CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS “DAKNAM” AND “BHALONAM” IN MODERN DISCOURSE

Yalovenko Olha Viktorivna
Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, 
Associate Professor at the English and Methodology Department
Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University
2, Sadova str., Uman, Cherkasy region, Ukraine

The article deals with the analysis of conceptual metaphors Daknam and Bhalonam in Jhumpa Lahiri’s poetics (an American writer of Bengali origin) as the personification of Asian identity in terms of transculture. It is mentioned that for such hyphenated writers like Lahiri common words (home, food, culture, name, etc.) appear to be conceptual metaphors that require special interpretation. Metaphor is treated as a symbolic “filter” and helps the readers discover latent meanings in Lahiri’s transcultural text. Metaphor analysis in Lahiri’s stories must be undertaken carefully (there is a difference between semiotic and semantic metaphor interpretation). Also, there is a need to emphasize the identification of tropes that are metaphors. It is a “language-game” notion, especially about “name-gaming” (like in “The Namesake”) where metaphor is the outcome of a debate between prediction and naming and its importance in Indian culture is sacred and dedicated to a religious purpose. Also, it is highlighted that a lot of things in Lahiri’s poetics have their double nature and the name is one of them. When reading the novel we understand that each person in India has two names: home and official (his Daknam and Bhalonam). It is mentioned that the name concept is expressed differently and sometimes it is not India/America dual opposition. The author adds one more culture, which once again proves the transcultural nature of her poetics. Metaphor acquires a special, “own” understanding in Lahiri’s poetics, primarily in cultural paradigm, and is correctly interpreted by Asian immigrants only. Incredible name list (often even the titles deal with names) is a significant feature in Lahiri’s poetics. The author approaches the choice of names carefully, and often it is not just due to a cultural component. In almost every story we find name evolution, a situation when the character wants to change or correct his name for different reasons, usually cultural ones. All “micro-metaphors” like name, color, detail, photograph, food, home, fish, shoes, blade, etc. exist within symbolic “overcoat” (presented in “The Namesake”) as a mega metaphor. Beyond the overcoat metaphor, there is a slim interplay with confession and recognition of the other “self” which acts like a metaphor through which new identities in oneself can be explained. All these items are important details that serve as key metaphors in Lahiri’s poetics. In Lahiri’s vision metaphors generate a wide range of referential and often inferential meanings. Despite a comprehensive study of Lahiri’s fiction mainly on immigrants’ assimilation and their experience in a new culture, the analysis of metaphors and metaphorical traces is still relevant.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, name, transculture, identity, immigrant, Indian culture.

Introduction. The study of metaphors and their role in fiction is of great importance in modern discourse, as the analysis of metaphor takes place mainly on a theoretical level without full understanding and cognition and with no appeal to fiction. We mean the new idea of metaphorical analysis which is moving to newer areas like neuroscience and how these new interpretative theories (like blending) have changed.

Jhumpa Lahiri (an American writer of Bengali origin) is a vivid example of a new spin on metaphor theory. When analyzing her poetics we notice how the author speaks metaphorically and how it is crucial to the formation of new concepts. Lahiri takes the notion of “metaphor” further in exploring particularly cultural perceptions of basic human emotions like love and friendship, sadness and anger, etc. Also, we may speak about metaphor evolution in Lahiri’s poetics as the author provides with detailed description of how Daknam and Bhalonam transform in contemporary and hasty American society where a lot of things including love, marriage and friendship are considered to be something temporary.

The purpose of the article is to explore and analyze conceptual metaphors Daknam and Bhalonam in Lahiri’s poetics as personification of Asian identity in terms of transculture.

In most cases, critics’ attention is focused on the identity analysis, gastronomic issues, gender characteristics and immigrants’ experiences in a new cultural environment. But a lot of aspects in Lahiri’s writing still lack critical analysis and metaphor is one of them. Only a few foreign researchers touch on metaphor implementation in Lahiri’s writing: S. Ahmed’s “Metaphors in Jhumpa Lahiri’s fiction: a study” (Ahmed, 2011), A. Barcelona’s “Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective” (Barcelona, 2000), R. Bailey’s “Conceptual Metaphor, Language, Literature and Pedagogy” (Bailey, 2003), A. Choubey’s “Food Metaphor in Jhumpa Lahiri’s “Interpreter of Maladies”” (Choubey, 2010). T. Cresswell’s “Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions: A Geographical Interpretation of Metaphors of Displacement” (Cresswell, 2007). All this determines the article’s relevance as conceptual metaphor analysis is important, especially in the context of transculture.

