The Partial Application of Speech Theory

-- The Speech Act Analysis on Animal Farm

Gaoqiang Lu¹, a

¹English Language Department, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia

aE-mail: 1598346355@qq.com

Abstract

Animal Farm is one of the novel of George Orwell. The rich irony in his works has become one of the classic novels of the author and ranks among the world’s most famous novels. Based on the theory of Speech Acts, this paper makes a theoretical analysis of the use of the theme expression, characters and dialogues in Animal Farm from both macro and micro aspects. It proves the possibility of using linguistic methods to analyze novels.

Keywords

Speech Act Theory; Animal Farm; Irony.

1. Introduction

Linguistic theories can be found in many literary analysis articles, which is one of the most effective methods to analyze literary works. In recent years, many scholars have applied linguistic theories to the analysis of poetry, prose and even lyrics, but the analysis of novels is really rare. Therefore, the author intends to try to use speech act theory to analyze the novel, to prove that linguistic theory plays an important role in analyzing the possibility of literature and in the reader's understanding of the intention conveyed by the author.

2. The Speech Act theory and Literary Analysis

The Speech act theory was proposed by Oxford University professor, philosopher J. L. Austin in 1955 and later be published by one of his students, was named How to do things with words. This book, or The Speech Art theory, expound that a large number of utterances are part of an action that is they are divided into 3 main parts, which are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act, and the illocution art is the center of his study (Austin, 1975). After that, based on his research, Searle modified and developed it into essential condition preparatory condition, propositional condition, and sincerity condition. He also analyzed speech acts in dialogue, fully considered the context factor, and divided speech act theory into five types: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (Searle, 1969).

Many scholars have made extensive research on the possibility of applying linguistic theory to literary analysis. Among them is M. Pratt, a linguistics professor at New York university. In her opinion, “literary language” is no different from “ordinary language”. Therefore, the speech act theory used to analyze ordinary language --- conversation, can also be applied to literary analysis (Pratt, 1978).
3. The Speech Act Theory and Irony

Searle (1969) argues that a speaker must satisfy the following four conditions in order to perform a speech act:

Firstly, essential conditions: the speaker wants to commit himself to an action by saying a sentence. For example, when A says "I will buy you a mobile phone" to B, and A fulfills this obligation. Secondly, Prepositional content conditions: the speaker mentioned that he was going to perform an act. Thirdly, preparatory conditions: the hearer is willing for the speaker to carry out this behavior, and the speaker believes that what he intends to do is in the hearer's interest. The speaker expressed sincere willingness to carry out the act. This is also a necessary condition for the implementation of speech acts. If the speaker is not sincere, it is likely to have an ironic effect. The meaning of a speaker's utterance is not only literal, but contrary and contradictory to the literal meaning. At the same time, it is also one of the most common methods of irony in British and American literature.

4. Using the Speech Act Theory to analyze the irony in Animal Farm

Many scholars believe that what we should pay more attention to is not the micro speech acts, but the macro speech acts of the text. Therefore, this essay will do a macro analysis (theme, plot, and characters) from the micro and micro analysis (Communication between characters).

4.1. Macro-speech Acts

Generally, macro irony speech act indicates that how are literal and structural irony organized by the author to become integrated in novels. It mainly contains theme expression, plot arrangement and characters-based irony.

4.2. Irony and Theme

From macro aspects, one of the themes of Animal farm is that there is a campaign that Old Major who is the oldest and respectful leader of all the animals in the farm wants to call up all his fellow to stand up and rebel against the owner of the farm. For example:

The novel begins with a speech by Old Major

“Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable and short...Remove man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and over work is abolished forever.’

(George Orwell 1945, Animal Farm chapter1)

Obviously, this speech is a speech act, which satisfies the conditions for speech acts. First of all, essential condition. Old Major told his dream and was willing to share it. Secondly, the audiences (animals) are obviously willing to listen to such stories and find it meaningful to do so. Finally, the sincerity condition, Old Major sincerely wants to let the animals have a better life.

Where there is oppression, there is resistance, and so it is. Just like we are familiar with the pre-war speech in the movie. All the animals are inspired by the speech and become aggressive, setting the stage for the uprising that follows, which is very common in fiction writing. It's obviously a speech act to tell all the animals on the farm about their current distress and to motivate them to get out of it. It's easy for readers to get carried away by the speech and the chorus at the end, and realize that the novel's theme is about an animal uprising. Dreams are also one of the themes of the novel. Old Major wants to tell all of his fellow about his such strange dream that is to become the true owner of the farm according to the situation.
In fact, it is hard to infer whether all the animals in the farm had the same thought. It is obvious to know that it would be a hard dream to come true according to the situation, however, at last, they end up this kind of behavior like humans do. Many scholars believe that Orwell used Jones to refer to the Russian tsar, and that the people would eventually rise up against him and overthrow him. Mr. Jones drunk, cruel, and an awful leader. Ironically, he was eventually driven away by a group of animals and taken over the farm. Here, the author obviously uses the technique of dramatic creation to express the effect of satire, which successfully reflects the situation of the society.

