

The cultural conversational pattern of Ifemelu in Adichie's *Americanah*

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Abstract

In any culture of conversation, especially the African culture, any specific act of speaking is a reflection of an individual's personality system that is profitable for a cordial, comprehensive and conducive communicative exchange by the speakers. Conversation can be established and sustained on the basis of certain principles; these tenets are conceptualised in Hymes' Ethnography of communication. This research attempts to investigate the conversational pattern of the protagonist (Ifemelu) in Adichie's *Americanah*, using the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. communication model by Dell Hymes' (1974) The researcher using stratified random sample collected ten (10) conversations of Ifemelu in the African novel from pages 74,88,116,121,20,205,179,438,443, and 502. These conversations are carefully in three dimensions which followed a pattern in their different spheres: when Ifemelu was in Nigeria, in America, and when she returned to Nigeria. The research shows the first sphere of Ifemelu's conversation as being naïve and uncertain of what she wanted out of life. The second sphere saw her as a focused and confident lady who is in control of her life. In the third sphere, she had grown into an institution. Her conversations were knitted with control, dominion, and satisfaction. The S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model which is an acronym for SETTING, PARTICIPANTS, END, ACT SEQUENCE, KEY, INSTRUMENT, NORMS and GENRES is highly dependent in analysing the conversations. The research shows conversationalists model and agree on their stances, values, norms, and belief system through language and bringing it all to the table of conversation.

Keywords: Conversation, pattern, Ifemelu, Adichie, *Americanah*

Introduction

The study of any aspect of language and society is the specialty of Sociolinguistics. It entails investigating the bond between language and societal beliefs, values, and norms through communication. The verbal and nonverbal messages accompanied most times by body language, tone modulations and gestures to establish conveyed messages are communicative acts of "speech among face-to-face interactants" Speier (1972). They exchange their speech with each other". Looking from a didactic perspective, Richards (1980) opines that "Conversation is an activity bound by rules, norms and conventions that are learned as part of the process of acquiring competence in a language".

Conversational system of communication is critical because, unlike other method of communication, it seems to

be the default setting of language use. That is, face-to-face conversation can only be utilise through language. This is achieved through swift turn-taking. It is an organised system of operation, participants in conversation are predicting and anticipating the termination of a turn and preparing beforehand. Only a person tends to speak in most cases while others contribute and receive adequate response(s). Conversation appears to be a template, modelling the correct way in which things should be done. It has an orderly manner that commands comprehension of those involved in it, either "one-one or one-many" Lyons (1977). "In both dyadic and multi-person interactions, conversation is highly structured and organised according to set principles" Sacks et. al (1974). Conversation in written narratives allows readers to mingle with the thoughts of the characters and the narrators,

since the conversation is guided by quotation marks that define boundaries between explanation and quoted speech. This permits readers to take part in the conversation.

Conversation is used in many ways and it varies according to different groups of people, which are of different ethnic, age, social, belief or cultural background. It is pertinent to leverage on some recognised and accepted model like the Ethnography of Communication by Dell Hymes (1974) to analyse these differences in linguistic behaviours. *Americanah* by Chimamanda Adichie is an embodiment of conversations of diverse kinds; this study adopts *Americanah* in analysing conversations.

Synopsis of the novel

Conversation in novel is centrally critical, for there is no novel of any sort that is devoid of conversation. *Americanah*, one of the novels by renowned Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, is an embodiment of conversation. *Americanah* is an intriguing story of an ambitious Nigerian lady who immigrated to the United States of America for studies and in search of a better life. There, she was faced with the realities of racism and hardship. She however, eventually overcame and became successful. Ifemelu later came back to Nigeria, leaving behind her flourishing blog, home and established life in America to reconnect with the love of her life, Obinze. The protagonist in the fiction, Ifemelu, engaged in series of conversations with the people she came in contact with.

