

النفاق في رواية «الحارس في حقل الشوفان» للروائي جي  
دي سالينجر: تحليل أطر المحادثة

**Hypocrisy in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in  
the Rye*: An Analysis of the Maxims of  
Conversation**

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<https://doi.org/10.54582/TSJ.2.2.9>

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### المستخلص

تعد أطر المحادثة إحدى الإنجازات الرئيسية لبول غرايس في مجال التداولية، حيث تلعب دوراً هاماً في العديد من المجالات ومنها الأدب. إن الإستخدام الفعال لهذه الأطر يجعل عملية التواصل ناجحة. يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحليل أطر المحادثة التي تضمنتها رواية «الحارس في حقل الشوفان» للروائي جي دي سالينجر، وكيف إن إستخدام هذه الأطر في الرواية يعكس قصد الكاتب في إيصال أفكار معينة كالنفاق والتضليل. إضف إلى ذلك أن هذه الأطر تثير المعاني في الرواية وتجعل عملية التواصل بين الشخصيات فعالة، وتساعد القراء على فهم طبيعة العلاقة بين الشخصيات عن طريق فهم الرسائل الضمنية، وأن الإخلال بهذه الأسس الكلامية في الرواية يشير إلى أن العالم الذي يعيش فيه بطل الرواية هولدن عالم يسوده الغموض والإختلال والشذوذ والزيف والنفاق، وأن عالم كهذا لا يقدر أطر وقيم الكلام يمكن أن يكون عالم تنقصه القيم الأخلاقية، ويزعم بشكل مزيف أنه يمتلك مبادئ سامية.

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** التداولية، أطر المحادثة، التضمين، جي دي سالينجر، الحارس في حقل الشوفان





## Abstract

The Conversational Principle is one of Paul Grice's major achievements in the field of pragmatics. It plays a very significant role in different fields among which is the field of literature. The effective employment of maxims of conversation makes the process of communication successful. The objective of this research paper is to analyze the maxims of conversation in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and examine how the use of the maxims reflects the writer's intention to communicate certain thoughts such as hypocrisy and disinformation. The manipulation of maxims of conversation enriches the meanings in the novel and makes the process of communication between the characters effective. It also helps the readers understand the nature of the relationship among characters through the comprehension of hidden messages. Violations of the maxims of the conversation throughout the novel reflects that Holden lives in an ambiguous, disorderly, irregular, false and hypocritical world. And such a world that shows no respect to the maxims and values of speech is possibly a world that lacks moral values and falsely claiming high principles.

**Key words:** pragmatics, maxims of conversation, implicature, J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Ry*





## Hypocrisy in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*: Analysis of the Maxims of Conversation

### Introduction

The maxims of conversation form the basis for the efficient use of language. The maxims are not confined to certain texts. They exist in all texts, whether spoken or written, among which are the literary texts. Authors of literary works use language in order to convey their thoughts to their readers. So readers should be aware of the authors' intentions in order to understand what they try to convey. Failing to comprehend the intended and implied meanings will lead to misinterpretation.

The British philosopher of language, Paul Grice, was the first, to use the term maxims of the conversation, which is now widely spread and cited in the pragmatics literature. Here, Grice (1989: 26) declares: "I call these categories Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner." In their clarification of the maxims of conversation, Gregory Trauth and Kerstin Kazzazi (1996: 729) write that this is a "Term introduced by H. P. Grice in a 1967 lecture . . . to denote those requirements accepted as reasonable for effective communication which, if violated, could cause a breakdown in communication." Likewise, Diane Blakemore (1992: 26) argues that

Grice's main concern was with the role of these maxims





in the explanation of the way speakers may communicate more than what they actually say. However, many so-called Gricean accounts of utterance interpretation do not recognize that Grice's account leaves many basic questions unanswered.

Alan Cruse (2006: 101), in his definition of the maxims of conversation writes that

They are rules of conversational conduct that people do their best to follow, and that they expect their conversational partners to follow. They have a rational basis, and are not matters of pure convention (think the Highway Code rather than table manners).

In his explanation about the nature of the conversational maxims, Alan Cruse (2006: 357) mentions a number of points: The first is that they are not rules, after the fashion of grammatical rules. They are much more flexible, more like guidelines. Infringing a rule of grammar leads to an ill-formed utterance; the maxims can be creatively infringed, frequently conflict with one another, and are to be followed by and large, to the best of one's ability.

