

Navigating Cultural Identity Through Code-Switching: An Analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah

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Abstract

Americanah (2013) is a novel written by the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The novel focuses on themes of identity, race, and immigration that are experienced by its main character, Ifemelu, a Nigerian young lady who travels to the United States for study. The current study examines the dynamic shift of using code-switching by the characters and the depiction of cultural identity. The study argues that the writer uses code-switching as a narrative technique to mirror the characters' cultural backgrounds, their identities, and the difficulties they encounter as immigrants. Besides, the study examines Adichie's varied employment of code-switching as a practice to enrich character depths, to enhance personal bonds, and to highlight thematic elements. The analysis also explores the possible difficulties arising from code-switching, and underlines some instances where linguistic choices mirror broader social tensions in the story. One interesting finding is that code-switching in this novel appears not only as a linguistic practice, but also as a cultural experience like dress choices or possessions. Some characters tend to imitate Americans not only in the way they speak, but also in the way they appear.

Keywords: Code-switch(ing); cultural; identity; bi(multi)lingual; language(s); linguistic(s)

التنقل بين الهوية الثقافية من خلال التبديل اللغوي: تحليل لرواية "أميريكانا" للكاتبة تشيما ماندا نغوزي أديتشي

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رواية "أميريكانا" (٢٠١٣) هي رواية كتبها الكاتبة النيجيرية تشيما ماندا نغوزي أديتشي. تركز الرواية على موضوعات كالهوية والعرق والهجرة التي تعيشها الشخصية الرئيسية، إيفيميلو، وهي شابة نيجيرية تسافر إلى الولايات المتحدة للدراسة. تبحث الدراسة الحالية في التحول الديناميكي لاستخدام التناوب اللغوي بين الشخصيات وتصوير الهوية الثقافية. وتجادل الدراسة بأن الكاتبة تستخدم التناوب اللغوي كأداة سردية تعكس خلفيات الشخصيات الثقافية وهوياتهم والصعوبات التي يواجهونها كمهاجرين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تستعرض الدراسة الاستخدامات المتنوعة للتناوب اللغوي من قبل أديتشي كوسيلة لإثراء عمق الشخصيات، وتعزيز الروابط الشخصية، وتسهيل الضوء على العناصر الموضوعية. كما يستكشف التحليل الصعوبات المحتملة الناتجة عن التناوب اللغوي، ويبرز بعض الحالات التي تعكس فيها الخيارات اللغوية توترات اجتماعية أوسع في القصة. ومن النتائج المثيرة للاهتمام أن التناوب اللغوي يُستخدم في هذه الرواية ليس فقط كممارسة لغوية، ولكن كتجربة ثقافية مثل اختيارات اللبس أو الممتلكات. بعض الشخصيات تميل إلى تقليد الأمريكيين ليس فقط في طريقة حديثهم، ولكن أيضًا في مظهرهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التبديل اللغوي؛ ثقافي؛ هوية؛ ثانئي (متعدد) اللغة؛ لغة (لغات)؛ لغوي (لغويات)

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1. Code-Switching

Language is not a static entity but a dynamic and versatile tool for communication based on the purpose and the context in which it is used. One clear example of this adaptability of language use is code-switching which involves the shift in the use of two or more languages or varieties of a language within a particular setting.

Akmajian, et.al (2001) define code-switching as a term that denotes “a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse proceeds” (307). This refers to the practice of mixing formal and informal language styles within a single discourse. For example, when discussing a serious topic, a speaker might adopt formal language then switch to informal language when expressing familiarity. However, when code-switching, a speaker is simultaneously using two different languages or language varieties (308). According to Gal (1988), “codeswitching is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations” (247). This quote implies that code-switching has multiple functions. It suggests that code-switching can be a means of defining, blurring, or eliminating the boundaries between particular groups. The quote further suggests that code-switching can play a role in shaping interpersonal relationships.

The choice of language is not static; instead, it is fluid allowing people to switch between languages to meet social and communicative needs, particularly in multicultural or multilingual contexts. Wardhaugh (2006) indicates that code-switching is a process that “can arise from individual choice or be used as a major identity marker for a group of speakers who must deal with more than one language in their common pursuits.” He, moreover, highlights the individuals’ need to select a specific language as they communicate and that this selection may lead to creating a new linguistic code (101).

