

## IMPLICIT EXPRESSION OF UNCERTAINTY IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POSTMODERN FICTION TEXTS

**Zaluzhna M. V.**

*Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor at the Department of English Philology  
and Linguodidactics  
Zaporizhzhia National University  
Zhukovskoho str., 66, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine  
[orcid.org/0000-0001-9316-452X](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9316-452X)  
[zaluzhna\\_mari@ukr.net](mailto:zaluzhna_mari@ukr.net)*

**Key words:** *verbalization, implicitness, implication, context, uncertainty, cognitive-discursive, communicative strategies, postmodernism, English-language fiction text/discourse.*

*The article discusses the specificity of implicit representation of uncertainty by means of the English language in the British postmodern literary discourse. The data for analysis was selected from the novels written by I. McEwan, D. Mitchell and D. Lodge. Implicitness is viewed as an inherent feature of language and is a promising object for linguistic analysis, as its mechanisms are unfolded in a new way within the cognitive-discursive paradigm.*

*Within any language, uncertainty is verbalized not only explicitly, but also through a wide range of implicit means. While explicit statements can directly express doubt or lack of certainty, implicit expressions of uncertainty add subtlety and nuance to communication. Uncertainty can be verbalized by various language means in English directly and indirectly. The English language provides a rich array of choices that enable speakers to express uncertainty implicitly. Uncertainty is a key concept of postmodernism, therefore postmodern authors attach great significance to representing it in their texts. Postmodern fiction conveys uncertainty which underlies and shapes the characters' perception and self-identity via a number of language means and some communicative strategies that are of special interest for our research.*

*The paper analyzes the implicit expression of uncertainty in the British postmodern fiction discourse represented by the novels of I. McEwan, D. Mitchell, D. Lodge. It has been identified that the main language means that the authors opt for are hedging, various means of expressing modality, "vague" expressions, qualifiers, euphemisms, interrogative sentences in inner represented speech, filler words, and aposiopesis. The article examines how their usage contributes to the nuanced portrayal of uncertainty in the English-language fiction, and in what ways the authors combine these means in order to reach their goal – give the readers the impression of the characters' lack of certainty, hesitation, indeterminacy and doubt. The analysis reveals that these implicit meanings are not directly stated, but are suggested in the wording or can be understood from the context. The writers mostly resort to a combination of various language means that imply the characters' uncertainty, in order to intensify the implied meanings and to make sure the reader interprets them adequately.*

## ІМПЛІЦИТНЕ ВИРАЖЕННЯ НЕВИЗНАЧЕНОСТІ В АНГЛІЙСЬКОМОВНИХ ХУДОЖНІХ ТЕКСТАХ ПОСТМОДЕРНІЗМУ

**Залужна М. В.**

*кандидат філологічних наук,  
доцент кафедри англійської філології та лінгводидактики  
Запорізький національний університет  
вул. Жуковського, 66, Запоріжжя, Україна  
orcid.org/0000-0001-9316-452X  
zaluzhna\_mari@ukr.net*

**Ключові слова:** вербалізація, імпліцитність, імплікація, контекст, невизначеність, когнітивно-дискурсивний, комунікативні стратегії, постмодернізм, англійськомовний художній текст/дискурс.

Статтю присвячено розгляду специфіки імпліцитної репрезентації невизначеності засобами англійської мови в британському постмодерністському художньому дискурсі. Матеріалом аналізу стали романи І. МакЮена, Д. Мітчела та Д. Лоджа. Імпліцитність розглядається як невід’ємна властивість мови та є перспективним об’єктом лінгвістичного аналізу, оскільки її механізми по-новому розкриваються в рамках когнітивно-дискурсивної парадигми.

У будь-якій мові невизначеність вербалізується не тільки експліцитно, але й за допомогою широкого спектру імпліцитних засобів. У той час як експліцитні твердження можуть прямо виражати сумнів або відсутність впевненості, імпліцитні вираження невизначеності додають комунікації витонченості та додаткових відтінків. Невизначеність може бути висловлена різними мовними засобами в англійській мові прямо чи опосередковано, із застосуванням широкого вибору засобів, які дозволяють мовцям імпліцитно виражати невпевненість. Оскільки невизначеність є ключовим поняттям постмодернізму, постмодерні автори надають великого значення її представленню у своїх текстах. Постмодерна художня література відображає невизначеність, яка формує самоусвідомлення персонажів та їхнє світосприйняття, із використанням низки мовних засобів і певних комунікативних стратегій, які становлять особливий інтерес для нашого дослідження.

