CHAPTER IV

VIOLATION OF THE CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS IN THE SELECTED PLAYS (II)
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4.1 Introduction

Grice’s theory of cooperative principle and the maxims, that are put forward to be followed while engaged in a conversation, are to be adhered if there would not be any breach of communication. But the adherence is not always direct which makes it possible that some utterances might seem irrelevant in spite of being totally relevant at a deeper level of thought given a context. The maxim of Quality and maxim of Quantity have been taken up for study in the previous chapter.

In the present chapter the other two categories of conversational maxims, namely, the maxim of Relation and the maxim of Manner are dealt with. The present chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the violation of the maxims of Relation and Manner. The selected data from the selected plays of Oscar Wilde would be analysed thoroughly to draw out newer interpretation of meanings.

4.2 Analysis of Violation of Maxim of Relation in the Selected Plays

According to the maxim of Relation, speakers should provide information that is relevant to the topic of conversation. The information must be related to the subject matter of their communication in some or the other way. Maxim of Relation states that the speaker should:

Be relevant.
According to Grice, ‘speaker thinks…that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively’ (Grice, in Cole and Morgan, 1975: 50) the meaning of an utterance. If the hearer could not work out, or grasp intuitively the meaning of an utterance with regard to its immediate context then the utterance becomes irrelevant.

4.2.1 Violation of Maxim of Relation in Lady Windermere’s Fan

Example 1

LORD DARLINGTON: Do you think then—of course I am only putting an imaginary instance—do you think that in the case of a young married couple, say about two years married, if the husband suddenly becomes the intimate friend of a woman of—well, more than doubtful character—is always calling upon her, lunching with her, and probably paying her bills—do you think that the wife should not console herself?

Act I, p. 16

Lord Darlington visits the house of Lady Windermere and comes to know that she is getting ready with her plan for her birthday party that evening. Lady Windermere is busy preparing and decorating the house for the party. She tells that her husband has given her a fan on her birthday as a present. The whole conversation centres round the theme of Lady Windermere’s birthday. In such a context Lord Darlington utters the above utterance.

Lord Darlington’s utterance above is not in relation to the immediate context of the conversation. He suddenly utters the above utterance to get the view of Lady Windermere about a man who would become ‘intimate
friend of a woman of…doubtful character’ in spite of his being married for ‘about two years’. The irrelevancy of his utterance to the immediate context of conversation is obvious from the fact that it ends suddenly as it started. Darlington’s intentions behind being irrelevant in his conversation could be traced to that fact that he wanted to inform her about her husband’s frequent visits to Mrs. Erlynne, and to make her feel the feelings that he has developed for her.

Example 2

LORD AUGUSTUS: Your wife has sent her a card?
LORD WINDERMER: Mrs. Erlynne has received a card.

*Act II, p. 32*

Lord Augustus comes to attend the birthday party of Lady Windermere. He is interested to have a talk with Lord Windermere, in fact he wants to know from him about Mrs. Erlynne as he knows that Lord Windermere has ‘seen a good deal of her’ since the last six months. Lord Augustus is confused about the character of Mrs. Erlynne. He asks Lord Windermere if he would introduce such a lady like Mrs. Erlynne to his wife. Lord Windermere informs him that Mrs. Erlynne is coming to the birthday party. Lord Augustus is surprised to hear about Mrs. Erlynne’s invitation to the party; he therefore wants to clarify if Lady Windermere has invited her.

The utterance above of Lord Windermere is not in relation to the interrogative utterance of Lord Augustus. Lord Augustus wants to know if Lady Windermere ‘has sent her (Mrs. Erlynne) a card’. The reply of Lord Windermere would have been either in the positive or in the negative which would have been in relation to the question of Lord Augustus. But, Lord Windermere’s reply is not in relation to the
immediate context of the conversation. He does not want to make it clear about who ‘has sent her a card’ so, in an attempt to avoid answering the question, he replies that Mrs. Erlynne has received a card which means that she would be coming to the party and that is the purpose of sending a card to anyone. He violates the maxim of relation in order to opt out from the situation demanding the true answer to the question of Lord Augustus. The irrelevancy of his utterance is obvious from the fact that Lord Augustus could not intuitively work out the answer that he wanted to have from him.

Example 3

MRS. ERLYNNE: How do you do, again, Lord Windermere? How charming your sweet wife looks! Quite a picture!

LORD WINDERMERE: It was terribly rash of you to come!

*Act II, p. 33-34*

Parker is announcing the names of the guests that come to the birthday party of Lady Windermere. Lord Windermere is waiting for the arrival of Mrs. Erlynne whom he has invited to the party against the will of Lady Windermere. Lady Windermere has threatened her husband about misbehaving and annoying Mrs. Erlynne. Lord Windermere wants to avoid any scene that would be created because of his wife’s behaviour with Mrs. Erlynne. As Parker announces the name of Mrs. Erlynne’s, ‘Lord Windermere starts’ (p. 33) and receives her into the party. She greets him and praises his wife’s charming look whom she met while entering the room.

The utterance of Lord Windermere above is not in relation to the question or to the appreciation of his wife’s charming look by Mrs. Erlynne. The obvious reply to a question like ‘how do you do?’ would
simply be in terms like ‘fine, thank you’, or stating the present condition biological, psychological, financial or social. And the accepted reply for any appreciation normally would amount into thanking the person who appreciates the thing or person. Lord Windermere’s response is neither of the kind. He rather tells her that her coming to the party ‘was terribly rash’. He has therefore violated the maxim of relation. His violation can be traced to the fact that he wants to provide hint to Mrs. Erlynne about any unbecoming situation and that his attempt to make her a party of society is not an easy one.

