

**COLONIALISM AND IDENTITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *NO LONGER AT EASE* AND
CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH***

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that **Amanda Osamase ODEMWINGIE**, with matriculation number ART2100278, has completed the project titled: **COLONIALISM AND IDENTITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *NO LONGER AT EASE* AND CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH***, at the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo state.

Prof. (Mrs) Sophia Akhuemokhan
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty for His grace upon my life and for strengthening me to successfully carry out this project. Also, to my parents for their support.

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My profound gratitude goes to God Almighty for His infinite mercy, blessings, wisdom, and understanding throughout the course of this study.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the enduring impact of colonialism on Nigerian identity, with particular attention to its influence on education, language, and culture. Using postcolonial theory, it critically analyzes Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, comparing how the protagonists' experiences reflect broader struggles within postcolonial society. The research reveals that both characters, in their pursuit of education and opportunities abroad, encounter alienation, cultural dislocation, and identity conflict. Their experiences highlight how colonial legacies continue to shape self-perception and belonging. The study highlights the enduring nature of identity conflicts shaped by colonial history and shows how literature reflects these ongoing struggles in Nigerian society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This study focuses on the impacts of colonialism on identity in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013). Although both novels belong to different historical periods, both authors examine the effects of colonialism on African characters as Western education, language, religion, race and global migration continue to influence their lives. This study seeks to explore how the characters in these works deal with their identity and self-identification in a postcolonial context.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study focuses on the representation of identity in relation to colonial and postcolonial influence as seen in the main characters of the two selected texts: Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* and Ifemelu in *Americanah*. The study will examine issues such as cultural alienation, hybridity, racial awareness, language, and personal conflict. While Achebe's novel is situated in Nigeria during the late colonial era, and Adichie's is set in the modern era of global migration, both works deal with characters who struggle with the influence of colonial structures and ideals.

1.3 Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative and interpretive literary analysis approach. Close reading of the texts is employed to examine themes, character development, and narrative techniques that reflect the impact of colonialism on identity.

1.4 Definition of Terms

1. Colonialism: According to *Collins dictionary*, colonialism is “the practice by which a powerful country directly controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its own power and wealth” (“Colonialism”).

2. Imperialism: *Merriam-Webster* defines imperialism as “a policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas” (“Imperialism”).

3. Postcolonialism: According to *Wikipedia*, postcolonialism is “a critical academic study of the cultural, political and economic consequences of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the impact of human control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands” (“Postcolonialism”).

4. Identity: According to *Fiveable*, identity is “the complex and dynamic ways in which individuals and groups define themselves in the aftermath of colonial rule. These identities are influenced by historical, cultural, and social factors that emerged from the colonial experience, leading to a blend of indigenous traditions and colonial legacies” (“Identity”).

5. Cultural Identity: According to *The Oxford Review*, cultural identity is “an individual’s sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. It is formed through shared characteristics such as language, traditions, beliefs, values, and norms that are passed down from generation to generation. It plays a pivotal role in shaping how people view themselves and the world around them” (“Cultural Identity”).

6. Race and Racial Identity: According to *Fiveable*, race is “a socially constructed category that classifies people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, facial features, and hair texture.” Racial identity is “a person's sense of belonging to a particular racial group and the

social, cultural, and historical context that shapes this identity. It encompasses how individuals perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, influencing their experiences and interactions within society” (“Race and Racial Identity”).

7. Hybridity: This is a concept introduced by postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha in Chapter 6 of his book *The Location of Culture*, where he defines hybridity as “the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha 112).

8. Mimicry: This is a key concept in postcolonial theory developed by Homi K. Bhabha. In Chapter 4 of *The Location of Culture*, he defines mimicry as “what emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal . The sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which appropriates the other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 86).

9. Cultural Alienation: According to *Fiveable*, cultural alienation is “a sense of disconnection or estrangement an individual feels from their own culture or society, often arising from external influences such as colonization, globalization, or social change” (“Cultural Alienation”).

1.5 Theoretical Background

This study is rooted in ‘postcolonial theory’. Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance (“An Introduction to Post-Colonialism”). It helps to explore how individuals and communities respond

to the long-lasting effects of foreign domination, particularly in the areas of identity, language, power, and cultural values.

Postcolonial theory was pioneered by Edward Said, who was a major figure of postcolonial thought, and his book *Orientalism* (1978) is often credited as its founding text (“Postcolonial Theory”).

Frantz Fanon, another prominent theorist, in Chapter 4 of his work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, analyzes the psychological impact of Western standards of civilization on colonized people and how it leads them to see themselves as inferior and suffer from an identity crisis. He captures the reality of the colonized subjects’ alienation from both the culture of their roots and the colonial culture they are taught to admire (Fanon 83-108). This perspective is important for the analysis of Obi Okonkwo in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*, whose rigid traditional Ibo roots and overwhelming British education clash with each other.

Homi K. Bhabha explores the concepts of hybridity (p.112), and mimicry (p.86) in *The Location of Culture*. These concepts capture the paradox of acceptance and non-acceptance experienced by the colonized in the colonial culture (Bhabha 86,112). Bhabha’s perspectives aid in unraveling the multifaceted complexities of Ifemelu’s identity in *Americanah*, where her experience in America highlights her constant negotiation between Nigerian and Western values, especially in terms of race, beauty, and belonging.

Main Tenets of Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory focuses on:

The concept of Otherness. According to *Fiveable*, “it refers to the ways in which individuals and groups are perceived and constructed as different or outside the dominant cultural norms” (“Otherness”). This concept has its roots in the works of Edward Said and Homi

K. Bhabha. Said's *Orientalism* explores how Western colonial powers constructed the 'Orient' as an exotic and inferior 'Other', reinforcing dominant narratives of power and control (Said 31). Bhabha built on Said's work, arguing that otherness is a complex and ambivalent concept that is negotiated through cultural and social interactions (Bhabha 91).

The concept of Identity Crisis. Postcolonial theory examines how colonialism leads to an identity crisis among colonized people, where individuals struggle to reconcile traditional cultural identity with imposed colonial values, resulting in alienation and psychological conflict (Fanon 83-108).

