

**CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANA*:  
A RELEVANCE THEORETICAL  
INTERPRETATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the role of context in communication and understanding using the novel 'Americanah' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as it is integrated in relevance theory. Sperber and Wilson emphasize that understanding an utterance is not simply a linguistic decoding. It involves identifying what the speaker intended to say. In most cases, the writer or speaker is the controller of his words. The way language is used makes the paper meaningful to the listener. However, this work exposes race and identity problem in America using relevance theory as a useful apparatus. The work has a frame work of pragmatics theory. Relevance theory as a string of pragmatics creates awareness of race/identity, economic and cultural problems in America through this novel. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory attempts to explain and share Grice's central claims that utterances create expectations which guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning. Its focus is in pragmatic processes which contribute to explicit truth-conditional content and the role of deliberate maxim violation in utterance. More so, interpretation and the treatment of figurative utterances as deviations from a maxim or convention of truthfulness are also accounted for in this pragmatic process. The search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition which communicators may exploit. This paper through communicative principle exposes intentions, attitude and contexts. In other words, it reveals communication process that not only encodes, transfers and decodes messages, but also involves other elements like inference and context. And the goal of inferential pragmatics is to explain how the hearer introduces the speaker's meaning on the basis of the evidence provided. Relevance is a function of effort and effect. This paper, therefore, attempts to analyze Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel 'Americanah' within the frame work of relevance theory.

## **INTRODUCTION**

For one to estimate the relevance of this novel or otherwise of the novel under study is to x-ray those factors which have enabled the author to arrange the American world at large. This is because Adichie holds nothing back in her cultural criticism, and Nigerians get just as much satire as Americans. For one to determine the way one understands the world via pragmatics is achieved through the ability to take control of the minds of the reader's using decisive instrument of affecting recognition of intentions. And the concept of language by Anagbogu, Eme and Mba (2001) as a means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires, e.t.c through complete vocal or written symbols. According to Yul-Ifode (2001:2); language stresses "the institution whereby human beings communicate ideas, feelings, emotions, and desires as well as interest with each other by means of habitually oral, auditory and arbitrary symbols". And pragmatics makes use of the world to create a desired reality. It achieved this using the communicative and cognitive approaches of the relevance theory created by language use. In doing this, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her novel 'Americanah' unveils the game of discourse between metaphorical extension, exposing intentions, attitudes and context through language. For one to achieve this, a type of language use that plays a very significant role in creating the awareness needed for the exposition of those factors that have helped the author of the novel to arrange the American world is applied. Based on this reason, the conduct of the people, and the choices of language in interaction have to be transparent. This has prompted the researcher here to explore the relevance theory in the analysis of this novel 'Americanah' by Adichie.

The Lacuna which this work recognizes is the fact that the relevance theory has never been fully explored in the analysis of this novel 'Americanah' by Adichie. And in such a consciousness for

race and identity, the relevance theory is effective in the exposition of all aspects of life woven around American history and as such captivating language that is considered most appropriate for the analysis as meaning is context dependent and can be recovered through implicit elements.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This section reviews some relevant works done on the area of relevance theory as it affects the factors which have enabled Adichie in her novel 'Americanah' to arrange the American world with a view to defining some useful materials for this work.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Under this section, one deduces some of the terms and concepts as used by the writer of this essay to give additional hints and adequate process in her analysis. Some of these concepts are Language, Pragmatics, Relevance theory, Racism and identity.

## **THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE**

Language according to Robins (1980:9) is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. Language is a mode of communication used exclusively by humans. And according to Yul Ifode in Enete (2008:7) "Language is a purely human and non-instructive; method of communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. This view point does not embrace all the aspects or roles played by language. Actually, language communicates much more than 'ideas', 'emotions', 'desires', one cannot study a language of a particular group without knowing their culture. This is because most human behaviours are language embedded. Therefore, language is an inevitable part of culture. In support of this, Kuper and Kuper (1996:45) in Enete, A.N (2008:8) say that:

Language is therefore not only part of culture but also a major and critical part. All those who seek fully to enter into and understand a give culture must accordingly, master its language, for only through that language can they possibly participate in and experience the culture.