**Investigation methods.** In the article we used the following methods: cultural and historical (defining the role and place of Lahiri’s writing in US literature), historical and typological (determining the specifics of themes, motifs, images, story features of the writer’s stories), functional (clarifying the features of Lahiri’s poetics), hermeneutic (interpretation of various aspects of the literary text), narratological analysis (specifics’ analysis of Lahiri’s narrative manner), biographical (revealing the reflection of author’s personal experience in fiction), postcolonial and decolonial criticism principles (rethinking the problem of “otherness” in transculture discourse).

**Article’s main material.** Metaphors cannot be viewed as a symbolic “departure” from ordinary language. They have to be “located” within the domain of semantics and pragmatics depending on individual meaning and sense. For such hyphenated writers like Lahiri common words (home, food, culture, name, etc.) appear to be conceptual metaphors that require the right interpretation. Metaphor is treated as a “filter” that helps the readers discover latent meanings in transcultural text. We may refer to a semiotic model where metaphor occupies the body of the text’s interpretation. The field of semantics in literary text has been identified as a special area of conceptual metaphors.

We are trying to study and analyze the use of a **web of metaphors** in modern discourse namely in Lahiri’s poetics. Along with the topos of marriage, communication (and often the lack of communication), generation relations (generation gap), family, love, and immigrant experience, the metaphor also plays a key role in her fiction.

There are examples of different and wide-ranging metaphors in Lahiri’s poetics such as names and naming (which is a common thing for Americans), family relations and landscapes, which both inform and shape her narrative powerfully and other interesting examples which become conceptual metaphors in Lahiri’s interpretation. It is relevant to note that the use of metaphors is the author’s prerogative. The inner framework of her narrative is twisted with conceptual and blended metaphors that are integrally “sewn” into it. Through the narrative, the author appears to chart metaphors’ interactions mainly with cultural, and then with social and temporal areas. For example, in “The Third and Final Continent” (“Interpreter of Maladies” collection, 1999) the story’s title acts as a key metaphor. The unnamed Bengali-American immigrant finally has a sense of “arrival” after a long journey spanning three continents.

In “Interpreter of Maladies” the title is presented as a “malady” metaphor, as Mr. Kapasi finds it extremely difficult to handle a private conversation. We mean the confession of Mrs. Das (the Indian-American woman) during the trip to the Sun Temple at Konark. Also, we may speak about the metaphor of vision here. Like in Lahiri’s other stories, we notice that the woman is being objectified, and her description plays a significant role: “He observed her. She wore a red-and-white-checkered skirt that stopped above her knees, slip-on shoes with a square wooden heel, and a close-fitting blouse styled like a man’s undershirt. The blouse was decorated at chest-level with a calico appliqué in the shape of a strawberry. She was a short woman, with small hands like paws, her frosty pink fingernails painted to match her lips, and was slightly plump in her figure. Her hair, shorn only a little longer than her husband’s, was parted far to one side. She was wearing large dark brown sunglasses with a pinkish tint to them, and carried a big straw bag, almost as big as her torso, shaped like a bowl, with a water bottle poking out of it” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 30).

“The Interpreter” requires special attention as a conceptual metaphor; we have another “interpreter” here. The interpreter’s capacity expected by Mrs. Das is similarly expressed through “Kapasi” as a

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1 It should be mentioned that “Three” is a frequently used numeral in Lahiri’s poetics.

2 Metaphor of vision (when woman is being objectified) is another individual significant feature of Lahiri’s poetics that require special interpretation. Mostly “metaphor of vision” is concentrated upon female characters when woman is being objectified. A lot of Lahiri’s stories start with a woman’s description where each detail is important. Women become the object, the body in the sight of men. They appear as a passive object, whose physical appearance/beauty is important.
and name is one of them. When reading the novel things in Lahiri’s poetics have their double nature religious purpose. We want to highlight that a lot of
tance are sacred in Indian culture and dedicated to a
debate between predictions. Naming and its impor-
tion of tropes that are metaphors. In this context,
procedure is still foreign to everyone in America.

In “A Temporary Matter” Lahiri examines a “gap” and lack of communication between a young couple who is grappling with the trauma of the loss of their first child before the very moment of its birth. We notice that both lives have changed rapidly: Shoba (the wife) thinks out of a “candle-lit” confession game during this “temporary” blackout in their apartment but in reality it is her preparation for a divorce. Bad experiences and the grief they share together make a sense of loss which is conveyed through the symbolic “thawing show” metaphor.