The concepts of Mimicry and Hybridity. Bhabha's concept of mimicry describes the ambivalent imitation of colonial culture by colonized subjects, which can be both a form of resistance and a reinforcement of colonial power (Bhabha 86). Hybridity describes the identity conflict that arises when colonized people blend their native culture with that of their colonizers. This results in a mixed identity that is rich but unstable (Bhabha 112).

The concept of resistance. Across literature, education, and everyday practices, colonized people have found ways to challenge and reclaim their cultures and identities. Whether through writing, language revival, or refusing imposed standards, these acts of resistance are central to the postcolonial experience.

Although postcolonial theory is widely influential, scholars have criticized it. Aijaz Ahmad in his critique argues that, "postcolonial theory often focuses heavily on textual and discursive analysis while neglecting material realities such as economic and class structures that sustain neo-colonialism and it tends to emphasize elite intellectual debates, ignoring the everyday struggles of ordinary postcolonial subjects" (Ahmad 5-6).

Despite these criticisms, postcolonial theory remains valuable for examining how colonial history and its aftermath continue to shape the identities of African characters in both novels. It offers insight into the lasting psychological and cultural challenges faced by individuals navigating between native traditions and foreign influences.

1.6 Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

Over the years, a wide range of scholars have explored the impact of colonialism on African identity, especially through literature. Many of these studies show how colonial experiences, whether direct or indirect, continue to shape the ways individuals see themselves and interact with the world around them.

Chinua Achebe's works, including *No Longer at Ease*, have often been discussed in relation to how colonial rule disrupted traditional African life and created a new generation of Africans caught between two worlds. Critics like Simon Gikandi, Kevin Frank and Dr. S. M. Nandini have emphasized how Achebe uses his characters to represent this struggle.

Simon Gikandi describes *No Longer at Ease* as "not just a story of individual moral failure but a systematic critique of a society whose cultural and moral systems have been transformed by colonialism. Achebe's project here is to explore the dialectic between a subjectivity that is committed to the public good and a modernity that redefines virtue in terms of individual accumulation and consumption" (Gikandi 98).

Kevin Frank explores the problem of both social and colonial alienation. He posits that *No Longer at Ease* exposes colonialism's exacerbation of preexisting Umuofian alienation and suggests that alienation neither encourages positive development nor improves quality of life. In his perspective, Obi's tragedy results from racially based, colonial alienation (Frank 21, 26).

Another scholar, Dr. S. M. Nandini says that “the title suggests something obvious - someone once felt comfortable and is now feeling uneasy. The title reflects the discomfort felt by the main character, Obi Okonkwo. His university education in England has left him feeling alienated from his family and friends. While in England, he was alone in a foreign place, thousands of miles from his family, speaking a foreign tongue. But that does not mean that he felt comfortable in England. There he was, studying in an alien culture, feeling uncomfortable and different. However, when he returns to Nigeria, not only does he not fit with his fellow countrymen, but also uncomfortable among the English expatriates in Nigeria. He does not feel content with his own folks and he does not feel at ease with the other guys, either” (Nandini 56).

Similarly, *Americanah* has attracted global attention for its exploration of postcolonial identity in a more contemporary, globalized context. Critics such as Badri Prasad Acharya, Prabal Koirala and Melony Akpoghene have analyzed how Adichie portrays race, migration, and belonging through Ifemelu's experience in the United States and her return to Nigeria.

Badri Prasad Acharya and Prabal Koirala analyze the novel as a transnational fiction that shows how transnational identity is formulated in a liminal space. According to them, “Adichie portrays her Nigerian characters like Ifemelu in transnational context not only to critique Western multicultural ethos policy to encourage transnational immigrants to assimilate to mainstream culture of the hostland but also to valorize the role of transnational subjects like Ifemelu for the development of their homeland even in the age of globalization. Difficulty in the formation of identity in the host country is at the heart of the novel. Both Ifemelu and Obinze are destined to follow the Western lifestyle while attempting to maintain their native way of life at the same time” (67, 68).

Another critic, Melony Akpoghene views *Americanah* as a narrative where “power manifests in the insidiousness of racism, the inequalities of immigration systems, and the gendered dynamics of love and desire. *Americanah* is as much about the failures of Western liberalism as it is about the complexities of Nigerian identity. Adichie’s portrayal of Lagos as a city of ambition, corruption, and reinvention stands in stark contrast to the sanitized multiculturalism of American suburbia. In returning to Nigeria, Ifemelu confronts the inadequacies of her American education and worldview, recognizing that her critique of Western racism does not fully equip her to navigate the intricacies of home. The ethics of her decision to rekindle a romance with Obinze, a married man, is always questioned. Ifemelu’s choices are shaped by the messiness of desire, memory, and longing, a narrative honesty that mirrors life itself” (2, 3).

One key idea that emerges from both books and that scholars consistently highlight, is the complexity of identity in a postcolonial world. Postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon provide helpful views here. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity and mimicry (Bhabha 112,86), and Fanon’s ideas about cultural alienation and psychological oppression (Fanon 140-141), help us understand why characters like Obi and Ifemelu feel confused, out of place, or disconnected at times. Their identities are not fixed or simple; instead, they are shaped by both the past (colonialism) and the present (globalization and migration).

While much has been written on each novel separately, only a few studies have placed Achebe and Adichie in direct conversation, especially in terms of how both authors deal with colonialism’s long-term impact on identity.

For example, "Culture Shock in The Novels *Americanah* and *No Longer at Ease*" compares both novels and states that, “in *Americanah*, Ifemelu, feeling very undermined because

of her strong foreign accent, immediately starts working on her American accent and even goes ahead to straighten her naturally kinky African hair. The author shows us Ifemelu's journey with accepting herself and her hybrid-ness throughout the rest of the book. She starts to embrace her African hair and discards her American accent for good. She reaches a point where she realizes that she can never be fully American nor Nigerian. Meanwhile, in *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo seems to also have a peculiar sort of culture shock as it was to his own Nigerian home and this is implied in many instances throughout the book. He is shocked by the difference in the Lagos that he dreamt and wrote poems about for so long and the different city that he was seeing now. It seems as though ironically, his fantasy phase with Lagos culture shock happened in England and when he landed home, he finds himself not recognizing the place that he once dreamed about in England” (Culture Shock 2,3).