Literature review

In her book, *Conversational Styles*, Tannen (2005) declared the study of conversation as a vital body on its own and should not be dismissed as “ad hoc” or “interpretive” and to proscribe the use of the basic tool of interaction for humans out of our personal experiences and practitioners of conversation, would be of gross

consequence. She also established that conversation, however is an awe-inspiring area of investigation because it is so vast and elusive. It is tempting merely to record a segment of conversation, transcribe it, gloss it (supply a running commentary or concordance), and leave it at that...To dismiss the possibility of studying conversation because it is too diffuse and not readily quantifiable would be to dismiss the basic material for interaction, indeed of humanness. It would be impossible. Sacks et al., (1974), inquired that how is it possible for most conversation to be so fluent and efficient? Because interlocutor tend to respond coherently and appropriately to each other. Additionally, they do so in good time. That they do not leave long gaps between contributions nor do they speak simultaneously for more than a brief moment. Drew et. al., (2006), note, in everyday interaction, contributions to a conversation can be designed to take account of prior interactional events, or previously disclosed information. This is a valuable resource by which, in their explanation, repetition, redundancy and so on can be avoided. They further reveal that, in standardised interviews, however, interviewers have to ignore precisely this kind of contextual knowledge like: not allowing them to incorporate inferences available from prior turns into design of subsequent questions.

As Cheng (2003) maintains, conversation is often described as ranging somewhere between casual talk in everyday setting and being synonymous with spoken interaction in general. Also, the use of the term “conversation” as a catch-all for any type of spoken discourse is quite common place. Cheng further states, participants in intercultural conversations may make different cultural assumptions about the context of situation, and about appropriate behaviour and intentions within the context.

Ray and Biswas (2011) noted that “Dell Hymes was the brilliant scholar who

developed a praiseworthy approach to the study of language designated to with terminology the ethnography of communication whose central unit of study is communicative events". As Maldona Matel (2009) stated, some aspects of communication can vary according to geographical areas, social class, gender age and level of education. Johnstone and Marcellino (2010) Opine that "The ethnography of communication is thus not just a method but a coherent theoretical approach to language." Also, that "Hymes provides a theoretical basis for language in ways of speaking, which accounts for the diversity and efficacy of actual human communication in terms of the ideas of means of speech and speech economy." Ethnography of communication aims to comprehend human behaviour in its social context. The ethnography of communication model the basic unit of analysis is considered "communicative event" and meaning are conveyed through "speech acts" Searle, (1969).

Shah (2022) shows how Hymes' communication model, fits in the analysis of Martin Luther King's speech. He describes the SPEAKING model as a tool to facilitate or ability to speak up in any social situation. By employing the framework, he continues, we can tackle any communication event or speech act and become more effective communicators.

In another light, Farrokh (2019) contribution on relevance of Hymes' communication model, reveals the effectiveness of Hymes' ethnography of communication model in teaching English. He says readers should adopt an interactive approach, they should analyse a text in a macro way as well as focusing on details, in this way, our students can understand a text more quickly and thoroughly and their language skills will improve.

Dawson – Ahmoah (2017) in Analysis of Speech Events in an M-Net African Drama Series-Tinsel explains: the

need for language learners to familiarise with the speech events is to enable them to communicate competently. Ethnography of communication could be used as a guide to teach culture in relation to the language used in specific speech community. Ethnography of communication reveals that people's sentiments, reservations, thoughts and feelings are manifested through language. Finally, Hymes' ethnography of communication provides both a theoretical basis and a methodological heuristic for exploring how language is embedded in discourse.

Methodology

This research is subjected to Ethnographic analysis using Dell Hymes Ethnography Theory of Communication. (1974).The data were sourced secondarily from the conversations of Ifemelu in Adichie's *Americanah*. The researcher, after careful reading observed the sequence or pattern of conversation between the protagonist and other characters in the novel. The work depicts three phases of Ifemelu's societal acclimatisation: before she traveled to America, while in America and when she came back to Nigeria. A number of ten (10) conversations in pages 74,88,116,121,20, 205,179,438,443 and 502 in the novel were gathered through stratified random sampling and were analysed.

Statement of problem

It has been observed for some reasonable length of time that cultural conversationalists seem not have a satisfactory conversation with people they converse with. This could be hinged on some factors surrounding the conversationalists. Differences in age, culture, exposure, education, civilisation among others could be responsible for proper comprehension and lack of exciting moment in many conversations. Conversation is an art which encompasses skill, knowledge and consideration to

effectively and successfully accomplish. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to explore the conversational pattern of Ifemelu in three spheres and examines how she had successful conversations against the aforementioned odds.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to show the various conversation styles and dexterity as depicted by Adichie in *Americanah* using Hymes' communication model. The objectives include:

1. To analyse Ifemelu's conversation in three dimensions: when she was in Nigeria, in America and when she came back to Nigeria.
2. To show the unique pattern and skills of Ifemelu's conversation in different context.

