4.1. GENERAL

Language is a system for the transference of thoughts. But for students of literature, it is also a medium. Literature is fashioned out of the substance of language and has the colour and texture of its matrix. It therefore entails that a literary study requires evaluation of works of literature and artifacts with intrinsic qualities. So views of literary works should be generated from the point of view of consumption where it results from an interaction between the reader and the text. This helps to bring about a discourse between the author and the reader. It helps the reader to negotiate with the intended meaning of the author’s work. An evaluation of a work should extend beyond merely the print and the reading, just as a chemist peers into the molecular structure and the astronomer into the effects of heavenly bodies on each other. Therefore constant search for insights will lead us to the working of the mind of the author and help the critic analyze the text in depth.

Language is viewed not simply as a means of communication but as a force building relationship among the users of the language. The study of language can be from two perspectives.
1. Language structure and
2. Language use.

Language structure which roughly corresponds to Chomsky's (1965) "competence" can be described as the knowledge about a language as has been acquired by the individual while language use, which can be equated with Chomskyan "performance", is the actual way in which an individual uses his language in a given context.

Lahiri has been born and bred in America. She had the opportunity to learn about Indian customs and culture through her frequent visits to India with her parents during her childhood. She has knowledge of both the Indian and American cultures. This has been well brought out in her collection. Her usage of the English language is based on both the Indian as well as American way of life. Hence certain examples have been picked out from the collection of stories which helps to reveal her particular style, distinct voice, which at the same time is lucid and delves deep into the minds of the characters to bring out their American as well as Indian lifestyle, both in India and in America.

In this Chapter an attempt has been made to study the use of language by Jhumpa Lahiri in her collection of short stories. It has to be kept in mind that language use varies from person to person, place to place, topic to topic, context to
context, speech situation to speech situation and so on. With this background in mind, a description about the use of language by the author has been made. Further an attempt has been made to describe the typical and unconventional use of language by the author thereby bringing about special effects on the readers. Certain instances of special usages by the author have been listed for illustration. They can be brought under

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A few examples of each have been elaborated in the following pages to emphasize the excellent use of language as a means of expression in the collection of short stories. The usages can be classified under Figurative, Linguistic, Compounding and Collocations and other usages.

4.2. Some examples of the Figurative Language are given in the following sections

4.2.1. Alliteration

It is a figure of speech where the repetition of initial sounds or letters in a sequence of words, or in verse of stressed syllables, occurs. Jhumpa Lahiri has used such instances in several of her stories.
Her soliloquies **mawkish**, her sentiments **maudlin**, **malaise** dripped like a fever from her pores. (161)

Here the repetition of the /m/ sound refers to the murmur of the participant.

**Wrestling with adversary, wracked with anguish** (168).

Similarly the repetition of ‘w’ indicates the twist in the event and the character’s connection with the particular event.

*In this context it helps to bring out the ravings of Bibi Haldar about her thoughts of marriage.*

4.2.2. **Simile**

A comparison of two objects of different kind with one or two points in common:

With hair in a knot no larger than a walnut. (70)

*The comparison here is physiological in nature. The tenor (Hair) and vehicle (walnut) usage gives an inkling of the frail structure of Boori Ma in ‘A Real Durwan’ which is proved towards the end of the story.*
Sari leaping like flames under her coat. (130)

These lines from ‘Mrs. Sen’s’ derive the nature of the participant and her unhappy life in the U.S. Although she was the wife of a university professor, her feelings of life and disintegration with the life abroad has been clearly brought out through this simile.

Her upper arms sagged like the flesh of a roasted egg plant. (185)

The participant is the focus of attention here. This simile brings out the difference in age of the elderly Mrs. Croft and Helen, her daughter, in the story ‘The Third and final continent.’

4.2.3. Personification

This is a special kind of metaphor. It is a figure of speech in which some abstraction or inanimate thing is represented as a person or is attributed with human qualities. A few such examples are given below:

Satchel plump with files. (1) (human quality + object)

Usually a satchel is filled only with books. But here the satchel is compared to that of a human attribute, viz., being plump. Such personifications add beauty to the writing of Lahiri.
Presiding over a skillet of fried spinach (human attribute + food)

The human attribute of presiding over an event is compared to that of a food item.