Example 4

LORD AUGUSTUS: You want to make her out a wicked woman.
   She is not!

CECIL GRAHAM: Oh! Wicked women bother one. Good women bore one. That is the only difference between them.

*Act III, p. 52*

Lady Windermere goes to Lord Darlington’s house with a view to accept his proposal, leaving a letter behind for her husband. Mrs. Erlynne happens to get the letter, and in order to save her (Lady Windermere) marriage she does not give it to Lord Windermere, and goes to Lord Darlington’s house to get her back to her (Lady Windermere) own home. As the two ladies are at Lord Darlington’s house, they hear voices outside of men. Among the men are Dumby, Lord Augustus, Cecil Graham, Lord Darlington, and Lord Windermere. They enter the house, both the ladies hide, and they talk about Mrs. Erlynne. Dumby comments on women of the time are ‘awfully commercial’ (p. 52) and that they ‘throw their caps over mills that can raise the wind for them’ (p. 52). Dumby refers to Mrs. Erlynne. Lord Augustus has fallen in love with
her, and so he did not want to hear anything against Mrs. Elynne. So he utters the above.

The utterance of Cecil Graham is an obvious example of violation of maxim of relation. Lord Augustus could not intuitively work out the meaning of his utterance as what is his opinion about Mrs. Erlynne. The utterance is not relevance to the immediate context of talk exchange. The conversation no doubt focuses on Mrs. Erlynne; Cecil would have been immediately relevant if he would have either replied in a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ or else would have simply apologized to Lord Augustus. But he did neither and uttered the above utterance which is nowhere relevant to the immediate context as the utterance works as nothing but to present the philosophy of Cecil Graham.

Example 5

LADY WINDERMERE: You will never speak against Mrs. Erlynne again, Arthur, will you?
LORD WINDERMERE: She is better than one thought her.

*Act IV, p. 69*

Mrs. Erlynne visits the house of Lord Windermere and informs Lady Windermere that she has come to bid good-bye as she is ‘going to live abroad again’ (p. 61). She asks for a photograph of Lady Windermere alongwith her son as a piece of memory. She and Lady Windermere has come to good terms after she has helped Lady Windermere out of the situation that she was in after leaving her husband’s house and going to Lord Darlington. Lord Windermere did not like the presence of Mrs. Erlynne in his house as he thinks that she ‘a worthless, vicious woman’ (p. 63). Mrs. Erlynne asks for the fan of Lady Windermere, as she has ‘taken a great fancy to’ (p. 68) the fan, and she (Lady Windermere)
happily gives it to her. Lord Windermere wants that Mrs. Erlynne should leave the house as early as possible, as he has not been told the whole truth of the incident, the night before, at Lord Darlington’s house. As Mrs. Erlynne leaves the house accompanied by Lord Augustus to the carriage, Lady Windermere tells her husband not to speak against Mrs. Erlynne anymore.

Lord Darlington instead of giving assurance about not speaking against Mrs. Erlynne or instead of rejecting the request of his wife, which would have been a normal utterance for him to make, utters the above utterance. He tells that Mrs. Erlynne ‘is better than one thought her’ which is not in relation to the immediate context of the act of communication, although it is an indirect affirmative utterance at a deeper level of interpretation. Lord Windermere’s utterance is a violation of the maxim of relation as the hearer, his wife, could not work out intuitively the meaning of his utterance which is obvious from the next dialogue in which she compares herself with Mrs. Erlynne.

4.2.2 Violation of Maxim of Relation in *The Importance Of Being Earnest*

Example 1

CHASUBLE: But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK: Oh yes.

MISS PRISM: People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

*Act II, p. 35*
Jack comes home ‘dressed in the deepest mourning’ (p. 34) and informs that his brother Earnest is dead. Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism are surprised to know about the sudden death of Earnest. Dr. Chasuble wants to know about the place of the interment, to which Jack informs that he (Earnest) ‘expressed a desire to be buried in Paris’ (p. 34). Dr. Chasuble informs him that his ‘sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion’ (p. 34) including christenings. Jack remembers of christening after the word being mentioned by Dr. Chasuble. He asks him if he is ‘continually christening’. Dr. Chasuble is surprised to know that Jack is asking him about christening. He asks him if he is interested in any particular infant, as he knows it well that there is no infant for whom Jack would think of christening. He asks him if his brother Earnest was not unmarried. Jack replies in the affirmative.

The utterance that Miss Prism utters above is neither a reply to any question nor she was asked about her view on Earnest. She has uttered the above to express her bitterness on the ‘people who live entirely for pleasure’. Her utterance is quite out of place in the conversational piece as it does not serve any immediate relation to further the act of communication. The question of Dr. Chasuble was directed to Jack and he has provided him with a very succinct answer. Miss Prism’s utterance therefore is a violation of the maxim of relation.

Example 2

JACK: How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can’t make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON: Well, I can’t eat muffins in an agitated manner.

The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should
always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

_Act II, p. 51_

Gwendolen and Cecily come to know the truth about the real name of Jack and Algernon. They also come to know from Jack that he has ‘no brother at all’. Both the girls get it clear that none of them are engaged to Earnest. They leave both the men into the garden and ‘retire into the house with scornful looks’ (p. 50). Algernon considers the situation as ‘a perfectly wonderful Bunbury’ (p. 50) whereas Jack is very serious thinking about the situation that he was in after the truth of his invented brother is revealed. While Jack and Algernon are engaged in conversation, in which Jack is very serious whereas Algernon has ‘not got the remotest idea’ (p. 50) about Jack’s being so serious, Algernon begins to eat muffins in a very calm manner. Jack considers Algernon’s attitude of calmly eating muffins, in such a serious situation, as a ‘perfectly heartless’ thing to do.

