

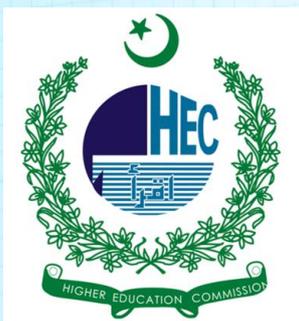
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Gender Discrimination in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus and Americanah*: A Critical Discourse Analysis



¹Muhammad Ramzan

²Mujib Rahman

¹PhD Scholar, Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar.

Email: ramzannurar@gmail.com

²Professor, Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar



Abstract

The thematic analysis of race, gender, culture, and postcolonial identity in the novels *Americanah* (2013) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the extant literature has largely operated at the level of literary and thematic criticism, using language as a clear medium to express themes, rather than as the main location where power relations are constructed, negotiated, and contested in a discursive manner. Although this approach has its value, it does not consider the linguistic processes that actually facilitate the discrimination and identity being performed in the texts. This paper attempts to fill this gap by using the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough to investigate the systematic construction of gender discrimination and identity in *Americanah* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The discussion dwells upon the specific passages where power relations become the most evident, as the scene of patriarchal authority and silence in *Purple Hibiscus* and the scene of racial negotiations and the life of immigrants in *Americanah*. This paper shows that in her fiction, Adichie not only addresses the issue of discrimination but also actually discusses it on the discursive level. According to the findings, this paper will present several recommendations regarding the next research on *Americanah* and *Purple Hibiscus* in particular. The comparison of certain discursive characteristics in the two novels is the issue that deserves further inquiry. Researchers might even study differences in the effects of silence in each text as a forced submission in *Purple Hibiscus* and as a strategic nondisclosure in *Americanah* and what it tells us about the different contexts and interests of their novels.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, *Americanah*, *Purple Hibiscus*, discrimination, gender, patriarchy

1.0 Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has left her mark as one of the most significant representatives of modern African literature. *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Americanah* (2013) received numerous positive reviews and scholarly attention for their moderate treatment of discrimination, identity, power, and resistance in postcolonial and

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diasporic contexts. *Purple Hibiscus*, which largely symbolizes the political unrest of that period, is the account of a teenage girl, Kambili, who finds it very hard to survive in the religious domestic extremism of her father. The novel is about the relationships among family, patriarchy, religion, and silence in the domestic sphere. Alternating between Nigeria, the United States, and Britain, *Americanah* is a story of a young woman, Ifemelu, as she immigrates to study and learns to deal with the reality of race, immigration, and cultural identity in the West. These novels taken collectively provide abundant source material when it comes to exploring how modern African fiction goes about answering the question of power, discrimination and self. This paper will focus on the discursive representation of ethnic, racial and gender discrimination in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*. It analyses the ways in which the power relations, social inequalities and structural injustices are treated by the language and ideas that the characters use to justify or criticize social structures in fictional communication. Particularly, this paper examines how the characters in both novels are discriminated against because of their gender, as well as racial and ethnic relations that influence the characters in the novels.

Despite the thematic focus of Adichie's works in novels, the available research has been conducted largely at the level of literary and thematic criticism. This method views language as a clear tool where themes are communicated in it and not the main location where power relations are discursively constructed, negotiated, and opposed. The researchers have identified the gap that is filled in this study as an absence of an analytical system in analyzing how discrimination and identity are put into language in these writings. It is necessary to leave the identification of themes behind and go to the discursive processes in which characters justify or undermine power. This paper takes the position of stating that discrimination in the fiction of Adichie is not only narrated, but rather is being built, using certain elements of language, sentence formation to silence, and the use of words to the voice of the story. The research questions that will be utilized in this study include: How do ethnic, racial, and gender discrimination discursively work in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*? Which linguistic strategies are used by characters in order to justify or reject power relations? What does this say about the relationship of these discursive practices to general social structures and ideologies?

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To analyze the study, the approach applied is Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as he introduced it in his preliminary works (1989a, 2006, 2013). CDA is concerned with the impacts of discourses on the social practices, identities, social relationships, and ideology construction. The framework works off the assumption that discursive practices that are embedded in ideologies are constructed to create and maintain unequal power relations. Using the three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough, that is, the analysis of textual characteristics, discursive practices and its connection to the social practice, this paper can determine the use of linguistic devices in the creation of marginalization and resistance. The discussion of dialogue and narrative tactics as well as internal monology of characters in the selected passages of both novels in which the issue of power can be most obvious, such as instances of patriarchal authority in *Purple Hibiscus* and racial negotiation episodes in *Americanah* are also discussed.