Her face contorted with sorrow. (22) (human + abstract)

She was ruminating on these things as she swept the stairwell. (75)

(human + abstract).

The habit of an animal is used to describe the thoughts of a human being.

As people filtered from one room to the next, presents piled on. (152)

(human + abstract)

4.2.4. Oxymoron

This is a figure of speech. It is a kind of paradox—a combination of contradiction or incongruous usages like 'deafening silence'.

Darkness of the sky like soft black pitch. (5)

Comparison of the heavenly body in contrast with a mundane object. It also reveals the temporary darkness in the life of the couple, Shoba and Shukumar.

She spoke softly as if she were thinking aloud. (44)
Why scrap lime from betel leaf. (72)

_This figure of speech is used here to describe the event of Boori Ma’s aristocratic heritage._

Sun burnt scalps and tanned youthful faces. (44)

Mrs. Dalal had diaphanous eyelids and very slender toes with strings on them. (74)

_Through the use of the oxymoron the author has delved deep into the mind of the reader, the contrast of life and India and abroad. These help to express the expatriate sentiments lucidly._

_The act of filter is associated with liquids, in order to remove impurities or sediments._

_Here it is used to describe the movement of people from one place to another._

Their rancour toward Bibi was fixed on their lips (attribute + human)

We bought an instamatic camera with which to document our life together. (196) (object + human attribute).

To cart their children (object = human)

The unpleasant traffic of life (object + human quality)

_Traffic is associated with automobiles on the roads. Here it is personified with the vagaries of life._
Each evening he appeared in ensembles of plums, olives and chocolate browns (human + objects).

4.2.5. Use of Eye dialects

Spoken elements appearing in the written medium constitute what is commonly called as eye dialect. Lahiri uses the eye dialect in her collection.

Instances:

Mr. Pirzada penciled inscriptions at the closet door. (32)

She exhaled audibly through her nose (116)

*These expressions symbolize the exposure of expatriate sentiments of Indians living abroad.*

4.3. Linguistic Items

4.3.1. Words with American spelling

The author has used American spellings in certain places, which shows not only her knowledge of the American usage, but also to drive home the theme of cultural variations and the situation. It brings out the nature of the participant at that particular moment.

Gotten drunk (18)

*Here the situation in the story ‘A Temporary Matter’, warrants that Shukumar drink in order to quell his remorse over his wife.*
Gotten up (54)

The speed of getting up denotes the children's inquisitive nature to know more about India in 'The Interpreter of Maladies'.

Other such usages help to bring out the situations and characters of the participants.

Offense (26)

Madame (48)

4.3.2. Medical Term

Amoebic dysentery.

Reveals the interpretation of maladies of people in India and the U.S.

4.3.3. Sartorial items

Instances of words of attire:

Turbans (78)

The purpose of the usage is to bring out the cultural background and locale of the setting. The strenuous lives of Indians as well as their traditional attire is described here. The cultural background of their wiping the perspiration using their turbans adds color to the description.
Informal dress, to show the difference in the state of mind when at work in formal attire, and when in love with paramour.

Sweat pants (93)
Sneaker (93)
Jeans (93).

Night wear mostly by men. Here used to show Dev’s urge for love-making in the story ‘Sexy’. It also brings out the psychological state of the characters involved.

Terms denoting Indian attire:

Sari (130) (traditional dress of Indian women)

In ‘Mrs.Sen’s’, the sari is worn by Mrs.Sen even when she is in America. This brings out the fact that Mrs.Sen was unable to cope with American life, right even from wearing the native attire. It seems to be difficult for her even to adapt to foreign style of dressing and is more comfortable with the Indian traditional wear.
Salwar Kameez (162) (another dress of Indian women)

Although this is another traditional dress, in the story 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar', the protagonist wears this in order to show that she was quite young and eligible for marriage.

Drawstring pajamas (173) (casual wear of Indian men)

In the story 'The Third and Final continent', this is used to show the unassuming and very casual manner of life of the main character as a student and later on his adapting to family life.