Algernon’s contribution to the process of communication in the dialogue above is not appropriate to the immediate purpose of conversation. He has violated the maxim of relation by not providing appropriate information sought by Jack. His utterance is simply an explanation on eating muffins or to say how to eat muffins, without referring to the situation that Jack was talking about. His utterance is irrelevant to the context of conversation as Jack could not intuitively work out any meaning out of the utterance. The non-relevance of Algernon’s utterance is also obvious from the next dialogue by Jack in which he clearly states that in his utterance above he meant that ‘it’s perfectly heartless (Algernon’s)...eating muffins at all, under the circumstances’ (p. 51).
Example 3

GWENDOLEN: But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY: Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN: Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY: Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian’s brother?

_Act III, p. 54_

Cecily and Gwendolen retire into the house, after knowing the fact that there is no person to be called Earnest and the real names of their lovers are Algernon and Jack respectively. They become very angry and retire into the house with scornful looks at their lovers. They were at the window, looking out into the garden, observing the actions of Jack and Algernon. Jack enters the house followed by Algernon, which the two girls see and decide not to speak first evident from the conversational piece above.

The utterances, that followed the decisions of Cecily and Gwendolen about not being the first to speak to Jack and Algernon, are in violation to the maxim of relation. The second utterances by Cecily and Gwendolen are not in relation to the immediate context of the dialogue. They decide for themselves that they would not be the first to speak to Jack and Algernon and they are quiet certain about their decision, but in the next dialogue that continues they break their decision and speak. The conversational piece taken as data for analysis is in contrast with the other two utterances by both Cecily and Gwendolen. Their second utterances are not in relation with their first utterances. And if somehow it is justified that their second utterances are relevant to the context of the
story, then immediately it is noticed that their previous (first) utterances above are not in relation to their utterances that followed.

Example 4

ALGERNON: I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: I beg your pardon?

CECILY: Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

_Act III, p. 57_

Jack and Algernon are successful in convincing Cecily and Gwendolen that they really love them and are ready to be christened as Earnest for their sake. As the two couples reconcile and fall into each other’s arm, they separate in alarm by the entry of Lady Bracknell. Lady Bracknell wants explanation of the situation from Gwendolen and Algernon. She asks Jack about the young lady whose hand was held by Algernon. Jack tells her that she is Cecily Cardew, his ward. As Jack introduced Cecily to Lady Bracknell, Algernon immediately informs her that he is ‘engaged to be married to Cecily’. The utterance of Algernon came as a surprise to Lady Bracknell and so in order to confirm what she heard was true begged his pardon.

The utterance of Cecily above is not in relation to the immediate context of the conversation. Lady Bracknell was informed by Algernon, and so her utterance was meant for Algernon, for which it was Algernon’s turn to speak or to repeat his declaration of being engaged to be married to Cecily. But he was interrupted by Cecily, his turn in the speech was taken by Cecily, who was not actually asked anything by Lady Bracknell. Cecily utterance is a mere repetition of what Algernon has
already declared. Cecily’s utterance is nothing but a deliberate violation of the maxim of relation, which was meant to provide the implicature that their (her and Algernon’s) decision is quite firm and they both agree to it.

Example 5

LADY BRACKNELL: The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.
ALGERNON: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.
CECILY: Thank you, Aunt Augusta.
LADY BRACKNELL: To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other’s character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

_Act III, p. 59_

When Lady Bracknell comes to know that Algernon and Cecily are engaged to be married, she was not ready to give her consent. But when she comes to know that Cecily ‘family solicitors are Messrs Markby, Markby, and Markby…a firm of the very highest position in their profession’ (p. 58) and that she has ‘about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds’ (p. 58); Lady Bracknell feels that Cecily is ‘a most attractive young lady’. After knowing about her family and her fortune, she is ready to give her consent for the marriage of Algernon and Cecily. She asserts that the marriage ‘had better take place quite soon’. Algernon and Cecily thank Lady Bracknell.

The second utterance of Lady Bracknell in which she frankly disagrees with long engagements is not in relation with the immediate context of conversation in which she was engaged. In the utterance she has violated
the maxim of relation by not being relevant to the topic of conversation, as her utterance is merely a presentation of her views on long engagement, which has nothing to do with the engagement of Algernon and Cecily as they both are ready for it and she has given her consent for the marriage.

Example 6

LADY BRACKNELL: It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE: I am a celibate, madam.

*Act III, p. 63*

Lady Bracknell agrees to the marriage of Algernon and Cecily Cardew and asks them to get married sooner. Jack objects to the marriage stating that he is the guardian of Cecily and he would not give his consent for the marriage unless Lady Bracknell would give her consent for his marriage with Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell did not approve of the proposal and she is ready to leave the place. As Lady Bracknell is about to leave the place, Dr Chasubal enters in the room informing Jack and Algernon that ‘everything is quite ready for the christenings’ (p. 62). He is then told that the idea of being christened has been dropped by both the gentlemen as that would be of not much practical value to the either of them. Dr. Chasuble tells that he would then go back as ‘Miss Prism has been waiting for (him) in the vestry’ ‘for the last hour and a half’ (p. 62). On hearing name of Miss Prism being mentioned by Dr. Chasuble, Lady Bracknell is interested in knowing more about her. She asks Dr. Chasuble about the position she holds at his household.