Although Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* has been widely studied for its postcolonial themes, few scholars have examined it alongside Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* in terms of generational shifts in identity. This study fills that gap by comparing how both authors represent postcolonialism and identity across two distinct historical periods. It helps to see how the legacy of colonialism is not only historical but also deeply personal and ongoing.

1.7 Thesis Statement

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* show how language, education, and culture create alienation, identity conflict, and a struggle to belong as evolving impacts of colonialism across two generations.

CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN POSTCOLONIAL NIGERIA

2.1 Introduction

Language, according to *Collins Dictionary*, is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols that are used by the people of a particular country or region. In Nigeria, colonialism deeply transformed language and identity. During British colonial rule, English gradually replaced indigenous languages as the official medium of communication. This shift did not only affect how people spoke or wrote but also how they saw themselves.

Asma Khodja writes that language has always been central to culture and identity. It is not merely a tool for communication, but a cornerstone of human identity. This is why colonizers deliberately targeted the languages of the colonized in an attempt to erode their identity. When the colonized adopt the colonizer's language, they often unconsciously absorb foreign ideas, beliefs, and cultural values. This shift can alter their way of thinking and detach them from their native culture. Africans, in particular, were deeply affected by this issue (1).

This chapter examines colonialism's impact on language and identity in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. It explores how the use of English and indigenous languages affects the characters' sense of self and belonging.

2.2 Language as Power and Alienation in *No Longer at Ease*

No Longer at Ease reflects how the colonizer's language impacts the colonized, particularly Nigerians, by shaping their identity and worldview. Chinua Achebe highlights how language became one of colonialism's most powerful tools to suppress indigenous cultures. Though Achebe himself chose to write in English to reach a global audience, his works consistently reveal how English, as the language of the colonizer, carries both power and loss for Africans.

In the novel, Obi Okonkwo represents a generation that believed acquiring English education would enable them to serve their country better, but they found themselves unconsciously becoming the second version of the colonizers (Khodja 1). This reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, where the colonized adopt the culture and language of the colonizer but remain neither fully native nor fully colonial (Bhabha 112).

Obi's choice to study English Literature instead of Law illustrates this influence even before he travelled to England (Khodja 2). As the narrator explains:

They wanted him to read law so that when he returned he would handle all their land cases... But when he got to England he read English; his self-will was not new. The Union was angry but in the end they left him alone. (6)

Here, his community hoped he would return with practical knowledge to help resolve local disputes, but Obi chose English, a subject shaped by colonial influence, further alienating him from his people's expectations.

This alienation is also evident in Obi's discomfort when forced to speak English with fellow Nigerians from other tribes:

He spoke Ibo whenever he had the least opportunity of doing so. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to find another Ibo-speaking student in a London bus. But when he had to speak in English with a Nigerian student from another tribe he lowered his voice. It was humiliating to have to speak to one's countryman in a foreign language. (45)

This moment reveals the inner conflict produced by colonial language. While English is a unifying national language, it also serves as a reminder of cultural loss and imposed identity. Obi's embarrassment reflects what Homi Bhabha describes as mimicry, the colonized subject

imitates the language and behavior of the colonizer, but this imitation is always incomplete and marked by ambivalence (Bhabha 86). In Obi's case, speaking English creates a psychological rift; it grants mobility yet reinforces a sense of inferiority and alienation, especially when used among his own people.

Asma Khodja further observes that “due to the influence of the western culture, Obi starts to feel alienation and anxiety instead of comfort. The paradox in the novel was embodied when Obi decided to study English Literature instead of law: The English (language) influenced him to the extent that he found himself in front of a trial. So if he studied law, he would not find himself in such a situation. Hence, the title reflects the absence of ease among the adoption of the colonizer language” (Khodja 4). The title *No Longer at Ease* underscores the discomfort and dislocation experienced by those who adopt the colonizer's language and values, yet cannot fully belong in either world.

This alienation deepens when Obi returns to Nigeria and struggles to fit in. At the Umuofia Progressive Union meeting, he cannot express himself fluently in Ibo, and the narrator observes:

The speech which had started off one hundred percent in Ibo was now fifty-fifty.
But his audience still seemed highly impressed. (74)

Although his mixed speech impresses the elders due to his status, it reveals his weakened connection to his native language.

In essence, for Obi, English offers education, power, and prestige, but it also distances him from Ibo linguistic heritage, communal wisdom, and traditional ways of knowing. Achebe portrays language as a double-edged sword: it elevates Obi socially yet isolates him culturally,

leaving him trapped between the world of his ancestors and the Western world that reshaped his identity.

This alienation leads to his downfall because he does not fully belong to either world, leaving him open to corruption and cut off from both traditional values and Western morals. Language, as Achebe shows, remains a lasting colonial legacy that continues to shape Nigerian education, bureaucracy, and personal identity.

2.3 Language, Race, and Belonging in *Americanah*

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores how language and race shape Ifemelu's sense of belonging both in Nigeria and in America. The novel shows that language is not just about words; it is tied to power, acceptance, and identity.

Ifemelu's journey with language reflects her negotiation of identity. At first, she rejects American expressions and accents, finding many phrases artificial:

When you tripped and fell, when you choked, when misfortune befell you, they did not say 'Sorry.' They said 'Are you okay?' when it was obvious that you were not... And they overused the word 'excited,'... it was altogether too much excitement. (Adichie 134; *The Struggle to Pretend and Belong*)

However, Ifemelu soon realizes that her Nigerian accent marks her as inferior in a society that privileges American speech. This is evident when she goes to register for classes and meets Cristina Tomas:

Cristina Tomas spoke slowly to Ifemelu as if she were a child, asking, "Do. You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?" When Ifemelu replied, "I speak English," Cristina retorted, "I just don't know how well." In that moment, Ifemelu felt she "shrank like a dried leaf." (163-164)

This encounter deeply shames her and leads her to begin practicing an American accent. Over time, she unconsciously adopts expressions she once criticized. When Obinze points out her use of “*excited*”, she realizes, “*New words were falling out of her mouth.*” (Adichie 136; *The Struggle to Pretend and Belong*)

Here, Adichie shows that learning a language is not neutral; it shapes identity, creating what Homi Bhabha calls hybridity, a blending of cultures where the colonized adopt aspects of the colonizer’s language and values, creating a mixed identity that is neither entirely native nor foreign (Bhabha 112).