In this article, the most profound dimensions of discourse that have an impact on behavior, attitudes, and social structures are outlined. It also adds to the discussion of social discrimination as a whole with the use of the CDA approach by showing how the analysis of language can help to understand the mechanisms of power in literature. The analysis of these prejudices in the chosen novels makes this piece of research work literally focused on the existence and impact of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination, as it is a discourse being shaped in the fiction of Adichie.

2.0 Method and Material

Method: This study uses qualitative analysis of text. It mainly focuses on the power relationships and dominant discourses that Adichie's characters reproduce. It also focuses on how she represents these terms with linguistic strategies. This research aims to demonstrate and explain how colonial legacies are negotiated and resisted in contemporary Nigerian and other societies through language. It also analyses how Adichie's narrative choices deepen the understanding of the postcolonial identity, cultural hybridity, and the impact of power dynamics and historical forces on personal and social realities. The data analysis consists of segment selection and coding for the relevant passages in the novels, followed by the detailed reading of the said excerpts and their analysis concerning the context of contextualization and reception. Ethical guidelines for this project would be to appropriately cite all of the primary and

secondary data sources to provide relevant interpretations, in secondary data research within the scope of evidence-supported arguments.

We conduct an analytical study of discrimination and identity crisis in the discourses (texts) from the view of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1989a, 2006, 2013) suggests that text can be taken as a discourse in CDA and discourse as a social and discursive practice. The framework for this study is Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which has a text analysis, a discursive practice analysis, and a social practice analysis. This investigation uses a qualitative method of interpretation of passages from the novels that are related to discrimination and identity crises. The passages that are identified are selected by means of filters of underlying social, political and economic structures in which prevailing social power relations occur in Fairclough's framework of the model of CDA.

Material: The primary research data relies upon the texts of Chimamanda Adichie's two novels, *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) and *Americanah* (2017). Moreover, it relies on secondary sources like research articles, the web, and reviews.

The focus of the analysis is discrimination in the use of language, including vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and intertextuality. For example, words, metaphors and phrases identifying racial, gendered, or cultural discrimination, as well as the ways in which sentences and the modality used represent social power and ideological subjugation, are used.

Analysis of discursive practice is centered on the context of creation and consumption of texts, on how Adichie's choices of narrative techniques, such as point of view, tone, and style, contribute to making meaning (Fairclough, 1992). This dimension focuses on the history, culture, and society in which the novels were produced and received and the reception of the novels' multiple postcolonial or feminist discourses. Analyzing social practice places the conclusions in an integrated social, cultural, and political framework, looking at how the novels contest or support the predominant ideologies and power relations of race, gender, class, and culture. It also assesses whether the texts help sustain social hierarchies and stigma or aid in changing them (Fairclough, 2006).

3.0 Theoretical Framework

There are three main CDA approaches: Norman Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational

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Approach, van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). This study is based on Norman Fairclough's approach to CDA. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse is the use of language, which is seen as a form or structure of social practice. Furthermore, discourse studies determine how texts play a role in social and cultural practices. Fairclough theorizes his approach by considering discourse as part of social life, which is interconnected with other components and may have constructive and transformational effects on other elements. CDA is relevant to this study, as Fairclough (2001) states that it contributes to the construction of 'social identities.' According to him (1995, 2001a), CDA aims to build social relationships.

The research mainly centers on language use, societal institutions and historical contexts, in which the discourse not only reproduces the 'reality', but also constructs power relationships and shared identities. The research work is based on an interdisciplinary theoretical approach. It relies on the knowledge of sociolinguistics, cultural readings, and political theory to gain an insight into the process of discursive production within a social setting. Fairclough (2013) argues that the three perspectives, which include producing the text, interpreting it, and treating it as a subset of social practice, provide a scholar with an in-depth idea of the complex social phenomenon. He emphasizes the political component of the social practice component, which is mostly the context of dominance and power relations of the discursive event. His analytical paradigm is the convergence of discourse and power theories. His paradigm focuses on the connections between the given texts and social actions. It is also concerned with exercise of power through language. This method provides a detailed insight into the role of language and discourse in the relations of power.