Dr. Chasuble, on being asked about the position of Miss Prism at his household, replies in severe tone that he is a celibate. The utterance of
Dr. Chasuble is an indirect rejection of Lady Bracknell’s question. The utterance is a declarative statement of his being a celibate which does not have a relation to the immediate context of the conversation. He would have directly mentioned that Miss Prism does not hold any position at his household. The answer to Lady Bracknell’s question is better provided by Jack in the continued dialogue. Dr. Chasuble deliberately violates the maxim of relation as his declaration of being a celibate is in severe tone, which indicates that the question would not have been put to him and objects to the question put to him.

4.2.3 Violation of Maxim of Relation in An Ideal Husband

Example 1


MRS. MARCHMONT: I come here to be educated.

*Act I, p. 1*

There are many guests present in the octagon room at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house in Grosvenor Square. Among the guests are Mrs. Marchmont and Lady Basildon. Mrs. Marchmont asks Lady Basildon if she is going to the Hartlocks’ party that night. Marchmont herself would be going to the party although she finds the parties at the Hartlocks’ to be tedious. Lady Basildon would also be attending the party. She tells that she never knew why she goes anywhere.

Mrs. Marchmont’s utterance above (‘I come here to be educated’) is an attempt to further the act of conversation. Apart from continuing the act of conversation the utterance of Mrs. Marchmont serves no other purpose as it is not in relation to the immediate context of the ongoing
conversation between her and Lady Basildon. The information that she tries to provide, through her utterance, to Lady Basildon, was not sought for. Hence the utterance is a violation of the maxim of relevance.

Example 2

CHILTERN: How can you say such a thing? Why, he rides in the Row at ten o’clock in the morning, goes to the Opera three times a week, changes his clothes at least five times a day, and dines out every night of the season. You don’t call that leading an idle life, do you?

LORD CAVERSHAM: You are a very charming young lady!

Act I, p. 2

At the party at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house, enters Lord Caversham, father of Lord Goring. He enquires about the arrival of his ‘good-for-nothing young son’ (p. 2), to Lady Chiltern, in the party. Miss Mabel Chiltern, sister of Sir Robert Chiltern, who is also present in the party, asks Lord Caversham the reason of calling his son ‘good-for-nothing’. He says that his son ‘leads such an idle life’ (p. 2). Miss Mabel describes the life of Lord Goring in the above dialogue, which is in support of Lord Goring not being idle. She asks him how he could call that kind of a life an idle life.

The utterance of Lord Caversham is not a reply to Miss Mabel’s question. He should have either uttered in the positive or in the negative. But instead of responding to her question, he praises the young lady, Miss Mabel. The praise of Miss Mabel by Lord Caversham seems here to be out of place as it is not related to the immediate context of the conversation between Miss Mabel and Lord Caversham. He has violated the maxim of relevance by being indirect in his utterance. He has used
indirect speech act (theory of Indirect Speech Act) to reply to her question, in which the direct speech act of praise performs the illocutionary act of irony on being very simple about her not having the practical knowledge of the world.

Example 3

MABEL CHILTERN: Oh, I think Lady Markby brought her. Why do you ask?

LORD GORING: I haven’t seen her for years, that is all.

*Act I, p. 8*

Lord Goring and Miss Mabel are engaged in a conversation in which they talk about the nature and habit of Lord Goring. Lord Goring, obviously, is in a non-serious mood as usual. They are in the party at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house. During their course of conversation, Lord Goring asks her, as she is the sister of Sir Robert Chiltern, about who has brought Mrs. Cheveley to the party. Miss Mabel tells him that it is Lady Markby who brought her there. But Miss Mabel is also interested in knowing the reason behind Lord Goring asking about Mrs. Cheveley.

Lord Goring’s reply above is not a direct reply stating any specific reason to Miss Mabel’s question. The utterance sounds to be irrelevant to the immediate context of conversation as no logical reason has been provided by Lord Goring. Mabel Chiltern could not intuitively grasp the meaning of the utterance of Lord Goring in relation to the immediate context of the conversation. The utterance therefore is a violation of the maxim of relation. The utterance being not in relation to the immediate context of conversation is also clear from the next dialogue by Mabel Chiltern when she utters ‘What an absurd reason!’ (p. 9).
Example 4

MABEL CHILTERN: What a horrid woman!

LORD GORING: You should go to bed, Miss Mabel.

*Act I, p. 19*

The scene is at the octagon room at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house. There are many guests present in the party at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house. Among the guests are- Mrs. Cheveley, Lord Goring, Lady Markby and others. Miss Mabel Chiltern, sister of Sir Robert Chiltern, is also present in the party. Mrs. Cheveley and Lady Chiltern are engaged in conversation in which they talk about Sir Robert and the Argentine Canal scheme in which Mrs. Cheveley wants to interest Sir Robert.

Lady Chiltern assures that she would not get the support of her husband; where as Mrs. Cheveley informs her that her meeting with Sir Robert ‘has been a great success’ (p. 18) because of a secret between her and Sir Robert. After Mrs. Cheveley leaves the party, Miss Mabel utters the above utterance.

The utterance above of Lord Goring in response to the exclamatory remark by Mabel Chiltern about Mrs. Cheveley is not in relation to the immediate context. The meaning of his utterance could not be intuitively grasped by Miss Mabel. The utterance, therefore, is an obvious violation of the maxim of relation. In response to Miss Mabel’s utterance, the utterance of Lord Goring should have also been focused on Mrs. Cheveley in the better interest of a successful communication. But, Lord tells her to ‘go to bed’ with the reason that he passes ‘on good advice’ (p. 19).
Example 5

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: How beautiful you look to-night, Gertrude!
LADY CHILTERN: Robert, it is not true, is it?