Theoretical framework

Dell Hymes is seen by many, to be the founder of the field known as Ethnography of communication. In 1962, he proposed "ethnography of speaking" as a way to study how people talked. Later the name was changed to include other symbolic means of expression and called ethnography of communication.

S. The first letter ("S") designates Situation, which includes both the scene and the setting. This is where the activities are taking place and the overall scene in which they are a part. It denotes the time and place that is the real physical circumstance in which the speech takes place. Scene on the other hand, refers to abstract psychological setting. Scenes differs according to the participant's speech in a setting. Participants are at liberty to define their scenes by their speech, as they change their level of formality and their type of activity. While a speech is appropriate for a particular scene, another would not be considered suitable for a scene.

P. The second refers to the Participants involved. This area includes the people present and the roles they play, or the relationship they have with other participants. Participants refers to the speaker and the listener in a conversation. A two-person conversation for instance, involves a speaker and a listener whose function changes as the conversation progresses. This can be seen a telephone conversation between two participants who observe the principles guiding a conversation by taking turns. Participants in a conversation could also involve two or multiple listeners or addressees, telling a tale by an elder to children in the night as the African culture permits involves an addressor and addressees.

E. Next, the Ends or goals of communication can be studied. This is the expected result or goal which is canonically acknowledged, that the participation seeks to achieve in a given cause. The grandparent may tell a tale to the grans in the family with the aim of achieving some goal at the end of the story. Probably to educate, teach morals, instil discipline or to entertain.

A. Acts, or speech acts include both form and content. That is, any action can be considered a communicative action if it conveys meaning to the participants. It means the way words are used and the link with what is said to the subject matter at the moment. A customer's conversation with a waiter in a restaurant, may start with a welcoming gesture or remark by the waiter, followed by an order by the customer, it may extend to delivering the order by the waiter and the customer acknowledging the service. The speech act may be concluded by a farewell remark by the waiter.

K. One can also choose to focus upon the Key or tone of speech. How the speech sounds or was delivered. It refers to the

“tone, manner or spirit of the speech act” Umezina 2017. The key could be marked as verbal or nonverbal: a key can be termed to be verbal when the tone or manner used to convey a conversation is wrapped with nonchalance, pride, mockery, sarcasm, seriousness or lack of it. Certain nonverbal behaviours like facial expressions, gesture or silence, employed in sending a message. In the example of an elderly person giving children a story, the elder could decide to playfully or aggressively mimic a character in the story to effectively pass across a message to the children.

I. Instrumentality or the channel through which communication flows can be examined. This refers to the choice of channel or medium employed to pass across a message. It could be oral written or telegraphic. The form of language employed is also intricately included. The language could be formal or informal, code switching can also be used for better understanding of the message.

N. The Norms of communication or the rules guiding talk and its interpretation can reveal meaning. It refers to appropriate statement or behaviour, expected of people in line with shared values in a given speech community. These values in speech could be facial expressions, gestures, silence, etc.

G. Finally, one can look at cultural or traditional speech Genres, such as proverbs, apologies, prayers, small talk, problem talk etc. This means utterances must be precisely defined to fit into a specific kind of occasion. A particular kind of genre should be more appropriate for a certain occasion than another. One can be asked to stop apologising for something and rather explain what happened. In a situation where one is expected to explain why s/he did something wrong, but the person started apologising, s/he can be asked to stop apologising and explain what led to the said wrong deed.

By using these tools (S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G.) to analyse one unit, such as particular speech community, a researcher can come to learn more about how people communicate and how that communication is often patterned.

A researcher does not need to use all the units and tools every time he or she sets out to look at a speech community. It depends upon the types of questions that the researcher is interested in asking as to what units and tools he or she will choose. For example, if you are interested in question of identity—How can you tell who is a member and what does it mean to be a member of this group?—then you can focus on the “P.A.S.” components of the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. tools. You would ask, who the participants (“P”) are and how their actions (“A”) help to define their identity as a group member in particular situations (“S”).—Hymes (1974).