4.3.4. Words denoting Indian food Items

Chutney (7) (a side dish used to be taken with breakfast items)

Shoba in the story 'A Temporary Matter', prepares this cuisine as something special, which reveals her skillfulness in the preparation of Indian dishes and her ability to cater to several guests. This proves her to be a good social woman, who mingles with people around, unlike her husband, Shukumar who is reserved totally.

Pickled mangoes (25) (a dish to be taken with curd rice)

Puffed rice (63) (eaten as snacks)

Snapped a Pappadum (97) (eaten as side dish with rice)
Laxmi's remorse towards her cousins patience, even on learning that her husband has deserted her for another woman, is well brought out by this act.

She also makes the reader understand that the family of Dev has broken apart, and the fragility of the dish is used her to drive home the point.

Samosa (98) (a type of snacks)
Rice cakes (104) (a breakfast item)
Paprika Stew (10) (a special item in the state of Bengal)

Preparation of this particular dish reveals the special culinary capability of Shukumar in 'A Temporary Matter', and his penchant to remain at home doing household chores while his wife earns.

The reversal of the husband-wife role unlike the traditional Indian culture is well brought out.

Pickled Herring (93)
Potato salad (93)
Tortes of pista and mascarpone cheese (93)

These preparations bring out the fact that Miranda was deeply in love with Dev in 'Sexy' and she satiates the desires of love of her paramour through his favorite dishes also.
4.3.5. Usages indicating Indian culture

Creating a well in his rice (31)

Painted with sandalwood paste (160)

Brush his teeth with index finger (95)

These usages bring out some of the peculiar habits of Indians as well as most Asians.

In some of the stories these have been used to lucidly bring out the fact that although the characters were in America, still some such habits and rituals stick on to them, probably idiosyncratic in nature as well as being a part of disintegration with American life. Through these examples, Lahiri has tried to bridge the eastern and western customs.

4.3.6. Terms related to Indian epics and Temples and God’s

Jack-o-lantern (35) (shaped out of pumpkin to ward off evils)

Nagamithunas (57) (God in the shape of half human and half serpent)

Kali (96) (a goddess)

These terms are used in three different stories such as ‘When Mr.Pirzada came to dine’, ‘The Interpreter of Maladies’ and ‘Sexy’. They help the reader to understand that although settled abroad, the characters who utter these are inquisitive to know more about Indian culture and thus try to integrate into the native.
4.3.7. Names of fishes

Shrimp

*Used to indicate a staple food of the Bengali’s in India.*

4.3.8. Influence of American English

4.3.9. Use of American words

The ‘T’ (88)

*The fast moving train indicates the desire of Miranda and Dev to see each other at the end of the day’s work in ‘Sexy’.*

Sipping coffee from a Thermos (111)

*The very casual approach of the former Eliot’s baby sitter in ‘Mrs.Sen’s’ is brought out through this. It is this careless approach that makes Eliot’s mother seek a new care taker for Eliot. It is the manner in which the author has introduced Mrs.Sen and as the story progresses, it is clear how Mrs.Sen is so careful and meticulous in her duties and takes care of Eliot very well.*

Check (134)

*Towards the end of the story, Mr.Sen hands over a ‘check’ to Eliot’s mother. Although the American spelling has been used, there is a pun on the word. It not only refers to reimbursement of the advanced received, but*
also that henceforth Mrs. Sen will not any more do the job of the baby sitter and take care of Eliot.

Elevator (174)

In the story ‘The Third and Final Continent’, the protagonist travels through several continents and finally arrives in America. He picks up the American usages such as ‘elevator’ for ‘lift’. He is thus ready to integrate into American life and experience the same.

4.3.10. Advertising items

Advertising brand names have been used in the text to expose the Indian and American ways of life as well as bring out the reconciliation, romantic feelings and integration to the new culture.