Act I, p. 20

The guests at the party at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house have gone, except Lord Goring. Lord Goring and Lady Chiltern discuss about the reason behind the arrival of Mrs. Cheveley at Sir Robert’s party. They are of the view that Mrs. Cheveley has chosen the wrong person to take interest in the ‘fraudulent scheme’ in which she is interested. Lord Goring takes the leave of Lady Chiltern and is about to leave the house when Sir Robert enters and requests him to wait a little. Lord Goring leaves as he has to go to the Hartlocks’. Sir Robert Chiltern and his wife, Lady Chiltern, are left alone. Sir Robert Chiltern appreciates the beauty of his wife.

The utterance above by Lady Chiltern, at the first instance, is not in relation to the appreciation of her beauty by her husband. As he appreciates, she should in normal situation of conversation thank her husband. But she questions him about the truth of the utterance. Her utterance is an obvious violation of the maxim of relation. The utterance is not in relation to the immediate context of conversation. She has uttered the above as she was talking about Mrs. Cheveley and the involvement of her husband in the Argentine Canal scheme. The irrelevance of her question to the immediate context of the conversation is clear from the continued utterances performed by her in which she asks him not to lend his support to the Argentine Canal scheme.
Example 6

LADY CHILTERN: You are not going, Robert?
SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: I have some letters to write, dear.

*Act II, p. 32*

At the morning-room of Sir Robert Chiltern, he and Lord Goring are engaged in a conversation. Sir Robert thanks Lord Goring for being his friend and giving him the strength to tell the truth to him. Sir Robert wishes that he could have been ‘able to tell the truth…to live the truth’ (p. 32). He wishes to soon see Lord Goring for further assistance to get rid of the situation created by Mrs. Cheveley. Lord Goring takes his leave and is about to leave the room, when Lady Chiltern enters and asks Sir Robert the above question.

The reply of Sir Robert Chiltern to the query of his wife is in indirect speech act. Instead of directly answering the question in affirmative or negative, he tells her that he has some letters to write. The utterance no doubt conveys the meaning that he is going to stay, but is not in relation to the immediate context of conversation. Lady Chiltern in order to work out the meaning intuitively has to work out on the various situations of the context of conversation and has to come to the conclusion that if Sir Robert is going to write letters then it is not practically possible for him to go (*competence of the hearer to work out intuitively*). The utterance is, therefore, a violation of the maxim of relation.

Example 7

LORD CAVERSHAM: Glad to hear it. Can’t stand draughts. No draughts at home.
Lord Goring is in the library of his house where he finds a letter in pink envelope which is from Lady Chiltern and in which she has written she is coming to him. Lord Goring is eagerly waiting for the arrival of Lady Chiltern. Lord Caversham, father of Lord Goring, arrives to the house of Lord Goring of which he (Lord Goring) is not happy at all. He does not want any visitor that day as Lady Chiltern is going to come, as a result of his psychological state; the arrival of his father is not welcomed. He, during his conversation with his father, replies in such a way as to sound very trivial.

In the conversational piece above, Lord Caversham is glad to hear from his son that the room in which he was then sitting has no draught. He then remarks that he could not stand draughts and states-‘no draughts at home’. Lord Goring’s reply to his father’s remarks above is an obscure contribution to the act of communication. The utterance of Lord Goring has no relation to the immediate context of conversation as it does not provide any logical meaning to it. The utterance is a violation of the maxim of relation. The meaninglessness of the utterance is clear from the next utterance of Lord Caversham when he says ‘Eh? Eh? Don’t understand what you mean’ (p. 47). Lord Goring, perhaps, uttered the above utterance to show disinterestedness to participate in the conversation as he was willing that his father should leave as early as possible, so that he would be free to give time to Lady Chiltern.

4.3 Analysis of Violation of Maxim of Manner in the Selected Plays

According to Grice (in Cole and Morgan (ed.), 1975: 46), the Maxim of Manner “is to be (understood) as relating not to what is said but, rather,
to HOW what is said is to be said” to which Grice includes “the supermaxim- ‘Be Perspicuous’ and the various (sub) maxims such as”:

a) Avoid obscurity of expression.
b) Avoid ambiguity.
c) Be brief.
d) Be orderly.

This maxim states that people should not use jargon, i.e. words or sentences that have more than one meaning, etc. They should be brief enough to give a chance to the other speaker to speak, and they should always present information in an orderly manner.

4.3.1 Violation of Maxim of Manner in Lady Windermere’s Fan

Example 1

LADY WINDERMERE: Oh, I can’t believe it!
DUCHESS OF BERWICK: But it’s quite true, my dear. The whole of London knows it. That is why I felt it was better to come and talk to you, and advise you to take Windermere away at once to Homburg or to Aix, where he’ll have something to amuse him, and where you can watch him all day long. I assure you, my dear, that on several occasions after I was first married, I had to pretend to be very ill, and was obliged to drink the most unpleasant mineral waters, merely to get Berwick out of town. He was so extremely susceptible. Though I am bound to say he never gave away any large sums of money to anybody. He is far too high-principled for that!

_Act I, p. 21_
Duchess of Berwick comes to visit Lady Windermere’s house. She wants to pass on the information to her that she has come to know from many people in London regarding her husband’s frequent visits to Mrs. Erlynne. She tells her that her husband ‘goes to see her continually and stops for hours at a time, and while he is there she is not at home to any one’ (p. 20). He also tells her that she has come to know that Mrs. Erlynne has ‘got a great deal of money out of somebody’ and ‘has a charming house in Mayfair’; and that she has got all the things ‘since she has known poor dear Windermere’ (p. 21). Lady Windermere is not ready to believe the words of the Duchess.