Language being part of culture plays some fundamental functions in society. However, Obuasi (2001;106) grouped the functions of language under three broad functions as an instrument of thought, as an instrument of communication, and as an instrument for social identity. More so, language provides the unique medium through which the belief system, world view, moral values and virtually all the basic ingredients of any given society are passed from generation to generation; Agbedo (2003;18) Language is a means of communication solely used by human beings. It can be spoken or written. Language is inextricably entwined with our mental life- our perceiving, our remembering, our attending, our comprehending, our thinking and all of our attempts to make sense of our experience in the world; Lindfors (1991; 8). Human communication however, is never simple. Context always plays a role in communication as do other factors such as author's intentions, the relationship between the sender and receiver and so forth. This gives an insight to pragmatics, that is to say; the way an individual goes about using language.

## **PRAGMATICS**

Pragmatics is needed if we want a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behavior. Actually, meaning is not complete at the surface level. Immediately meaning deviates from the meaning of sentence and tags to the meaning of utterance, pragmatics is considered. Content is very important in the study of pragmatics. And this relates to the first principle of relevance, which is that an utterance is relevant when it connects to available

contextual assumptions. That is to say when it relates to the context of conversation and yields a positive cognitive effect here. The language user is the centre of attention in pragmatics .And pragmatics introduces the basic cognitive notion of relevance and the cognitive principle of relevance which lays the foundation for the relevance- theoretic approach to pragmatics. And reveals how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. Thus the major assumptions of the relevance theory are explored along the lines of the relationship and interaction between relevance and communication, relevance and cognition, relevance and comprehension among other socio-psychological variables.

### **RELEVANCE THEORY**

Relevance theory ‘‘aims to describe and explain how humans understand the world and how we understand each other’’ Clark in Nordquist updated 17, 2017.Relevance theory share Grice’s intuition that utterances raise expectations of relevance and focus on pragmatic processes which contribute to explicit truth conditional context. And also, the role of deliberate maxim violation in utterance, interpretation and the treatment of figurative utterances as deviations from a maxim or convention of truthfulness is also its major focus.

The foundation for relevance theory is an establishment by two cognitive scientists: Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (1986).Other aspects of relevance theory’s account of communication include its theory of context selection, and of the account rest on the notion of manifestness and mutual manifestness. In relevance theory terms, communication is successful when (i) it attracts the attention of the target audience, (ii) it indicates that the speaker wishes to convey a message of interest to the hearer (iii) the audience recognizes the speaker’s informative intention and finds it worthwhile to make effort to understand what the speaker intends to tell them, and (iv) the message received by the hearer is

as close as possible to what the speaker has in mind. Relevance may be assessed in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort. And an input is said to be relevant to an individual when it connects with background information he has available to yield conclusions that matter to him for instance, by answering a question he has in mind, improving his knowledge on a certain topic, settling a doubt, confirming a suspicion, or correcting a mistaken impression. An input can be (a sight, a sound, an utterance, or a memory). More so, in relevance theoretic terms, an input is relevant to an individual when its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a positive cognitive effect Sperber .D and Wilson .D (1986a:251).

### **IDENTITY**

This is the portion of an individual's self – concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group. As originally formulated by Henri Tagifel and John Turner in the 1970's and 1980's social identity theory introduced the concept of a social identity as a way through which one can explain intergroup behaviour. It also describes a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviours on the basis of perceived legitimacy and stability of that status differences, and the perceived ability to move from one group to another.

Identity refers to the state of remaining the same one or ones under varying conditions. Identity is an important theme in the novel "Americanah". This is because an individual manipulates universal linguistic features in creating a social identity. Emenike a secondary character in this novel totally changes personality to become a cultured and wealthy British citizen. This is to say that an individual creates rules so as to resemble as closely as possible for those of the group or groups with which from time to time, he wishes to identify as constrained by a number of factors:

- the extract to which he identifies his model group.