Text analysis includes form-and-meaning analysis, and it is necessary to underline the fact that the two concepts are inextricable. Each writing is a complex network of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings (Fairclough, 2013). These domains include allocating pre-existing and novel data, foregrounding and backgrounding information, interpreting the situation and experiences, and creating participant identities and connections. The interpersonal function of communication has two sub-functions: the 'identification' function, which creates social and personal identities, and the 'relational' function, which fosters connections. The examination of

these complex interactions between meanings in texts must involve an analysis of text forms, such as generic forms (the general framework of a narrative), dialogic organization (in terms of turn-taking), cohesive relationships between sentences and between clauses in intricate sentences, clause grammar (including issues with transitivity, mood, and modality), and vocabulary. Much of what is categorized as pragmatic analysis, such as the study of utterance force, is done at the interface between speech and text. Discourse and Social Change is a set of ideas that helps one understand the connection between language, power, and society (Fairclough, 2006). As already stated, Fairclough's approach is based on three interacting dimensions which are discussed as follows:

4.0 Analysis and Results

In the following sections (4.1 and 4.2), we present the analysis of excerpts from the two novels one after the other, divided into subsections in terms of the themes we have identified in the two novels. To illustrate each theme, we use a representative passage (three each from the two novels), and describe each passage to place it in the context, followed by interpretation and explanation.

4.1 Discrimination in *Purple Hibiscus*

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie manages to reveal the intricate ideological grounds on which gender relations and power interactions are based, using language. She is very selective with words, which allows her to criticize the social systems that continuously maintain the bias against other groups. Her language shows that dictatorial power is connected to the norms of patriarchy (Okpala, 2016). Through this connection, a spectrum of discriminatory experiences emerges for people like Kambili and her mother who mediate the oppressive environments imposed by such demands of society. *Purple Hibiscus* by Adichie is not only a reflection of the criticism of such oppressive structures, but it also gives a reflection of fighting back and empowering oneself. The plot of *Purple Hibiscus* follows a chaotic Nigerian society, in which the political, social, and family resistance is oppositional (Elizabeth, Zainal, and Singh, 2025).

4.1.1 Discourse on Gender Discrimination and Suppression

The following excerpt constructs Kambili's quick belief that something horrible will happen, emphasizing how she has absorbed her father's rigorous rules and

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expectations. It reflects her inner state of mind regarding any perceived departure from Papa's expectations, resulting in self-discrimination. As a consequence, she treats herself differently.

Text

"I didn't...to do. This had... never. The compound walls would crumble, I was sure, and squash the frangipani trees. The sky would cave in. The Persian...floor would shrink. Something would happen. But the only thing that happened was my choking. My body shook from the coughing. Papa and Mama rushed over. Papa thumped my back while Mama rubbed my shoulders and said, "O zugo. Stop coughing." (Adichie, 2013: p.14)

Description

The use of words such as "crumble," "cave in," "shrink," and "squash" constructs a future disaster. This also constructs Kambili's failure to identify the source of her discomfort, which is produced by the suppressive environment in a patriarchal family. The word 'choking' denotes the feeling of not being able to talk and finding it hard to communicate. In the framework of gender, it may stand for the muting of women and the repression of women's desires or opinions. The collocation 'rushed over' constructs worry, and is considered the male dominated tone being resonated.

The use of short, fragmented sentences, "I didn't know..., never" establishes Kambili's fear. The emotional and mental dominance of her character is evident in the simple sentence structure. The phrases "Something would happen" and "But the...my choking" construct the gulf between Kambili's catastrophized thinking about and what was essentially happening in her body. It indicates that the internal realm of the individual is far more complex, conflicted, and dominant than the external condition.

Cohesion: Kambili's perplexity becomes the story of apocalyptic ideas, lacking even a hint of context. In the loss of cause and effect, this is the nonsensicality of dread, one that runs, however, in conjunction with something greater: Kambili's emotions are not examined, nor are they settled. But she speaks to no one in her own romantic quest to come to terms with her fears and ends up producing tensions and extremes. "Indeed, part of the silence is often dismissed out of hand due to the demotion of the female sentiment, a phenomenon which is also a result of gendered oppression. Bourdieu (2001) argued that patriarchy is symbolically instituted through symbolic

violence, which actually results in the 'paradoxical subordination' of women.

Interpretation and Explanation

Adichie consciously makes decisions about language use, narrative viewpoint and characterization (Bianco, 2024). This excerpt constructs how a female writer portrays gender relations in a Nigerian family, from the perspective and experience of the family. Adichie not coincidentally chooses Kambili as the novel's narrator. This excerpt offers the reader a chance to explore the world through a young teenager struggling to push boundaries by fighting against herself and the limitations of her individual freedom (Hanzelková, 2025).