У статті аналізуються особливості імпліцитного вираження невизначеності в британському постмодерністському художньому дискурсі, представленому романами І. МакЮена, Д. Мітчела, Д. Лоджа. Визначено, що основними мовними засобами, які використовують автори, є хеджування, різноманітні засоби вираження модальності, «розпливчасті» вирази, слова-кваліфікатори, евфемізми, непряме мовлення, питальні речення у внутрішньому мовленні персонажів, слова-заповнювачі пауз, апосіопеза. У статті досліджується, як їх використання сприяє нюансованому зображенню невизначеності в англійськомовних художніх текстах та як автори поєднують ці засоби, щоб досягти своєї мети – створити у читачів враження невпевненості, вагань та сумнівів героїв. Проведений аналіз виявив, що ці імпліцитні значення у текстах інколи не є очевидними та можуть бути зрозумілі лише з контексту. Автори розглянутих романів найчастіше вдаються до поєднання різних мовних засобів, які імплікують невизначеність, щоб посилити закладені в них значення та полегшити читачеві адекватну їх інтерпретацію, оскільки всі вони спрямовані на вираження вагань та відсутності впевненості персонажів.

---

**Problem statement.** Modern interdisciplinary studies do not pay sufficient attention at such a basic category for the modern scientific space as uncertainty, which is embodied in the lingual plane and plays a

fundamental role in the postmodern worldview and art. In linguistic scientific domain, certain parameters of indefiniteness have been considered as an inherent feature of language (G. Ryle, U. Quine, R. Langacker).

As a result of the search by linguists for the cognitive foundations of language universals (S. Pinker, J. Greenberg, F. Newmeyer) it was found that language “reflects the universal principles of information processing in the human mind” [1, p. 32]. Despite this, the reflection of uncertainty in the linguistic-cognitive aspect remains unresearched, there is a lack of thorough scientific investigations of its manifestation in discourse, in particular postmodern one.

Although frequently encountered in communication, uncertainty is often implicitly referred to rather than explicitly discussed [2]. Dealing with ways of expressing uncertainty is an essential competence of a fiction writer and reader, as they both have to correspondingly code and decode the explicit and implicit means of verbalizing uncertainty in the same way. Conveying uncertainty in a literary discourse is important for producing a certain effect on the reader, which is so relevant for postmodern outlook, but it is often not explicitly expressed and can influence the general perception of the text. This study examines the implicit expressions of uncertainty in postmodern fiction texts by the British authors. In many cases, uncertainty is not openly communicated in fiction, as the authors tend to leave some information “under the surface” for the reader to grasp. There is always a risk that the addressee can misunderstand the implications, so the writers have to make sure their hidden messages are interpreted in the proper way. Hence we can observe their focusing on the thorough choice of lingual means for implicit expressing of uncertainty. In this article, we will explore how uncertainty is verbalised, and describe the strategies of expressing uncertainty implicitly that contemporary postmodernists resort to in their fiction.

The paper **aims** at studying the ways the implicit expression of uncertainty is realized in the English-language postmodern fiction texts.

The main **tasks** that we intend to accomplish in the paper are:

- to specify the notion of implicitness and its interpretation in linguistics;
- to describe the role of implicitness in communication;
- to analyze implicitness as a linguo-cognitive phenomenon;
- to single out the implicit means of expressing uncertainty in postmodern British fiction.

The British postmodernists’ fiction texts (I. McEwan, D. Mitchell, D. Lodge) comprise the research **material**.

The **object** of the research is represented by implicitness and its realization in language. The **subject** of the article includes the implicit means of expressing uncertainty in the English-language postmodern fiction texts.

**Presentation of the main material.** In modern linguistics, it is important to focus on the problem of the implicit in a statement, when the implied rather

than the verbalized comes to the fore, since it is the implicative of the statement that tends to constitute its main meaning dovetailed with the explicative. The study of implicitness also becomes relevant due to the fact that each speaker to depict the multiple aspects of a fragment of reality can use a limited set of language means, the choice of which may differ from those ones that another speaker of the same language would choose in a similar situation.