Speakers code-switch for a number of reasons such as “to express in-group solidarity, to exclude someone from a conversation by switching to a language the person does not understand, to emphasize a point by repeating it in two languages, etc.” (Kamwangamalu, 2010: 118). Wardhaugh (2006) states that code-switching enables a speaker to accomplish a variety of tasks, such as to claim power, to demonstrate solidarity, to preserve a particular neutrality when employing both codes, to assert identity and so on (110). Further, Gardner-Chloros (2009) introduces a variety of functions of code-switching. Regarding social identity, code-switching is employed by bilingual individuals as a form of “conversational scaffolding, while at the same time they use it to express their identities. The use of code-switching is affected by factors such as the

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relative competence of both the speakers and the hearers, the identities they can express through each language they use, the appropriate situation when code-switching is necessary, and many other factors (42).

Significantly, it is very important to recognize that code-switching occurs within communities of bilingual or multilingual speakers who have a common understanding of the language being switched. Thus, the use of code-switching in such communities serve diverse pragmatic functions, reflecting social identity and solidarity, conveying emotions, demonstrating linguistic competence, and being intricately entangled with social context.

2. Pragmatic Purposes of Code-Switching

Code-switching does not occur randomly, instead, it is a deliberate use of speakers to “fill lexical gaps” (Kamwangamalu, 2010: 118), or convey complex meanings that might not be as effectively communicated in a single language. For instance, when multilingual individuals encounter a difficulty to use a terminology in one language, they tend to switch to another language that best captures their intended meaning.

As Cited in Gardner-Chloros (2009), Meisel (1989) uses code-switching as “the pragmatic skill of selecting the language according to the interlocutor, topic, context, etc.” In this respect, code-switching is a device for clarification and emphasis. Such language shift enables speakers to underline a specific point or idea (Gardner-Chloros, 2009:13).

2.1.Social Identity and Solidarity

In one way or another, language is interconnected to identity, and code-switching reflects the nuanced interplay between language and the formation of identity. As Wardhaugh (2006) notes, “Code-switching can arise from individual choice or be used as a major identity marker for a group of speakers who must deal with more than one language in their common pursuits” (101).

Code-switching is a way by which people can express their identities and connect themselves with different social groups and communities. That is, it can be used to express ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic identities, enabling speakers to enhance their belonging within a particular linguistic community. It can further be used to build solidarity among individuals who share the same multilingual background, thus enhancing a sense of social bond.

2.2.Expressing Emotion

Bilingual speakers usually feel that the languages they use are divergently related to their emotional experiences, and this can determine which language to use (Williams, et.al, 2020: 830). Based on empirical studies and findings, Pavlenko (2005) demonstrates that bilingual speakers are inclined to switch into their native language to mark intimacy or to convey charged feelings, and

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to the foreign language to signal distance, exclude others, or to describe emotions in a separate way (131).

Language is a primary means people use to convey their emotions. One of the challenges multilingual speakers encounter is the difficulty to use the foreign language they speak to convey their emotional stances. In such special circumstances, they employ code-switching by borrowing some needed vocabularies from the other language as a mechanism to express subtle feelings. This code-switching, a language the hearer understands, is very important when discussing touching topics or cultural bound experiences that find accurate expressions in one language than in another.

2.3. Linguistic Competence and Social Context

While a speaker's competence determines which language to choose in communication in general (Pavlenko, 2005: 133), there are other factors that determine language selection such as the social contexts. When multilingual speakers use the other language skillfully, they will be able to express their ideas efficiently with their interlocutors. Besides linguistic factors, social factors lead to code switching.

Choosing which language to utilize when code-switching depends on who is speaking, the topic, and the context of situation. For instance, a person may choose a more informal language when speaking to his or her boss, but to a more informal language in friendly environment (Malmkjær, 2002:77). Thus, the degree and nature of code-switching are shaped by social factors such as the participants, setting, and the conversational dynamics.

3. Adichie's *Americanah*: A Brief Synopsis

Americanah, a novel written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in 2013, tells the story of Ifemelu, a Nigerian young lady who migrates to the United States to pursue her study. The novel is a deep searching exploration of a conflict of an individual against society. It recounts the struggle of Ifemelu with racial discrimination and her quest to distinguish her identity first in the American ambiance and then back in Nigeria. The novel also traces Ifemelu's relation with her high school first love, Obinze, who becomes an undocumented immigrant in England¹.

In *Americanah*, the characters code-switch between Nigerian and English languages for several reasons like adapting to the society in which they live, solidifying cultural bounds, expressing heightened emotions, etc. The novel addresses themes that most immigrants encounter such as racism, culture belongingness, and language, highlighting the importance of protecting one's cultural and linguistic heritage².