These maxims of conversation are originated in the conversational implicature. For Grice, implicature refers to the idea that what is literally said by the speaker is not necessarily similar to what is inferred by the hearer (Paul Grice, 1989: 25). For David





Crystal (2008: 238) “**Conversational implicatures** refer to the implications which can be deduced from the form of an utterance, on the basis of certain co-operative principles which govern the efficiency and normal acceptability of conversations.”

A conversational implicature is an indirect additional meaning of an utterance that is based on the maxims of conversations. It is of two types: generalized and particularized. The latter is a conversational implicature that can be inferred in a particular context, and the former is a conversational implicature that is derived without referring to a certain context (Paul Grice, 1989: 30-31).

The cooperative principle was proposed by philosopher H. P. Grice in 1975. It assumes that participants in a conversation expect to follow four maxims in order to make communication effective. These maxims are known as conversational maxims: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner (Paul Grice 1989: 26). They, to a certain extent, account for conversational implicatures. The maxim of quantity is stated as ‘make your contribution informative as is required.’ The maxim of quality is stated as ‘try to make your contribution one that is true.’ In this maxim, the speaker should not say something that he/she believes to be untrue. The maxim of relation is stated as ‘make your contribution relevant.’ In this maxim, the speaker makes his utterance related to what comes before it and what comes after it and relates it to the whole context. The maxim of manner is stated





as ‘make your contribution perspicuous.’ In the maxim of manner, the speaker expects to avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and his contribution should be brief and orderly (Paul Grice, 1989: 26-27).

On the other hand, these four maxims can be simply flouted. The speaker can flout the maxim of quantity if his/her contribution fails to be enough about the topic. Saying little about something is not good if it is not enough. The speaker can flout the maxim of quality if his/her contribution is false. In this concern, Betty Birner (2013: 51) argues that “It is also possible, however, to flout the maxim – that is, to make an utterance that is so obviously contrary to any plausible belief we might hold that the literal meaning of the utterance cannot reasonably be considered to be what is intended.” The speaker can flout the maxim of relation when his/her contribution is irrelevant to the topic, and the addressee realizes that his/her irrelevance is not made for the purpose of implicating something. The maxim of manner can be flouted if the speaker makes his/her contribution obscure, ambiguous, lengthy, or unordered. In addition, Wayne A. Davis (1998: 12) assumes that some implicatures rely on the violation of the maxims: “This occurs when what a cooperative speaker says so obviously fails to obey the maxims that the hearer must assume the speaker means something different.”

Geoffrey Leech (1980: 12) enquires why the force of the utterance “the implied meaning” should be greater than its sense





“the explicit meaning.” Leech finds the answer in Grice’s explanation in which he assumes that the speaker has to obey the cooperative principle in order to allow the extra meaning to work out. Leech (1980: 12) also states that

Conversation . . . is only successful on the assumption that people generally observe the Cooperative Principle: that they speak sufficiently informatively, truthfully, relevantly, and clearly. This is not to say that the maxims cannot be violated: one can be a liar in English, or in any other language; but if everyone told lies or told the truth indiscriminately, practical communication would be impossible.

In the same concern, Bart Geurts (2010: 11), in explaining the maxims of conversation, argues that

Surely, if a speaker wants to be cooperative, it would be a good idea for him to make his utterances sufficiently informative, speak the truth, and so on, and surely it is reasonable for hearers to expect speakers to behave in conformity with such patently sensible rules. In brief, the banality of the maxims strongly speaks in their favour.

The objective of this research paper is to analyze the maxims of conversation in J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* and examine the way the maxims are deployed to reflect the writer’s intention to communicate certain themes such as hypocrisy and disinformation. This study is significant in that it sheds light on the







maxims of conversation in the novel and how they contribute to the richness of its meanings.

## Literature Review

Since its publication, *The Catcher in the Rye* has been a subject of great interest to many scholars. It has obviously drawn the attention of critics, and they have given their views upon its linguistic features such as the maxims of the conversation and upon its themes among which is hypocrisy.