Data analysis and presentation

There are previous studies on Dell Hymes theory, one of which is Umezina (2017) titled *Analysis of a Selected Bargain Discourse Using Dell Hymes' S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G Model*, the author proved the viability of Dell Hymes' model using the bargain conversation of a tomato seller and house wife (buyer) by the entrance of the market. The analysis which is a transcription of a recorded dialogue in the course of conversation, started with greetings from the buyer to the seller, bargain and ended with pleasantries and with high expectations from the seller of seeing the buyer again soon. While Umezina's analysis is only on bargain in a conversation, this research is an omnibus of different types of conversations they include: bargain kind of conversation, argument, telephone, interview, complain, pleasantries and request and service rendering kinds of conversation.

The analysis is numbered 1 to 10 using Dell Hymes communication theory to analyse each conversation.

Part one

Datum 1

Ifemelu: "You actually said country bumkin"

Obinze: "What?"

Ifemelu: "Nobody says 'country bumkin,' it's the kind of thing you read in books"

Obinze: "You have to tell me what books you read."

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) Kayode's party, in a room at his parent's guest quarters (TIME) at night

Participants: two school mates, Ifemelu and Obinze

End: the participants tend to be jovial and amiable to each another while trying to know each other more.

Acts: after some dance moves, she broke the silence.

Key: informal, playful manner and happy mood.

Instrument: spoken words. Face-to-face conversation

Norms: the participants both spoke English language as they converse. The atmosphere could not permit them to respect the norm of conversation.

Genres: The conversation is casual

The conversation broke out of a long silence. Obinze did not say the phrase she claimed he did. Ifemelu just wanted to start a conversation. She used the opportunity to be chatty and to know more about Obinze personally. In a crowded heated room with overwhelming music atmosphere, Ifemelu

had to raise her voice above the music, lest she will not be heard.

Datum 2

Ifemelu: "The soup is very sweet ma."

Obinze's Mum: "Oh Obinze cooked it."

"Didn't he tell you that he cooks?"

Ifemelu: "Yes, but I didn't think he could make soup ma."

Obinze's Mum: "Do you cook at home?"

Ifemelu: "No ma,"

"I don't like cooking. I can eat Indomie noodles day and night"

(p. 88)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) Obinze's house (TIME) in the afternoon.

Participants: Ifemelu and Obinze's mum

End: appreciates the cook for a delicious meal.

Acts: first, a compliment from Ifemelu, and then a humble acknowledgement from the addressee. A revelation. An awareness. A question and a sincere answer.

Key: Ifemelu spoke in a shy tone and her manner, sincere. Obinze's mum on the other hand was soft and homely.

Instrument: dialogue with accurate turn taking

Norms: a conversation between a young school girl and an elderly professor should in all aspect follow the norm of a conversation. As a norm, it is expected that one should complement the cook for a delicious meal, especially, when being hosted. They did not observe table manners. English was used, respect and politeness was mutual.

Genre: An informal but intentional conversation in the atmosphere of love and togetherness.

The conversation took place while the two were eating. From the part of Ifemelu, it can be seen that she's entirely sincere with her assertions: from acknowledging the palatability of the food, to being surprised about who cooked it and her sincerity about not having cooking skills. Obinze's mum invited Ifemelu for lunch. She intends to know her better by bringing her close to the family.

Datum 3

Ifemelu: "Aunty, I think what happened to you before Dike came has happened to me."

"We ate the food a week ago"

Aunty Uju: "Just last week? How many times?"

Ifemelu: "Once"

Aunty Uju: "Ifem, calm down. I don't think you're pregnant. But you need to do a test. Don't go to the campus medical centre. Go to town, where nobody will know you. But calm down first. It will be okay, *Inugo?*"

(p. 116)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) at a telephone booth (TIME) in the morning after her lectures.

Participants: Ifemelu and Aunty Uju

End: Ifemelu informs Aunty Uju on her pregnancy suspicion.

Acts: Ifemelu spoke to her aunt, then her aunt responded with a question which she (Ifemelu) answered and her aunt (Uju) concluded the conversation.