The foundations for a pragmatic theory of implicit meaning were laid by P. Grice. In his view, there is quite often a gap between what is (explicitly) said and what is (implicitly) meant by a speaker with an utterance: while the former is mostly determined by linguistic information, the latter is derived from the former thanks to rational inferences also taking into account context and background knowledge [3]. As a linguistic phenomenon, implicitness was traditionally studied by grammar, as a category that is semantically unmarked, as restrictions imposed on a linguistic construction with an unexpressed grammatical aspect. The notion of implicitness has also obtained a new dimension in the field of speech acts theory, as well as the further research in the field of pragmatics of the utterance.

In modern linguistic studies implicitness is treated as a blanket term that researchers use with regard to a variety of phenomena associated, broadly speaking, with the hidden aspects of meaning. They include various types of presuppositions, entailments, implicatures and implicatures, explicatures, as well as a number of more specialized concepts denoting specific inferential schemata in different languages [4, p. 1]. Implicitness is an inherent feature of language practically all the areas of its use – from everyday colloquial speech to scientific discourse, from the language of fiction to transactional discourse of business correspondence – as not all the meanings and connotations can be expressed directly, and there is always a certain correlation between the explicit and the implicit in any kind of discourse as it is one of the relevant aspects of language functioning.

According to M. Dynel and P. Cap, implicitness extends over both the use and the system side of language, and especially over the cases where different-size phrasal, sentential and textual carriers of indirect meaning can be identified in the lexico-grammatical arsenal of a language [4, p. 4]. This is what differs it from indirectness which involves only the use of language. Implicitness as a language category reflects the relationship of some components of the utterance content plan with non-verbalized components of the plan of expression. The linguo-cognitive approach enables to identify several forms of implicitness as a cognitive phenomenon: implicit knowledge, implicit meaning and implicit sense.

The author of the philosophy of language L. Wittgenstein indicated that “propositions can only say how things are, not what they are” [5, p. 15]. This reflects

the limits of language as another dimension of the world next to the physical reality, since the diversity of reality goes far beyond the expressive capabilities of any language. So one of the ways in which language can enhance its expressive function is constructing the means do not only explicate senses, but possess the potential for implication as their integral feature. In the situation of uncertainty, “when there is no clear basis for making a decision, people are influenced by the way in which the problem is framed” [6, p. 297].

I. Kecskes highlights a direct relationship between conventions and implicitness in human languages, which can be well demonstrated through the use of situation-bound utterances [7, p. 201]. It brings us closer to discussing the role of context in creating and retrieving the implied meanings. Context plays a prominent role in the analysis of meaning, accounting for the differentiation between context-dependent meaning in pragmatics and context-independent meaning in semantics [8, p. 235]. As viewed by M. Tóth, the context triggers the co-activation of the implicit relationship between source and target and the target content [9, p. 115]. I. Kecskes differentiates between *actual situational context*, which theories of pragmatics mean when they use the term “context”, and *prior experience-based context* that is the main condition for standardization and conventionalization. Both types of context are equally important in meaning construction and comprehension [7, p. 209–210].

Discourse is – like context – used in diverging frameworks, where it refers to different theoretical constructs defined in accordance with frame-work-specific premises [8, p. 236]. As stated by A. Fetzer, these are not only discourse units that are situated in context, but also the context itself situates and conditions discourse units. This is particularly true for discursively implicated meaning, which is what the context makes it to be. Conversely, a discourse unit may create the context for which it is appropriate [8, p. 240].

Discourse is a parts-whole configuration in which the meaning of the whole is more than the sum of its separate parts [8, p. 253], and this meaning increment emerges mainly due to implication. This is especially true for literary discourse, whose integral and inalienable part is implication. As D. Lodge puts it, “all novels contain gaps and silences which the reader must fill, in order to ‘produce the text’. But in some cases these gaps and silences are the result of unconscious evasions or suppressions on the writer’s part (and no less interesting for that) while in others they are a conscious artistic strategy, to imply rather than state meaning” [10, p. 190].

The implication can be both a signal of the speaker’s corresponding attitude to any phenomenon, and the embodiment of a speaker’s special communicative strategy [11, p. 5]. The aspects of narrative fiction subject to implication can be diverse – from the implied fictional narrator [12] or reader [13] to sexual

relations [10] and violence [14]. The implicit treatment of sexual acts as well as violence or other sensitive content is certainly a challenge to the novelist’s artistry if the author intends to convey the message but avoid offensive language.

