
**Investigating Conditional Promise in the Tweets of British Prime Minister
Boris Johnson**

Key words: conditional promise, Tweets, Boris Johnson.

M.A. Thesis Extracted Paper

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the conditional promising analysis in English social media. The conditional promising utterances must contain *If Clause*, since there is a condition that must be fulfilled. The researcher collected the data which is concerned with corona virus out of Tweeter in a specific period and investigating the conditional promise in that period. The study will investigate the promise in the political figures' tweets. First, it will shed light on the concept of promising and then will investigate the model that contains the conditional promise and its functions and the data that will be analyzed. The study will be limited to one political figure, the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in one platform of social media(Tweeter).

1. Introduction

The linguistic forms of promising utterances are used in political speeches. How do we clarify the promise utterance in the context, the social setting of the utterance that becomes the background knowledge to interpret what the speakers mean in their utterances? This will help the hearer to interpret the purpose of the utterances of the speaker. An utterance made by a speaker is used to deliver particular purposes. On the other hand, the interest in studying Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has increased, especially in social media sites(tweeter). The question that is raised here —can this new community with the different topics and events that the users of social media are engaged in affect the use of promising utterances?”. A promise is still a promise even without one actually saying —I promise”. One need not use the performative verb “promise” to explicitly intended action when uttering something. The dominant promising utterances used by political figures is a promising non-performative verb. There is more than one form for expressing the promising utterance. The intention of promising utterances identifies the type of promising and the function of promising utterances.

2. The Concept of Promising

Speech act theory has viewed promising, if not such an act, as a prototypical or paradigmatic illocutionary act. To illustrate the principles of performative utterance, coercion and illocutionary act, Austin (1962:53) uses the promise more frequently than some other kind of speech act. Equally, Searle's early work of speech acts, which claimed that a thorough analysis of promising was a strong foundation on which to build, through extrapolation, a theory of illocutionary acts that included concepts such as preparatory, propositional content, sincerity, and essential conditions, and a successful analysis of promising promised to take with it a comprehensive theory of speech act. The standard classification of Searle (1975:71) that appears together with promises in the general category of commissives: illocutionary behavior, the illocutionary point of which is to tie the speaker to a future course of action. The future conduct of the speaker is based on the fulfillment of any provision in a commissive conditional commitment, but the primary purpose of the commitment is not to make Receiver (R) satisfy that condition, which normally is not within the recipient's power to do. Example of promise:

(1) "*If I win the lottery, (I promise that) I'll buy you a car*".

This promise can be formally described as follows:

CCP (commissive conditional promise): $P \rightarrow Pr(s d a)$.

The major illocutionary factor in a directive-commissive conditional pledge is directive, and the obligation of Speaker (S) to a future action is conditional not only on the fulfillment of the stated condition, but also on the fulfillment by the receiver:

(2) "*If you give up smoking (I promise you) I'll buy you a car*".

Formally,

DCCP (directive-commissive conditional promise):

$Re(R d a^1) \wedge (R d a^1) \rightarrow Pr(s d a^2)$

Where Re stands for "I request" (Beller, 2002:113,8).

In these situations, A biconditional full speech act comprising both what is said and what is pragmatically implied will be more appropriate to consider, since the speaker who gives the promise "If I win the lottery, I'll buy you a car" or "I'll buy you a car if you give up smoking. Normally, one also needs to

express the impression that the result depends entirely on the antecedent, i.e. that without winning the lottery or giving up smoking by the recipient, there would be no car.

Some writers define promising as follow:

Prichard ([1940] 2002: 257) says: "In promising, agreeing or undertaking to do some action we seem to be creating or bringing into existence the obligation to do it, so much so that promising seems just to be binding ourselves, i.e. making ourselves bound, to do it, and the statement "I ought to keep a promise", like "I ought not to steal", seems a mere pleonasm". As Raz (1977:218) says, "To promise is . . . to communicate an intention to undertake by the very act of communication an obligation to perform a certain action."

Herbert Hart (1958: 101,102) believes "Promises constitute the obvious case of moral obligation. When we promise we make use of specified procedures to change the moral situation; in lawyer's language we exercise a 'power' conferred by rules to change moral relations".