Despite perfecting an American accent, Ifemelu feels it is unnatural:

If she were in a panic, or terrified, or jerked awake during a fire, she would not remember how to produce those American sounds. (183)

Her decision to stop faking an accent comes after a telemarketer says, “*Wow. Cool. You sound totally American.*” to which she replies, “*Thank you.*” (215). Later, she feels deep shame for her gratitude, thinking:

Why was it a compliment, an accomplishment, to sound American?... because she had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers. (215-216)

Adichie also illustrates how accent discrimination affects immigrants beyond Ifemelu. In a hair salon, Halima shares the pain her son faced in school:

When I come here with my son they beat him in school because of African accent... Black boys beat him like this. Now accent go and no problems. (230)

These experiences show that in America, accent is about power, dignity, and belonging. For Ifemelu, adopting an American accent grants social acceptance but alienates her from her Nigerian self.

Race also shapes Ifemelu's belonging. In Nigeria, she never thought of herself as Black. However, in America, her race became the first thing people noticed about her. This shift is captured in her blog:

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. (359)

She also notices how American society promotes whiteness as the ideal standard. In her blog, she observes: *So whiteness is the thing to aspire to. Not everyone does, of course* (253).

Here, she points out how beauty standards, speech patterns, and behaviours are often designed around whiteness, pressuring Black people to assimilate or change themselves to be accepted.

Even her relationship with Curt, a white man, reveals how race complicates intimacy:

When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. (359)

Although love feels equal in private, public spaces remind her of racial differences, and she often suppresses her feelings to avoid being called sensitive or angry.

Overall, *Americanah* shows how language and race intertwine to shape identity. Adichie uses Ifemelu's experiences and blog to expose hidden racial tensions in America, revealing that while learning American English and adopting its accent may bring social acceptance, it also

erodes cultural identity. Despite this, Ifemelu reclaims her voice by writing honestly about her experiences, building a sense of belonging grounded in truth rather than forced assimilation.

2.4 Comparative Analysis

Both *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah* explore how colonial language continues to shape identity across different generations. While Achebe focuses on post-independence Nigeria and the internal conflicts faced by a young man returning from England, Adichie presents the complexities of race and belonging through the experiences of a Nigerian woman navigating American society. Despite differences in context and time, both novels depict language as a powerful tool of assimilation, alienation, and identity transformation.

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo's struggle reflects the early postcolonial reality where English is both a symbol of social mobility and a source of cultural disconnection. His choice to study English Literature, against the expectations of his community, marks a shift from communal identity to individual aspiration rooted in colonial education. His inability to speak fluent Ibo upon return: "the speech which had started off one hundred percent in Ibo was now fifty-fifty" (74) symbolizes how English has alienated him from his roots. Language in Achebe's novel operates as a double-edged sword: it grants access to colonial structures of power while severing ties with indigenous values.

Similarly, in *Americanah*, Ifemelu undergoes linguistic transformation as she assimilates into American culture. However, her experience introduces a racial dimension absent from Obi's. While Obi's English education isolates him culturally, Ifemelu's Nigerian accent becomes a marker of inferiority in a society where "sounding American" is praised (215). Like Obi, she perfects a foreign language for acceptance, yet feels shame and loss of authenticity as a result. The scene with Cristina Tomas (163), where she is treated like a child on account of her accent,

shows the subtle violence of linguistic discrimination. Adichie highlights that accent is not just a marker of origin but of class, intelligence, and social worth in the American racial hierarchy.

Both characters reflect Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, embodying identities caught between two cultural worlds. Obi is "neither fully native nor fully colonial," and Ifemelu is "neither fully Nigerian nor fully American." In both cases, the colonial language serves as a vehicle of transformation, elevating them socially but fragmenting their sense of self.

However, the generational shift is clear: Obi internalizes his alienation silently, leading to moral and social collapse; Ifemelu, by contrast, resists through self-reflection and blogging, ultimately reclaiming her voice.

Furthermore, race compounds Ifemelu's experience in a way Obi's does not. While both struggle with belonging, Ifemelu becomes "black" only upon arriving in America, a socially constructed identity loaded with historical and systemic implications. In her blog she writes, "I only became black when I came to America" (359), revealing how racial identity is shaped by external perceptions, not self-definition. Obi's alienation stems more from cultural dislocation and generational pressure than from visible racial difference.

Both *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah* expose how the enduring power of colonial language shapes individual identities, though in different contexts. Achebe focuses on the legacy of colonialism in newly independent Nigeria, while Adichie explores its evolution in a globalized, racially stratified world. Through Obi and Ifemelu, both authors show that language, once used to control the colonized, continues to influence how Africans relate to themselves and others bridging or breaking their sense of cultural belonging.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how language shapes identity and belonging in *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah*. It explores how English gives Obi power but also alienates him from his roots and how Ifemelu faces racial and accent-based discrimination in America, revealing how language is linked to race and social acceptance. Both characters experience identity conflicts, showing that colonialism's effects are ongoing.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION AS EMPOWERMENT AND BURDEN

3.1 Introduction

Education, according to *Fiveable*, is the systematic process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various forms of instruction and learning experiences. It plays a vital role in shaping individuals' understanding of their rights and responsibilities, influencing their political beliefs, and promoting civic engagement.