Social hypocrisy is one of the themes of the novel. In this concern, Sarah Graham (2007: 52) writes, “As Marxist critics, the Ohmanns find a great deal of material in *Catcher* that they read as evidence of Salinger’s awareness of class inequality, social hypocrisy and the impact of capitalism.” It seems that Salinger is interested in describing the nature of social hypocrisy in the novel. This may reflect the many well-to-do lives he perceives. Similarly, David Galloway (2008: 27) refers to the nature of the world in which Holden has grown up, a world full of social hypocrisy and deception: “Even though he is often childishly ingenuous, and his language is frequently comic, Holden must be seen as both a representative and a critic of the modern environment.” Concerning the novel’s language, Graham (2007: 40) also states that there are many “anxieties about the novel’s language or its implications.”

Salinger is good at using dialogues throughout his literary works among which is his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. He made





use of this skill from the contemporary novelists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Here, Harold Bloom (2008: 2) writes that

Salinger's ear for dialogue, inherited from Hemingway and Fitzgerald, is acutely manifested throughout a bizarre narrative in which little happens, which is to be preferred to Seymour's suicide in "A Perfect Day for Banana fish," or Franny's fainting fit in the story that bears her name.

Rosaler Ruth (2016: 125), in his analysis of Collin's *The Dead Secret*, writes that "there is no doubt that *The Dead Secret*, and specifically its style of narration, was a success." He also states that

the primary information is implicated through character dialogue rather than communicated through narratorial commentary. The communication of the 'secret' information's antinarratability results largely from this lack of narratorial commentary, which persists despite the vagueness of Mrs Treverton and Sarah's discussion. Because it is antithetical to communicative norms (and, more specifically, repeatedly flouts Grice's maxims of quantity and manner). (127)

Stanley P. Baldwin (2000: 10) mentions that *The Catcher in the Rye* is banned in American schools because of its language and obscenity: "When the novel has been banned from classrooms, it has been because school boards and administrators have objected





to the language as well as the general atmosphere of subversion in the book.” This may imply that the speakers in the novel flout the maxims of conversation. This is because their utterances are not morally controlled.

### About the Text

J. D. Salinger (1882-1941) was considered one of the most influential American novelists in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of his novels are on the list of greatest literature. His notable literary works are *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), *Nine Stories* (1953), *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (1963), *Franny and Zooey* (1961). The main focus of the current study is *The Catcher in the Rye*.

*The Catcher in the Rye* is one of the best American novels in the twentieth century. It is regarded as J. D. Salinger’s greatest novel. It was translated to many world languages. About one million copies are sold per year. It was ranked in 2005 among the best 100 novels that was written in English since 1923. In this concern, Sarah Graham (2007: 3) writes that

*The Catcher in the Rye* is one of the most famous novels written in the United States of America in the twentieth century. With sales of more than 60 million copies, it has made Holden Caulfield famous to generations of readers and made a reluctant star of Jerome David Salinger.

*The Catcher in the Rye* is about the adventures of Hold-





en Caulfield. The story begins with Holden going to his history teacher to say goodbye to him after Holden is expelled from Pencey Prep School because of his academic failure. After the visit, Holden's roommate, Stradlater, asks him to write an essay for him, but the essay is not good. Later, Holden gets nervous because he knows that Stradlater meets his girlfriend, Jane, whom he gets used to date. Then Holden returns to New York City, but he could not go home because he does not like his parent to know that he is expelled. He rents a room in a hotel and sees many sexual scenes through the window. The next morning, he calls his ex-girlfriend and comes to the hotel, but she leaves angrily because he is rude with her. After that he sneaks to his apartment. His ten-year-old sister, Phoebe, gets upset when she knows that he has failed his classes. Holden sneaks away when his parents come back. Holden calls Antolini, his former English teacher, who allows him to sleep in his flat. He awakens to find Mr. Antolini stroking his forehead, which he interprets as a homosexual sign. Holden heads to Grand Central Station and spent the rest of the night on a bench. In the morning, he goes to his sister's school and tells her in a note that he will leave home. She brings his clothes, and he refuses to take her with him. The novel ends with Holden telling the readers that he is sick, and he will go to a new school in the fall.

### **Analysis of Maxims of Conversation in *The Catcher***

*The Catcher in the Rye* is a text that is replete with the vio-





lations of maxims of conversation. It is obvious through the language and its implications which Salinger uses. The language includes hypocrisy and false information.