Adichie discursively projects the difficulties that young women suffer following Nigerian freedom, and the complexities of family relations and also faces the challenge of Patriarchy. She settles on a narrative technique that focuses on Kambili's fear and silence, rather than her rebellious actions.

The readers' awareness of gender and cultural expectations, as well as power relationships, will also decide how much they will understand the text. A feminist philosopher will view Kambili's choking as a metaphor for the choking female voice. Usually, the reader can reflect on Mama as an overprotective mother. Meaning in the text is not established but constructed by the reader.

The passage discursively invokes emotions. One feel regret for Kambili and becomes annoyed at her mama, who appears to be living like the Queen of the household. These kinds of emotional responses cause the reader to think critically about gender roles and power relations in their own world.

By the particularity of the female protagonist's inner world, Adichie normalizes the behavior or attitude of the aspect of the father without pointing out that there is something wrong with a man who cannot provide for his family, promoting gender stereotypes (Palapala, 2018)

2. Discourse on Patriarchal Violence

The passage below is a reflection of the patriarchal aggressiveness of Papa Eugene who seems to want to dominate the body of Kambili and suppress her emerging femininity bringing in religious fanaticism as an excuse to his violent behavior.

Text

“...He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt... leather-covered buckle. It

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landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as they landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse. I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back... as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja, and me, muttering that the devil would not win." (Adichie, 2013: p. 102).

Description

Reading the text through a lens of CDA illustrates that language is not a neutral entity, but rather a social activity whereby power relations are shaped. The study applies these discursive strategies to analyze them, which demonstrates how they justify certain ideologies and conceal power and domination relations.

The very first sentence of the excerpt, "He unbuckled...slowly," indicates slow and formalized action, which underscores the intended manner in which Papa is going to execute violence rather than an impulsive act. The presence of the adverb 'slowly' adds more tension and anticipation of the abuses. In the phrase, "a heavy belt...of brown leather," the word heavy is used to bring out the potential pain that may be caused.

The application of the word 'sedate' is inconclusive in this situation. It does not even coincide with the act of violence that follows and ironically constructs the deceptive character of Papa. He is serene and reserved yet abusive. The use of the phrase 'landed on' represents the fact that there is a need to be responsible and to realize our actions. The statement "muttering...not win" is used as a mere argument to explain his deeds as a religious battle.

The violence of Papa is also marked by the fact that a number of devices are used which approach the theme indirectly. Jaja was first, as the phrase makes ambiguity about responsibility, meaning that he is a victim, a perpetrator, and a victim of violence inflicted on him by a person of power.

The passage represents a slowly developing tension when the belt is undone, and this gives a sense of anticipation. Providing more complex information, the excerpt not only intensifies the emotional effect but also makes us consider the complexity of the situation, learning more about the characters and their motivations.

Interpretation and Explanation

The extract involves wider discussions of religious violence, domestic abuse and

patriarchy. It resonates with the words and reasoning provided to validate violence perpetrated within some religious and cultural frameworks (Iman, 2025). *Purple Hibiscus* discursively establishes themes of religious fervor, political domination, and the suppression of women's voices. It discursively projects Papa Eugene's oppressive control over his family (Fazakas, 2025).

The excerpt discursively depicts the power subtleties in the family. Eugene is shown as an autocratic dictator who abuses his power through violence. He controls all the family and has the charmed determination. Papa's such influential control constructs an environment of fear that the other family members find no way of resistance or rebellion against it. His rigid oppression causes severe psychological and physical harm to the family members. Mama, is the victim Eugene's submissive dominance. She is so ensnared between obstinate obedience and silences that most of them have suppressed her emotions for years.

Singh (2024) explores religious fanaticism, violence and domination in *Purple Hibiscus*. He examines how such mingled structures support the characters' ostracism in these systems, where women and children are often in danger. He contends that religious fanaticism and patriarchy occur at the same time, e.g., they are interlocked, and provide a helpful breeding ground for offenders and an excuse code for the undesirable activities in which these offenders are involved.

3. Powerlessness and Dependence

The passage creates the impression that Powerlessness and dependence are not only themes of *Purple Hibiscus*, but they are experiences that Adichie builds up using a certain selection of words.