Another essential aspect that can be implied in a fiction discourse is the character’s uncertainty, hesitation, doubt. The use of implicit uncertainty markers is pragmatically vital for fiction texts. Such linguistic means with implied meanings make the reader interpret properly the author’s intention to depict the characters’ uncertainty and diffidence.

To detect the main language means that imply the idea of uncertainty in literary texts, we analyzed the novels written by the British postmodern authors David Mitchell (“Black Swan Green”), Ian McEwan (“Amsterdam”) and David Lodge (“A Man of Parts”). It should be noted that uncertainty is extremely important for postmodern texts, as it is a key concept of postmodernism [15]. Postmodern fiction quite frequently focuses on representing uncertainty which underlies and shapes the characters’ perception and self-identity. As M. Michael puts it, “postmoderns are likely to represent uncertainty as shifting from specific external loci to the self” [16, p. 383]. So, the strategies that the British postmodernists choose to convey this overall uncertainty and doubt is of special interest for our research.

The semantic analysis of the concept “uncertain” enables to single out such layers in the volume of its meaning: (1) a state of being not sure or feeling doubt; (2) smth. likely to change; (3) smth. not definite or decided [17, p. 1564].

So, these are the implied semes that we tried to identify in the texts. By the methods of continuous sampling, interpretation of factual material, and contextual analysis we singled out such language means of implicit expression of uncertainty:

1. **Hedging.** Hedging as a communicative strategy is used to express uncertainty in speech; it involves the use of tentative language and qualifiers that soften the categorical sounding of a statement. Such phrases act as markers that indicate the speaker’s awareness of alternative perspectives or the possibility of error. Phrases such as “I think”, “perhaps”, “it seems”, “in my opinion”, “it appears”, “it is possible” introduce an element of doubt, indicating that the speaker is not entirely certain about the accuracy or validity of their statement. In communicative situations hedging allows the speakers to express their statements with the possibility of alternative perspectives, fostering open dialogue and avoiding being too categorical.

This is also relevant for authors of fiction whose aim is to indicate the character’s hesitation, doubt or lack of certainty. By incorporating these phrases into their texts, the authors implicitly convey that the characters’ statements are subject to interpretation or poten-

tial revision, emphasizing their lack of confidence and indeterminacy: *'What's a rock-hound?'* *'Amateur geologist. Most holidays, he'd find an excuse to go off fossil-hunting with a little hammer he kept. I think I've still got it somewhere* [21, p. 233]. *"It seems to me,"* he was saying, *"that what you need now is one big story, something that'll catch fire, something your opponents will have to run with just to keep up"* [22, p. 45]. *'Perhaps,'* he said, *suppressing the impulse to defend himself. 'The point is this. I still love Amber, but it seems to me that the best way I can express that love is to let her go – into the care of a man who will cherish and protect her.'* [23, p. 277].

The examples demonstrate that hedges as lingual markers provide the reader with enough information to conclude about the characters' uncertainty.

2. **"Vague" expressions.** "Vague" expressions serve as another way uncertainty is implicitly manifested in English, by which we mean the lexical units and phrases that allow speakers to avoid committing to precise or specific information, leaving room for the interlocutor's interpretation. Vagueness acknowledges the limitations of knowledge and the inherent uncertainty that exists in many communicative situations. The English language encompasses numerous words that inherently possess such implication of vagueness and lack of factuality or confidence. Expressions like "some", "sort of", "kind of", "and that kind of thing", "or something", "approximately", "roughly", "stuff" indicate some degree of uncertainty or imprecision in quantity or measurement, enabling speakers to communicate without making definitive claims, to express uncertainty implicitly without stating it.

Such words and phrases used in literary texts provide the authors' flexibility in giving the reader imprecise statements as well as enable them to depict the characters as individuals who express their thoughts without committing to a definite statement, thereby conveying a sense of hesitation: *At approximately 1400 hours a pair of enemy Skyhawks came flying in at deck level out of nowhere* [21, p. 138]. *Ross Wilcox sort of crumpled in shock* [21, p. 305]. *As the notes swelled, as the whole string section positioned their bows to breathe the first sustaining whispers of their sinuous sliding harmonies, Clive slipped quietly into a seat and felt himself tumbling into a kind of swoon* [22, p. 116]. *Rebecca is relieved, and makes a kind of peace with Anthony* [23, p. 46].

In the given cases the implications signal of the authors' reluctance to be precise and categorical in describing their characters, in such way providing the reader an opportunity to make their own interpretation of their actions and words, but still directed by the writers.