### Maxim of Quantity

It was very ironical when Stradlater, Holden's roommate asks him to write an English essay for him because he is busy with a date. Holden fails his classes. Holden himself admits that it is so ironical: "I'm the one that's flunking out of the goddam place, and you're asking me to write you a goddam composition" (Salinger, 1951: 37). Here Stradlater comments in the form of a question: "Yeah, I know. The thing is, though, I'll be up the creek if I don't get it in. Be a buddy. Be a buddyroo. Okay?" (Salinger, 1951: 37). When Stradlater does not get a direct promise from Holden, he asks him again: "Listen. Are ya gonna write that composition for me? I have to know" (Salinger, 1951: 39). Holden answers him: "If I get the time, I will. If I don't, I won't" (Salinger, 1951: 39). Before Stradlater leaves, he asks Holden for the third time: "No kidding, now. Do that composition for me . . . Don't knock yourself out or anything, but just make it descriptive as hell. Okay? (Salinger, 1951: 44)" He violates the maxim of quantity by repeating himself more than once and asking the same question. It is a sign of social hypocrisy. Though Holden admits that he is good at nothing, Stradlater persists in his request.

Another sign of social hypocrisy is seen in the scene when





Dick Slagle hides his inexpensive suitcases under the bed when he roomed with Holden at Elkton Hills. On the contrary, Holden's suitcases are expensive. Slagle keeps saying that they are bourgeois. Holden says (Salinger, 1951: 141-42): "Everything I had was bourgeois as hell. Even my fountain pen was bourgeois. He borrowed it off me all the time, but it was bourgeois anyway." Slagle borrows Holden's fountain pen in order to show off. Moreover, Harold Bloom (2007: 34) writes that Slagle

seizes the opportunity to replace Holden's luggage in the closet and pass it off as his own. The memory of this incident really bothers Holden, and he is not sure why; he thinks it has something to do with inequality and hypocrisy, two things he hates.

In the same connection, Sarah Graham (2007: 52) states that Salinger is aware about the inequality and social hypocrisy in his novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. She adds: "A concrete example of this is Holden's description of his relationship with Dick Slagle, a friendship that was spoiled because the class barrier that separated the two boys could not be crossed."

Stradlater violates the maxim of quantity by repeating himself many times when he quarrels with Holden after he comes back from a date with Jane. He repeats this utterance, "shut up" several times on the same occasion (Salinger, 1951: 57-58):

### 1. "Shut up, now, Holden,"





2. “just shut up, now.”
3. “Now, shut up, Holden, God damn it--I’m warning ya,”
4. “If you don’t shut up, I’m gonna slam ya one.”
5. “If I letcha up, will you keep your mouth shut?”
6. “Holden. If I letcha up, willya keep your mouth shut?”
7. “Holden, God damn it, I’m warning you, now. For the last time. If you don’t keep your yap shut, I’m gonna-”

In a long conversation between Holden and his little sister when he comes back home and enters like a thief in order not to make his father see him, Phoebe repeats this sentence six times, “Daddy’s going to kill you.” By this repetition, phoebe unintentionally violates the maxim of quantity. Obviously enough, she repeats that sentence innocently. She does not know anything about hypocrisy.

There are also many examples where Holden flouts the maxim of quantity. He repeats this conditional clause twenty-four times throughout the novel: “If you want to know the truth.” Here are some samples (Salinger, 1951):

1. I have no wind, if you want to know the truth.
2. I don’t even think the bastard had a handkerchief, if you want to know the truth.
3. I’m a pacifist, if you want to know the truth.
4. She had quite a lot of sex appeal, too, if you really want to know.
5. If you want to know the truth, I’m a virgin.





6. Half the time, if you really want to know the truth, when I'm horsing around with a girl, I have a helluva lot of trouble just finding what I'm looking for, for God's sake, if you know what I mean.
7. I felt more depressed than sexy, if you want to know the truth.
8. They annoy the hell out of me, if you want to know the truth.
9. You give me a royal pain in the ass, if you want to know the truth.
10. The funny part is, I hardly even know James Castle, if you want to know the truth.
11. If you want to know the truth, I almost didn't lend him my sweater. Just because I didn't know him too well.
12. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth.