Text

"Do you know that Eugene pays the school fees of up to a hundred of our people?... "That is not the point and you know it." "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" ... "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price?" "And so?" (Adichie, 2013: pp. 250-251)

Description

The confrontational and defensive quality is enhanced by the frequent use of the pronoun "you" that Mama uses when he is talking to Aunty Ifeoma. It is gentler and it

weakens her previous aggressiveness, and creates a more complicated relationship between the two women. Mama is friendly to an extent of addressing her husband by his first name, Eugene, but this move underscores her weakness. The fact that she does not mention words such as 'my husband' or 'Papa' implies that she does not regard or belong to him, which means that her attachment to him is complicated and involves emotional detachment.

Mama employs declarative sentences in her speech, like, "Do you know... the school fees..." and "Where would I go..." These assertions are made as undeniable facts that are meant to shut down any opposition that Aunty Ifeoma may have. The expression, 'Tell me, ... I go?' stresses the complete powerlessness of Mama and the lack of any potential alternatives, the sense of being lost without even attempting to find a solution and a remedy.

Furthermore, Mama does not talk positively, and words such as 'pushed', 'impregnate' and the expression 'bother paying... price' discursively portray the other women who are fighting to draw the attention of Eugene negatively. The language also reveals the fact that they are desperate to win his favor and also the objectification of women in this society. The reading is a good simulation of the fight and the limitations women have to endure and presents these women in a way that shows the ugly reality that they have to contend with. The reality that Mama does not consider the view of Aunty Ifeoma as university talk is also evidence that she sees that the academic rationales of Ifeoma have no bearing on her life and therefore does not appreciate what the other woman says.

Interpretation and Explanation

The excerpt puts together the influences of the West and the religions, mixed with the traditional patriarchal systems. This creates a complex network of power relations, which affects the attitudes and behavior of people (Bulus, 2025). The conversation reflects the lack of equality in the power between Mama and Eugene or between Mama and Ifeoma. Despite the opposing nature of education and independence to Mama due to her conservative outlook on the world, the economic prowess of Eugene helps him to control the life of Ifeoma (Wardhana, 2025).

The discussion shows the hidden ideological premises regarding the place of women in society. Mama's remarks suggest that a woman's role depends on her marital status

and her ability to provide a man with material security. It also emphasizes the ways in which female independence is discouraged and male dominance is accepted.

The passage is about women, marriage, and power relations in Nigerian society and literature. Adichie plays with these stereotypical themes or ideas a little subtly. Her observations are either a challenge or a reflection of the established stories regarding gender roles and gender relations within the Nigerian culture. The discourse is influenced by the deeply rooted patriarchal ideals of the Nigerian society that uphold male dominance and restrict the opportunities of women (Mills, 2008).

Moreover, colonialism has perpetuated the standards of patriarchy. In most cases, the adoption of Western concepts and religion has led to the marginalization of women and the oppression of the local traditions. The power gap is also widened by constructs that reinforce economic disparities between men and women. Mama is financially dependent, and it is this fact that makes her remain in a repressive marriage (Daniels, 2022).

4.2 Discrimination in *Americanah*

The novel is all about social discrimination, identity issues, and dominance. Adichie observes the concept of identity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class. She looks at how these identities mold the realities that her characters tell and how society shapes them.

1. Exploitation and the Commodification of Immigrant Women

The passage below examines how women are subjugated and commodified in the background of economic instability. The offer by the employer symbolizes the instability and power inequality of Ifemelu.

The difference between the beautiful fall scene and the unusual experience reveals the extreme contrast between the peaceful and the inhuman reality of existence.

Text-4:

"... I work so hard I can't sleep. I can't relax. I don't do drugs... to relax. You can give me a massage, help me relax, you know. I had somebody...thought so. Helped her...debt."...She stood up. "Can I think about this and give you a call?" ... She walked back to the station, mourning the train fare. The trees were awash with color, their red and yellow leaves tinting the air golden, and she thought of the words she

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had recently read somewhere: "Nature's first green is gold." (Adichie, 2017: p. 144)

Description

The language usage in the excerpt is a form of a system that continues to manipulate the immigrants. The passage embodies the facilitation of such forms of encounters by structural injustices, primarily economic precarity and gender inequity. In this excerpt, Ifemelu is a target because of her economic weakness, while the man's (employer's) position of power allows him to act exploitatively.

It is a system that perpetuates and makes these exploitative relationships normal and is itself implicitly criticized. The idealized and the actual conditions of social injustice are also demonstrated in a stark contrast by the perfect natural surroundings.