Rawls (1971:343) asserts, "Promising is an action defined by a public system of rules. These rules are, as in the case of institutions generally, a set of constitutive conventions".

3. The Model and Data

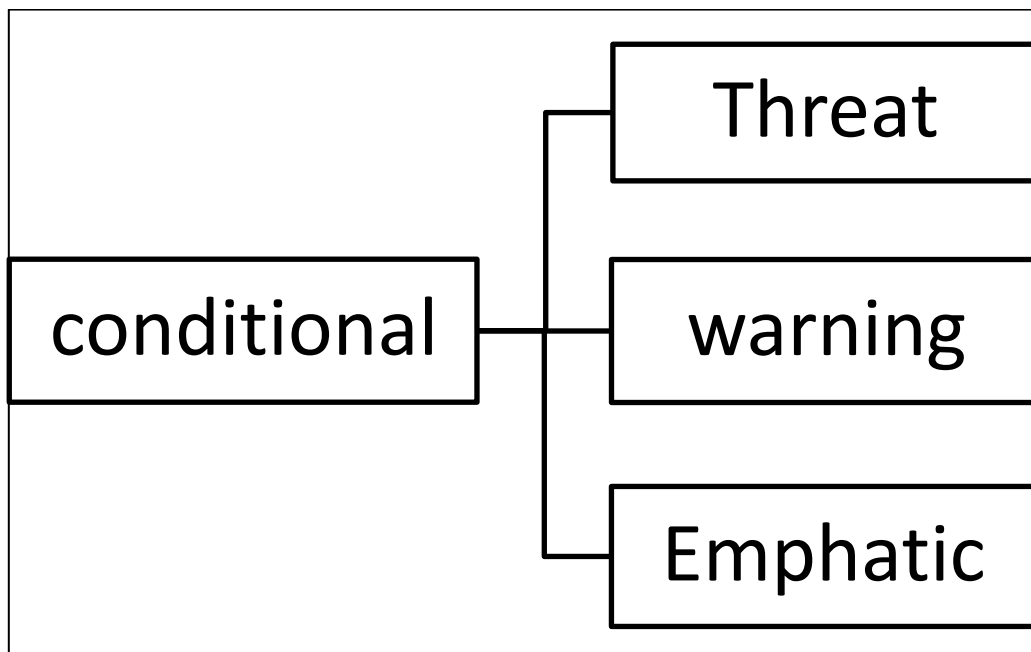


Figure (1) The Adapted Model

3.1 Conditional Promise

Salguiro (2010: 216,219) did not pay much emphasis on conditional promise. He simply believes that, in nature, act is conditional. He has given more focus to commissive conditional promises (CCP) and directive commissive conditional promises (DCCP). Commissive conditional promises (CCP): means that promise is the one in which a speaker's future conduct becomes conditional, but the purpose of the pledge is not to get the addressee (the promisee) to bring about the fulfillment of the condition, e.g.

(3) If I pass Research Statistics course, I will give my dictionary to you.

The speaker does not get his / her addressee to satisfy the fulfillment condition in the if clause where it applies. Having the speaker pass Study Statistics course is unlikely of the addressee. In other words, in the if clause the addresser does not direct his / her addressee to satisfy the requirement. What occurs in the if clause is not the duty of the addressee, but rather that of the addresser. In a directive-commissive conditional promise (DCCP), the key point

is the directive and the future action depends on the fulfillment of the condition stated and the fulfillment of the condition by the receiver, e.g.

(4)-If you send me to a book store, (I promise) I will buy you your favorite book.

The promise depends, however, on the Promisee Party. In the event that s/he would satisfy the condition in the if clauses, the promise will occur.

In most cases, the conditional construction will convey the act of promise. In this regard, Beller (2002:113) points out that the speaker requires a receiver to illustrate a certain objective behavior with a positive meaning for him / herself (i.e. to perform any action or to refrain from performing an action) in conditional speech acts:

(5)-" If you lend me your bike, then I will help you with your homework".