4.3.10.1. Use of brand names

I cheated on my Oriental civilization examination. (17)

The estranged couple in ‘A Temporary Matter’ is reconciled through revelations at the end of the story. One such example is Shukumar’s confession given above. It helps to understand in the long run as the stories progress that in spite of several hardships, the Indians are reconciled to their migratory life in the U.S.
The protagonist of 'The Interpreter of Maladies' is introduced as a tourist guide. The brand name 'Ambassador' has been used to show that in those days it is a car that could very well accommodate a very large number of people. It reveals that the tourists from abroad could easily acclimatize to Indian situations. It gives an insight into the romantic possibilities of Kapasi and Mrs. Das later on in the story and Mr. Kapasi's wishful thinking to become an interpreter between nations.

Gramin Bank (85)

The theme of integration is brought out through such usages. In the story 'Sexy', this is used as a brand name which makes Miranda inquisitive to know more about India and its neighbors, so that she could adjust and integrate to Indian way of life with Dev.

Purity Supreme (174) a supermarket MIT (174)

This marks the arrival of the protagonist in 'The Third and Final Continent' in the U.S. and his trying to ascertain the facts of the environment to later on get integrated into American life.
4.4. Compounding and Collocating

Compounding is the result of joining up of two or more smaller words to form a bigger one. It is important because it has always provided many new words, form such well-established items like housewife, eyeball. Some complete words affix particularly easily and yield numerous compounds. One of the commonest types of word formation occurs with the joining of two nouns to make a single compound noun; sheep dog.

Using the enormous range of opportunities available, writers create or coin many new words from old ones. Such coinages and inventiveness leads to the formation of new, interesting collocations. These collocations often reveal the idiosyncratic style of the author. They help to project the culture and background of the literary work of art and its artist.

In the Interpreter of Maladies Jhumpa Lahiri has made use of various peculiar collocations combining nouns with nouns, nouns with adjectives, verbal nouns and gerunds, as well. Thus these stories abound in catchy collocations. Some of the peculiar collocations are:

Building materials (gerund)

Flashing silver wires (43) (gerund+phrase)

*The teeth of the boys are described here to show the seeming network of the happy family of Mr. Das in ‘Interpreter of Maladies’.*
Sun burnt scalps (44) (adj noun)

_The varied psychological and age factors of tourists catered to by Mr. Kapasi is exposed through this collocation._

Scarlet powder (117) (adj. noun)

_Mrs. Sen's use of this brings out her mental cultural association with India and her unwilling nature to integrate to American way of life._

Cool corridors (122) (adj noun)

_This is used to show the serenity of the university where Mr. Sen was a professor of Mathematics, in contrast to the totally perturbed mind of Mrs. Sen in her new surroundings in the U.S_

Glaring turquoise pools (122) (gerund colour noun)

_Such usage where swimmers are found to cross in the pool indicate the cross currents of culture which Mrs. Sen finds difficult to integrate into._

Thawed chicken legs (124) (adj. noun noun)

Press buttons (125) (verb noun)

Knee length overcoats (131) (adj. noun)

Idiotic statue (136) (adj. noun)
Such expressions bring out the remorse about the wife’s actions in ‘This Blessed House’ leading to a seeming rift in family life and consequently with American way of life.

Steaming pot (143) (gerund noun)
Winding staircase (154) (gerund)
Adjoining latrine (159) (gerund)
Brocaded silver kameez (152) (adj. noun)
Herbal infusions (158) (adj. noun)
Pallid freckles (159) (adj. noun)
Fruitless antidote (159) (adj. noun)
Propitious hour (162) (adj. noun)
Elegant armature (162) (adj. noun)
Mottled skin (163) (adj. noun)
Pallid fingers (178) (adj. noun)
Sapphire blue visor (44) (adj. colour noun)
Wire pin (hair) (121) (noun noun)
Christian paraphernalia (137) (noun noun)
Iceberg lettuce (143) (noun noun)
Biblical stickers (143) (adj. noun)
Curtained entrance (159) (noun noun)
Black moons (164) (noun noun)
Four toothed widower (165) (noun noun)
Fish pond (167) (noun noun)
Drawstring pajamas (173) (noun noun)
Plastic bowl (175) (noun noun)
Swan boat (179) (noun noun)
Roasted egg plant (185) (verb noun noun)
Furnished apartment (190) (noun noun)
Grated carrots (143) (verb noun)
Check imbursing November payment (134) (noun phrase noun phrase)
Soliloquies mawkish, sentiments maudlin (161) (semantic shifts)
Marcara coated eye (147) (colour noun adj. noun)

The various usages signify the nature of the characters, their idiosyncrasies and their struggles and tribulations to assimilate into the family as well as culture in the United States.