Duchess of Berwick, when sees that Lady Windermere is not going to believe what she has told her about her husband, tells her that what she has told is ‘quite true’. Her utterance (“But it’s quite true, my dear”) was sufficient for the Duchess to emphasise on the quality of information that she has given to her. But she goes on to violate the maxim of manner by not following the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. She tries to convince Lady Windermere about the validity of her information by way of giving example of her husband. She also suggests to her to take her husband out of town so that she ‘can watch him all day long’. Her utterance is a deliberate violation of the maxim of manner through which she provides the implicature that she should believe her words and should not have more than necessary trust on her husband. She no doubt by way of giving example of her husband also tries to mean that her husband is a ‘high-pricipled’ person in comparison to Lord Windermere.

Example 2

DUCHESS OF BERWICK: Come and bid good-bye to Lady Windermere, and thank her for your charming visit. And
by the way, I must thank you for sending a card to Mr. Hopper—he’s that rich young Australian people are taking such notice of just at present. His father made a great fortune by selling some kind of food in circular tins—most palatable, I believe—I fancy it is the thing the servants always refuse to eat. But the son is quite interesting. I think he’s attracted by dear Agatha’s clever talk. Of course, we should be very sorry to lose her, but I think that a mother who doesn’t part with a daughter every season has no real affection. We’re coming to-night, dear. And remember my advice, take the poor fellow out of town at once, it is the only thing to do. Good-bye, once more; come, Agatha.

*Act I, p. 22-23*

Duchess of Berwick, with her daughter, Agatha, visits the house of Lady Windermere to tell her about the frequent visits of her husband to Mrs. Erlynne. She, also, informs her that she has come to know that Mrs. Erlynne got a house since she has been visited by Lord Windermere. She receives an invitation from Lady Windermere to come to her birthday party that evening. She is about to leave the house, so asks her daughter to bid good-bye to Lady Windermere.

The Duchess is about the leave the house of Lady Windermere and her bidding good-bye was sufficient enough to part, but then she continues to talk about Mr. Hopper, whom Lady Windermere has also invited to the party. She praises Mr. Hopper and feels that he is attracted towards her daughter’s ‘clever talk’. She harbours the thought that her daughter would be married to Mr. Hopper. She, finally, once again, tells Lady Windermere to take her husband out of town. Her bidding good-bye to Lady Windermere is not brief at all. Her utterance goes against the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner as a result of which there occurs the
violation of the maxim of manner. She has violated the maxim of manner deliberately. Her utterance has the hint of the implicature of her thought of making a match between her daughter and Mr. Hopper, so that her daughter could get married to him. Her suggestion to Lady Windermere is also intended to have the same end with regard to her daughter and Mr. Hopper as she would sound to be friendly and caring to Lady Windermere through her suggestions.

Example 3

LORD WINDERMERE: I am afraid—if you will excuse me—I must join my wife.

LADY PLYMDALE: Oh, you mustn’t dream of such a thing. It’s most dangerous nowadays for a husband to pay any attention to his wife in public. It always makes people think that he beats her when they’re alone. The world has grown so suspicious of anything that looks like a happy married life. But I’ll tell you what it is at supper.  

*Act II, p. 32-33*

Lady Plymdale is among the many invited guests to the birthday party at Lord Windermere’s house. In the drawing room of Lord Windermere, Lady Plymdale approaches to Lord Windermere to ask him ‘something most particular’ (p. 32) which he wants to avoid as he is very sure that the question would be concerned with his visits to Mrs. Erlynne. He tells her that he could not talk to him as he must join his wife.

Lady Plymdale’s utterance above is a clear violation of the maxim of manner as the utterance goes against the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner which is not being brief. Lord Windermere is not ready to listen to her, but she goes on to say things that are not at all welcomed by
the listener. Lady Plmdale violates the maxim of manner deliberately with an intention to an implicature. Her utterance about people being suspicious about a husband who pays attention to his wife in public is an unnecessary act of speech in which she tries to warn him and also to hint about his relation with Mrs. Erlynne. But, it proves to be a futile utterance as she doesn’t wait for any reply from him and moves towards the door of the ball-room.

Example 4

DUMBY: What a mystery you are!
LADY PLYMDALE: I wish you were!
DUMBY: I am—to myself. I am the only person in the world I should like to know thoroughly; but I don’t see any chance of it just at present.

_Act II, p. 36_

Lady Plymdale and Mr. Dumby are at the party at Lady Windermere’s house. Lady Plymdale asks Mr. Dumby if he knows Mrs. Erlynne. He replies in the negative which is a lie. When she comes to know that he lied to her and in fact knows Mrs. Erlynne and has called ‘on her three times running’ (p. 36). Lady plymdale tells him that next time when he is going to visit her, she would like that he should take her husband with him to Mrs. Erlynne. Mr. Dumby could not understand what she meant as the other ladies tried that their husband’s should be kept away from her. Lady Plymdale explains that her husband ‘has been so attentive lately, that he has become a prefect nuisance…He’ll dance attendance upon her as long as she lets him, and won’t bother me’ (p. 36). On hearing the plan of Lady Plymdale Mr. Dumby expresses that he too is mystery, to which she replies that she wished if he could also have been mysterious.
The second utterance of Mr. Dumby is a violation of the maxim of manner as he replies to Lady Plymdale in ambiguous terms. His utterance is in non-compliance to the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. The meaning of his utterance is not clear or not understandable. He tells that he is mysterious in the sense that he could not understand himself and he is the only person in the world whom he would like to understand thoroughly. His violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate one which he does to provide the implicature that he is not taking Lady Plydale’s utterance seriously and wants to avoid the conversation, which is evident from the fact that after his utterance ‘they pass into the ball-room’ (p. 36).