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2013/05/20/183662205/black-in-america-a-story-rendered-in-grayscale>

² <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/americanah/summary/>

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One reason this novel is selected for the examination of code-switching is its title. The title of a story often captures the interest of its readers, providing a hint about its content, theme, or central idea. The term *Americanah* is used in Nigeria as an identity term to refer to those immigrants who go to America and return home. Having been to America, Ifemelu is called *Americanah* when she returns to Nigeria based on her American way of speaking and addressing problems.

4. Examining Code-Switching in Adichie's *Americanah*

In Adichie's *Americanah*, the characters code-switch between English and Igbo depending on the situations and persons they are talking to. Within the context of this novel, it could be argued that code-switching can serve as a coping mechanism for individuals to deal with the challenges of living in a foreign country, while simultaneously emphasizing their cultural identity.

Adichie brilliantly depicts the complex art of code-switching through Ms. Akin-Cole's speech patterns and accent. In the excerpt that follows, the use of code-switching shows a blend of linguistic, social, and cultural elements, reflecting Ms. Akin-Cole's transnational and social aspirations:

“If you decide to disadvantage your child by sending her to one of these schools with half-baked Nigerian teachers, then you only have yourself to blame,” Mrs. Akin-Cole said. She spoke with the unplaceable foreign accent, British and American and something else all at once, of the wealthy Nigerian who did not want the world to forget how worldly she was, how her British Airways executive card was choking with miles (Adichie, 2013: 29).

Code-switching is clearly evoked in Ms. Akin-Cole's speech by using a blend of foreign accent, British, American, and something else at the same time. Her linguistic choice is also obvious. For example, instead of saying impractical Nigerian teachers, she uses “half-baked”, a phrase that is deeply rooted in British English. Through code-switching, Ms. Akin-Cole is very careful in reflecting her social standing as a wealthy Nigerian who traveled and learned how to speak English.

In this excerpt from the novel, Adichie craftily portrays the use of code-switching as a social marker, while at the same time highlighting socioeconomic standing. Such use of code-switching adds depth to the complex interplay of individuals living in multicultural communities.

Although code-switching is defined as a linguistic phenomenon, it could extend to include diverse facets of other cultural experiences such as dress choices, physical mannerism, and other aspects of self-reflections. In a study of the use of code-switching in Nigeria, Omoniyi finds that code-switching in Nigeria does not merely involve the use of various languages such as Yoruba,

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English, and Igbo, but also encompasses modes of dressing, walking, and a number of other social activities (2009: 130). The following excerpt shows clearly how Kayode and his girlfriend, Yinka adopt this type of code-switching that shapes their social perception and contributes to their standing within their community:

Kayode spent every vacation in his parents' house in England, which looked large and forbidding in the photos Ifemelu had seen. His girlfriend, Yinka, was like him—she, too, went to England often and lived in Ikoyi and spoke with a British accent. She was the most popular girl in their form, her school bag made of thick monogrammed leather, her sandals always different from what anybody else had (Adichie, 2013: 57).

Despite her Nigerian origin, the British accent Yinka uses could serve as a striking example of the use of code-switching to reflect cultural identity and social status. Yinka's code-switching extends beyond language, including modes of dressing and highly expensive possessions. In this respect, while Yinka intends to use code-switching to positively assert her identity and social standing in a multicultural community, it can signal a negative impact by distancing her from her Nigerian roots.

It has been stated earlier that besides asserting identity, demonstrating cultural competence, code-switching can be used to create intimacy and connection. The following conversation between Ifemelu and Obinze shows how successful code-switching is in achieving its desired effects:

"I know Abba. The roads are worse."

"How often do you go to your village?"

"Every Christmas."

"Just once a year! I go very often with my mother, at least five times a year."

"But I bet I speak Igbo better than you."

"Impossible," he said, and switched to Igbo. "*Ama m atu inu.* I even know proverbs."

"Yes. The basic one everybody knows. A frog does not run in the afternoon for nothing."

"No. I know serious proverbs. *Akota ife ka ubi, e lee oba.* If something bigger than the farm is dug up, the barn is sold."

"Ah, you want to try me?" she asked, laughing. "*Acho afu adi ako n'akpa dibia.* The medicine man's bag has all kinds of things."