3. **Qualifiers.** Qualifiers are words or phrases that modify or limit the meaning of other words or phrases. They can introduce some level of uncertainty by indicating the speaker's hesitation or lack of precision.

Qualifiers like "quite", "somewhat", "rather", "more or less", "a bit" soften the impact of a modified adjective or adverb, suggesting some degree of uncertainty or reservation. The use of qualifiers in speech or creative writing allows to implicitly acknowledge and express the presence of some degree of uncertainty of the statements they make: *'I'm rather surprised you don't remember her better. She's very striking. Her husband – Bertie – was a semi-professional golfer'* [21, p. 167]. *Front-page headlines divided more or less equally between "blackmailer" and "flea," and most made use of a photograph of Vernon taken at a Press Association banquet looking somewhat squiffy in a crumpled dinner jacket* [22, p. 94]. *The rope that held us together was fraying, but it wasn't quite severed. After that we had a short holiday in Swanage with Anthony, for the boy's sake, and were quite happy together for a few days, until she raised once again the question of my divorcing Jane and I refused...* [23, p. 415].

In the exemplifying sentences the speakers are not absolutely confident about their statements as the latter are modified by the quantifiers with implicit meaning of uncertainty and imprecision, which transforms the messages to less certain ones.

4. **Means of expressing modality.** Modality refers to the linguistic expression of possibility, necessity, and probability. Modal verbs and other modal words suggest the possibility, probability, likelihood, credibility of what is described in the utterance, and therefore they can be used to imply varying degrees of certainty or uncertainty. Expressing modality is another communicative strategy to imply uncertainty, so far as it provides the speakers with the flexibility to convey their level of confidence in a particular statement, admitting that there is no definiteness about the phenomenon or action, and its subjective interpretations may vary. This function of modal verbs and words provides their powerful potential for implying uncertainty in literary discourse, as they express the correlation of the proposition with artistic reality through its alleged feasibility as stated by the author: *I hastily stuffed my fortune into my pocket, repositioned myself on the scratchy mat and a wonderful thought slid into my head as I slid off the lip. Six hundred pounds could buy an Omega Seamaster* [21, p. 313]. *For now there could be no backward glances, and he could only push on and hope to be finished before next week* [22, p. 99]. *Why on earth did you send the woman round to Queen's Gate? Anything might have happened. She might have attacked Rebecca* [23, p. 415]. – *But you must have some idea of when that was. – It was probably about 1907, 1908. Maybe 1909* [23, p. 120].

The main function of the modal verbs and modal words (in the last example) in the cases above is to express different degrees of probability of the mentioned actions, at the same time implying the character's uncertainty concerning them.

**5. Reported speech.** Reported speech is a common feature of English communication that can indirectly convey uncertainty. Instead of making direct assertions, the speaker may use reported speech or conditional structures to express their thoughts indirectly. For example, rather than stating directly what they intend to do, the speakers might say that they were thinking of doing it, implying they are not absolutely sure they will do it. By employing reported speech, the speakers can imply uncertainty while maintaining their communicative flexibility, preserving social harmony, or avoiding commitment. The same is true of fiction characters when the author wants them to sound less categorical or unconfident: **'I've been thinking—'** Mum began. 'Steady now,' Dad interrupted, jokily, like he used to. '—now's rather a good time to build that rockery' [21, p. 282]. 'You've had a heavy week. **I think** I'll take a bath. See you down here in about an hour?' [22, p. 122]. 'Haslemere!' he exclaimed. 'There's a farm near there with a guest-house where I sometimes go to work. **I was thinking of going there again.**' [23, p. 317].

In the mentioned examples the writers intend to demonstrate that by reporting their own statements the characters imply they are not sure about their decisions, actions and words.

**6. Euphemisms.** Euphemisms are words or phrases that are used to substitute potentially harsh or uncomfortable terms with milder or less direct expressions. In the realm of uncertainty, euphemisms allow speakers to soften the impact of uncertain or ambiguous situations. Euphemistic phrases provide a diplomatic means of conveying uncertainty, thus maintaining a polite and tactful conversation. In literary discourse euphemisms serve as the way to sound not categorical and to express doubt or ambiguity without explicitly stating them: Clive opened the door, and Vernon stepped out into the night. **"I'll need to think about it."** "Quite so. Thanks for coming." [22, p. 43]. 'Remember Karenin in *'Mind at the End of its Tether'* with increasing dismay, sitting in Marjorie's little office in Hanover Terrace *The World Set Free*?' **'I can't say I do,'** says Marjorie [23, p. 432].