Example 5

DUCTESS OF BERWICK: Dear Margaret, I’ve just been having such a delightful chat with Mrs. Erlynne. I am so sorry for what I said to you this afternoon about her. Of course, she must be all right if you invite her. A most attractive woman, and has such sensible views on life. Told me she entirely disapproved of people marrying more than once, so I feel quite safe about poor Augustus. Can’t imagine why people speak against her. It’s those horrid nieces of mine—the Saville girls—they’re always talking scandal.

*Act II, p. 39*

Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington are engaged in a conversation, at the birthday party of Lady Windermere. During the course of their conversation, Lord Darlington proposes to her and offers her his life. Lady Windermere wants time to think where as he demands the answer then and there ‘or not at all’. Lady Windermere rejects his proposal and leaves him heart-broken. Lord Darlington leaves the place stating that
they should never meet again. Then, enters Duchess of Berwick and starts her dialogue as above.

The Duchess of Berwick appears in front of Lady Windermere and all of a sudden starts praising Mrs. Erlynne and accounts that she is in fact a good lady. Her views about Mrs. Erlynne have changed after having ‘a delightful chat’ with her. She blames her nieces—the Saville girls—for always talking scandal. The utterance above of the Duchess is neither brief nor orderly. Her utterance goes against two sub-maxims of the maxim of manner, namely, the the third sub-maxim and the fourth sub-maxim which paves her way to the violation of the maxim. She has provided her changed views on Mrs. Erlynne along with the reason and also states that because of the Saville girls she believed in the scandal about Mrs. Erlynne. Her information is not brief, further she is actually not involved in conversation with Lady Windermere, she has suddenly appeared and provided the information and went away without getting any response from her. She deliberately violates the maxim of manner with an intention to provide an implicature that her opinion about Mrs. Erlynne has changed.

Example 6

LADY WINDERMERE: Are you going away, then, Mrs. Erlynne?
MRS. ERLYNNE: Yes; I am going to live abroad again. The English climate doesn’t suit me. My—heart is affected here, and that I don’t like. I prefer living in the south. London is too full of fogs and—and serious people, Lord Windermere. Whether the fogs produce the serious people or whether the serious people produce the fogs, I don’t
know, but the whole thing rather gets on my nerves, and so
I’m leaving this afternoon by the Club Train.

_Act IV, p. 61_

Lord Windermere and Lady Windermere at engaged in a conversation in
the morning room of their house. They talk about Mrs. Erlynne. Lord
Windermere has changed his view about Mrs. Erlynne and thinks that
‘she is bad-as bad as a woman can be’ (p. 60), whereas Lady
Windermere thinks that Mrs. Erlynne is not a bad woman.

Parker, their servant, brings in Lady Windermere’s fan ‘which she took
away by mistake last night’ (p. 60). Lady Windermere insists on seeing
her, as she has also mentioned in the letter with the fan that she wants to
see Lady Windermere. Mrs. Erlynne informs them that she came to bid
good-bye. Lady Windermere’s question above is to know if she is going
to leave England.

Mrs. Erlynne tells her that she is going to live abroad. The information
was sufficient to answer the question of Lady Windermere. But, then,
she goes on with her speech without being brief which is an obvious
violation of the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. She tells the
reason of leaving and her preference of living in the south. She even tells
that she could not tolerate being with ‘serious people’ of London and
therefore was going to leave London forever.

Her utterance is an obvious violation of maxim of manner as she is not
brief. She violates the rule of being brief under the influence of her
emotion when she is confronted with her daughter and knows that she
would not see her again, moreover she has not even informed her
daughter that she is her mother.
4.3.2 Violation of Maxim of Manner in *The Importance Of Being Earnest*

Example 1

JACK: My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven’s sake give me back my cigarette case.

*Act I, p. 11*

Jack visits Algernon’s flat in Half-Moon Street. There he comes to know that the cigarette case that he was searching and for which he was about to offer a large reward was with Algernon. Algernon found it left by Jack when he last came to dine with him. Algernon has read the inscription inside the cigarette case and wants to know whose case it is as from the inscription inside he is clear that the thing does not belong to Jack. The inscription says that it is for Jack whereas Jack has been known to Algernon as Earnest. Jack claims that the case is his and he is not Earnest but Jack. Algernon wants to know why Jack’s aunt ‘call herself little Cecily’ (p. 11).

Jack’s reply above is an obscure, which is against the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner, reply to Algernon’s question about knowing an aunt who is ‘little’. He, instead of telling the truth about the cigarette case and about his ward Cecily, tries to hide the fact and lies to Algernon. His utterance above is so obscure that it brings out no logical meaning when he says ‘some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall’. Again, the utterance is in violation of the third sub-maxim by not being a
succinct expression. The utterance therefore violates the maxim of manner. The violation of manner maxim is a quiet one as Jack wants to mislead Algernon regarding the identity and truth about his ward, Cecily.