"Not bad," he said. "*E gbuo dike n'ogu uno, e luo na ogu agu, e lote ya.*"

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If you kill a warrior in a local fight, you'll remember him when fighting enemies.” They traded proverbs. She could say only two more before she gave up, with him still raring to go.

“How do you know all that?” she asked, impressed. “Many guys won't even speak Igbo, not to mention knowing proverbs.”

“I just listen when my uncles talk. I think my dad would have liked that” (Adichie, 2013: 61-62).

It should be taken into account that Ifemelu and Obinze were high school lovers before they have separated for a period of time prior to this meeting, where he migrated to England and she to the United States, and now they meet again. This long conversation between Ifemelu and Obinze initially runs in English, and then collapses into using Nigerian proverbs. The blend in using English language and their native language, Igbo, reflects their linguistic competence in navigating between two entirely different languages. On the other hand, the shift into using Igbo proverbs suggests a deeper connection to their cultural heritage of which they are both proud. Given that they were formerly teenager lovers, the code-switching to their mother language creates a touch of intimacy.

Beside linguistic factors, code-switching is also affected by social factors. The language or accent persons use in an interaction can alter based on the individuals they are talking to, the subject, and the context of situation. In the following excerpt, when talking to her son in the presence of white Americans, Aunt Uju code-switches to fit in with the social context:

“Dike, put it back,” Aunt Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. *Pooh-reet-back*. And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing. She was overeager with the cashier. “Sorry, sorry,” she said as she fumbled to get her debit card from her wallet. Because the cashier was watching, Aunt Uju let Dike keep the cereal, but in the car she grabbed his left ear and twisted it, yanked it (Adichie, 2013: 108).

Gardner-Chloros (2009) asserts that beyond being present within "regional minorities and native multilingual groups," code-switching is also prevalent among immigrant communities (20). Aunt Uju's adaptation in employing a nasal and sliding accent as she talks to her son in the presence of Americans, is a deliberate use to make herself more amicable and less threatening in interactions with white Americans. This strategic use reflects the pressures faced by most immigrants who seek to mitigate possible discrimination and conform to societal norms. The punishment of Aunt Uju's son by twisting his ear in the car reflects her authority and control.

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Thus, for Aunt Uju, code-switching in public spaces is necessary to fit in with the social context. In the same token, later in home, when Ifemelu speaks Igbo to Dike, Aunt Uju tells her “Please don’t speak Igbo to him” because “Two languages will confuse him.” Here, the case is different because “This is America” (Adichie, 2013: 109). This conversation between Ifemelu and Aunt Uju displays the conflict people encounter when they try to reconcile their cultural identity with the linguistic norms of a different culture.

Communities’ view of code-switching varies. Some view code-switching as a weakness of belonging and a lack of importance in the original language, while others find it flexible and socially intelligent, because language is a tool that strengthens ties between members of societies, and carries within it evidence of their place of origin and the diversity of their backgrounds. This encourages some people to keep up with the conversations of others trying even to imitate their accents to facilitate communication and break down the barriers of differences. Wardhaugh (2006) argues that the specific selection of the code to be used on a particular occasion can lead to judgments from others. For instance, some accents may be considered as “unpleasant,” while others may be regarded as “beautiful” (117). In the following excerpt, Ifemelu criticizes the way Bartholomew speaks in his adoption of an American accent. Bartholomew's wrong pronunciation and his frequent use of words like “wannas” and “gonnas”, Ifemelu judges, have come from his endeavor to compensate for his rural upbringing. He wants to give the impression that although he has come from a rural Nigerian origin, he can speak English. Here, code-switching to an American accent, for instance, reinforces the idea that some immigrants feel that this use reflects social standing:

Bartholomew wore khaki trousers pulled up high on his belly, and spoke with an American accent filled with holes, mangling words until they were impossible to understand. Ifemelu sensed, from his demeanor, a deprived rural upbringing that he tried to compensate for with his American affectation, his gonnas and wannas (Adichie, 2013: 115).

The ideas contained in the aforementioned excerpt conform to Young’s view. In his argument against code-switching, Young extensively discusses code-switching as the need for African Americans to adopt the speech patterns preferred by the white majority. His argument suggests that when people code-switch, it is important to examine the reasons behind the preference of one code over another (See Young, 2009:49-76). Hence, based on this view, Bartholomew’s struggle with his bad American accent reflects his social standing as A Nigerian immigrant who tries to gain respect by others through the use of American accent. It further highlights the challenges immigrants encounter when trying to assimilate into another culture.