4.3. Irony and Plot
The story begins with people's high hopes for the community, because animals have brought revolutionary changes to society. Later, the desire for power made things worse. Verbal irony is used to illustrate various concepts in the story.

To illustrate this point, when pigs realized how beautiful life is as humans rather than animals, the commandment given as a rule that every animal should obey was secretly changed. Another example is that when animals begin to drink alcohol, the notion that “No animal shall drink alcohol quickly becomes that they do not allow any animals to drink too much”.

(George Orwell, 1945 chapter 8)

Once again, when the pigs started to sleep on the bed, the statement "no animal sleeping in bed" should be changed to "an animal should sleep on a bed with sheets".

(George Orwell, 1945 chapter 7)

Clearly, the seven commandments are rules and regulations, an incontrovertible act of command that animals can only observe.

Years passed, the windmill was rebuilt, and another was built, which gave the farm a considerable income. However, the ideals that Snowball once discussed, including shacks with electric lights, heating and running water, have been forgotten because Napoleon advocated that the happiest animals live a simple life. In addition to Boxer, many animals involved in the rebellion are either dead or old. Mr. Jones moved away after giving up taking back his farm, and he also died. Here again is the irony of breaking the conditions of good faith.

Pigs start to look like people because they walk upright, carry whips, drink alcohol, and dress. The Seven Commandments were reduced to one sentence:

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

(George Orwell, 1945 chapter 10)

The motto "four legs good, two legs bad" is changed to "four legs good, two legs better".

(George Orwell, 1945 chapter 10)

Napoleon held a banquet for pigs and local farmers to celebrate the new alliance with them. He abolished the revolutionary tradition and restored the name "The Manor Farm". Men and pigs
start to play cards, flatter and praise each other, and cheat in the game. Napoleon and farmer Mr. Pilkington played spades at the same time, and both sides started to fight for who cheated first. When animals outside see pigs and people, they can no longer distinguish between the two.

Politics is similar, the human will repeat mistakes, George Orwell’s creation in 1943 of the book, after decades of time, we see or hear how similar some of the descriptions are, and now some countries on earth or in the future will also be repeated. Orwell used a fable tells us: a regime after the revolution, if there is no democratic supervision, not the rule of law, must be alienated, bound to the opposite of his.

4.4. Irony and Characters

Animal Farm as one of the most classic novels among literary work successfully portrait the characters through their speech act behavior. Taking Mollie and Napoleon as examples:

4.4.1. Mollie

In chapter two, Mollie asked Snowball:

“Will there still be sugar after the Rebellion?” “No.” said Snowball firmly.

The stupid questions of all were asked by Mollie, the white mare. After that, she continued to ask:

“And shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane?” said Snowball “Those ribbons that you are so devoted to are the badge of slavery. Can you not understand that liberty is worth more than ribbons?” Mollie agreed, but she did not sound very convinced.

(George Orwell 1945, Animal Farm chapter2).

These two requests are a kind of "Directive speech act", which expresses the demands of the mare in the form of questions. Such speech act here, the usage of word sugar and stupid here indicated that she was a character who did not support the animalism in the animal farm. She just thought about nothing to do with animal, in this case, it was counted on irony to satire her behavior, which form an apparent comparison with the Snowball. In George’s novel, Mollie is the typical character who stands for the Middle class that happened in Russian Revolution. She didn’t realize the significance of rebellion against human in the animal farm, however, she didn’t oppose such revolution neither.

4.4.2. Napoleon

“One Sunday morning, when the animals assembled to receive their orders, Napoleon announced that he had decided upon a new policy. From now onwards, animal farm would engage in trade in with the neighboring farms: not, of course, for any commercial purpose, but simply in order to obtain certain materials which were urgently necessary.” “Finally, Napoleon raised his trotter for silence and announced that he had already made all the arrangements. There would be no need for any of the animals to come in contact with human beings, which would clearly be most undesirable.”

(George Orwell 1945, Animal Farm chapter 6)

Through this speech act(announcement), Napoleon has already forgot the previous rules that animals should be allowed to do, but here he decided to develop business trade. Obviously, it violates the sincerity condition (one of the four Searle speech act conditions). In addition, the sentence he had already made all the arrangements indicated that he actually is cruel to all the
animals and there is no autonomy. In George's novel, in this way, pigs are portrayed as lazy, dishonest and lack of action. The author constantly uses the pig's lie, saying but not doing, to achieve the ironic effect and reflecting on the Stalin during the revolution.