Key: Ifemelu was apprehensive, confidently tensed. Aunty Uju's tone, mild and her manner, concerned.

Instrument: telephone conversation

Norms: Ifemelu choice of words is not strange to her aunt. Her aunt is familiar with the coded utterances. Her aunt also code mixed her last sentence, which Ifemelu is familiar with. Therefore, none of them is flouting the norm of the conversation because they both understood each other.

Genre: Confession and counselling kind of conversation

Usually, when people engage in a sensitive or confidential conversation, especially on a mobile phone, you realise they excused themselves from people (if they are not alone) in order to converse freely and comfortably. But the case is different if one is at a public telephone centre and there are others hanging around, eagerly waiting for their turn. Ifemelu found herself in this kind of situation and she had to converse in codes with her aunt. Secondly, Ifemelu being naïve might have felt ashamed of herself and could not confidently tell her aunt that she suspects she is pregnant. Hence, she chose to say it in codes. Her aunt was not rebuking, rather she repelled the suspicion.

Datum 4

Ifemelu: "Maybe I should just stay and finish here,"

Obinze: "Ifem, no, you should go. Besides, you don't even like geology. You can study something else in America."

Ifemelu: "But the scholarship is partial. Where will I find the money to pay the balance?"

"I can't work with a student visa."

Obinze: "You can do work-study at school. You'll find a way. Seventy-five per cent off

your tuition is a big deal.

(p. 121)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) in her hostel room in school (TIME) in the afternoon

Participants: Ifemelu and Obinze

End: Ifemelu felt hopeless and communicate fear and gloom but Obinze encouraged and gave her hope.

Acts: Ifemelu spoke, Obinze did not support her assertion, she tried to justify her assertion, again, Obinze made her see that the bottle is half full than half empty.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is pessimistic and her spirit low but Obinze on the other hand was optimistic and assuring.

Instrument: spoken words face-to-face conversation.

Norms: I imagine her squeezing her face, dragging her words while Obinze, holding her hands trying to catch her wandering eyes as he gives her hope. This cannot not go out of the norm of a conversation between two lovers.

Genre: Intimate moment of truth conversation

Ifemelu is not very sure if she should go ahead with her journey to America or not. Everyone is full of expectations from her and she is not sure if she will be able to meet them all. Therefore, she became afraid and needed Obinze to support her timidity but he recognised her fears and encouraged her to face it with courage.

Part two

Datum 5

Ifemelu: "Hi"

Mariama: "Hi. Welcome"

Ifemelu: "I'd like to get braids."

Mariama: "what kind of braid you want?" (Ifemelu said she wanted a medium kinky twist and asked how much it was.)

Mariama: "Two hundred"

Ifemelu: "I paid one sixty last month." (Long pause)

Ifemelu; "So one sixty?"

Mariama: "Okay, but you have to come back next time. Sit down. Wait for Aisha. She will finish soon."

(p. 20)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) a hair salon (TIME) in the morning

Participants: Ifemelu and Mariama

End: Ifemelu intends to braid her hair but she had to reach an agreed price with Mariama before making it.

Acts: after exchanging greetings, Ifemelu declared her intentions. Mariama asked her to be specific which she (Ifemelu) explains and inquire of the price. They started bargaining and agreed on a price.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is mild but intentional. Mariama's tone was also gentle and her manner business-like.

Instrument: It's a face-to-face conversation with spoken words.

Norms: the conversation is entirely business like. Typically, of a hair maker bargain with a customer. She talks and still has her eyes and divided attention on the present customer while she bargains with a potential one. They used English language and the conversation was introduced with greetings.

Genre: The conversation is bargain inclined. A little serious, more business like typical of an American situation. Time is money, as they say.

While it is not Ifemelu's first time to be making hair in that saloon, she did not assume that Mariama would accept the old price after making her hair. She bargained first before they agreed on a price. Mariama was reluctant to agree because there was a long pause and no eye contact between them before Mariama finally agreed. Ifemelu was insistent on the price she paid the last time, not willing to show any lack of control on her bargain otherwise she weakens her bargain power.

Datum 6

Ifemelu: "Evening"

Telemarketer: "May I ask who I'm talking to?"

