

A Pragmatic Study of Promising in George Orwell's Animal Farm  
توظيف الوعد في رواية مزرعة الحيوانات لجورج اورويل

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### Abstract

This paper is a pragmatic study of promising in George Orwell's Animal Farm. It tackles the connotations of using promising in this novella. It sheds light on the theoretical background of this study as an introduction. Thus, as it is a pragmatic study, it briefly defines, presents and explains pragmatics, context, as connotation cannot be specified without taking it into consideration, and speech act, as promising is considered one of its types. After that, the most important section, the practical one, is presented and analyzed pragmatically. This is done by taking some examples of promising from the novella and analyzing them by showing their connotations. Thus, it shows the significance of employing promising in this literary work. The last section is the Conclusion which gives a summary of the results of the study.

### المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة العملية توظيف جورج اورويل لاسلوب الوعد في عمله الأدبي مزرعة الحيوانات. حاولنا أن نسلط الضوء على الخلفية النظرية لهذه الدراسة من خلال تقديم البراغماتية، السياق، لأهميته في تحديد دلالة النص، وأفعال الكلام مع أنواعها، وخاصة الوعد، مع الشرح و التحليل. أتبعنا ذلك بعرض الجزء الأهم، وهو العملي الذي يتم من خلاله أخذ بعض الأمثلة لاستخدام الوعد من الرواية وتحليلها بصورة عملية من خلال إظهار دلالاتها مع توضيح أهمية و دور استخدام أسلوب الوعد في هذا العمل الأدبي. أختتمت الدراسة بتلخيص النتائج العامة لها.

### Introduction

#### Pragmatics

In general, linguistics has a close relation to the human life. This idea is mostly clarified in speech or writing as they are usually understood and interpreted by taking the context into consideration. This is considered one of the main factors in pragmatics which focuses on the use of the language.

This idea is clarified in Richards and Schmidt's (2010: 449) definition of pragmatics as "the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used." As context plays a vital role in understanding any text pragmatically, it is important to define it. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 127) define it as "that which occurs before and/or after a word, a phrase or even a longer utterance or a text. The context often helps in understanding the particular meaning of the word, phrase, etc." So, it refers to all the circumstances in which the language takes place which has a major role in the interpretation of speech or writing.

### Speech Acts

Furthermore, another crucial subject in pragmatics is speech acts, on which this paper is based as it tackles promising pragmatically. Speech acts is used in greeting, making requests, asking questions and giving promises depending on the speaker's intention. So, "Speaking a language is performing speech acts", as it is indicated by Searle (1969: 16).

As a result, speech acts is an essential factor in communication, as it is stated by Perkins (2007: 15) who asserts that speech acts is based on the goal of the speaker behind his speaking, the communicative function of the utterance, in addition to the effect of speaking on the listener or the addressee.

Crystal (2008: 446) argues the same idea as he says that speech acts is used "to refer to a theory which analyzes the role of utterances in relation to the behavior of speaker and hearer in interpersonal communication." He (Ibid: 424) also stresses that there are different purposes behind speech acts like complaining and promising. Moreover, Yule (2010:133) defines speech acts as "the action performed by a speaker with an utterance"

One can understand that using speech acts is active in communication. As a result of that, it includes the speaker's goal behind what he/she says like promising, questioning and commanding in addition to the listener's response. Thus, speech acts refer to the actions required by speech.

Speech acts can be direct and indirect. The direct speech acts refer to, for example, using the interrogative structure like, (example 5):

"Did you wake up late?",

Which is used to refer to question that needs an answer. Such a kind of sentence is clear and conveys the exact meaning of the used structure, that is asking a question. On the other hand, using a structure like the interrogative in, (example 6):

"Can you close the door please?"

It is used to refer to something else, other than a question, the request here is called an indirect speech act. Unlike the direct speech act that is easily understood by the listeners because of the unity between the structure and the function, the indirect speech act is somehow ambiguous to those who do not analyze speeches deeply. In spite of that, we usually use it to make our speech more polite, e.g. using questions for commands. (Ibid: 134)

Finally, speech act is the influential speech that makes the listener, in response to it, do something.