The examples offered above suggest that the statements in bold equal to the phrase "I'm not sure", though they do not have a direct meaning of uncertainty, which is implied and can be elicited from the context.

**7. Interrogative sentences in inner represented speech.** Inner represented speech expresses feelings and thoughts of the character verbalized not by them, but by the writer whose intention is to give an insight into the character's personality, to reveal the motives of their actions and produce a certain impact on the reader. Interrogative sentences in inner represented speech turn out an effective writers' strategy to demonstrate the characters' uncertainty without explicating it. The characters' questions addressed at themselves

can contain a variety of meanings depending on what exactly they ponder on. But their emergence in the text even implicitly conveys the characters' thoughts and inner state, including lack of certainty, hesitancy and self-doubt: ***Should I cough? That'd be stupid. She knew I was there*** [21, p. 188]. ***Was everything in place? Had he remembered everything? Was it really legal?*** Clive considered these questions from the confines of a Boeing 757 parked in freezing fog at the northern end of Manchester airport [22, p. 111]. ***Must he choose between these two relationships? Or could he somehow contrive to enjoy both? Should he tell little E about Rebecca when he got to Randogne, and risk an irreversible break-up, or devote himself to smoothing over the bad feeling with which they had last parted, and continue to maintain the liaison with Rebecca in secrecy for as long as she was interested herself?*** [23, p. 353] ***But now it was all over. 'Or is it?' she wonders, looking down at the green and brown quilt of English fields, and the ribbons of winding road with little toy cars crawling along them*** [23, p. 451].

The impression of turmoil and lack of confidence created in the above-mentioned passages demonstrates the ability of questions in inner represented speech to implicitly activate the idea of characters' hesitation and uncertainty that the writer wants the reader to grasp.

**8. Filler words.** Filler words have no lexical meaning of their own, but they serve as pause fillers and imply hesitation in speech. Filler words in English, e.g. "um", "uh", "er", "ah", "like", "right", "you know", can express confusion or indicate that the speaker is considering the content of the statement. Uncertainty can be implied by filler words not only in actual communication, but in fiction as well: *'Yes. Dad was sacked on Goose Fair day. Uh...some weeks ago'* [21, p. 320]. *"Um, always losing Biros. Where do they go?" "Ehm, canna keep his tongue out of the wee hole in his tooth"* [22, p. 96]. *They chatted for a while on trivial topics, and then she startled him by saying: 'I've been pleased to see that Rosamund and you are becoming great friends.'* ***Well, I er, I do my best to help her with her writing, you know,*** he stammered [23, p. 178].

The given statements contain filler words that imply the characters' lack of certainty, and demonstrate how they gain time, considering the content of the statement, at the same time allowing the interlocutor to understand that they are not sure as for how to formulate their ideas properly.

**9. Aposiopesis.** The abnormally short or broken sentences emphasize the fact that there is hesitation about what is being said or described. L. Wittgenstein points out that "[w]hat we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" [5, p. 89]. As D. Kurzon states it, "the thematic silence of a speaker is highly contextualized in the co-text of what the speaker is saying and/or in the situation in which the speaker

is speaking” [18, p. 219]. As for fiction characters, their speech can be suspended for reasons of uncertainty about what to say next or whether to say it. In a written text such kind of silence is marked graphically by punctuation, usually (—) or (...) is used in texts. Here is how such breaking off an utterance into silence is used in fiction to imply uncertainty, confusion or doubt of the characters: *I nodded. I decided to tell her about the form assembly. ‘Mum, there’s –’* [21, p. 47]. *It was past four o’clock, so what was it with Clive, lying there all day like a depressed teenager? “Ah, Vernon, I was just –”* [22, p. 88]. *‘She’s in the country, staying with Tania.’ ‘Has she been to see you, since...?’ ‘Since Horder pronounced the death sentence?’ ‘Don’t, Jaguar!’* [23, p. 20].

The characters’ speech can be broken for several reasons, such as another character’s interruption or some action that suddenly stops the speaker, but the passages above are the illustrations of the speakers’ hesitancy or uncertainty in their attempts to tell about something important or in just picking up the proper words to express what they intended. Such hesitation is implied by aposiopesis, and this becomes clear only from the context.

