexities of transnational mobility, grappling with questions of belonging and citizenship in a globalized world.

For the objective of this current study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. In what ways do transnational experiences shape the cultural identities of Nigerian immigrants in the United States?
2. How does the novel illustrate the challenges faced by characters with Nigerian accents in the United States, and what does this suggest about cultural identity and acceptance?

### **Discussion & Analysis**

#### **Migration As Influential Factors In Shaping And Negotiating Identities:**

Through Obinze's experience, the author illustrates the profound impact of cultural adaptation within the realm of the job market. Upon graduating from university, Obinze relocates to London at his mother's behest. After he arrives, he starts working as a cleaner in an office building, but after some time he feels “smaller and smaller as he did so, until it became a personal affront, a punch on his jaw. And all this for three quid an hour” (Adichie 237) and he decides to quit his job and seeks help from his cousin Iloba. Iloba's friend, Vincent, provides Obinze with a national assurance number in exchange for a portion of his salary. Despite finding a better job at a warehouse, Obinze lives in constant fear of the fraud being uncovered. A specific scene illustrates Obinze's daily anxiety very well. One day Obinze enters the warehouse and “[t]he men avoided his eyes, an unnatural stiffness in their movements, and Nigel turned swiftly, too swiftly towards the toilet when he saw Obinze. They knew” (Adichie 260). Actually, his fellow workers just prepare a surprise for his birthday, which leaves Obinze “nauseous from relief” (Adichie 260).

Adichie vividly shows how Obinze, with high ambitions and intellect, bows to the psychological pressure of illegal work. Psychological aspect is also considered important in literature (Akram & Oteir, 2025; Akram et al., 2022, 2021, 2020), which influences academically (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023, 2025; Ramzan & Khan, 2019), linguistically (Amjad et al., 2021; Li & Akram, 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023, 2021, 2020)

Vincent demands a raise from Obinze. Unable to comply, Vincent threatens to call their boss. Obinze initially doubts Vincent's threat but realizes it's true. One day, the boss of the warehouse calls Obinze and says: "Somebody called yesterday. Said you're not who you say you are, that you're illegal and working with a Brit's name. [...] Why don't you just bring in your passport tomorrow and we'll clear it up, all right?" (Adichie 261). When Obinze tries to marry an Angolan woman in order to receive a legal residence permission, his worst nightmare comes true and he is really discovered, put in detention and finally sent back to Nigeria like a criminal (Adichie 278-284). The author depicts how this event shatters Obinze's pride, eroding his confidence in the future. His desperation from London experiences leaves him vulnerable to corrupt practices in Nigeria.

Obinze's London experience encapsulates the challenges of cultural adaptation and illegal work in a globalized context. His story illuminates the complexities of identity erosion, the pressures of transnationalism, and the compromises forced by the job market. Adichie vividly portrays the personal toll of globalization, revealing the fragility of postcolonial identities amidst the pursuit of economic survival and the ethical dilemmas encountered (Ahmad et al., 2022). Through Obinze's narrative, the novel effectively examines the intricate and far-reaching impacts of cultural exchange within the framework of globalization. Ramzan and Khan (2024) also acknowledge this.

Ifemelu's story differs from Obinze's, yet parallels exist. Upon arriving in the US, Ifemelu, unlike her expectations, cannot work due to having a student visa. Thus, just like Obinze in England, she gets the social security card of an African friend of Uju (Adichie 106). In her first summer, she applies for numerous jobs without even getting responses "and for this she blamed herself" (Adichie 131). Adichie illustrates how, soon after arriving in America, Ifemelu's strong personality begins to diminish. One day, Ifemelu has a job interview with an old tennis coach who needs someone to help him relax and pays a hundred dollars a day, which makes her leave in horror (Adichie 143).

When Ifemelu reaches a point of being unable to afford food, Obinze sends her money from Nigeria, greatly hurting her pride. In a very tough situation, Ifemelu faces a distressing event that changes things in the story. This experience deeply affects her and comes up again later when talking about her romantic relationships. As a last resort to pay her rent, Ifemelu calls the tennis coach, saying she won't have sex with him, but he says: "Just come here and lie down. Keep me warm. I'll touch you a little bit, nothing you'll be



uncomfortable with. I just need some human contact to relax” (Adichie 153). After she leaves, she feels as miserable as never in her life. She is in shock, disgusted by her own body and just wishes to go home to Lagos. “She felt like a small ball, adrift and alone” (Adichie 154). This incident highlights how migrants end up in unexpected situations far from their homeland. Uju's indifferent reaction to Ifemelu's experience shows how living in the US has made her somewhat cold. Later, Ifemelu finally gets a job as a nanny with the rich Kimberly and her family (Adichie 157). Diazi et. Al. (2019) and Adnan NM (2021) finding are similar that Postcolonial identity has emerged as a major issue in modern writing, notably in the novel. Many contemporary novels, like *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid and *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, have addressed the challenges of cultural identity in a globalized society.