#### Main Classifications of speech acts

Originally, there are two main classifications of speech acts. On the one hand, the first classification is by Austin (1962: 101) who claims that there are three acts of an utterance. The first one is the locutionary act which forms, as it is stated by (Sadock, 2006: 54), the first or abstract level of speech which includes sound and words, in addition to grammar. The second one, the illocutionary act includes the action that is attached to those words, sounds and grammar. (ibid: 54) The third and the last one is the perlocutionary act which refers to the action that is done by the speech. (Ibid: 55)

On the Other hand, the second classification of speech acts is by John R Searle, Austin's student. In fact, Searle has a major role in developing Austin's speech acts' theory. He classifies speech acts into assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. The first one, the assertive, confirms or describes reality or facts. (Searle, 1979: 12) The directive, in which the speaker urges someone to do something in, for example, commanding and requesting. (ibid: 13) The third type is the commissive which expresses the speaker's intention of doing something in the future as in planning and promising. (ibid: 14) Moving to the expressive one, it includes the speaker's feeling about what he encounters psychologically. (Ibid: 15) The last type of speech act, as it is classified by Searle ((ibid: 16-7) is the declarative one which declares a performative decision by which something is changed.

#### A pragmatic Study Promising in Animal Farm

Animal Farm is considered a political fable, which can be defined as "A short story, often with animal characters intended to teach a moral lesson". (The Webster's Dictionary: 1986) In addition, the beast fable is "a short tale in which the principal actors are animals". (Holman and Harman, 1986: 50) It is the most common type of fable in which animal characters are used with specific human features in order to help us understand and criticize the human nature.

Although its events took place in a farmyard, Animal Farm is based on Stalin's betrayal of the Russian Revolution. This work helped in making Orwell's name for the first time in his life. (Moran, 2001: 6) In this section, we are going to analyze some examples of promising in the novella pragmatically.

1. "There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word – Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever." (Orwell: 1993: 28)

From the very beginning of this novel, one can notice that it is based on the big dream of Old Major, the wise pig, of a utopian world in which all the

animals live together without the oppression of the human beings. Old Major's speech forms the first promise in this novella which can be summarized in that getting rid of Mr. Jones, the owner of the farm who cares a little for his animals and forgets to feed them, but never forgets to drink a glass of beer which reflects his carelessness, will lead the animals to freedom and prosperity. He describes man as an absolute enemy linking happiness with his expulsion. The animals' believe in this promise was strongly supported by their current circumstances and by their feel of oppression and hunger. Old Major, in his promise, uses the directive act in which he commands the animals to make his dream comes true by removing man as he directly says: "remove man ...". In the same lines we can find the commissive speech act in which he plans and promises about the bright future. The Old Major's speech here is closely related to the previous context in which he paves the way to persuade the animals to believe in the effectiveness of his promising idea:

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth." (Ibid)

Old Major's promise necessitates to be supported with real examples of the animals' suffering. So, he has delivered a very effective rhetorical speech in which he expresses their unhappiness. He wants the animals to stop their blindness and to see the reality of their life as they are completely exploited by the human beings. Under the human's control, they must work hard with little food. In addition to that, and in spite of all of their devotion to their master, they are heartlessly slaughtered as soon as they get old and unable to work hard.

In fact, *Animal Farm* is based on the Russian revolution in which Mr. Jones is based on the last Russian emperor Tsar Nicholas II (1868 – 1918). (Moran, 2001:57) Reading the novella, one can trace the same major events that happened in Russia at the period of the 1917 revolution.

Similarly, the Russian suffered from the oppression and inequality under the Tsar's reign because of the hard poverty under which they lived which is represented, in the novella, by the terrible life of the animals under Mr. Jones's control. As a result of that, the Russian people made many strikes that led to Nicholas' end as he left the throne. (Ibid) In addition, the promising in Old Major's speech represents the promising future of Russia after Nicholas.

2. "all men are enemies. All animals are comrades" (Orwell, 2003: 30)

As the mottos are easy to be memorized by the animals, this speech is a motto which is based on the previously explained idea. It stresses the idea that all the animals should be friends and work together. Accordingly, they will easily get rid of their enemies: the human beings. The promising future of the

farm represented by Old Major's dream can never be fulfilled without the animals' cooperation and working together.

This speech can be considered an implied directive act in which Old Major commands, as he is the eldest animal in the farm, all the animals to be friends to reach to their common goal. Furthermore, it is also an expressive one in which Old Major expresses his deep feelings and wish that all the animals be united and equal against their human enemies.