Ifemelu: "My name is Ifemelu."

Telemarketer "Is it a French name?"

Ifemelu: "No, Nigerian."

Telemarketer: "That where your family came from?"

Ifemelu: "Yes." "I grew up there."

Telemarketer: "Oh, really? How long have you been in the US?"

Ifemelu: "Three years."

Telemarketer: "Wow. Cool. You sound totally American."

Ifemelu: "Thank you."

(p. 205)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) In her room (TIME) in the morning

Participants: Ifemelu and a Telemarketer

End: Ifemelu wants a better long-distance phone rate to Nigeria or any other country from a phone company. The telemarketer is

Acts: A swift turn taking in a formal conversation that is more of questions and answers.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is formal and calm her manner, cooperative and engrossed. The telemarketer also is friendly and inquisitive.

Instrument: telephone conversation

Norms: The conversation is a formal one. No familiarity tone, no long pauses and straight to the point. The conversation between a white American and a black non-African American student is usually laced with communication flaws like accent interference and so on. Rather, the conversation was smooth and the telemarketer complimented her for sounding entirely American.

Genre: It is more like an interview. Business like. Entirely questions and answers accompanied with mutual respect and understanding.

In her selection for a phone company with a better call rate for international calls, she decided to pick this particular call and send the person off, if the person is from a phone company. From much comparisons, their prices are the same, but the voice at the other end was warm, charming and friendly. There was something about his voice "An aggressive customer-service friendliness that was not aggressive at all." Adichie (2013). As later revealed by the narrator, the telemarketer won because Ifemelu switched to the phone company.

Datum 7

Ifemelu: "Your dog just ate my bacon."

Elena: "You just hate my dog"

Ifemelu: "You should train him better. He shouldn't eat people's food from the kitchen table."

Elena: "You better not kill my dog with voodoo."

Ifemelu: "What?"

Elena: "Just kidding!"

(p. 179)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) in her apartment where she shared with some students (TIME) late in the afternoon

Participants: Ifemelu and Elena

End: Ifemelu expected Elena to apologise to her when her (Elena) dog swallowed her (Ifemelu) bacon but Elena rather, provoked her more, justifying the dog's action and using hurtful words.

Acts: firstly, it was a complain followed by a defensive assertion by Elena. Secondly, Ifemelu offered a counsel and Elena laid an accusation. Finally, Ifemelu got furious while Elena makes a mockery of the whole situation.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is rebuking and she behaved sadly but Elena's tone is sarcastic and her manner indifferent.

Instrument: face-to-face verbal conversation.

Norms: knowing the difference of right and wrong with obvious evidence, Elena is expected to listen remorsefully as Ifemelu vent her anger. Elena could have apologised on behalf of her dog. This would have been the norm for this conversation, not being defensive, sarcastic and unremorseful thereby creating tension in the atmosphere.

Genre: The conversation is more of a quarrel or argument.

Ifemelu just needed a sincere apology from Elena. That would have eased her hurt after waiting till late for a call from the last interview she went and the call did not come. She could have smacked the dog for eating her bacon but she felt she should let the owner know. I am very sure this is not the first time. Ifemelu must have been tolerating their excesses in the apartment.

Part three

Datum 8

Ifemelu: "Ranyi"

"I know my coming back is a big deal but I didn't know it was big enough for a ball gown"

Ranyinudo: "Idiot. I came straight from the wedding. I didn't want to risk the traffic of going home first to change."

Ifemelu: you look amazing, Ranyi, I mean, underneath all that war paint. Your picture didn't even show you well."

Ranyinudo: "Ifemsco, see you, beautiful babe, even after a long flight."

(p. 438)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) On the road, in the car (TIME) early evening

Participants: Ifemelu and Ranyinudo

End: Ifemelu expects Ranyinudo to comprehend the compliment she is giving her, out of a joke. Ranyinudo, familiar with her friend's ways also jokingly responded with a compliment.

Acts: Ifemelu jokingly attacked Ranyinudo and Ranyinudo jokingly responded. Ifemelu complimented her and Ranyinudo also returned the compliment.

Key: they both operated in a jovial and friendly manner.

Instrument: words, casually spoken.