Even after her graduation, Ifemelu has a very hard time finding a job. Like all of her immigrant friends, she applies for numerous jobs, but whenever employers find out that she has no citizenship, they know they would “have to descend into the dark tunnel of immigration paperwork.” Strikingly, she gets a job at the spot, after Curt, her rich white boyfriend helps her and just makes a few calls. Ifemelu is happy to have a job, but “a soberness wrapped itself around her”, she feels like “a pink balloon, weightless, floating to the top, propelled by things outside herself”. Having this job, does not feel like an achievement to Ifemelu, because she is just lucky enough to have the right white guy who makes things happen to her. All her efforts did not pay off, just surrendering to the corruptive system does. Curt “could, with a few calls, rearrange the world, have things slide into the spaces that he wanted them to.” The situation leaves Ifemelu’s idealistic and ambitious character unsatisfied and the reader understands how difficult it is for the two to have a balanced relationship. Of course, Curt wants to share his privileges with his girlfriend, but on the other hand it constantly shows Ifemelu what she lacks and that this glamorous world of his would never be hers (Adichie 202).

After her breakup with Curt, Ifemelu starts writing a blog entitled “Raceteenth or Curious Observation by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America” (Adichie 296). Unexpectedly, the blog is going really well, people love it, comment on her posts and want to support her. She gets invited by various universities and companies to give talks about diversity or lead workshops (Adichie 303). After speaking to an all-white audience at an Ohio company, Ifemelu receives an upsetting email suggesting some attendees

were displeased. "YOUR TALK WAS BALONEY. YOU ARE A RACIST. YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL WE LET YOU INTO THIS COUNTRY ". This is when Ifemelu understands, what they really want from her, namely "to leave people feeling good about themselves [... and so] she began to say what they wanted to hear, none of which she would ever write on her blog" (Adichie 305).

After her return to Nigeria, Ifemelu swiftly lands a job at Zoe magazine. During her interview at Auntie Onenu's luxurious home, Auntie Onenu, a wealthy woman, reveals her stance on returnees with pride: "My new features editor has come from America!" (Adichie 391). Ifemelu "thought the home visit unprofessional and odd, but this was a small magazine, and this was Nigeria, where boundaries were blurred, where work blended into life, and bosses were called Mummy. Besides, she already imagined taking over the running of Zoe" (Adichie 392).

So, Adichie vividly illustrates the profound impact of globalization on postcolonial identities. Through Ifemelu's tumultuous journey in the United States, juxtaposed with Obinze's experiences in England, the novel poignantly portrays the struggles of migrants, illuminating the challenges of employment, assimilation, and the negotiation of cultural identity in foreign lands. Ifemelu's evolution, from facing degrading job prospects to becoming a successful blogger, underscores the complexities of navigating transnational spaces and the compromises often demanded of immigrants. The novel critically examines societal prejudices, particularly concerning race and nationality, exemplified by Ifemelu's candid discussions on race facing backlash. Moreover, her return to Nigeria highlights the fusion of personal and professional realms, shedding light on perceptions of returnees and the intertwining of global influences in postcolonial settings. "Americanah" stands as a compelling exploration of the intricate interplay between globalization and postcolonial identities, inviting readers to contemplate the multifaceted impacts of cultural exchange and the quest for belonging in an ever-evolving global landscape.

### **Transnationalism**

'Americanah' explores globalization's impact on identity through Ifemelu and Obinze, who cross borders for stability. The novel shows fluid connections between America, Lagos, and England, emphasizing global interconnectedness. Ifemelu's assimilation challenges traditional notions, portraying a transnational world. Hence, the world in the novel embodies what Marshal MacLuhan termed "the global village," a result of time and space compression

(McLuhan et al. 1989), reflecting the age of globalization depicted by Adichie.