Believing that the addressee needs support with her/his homework, the S here declares that s/he will respond positively, i.e. make a promise if the addressee demonstrates a desired behavior, and otherwise negatively, i.e., make a threat (ibid).

"A conditional promise is a construction in which one sender promises a particular promise body conditionally, based upon the existence of other commitments"(Couch, et al:2007).

3.1.1 Threat, Warning and other Acts

It is possible to use the locution "I promise" to express a threat:

(6)-I promise you I will make you regret.

Therefore, Allan (1986:195) uses the terms threat and true promise, supporting their suggestion by the following examples:

(7)- I promise you I will come (True promise)

(8)- *I promise I'll kill you if you do it again* (Threat)

In the same vein, Lyons (1977:737) and Verschueren (1983:737) refer that promise and threat may share similar conditions of sincerity, preparaty and essential. In addition, all activities can be represented both linguistically and non-linguistically; and in certain societies they can oblige people to perform out the respective behavior so as not to lose face.

It is worth noting that the threatener may avoid the obligation to do what s/he threatens to do in threats, because the threatener has the power and authority to do the action, and then s/he has the option either to do it or not to act. On the contrary to promise, the speaker has an obligation to fulfill his word. Even, more commitment is promise than threat. Thus, if anyone threatens someone by the act of "promising," s/he is obligated to perform her/his threat as "promise" imposes a sense of obligation on the speaker to fulfill his threat.(Sami, 2015:50).

Both threat and promise can also be performed as an act of conditional speech. Leech (1983:226,7) claims that "threatening" as well as "promising" can signify a conditional speech act in the context that "speaker threatened hearer with x" is roughly S committed to seeing that something negative (x) will happen to listener unless s/he did something desired by speaker. Beller (2002:114) indicates that the standard formulas for the threat and conditional promise will be:

(9)-*"If you do (desired behavior), then I will reward you with (promise)" vs. "If you do (undesired behavior), then I will punish you by (threat):*

(10)- *Be quiet or you'll be sent out.*

This sentence demonstrates that the speaker will respond "threat" negatively if the listener shows undesirable behaviors (make a noise), but the speaker will

respond "promise" positively, if the listener shows the desired behavior (be quiet).

The theory of politeness is based on the idea of 'face.' This theory argues that through different means of indirectness, vagueness and assurances, speakers escape threats to the 'face' of those they discuss. Face has two aspects: negative and positive. The negative face of a person is the wish of others to remain undisturbed. An individual's positive face is reflected in her/his desire to be appreciated by others. (Brown and Levinson, 1987:66). Some illocutionary acts are liable to threaten the face, according to Brown and Levinson; these actions are known as "face-threatening acts" (FTAs). For example, requests and orders threaten negative face, while disagreement and criticism threaten positive face. They maintain that promises can be used as a positive strategy on politeness (ibid: 128).

Searle (1969:58-9) claims, suppose that someone says to a lazy student,

(11)- *“If you don't hand in your paper on time I promise you I will give you a failing grade in the course”*.(warning)

(12)-*If you don't take my advice, you'll regret it, I promise you*.(warning)

More naturally, others would characterize that as a warning, or maybe even a threat. But why, then, can the "I promise" locution in such a case be used? Searle claims that one is using it here because "I promise" and "I promise hereby" are among the best illocutionary power given by English to indicate commitment devices. This is why these terms are also used in the development of speech acts that are not purely speaking promises, but in which the degree of their commitment is emphasized. Sometimes when one makes an emphatic assertion one hears people say "I promise." Suppose someone accuse s/he for stolen the money , for example. He say,

(13)- *“You stole that money, didn't you?”*.

Your answer is: *“No, I didn't, I promise you I didn't”*.

Have you made any promise here? Searle finds through describing your utterance as a promise is very unnatural. This utterance can be more accurately characterized as an emphatic denial, and one can understand the occurrence of the illocutionary force indicating device "I promise" as a derivatives of sincere promises and serve here as an expression that adds emphasis to s/he denial.