- the extent to which he has sufficient access to those model groups and sufficient analytic ability to work out the rules of their behavior.
- the strength of various motivations towards retaining sense of his own unique identity.
- the ability of the individual to modify his behaviour Agbedo (1997) in Enete (2008)

This is also depicted in the plot that follows Ifemelu and Obizie growing up and finding each other in the world. As a result of their life situations and identification of a person is inextricably linked to national identity for these two major characters.

## **RACE**

Of all tribalists, Americans are the most uncomfortable with race. According to Adichie, race is not biology, race is sociology. And in *Americanah*, an individual does not decide what race to belong, it is decided for an individual. More so, in America racism is about the shade of one's skin, the shape of the nose and the kink of one's hair and class privilege, race privilege are decided by those features. Racism is all absurd because it's about one's look, not about the blood one has. For instance, the surprises and expressions on the faces of the white women, when Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girl friend, pg 293.

First, as a novel, the author's primary aim to convince or persuade the Nigerian immigrants in America to stick to their culture and identity of being Nigerians. The novel '*Americanah*' by Adichie reveals certain things that may seem to be minor in an attempt to bring to notice the yearnings of non-American blacks to imitate the American blacks.

Adaoma (2016; 256) in Obama's speech explains that "to draw a road map for a visionary mission of America that was vital of the movement in his theory 'not this time' rejects, all the philosophies which hold one American against the other in the continued attempt of the

privileged few to enjoy a stupendous opulence while distracting the majority poor from uniting against a common problem for the general good’

## **SUMMARY OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The writer adopts the relevance theory model in the analysis of this novel ‘Americanah’ by Adichie. This approach was adopted because the writer considered ethno linguistic factors prevailing in America as a social group. And the act of social identity and dynamic model communicative and cognitive principle as considered unreliable by many. The application of relevance theory under this study allows one to perceive how language is used in interesting and social ways. For instance, Ifemelu’s protection of her kinky hair style stands out to create awareness of her social standing, similarly her language can act in ideological ways to reinforce American societal value

## **RELEVANCE AND COMMUNICATIVE PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO RACE IN AMERICANAH**

**This approach explains the principles that guide the mental state of the speaker which provide the easiest possible means of making himself understandable to the hearer.**

Through communicative principle of relevance every ostensible stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance. For instance, Ifemelu, a Nigerian woman living in Princeton, New Jersey, travels to another town in order to get her hair braided properly. Ifemelu getting her hair braided introduces black women’s hair as being relevant and its processing in the context yields a positive cognitive effect as it reinforces societal values. There is a typical communication chain visible in the discussions between Ifemelu, Aisha and Mariama. The author’s primary aim is to

convince, the immigrants in America by exposing the yearnings of these immigrants who imitate the Americans that black is good, if not more beautiful. For instance, in the Saloon, Ifemelu wants colour two of the attachment while Aisha encourages her to take colour four;

“colour four” “Not good colour” Aisha said promptly. “That’s what I use”. “It look dirty. You don’t want colour one?” “Colour one is two black, it looks fake”, Ifemelu said, loosening her headwrap. Sometimes I use colour two but colour four is closest to my natural colour, pg12.

The above extract reveals the efforts by these blacks to imitate the Americans; take for instance the language use of the word ‘headwrap’ for the Nigerian use of ‘headtie’. Consequently, the speakers of the specialized variety may switch to other varieties of language when interacting in a highly specialized setting. Here, Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory shows explicature signifying assumptions explicitly communicated by an utterance; and seen as the most relevant utterance that the speaker is willing and able to produce. Again, Ifemelu touches an offending braid and exclaimed that it is tight, and Aisha pushes her hand away saying to her ‘leave it .It good’pg13.Ifemelu insists that the braid has to be loosen but Aisha maintains that it has to be tight. Mariama who is watching instructs Aisha using French language to loosen the hair and lies to Ifemelu that Aisha does not understand English very well.s

Here, the change of attitude by Aisha reveals the context of Mariama’s utterance. Evidence is relevant in the change of attitude as Aisha loses the tight braid which she previously insisted has to be tight to reflect the ‘cosmetic niceties of American customer services’p13.And this reflects the background assumption that communicated Aisha’s utterance.