Regarding the vocabulary, the employer reduces the exploitative nature of his offer by employing such terms as 'college debt', 'great gig', and 'help me relax'. Such statements diminish his personality in building the power difference and make the situation acceptable. The language used by Ifemelu is more cautious and polite, which shows her inferior status.

The excerpt compares the language use of a hesitant and inquisitive Ifemelu with the powerful and forceful arguments of the man in terms of grammar. Adichie's construction of difference in the grammatical structure of the communication builds their power relation. This relationship brings out the primary power gap and the socialization that upholds this gap. The man (the employer) is able to smooth out the opposing arguments with his aggressive words, which make his voice the most predominant voice in the dialogue. The probability of disagreement or debate is low as his authoritative words, which are presented as facts, create power and force people to obey. Conversely, Ifemelu demonstrates a reservedness that is often an acquired reaction to unequal power structures by using language of caution, which is evident by qualifiers and questions.

The man also tends to make a declaration, like, 'I work so hard.' It is a great gig. These vehement statements put his mastery of the discussion into place. Conversely, Ifemelu also shows her indecisiveness and subordinate status when she uses more interrogative words, such as Can I think about this and give you a call?

The aggressive and violent behavior of the man is replicated in his short and more

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direct statements. His language is simpler. The expressions used by Ifemelu are characterized by a certain extent of anxiety and indecisiveness, which means that the latter is not experienced in negotiating the situation.

The producer of the text employs active voice sentences and this is the agency of the actors (agents). The direct proposals and accounts of the man are represented in the active voice and it is evident that he is the one who is taking the initiative. Though the agency of Ifemelu is receptive to the action of the man, her action is also reported in the active voice. The difference in power is clear because the passive voice is not employed to conceal the person who is performing.

There is no use of complex sentences with a lot of subordination in the discourse in the excerpt, making it less obscure and simplifying the way their goals and actions are presented. This straightforwardness and lack of ornamental sentence pattern underscore the straightforwardness and maybe the bluntness of the offer and the reply, which once more underscores the power dynamic. The power imbalance is also brought out in the manner in which the man speaks in declarative sentences and the woman responds in questioning sentences.

To understand how agency and power are represented discursively in the text, the study analyzes the transitivity of verbs and grammatical roles to know how they are represented in the text. The man (employer) is the main agent (actor) in starting the discussion. The man offering the "relaxing" job is proactively pursuing a connection with Ifemelu. Expressions like "I work so hard," "I need help to relax," and similar phrases portray him as someone who desires support. He is the subject of the majority of the verbs in his speech and the one who started the action. His actions indirectly serve the Ifemelu. He aims to persuade her to do the job, which makes her the object of his offer and the object of his proposal.

Similarly, the man's proposal directly targets Ifemelu. The verb phrases construct her as the one who would act (the job) and as the intended recipient of his offer. Here, Ifemelu's agency is delimited. She merely performs the role of the actress when she hesitates and finally declines. Her actions are generally in response to the man's offer. She responded to the man's initiative by using verbs that define her actions ("stood up," "give you a call").

Interpretation and Explanation

The discourse (text) discursively projects power disparity through the use of language. It examines the way in which the subtleties of power in the workplace are brought into focus through the application of different language options (Hussain & Tariq, 2025). The cautious and polite attitude of Ifemelu is in contrast to the direct thinking and powerful tone of the man, which constructs an apparent power imbalance. The man's (employer) casual mentioning of past similar experiences constructs a trend of manner and of privilege. This analysis reveals the indirect power structures and social norms that allow this encounter to take place and is not limited to describing the language used.

This text discusses the ideologies behind the text. The use of language by the man makes exploitation a normal practice as his job offer is presented as a humble deal. The implicit meaning of the passage discursively reflects the fact that men have a right and women are weak. This paper explores how the text builds up bigger issues in society that are economically weak, gender unjust, and the toleration of exploitation. The indecisiveness and anxiety about the rail ticket made Ifemelu noticeable regarding her economic difficulties and made her more susceptible to mistreatment (Iloanwusi & Obasikene, 2025). The context of the encounter refers to her inability to have safety or support networks.

The text highlights the point discursively and creates the issue of the core difference in power between Ifemelu and the man. The study examines the use of language as it is created and maintained to perpetuate this disparity. The man's employment opportunity can be seen to guide her out of a dangerous position where she is a marginalized foreign student seeking employment. The man is exploiting Ifemelu's helplessness as an immigrant with his proposal, which extends beyond a simple job offer. The study must identify the wording that exposes her weaknesses and emphasizes how deceptive his offer is. The excerpt discursively projects that discrimination is mostly caused by racial differences. In America, racism remains great as Black individuals are overwhelmed at the first chance and deprived of their rights. Blacks are frightened, and Ifemelu's enforced belief that she is less than the 'whites' makes her feel disappointed, sad, and tired of America, which is why she is compelled to return home (Jacinta, 2020).