Norms: friends from childhood are at liberty to have one or two jokes with each other, especially when they are together, regardless of position, achievement or social ladder. Nevertheless, while doing so, the rules guiding conversation should be observed. Like one should not talk and drive especially if it's face-to-face conversation. It is dangerous.

Genre: Pleasantries.

Ifemelu just came back from America after many years and Ranyinudo arrived to the airport on time to pick her. The conversation between them clearly shows intimacy and understanding in their solid friendship. The sarcasm in Ifemelu's "arrival speech" did not go unnoticed in Ranyinudo's vulgarised "welcoming address."

Datum 9

Ifemelu: "What kind of humidity is this?"

"I can't breathe."

Ranyinudo: "I can't breathe," (mimicking & laughing)

"haba! Americanah!"

(p. 443)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) Ifemelu on Ranyinudo's bed; Ranyinudo, on a mattress on the floor at Ranyinudo's house. (TIME) at midnight.

Participants: Ifemelu and Ranyinudo

End: Ifemelu complains about the dampness of the room. Ranyinudo feels she's making a mountain out of a molehill.

Acts: there is an unease, complain, by Ifemelu. Interruption by Ranyinudo with the intention to calm her.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is grumbling and she is not comfortable. Ranyinudo on the other

hand is mimicry between laughs and her manner shows mockery.

Instrument: spoken words without eye contacts because it's dark.

Norms: the interlocutors are friends and they have a lot in common. None of them seems to be bothered about the utterance of the other. Even the exclamation by Ranyinudo was well received by Ifemelu. It's a normal conversation for them. While Ifemelu maintained Standard English as she speaks, Ranyinudo on the other hand code mixed her utterance.

Genre: A complain kind of conversation.

Again, yet to acclimatise to the Nigerian system of power outage, Ifemelu aired out her disappointment as she sleeps because of discomfort. This, she did not particularly at Ranyinudo but generally at the system. Knowing well that this is part of the situations she signed for when she decided to leave a good life and flourishing career in America and come back to Nigeria. Ranyinudo rather, was having fun with Ifemelu's exaggerated complain.

Datum 10

Ifemelu: "The sandwich comes with chips?"

Waiter: "Yes madam."

Ifemelu: "Do you have real potatoes?"

Waiter: "Madam?"

Ifemelu: "Are your potatoes the frozen imported ones, or do you cut and fry your potatoes?"

Waiter: (The waiter looked offended) "It is the imported frozen ones."

Ifemelu: (As the waiter walked away) "Those frozen things taste horrible."

(p. 502)

Analysis

Setting: (PLACE) an eatery (TIME) in the afternoon

Participants: Ifemelu and a Waiter in company of Obinze

End: Ifemelu places an ordered for a meal and she demands to know the content of the meal she ordered.

Key: Ifemelu's tone is informal and her manner, concerned.

Instrument: face-to-face conversation.

Norms: Asking for the content of the meal you want to order from a waiter is a common and acceptable norm. In anyway, waiters are expected to always smile at their customers. That is the norm.

Genre: A request and service rendering kind of conversation.

Ifemelu in company of Obinze, placed an order of sandwich and demanded to know if the potatoes in the sandwich are imported or local (that is, if it is cut and fry by the chef in the eatery). As she bombarded the waiter with questions, he felt offended because he does not know why she's really asking. After all, he feels, they are offering the best kind of potatoes (the imported frozen) which everyone prefers. The Nigerian mentality is that, anything imported is the best, including foods but Ifemelu However, would have loved the fresh local potatoes which is not preserved by chemicals which makes it taste horrible.

Findings and conclusion

Deducing from the analysis, we can accurately assert that Dell Hymes' theory of S. P. E. A. K. I. N. G has proven to be a template that can be tested in analysing conversations of any sort. It reveals the authenticity and viability of the communication theory as a tool to ascertain people's behaviours, attitudes, thoughts characters, among others through

communication in every sphere and age of life. Nevertheless, there are some dimensions of linguistic meaning that are not captured in the communication model. Nonverbal linguistic communicative device such as gesture, touch, facial expressions have been conveniently ignored in the model.