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It is safe to say that even if a person speaks more than a language, the mother tongue is the only one capable of expressing strong feelings. Therefore, it is natural for multilingual speakers to code-switch to their native language in situations that need to express anger, excessive happiness, or profoundly touching feelings. For instance, while formerly asked Ifemelu not to speak Igbo to Dike because “Two languages will confuse him,” Aunt Ujo, using Igbo, angrily threatens Dike into sending him back to Nigeria if his grades in school keep falling:

His grades were falling. Aunt Ujo threatened him more often. The last time Ifemelu visited, Aunt Ujo told him, “I will send you back to Nigeria if you do that again!” speaking Igbo as she did to him only when she was angry... (Adichie, 2013: 171).

In the above excerpt, Adichie seems to suggest that code-switching is employed to convey various emotions based on the context. Aunt Ujo speaks English to her son in normal situations, while switching to Igbo to express threat and anger. She feels that Igbo carries more emotional impact of her words during moments of seriousness and frustration. Another striking example from the novel that displays how multilingual persons switch to their mother language to express their overjoyed sensations is shown in the following excerpt. Both Ifemelu and Obinze begin to sing a Nigerian song to convey their profound emotions, indicating that they are unable to find a more suitable means of expression in any other language except their native one. This could be attributed to their limited vocabulary in English, as they lack the precise lexical items they require:

Obiwon’s “Obi Mu O” started and she sat still and silent as the words filled the car: *This is that feeling that I’ve never felt ... and I’m not gonna let it die.* When the male and female voices sang in Igbo, Obinze sang along with them, glancing away from the road to look at her, as though he was telling her that this was really their conversation, he calling her beautiful, she calling him beautiful, both calling each other their true friends. *Nwanyi oma, nwoke oma, omalicha nwa, ezigbo oyi mo* (Adichie, 2013: 443).

In the abovementioned excerpt, the switching to sing a Nigerian song emphasizes the connection between Ifemelu and Obinze, providing a sense of intimacy, belongingness, and cultural bond. It seems that the song better conveys their affection and mutual connection. It is as if this Nigerian song communicates feelings and thoughts they cannot express directly in words to each other.

It has been stated earlier that there is a constant relationship between language and social identity in which code-switching plays a significant part. Code-switching bridges between language and the formation of a person’s identity. In the following excerpt, Adichie shows how

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Nicholas considers speaking English as a social marker of identity. He code-switches to English when he speaks to his Nigerian children:

He spoke to them only in English, careful English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them, perhaps make them lose their precious British accents. Then he would say, “Ojiugo, well done. I’m hungry” (Adichie, 2013: 239).

This excerpt illustrates Nicholas’s fear that the Igbo language he shared with their mother would potentially negatively influence them and, as a result, corrupt their precious English accent. Therefore, he believes that speaking to them in English will help them gain a culture and preserve an identity that is closely linked to English culture.

Adichie emphasizes the nuanced interaction between code-switching and language dynamics within families. Nicholas's decision to use only English indicates a preference for and emphasis on ownership of the English language. His concern about the impact of Igbo, his shared language with his wife on their British accent, suggests a hierarchy of languages within the family. The passage also emphasizes the important role that language choices play in shaping individual identities and family relationships. Nicholas's careful use of English with the avoidance of Igbo may be linked to his desire to uphold a certain social identity. He is likely aware that British accent is an indicator of status or cultural belonging, which prompts him to adapt his language use accordingly.

Adichie underscores the complex nature of code-switching in the context of race and identity in multicultural communities. In the following excerpt, Ifemelu is surprised to hear Blaine speak Ebonics for the first time. On his part, Blaine explains that he is accustomed to using English language around white people to align with their perceived expectations. He further adds that recently young Africans do not code-switch to Ebonics:

Funny how I’ve never heard you speak Ebonics before,” she told Blaine, the first time she heard him talking to Mr. White. His syntax was different, his cadences more rhythmic. “I guess I’ve become too used to my White People Are Watching Us voice,” he said. “And you know, younger black folk don’t really do code switching anymore. The middle-class kids can’t speak Ebonics and the inner-city kids speak only Ebonics and they don’t have the fluidity that my generation has.” “I’m going to blog about that” (Adichie, 2013: 342).