While education is often seen as a path to personal advancement and empowerment, it also remains one of the most enduring legacies of colonialism. In both *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah*, Western education functions as a double-edged sword. It provides opportunities for social mobility and global access but simultaneously distances characters from their roots, creating identity and belonging crisis.

This chapter explores how education transforms the lives of Obi Okonkwo and Ifemelu, showing how colonial influence on education continues to exert psychological and social pressure across generations.

3.2 Education in *No Longer at Ease*

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo's British education is portrayed as both a source of empowerment and a heavy burden. In colonial Nigeria, communities often sponsored promising youths to study abroad with the hope that they would return and serve as agents of development.

Obi is the first recipient of such a scholarship from the Umuofia Progressive Union:

Six or seven years ago Umuofians abroad had formed their Union with the aim of collecting money to send some of their brighter young men to study in England...

The first scholarship under this scheme was awarded to Obi Okonkwo...

Although they called it a scholarship it was to be repaid... They wanted him to read law so that when he returned he would handle all their land cases against their neighbors. (6)

However, Obi defies expectations by choosing to study English Literature instead of Law:

They wanted him to read law... But when he got to England he read English... Although he would not be a lawyer, he would get a 'European post' in the civil service. (6)

This decision, while tolerated by the Union, sets the stage for his internal conflict. Although Obi gains status upon returning to Nigeria and secures a well-paying civil service job, a car, and accommodation, his education creates a rift between him and his community. He begins to feel shame for studying English and increasingly senses cultural disconnection:

Four years in England had filled Obi with a longing to be back in Umuofia. This feeling was sometimes so strong that he found himself feeling ashamed of studying English for his degree. (45)

Obi's Western education creates a hybrid identity, he is no longer fully Ibo nor fully European. This in-between state leads to alienation, a condition postcolonial scholars like Bhabha call "hybridity." His education becomes a defining feature of his identity, influencing how others perceive and relate to him, as well as what they expect from him (Barker). Yet, the very education he values so highly also contributes to his sense of otherness within his own society.

His education serves both as an advantage and a disadvantage. While it earns him respect and social standing, it also distances him from his cultural background. During his welcome

ceremony, his choice of clothing and relaxed manner of speaking disappoint the Union elders, who anticipated a more appropriate presentation. His formal education does little to equip him for the emotional, moral, and cultural challenges he faces upon returning home (Barker).

Obi's status also exposes him to temptations. As Secretary of the Scholarship Board, people expect him to take bribes but his friend defends him, saying:

‘E no be like dat,’ said Joseph. ‘Him na gentleman. No fit take bribe.’

“Na so,” said the other in unbelief. (70)

Their reaction foreshadows Obi's eventual moral decline. At first, he resists corruption, even when offered money and sexual favors by scholarship applicants. But the pressure builds:

It was rather sheer hypocrisy to ask if a scholarship was as important as all that...

A university degree was the philosopher's stone... To occupy a 'European post' was second only to actually being a European. (84)

This line reveals the power and prestige attached to foreign education and how the colonized mimic the behavior, status, and structure of the colonizers in an attempt to gain acceptance and power, a process Homi Bhabha describes as mimicry. Obi himself becomes a mimic man adopting Western speech, values, and behaviors while losing touch with traditional systems and ethics.

His education also shapes his personal values such as his intention to marry Clara, an Osu (a caste considered outcast). Joseph rebukes him, saying:

You know book, but this is no matter for book... Obi's mission house upbringing and European education had made him a stranger in his country. (64)

This reveals how Obi's education redefines his identity, making him appear “less Nigerian” in the eyes of his peers.

The final fracture comes when Obi fails to attend his mother's burial, choosing instead to remain in Lagos and send all the money needed. The Umuofia Progressive Union is appalled, and the President states:

A man may go to England, become a lawyer or a doctor, but it does not change his blood. It is like a bird that flies off the earth and lands on an anthill. It is still on the ground. (146)

This reaction reflects how deeply the community values tradition and views Western education as insufficient to define a man's true character. Despite Obi's learning, he is still expected to obey communal responsibilities.

Eventually, Obi succumbs to the very corruption he once resisted. He accepts a bribe and is caught in a sting operation. The judge laments: I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this (1).

Ironically, Obi's Western education gave him success but failed to prepare him for the moral challenges of his society. His downfall was not from lack of intelligence, but from an education that gave him status yet distanced him from his cultural roots.

Ultimately, education in *No Longer at Ease* is shown as a paradox. It elevates, but also isolates. It offers opportunity, yet brings pressure and moral conflict. Achebe presents Western education not as an unbiased system, but as a lasting colonial influence that still shapes and at times damages the identity of the postcolonial elite.

3.3 Education in *Americanah*

Education in *Americanah* functions as both a pathway to empowerment and a source of alienation. For Ifemelu, the protagonist, it opens doors to global opportunity, yet distances her

from familiar cultural roots. Through her academic journey, Chimamanda Adichie explores how education, particularly Western education, shapes identity, migration, race, and belonging.

Ifemelu's decision to migrate to the United States is driven by the dysfunction of Nigeria's educational system. Recurrent university strikes disrupt her studies at Nsukka and push her to seek stability abroad:

We're on strike." "Ahn-ahn! The strike hasn't ended?" "No...we went back to school and then they started another one. (121)

Her move to America is not just a pursuit of knowledge, but an escape from systemic failure. Encouraged by Obinze who tells her: "You can study something else in America" (123).

Despite receiving a partial scholarship, Ifemelu faces intense financial strain. Without legal means to work, she is driven into a degrading encounter with a tennis coach who offers her money in exchange for sexual favors: "Now what I need is help to relax. If you want the job you have it" (177).

This traumatic experience marks a turning point, exposing the hidden costs of surviving in a foreign academic system as an immigrant.

Initially, Ifemelu finds American education easy: "School in America was easy, assignments sent in by e-mail, classrooms air-conditioned, professors willing to give makeup tests" (164).

But she criticizes the emphasis on what she sees as superficial classroom participation: "Class time wasted on obvious words, hollow words, sometimes meaningless words" (164).

Despite excelling academically, she feels invisible, a reflection of how Black immigrants are overlooked despite their achievements.