3. "Soon or late the day is coming,  
Tyrant Man shall be o'erthrown," (Ibid: 32)

Moreover, in order to make his dream a reality, Old Major has to do something special to enthuse the animals and to make them never forget his promise. As a result, he has decided to teach them a revolutionary song, "Beasts of England", which urges them to work hard in order to make his dream, which is the animals' dream as well, a reality. He promises them of the "day" which is coming soon as they get rid of the humans. His assurance on the fact that being ruled by the animals is the only solution that will lead to the animals' prosperity illustrates that he is somehow narrow-minded and provincial. These lines are related to the surrounding context in, especially in the following lines, in which the wise pig gives more details about the promising day:

"Rings shall vanish from our noses,  
And the harness from our back," (Ibid)

Old Major here tries to push the animals forward by making them more excited to get their freedom. Accordingly, he lists some promises that include the freedom from the most terrible things that make them suffer in the farm as he promises them that they will soon get rid of all the rings and the harnesses that are imposed on them. These lines, and the whole "Beasts of England" is an expressive act describing the optimism of the Old Major's promise. Accordingly, these promises make the animals excited and hopeful as all of them have enthusiastically joined singing the song with Old Major.

In Animal Farm Mr. Jones, the farmer of Manor Farm, faces the same strikes that opposed the Tsar's in Russia as the animals make a revolution that finally leads to Mr. Jones sending out of the farm.

Actually, Old Major's character is based on the leader of the Bolshevik Party, Vladimir Lenin, who led the 1917 promising Revolution and who died before seeing its results. Lenin was inspired by Karl Marx's, the German political economist, theory of Communism which exhorts the working class "proletariat" in all over the world to be unified against their oppressors. According to Communism, community is for the common use, and people should have economic equality. (Moran, 2001: 57)

4. "But they woke at dawn as usual, and suddenly remembering the glorious thing that had happened, they all raced out into the pasture together. A little way down the pasture there was a knoll that commanded a view of most of the farm. The animals rushed to the top of it and gazed round them in the clear morning

light. Yes, it was theirs—everything that they could see was theirs!”. (Orwell, 2003: 40)

The revolution comes as an absolute reaction to dictatorship. Accordingly, after expelling Mr. Jones, it seems for the animals that they have almost reached to Old Major’s promising future of a life without the dominance of the human beings; they possess everything in the farms now. In the morning, every one of the animals was excited and unable to believe that they have reached to the victorious point of freedom that they have dreamed of. Now, they are looking for the promising state that is governed by the animals rather than humans.

The act here is an assertive one as the animals here reach to the reality point in fulfilling the dream of self- government freedom and prosperity.

5.“Then Snowball (for it was Snowball who was best at writing) took a brush between the two knuckles of his trotter, painted out MANOR FARM from the top bar of the gate and in its place painted ANIMAL FARM. This was to be the name of the farm from now onwards” (Ibid: 42)

Accordingly, the new Animal Farm, as a whole, forms a big promise for the animals. Changing Manor Farm to Animal Farm suggests a new chapter in their life and a big promise of freedom, equality and common goal for the animals as they undisputedly own the farm now. From now on, they will equally work together.

In these lines, the act is also an assertive one in which the animals have done the first change on their own without the intrusion of Mr. Jones. It is also considered a declarative one in which the animals have reached to what they have been planning to do. It is the turning point in their life as the past Manor farm is renamed Animal Farm now.

Snowball, the pig who participated in leading the revolution which expelled Mr. Jones, is based on the Marxist thinker Leon Trotsky (1879 – 1940) who took part in the revolutionary demonstrations and uprisings and led Lenin’s army, as Snowball does in his leading of the rebelled army that expelled Mr. Jones. Trotsky tried to change the ideas of Marx into actions and Snowball’s plan of improving the farm after expelling Mr. Jones proves that.

6."I will work harder" (Ibid: 113)

After achieving the first step on reaching their promising dream, which is getting rid of Mr. Jones, the seven commandments of Animalism are inscribed on the wall of the barn. All animals have started to work hard to build their new animal farm, but the strong Boxer, adopted this maxim of “I will work harder”, which reflects how deep he believes in Old Major promise, has devoted himself to fulfill it. As a result, he promises to work harder than the other animals, but will he achieve his promise? And will the pigs who are taking the responsibility instead of Mr. Jones achieve their promise of making all the principles of Old Major’s dream come true?