2. Discourse on Power Disparity and Exploitation

The selected text is the argument of decriminalization based on race, and the exploitation and the power disparity. The text producer asserts that the system should maintain helpless individuals and handle the actual causes of engaging in sex and not just criminalize sex. The text is focused on the emotional and psychological aspects of force rather than the physical force.

Text

"... She did not want to be here, did not want his active finger between her legs, did not want his sigh-moans in her ear, and yet she... wetness. Afterwards, she lay still, coiled, and deadened. He had not forced her... She had lain on his bed, and when he placed her hand between his legs, she had curled and moved her fingers. Now, even after she had washed her hands, holding the crisp, slender hundred-dollar bill he had given her, her fingers still felt sticky; they no longer belonged to her. "Can you do twice a week? I'll cover your train fare," he said, ... She said nothing. "Shut the door," ... She walked to the train, feeling heavy and slow, her mind choked with mud, and, seated by the window, she began to cry. She felt like a small ball, adrift and alone. The world was a big, big place, and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around empty." (Adichie, 2017; p. 154)

Description

There is an informal and transactional discourse (text) that is discursively represented through the language. This informality is supported by the use of simple sentence patterns and simple language. 'Assuredness', 'defeated', 'dismissive', 'stretching', 'tainted', and 'deadened', etc., are some of the words used in the discursive description of helplessness and abuse of power by Ifemelu. These lines emphasize the inequality of relations and power abuse. The expressions of the 'hundred-dollar bill' and 'cover your train fare' discursively shape the body of Ifemelu as a commodity and relate the sexual act with a financial transaction. The aspect of Ifemelu is made into a commercial object, which sets up the commercial side of the interaction.

The expression 'choked with mud', 'heavy and slow', and the words 'cry', 'alone', and 'empty' convey emotional suffering and are highly emotional in nature, illustrating the psychological damage and emotional torture that Ifemelu has suffered. In this case, the negative psychological characteristics of the interaction are created by

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the producer of the text.

The opposite terms, like 'defeated' and 'assuredness', are constructed to create the various views of the two people. Nonetheless, there are no definite synonyms or hyponyms having specific ideological meanings in the text (discourse).

Likewise, the sexual attractiveness of the communication is not disguised with euphemisms. The expressive values of the passage attach significant importance to the opinion of Ifemelu. The text producer uses such words as choked with mud and sickening to discursively define her emotional state and this symbolizes the helplessness, anguish, and disgust.

The aspect of Ifemelu being a small ball, drifting and alone, is a strong metaphor. It builds her meaninglessness and isolation in a large, inhumane world. This supports the concept of powerlessness and marginalization. The processes are typically built in the way they look, which is the straightforwardness of the discourse. The complex internal experience is represented by the emotional processes (she felt defeated, she felt her body rousing). Also, there are minimal nominalizations employed and this helps to maintain the language as simple and influential. The absence of nominalizations lowers the level of abstraction and makes the emotive experience more immediate.

The passage discursively highlights the agency by using active words, but the behaviors of Ifemelu are reactions to the actions of the man. The helplessness is made worse when the passive voice is not used directly but implied (e.g., she was...tainted). One can see the mixture of positive and negative expressions in the excerpt that demonstrate the contrast between the inner emotions and the outer actions.

The extract (text) is mainly composed of declarative sentences, although there are some moments of imperatives, including the phrase Shut the door. This creates an evident power imbalance in which the man dictates the behavior of Ifemelu. The language is based on the natural power relationship between the man and Ifemelu and not necessarily the reference to relational modality.

The application of pronouns like he and she creates an unequal relationship and a clear divide. The man refers to himself as you to even more distance himself and retain his power.

The expressive modality can be seen in the usage of emotionally colored verbs

(defeated, coiled, deadened), descriptive adjectives (sordid, sickening, heavy, slow, choked with mud). Further, the adjectives (already, emptily) play a crucial role and contribute to the emotion as well as articulate the feelings of Ifemelu.