Ifemelu's early encounter with racism occurs subtly during a registration process:

“Are. You. An. International. Student?”

“Yes.”

“You. Will. First. Need. To. Get. A. Letter...” (163).

The receptionist spoke to Ifemelu in an exaggeratedly slow tone, as if she wasn't smart enough to understand. This subtle insult shows the kind of racial bias that immigrants often experience.

Despite these struggles, Ifemelu regains control over her life through education. She becomes a successful blogger, using her personal experiences to educate others about race and identity in America: “Her blog was doing well... she was earning good speaking fees, and she had a fellowship at Princeton” (7).

Her blog serves as a tool for counter-education, giving her a platform to challenge dominant racial narratives and reclaim her voice.

Ifemelu's journey reflects the concept of postcolonial hybridity. As she adapts to American norms while holding on to her Nigerian identity, she becomes a hybrid subject, belonging fully to neither culture. As theorized by Homi Bhabha, this “in-between” state produces a complex but empowered identity. Ifemelu questions, assimilates, resists, and finally reconstructs herself on her own terms.

By the time Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, she is profoundly transformed. Her return is not about going back to how things were, but about seeing herself in a new way. She integrates her experiences abroad with her Nigerian reality, choosing to exist between both worlds rather than fully assimilate into either.

Ultimately, *Americanah* portrays education as a powerful yet paradoxical force. It offers Ifemelu the tools for mobility and self-expression, but also exposes her to racism, alienation, and

cultural conflict. Adichie critiques the postcolonial obsession with Western education, revealing that while it promises success, it often demands emotional sacrifice for the colonized.

3.4 Comparative Analysis

Both Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* critically explore the dual nature of Western education in postcolonial contexts. In each novel, education functions as a double-edged sword granting characters access to global opportunities while simultaneously alienating them from their cultural roots. Through the experiences of Obi Okonkwo and Ifemelu, the two authors highlight how education, especially when obtained abroad, becomes both a vehicle for personal advancement and a site of identity conflict.

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi's British education is a symbol of prestige and hope for the Umuofia community. It is meant to empower him to serve his people and participate in the governance of a modernizing Nigeria. Similarly, in *Americanah*, Ifemelu's move to America for schooling is driven by the failure of Nigeria's educational system specifically, the frequent strikes at her university. Like Obi, she seeks a better future through the promises of a Western education.

However, both characters quickly realize that the advantages of foreign education come with heavy costs. Obi, despite returning to Nigeria with a civil service job and social respect, finds himself emotionally and morally unprepared for the pressures of his role. His education alienates him from traditional expectations, seen in how he disappoints the Umuofia elders and struggles with communal values. Likewise, Ifemelu's academic excellence in America does not shield her from financial hardship, racial bias, or cultural dislocation. Her humiliating experience with the tennis coach, along with the subtle racism she faces, shows that achieving success in a Western system often requires immigrants to make difficult and painful sacrifices.

Both characters embody postcolonial hybridity, as described by Homi Bhabha. Obi and Ifemelu exist in an “in-between” space: neither fully accepted by their traditional roots nor completely assimilated into Western culture. Obi’s choice to study English instead of law already marks a subtle act of resistance, but it distances him from the expectations of his community. Similarly, Ifemelu initially adopts American norms but gradually begins to critique and reject them, especially in how she writes about race and identity in her blog. Her return to Nigeria, much like Obi’s, represents a critical point of reflection where she confronts both her sense of self and the demands of society. However, unlike Obi who is defeated by the system, Ifemelu returns stronger, empowered and firmly rooted in her sense of self.

Adichie’s *Americanah* further expands on themes that Achebe introduces in *No Longer at Ease*, particularly by highlighting gender and race. Unlike Obi, Ifemelu must navigate not only cultural alienation but also gendered expectations and racial prejudice in America. Her ability to turn personal struggle into public voice through blogging and speaking engagements suggests a more proactive use of education, even though it is not without sacrifice. Obi, on the other hand, is portrayed as more passive and eventually succumbs to the very corruption he once resisted, illustrating a tragic arc of failed potential.

In both narratives, Western education is not simply a tool for success but a complex force that reshapes identity, values, and belonging. Achebe and Adichie show that in a postcolonial context, education still reflects colonial influence encouraging imitation of Western ideals while discouraging genuine cultural expression. While Obi and Ifemelu both experience disconnection, shame, and moral conflict, their stories differ in outcome: Obi’s ends in disillusionment and downfall, while Ifemelu’s ends in redefinition and reintegration.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter explores how education empowers yet alienates characters in *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah*. Obi and Ifemelu gain status and opportunity through Western education but face disconnection from their cultures. Their experiences reflect the struggles of identity, belonging, and postcolonial hybridity. Education offers growth but also exposes them to moral, emotional, and social challenges. Both novels critique the colonial legacy tied to education.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURE, TRADITION, AND POSTCOLONIAL CONFLICT

4.1 Introduction

Culture refers to the way of life of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, customs, social habits, music, art, and worldviews (“Culture”). Tradition consists of long-standing beliefs, principles, and practices passed down within a community (“Tradition”). Postcolonial conflict, on the other hand, describes the active disagreements that arise after the end of colonial rule, often emerging from tensions between traditional cultural values and the influences of colonial legacies.

In postcolonial African societies, culture and tradition frequently come into conflict with Western ideals introduced through colonial education, religion, and governance. Such clashes are central to Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah*.

This chapter examines how Achebe and Adichie use their protagonists to portray cultural conflict and alienation as central features of postcolonial identity. By examining Obi’s struggles in *No Longer at Ease* alongside Ifemelu’s experiences in *Americanah*, the chapter shows how culture and tradition remain deeply contested in the postcolonial era, shaping characters’ identities in complex and often contradictory ways.

4.2 Cultural Conflict and Alienation in *No Longer at Ease*

In *No Longer at Ease*, Chinua Achebe presents Obi Okonkwo as a man caught between the conflicting demands of traditional Ibo culture and the Western values imposed through colonial influence. Obi’s life reflects the tension of postcolonial identity: he is neither fully Ibo nor western. This conflict produces a deep sense of alienation that drives his downfall.