In the story name is paid no less attention but in another paradigm. Shoba and Shukumar have phonemic echoes in their names. In this context name is connected with the character’s description: Shukumar is described as a young man with long artistic fingers befitting his name meaning, his wife Shoba, on the other hand, is similar to “Shova” – the dissonance of her slightly slovenly and casual dress and her appearance in the beginning (again we notice “metaphor of vision” here). Thus characters’ names serve as conceptual metaphors and contribute with a new meaning to the lexeme.

In “Unaccustomed Earth” the metaphor is associated with Ruma’s gardening in her apparent sadness. We have to mention that the metaphor of pain is another kind of metaphor in Lahiri’s writing. The metaphor of pain is seen in almost every Lahiri’s story. Again name appears as a conceptual metaphor and sometimes a story’s main problem. In “The Namesake” Ashoke’s and Ashima’s names are provided with short interpretation, although in some other stories, for example, in “Only Goodness” the name is paid little attention as characters’ names are replaced with personal pronouns “he” and “she” (and sometimes a character may appear even without a name).

We want to take into consideration the signs associated with the unique name system presented in Lahiri’s poetics. We find the name as repeating metaphorical resonance in almost each Lahiri’s story. It seems that it is “The Namesake” where the name appears to be a symbolic “locus” of different cultures.

Another interesting name paradigm is found in “The Namesake”. Parents decide upon a single name “Sonali” (meaning “she who is golden”; again Lahiri provides with a name’s definition) which soon changes to Sonu and Sona and then to Slavic Sonia thereby having a daknam that also becomes her bhalonam (while the first variant gradually wears out). Sonia’s name transformed and has got its shorted American equivalent (the same motif is also noticed in “Unaccustomed Earth” as Ruma’s name is changed to Run by her American husband).

In “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” we find an example of a violent transitional stage from the cozy warmth of Lilia’s family to “Pirzada” which contains elements of a “peer” (and it is related to mystic in this context). This raises a protective image for the young girl. Lilia’s name (like Sonia in “The Namesake”) is more similar to the Slavic equivalent of the Indo-European language family. It also contains Lily, a plant with large trumpet-shaped, typically fragrant flowers on a tall, slender stem. This beautiful flower captures the curiosity and innocence of the child. Again name appears as a conceptual metaphor in transcultural perspective.

The name of Miranda, the young mistress from “Sexy” also deals with duality and has a double path of inferences. On the one hand, the woman is conscious of the connotation of beloved Ferdinand in The Tempest. But on the other hand, Dev (her
lover) shortens her name to “Mira” thus adding a new connotation to her image. Again the reader is provided with the name’s meaning (it can be noted as Miranda’s interaction with her background). Her Indian cultural component is her symbolic “meeting” with a still frightening image of Goddess Kali (author’s appeal to mythology). But in this context, we notice the dissonance between the images of Mira and Kali which is later reflected in Miranda’s attempt to interpret the meaning of “sexy” (that was once said by a young boy towards her). Finally, Miranda discovers a similar lack of harmony in Rohin’s interpretation of the word as “Loving someone you do not know” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 59). In his context “sexy” acquires additional meaning and like a name, “love” becomes a conceptual metaphor in the text.

In “The Blessed House” Sanjeev introduces his wife as Tanima (it has Japanese roots and means “a valley”) to his friends Douglas and Nora. But the woman insists on being called by her nickname “Twinkle” (“twinkles” shine with a gleam that varies repeatedly between bright and faint). Again name appears to be a conceptual metaphor and has an additional meaning. Nora calls it “an unusual name” and Twinkle explains that it has his hidden link with the Bombay film industry because of an actress Dimple Kapadia (she also has a sister named “Simple”). Dimple has a common meaning to be “a small depression in the flesh, either one that exists permanently or one that forms in the cheeks when one smiles”, but again in Lahiri’s interpretation it is a name. It should be mentioned that one more significant item in Lahiri’s poetics is her appeal to mythology. For Lahiri having names means “the blue-eyed” and Sudeshna refers to “a predictor of good news and knowledge” and to “the mythical wife of King Virata”*. Lahiri has mentioned that Jhumpa has no meaning: “It always upset me. It’s like Jhuma, which refers to the sound of a child’s rattle, but with a “p”. In this country, you’d never name your child Rattle. I have two good names, Nilanjana and Sudeshna. My mother couldn’t decide. All three are on the birth certificate. I never knew how to write my name”.