### Maxim of Quality

After Holden is expelled from Pencey School, he goes to his history teacher, Mr. Spencer, to say goodbye. Mrs. Spencer receives him warmly and he repays kindly. Holden talks to his teacher and after a while he decides to leave. And his excuse is this: "The thing is, though, I have to get going now. I have quite a bit of equipment at the gym I have to get to take home with me. I really do" (Salinger, 1951: 20). Before Holden goes, Mr. Spencer asks him if he would like a cup of hot chocolate so that Mrs. Spencer will make it for him. But Holden uses the same excuse: "I would, I really would, but the thing is, I have to get going. I have to go right







to the gym. Thanks, though. Thanks a lot, sir” (Salinger, 1951: 21). In fact, Holden will not go to the gym. It is a lie. By doing so, he flouts the maxim of quality. He does not tell the truth to his teacher. He himself admits that he is a liar:

I’M THE MOST TERRIFIC LIAR you ever saw in your life. It’s awful. If I’m on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I’m going, I’m liable to say I’m going to the opera. It’s terrible. So when I told old Spencer I had to go to the gym and get my equipment and stuff, that was a sheer lie. I don’t even keep my goddam equipment in the gym. (Salinger, 1951: 22)

The inappropriateness of Holden’s utterances is the result of the nature of the social life he lived in his childhood. In this concern, Leech (1980: 18) writes that the maxims are originated from the non-linguistic behavior. He adds that “These maxims are therefore in their most general form social maxims, which happen to impinge on language because language is one particularly important form of social behaviour.”

On the train to New York, an old woman sits next to Holden. She turns to be the mother of one of his classmates at Pencey School, Earnest Morrow. While they are talking with each other, Holden asks her if she cares for a cigarette, and he gives a light. Commenting on this, Yasuhiro Takeuchi (2008: 195) states, “Beyond reflecting hypocrisy or a lack of self-insight, Holden’s giving





someone a light in proximity to this story equates the novel itself . . . to the “dumb” (phony) sort of story that Holden describes.” As the conversation between them progresses, Holden tells her a bunch of lies. By doing so, he flouts the maxim of quality by providing Earnest Morrow’s mother by false information. The first lie is that he tells her that his name is Rudolf Schmidt when she asks him about his name in order to tell her son that she met his classmate on the train. The second lie is that he tells her that her son is modest and respected by everybody at school, and they try to nominate him to be president of the class but he refuses. Holden says “Well, a bunch of us wanted old Ernie to be president of the class. I mean he was the unanimous choice. I mean he was the only boy that could really handle the job” (Salinger, 1951: 74). In reality, her son is not a good boy, and he himself hates him. Holden adds:

But this other boy--Harry Fencer--was elected. And the reason he was elected, the simple and obvious reason, was because Ernie wouldn't let us nominate him. Because he's so darn shy and modest and all. He refused. . . Boy, he's really shy. You oughta make him try to get over that. (Salinger, 1951: 74)

Holden makes the mother believe that her boy is modest and so popular at the campus. Here he comments: “But I'll bet, after all the crap I shot, Mrs. Morrow'll keep thinking of him now as this very shy, modest guy that wouldn't let us nominate him for pres-





ident. She might. You can't tell" (Salinger, 1951: 74). The third lie is when she asks him why he leaves Pencey early: "I hope you weren't called home suddenly because of illness in the family" (Salinger, 1951: 75). Here he claims that he returns to New York to have a small tumor operation on the brain: "No, everybody's fine at home . . . It's me. I have to have this operation" (Salinger, 1951: 75).

At the night club in the hotel, Holden orders alcohol but the waiter refuses to serve him alcohol because he is still young. Then Holden starts to flirt three women who come from Seattle. He goes to their table and asks if one of them would like to dance with him. The blonde one agrees to dance with him. He talks to her, but she does not listen attentively to him. So he tells her that she is a very good conversationalist. She may think that he praises her, while ironically he ridicules her. When she asks him about his age, he gets annoyed and says to her: "I'm twelve, for Chrissake. I'm big for my age" (Salinger, 1951: 94). In fact, Holden is not twelve years old. He is seventeen years old. Here Holden flouts the maxim of quality by giving her false information about himself, and she knows that he does not tell her the truth, and he uses a ridicule language with her. That is why she angrily orders him: "Listen. I toleja about that. I don't like that type language . . . If you're gonna use that type language, I can go sit down with my girl friends, you know" (Salinger, 1951: 95). So he apologizes to her like a crazy





man. Later, when they ask him about his name, he tells them that his name is Jim Steele. Again, he flouts the maxim of quality by lying to them about his name.