The analysis, using Dell Hyme's speaking model, reveals the conversational pattern of Ifemelu in three phases: while she was in Nigeria, when she was in America and after she came back to Nigeria. From the research it shows that except for always starting a conversation and speaking English all through, Ifemelu's pattern of conversation is not entirely the same. It differs according to SETTING which generally was in Nigeria and America. And specifically, in an enclosed place, outside or a car. The PARTICIPANTS usually involve two persons except with others around. The END in all conversations were achieved except the first one with Obinze which took place for the sake of it. The ACTS SEQUENCE was not unnecessarily interrupted and the KEY in almost all cases were positively depicted except for her conversation with Elena. The INSTRUMENT in seven conversations were face to face, a conversation in the dark and two were distance conversation through telephone. In some conversations, NORMS guiding them were violated whilst some were not. Similarly, the GENRE of all the conversations is an omnibus of bargain, confrontation, interview like, pleasantries, confession and counsel, request and service rendering kind etc. There are three dimensions representing her conversational style. In the first phase, before she travelled to America, she appeared to be naïve and uncertain in her conversations. She seems not to own her conversations. While at a party, she just wanted to say something to Obinze even without a particular goal. Secondly, she testified to the palatability of the food she ate but anyone can say that

when being hosted for lunch or dinner. The meal must not be tasty for one to compliment, it is the principle of it. Further, she was apprehensive when talking to her aunt on phone concerning her pregnancy suspicion. Finally, she needed Obinze to encourage or discourage her to travel to America.

Ifemelu gained confidence in America and she was focused. She refused to be intimidated and ignored. She was determined with a razor-sharp precision and knows what she wanted with a calculated effort. She vistas her goal and achieved it. Her conversation with Mariama rhymes with the preceding evaluation. Though she doesn't want to speak to a phone company marketer again, she settled for the telemarketer she had conversation with because there is something about the way he talked which satisfied her searching spirit. Her confrontation with Elana only shows her lack of timidity and her ability to stand up for herself.

Adichie's skilful pen portrayed the *Americanah* in Ifemelu when she arrived Nigeria. The author depicted two good friends who were conversing with each other, whom one is not offended or bothered by the other's dominance in the conversation. Ifemelu's aura charmed the atmosphere in conversations. She talked fulfilled, in control, and compelled her personal standard on others. Her conversations are also characterized with exaggerated American lens in Nigeria's socio-economic situation.

Ifemelu's conversational style can be used as a template in modelling how a conversation should be carried out. She is a lover of conversation and believes things don't get identified, known, agreed and solved in silence. One of her unique patterns is leading all conversations. She is the first to start all the conversation analysed. She also believes in the conversation principle of turn taking, be it face-to-face, or telephone conversation. This does not matter if the

conversation is an argument, bargain or the other party being reluctant to say something, she always waits for feedback from the other end. This could be seen in her conversation with Mariama in the saloon, when Mariama was reluctant to agree on a price, another instance is when she complained to her flat mate Elena, about her (Elena) dog ate her bacon. Even though Elana was rude to her by being supportive of her dog, which drove Ifemelu angry, Ifemelu nevertheless did not flared up, she waited to hear all that Elena has to say before walking away. In the case of complaining about the humidity in Nigeria when she got back to the country, the question was not directly at Ranyinudo but a rhetorical one. However, Ranyinudo, knowing how her friend likes conversation from their many years of friendship, responded accordingly. While in a restaurant with Obinze, the waiter was offended because Ifemelu asked him if the potatoes were imported or local. Ifemelu ignored his countenance and waited for him to respond to her before allowing him to leave.

Ifemelu is always in control of her conversations. She never allows anger, sarcasm or any offence get in the way of her conversations, especially, in her conversation with Elena, Ranyinudo and the waiter. She knows exactly what to say to start a face-to-face conversation: firstly, she used the ice breaker method to start a conversation with Obinze at Kayode's party. She also started a conversation with Obinze's mother by complimenting the soup she ate and her conversation with Ranyinudo started by complimenting her dress, when Ranyinudo came to pick her in the airport. Ifemelu control of conversation can further be seen in her conversation with her aunt. Though it was a telephone conversation at a public place, but she still manages to conveniently converse with her aunt in coded language without anyone understanding or coding what she was saying.

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