It should be pointed out that writers most frequently resort to a combination of various language means that imply doubt, in order to intensify the implied meanings and to make sure the reader interprets them adequately, as they all are aimed at expressing uncertainty, hesitation and lack of confidence: *‘Mmm.’ ‘That was the closest he came to smiling. ‘There’s kind of a big clue in the word, Jason.’ ‘Well. Yeah. One of those. In France. Maybe.’* [21, p. 315]. *There might have been a bit of that in the affair with Rosamund, I suppose* [Lodge, p. 304]. *‘Hugo, I’m grateful to you for...y’know, showing me, and everything, but, to be honest, I’m not sure if –’ ‘Jace!’ Hugo did a jokey-amazed face. ‘Don’t say you’re backing out now?’ ‘Yeah...but maybe...not today.’* [21, p. 77]. *“‘Thing is, others might chime in, there might even be some applause, that sort of thing. If it’s all right with you, I think I should hang back, not show my hand at this stage.”* [22, p. 83] *‘I really can’t answer your question unless you tell me what you are referring to,’ said Pease. ‘Then perhaps I could clear up any misunderstanding.’* [23, p. 200].

Let’s have a closer look at the strategies the authors choose to combine various means of expressing uncertainty in their novels. For instance, the discussion of the essence of beauty in D. Mitchell’s novel “Black Swan Green” brought the narrator to the state of confusion (which is implied by aposiopesis) as he was struggling with articulating the definition of this concept: *‘Attempt a definition now. What is beauty?’ Madame Crommelynck tapped cigarette ash into a ruby blobby ashtray. ‘Beauty’s...’ She relished my stumpedness. I wanted to impress her with a clever definition, but I kept crashing into beauty’s something that’s beautiful* [21, p. 191]. The implied meaning is

further substantiated in the same episode by explicit statements denoting difficulty and hesitation, and by another aposiopesis, to confirm that the reader interprets the author’s idea correctly: *I admitted, ‘It’s difficult.’ <...> ‘But...’ I hesitated, wondering if I should say this.* [21, p. 191].

By the way, this episode contains the reasoning of one of the characters, Madame Crommelynck, in which she sounds quite skeptical about the potential of words to describe the variety of the world: *‘We say, we say. Be careful of say. Words say, “You have labelled this abstract, this concept, therefore you have captured it.” No. They lie. Or not lie, but are maladroit. Clumsy.’* [21, p. 191]. The statement resonates with L. Wittgenstein’s ideas discussed above in this paper, these are the thoughts which D. Mitchell wants the reader to reflect upon, and which are relevant for all writers, even more so for postmodernists.

In D. Lodge’s novel “A Man of Parts” one of the characters tells about her father’s death with a great deal of uncertainty about how it happened: *‘It’s not clear what happened – he was found beside the line, apparently hit by a train,’ Catherine said. ‘He may have been trying to cross it, because he often walked in the woods nearby. The coroner’s verdict was accidental death, but of course one can’t help wondering if it wasn’t an accident, especially as his business affairs were in such a bad state.’* [23, p. 82]. The fact that she doubts about the real reason of her father’s death is expressed both explicitly: via her phrase “it is not clear”) and implicitly (with the help of the compound verbal predicate with a modal verb of assumption “may”, and through an impersonal “one can’t help wondering if” which is an indirect way to doubt and question the information. This accumulation of lingual means with similar meaning (direct or implied) consolidates the author’s effort to convey Catherine’s uncertainty and emotional turmoil.

Another interesting case of using a combination of various ways of implying uncertainty can be found in I. McEwan’s novel “Amsterdam”: *He paused. Vernon drank and waited. “Well, the thing is this. I’ve had my own little scare lately ...” He raised his voice to forestall Vernon’s concern. “Probably nothing. You know, the sort of thing that gives you the sweats at night and by daylight seems like stupidity”* [22, p. 42]. Clive’s hesitation about telling his friend Vernon of his scare is transmitted implicitly with the help of the verb “paused” which means a break in speech due to the character’s confusion, filler-word “well”, the sentences broken after “lately...”, the modal word “probably”, the phrase “the sort of” which belongs to vague expressions, “seems like” which implies the speaker’s lack of confidence. Collectively, all these lingual means serve the same aim – to form the reader’s impression that Clive is not sure whether to tell his friend of the problem, and how to formulate it properly.