When the prostitute, Sunny, enters Holden's room, he starts a conversation with her. During the conversation, he flouts the Maxim of quality three times by telling her false information about himself. First, he tells her that his name is Jim Steele. Second, he tells her that he is twenty-one years old. Third, he tells her that he has an operation on his clavichord in the spinal canal. She also flouts the maxim of quality when she claims that the price is ten dollars not five. Holden gives her only five dollars because this is the price that Maurice tells him to pay. Later on, Maurice and Sunny come to Holden's room to get the extra five dollars: "It's ten bucks, chief. I tole ya that. Ten bucks for a throw, fifteen bucks till noon. I tole ya that" (Salinger, 1951: 132). Here Holden responds: "You did not tell me that. You said five bucks a throw. You said fifteen bucks till noon, all right, but I distinctly heard you--" (Salinger, 1951: 132). But Maurice gets the money from him by force.

In short, Holden flouts the maxim of quality in different places throughout the novel. On the other hand, he tries to affirm that his contributions, in many places, are true. He, for example, declares that he tells the truth by using this conditional clause repeatedly: "If you want to know the truth."

### Maxim of Relation





When Stradlater asks Holden to write an English composition for him. Holden comments in the form of a question. Then Stradlater asks again. Holden answers that he will do it if he has time. After that his friend asks for the third time, but Holden does not answer, and instead he tells him to “Ask her if she still keeps all her kings in the back row” (Salinger, 1951: 44). In this case, Holden flouts the maxim of relation by ignoring Stradlater’s question and talking about something else as if he intends to say I do not like to write it for you.

At Penn station, Holden feels that he needs to call someone but he cannot think of anyone to call. Therefore, he takes a cab to Edmont Hotel. After a while he asks the driver: “Hey, do you mind turning around when you get a chance? I gave you the wrong address. I want to go back downtown” (Salinger, 1951: 78)? The driver tells him that he cannot turn around because it is only one-way. Later, Holden asks him about something else, which is not relevant to the course of the conversation. Holden, here, asks: “Hey, listen . . . You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you happen to know, by any chance” (Salinger, 1951: 78)? In this case, Holden flouts the maxim of relation. That is why the driver looks at him as if he looks to a madman. Then he enquires: “What’re ya tryna do, bud? . . . Kid me” (Salinger,





1951: 78)? Then Holden replies: “No--I was just interested, that’s all” (Salinger, 1951: 79)? The driver says nothing more until they arrive at Ninetieth Street; he asks him where to go.

Holden takes a cab to the nightclub in Greenwich Village. The cab’s driver’s name is Horwitz. Holden asks him the same question he asked to the former cab driver. It is about the ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South; he asks: “Well, you know the ducks that swim around in it? In the springtime and all? Do you happen to know where they go in the wintertime, by any chance” (Salinger, 1951: 107)? At the beginning, Horwitz feels that Holden is not clear in his speech. Then he gets anger and says: “How the hell should I know a stupid thing like that” (107)? Later on, he answers him that “The fish don’t go no place. They stay right where they are, the fish. Right in the goddam lake” (Salinger, 1951: 107). By this answer, Horwitz flouts the maxim of relation by talking about something which is irrelevant. Holden asks him about ducks, and he talks about fish. Therefore, Holden tells him that “The fish--that’s different. The fish is different. I’m talking about the ducks” (Salinger, 1951: 107). But Horwitz persists that he is relevant: “What’s different about it? Nothin’s different about it . . . It’s tougher for the fish, the winter and all, than it is for the ducks, for Chrissake. Use your head, for Chrissake” (Salinger, 1951: 107-108).