4.5. Synaesthesia

The blending of an image or sensation perceived by one of the senses with that received by the other is called synaesthesia. Common synaethetic expressions are

His ears were insulated by tufts of graying hair that seemed to black out the unpleasant traffic of life (28)
The expression black out is usually associated with light. But here the other sense, viz. hearing is given importance.

He grazed my throat with his short, restless fingers, the way a person feels for solidity behind a wall before driving a nail. (28)

Such expressions are self explanatory of synesthesia.

The laminated jacket crackled in my grip. (33)

As the bones cackled apart over the blade, her golden bangles jostled, her forearms glowed, and she exhaled audibly through the nose. (116)

But when he sat with Mrs. Sen under an autumn sun that glowed without warmth through the trees, he saw now that same stream of cars made her knuckles pale, her wrists tremble and her English falter. (121)

Weeks passed at Mrs. Sen's before he found a blue aerogram, grainy to the touch, crammed with stamps showing a bald man at a spinning wheel and blackened by post marks. (122)

In this example the sense of perception is associated with that of feeling through touch.

She shook the free end of her sari, but nothing rattled. (76)
She watched his lips forming the words, at the same time she heard them so clearly that she felt them under the skin, under her winter coat, so near and full of warmth that she felt herself go hot. (91)

*Here again one sense (speech) is contrasted with another (touch)*

4.6. Semantic

4.6.1. Use of Neologism

Neologism is an item newly introduced into the lexicon of a language. The following such example shows the word power of the author:

Gotten (18)

*The peculiar American usage has been here added to the lexicon of Lahiri's writing enhancing her style of writing.*

4.6.2. Use of Hyperbaton

Hyperbaton results from arranging syntactic elements in an unusual order. Twinkle in her haste had discarded her shoes altogether for they lay by the foot of the ladder, black patent-leather mules with heels like golf trees, open toes, and slightly soiled silk labels on the instep where her soles had rested. (155)

*This usage in the story 'This Blessed House' describes the house of Sanjeev to be in a total disorder after the party hosted by them, and reveals that the minds of the couple are also not in harmony with each other.*
4.6.3. Phonological

4.6.3.1. Homoioteleuton

It is defined as a repetition of the same derivational or inflectional ending on different words:

Pigeon droppings that plastered the parapets of our roof tops. (162)

Here the message of Bibi's desire to get married spreads like fire and the repetition of the 's' sound at the end of the words helps to identify the spread of fire from one object to another consuming whatever comes in its way.

4.7. Usage of Colours

Lahiri with her 'arsenal of coloured pencils' has been able to draw shades of distinction in the usage of colours. She has used them for various purposes in different contexts in order to bring home to the reader her infinite variety of language use. They reveal the nature of changing context, add value to the description, denote patriotism etc. A few such instances are given below:

4.7.1. Nature of Changing Context

White sneakers (1)

Blue poplin (1)

Gray sweat pants (1)

Yellow lined paper (4)
Yellow chintz armchair (6)

Blue and maroon Turkish carpet' (6)

Such usages in the story 'A Temporary Matter' help to bring out the contrast in characters of Shoba and Shukumar and their temporary rift in marriage.

Here the colour of the chair is in contrast with the carpet and this brings out the difference between the characters.

Blue crayons (101) (104)

Brown and yellow leaves (145)

Blue sky was colourless one tree on the lawn was still full of leaves, red and orange (147)

The change in the nature of the characters involved, such as Miranda in 'Sexy', and the hero in 'The third and Final continent' wherein they reconcile to the truth of their respective lives is well brought out by these colours.