Again there is an interesting philological path and a pun with name interpretation. Nilanjana means “the blue-eyed” and Sudeshna refers to “a predictor of good news and knowledge” and to “the mythical wife of King Virata”. For Lahiri having two formal names always remains at the sideline, and it is her pet name that became a functional crux of her double identity. There are many coincidences with her character: the circumstances under which she lost her good name are similar to the fact that the protagonist’s parents (“The Namesake”) could not write the name of their firstborn chosen by their grandmother due to Indian tradition.

It should be mentioned that the author provides a detailed explanation of daknam as a conceptual metaphor: “In Bengali, the word for pet name is daknam, meaning, literally the same by which one is called, by

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3 An appeal to gender problems is also considered to be a part of Lahiri’s poetics. Gender specificity is seen in the role of “invisible existence”: women are associated with maids who can cook dinner and wash socks only. Unlike men, the assimilation process is much more difficult for them. The problem of gender relations also associates with the decline of family values, where marriage becomes a temporary matter.

4 Even the title and epigraph in “Unaccustomed Earth” has a special meaning in terms of transculture; the metaphor has a powerful implication of characters’ striking roots in foreign and distant from India culture. Mostly they are first-generation immigrants belonging to Bengali-American communities. In the title story we find initial connection with garden metaphor which is prominently in the foreground. Another important detail which acts as metaphorical item is snow and snowfall as it helps “to interpret” characters’ inner state deeper. Some characters are happy with the snow like little children (they have never seen it before).

5 Blue eyed (used figuratively or idiomatically) means naïve, innocent, ingenuous.

6 Virata (sanskrit: विरात , IAST virāta) – the king of the Matsya Kingdom, in whose court the Pandavas spent a year in concealment during their exile. Virata was married to Queen Sudeshna.
friends, family and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a persistent reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people. They all have pet names. Ashima’s pet name is Monu, Ashoke’s Mithu, and even as adults, these are the names by which they are known in their respective families, the names by which one is adored and scolded and missed and loved” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 25-26).

While reading the novel we see that as opposed to a daknam comes its “other” kind – blalonam, which also serves as a conceptual metaphor. Along with word definition, the author provides with interpretation of characters’ names, and in this context, it is more like reading a reference book than fiction: “Every pet name is paired with a good name, a blalonam, for identification in the outside world. Consequently, good names appear on envelopes, on diplomas, in telephone directories, and in all other public places. (For this reason, letters from Ashima’s mother say “Ashima” on the outside, “Monu” on the inside). Good names tend to represent dignified and enlightened qualities. Ashima means “she who is limitless without borders”. Ashoke, the name of an emperor, means “he who transcends grief”. Pet names have no such aspirations. Pet names are never recorded officially, only uttered and remembered. Unlike good names, pet names are frequently meaningless, deliberately silly, ironic, even onomatopoeic. Often in one’s infancy, one answers unwittingly to dozens of pet names until one eventually sticks” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 26).

Quite different situation happens when “names can wait” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 25) and at the same time, there is an episode when “names can’t wait” as Ganguli are informed that they cannot leave the hospital without registering the baby’s name. That is why to escape being recorded as “baby Boy Ganguli” and face the red tape later, Mr. Wilcox asks whether the couple has an additional variant for the name.

We have to remember, that names in Lahiri’s fiction have an interesting background. Sometimes it is a combination of several cultures or puns which is considered to be a specific feature of her poetics. Often even secondary characters have their stories connected with names. For example, Mr. Wilcox informs that his real name is Howard Wilcox III (a Western tradition of naming someone after a forefather). In this context naming deals with a culture again and acquires another paradigm and confusion. It could be ridiculed in Bengali tradition as names are considered to be “sacred and inviolable” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 28). That is why the couple is confused when asked to name the baby after someone they greatly admire.

There is a flash of light, a strong emotion and a completely different experience for Ashoke when he realizes he can leave cultural traditions now and choose the name by himself. “The door shuts, which is when, with a slight quiver of recognition, as he’d known it all long, the perfect pet name for his son occurs to Ashoke. He remembers the page crumpled tightly in his fingers, the sudden shock of the lantern’s glare in his eyes. But for the first time he thinks of that moment not with terror but with gratitude: “Hello, Gogol”, he whispers, leaning over his son’s haughty face, his tightly bundled body. “Gogol”, he repeats, satisfied. The baby turns his head with an expression of extreme consternation and yawns” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 28). Later, being a teenager, Ashima’s son says that nobody takes him “seriously” because of his strange name, and despite Ashima’s explaining that daknam is a Bengali tradition, Ashoke sums up that “in America everything is possible” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 100).