At Kayode's party, the colleagues match-make Obinze and Ginika the Half –caste but through communication between them, there is relevance in the interaction between Obinze and Ifemelu that depicts the attitude portrayed by these individuals to racism.

“So what did Kayode say about me?” “Nothing bad. He likes you” “You don't want to tell me what he said” He said, “Ifemelu is a fine babe but she is too much trouble. She can argue”....pg60.

The communication, here, through Kayode fails to deter or discourage Obinze from picking on Ifemelu, this infers that there is more to the affection between them than meets the eye following their interaction. Actually, the relationship between Obinze and Ifemelu is relevant to national identity and racism. Another instance of relevance theory reflects where Ifemelu disapproves Bartholomew's relationship with Aunty Uju in her coded language, “He uses bleaching creams” pg117. The coded language is decoded thus: it is not as a result of Bathlomew's behavior or the fact that he is not interested in the son of a woman he is courting and refuses to pretend that he is –as stated in Ifemelu's context but in the fact that he is fake, he imitates the Americans. He is not realistic and his status is low though he assumes a higher status. This is relevant from the language of ‘bleaching creams’ as used by Ifemelu.

In addition to this, attitudes, intentions and context reflect racism and are relevant as Ifemelu moves in with Blaine to New Haven just because the environment is America. She is not yet married to Blaine and she calls her parents to inform them and racism unveils from the questions asked by her parents, “An American Negro?” her father asked sounding baffled” pg314 and her mother ‘is he a Christian?- She further advices revealing her intention through the context as

“then no problem, ‘her mother said.’ ‘when will he come to introduce himself? You can plan it so that we do everything at the same time-door-knocking, bride price and wine- carrying-it will cut costs and that way he does not have to keep coming and going, America is far’”pg315.

This is relevant as her mother bases her argument on the cultural practices in Nigeria which depicts the mother’s intention through the context. This shows that her parents are not comfortable with the idea of Ifemelu getting married to Blaine, a half –caste and an American. It is relevant from the questions asked by Ifemelu’s parents and the context that seem welcoming but insincere. For Americans marriage is not a serious institution, Blaine’s second encounter with Ifemelu explains the reason behind Blaine’s refusal to answer her calls previously. And Blaine reveals with an expression the arrogance in the American blacks’’ a virtuous narrowing of his eyes that announced the high-mindedness of their owner’’pg309.

The above sentence from the novel explains the American blacks attitude towards the non-American blacks whom they believe are inferior to them; while they, the American blacks are faultless. This also proves why Araminta refers to Ifemelu as ‘‘a chocolate sister’’. More so, the question ‘‘what do you mean? As directed by Blaine to Ifemelu where both watch a news item about a celebrity divorce and Ifemelu states that she does not understand the bending unambiguous honesties that Americans require in relationships.

Ifemelu hears a looming disagreement in Blaine’s voice because Blaine also believes in unbending, unambiguous honesties despite the fact that he is an American black. The above extract conveys racial superiority that is assumed by the American blacks over the non-American immigrants. The intended meaning is being recovered from Blaine’s looming disagreement implied in his voice. Though ,this requires an additional effort of parsing and inference in order to work out the inferred meaning .This takes us to what the speaker thinks that the audience or

listener already knows and the mutual cognitive environment between them .Even when their mindset are directed towards the same direction.

### **RELEVANCE AND COMMUNICATION APPLIED TO IDENTITY IN *AMERICANAH***

The application of relevance theory to 'Americanah' Adichie's novel allows one to perceive how language is used in interesting and social way to unveil identity problems in America. It uses words and creates inferred elements to depict culture conflict, societal values that contradicts in a way that reinforces confusion that these non –Americans face and their yearnings to imitate the Americans, and their failure to adapt.