In this framework, Adichie portrays figures such as Ifemelu and Obinze—Nigerian immigrants who transcend national boundaries through telecommunications like email and phone calls. Despite residing in a host country, these characters sustain diverse ties with their homeland. For instance, Obinze maintains consistent communication with Ifemelu across national borders: “Obinze, so like him to have an explanation. Obinze, who anchored her through that summer of waiting- his steady voice over the phone, his long letters in blue airmail envelopes” (Adichie 119). Hence, characters such as Obinze give rise to a profound transnational identity, representing a constant interplay between Nigeria and America. This fosters the capacity for immigrants to navigate between these cultural spheres while preserving strong connections to their homeland. Scholars like Bhabha and Bhatia underscore that modern technology and seamless communication are driving forces behind globalization. This facilitates migrants in sustaining ties with their home country while assimilating into their host society, emphasizing the experience of living in and engaging with two countries simultaneously (Bhabha, et al. 2021).

Adichie especially chooses email and cell phones by means of which Ifemelu reaches out virtually across the boundaries: “Later that day she would send an email to Obinze’s Hotmail address: Ceiling I don’t even know how to state I ran into Keyode today . . . I have missed you and I miss you” (Adichie 224). And Obinze also receives different emails sent by Ifemelu: “that evening he receives an email from Ifemelu . . . I will tell you everything that happened. I have missed you and I miss you” (Adichie 237). Hence, Telecommunications, particularly Email, a key element in the novel, symbolizes transnational identity for characters like Ifemelu. Adichie highlights its role in fostering cross-border connections, showcasing the impact of technology on postcolonial identities. Ifemelu's adept use of email reflects her physical presence in America while maintaining virtual connections elsewhere, emphasizing the interplay between transnationalism, cultural exchange, and globalization in navigating multifaceted identities across boundaries.

Patterson, J., and Leurs, K, probably the most influential figures in the field of literary transnationalism, puts forward the same argument that transnational people “live their lives in the literal and virtual spaces, between nations, perpetually in transit between two locations” (Patterson and Leurs, 2019). And Ifemelu exemplifies what they argue in these lines.

In the final section of chapter thirty-four, Ifemelu bridges thousands of miles, communicating

with her family in Nigeria from America. She openly shares details, updating her parents on her relationship with Blaine and her choice to move from Baltimore to New Haven to live with him. Instead of fabricating a story, she candidly discloses "His name is Blaine. He is an American. She heard the symbolism in her own words, travelling thousands of miles to Nigeria, and she knew what her parents would understand . . . she used that word in describing him: 'good'.

'An American Negro?' her father asked, sounding baffled.

Ifemelu burst out laughing. 'Daddy, nobody says Negro any more'. 'But why a Negro?

Is there a substantive scarcity of Nigerians there?'

She ignored him, still laughing, and asked to give her mother the phone . . .

because she lived in America. Rules had shifted, fallen into the cracks of distance and foreignness. (Adichie 314)

This paragraph illustrates how transnational identities illuminates the profound impact of globalization on postcolonial concepts. Characters like Ifemelu exemplify this by effortlessly traversing national boundaries, maintaining a virtual presence in their homelands while living in America. It vividly portrays how technological advancements resulting from globalization facilitate this seamless movement between physical locations. It underscores the intricate relationship between transnationalism, cultural exchange, and the evolution of postcolonial identities within the narrative realm of 'Americanah. Vorobeveva also sheds light on how migrants swiftly and indispensably link their home and host countries, emphasizing the formation of virtual communities that transcend geographical borders (Vorobeveva, et al. 2022).

In Chapter 42, Adichie emphasizes cross-border connections among characters like Obinze and Ifemelu, showcasing their ability to transcend national boundaries. highlighting their capacity to establish connections across them: "Obinze checked his Blackberry often, too often, even when he got up at night to go to the toilet, and although he mocked himself, he could not stop checking . . . He tried Facebook Kosi was active on Facebook. He had at first been excited by Facebook. Ifemelu's reply to his email came an hour later. Her email made him happy . . . she had asked for his number. She could not feel so strongly about his mother . . . so he wrote to her again giving her all of his phone numbers, his three mobile phones, his office phones and his home landline" (Adichie 369-370). These lines justify the fact that Ifemelu and Obinze are the transnationals who keep in touch with each other in

Adichie's words irrespective of where they are and how far they are (Baniya, 2018).