4.5. Micro-speech Acts
As mentioned above, Searle divides speech acts into five categories. Therefore, this article from the representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative those 5 aspects to explore the micro speech acts.

4.5.1. Representative Irony
According to Searle, a Representative speech act commits the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition. It represents the speaker's belief of something that can be evaluated to be true or false. (Searle,1976) Typical cases are when the speaker thanks, apologizes, or welcomes the listener. Expressive speech acts are common in message boards because writers often greet readers at the beginning of a post ("Hi everyone!") or express gratitude for help from the readers ("I really appreciate the suggestions."). We also found Expressive speech acts in a variety of other contexts, such as apologies. (Qadir & Riloff, 2011) For example:

In chapter 7, the denigration of snowball is described “Whenever anything went wrong it became usual to attribute it to Snowball. If a window was broken or a drain was blocked up, someone was certain to say that Snowball had come in the night and done it, and when the key of the store-shed was lost, the whole farm was convinced that Snowball had thrown it down the well. Curiously enough, they went on believing this even after the mislaid key was found under a sack of meal.”

(George Orwell,1955 chapter 7)

The animals used the word "certain" and "convinced" that Snowball was a traitor, but the process of Napoleon's conviction was so ludicrous. “At every few steps Napoleon stopped and snuffed the ground for traces of Snowball’s footsteps, which, he said, he could detect by the smell. He snuffed in every corner, in the barn, in the cow-shed, in the henhouses, in the vegetable garden, and found traces of Snowball almost everywhere. He would put his snout to the ground, give several deep sniffs, ad exclaim in a terrible voice, "Snowball! He has been here! I can smell him distinctly!" and at the word "Snowball" all the dogs let out blood-curdling growls and showed their side teeth.” The descriptions of "at every few steps" and "he could detect by the smell" were accompanied by " illocutionary act[ Austin's development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. ]" to show that in fact snowball was not a traitor. He had never been there and had not done any of those things.

This is exactly the ironic effect the author wants, which satirizes the incompetence of the ruling class, who cannot solve the problem and then frame up the charges, or even attack their colleagues. The author is opposed to Stalin's authoritarian rule. He cleansed up to create terror and killed innocent peasants while engaging in collective farms. The author was ridiculed as a pig-like humble act. Despite being humble, he insisted that he be a man of justice, morality, and humanity. But those so-called people, that is, the Western world, but for the sake of benefit and harmony with pigs, in the eyes of the author are also willing to degenerate, just like beasts.

Another example is in the end of this novel:

“Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.”

(George Orwell,1955 chapter 10)
After a whole novel of description, finally, we can not tell, in the end is a pig or a person, step by step the pig became a person. “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again. Such a sentence seems to be only a superficial description (locutionary act), it also has an extra meaning (illocutionary act). After years of oppression, struggle, rebellion and reform, the pigs became as corrupt and cruel as their owners. Today, smoking, drinking, whipping, killing and even cheating have become common characteristics of both animals and humans. It is also proved an old Chinese saying: "We prosper, the people are suffering; we fall, the people are suffering."

4.5.2. Directive Irony

Directive speech act [For example, the speaker may ask a question, make a request, or issue an invitation. Directive speech acts are common in message board posts, especially in the initial post of each thread when the writer explicitly requests help or advice regarding a specific topic. Many Directive sentences are posed as questions, so they are easy to identify by the presence of a question mark. (Ashequl Qadir and Ellen Riloff, 2011)] is a speech act in which the speaker asks the listener to do something, including suggestion, request, order, etc (Searle,1976). Speakers use it to express a hidden meaning that is different or contrary to what they say. The biggest difference between representative irony and directive irony is that the former tends to adapt the objective world to language, while the latter, on the contrary, tends to adapt language to the objective world. When the speaker does not sincerely ask the listener to do something or it is impossible to get the listener to do something, the speech act constitutes irony. There are many examples of directive irony on this text, such as Napoleon tried to convince all the animals, by using some sort of imperative persuasion, that snowball had rebelled, leading to the following conversation:

"I do not believe that," he said. "Snowball fought bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed. I saw him myself. Did we not give him 'Animal Hero, first Class,' immediately afterwards?"

"That was our mistake, comrade. For we know now—it is all written down in the secret documents that we have found—that in reality he was trying to lure us to our doom."

"That is the true spirit, comrade!" cried Squealer. (George Orwell,1955 chapter 7)

This is a classic example of directive speech act, napoleon tried to convince the animals that snowball was a traitor, but failed to show any concrete proof. As a result, they can only force people to accept it by command, by shutting. Even directly declare capital crime of Snowball in chapter 6: "Comrades, here and now I pronounce the death sentence upon Snowball." It also satirizes fascist rule in another way.