4.7.2. Descriptions

Coffee coloured rivers (31)

Yellow canopied bed (32)

Violet papered walls (32)
Hashing silver wires (43)
White labels (112)
Plush pear coloured carpet (112)
White drum shaped (112)
Sari brocaded with gold and silver (125)
Coffee coloured sedan (119)
Dark green trash bin (120)
Magenta umbrella fringed with white and orange tassels (54)

These colours help to describe certain events such as the picture of Bangladesh in 'Mr. Pirzada', the drawings in 'Sexy' and the university in 'Mrs. Sen's'. (54)

4.7.3. Patriotism

Pakistan was yellow not orange (26)
King George wearing white tights (27)

4.7.4. Romantic Feeling

Golden brown hollow (53)
Strawberry shirt (60)
These usages in ‘Sexy’ and ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ bring to light the romantic feelings of Miranda towards Dev and that of Mr. Kapasi towards Mrs. Das, although both end in non-fulfillment.

4.7.5. Love and Affection

Purple cellophane (29)

4.7.6. Reveal Indian culture

Scarlet powder (117)

*Mrs. Sen uses this to apply the same on her head, which shows her adherence to the Indian culture even in a foreign land.*

4.7.7. Reveal Character

Black stirrup pants and a yellow chenille sweater (142)

*Twinkle in ‘This Blessed House’ narrates to her friend the various Christian paraphernalia she found around the house and feels totally comfortable narrating the events, as if one wears a sweater when one feels cold in order to keep oneself comfortable.*

4.7.8. As Adjective

Turquoise pools (122)
4.7.9. The Change of Atmosphere

The peach and purple sky (130)

*In 'Mrs.Sen's*, the couple do not come closer when taking a photograph, but they later on enjoy the warmth and the atmosphere around sitting in their car.*

4.7.10. Unusual Situation

Yellow rubber bands (127)

*Mrs.Sen, who is always raving about her deprivation of India, is found to be in an unusually happy mood when she tries to procure fish.*

4.7.11. Cultural Variation

Dark brown red broth (144)

4.7.12. Fashion and Romanticism

Colour of marigolds (163)

4.7.13. Confide

Striped velvet sofas (17)

*An imaginary situation of Shukumar, who feels that given an opportunity to express their hidden minds would lead to reconciliation in their family life.*
4.7.14. Prepares reader for a change

White sari (112)
Coral gloss (112)
Green and black bed cover (115)

Helps the reader understand the difference between the earlier baby sitter and that of Mrs. Sen.

4.7.15. Adaptation to an entirely new situation

Grey pot (112)

Eliot’s mother is happy about having found a new baby sitter for her son and is comfortable about the hospitality of Mrs. Sen when the former visits the home of the latter.

4.7.16. Reveal Personality

Navy blue sun glasses (119)

4.7.17. Distinguishing Aspect

Yellow stripe (120)

Brings to light that the thought of Mrs. Sen is only about India, where the colour helps to denote a one way traffic on the road.
4.7.18. Reveal Happiness

Blue aerogram (121)

_The moment Mrs. Sen receives a letter from homeland, immediately she is ecstatic about it._

4.7.19. Show Absent Mindedness

Pear coloured carpet (122)

The study of language use in a particular piece of writing helps to comprehend the portrayal of character and explain certain expatriate sentiments and estrangements between couples by the author and the nature and attitude of the characters as intended by the author.

In other words, it can be said that the authors exploit their lexical and other linguistic resources to the maximum thereby creating a sort of image about the particular character in the minds of the reader.

Lahiri has used several kinds of formations such as single words, nominal compounds, a whole set of complex sentences, colours, etc., in certain given contexts to project the type character involved and hence create a certain type of image of them in the minds of readers.
She has been successful with the use of a variety of language formations. Her judicious mixture of such lexical items add variety and brings out her method of expression quite lucidly, although sometimes grammar or structure takes a backseat and high speed communication gets priority. Her prose is scattered with details of traditional Indian names, food, cooking and wardrobe giving flavor and character to her stories. She lures the Indian reader with her rhythmic sentences, simultaneously satiating the western audience with the Indian setting. Her depiction of events can thus be said to be inherently present, yet not overbearing or exaggerated.