(14)- *It won't happen again, I promise.*(apologizing)

Trosborg (1995: 383),promise expresses in this sentence apologize

3.2 Data

The data consist of promising in social media specifically in tweeter. The tweets of English political figure, the British prime minister Boris Johnson. The tweet will serve as the data source for the analytical part of this study. The result shows with statistic procedures in analyzing the data. The corpus data is compiled manually from the internet.

4. Analysis

Table 1: Sample of the analysis of promise in PM Johnson tweets

Date /time	Tweet	Type of promise	Function of promise
11:38 AM · Apr 5, 2020	Thank you to everyone who is saving lives by staying at home this weekend. I know it's tough, <u>but if we all work together and follow the guidance we will beat #coronavirus.</u>	Conditional promise	Warning

Johnson used "we will" as a reference for making a promise with his public together. Johnson thanks every member of his society for staying home in order to save life. Although staying home is not an easy thing, but unfortunately it is the only solution for keeping ourselves save from coronavirus and also for keeping others save from infection of the virus. Johnson promises his society

that they will beat this disease together if they follow the NHS (National Healthcare System) guidance and advice. The word "will" as a modal is used to refer to the future action that someone will do something. Promise is a declaration made, as to another person, with respect to the future. This tweet, which represents a conditional promise, functions as a warning statement to urging people to stay home and follow the medical guidance. This is a warning phrase, since the speaker tells the audience to do as he wishes. For listeners this message means to stay always careful in such situation.

Table 1 results of the analysis of the tweets of Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Promise	Promise function	Frequency	Percentage
Conditional Promise	Threat	0	0%
	Warning	4	5.71%
	Emphasis	3	4.28%

5. Discussion

By the conditional promise we mean that promise which contains *if clause*. This type of promise has a condition to be fulfilled and without executing that condition the promise does not have the chance to be achieved. The conditional promise has more than one function. The function may be changed due to various linguistic uses. The conditional promise may function as *threat*, an indication of one's intention to punish or injure others, especially if he / she does not do what the speaker wants, they will be in trouble. The conditional commitment will act as a *warning* to advise others to do or not to do something and to inform them in advance of something, particularly potential danger or anything bad that is likely to happen, so that they can avoid it. Warning is an utterance that intends others to be careful. The conditional promise may function as an *emphasis* to what the speaker says (in different degrees), the truth of the proposition expressed, or the assurance of the utterance that gives to something. Therefore, the conditional promise is not used so much. Boris Johnson used seven conditional promise frequent and the percentage in two functions the

warning has four frequent and percentage 5.71%, and the emphasis has three frequent and percentage 4.28%.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that:

1. The conditional promising is widely used in the political figures as we have seen this clearly throughout the tweets of Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
2. The conditional promising is not used more frequent since it needs a condition to fulfill the promise.
3. The conditional promise has more than one function. The function may be changed due to various linguistic uses. Throughout the analysis of Boris Johnson tweets we can come to conclusion that warning and emphasis are the most frequent functions while the threat function is not used in his tweets.

دراسة الوعد المشروط في تغريدات رئيس الوزراء البريطاني بوريس جونسون
الكلمات المفتاحية: الوعد المشروط، التغريدات، بوريس جونسون.

بحث مستل من رسالة ماجستير

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دعاء نوح كريم

جامعة ديالى

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى التحقق من تحليل الوعد المشروط في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الإنكليزية. ان ألفاظ الوعد المشروط يجب ان تحتوي على عبارة شرطية ، طالما ان هناك شرط يجب ان يتحقق. وقد قامت الباحثة بجمع البيانات المتعلقة في فيروس كورونا من منصة تويتر خلال فترة محددة وقامت بتقصي عن الوعد المشروط خلال هذه الفترة. تبحث الدراسة عن الوعد في تغريدات الشخصيات السياسية. في البداية، سيتم تسليط الضوء على مفهوم الواعد ، ثم يم بعد ذلك البحث في النموذج التحليل والذي يتضمن مفهوم الوعد المشروط ووظائفه بالإضافة الى البيانات التي سيتم تحليلها. ستقتصر الدراسة على شخصية سياسية واحده رئيس الوزراء البريطاني بوريس جونسون في منصة واحدة من منصات التواصل الاجتماعي (تويتر).

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