Through communicative principle, there is relevant information in the discussion between Aisha and Ifemelu. Aisha pleads with Ifemelu to persuade one of her two boyfriends who are Igbos to marry her (a Senegalese), From the above information, one asserts a peculiar case of a non-American black, and how the pressures of immigrant life can make one to act crazy. And it reveals a sense of self, providing continuity in personality over time. Again, the change in the modulation of Emenike's speech points at relevance.' "oh, that's a bit tatty," Emenike said. He had changed. His voice had taken on taken on an unfamiliar modulation, his delivery slower, the temperature of his entire being much lower. "'We could go to that new place in Kensington, it's not that far'" pg267.

Emenike , though a secondary character totally changes his personality to become a cultured and wealthy British citizen and it is relevant from the above discussion. His voice imitates the Americans and the choice he makes reflects this new life.

### **RELEVANCE AND COGNITIVE PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO IDENTITY**

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance. It is against this cognition background that inferential communication takes place. And the more cognitive effects a

stimulus has, the more relevant it is. Relevance theory presents cognitive effects for an individual as adjustments to the way an individual represents the world like most pragmatics, Sperber and Wilson emphasize that understanding an utterance is not simply a matter of linguistic decoding. It involves identifying what the speaker intended to say; for instance in this extract; ‘‘Once a Guinean braider in Philadelphia had told Ifemelu, ‘’amma like, oh God, AZ someh’’ which means that ‘I’ m like, oh God, I was so mad’; this reveals the speakers discomfort with her half completed words her struggle to speak English that turns out to be broken. In the extract, ‘‘we’ll go to Sidcot hall and the French school, and also look at some Nigerian schools like Crown Day, Kosi said and looked at him with a plea’’ pg 30. In this case, it is not clear whether what is said is what the words represent or the proposition the speaker expressed. Kosi apologizes to Obinze with a non-verbal expression.

Kosi creates in this context, the above extract so as to resemble as closely as possible those of the group which the majority wishes to identify themselves with as constrained by a number of factors. More so, one of Kosi’s maids displays attitude in his behavior thus, ‘‘The girl looked down at first, silent, then she looked Kosi in the face. And said quietly,’ in my last job, my madam’s husband was always forcing me’’pg34.

Here, the fact is recovered from the exposure of the ‘‘condoms’’ which acts as the processing effort and the contextual assumptions got from the word ‘‘forcing me’’. From the above information, there is a maximization of relevance in the fact that it connects with the background information and has available information to yield conclusion. Back in Nigeria before Ifemelu left for America, Ifemelu’s hair flows down her back each time she relaxes it at the saloon and her father refers to it as ‘‘a crown of glory’’pg41. This is an instance of deliberate maxim violation in utterance as in Grice’s intuition that utterances raise expectations of relevance. In

this case, meaning becomes multivalued, and sense lose its primacy. Although, it postulates that black is glorious, it can also depict so many other interpretation. Contrary to this, Ifemelu arrives America and changes her hair style in other to modify her look in pursuance of a job opportunity. Thus hair starts to represent how American society makes no place for black independence or beauty.

Relevance explains a lack of communication between Ifemelu and Blaine as revealed where Blaine's ex-girlfriend, Paula, asks Blaine if he still remembers the awful Thanksgiving at her parent's house. The experience was left unaired, as it remained wrapped in their shared privacy; and this in effect made Ifemelu jealous and uncomfortable with Blaine's friends. Though, Ifemelu as Blaine's girl now has a Yale gym pass as a professor's partner, and writes her blogs from his apartment, she allows Blaine to read and slowly she now makes changes as a result of his advises.