Having an unusual name, the protagonist is sunk in the world of contemporary American music, TV shows, and comics and that is why he is not able to appreciate his father’s gift (a collection of his namesake’s stories) on his birthday. In this context we find a negative connotation within the conceptual metaphor of name as “he hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that he has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 76). The protagonist has mixed feelings: “To read the story, he believes would mean paying tribute to his namesake, accepting it somehow. Still, listening to his classmates complain, he feels perversely responsible, as if his own work is being attacked” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 92). But the boy is yet to learn the metaphorical significance of his unique name.

**Conclusions.** Metaphors interpretation requires special attention as they relate to the mixed path of speech figures in Jhumpa Lahiri’s whole fiction. On the examples of her stories, we see that the name concept is expressed differently and sometimes it is not India/America’s dual opposition. The author adds one more culture which once again proves the transcultural nature of her poetics. Metaphor acquires a special, “own” understanding in Lahiri’s poetics, primarily in cultural paradigm, and is correctly interpreted by Asian immigrants only.

Having analysed the novel we have to mention that an incredible name list (often even the titles deal with names) is a significant feature in Lahiri’s poetics. The author approaches the choice of names carefully, and often it is not just due to a cultural component. In almost each story we find name evolution, a situation when the character wants...
to change or correct his/her name for different reasons, usually cultural ones.

In Lahiri’s vision metaphors generate a wide range of referential and often inferential meanings. Despite a comprehensive study of Lahiri’s fiction mainly on immigrants’ assimilation and their experience in a new culture, the analysis of metaphors and metaphorical traces is still relevant.

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Яловенко Ольга Вікторівна
кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри англійської мови та методики її навчання
Уманського державного педагогічного університету імені Павла Тичини
вул. Садова, 2, Умань, Черкаська область, Україна

Статтю присвячене аналізу концептуальних метафор Дакнам та Бхалонам у поетиці Джумпи Лагірі (американської письменниці бенгальського походження) як усвідомлення азійської ідентичності в транскультурах. Зазначено, що для таких порубіжних авторів, як Лагірі, загальні слова (дім, їжа, культура, ім’я тощо) тягнуть до концептуальних метафор, які потребують особливого тлумачення. Метафора розглядається як символічний фільтр, і допомагає читачам відити приховані значення в транскультурному тексті Лагірі. До аналізу метафор у творах Лагірі слід підходити обережно (існує різниця між семіотичною та семантичною інтерпретацією метафор). Також необхідно підкреслити ідентифікацію тропів, які є метафорами. Це «мова гра», особливо у зв’язку з «відома імена» (як у «Тезки»), де метафора с результатат суперечки між передбаченням і найменуванням, а її значення в індійській культурі є священним і має релігійну мету. Також підкреслено, що багато позицій у поетиці Лагірі мають подвійну природу, і ім’я є однією із них. Читаючи роман, ми розуміємо, що кожна людина у Індії має два імена: домашнє та офіційне (своє Дакнам та Бхалонам). Зазначено, що концепт імені виражає по-різному, і іноді це не подвійна опозиція Індія/Америка. Автор додає ще одну культуру, що вкотре доводить транскультурність її метафор. За межами метафори шинелі є тонка взаємодія з визнанням іншого я, що діє як метафора, за допомогою якої можна пояснити нові ідентичності в собі. Усі ці предмети є важливими деталями, які служать мегаметафора. За межами метафори шинелі є тонка взаємодія з визнанням іншого я, що діє як метафора, за допомогою якої можна пояснити нові ідентичності в собі. Усі ці предмети є важливими деталями, які служать мегаметафора. За межами метафори шинелі є тонка взаємодія з визнанням іншого я, що діє як метафора, за допомогою якої можна пояснити нові ідентичності в собі. Усі ці предмети є важливими деталями, які служать мегаметафора. За межами метафори шинелі є тонка взаємодія з визнанням іншого я, що діє як метафора, за допомогою якої можна пояснити нові ідентичності в собі. Усі ці предмети є важливими деталями, які служать мегаметафора. За межами метафори шинелі є тонка взаємодія з визнанням іншого я, що діє як метафора, за допомогою якої можна пояснити нові ідентичності в собі.

Ключові слова: концептуальна метафора, ім’я, транскультура, ідентичність, імігрант, індійська культура.