Ifemelu stays in contact with her family in Nigeria by regularly sending money across the American border. Whenever Ifemelu earns money, she sends it to her family. When Ifemelu informs Mariama about her intention to return to Nigeria, Mariama suggests that instead of making the trip, Ifemelu should send money to support them: "Better you send money back. Unless your father is a big man? You have connections" (Adichie 16). Even though she is physically present in America, her influence on the Nigerian economy is notable. Similarly, when she encounters economic hardships initially, Obinze also supports her by sending money across the Nigerian border to America; "Obinze offered to send her some money. 'How can you be sending me money from Nigerian? It should be the other way around' she said. But he sent it to her anyways, a little over a hundred dollars carefully sealed in a card" (Adichie 145).

Ifemelu's U.S.-Nigeria financial support and Obinze's reverse aid reveal the economic impact across borders, highlighting globalization's role in reshaping cultural connections and postcolonial identities. The novel reflects on how economic ties shape identities in a transnational world. Anghel, R. G., Piracha, M., & Randazzo, T highlights how the transnational movement of capital vividly illustrates the cross-border circulation that symbolizes the profound impact of globalization on individuals (Anghel, et al. 2015).

In a similar vein, the novel depicts a spectrum of characters traversing the interconnected landscape of a globalized world. This is evident when Ifemelu's parents promptly enter America, bridging geographical gaps within moments to reunite with their daughter, who works and studies there: "And, so Ifemelu sent them invitation letters, bank statements, a copy of her green card. The American embassy was better now: the staff was still rude, her father said . . . They came for three weeks. They seemed like strangers" (Adichie 301). In this context, Ifemelu's parents have functioned as temporary visitors in the USA in Jay's words, Ifemelu's parent characterize "the fluidity of movement across the border" (Jay 2014). And, this freedom of movement displayed by these individuals is a significant aspect of transnationalism.

Similarly, Ifemelu possesses the capacity to navigate the transnational realm. She is depicted as having the freedom to travel between Nigeria and the U.S.A, effortlessly moving back and forth between the two countries. With her American citizenship, she can easily travel between her home land and host land: "Ifemelu's blue American passport shielded her

from choicelessness. She could leave Nigeria: she did not have to stay” (Adichie 389). Due to her American passport, Ifemelu enjoys unrestricted movement not only between Nigeria and the USA but also across the globe. Throughout her relationship with Curt, her boyfriend, Ifemelu frequently travels abroad. “Her passport filled with visa stamps” which allows her to go wherever she wishes (Adichie 200). Jay suggests that transnationalism constitutes “model of migration characterized by the back-and-forth movement of people across borders” (Jay 2014). This demonstrates that people with transnational connections move across national borders in both directions.

To sum up, "Americanah" intricately portrays the profound impact of globalization on postcolonial identities, emphasizing the role of transnationalism. Through characters like Ifemelu and Obinze, Adichie vividly illustrates the fluidity of movement across borders and the continuous interconnectedness between nations. The novel emphasizes the influence of modern technology, particularly telecommunications, in facilitating cross-border connections and sustaining transnational identities. It highlights the evolution of identities in a globalized era, showcasing the ability to inhabit multiple cultural spheres simultaneously. Economic ties and familial connections depicted in the novel further underscore the blurred boundaries and reshaping of cultural identities in a transnational world. "Americanah" serves as a compelling lens through which to understand the dynamic interplay between globalization and postcolonial identities, offering insights into how individuals navigate and shape their identities in a world marked by transnationalism.

### **Cultural Exchange**

Cultural exchange is a vital aspect of understanding how globalization impacts postcolonial identities in 'Americanah.' This novel delves into how people from different cultures interact and influence each other. Through characters like Ifemelu and Obinze, the novel explores how cultures mix and shape identities.

Regarding the depiction of accents in the novel, Adichie highlights how accent significantly impact cultural exchanges and identity formation. Ifemelu's concerns regarding her Nigerian accent unveil the challenges of engaging with her own community members abroad and negotiating her identity in an unfamiliar environment. When Ifemelu takes a taxi to the braiding salon in Trenton “she hoped her driver would not be a Nigerian, because he, once he heard her accent, would either be aggressively eager to tell her that he had a master’s degree [...]; or he would drive in sullen silence.” But luckily “she could tell right away, with

relief, that his accent was Caribbean” (Adichie 8/9).

Upon Ifemelu's arrival in the United States, her old friend Ginika, from Nigeria, picks her up from the airport and tries to converse in Nigerian English. She speaks in “a dated, overcooked version, eager to prove how unchanged she was” (Adichie 123). Even Later, when she is with her friends, she speaks with a perfect American accent. Ginika attempts to emphasize their common background as a way to warmly welcome Ifemelu. This underscores the implicit communication conveyed by accents and how fluidly identities can shift alongside changes in accent. However, once Ginika rejoins her roommates, she reverts to her usual all-American persona.