For this reason, her posts start to sound too academic, too much like Blaine's instead of hers. But even at that Ifemelu has this statement that unravels her identity,' "Remember people are not reading you as entertainment, they are reading you as cultural commentary"pg312.This shows that Ifemelu 's blog is a real responsibility to her identity as a Nigerian. However, through attitude, relevance is put forward where Mariama puts on a part of her American self in cognizance to her business and even when a customer complains about rough or loose braid, Mariama uses her smooth-tongued to agree to do it again. But behind this Ifemelu could tell that Mariama thinks her customer a troublemaker and that nothing is wrong with the 'cornrow' but this is just in a bid to favour customer service. It is called shiny falseness of surfaces and Mariama has accepted an embraced it, pg 188.When the customer leaves, she says something to Halima and Aisha about Americans, how spoilt and chidish they are, but when the next

customer comes , she puts on, ‘a faultless version of her American self,pg188. There is an unspoken apology from Mariama as she criticizes Nigerians with her customer in front of Ifemelu.

In the discussion, between Auntie Uju and Ifemelu, there is an instance of cognitive relevance in the extract: “At this point in the story ,Auntie Uju paused, Ifemelu imagined Bartholomew in his contrast -collar shirt and his trousers pulled too high up ,the unflattering pleats at the front , his k-leg walk as he stormed off” pg219.

The author, through Ifemelu describes, Bartholomew with foul language which could only be understood by the Nigerians. This is because the word k-leg is a borrowed word from Nigerian language.

### **RELEVANCE AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES APPLIED TO IDENTITY**

To know what people mean, one has to interpret what they say. The implication here is that utterances send messages as they are uttered and also informative as well founded as well as relevant and perspicuous. Again, according to Grundy (2008:95) “knowing the speakers well enough would enable us to know what they mean” by what they say. This is portrayed in Ifemelu’s father’s advise to his daughter; “You have singled yourself out at school where you are known for insubordination and I have told you that it has already sullied your academic record”. There is no need to create a similar pattern in church” pg52

Here, Ifemelu’s father reveals his intention in the context because this exposes her father’s fear which is that his child’s behavior resembles his own and may land her in a similar problem he experienced in the hands of his boss in the office which cost him his job. The meaning is conveyed indirectly that is to say that the meaning is implied, through hints that are not explicitly

stated; but are recovered from the context and are relevant to the poor economic status of Nigeria.

Again, Ifemelu asks why she has to make decorations for a thief, ” A person who had to spread the cloak of religion over her own petty desires “ pg 57.

This reveals truth-conditional content .Though, it is a figurative utterance and deviates from the maxim or convention of truthfulness.

In the same sense, Ifemelu’s mother proclaims blessing of God upon whoever has been showering aunty Uju with so much wealth, while behind this the audience perceive the spread of the cloak of religion over her own petty desires for material wealth.

The relationship between aunty Uju and the General is based on culture of dependence, likewise the relationship between Ifemelu and the rich white guy in America which earned her the US citizenship and a job in America. All these attitudes are inclined to the relevance of economic pressures on the situations of these individuals.

### **RELEVANCE AND CULTURE APPLIED TO IDENTITY**

This explains some of the attitudes by these immigrants as a result of having stayed too long with foreigners; take for instance

Dike brought up a tray to her room,

On which he had placed a banana and a can of peanuts” pg 300.

The author did not leave his audience in doubt regarding his ideas, the can of peanuts going with bananas seem odd instead groundnut is used with bananas. In addition, Ifemelu now do other things that Blaine does like going to the gym, eating more protein than carbohydrates and she does all these with a kind of grateful contentment because they improved her.

## **RELEVANCE AND FIGURES OF SPEECH**

Relevance theory tries to account for the use of loose languages unlike other pragmatic discussions. Grice's framework has been criticized for giving such figures of speech like irony, metaphor, and hyperbole a parallel treatment. For Sperber and Wilson state that

Grice's account of irony is a variant of the classical rhetorical account on which an ironical utterance is seen as literally saying one thing and figuratively meaning the opposite. There are well-known arguments against this account. It is descriptively inadequate because ironical understatements, quotations, and allusions do not communicate the opposite of what is literally said.