The Umuofia Progressive Union initially sponsors Obi to study law, hoping he would defend their land cases. Obi, however, defies their expectations by studying English instead, a choice that reflects his desire to escape communal responsibility. While his education should have empowered him, it instead distances him from his community and lays the foundation for his tragic alienation.

Obi's hybrid identity is further complicated by his upbringing. His father, Isaac Okonkwo, a devout Christian catechist, rejected Ibo traditions. As a result, Obi and his siblings grew up estranged from their community's culture. This alienation is symbolized in Obi's childhood humiliation when he is mocked in class for not knowing a folktale to share, a direct consequence of his mother being forbidden from telling traditional stories because of her husband's faith: "We are not heathens... Stories like that are not for the people of the Church" (52). Such moments emphasize how Christianity, as a colonial legacy, severed Obi from his cultural roots and created an enduring sense of otherness.

This alienation resurfaces in Obi's adult life. On his return from England, his community celebrates him, but cultural tensions emerge even in moments of joy. When an elder requests the ritual breaking of kola to thank the ancestors for Obi's safe return, Isaac refuses, declaring that kola will not be used for "heathen sacrifice" in his house (46). The kola is instead blessed with Christian prayers, symbolizing the uneasy clash between Ibo tradition and colonial religion. Here, Achebe dramatizes how Christianity breaks communal practices and contributes to division within families (Lokare 160-161).

The most intense cultural conflict arises in Obi's decision to marry Clara, an *osu*, a woman descended from a caste once dedicated to serving deities and therefore considered outcast. Joseph, Obi's friend, finds the idea unthinkable:

“You know book, but this is no matter for book. Do you know what an osu is? ... Obi’s mission-house upbringing and European education had made him a stranger in his country.” (64-65)

Joseph’s words highlight the alienation created by Obi’s Westernization: his education has not freed him from prejudice but instead left him caught between two irreconcilable worlds.

Even Obi’s father, despite being a Christian, opposes the marriage, insisting that the taboo of the osu is “deeper than you think” (120). This conflict demonstrates how colonial religion failed to erase indigenous traditions completely, leaving individuals like Obi stranded in a space where neither the old nor the new can provide belonging. His insistence on marrying Clara, an act he sees as pioneering modernity isolates him from both family and community.

Critics have noted that Obi’s predicament reflects a larger postcolonial dilemma. Homi Bhabha argues that colonialism produces hybrid identities in which neither the colonizer nor the colonized remain culturally “independent” (Bhabha 116). Obi represents this hybridity as he admires English culture yet longs to reconnect with his Ibo roots. Instead of harmonizing these identities, the clash leaves him alienated everywhere. Litcharts observes that Obi was “never at ease,” not in England, where he felt foreign, nor in Nigeria, where Christianity and Western ideals distanced him from his people. His life becomes an “impossible bind,” in which the very values meant to empower him instead deepen his loneliness and cultural displacement (“Western Influence and Alienation”).

Ultimately, Obi’s downfall is inseparable from these cultural conflicts. His alienation from folktales, from rituals like kola breaking, from the prohibitions against marrying an osu erodes his sense of belonging and drives him into isolation. Achebe uses Obi’s tragedy to reveal

the cost of postcolonial identity: caught between tradition and modernity, individuals are often broken by the very forces that promised progress.

4.3 Cultural Identity and Beauty Standards in *Americanah*

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses the character of Ifemelu to explore how cultural identity and beauty standards are negotiated in a Western society dominated by racial prejudice and Eurocentric ideals. After relocating to America, Ifemelu struggles with a sense of dislocation, finding herself in a culture where her authenticity is undervalued and her identity reshaped by external judgments. Through this lens, Adichie examines the cultural clash, subtle racism, and pressure to assimilate that shape the experiences of Black immigrants.

One way this conflict emerges is through names. Nigerian migrants like Auntie Uju alter the pronunciation of their names (“you-ju”) to make them easier for Americans, while Ifemelu and Obinze also disguise their names at different points. This practice highlights how assimilation often begins with identity markers as basic as one’s name, signaling the compromises immigrants make in order to “fit in” (Sanesh 437).

Physical appearance also becomes a way of struggle. In Nigeria, Ifemelu was never judged harshly for her body, but in America, she faces fat-shaming, as when a stranger in a supermarket mutters, “Fat people don’t need to be eating that shit” (6). Similarly, her friend Ginika, considered a beauty in Nigeria, is dismissed as unattractive in America and pressured to become thin. These shifting standards highlight how beauty is culturally relative, while also revealing the harsh racialized expectations imposed on Black women in the West (Sanesh 438).

Hair functions as perhaps the most powerful symbol of cultural identity in the novel. For a woman like Auntie Uju, natural hairstyles are deemed “unprofessional,” forcing her to straighten her hair before job interviews: “You are in a country that is not your own. You do what

you have to do if you want to succeed” (146). Ifemelu internalizes these same pressures, relaxing her hair in an attempt to meet American expectations of professionalism. Yet this choice leaves her feeling mournful, as the act of burning and straightening her hair becomes a metaphor for the suppression of her Black identity: “The smell of burning, of something organic dying ... made her feel a sense of loss” (251).

Her relationship with Curt highlights this cultural compromise. While he admires her natural hair, Ifemelu insists that “professional” in America means straightened or loosely curled hair, never kinky (252). The chemicals eventually damage her scalp, forcing her to cut her hair and embrace her natural Afro once again, even though this choice brings new stigmatization, with colleagues asking if she is a lesbian (262). In this way, Adichie reveals how hair politics expose the deeper struggles of race, gender, and assimilation in America.

Ifemelu also becomes aware of how racism penetrates cultural spaces such as magazines, which rarely feature dark-skinned women. She notes that beauty tips cater exclusively to white features, blue or green eyes, straight or wavy hair, leaving no space for her own appearance (321). This realization reinforces her alienation but also strengthens her determination to reject imposed norms.