Ifemelu's experience in the US reveals a struggle with her Nigerian accent, influenced by societal reactions. Initially proud of her roots, she faces ridicule for her speech, leading her to consider adopting an American accent. And in the following weeks, [...], she began to practice an American accent” (Adichie 133). Despite her strength, societal pressures erode her resolve, prompting a compromise for social acceptance. This pivotal moment marks a shift in Ifemelu's integrity and identity, illustrating the subtle impact of societal expectations on postcolonial identities within a globalized context. Researcher Kozlowski also underscores the significance of understanding how accents can shape judgments, influence perceptions, and contribute to the evolving dynamics of cultural acceptance and respect in societies navigating diverse cultural horizons (Kozlowski 2015).

After three years, Ifemelu's acquired American accent becomes so flawless that a telemarketer mistakes her for an educated White American woman over the phone. “did she begin to feel the stain of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her, for thanking him, for crafting his words ‘You sound American’ into a garland that she hung around her own neck” (Adichie 175). This moment is tough for Ifemelu. She realizes that her connection to Nigeria is fading, and she's becoming someone she never wanted to be. In a braiding salon scene, it's shown that children with American accents find school easier. Halima, one of the braiders explains: “When I come here with my son, they beat him in school because of African accent. Now accent go and no problems” (Adichie 187). Hence, several characters face prejudice due to their Nigerian accent in the United States, reflecting the challenges individuals encounter in navigating cultural identity and acceptance in a new environment. De Souza et al. (2016) underscores how accent influences discrimination against immigrants, especially in individuals with higher prejudice. The perception of native accents as superior exacerbates

biases, perpetuating discriminatory practices and hindering the appreciation of linguistic diversity.

Hence, Ifemelu's initial pride in her Nigerian roots contrasts sharply with the societal pressures and reactions she faces upon her arrival in the United States. The novel vividly illustrates the struggles Ifemelu encounters in maintaining her authentic identity in the face of societal expectations, particularly regarding her accent. Her gradual transition from embracing her Nigerian accent to adopting an American one reflects the nuanced impact of external influences on shaping postcolonial identities. The pivotal moment where Ifemelu feels the weight of shame upon being mistaken for an educated White American woman highlights the profound emotional and identity-related turmoil she experiences. Adichie masterfully delves into the complexities of cultural exchange, highlighting how the interplay of accents, societal expectations, and the pursuit of acceptance profoundly shapes postcolonial identities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Beside language and accents, I'll explore how euphemisms and word choices, reflect cultural variations between Nigeria and the United States. When Ifemelu arrived in the US "one of the first things her friend Ginika told her was that 'fat' in America was a bad word, heaving with moral judgement like 'stupid' or 'bastard', and not a mere description like 'short' or 'tall'. After having spent some time in America, Ifemelu "thought about all the other things she had learned not to say aloud in America" (Adichie 5/6).

While 'fat' is substituted by 'big' in the US, 'thin' seems to be replaced by 'slim' in Nigeria. Ginika explains to Ifemelu that "Americans say 'thin'. Here 'thin' is a good word." In Nigeria, if "you lost weight it means something bad, but here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you" (Adichie 124). Nigerians and Americans avoid certain words about body weight but differ in using racially charged terms. In Nigeria, words like 'Negro' or 'half-caste' are used openly, while in the US, they're avoided. Ginika explains these differences to Ifemelu (Adichie 123/124):

**Can you imagine 'half-caste' is a bad word here? [...] I was telling them [...] how all the boys were chasing me because I was half-caste, and they said I was dissing myself. So now I say biracial, and I'm supposed to be offended when somebody says half-caste.**

Hence it reveals how globalization shapes postcolonial identities through cultural exchange. Euphemisms and word choices illustrate stark variations between Nigeria and the US, showcasing differences in body image perceptions and acceptability of racially charged



terms. This exchange highlights how globalization influences linguistic nuances, impacting the construction of postcolonial identities in the novel. Understanding these cultural shifts is vital in comprehending the evolving nature of identities in a globalized world.

Initially, food might not seem culturally relevant, but examining the characters' food choices and habits reveals much about their cultural identities. The scenes set in Nigeria don't emphasize food until before the protagonists go abroad. Upon Ifemelu's arrival in the US, she encounters food as an immediate concern. Initially, she finds herself perplexed by American eating customs and behaviours. For example, it is "perfectly normal and did not require a humorous preamble about how Americans ate bread for lunch" (Adichie 107). Moreover, Ifemelu is unfamiliar with American food, evident when she fries sausages instead of boiling them when asked to prepare a hot dog for Dike.