Ebonics is a special American English language created by African descendants to fit into dominant cultural contexts. In this passage, Blaine’s reference to the idea that younger generation of black people do not use Ebonics nowadays underlines that code-switching can be affected by

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socioeconomic factors and cultural backgrounds, where middle class kids do not speak Ebonics while inner-city kids speak only Ebonics with less flexibility than the older generation. This view prompts Ifemelu to think of blogging about code-switching and African generational language. This passage evokes that code-switching is a dynamic practice which either evolving or stagnating depending on social and economic factors.

It should be said that code-switching is not only limited to spoken language, rather it may extend to encompass written forms of language. In the following excerpt, Ifemelu's use of code-switching in her blog is obvious to Obinze who notices a complete shift in her style and language variation:

HE READ all the archives of *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. The blog posts astonished him, they seemed so American and so alien, the irreverent voice with its slanginess, its mix of high and low language, and he could not imagine her writing them (Adichie, 2013: 374).

In the given passage, Obinze's surprise is clearly evoked. Given that he knows Ifemelu, Obinze does not expect her to write in such a highly stylized English language, with irreverent voice, slangs, and a blend of high and low language. Ifemelu's unique style in English reflects her mastery of English language and her ability to navigate between various linguistic choices and cultural influences. Moreover, Ifemelu's new style on her blog helps her to project a special identity through which she can freely express her perspectives about race and culture.

Immigrants, when speaking to one another, are supposed to use their original language in multilingual communities as a sign of inclusion, belongingness, and preservation of cultural heritage. Adichie criticizes that Nigerian individuals, particularly Igbo people, prefer to use English instead. The following interaction between Edusco and Obinze displays Edusco's surprise and frustration towards an Igbo man who refuses to answer him when he speaks to him in Igbo:

Do you know that the other day I went to the Inland Revenue office near my house and one man there, an Igbo man, I saw his name and spoke to him in Igbo and he did not even answer me! A Hausa man will speak Hausa to his fellow Hausa man. A Yoruba man will see a Yoruba person anywhere and speak Yoruba. But an Igbo man will speak English to an Igbo man. I am even surprised that you are speaking Igbo to me (Adichie, 2013: 456).

In this excerpt, Adichie mentions three various languages used in Nigeria. Hausa is a spoken language dominant through the north, Yoruba is another language spoken in Southwestern and Central Nigeria, and Igbo is the principal native language used in Southern Nigeria. The

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interaction in this excerpt highlights how language choices are closely connected with ethnic identity. The selection of which language to use could be attributed to geographical or political reasons. Edusco's remark that the Hausa and Yoruba men code-switch to use their respective languages when interacting with their fellows may indicate enhancement of their cultural backgrounds and preservation of their identities. On the other hand, the Igbo man's preference to respond in English may indicate the contrary which aligns with Obine's assertion that the Igbo people do that due to the legacy of being defeated: "We lost the Biafran war and learned to be ashamed" (Adichie, 2013: 456).

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the use of code-switching in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. Engaging code-switching as a linguistic practice, and stylistic features as a narrative technique, the current study has illuminated the different uses of code-switching as coping mechanisms immigrants shield themselves with to navigate their life in multicultural communities.

One important aspect of code-switching, this study has revealed, is its ability to represent cultural identity. The characters in the novel employ code-switching as a device to assert their cultural heritage within a multicultural community, suggesting their double identities.

While dealing with some thematic questions related to identity, race, and cultural backgrounds, the present study has shown code-switching to be used as a social marker. Some characters switch from Igbo to English not only when white characters around, but also when they interact with each other. They believe that switching to English or American accent would reflect their social standing.

The study has further unveiled that in moments of greatest emotional intensity such as expressing anger, frustration, or excessive happiness, multilingual speakers tend to use their native language instead of English. In this case, code-switching demonstrates a limitation of a particular language in expressing deeply touching feelings, on the one hand, or serves as a tool to enhance intimacy and reciprocal understanding, on the other.

Moreover, the study has revealed that code-switching is far beyond the confines of being spoken. Ifemelu's blog is a prime example that code-switching could also exist in writing as well. Her style of writing was a mix of high and low language, seemed so American and so alien that astonished its readers.

The study has also demonstrated that beyond its use as a linguistic practice, code-switching can take the form of other cultural experiences like dress choices and possessions. Some

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immigrants not only imitate Americans in the way they speak, but also in the way they dress and appear.

The study has further revealed that code-switching can be affected by geographical and political dimensions. Adichie addresses this issue through an Igbo character who refuses to use Igbo language when interacting with his fellow because he feels ashamed due to their defeat in war.

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