Ultimately, Ifemelu’s decision to embrace her natural hair marks a symbolic act of resistance and self-definition. By reclaiming her authentic identity, she resists assimilation and challenges the narrow, Eurocentric definitions of beauty and success. Adichie uses this journey not only to highlight the politics of hair and body image but also to critique how cultural identity is constantly negotiated under systems of racial hierarchy (“Cultural Identity in *Americanah*”). Through Ifemelu, Adichie encourages readers to question societal prejudices and embrace the

richness of cultural diversity, showing that true empowerment lies in self-acceptance rather than conformity.

4.4 Comparative Analysis

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* both explore the complexities of cultural identity in postcolonial and diasporic contexts, though their settings and emphases differ significantly. Achebe situates his narrative within Nigeria at the dawn of independence, where the protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, struggles to reconcile Ibo traditions with the Western values instilled through colonial education and religion. Adichie, by contrast, situates Ifemelu's journey in twenty-first-century America, focusing on the challenges of negotiating identity, race, and beauty standards within a globalized, racially stratified society. Despite these differences, both texts highlight how cultural conflict and pressures of assimilation changes individual identity, leading to alienation, resistance, or downfall.

In Achebe's novel, cultural conflict emerges from the intersection of indigenous Ibo traditions and the lingering influences of colonialism. Obi's alienation begins with his father Isaac's rejection of traditional practices in favour of Christianity, depriving him of folktales and communal rituals that once defined Ibo childhood. His further Westernization through education abroad deepens this distance, leaving him "no longer at ease" in either world. This alienation manifests most dramatically in his choice to marry Clara, an osu, which places him in direct conflict with both tradition and family expectations. Obi's downfall is therefore inseparable from the hybrid identity produced by colonialism, he is unable to harmonize tradition and modernity, and instead is defeated by their contradictions. Achebe's critique emphasizes the destructive impact of colonial legacies on cultural continuity and individual belonging.

In contrast, Adichie's *Americanah* explores cultural identity in the diaspora, where the conflict arises not between Christianity and tradition but between African authenticity and Western racialized beauty standards. Ifemelu's struggles are embodied most visibly through her hair, which becomes a site of negotiation between assimilation and self-acceptance. Straightening her hair for job interviews symbolizes the suppression of her Nigerian identity to conform to American ideals of professionalism, while her eventual decision to embrace her natural hair represents resistance and reclamation of self. Similarly, the pressure to alter names, body shapes, or fashion to fit Western expectations reveals the pervasive reach of assimilation in immigrant experiences. Unlike Obi, who is trapped in cultural conflict and destroyed by it, Ifemelu eventually reclaims her identity, choosing authenticity over conformity. Adichie thereby presents identity not only as broken but also as resilient and capable of self-definition.

A key difference lies in how both novels frame the outcomes of cultural conflict. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi's inability to balance tradition and modernity leads to moral and social collapse, reflecting the broader challenges of Nigeria's postcolonial nation. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's struggles with beauty standards and racism expose the persistence of colonial ideologies in global spaces, but her return to Nigeria and embrace of authenticity suggest a more hopeful resolution. Where Achebe highlights the tragedy of hybridity, Adichie underscores the possibility of empowerment through self-acceptance.

However, both texts reveal that cultural identity in postcolonial contexts is never static but constantly negotiated. Obi's hybrid identity illustrates the destructive consequences of unresolved conflict between past and present, while Ifemelu's evolving identity demonstrates the endurance of selfhood amid external pressures.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter shows that both *No Longer at Ease* and *Americanah* portray identity as a struggle shaped by cultural conflict. Obi's alienation ends in tragedy, while Ifemelu resists assimilation and reclaims her true self. Together, Achebe and Adichie reveal how colonialism and modern pressures make cultural identity both fragile and constantly negotiate.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study utilized the qualitative research method which involves using the narrative and historical method in interpreting a text. A relevant theory used in this study is postcolonial theory, which explores how individuals and communities respond to the long-lasting effects of foreign domination.

The study has examined the evolving narrative of colonialism and identity, focusing on alienation, identity conflict, and the struggle to belong as enduring impacts of colonialism. It also explored the postcolonial conflicts that arise as a result of cultural and identity clashes, particularly in the postcolonial Ibo community and in the lives of Black immigrants in America, revealing the challenges and how the protagonists in both texts navigate such situations.

Chapter Two focused on language and identity in postcolonial Nigeria as a source of power, alienation, and racism, highlighting the challenges the protagonists encounter while navigating through clashing systems. The study examined how Nigerians struggle to survive in postcolonial societies: from isolation to mixed identity and racism. It revealed that the colonizer's language is not only a tool of communication but also a cornerstone of identity that can empower, alienate, and force identity negotiation.

Chapter Three discussed education as both empowerment and burden. In both texts, education functions as a double-edged sword that provides opportunities but also creates crises of belonging. Obi and Ifemelu struggle to attain Western education, and while it opens opportunities, it also alienates them. This alienation eventually leads to Obi's downfall, while Ifemelu reclaims her voice through her blog, writing about racism and the life of a Black immigrant in America.

Chapter Four examined postcolonial conflict, cultural identity, and beauty standards. It exposed the disadvantages of clashing cultures, which lead to alienation, loss of belonging, and identity negotiation. Obi continually defies Ibo customs due to his Western education and beliefs, especially in his attempt to marry an osu. Ifemelu, on the other hand, faces discrimination because of her weight, hair, and skin colour. Although she tries to assimilate, she eventually rejects imposed beauty standards and embraces her authentic identity.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to the study of scholarship by doing a comparative analysis of the evolving impacts of colonialism on identity through Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Adichie's *Americanah*. It reveals how the legacy of colonialism manifests in the domains of language, education, and culture as enduring impacts of colonialism, showing that these effects are not only historical but still deeply personal and ongoing. This research also adds to postcolonial scholarship by demonstrating how literature from different eras Achebe's mid-20th century Nigeria and Adichie's 21st-century diaspora reflects the persistence of colonial legacies, therefore bridging historical and contemporary perspectives in African literature.

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