After some time though, she starts to like American food: "She enjoys the unfamiliar – the Mc Donald's hamburgers with the brief tart crunch of pickles [...]". All the same Ifemelu "was disoriented by the blandness of fruits, as though Nature had forgotten to sprinkle some seasoning on the oranges and the bananas, but she liked to look at them, and to touch them; because bananas were so big, so evenly yellow, she forgave them their tastelessness" (Adichie 113).

Adichie humorously portrays Ifemelu's initial mockery of American food culture and her fascination with its artificial perfection, yet Ifemelu, despite adapting, never fully embraces American eating habits, as seen when she notices someone eating ice cream at a train station: "She had always found it a little irresponsible, the eating of ice cream cones by grown-up American men, especially the eating of ice cream cones by grown-up American men in public" (Adichie 4).

Henceforth, the analysis of food choices and cultural adaptation offers a compelling lens through which to explore the impact of globalization on postcolonial identities. Ifemelu's journey from Nigeria to the United States highlights the initial disorientation and subsequent adaptation to American food culture, portraying the complexities of cultural exchange in a globalized world. While initially bewildered by American eating customs, Ifemelu gradually develops a taste for certain aspects of American cuisine, yet retains a sense of detachment and critique towards certain food habits. This nuanced portrayal underscores the struggle of maintaining one's cultural identity amidst the influences of globalization, emphasizing that adaptation does not equate to complete assimilation. Through the lens of food, Adichie

navigates the tensions between embracing the new and retaining elements of one's cultural heritage, providing a vivid illustration of the intricate interplay between transnationalism, cultural exchange, and postcolonial identities in a globalized setting.

### **Conclusion**

The research conducted has delved deep into the intricate nuances of postcolonial identities as portrayed in "Americanah," shedding light on the enduring impact of historical legacies on identity negotiations. By examining the characters, particularly Ifemelu, within the context of an increasingly interconnected world, the study has unveiled the transformative power of transnational experiences and cultural exchanges in shaping the construction of hybrid identities. The analysis has underscored the complex power dynamics and cultural hegemonies at play, illuminating the ways in which individuals navigate the complexities of identity formation in a globalized landscape. Through a theoretical lens that frames the examination of global processes and their effects on individuals' lives, identities, and cultural affiliations, this research has provided a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of postcolonial identities. The meticulous investigation into language dynamics within the novel has revealed how Adichie skillfully captures the challenges and opportunities inherent in the reshaping of postcolonial identities, offering a rich tapestry of individual struggles and collective experiences that resonate with readers on a profound level.

The research questions posed, focusing on the cultural identities of Nigerian immigrants in the United States and the societal attitudes impacting characters moving between Nigeria and the United States, have been rigorously examined and thoroughly addressed. By unpacking these questions, this study has contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of identity construction in a globalized context, offering fresh insights into the ways in which individuals negotiate their identities amidst the complexities of cultural exchange and transnational experiences. In essence, this study serves as a cornerstone in enriching the broader discourse on postcolonial literature, offering a profound exploration of the dynamic interplay between postcolonial identities within the landscape of "Americanah." By engaging with the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques in depth, this research endeavour has not only expanded our understanding of postcolonial identities but has also provided a critical lens through which to examine the complexities of identity formation, migration, and cultural exchange in a globalized world.

As we reflect on the implications of this research, it becomes evident that the themes and

insights uncovered have far-reaching implications for our understanding of postcolonial identities, cultural fluidity, and the enduring legacies of colonialism. By situating "Americanah" within the broader context of postcolonial literature, this study has opened up new avenues for exploration and dialogue, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of identity negotiation and cultural hybridity in a rapidly changing world. Expanding further, the research findings underscore the importance of literature as a mirror to society, reflecting the complexities of human experiences and offering a platform for dialogue and reflection on the intricacies of postcolonial identities. By delving into the nuances of identity construction, power dynamics, and cultural affiliations within "Americanah," this study has not only deepened our appreciation for Adichie's narrative craftsmanship but has also provided a rich tapestry of insights into the ways in which literature can illuminate the complexities of identity in a globalized context. In conclusion, this research endeavour stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of postcolonial literature in shaping our understanding of identity, culture, and the interconnected world we inhabit.

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