The list of linguistic means used by postmodern British authors to implicitly express uncertainty is far from being exhaustive. We can, for instance, include metaphor and metonymy into it, inasmuch that they also imply certain meanings without directly stating them, as highlighted in [9], [19], [20], but their mechanism of implication is rather complex and is worth conducting a separate analysis.

#### Conclusions and prospects for further research.

The implicit expression of uncertainty in the English language is a nuanced and subtle aspect of communication. It enables speakers to navigate the delicate balance between expressing their thoughts and acknowledging the inherent uncertainty in many aspects of life, to manage delicate conversational situations while conveying doubt or lack of certainty. Through the use of hedging, modals, “vague” expressions, qualifiers, euphemisms, interrogative sentences in inner represented speech, filler words, and aposiopesis individuals can communicate their thoughts and opinions while acknowledging the inherent uncertainties in language and their knowledge. In the English-language postmodern fiction these linguistic devices add layers of complexity, allowing for nuanced expression of uncertainty as the aspect of the characters’ inner state, and broader, as all-encompassing indeterminism of postmodernity.

We consider it prospective for further research to study how metonymy and conceptual metaphor are used to imply uncertainty in postmodern fiction. Besides, comparative analysis of the explicit and implicit lingual means of expressing uncertainty in the works of modernists and postmodernists can disclose new dimensions of this interesting subject.

#### REFERENCES

1. Pinker S. *The Language Instinct. The New Science of Language and Mind.* Penguin Books, 2000. 548 p.
2. Gärtner J., Berberat P. O., Kadmon M., Harendza S. Implicit expression of uncertainty – suggestion of an empirically derived framework. URL: <https://bmcmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12909-020-1990-3>
3. Grice P. *Studies in the Way of Words.* Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press. 1989. 394 p.
4. Dynel M., Cap P. Implicitness : familiar terra incognita in pragmatics. *Implicitness. From lexis to discourse.* Ed. by P. Cap and M. Dynel. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017. P. 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.276>
5. Wittgenstein L. *Tractatus logico-philosophicus.* London : Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1974. 106 p.
6. Anderson J. R. *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications.* Eighth Edition. Worth Publishers. 2015. 406 p.
7. Kecskes I. Implicitness in the use of situation-bound utterances. *Implicitness. From lexis to discourse /* Ed. by P. Cap and M. Dynel. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017. P. 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.276>
8. Fetzer A. The dynamics of discourse. *Implicitness. From lexis to discourse.* Ed. by P. Cap and M. Dynel. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017. P. 235–257. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.276>
9. Tóth M. *Linguistic Metonymy : Implicitness and Co-Activation of Mental Content.* Berlin : Peter Lang GmbH, 2018. 248 p.
10. Lodge D. *The Art of Fiction.* Viking Penguin, 1993. 240 p.
11. Prihodko G., Prykhodchenko O., Zaluzhna M., Moroshkina G. Strategies and Tactics of Evaluative Discourse. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research.* Volume 129. Atlantis Press SARL, 2020. P. 1–7. URL: <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/isc-sai-20/125937223>
12. Bareis J. A. The Implied Fictional Narrator. *Journal of Literary Theory.* Vol. 14, №1/2020. P. 120-138. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2020-0007>
13. Iser W. *The Implied Reader : Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. 318 p.
14. *The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Film and Media.* Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022. 529 p. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05390-0>
15. Tauber A. I. *The Triumph of Uncertainty : Science and Self in the Postmodern Age.* Central European University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.7829/j.ctv2cw0s3h>
16. Michael M. Discourse and Uncertainty : Postmodern Variations. *Theory & Psychology.* 1994. № 4(3). P. 383–404. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354394043006>
17. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.* 3rd Edition. Longman, 2000. 1680 p.
18. Kurzon D. Thematic silence as a speech act. *Implicitness. From lexis to discourse /* Ed. by P. Cap and M. Dynel. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017. P. 217–232. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.276>
19. Kövecses Z. *Metaphor : a practical introduction.* 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2010. 375 p.
20. Ritchie D. “ARGUMENT IS WAR” – or is it a Game of Chess? Multiple Meanings in the Analysis of Implicit Metaphors. *Metaphor and Symbol.* 2003. № 18(2). P. 125–146.

#### SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

1. Mitchell D. *Black Swan Green.* Sceptre Book, 2006. 374 p.
2. McEwan I. *Amsterdam.* Anchor Books, 1999. 133 p.
3. Lodge D. *A Man of Parts.* Harvill Secker Random House, 2011. 460 p.