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MODAL WORDS AND IMPLICIT MEANING

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the pragmatic characteristics of modal words and their potential to convey implicit meaning within a text. The findings demonstrate the interrelationship between the categories of modality and implicitness in literary texts, allowing modal words to be assessed as significant pragmatic tools for expressing an attitude toward an idea and conveying hidden meaning.

Keywords

implicit meaning, implicitness, modal word, modal meaning, direct, indirect.

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INTRODUCTION

The category of words in question comprises modal words, interjections, and onomatopoeic words – linguistic tools that serve to reflect fundamental characteristics of the human psyche. Modal words (from the Latin "modalis" – meaning "measure" or "mode") constitute a functional-semantic category[2] consisting of words[1] that convey the speaker's varying attitudes toward their own statements, expressing qualities such as certainty, veracity, doubt, or conditionality. They demonstrate communicative significance by signaling the speaker's attitude – such as confidence, doubt, surprise, or regret – regarding the content of a sentence or the reality it describes, thereby serving to directly convey that attitude to the listener. According to A.M.Peshkovsky, the category of modality expresses a single relationship – specifically, the speaker's attitude toward the connection established between the content of a given sentence and reality; in essence, it represents an "attitude toward an attitude."[3] A cognitive-pragmatic analysis of modal words necessitates an examination of the anthropocentric factor in language, as well as the communicative attitudes, emotional states, and modes of influence of the participants in the communication process. Furthermore, by conveying implicit meaning and subjective modality, these words serve to express thoughts not directly, but rather indirectly through the personal evaluations of the communicants. Thus, rather than directly expressing the denotative content of a sentence, they imbue it with an additional pragmatic layer, helping to convey the speaker's communicative intent in a softened, cautious manner and to indirectly signal an implicit evaluation, ethical stance, or social critique. This characteristic of modal words allows them to be interpreted not merely as units belonging to the lexical stratum of the language, but also as pragmatic indicators that shape communicative intent. This is because, alongside the sentence's explicit content, they also express the speaker's internal stance and speech strategy – that is, the speaker's attitude toward the proposition conveyed through specific linguistic means [4.22]. Linguist Sh. Rahmatullayev classifies modal words into three groups based on semantic relationships: 1. Modal words expressing the certainty of a thought; 2. Modal words expressing the uncertainty of a thought; 3. Modal words expressing the speaker's surprise or regret regarding an event or phenomenon [5.149]. Modal words serve to imbue the speaker's thought with the following additional meanings. Semantic groups of modal words.

№	Semantic groups	Modal words
1	Certainty	Certainly, naturally, undoubtedly, without a doubt.
2	Regret	What a pity, it is a shame, unfortunately, regrettably.
3	Joy	Fortunately, thank goodness.
4	Doubt	Perhaps, it seems, likely, apparently, it appears.
5	Affirmation	Truly, indeed, correct
6	Wish	If only, hopefully, would that.
7	Order of ideas	First of all, firstly, finally.
8	Substantiating an idea	For example, including, consequently, for instance.
9	Summarizing an idea	In short, in conclusion, to sum up.

Figure 1.

Communicants can use modal words to freely express their personal opinions and desires, as well as to convey their attitudes and assumptions regarding future events. For instance, the word “albatta” (certainly/of course) generates additional implicit meaning by signaling confidence in the reality of an event or an attitude of agreement. “The department head is in charge of it. The matter has been agreed upon.” “With whom?” “I do not report to you, Comrade Inspector.” “Yes, of course... so be it. To whom should I hand over the documents?” In this excerpt, although the modal word “albatta”expresses affirmation, it signifies a forced concession rather than the inspector’s genuine agreement. It also indirectly reveals the conflict arising from the social roles of the participants (department head, major, and inspector). In short, by offering a generalization, a conclusion, or a final assessment, the word conveys the speaker’s attitude toward previously stated judgments. Childhood becomes a part of your memory. In time, this memory may bring the pangs of a guilty conscience or compel you to yearn for things past; in short, it stirs up a multitude of emotions within you. (Tohir Malik, “Alvido… Bolalik ”) In the cited passage, the word “xullas” (“in short”) implicitly conveys a sense of inevitability and serves as a warning. That is, with the passage of time, every action from childhood evokes suffering and anguish for some, while stirring feelings of longing in others. Thus, the concluding function of this modal word underscores the need to approach a child’s upbringing with a sense of responsibility. The use of the word “shekilli” (apparently/it seems) conveys that the information is based on conjecture, supposition, or indirect observation. For example: “Asror sat there, unsure whether to leave or stay. He could not tell if Salimjon was driving him away out of anger or if he genuinely did not want to see him. Then, the pain seemingly passed, and Salim opened his eyes” (Tohir Malik, “Alvido… Bolalik”). The narrator does not directly perceive the passing of Salim’s pain but draws a conclusion based on his opening his eyes and the change in his condition, though without absolute certainty. This reinforces the implicit meaning that the protagonist lacks full control over the situation, perceiving it only indirectly and through inference. “When Qamariddin tried to take advantage of Asror as well, Salim did not allow it. True, Qamariddin had used Asror just once back when Salim had left home in a huff and was wandering aimlessly” (Tohir Malik, “Alvido… Bolalik”). In this example, the word “to‘g‘ri” (true/admittedly) reflects an attitude of affirmation; it is used to recall a past event and to emphasize, acknowledge, and openly admit the truth. First, they disturbed the neighbors. Upon hearing Soliyev’s words, a middle-aged woman who had stepped out of the door on the right exclaimed, “Thank goodness—justice actually exists!” and immediately agreed to serve as a witness. (Tohir Malik, “Alvido… Bolalik”) In this example, the word “xayriyat” (thank goodness) conveys a sense of satisfaction and social relief, as well as an implicit message that a previously felt anxiety has subsided. The woman had not even dared to hope that justice would be restored, yet she expresses gratitude for the fact that the truth has prevailed thanks to Soliyev’s actions. What about the penal colony supervisor who, despite witnessing a disciplinary violation, turns a blind eye – while the court reduces the prisoner's sentence? Unfortunately, they escape punishment; there is no law to hold them accountable. (Tohir Malik, “Alvido… Bolalik”) Here, the word “unfortunately” conveys a sense of regret, dissatisfaction with the status quo, inner anguish, and resentment over injustice, reflecting a critical stance toward the social justice system. It implies that the existing legal system is limited to punishing inmates yet fails to penalize the true instigators, highlighting the one-sided nature of current laws – a situation where the law exists, but justice is absent.

CONCLUSION

In literary texts, modal words function not merely as grammatical markers of modality but as potent pragmatic tools. They convey the speaker’s attitude toward an idea (such as supposition, certainty, regret, relief, or evaluation), their internal stance regarding the speech situation, and their communicative intent toward the addressee often in a subtle or implicit manner. Consequently, the capacity to convey implicit meaning holds particular significance among the pragmatic functions of modal words. Elements such as evaluation, warning, regret, and relief conveyed through modal words bring to the surface layers of moral and social meaning that are not explicitly stated in the text, thereby contributing to the formation of the literary discours’s overall implicit background.

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