This is seen in the advice given to Ifemelu by Obinze's mother concerning her love relationship with her son. "I will advise you to wait until you are at least in the university, wait until you own yourself a little more" pg72. And this is relevant as it tries to bring up the culture of Nigerians and their regard for relationships in other words, relationships for instance, marriage is a serious institution for them, though the addressee is not very much at home with "when you own yourself a little more" but the preceding clause has the tendency of maximizing the relevance because it serves as an interpretive step in its processing. Her explanation contributes to explicit truth-conditional content. This is in contrast to what is obtainable in American and can be seen in Marlon coming back from work only to flirt with Ifemelu in a hasty whisper "I've been thinking about you. I want to talk to you" pg112. This reveals attitudes of the Black Americans. Ifemelu decides the meaning from the context that Marlon may have found her attractive and may like to flirt with her, so she starts to avoid the him. For Tendahl and Gibbs (2008) "...there is no difference in kind between metaphor processing and the processing of non-metaphorical

utterances’’ Again, Sperber and Wilson(1995) claim that the relationship between an utterance and the thought of the speaker is always one of interpretative resemblance between the propositional forms of the utterance and the thought. For instance, back in Nigeria before Ifemelu travelled to America,Ifemelu’s hair flows down her back each time she relaxes it and her father refers to it as a “crown of Glory”pg41.Relevance theory suggests that metaphor expresses one form of ‘ loose talk’ which rest on an important distinction between ‘descriptive ‘ and’interpretive’ representation.So,meaning becomes multivalued and sense loses its primacy. Although it postulates ‘black’ as being glorious. It also depicts so many other interpretations.

In the novel, Araminta refers to Ifemelu as a” chocolate sister’’ .here; chocolate sister is relevant as regards to what colour infers in the American societal values. In addition to this, Ifemelu asks why she has to make decorations for a thief, ‘‘A person who had to spread the cloak of religion over her own petty desires’’pg51.This is a figurative utterance and reveals a truth conditional content. It accounts for the petty desires of material wealth under the guise of religion by these Nigerians like, aunty Uju, Ifemelu’s mother, and those of them in the ‘church’pg 52 all based on the culture of dependence.

### **RELEVANCE AND STRUCTURE in *AMERICA*HAH**

The purpose of this is to assess the developing of writer’s uses of evidence; this is achieved through the two dimensions used for assessing the quality of argumentation, argument as a product (argument structure) and argument as a process (relevance), are interrelated and how they can be used to assess the effect of argumentative mode on the characters or writers arguments.

To this purpose, a two- fold coding scheme will be developed, aimed at capturing (a) the argumentative function of evidence used and (b) the dialogical relevance of evidence use.

A study will be described in which writer's use of evidence is elicited in two distinct argumentative modes (dialogical vs non-dialogical mode writers tended to use evidence in a more sophisticated way from both argument evaluation perspectives.

This is relevant from the pleadings Aisha posits on Ifemelu for her to persuade Emeka, an Igbo boy to marry her. She uses the evidence that Ifemelu, a Nigerian female is marrying a half-caste, an American. Her argument lies on the fact that if a Nigerian, female can live with a half-caste, as Ifemelu does with Blaine or even Curt, then the argument mode prescribes that herself, Aisha can also marry or live with a Nigerian boy even an Igbo boy. The argumentative function of evidence used provides the paper with the dialogical relevance of marriage as evidence of use.

Again , on the T.V screen at the Saloon, a father was beating two children, wooden punches that hit the air above their heads. "No! Bad father! Bad man!" the other braider said, staring at the T.v and flinching. "You from Nigeria?" Mariama asked. Yes, Ifemelu said;" where are you from? Pg 10.

Here, there is a construct of (a)'bullying' and parents beating children as reflected in the T.v screen which functions as an evidence to the relevance of (b) which is the interpretation that the parent reflects the Nigerian parent .In other words, points at the trauma of slavery from Nigerian as parents and their bullying.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the discussions carried out in this paper, it can be stated that this novel, 'Americanah' obeyed one of Grice's maxim of relation to a great extent. This has been observed from the analysis of some speeches in the light of this theory. It flouted to a lesser extent and therefore alerts the addressee that there is a relevant meaning.

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