The excerpt is connected with the chronology of the sentences, and this follows the activity of the encounter and the consequences. Simply coordinating conjunctions like *and* but are used to connect clauses of complex or compound sentences, but more complex relationships are connoted. The events are developed in chronology, which stresses the feeling of helplessness that Ifemelu perceives in the situation.

The text (discourse) is narrative in character, following an evident order of events. The construction emphasizes the mental process of Ifemelu and not the comprehensive development of her physical activity. This arrangement brings out her deep anguish and helplessness even further.

Interpretation and Explanation

The discourse (text) builds power disparity between the man (employer) and the girl (Ifemelu). His dominance is emphasized by the fact that the man has high self-confidence, contempt, and the style of dealing in money in exchange for her services. Her powerlessness and helplessness are made by her feeling of insignificance, taint, and failure (Ulogu, 2025).

The character of Ifemelu is created as a commodity, which can be purchased and sold at a given price. The stress on the physical act and the transfer of money, which enhances this commercialization, offers the social value system, which reduces people to their economic value (Fairclough, 2003). Her perception of herself as being lost and lonely in a prominent, big place discursively creates her perception of social alienation and insignificance. This discursively dictates the way some people are marginalized and undervalued by the social institutions.

The words she took off her shoes and he placed her hand are an action that involves substantial processes. The pronouns, *she* and *he*, which are used as the main participants, draw attention to the imbalance of power. Women end up playing passive roles in material practices that are initiated by men.

The agency of Ifemelu is veiled here, but it is quite clear in the discourse. Her activities are often forced or motivated by fear, yet she is engaged in physical

participation.

The use of language in the excerpt is intense in creating a sense of the scene in that it brings the difference in power, the commercialization of the body by Ifemelu, and the supreme emotive pain. The lack of distinct ideological indicators does not reduce the solid message that is formed by using emotional appeal and implicit meaning.

The language (vocabulary) in the passage is literal ideological icons; the relations of power are transferred secretly. Nevertheless, the core meaning of the word "tainted" may be regarded as ideologically disputed, depending on the opinions of different players. Besides, the grammatical and textual features of the passage reinforce the idea of inequality in power and the emotional distress experienced by Ifemelu. The structure of the text, the language used in the description and the active and passive sentences all help create an image of the complexity of the scene and the way in which Ifemelu reacts to the situation. The apparent lack of agency is also supported by the use of declarative sentences.

5.0 Comparative Discussion & Conclusion

Purple Hibiscus and *Americanah* by Adichie have a similar interest in the issues of power, identity, and discrimination; they look at the issues through very distinct perspectives and environments. *Purple Hibiscus* is mostly located in Nigeria, which is concentrated in the domestic realm and the relationships of one household within the atmosphere of patriarchal religion. *Americanah* is a transatlantic novel that looks at the process of migration and racial and cultural identity negotiation in the West (Okpala, 2016). A comparative CDA not only indicates the way the discursive production of power and resistance varies between these situations, but also reveals some underlying continuities in the way Adichie addresses the site of social struggle, language.

This comparative analysis uses the three-dimensional framework of Fairclough in analyzing the ways in which each of the novels details its main themes using textual effects, discursive strategies, and relation to larger social orders. The discussion shows that the type of discrimination in both cases is different because the first is patriarchal oppression and the second is racial exclusion, but the means of discursive power are similar in the linguistic techniques used. On the other hand, although the domains of identity negotiation are different, the family, in the first case,

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and the diaspora, in the second, the mechanisms of identity construction by means of language depict impressive similarities.

In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, Adichie is not merely writing about gender discrimination as a theme, but she constructs it in the very fabric of her sentences, conversations and voices of her narration. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough, this paper shows that gender discrimination is not only narrated but also discursively performed. Papa Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* is full of religious authority; he is not telling commands, but rebuking and correcting, and framing patriarchal violence as a moral imperative. The silence of Mama, her incomplete sentences, and the hesitant and observational narration of Kambili all imply the restricted subjectivity of women, which is denied the power to narrate discursively. In *Americanah*, gender discrimination works differently, yet it is also entrenched in language. Ifemelu is moving through a male-dominated intellectual and professional terrain; her blog is a conscious counter-discourse, a place where she takes narrative control back.

These linguistic devices are not impartial through the prism of Fairclough. They are the places where gender ideologies are reproduced, negotiated and even opposed. Finally, this discussion concludes that the novels of Adichie are not just about gender inequality, but they reveal the ways it is ingrained in the vernacular and in the process, they show that it is time to start combating discrimination by first reclaiming the right to talk and be heard.

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