After Holden’s visit to his teacher of history, his roommate





Stradlater requests from him to write him a composition about a room, a house or something he lives in. When Stradlater comes back from his date, he asks Holden about the composition. He has gone through it, and finds that it is about a baseball glove. He got very angry. Here, Holden (Salinger, 1951: 53) coldly tells him, “You said it had to be descriptive. What the hell’s the difference if it’s about a baseball glove?” After that, Stradlater (Salinger, 1951: 53) furiously says,

You always do everything backasswards . . . No wonder you’re flunking the hell out of here [the school] . . . You don’t do one damn thing the way you’re supposed to. I mean it. Not one damn thing.

In this case, Holden violates the maxim of relation by writing his roommate a composition about something unrelated, which resulted in his anger.

### **Maxim of Manner**

When Holden comes back from the nightclub to the hotel, he takes the elevator to his room. The elevator boy, Maurice, asks him an ambiguous question: “Innarested in having a good time, fella? Or is it too late for you” (Salinger, 1951: 118)? At the beginning, Holden does not understand what he is trying to arrive at. So he asks him: “What do you mean” (Salinger, 1951: 118)? This means that the elevator boy flouts the maxim of manner by being ambiguous in his question. Then he tries to clarify himself,





but he becomes a little bit ambiguous: “Innarested in a little tail t’night” (Salinger, 1951: 118)? Though he does not tell him directly that he can send him a prostitute, Holden understands what he intends to get at. Holden agrees to pay her five dollars for a throw or fifteen dollars for a whole night. Then he asks him: “Hey, is she good-looking? . . . I don’t want any old bag” (Salinger, 1951: 119). He uses a metaphorical expression by saying ‘old bag’, meaning that he does not want an old whore nor a prostitute who is used too much by men. Therefore, Maurice reassures him: “No old bag. Don’t worry about it, chief” (Salinger, 1951: 119).

If we regard Holden’s return to his father’s house as a text, it can be seen as an obscure text. Therefore, Holden, here, violates the maxim of manner by being obscure when he enters his father’s house as a robber. About this scene, David Seed (2008: 78) comments, “Holden’s return to his parents’ apartment is ambiguous. It cannot function as a refuge, nevertheless it tugs him back; he pays a visit, but almost like a thief since he is only seen by his younger sister Phoebe.”

At the house, Holden’s sister Phoebe tells him that her father is going to kill him because he failed his subjects at the school. But Holden was not paying attention to her speech. Instead he tells her about the poem by Robert Burn: “if a body catches a body coning through the rye”; his sister corrects him the word catches by meet as it is mention in the original text. Then Holden explains how he







would like to be a catcher in the rye to save thousands of innocent little kids who play games in the rye. Holden goes on picturing this to his little sister:

What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. (Salinger, 1951: 224-25)

Here, Holden flouts the maxim of manner by being ambiguous while explaining, to his little sister, his desire to be a catcher in the rye. She says nothing for a long time because she understands nothing of what he says. That is to say, Holden's explanation is above her mind.

## Conclusion

The maxims of conversation play a very important role in making communication, among the participants in a conversation, successful. And violation of these maxims lead to ambiguity, misunderstanding, boringness, failure of communication, and lack of trust.

The four maxims of conversation are violated in different places throughout the novel. The maxim of quantity is violated in the novel through the existence of over-informativeness, which results in Holden's misleading and confusion. The maxim of relation is also violated. This reflects that Holden's world is irregular.





Similarly, the maxim of manner is flouted in the novel, and this violation results in ambiguity and disorder. This reflects that Holden lives in an ambiguous and disorderly world. The maxim of quality is the most flouted maxim. This reflects that Holden's world is false and hypocritical.

Concerning the most flouted maxim, the maxim of quality, there are many situations in which characters flouted it by making their contributions untrue. For example, Holden provides other characters by false information about himself and about others. That is to say, the lies and the ridiculous language Holden uses lead to building up his personality in a way that one can lack trust in his point of view. On the other hand, Holden uses the conditional clause "if you want to know the truth" in different places throughout the novel to affirm that his contributions are true. This conditional clause can be taken as a sign of his respect, in some cases, to the maxim of quality.

In brief, violations of the maxims of the conversation throughout the novel reflects that the world in which Holden lives is false, hypocritical, disorderly, ambiguous and irregular. A world that does not respect the principles and values of speech is a world that lacks moral values and falsely claiming high principles.





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