4.5.3. Commissive Irony

Commissive speech acts mainly include promise, bet, swear. Its purpose is to ensure that the speaker does something; The direction of adaptation is from the world to the language; The mental state expressed is intention; The propositional content is that the speaker does something, and its prerequisite is that the speaker is capable of accomplishing the promised action. By making a promise, a speaker automatically assumes the obligation to do something. If both parties know that the speaker is not competent and take the initiative to assume the obligation, the promise is given an ironic implication. There are many such examples in the article. For example, in the speech of pigs, mentioned that:
In the long pasture, not far from the farm buildings, there was a small knoll which was the highest point on the farm. After surveying the ground, Snowball declared that this was just the place for a windmill, which could be made to operate a dynamo and supply the farm with electrical power. This would light the stalls and warm them in winter, and would also run a circular saw, a chaff-cutter, a mangel-slicer, and an electric milking machine. (George Orwell, 1955 chapter 5)

But later on Napoleon announced a new policy is that:

The windmill, however, had not after all been used for generating electrical power. It was used for milling corn, and brought in a handsome money profit. The animals were hard at work building yet another windmill; when that one was finished, so it was said, the dynamos would be installed. But the luxuries of which Snowball had once taught the animals to dream, the stalls with electric light and hot and cold water, and the three-day week, were no longer talked about. Napoleon had denounced such ideas as contrary to the spirit of Animalism. The truest happiness, he said, lay in working hard and living frugally. (George Orwell, 1955 chapter 10)

The animals felt vague uneasiness but said nothing. It’s a sign of napoleon's authoritarianism and getting his own way. The animals had become accustomed to napoleon's behaviour. Obviously, this also violates the sincerity condition, where the author again uses the inconsistent pig's promise to achieve the ironic effect. It expresses the dissatisfaction and ridicule for the ruling class's inaction.

4.5.4. Expressive Irony

Expressive speech acts are speech acts that express the speaker's feelings, attitude or state of mind about themselves or the world (Searle 1976:12). Expressive speech acts mainly include” Thanks, We found that the novel of Animal Farm is chocked with expressive irony. One of the good examples can be Boxer, one among Napoleon's most devoted followers, who used the tongue-in-cheek maxim "Comrade Napoleon is always right". There is no doubt that Boxer's attitude, which is a staunch supporter of Napoleon's rule, conform to the sincerity conditions, and it was an act of expressive speech act.

However, his leader----Napoleon, broke every rule they arranged down, so-called The Seven Commandments. In other words, the truth is, he’s even never correct. This is shown below:

“No animal shall lie in bed;”

(George Orwell, 1955 chapter 2)

But violates the provisions in chapter 6, "It was about this time that the" suddenly version into the farmhouse and took up their residence there. "and," Boxer passed It off as usual with "Napoleon is always right!"

“No animal shall drink alcohol:"

(George Orwell, 1955 chapter 2)

The author is using exaggerated words such as "work harder" and "always" to express the ignorance and blind pursuit of the lower class, thus achieving an ironic effect. But violates the provisions in chapter 9,"And the news soon leaked out that every pig was now receiving an arbitration of a pint of beer daily, with half a gallon for Napoleon himself. Which was always served to him in the Crown Derby soup tureen."
There are many such expressive ironies in the text, which are not only the ridicule of those who follow blindly, but also a reflection of the social situation.

4.5.5. Declarative Irony

A further category of Searle’s speech acts is declaration. These utterances by a person with the appropriate authority under certain well-defined conditions, and create situations that fit the words. A case in point is that a judge sentencing someone in a courtroom or a member of the clergy baptizing a child in the church (Searle 1976:13;). Furthermore, Declarative speech acts primarily contains "appointment, resignation, naming, dismissal" etc. and this is also really common in this novel, because the pig always announces some ridiculous decision, for example:

Farm rules (The Seven Commandments) forbid all animals from eating apples and drinking milk, but milk is added to pig’s mash. This caused a lot of discussion among the animals. At this point, the pig explains that we don’t really like apples and milk, but we have to eat them in order to work better on the farm. They claim:
"We pigs are brain workers. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back!"

(George Orwell, 1955 chapter3)

In other words, the pigs want to say, we have this privilege for the farm. What a ridiculous explanation!
Implementation declarations require not only rules of language, but also special rules - the speaker must have the right to perform the act. In this novel, the pigs are the leader of the farm and clearly has the right to announce something. One of the cardinal principles of animal farm was that all animals were equal, but the pigs used this overt act to establish privileges for themselves, claiming to do it for the common good. Ironically, the pigs will break the rules again and again.

5. Conclusion

As one of the basic theories in the field of linguistics, speech act theory not only provides a new perspective for the study of linguistics, but also provides a new method for the analysis of literary works. This paper analyzed Animal Farm from macro and micro, and selected some examples for specific explanation. It proves that there is no specific difference between "literary language" and "common language", and that the same theories applied to "common language" can also be applied to "literary language".

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