This speech by Boxer is a commisive speech act in which the hardworking horse promises and delivers his future plan of working harder than the other

animals. This is also an expressive act in which the horse expresses his happiness and excitement about the new status of their farm which gives him an extra energy to work more. Furthermore, Boxer's words express his love for the animals and his devotion to the farm and to his comrades.

Later in the novella, as Snowball, who lacks authority, is expelled from the farm by Napoleon, Trotsky was banished and killed by the agents of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. (Moran, 2001: 58) Trotsky's flaw is his lack of force and authority that is totally owned by Stalin, who worked to get the absolute authority.

Years after that, the pigs started to walk upright and take on many other vices of the humans.

In spite of all the promises of prosperity, the leading pigs are finally able to make the animals work harder with a little amount of food, just like the poor working class of the human beings. Eventually, when the animals were standing at the window of the farm house watching the pigs having a party with the human beings, they could hardly find a difference between them and realize that they look the same and so, the final state of the farm is as bad as the original state, if not worse. This proves that the pigs who previously expelled Mr. Jones from the farm usurped Old Major's dream to reach to their own dream of leading the farm. This also shows their betrayal of the animals.

Furthermore, it appears that Old Major is unable to comprehend that power mostly corrupts and changes those who inherit it, as it is proved at the end of the novella.

In *Animal Farm*, one can clearly note that the monopolization of Old Major's promises and ideas by the pigs is similar to that of the Bolsheviks with Marx's thoughts in 1917. (Juneau, 2006 : 273) Old Major and Karl Marx's thoughts were taken as paved ways for those dictators to enable them to achieve their own aims under the safe-side of the promising reformation mottos.

The intelligentsia, to whom power is quickly transferred, quickly changed the Communist party into a form of totalitarianism, just like the pigs, to whom the power is quickly transferred. This is clearly represented by Napoleon and Snowball who try to seize power after Old Major's death, each to himself. This incident also proves that power mostly leads to pride and corruption which blind those who initially carry the promising slogans of change and improvement that, as a result, blind people, the dreamers of a better future, and make them accept what those change callers claim.

Stalin, who tried to use power to achieve his own intentions and aims and to get rid of anyone who opposed him and who rewrote the history giving himself the greatest role in the revolution, seized control of the Communist Party in 1927 with the help of his secret police, just like Napoleon who uses his dogs to gain control in the farm and who is able to convince the naïve animal of his fake accomplishments. (Moran, 2001: 58) Stalin started with many promising mottos of equality and prosperity, just like Napoleon who claims to reform what was spoiled by Mr. Jones and who promises to make Old Major's dream a reality

until he gradually becomes another face of the former corruption which he hides under the false propaganda.

So, Stalin, instead of making real improvements as he promised, tried to use propaganda to show himself as an ideal leader. (Juneau, 2006: 269) Moreover, Stalin's Five Years Plan of improving Russia are symbolized by Napoleon's plan to build the windmill. (Moran, 2001: 58) Just like a drug, Stalin used these five years of improvements as a promise to make the poor and the starved people look forward, expect and excitingly wait for what he promised and to prevent any attempt of another revolution or a protest against his bad leadership that might cause his end.

The end of the novella, with all its disappointing events, expresses a declarative act in which the animals reach to another turning point in their farm, but to the worst as they go back to their first state of tyranny, oppression and dictatorship.

### Conclusion

Promising in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a major theme around which this literary work revolves. All the idea of this novella is based on the promising dream of Old Major which is not fulfilled even after the revolution, as the leaders of this revolutions adopted the same vices of the human beings against whom they originally rebelled. Similarly, the events of this novella connote the 1917's Bolshevik Revolution. As a result, the *Animal Farm* represents Russia.

Promising, as a speech act is used in this novel as it helps in serving its main idea of reaching the goals by using fake promising mottos to make people believe in them. One can conclude, from this study, that there are several speech acts, especially those which are classified by Searle, used in this novella like the commissive, directive and the expressive one. All of these acts are employed in a suitable context to refer to the different promising connotations of this novella, that are finally proved to be fake. Thus, people should have their own will and prevent any attempt of usurping them, since some politicians may misuse power the thing that increases the poor people's misery.

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