Example 2

JACK: My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN: Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Earnest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

Act I, p. 19

Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen visit the house of Algernon. Algernon has already planned with Jack that he would provide him with ‘an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen’ (p. 14). As he gets the opportunity, he starts a conversation with Gwendolen and tells her that they should get married as he knows that she knows that he loves him and he too believes that she loves him. Gwendolen tells him that he has not yet proposed to her and the subject has not yet touched on, and urges him to propose to her although she assures him that she is going to accept his proposal. The way Jack proposes to her it is very obvious to her that he ‘had very little experience in how to propose’ (p. 19). Jack tells that he has never loved anyone, except her, so he has gained no experience in it.

The utterance of Gwendolen regarding the experience of proposing to someone is disorderly. She first tells him about proposing for practice, and then gives the example of her brother. She, then, all of a sudden
shifts the topic and starts praising his blue eyes and then asks him to look at her ‘just like that, especially when there are other people present’. Her utterance is a clear violation of maxim of manner as the utterance is not presented in an orderly manner to suit the process of communication. Her shifting of the emphasis from one topic to another without giving Jack a moment to reply to her query leaves her utterance to look as an expression which has no order of its own to present the sequence of thought. Her being disorderly in her utterance goes against the fourth sub-maxim of the manner maxim and makes it obvious that she has violated the maxim of manner. Her violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate one which gives rise to the implicature that her query about Jack having any experience in proposing is not an important part of the utterance and hence she does not even receive an answer from Jack.

Example 3

JACK: You don’t think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON: All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That’s his.

_Act I, p. 23-24_

When Jack was about to propose to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell comes in the room and objects to the proposal and even to the ‘semi-recumbent position’ before he could finish his proposal. She, then, goes on to interview Jack. She asks him about his personal life, income, and many other issues related to his family. She tells him that she and Lord Bracknell would never allow the marriage of Jack and Gwendolen. Jack’s impression about Lady Bracknell is not a good one; he considers her to be ‘a monster’. He tells Algernon that he had ‘never met such a
Gorgon’ (p. 23). He asks Algernon the above question seeking information about the chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother.

Algernon’s reply is a generalization of his own thought. He presents his philosophy by uttering the above utterance in which he talks of women and men in general without providing any specific information to Jack’s query. Whereas, Jack intends to have specific information considering the fact that Algernon would know better about the character of his aunt, Lady Bracknell and his cousin, Gwendolen. Algernon’s reply is obscure in nature and he has not clearly stated whether Gwendolen would become like her mother or not, rather he has made an obscure utterance by generalizing his philosophy about a woman becoming like her mother. Algernon has violated the maxim of manner. His violation of the maxim is a deliberate one as he violates the maxim to not be personally responsible in stating that Gwendolen might become like her mother and leaves Jack at the verge of making out meaning out of a generalized statement.

Moreover, the question by Jack is also a violation of the maxim of manner. Jack’s question is obscure in nature, although his concern expressed in the question is genuine. Jack goes against the second maxim of manner by being obscure in his interrogative expression to Algernon. His question is obscure considering the fact that no one could ever predict about someone’s change in character ‘in about a hundred and fifty years’. Jack violates the maxim deliberately which gives rise to the implicature that he is a little afraid of his relation with Gwendolen and his future with her if she becomes like her mother. The obscurity in the question is also gained from the common knowledge that it’s next to impossible for a person to live for ‘a hundred and fifty years.’
Example 4

ALGERNON: I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.
LANE: It never is, sir.

*Act I, p. 27*

After the interview of Jack by Lady Bracknell about his eligibility to be married to Gwendolen, Jack and Algernon become engaged in a conversation. During the conversation, Algernon expresses his interest in seeing Cecily, the ward of Jack, to which Jack objects. He wants that Algernon should never meet Cecily as ‘she is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen’ (p. 25). As they are engaged in their conversation, Gwendolen comes and wants to have some talk with Jack. From the conversation of Jack and Gwendolen, Algernon comes to know that Jack is not going back to the country till Monday next. Algernon then makes a plan to visit the house of Jack, in the country, as his (imaginary) brother Earnest, in order to see Cecily.

The dialogue above between Algernon and Lane is a violation of the maxim of manner. The violation occurs from the utterance of Algernon being ambiguous. Algernon’s fine day meant that he would meet Cecily the next day as he is going ‘bunburying’. His plan is to visit the house of Jack disguised as his brother Earnest. Lane is unable to get the meaning of Algernon’s utterance stating about the next day being a ‘fine day’. Lane could not make out the intended meaning of Algernon’s utterance as he has simply told him that he is going bunburying the next day, which is again ambiguous. Algernon uses the term bunburying for various purposes for which he would not like any one get a hint and he could easily ‘go down into the country whenever’ (p. 13) he chooses. Lane as a servant does not bother to make out the meaning of his master’s utterance and replies in a simple statement from the view point
of a servant’s life. Algernon’s violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate one as he does not want to discuss everything with his servant but at the same time he wants to pass on him the information that he would not available the next day. Moreover, his violation also is an expression of his happiness on the thought that he would be seeing Cecily.

Example 5

JACK: …What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON: Oh, I’m a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.

_Act I, p. 27_

Algernon comes to know from the conversation of Jack and Gwendolen that Jack would stay in town till Monday next. Algernon makes a plan to visit Jack’s house, in the country, as his invented brother Earnest. He is fascinated by the fact that he would be seeing Cecily, who, he thinks, is interested in Jack’s brother Earnest. He calls it Burburying and thinks that the next day would be a fine day for him. Jack enters the room and tells of Gwendolen being ‘a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl (he) ever cared for in (his) life’ (p. 27). This reminded Algernon of Cecily and he started laughing immoderately, and when asked by Jack the reason behind being so amused Algernon replied about ‘Burburying.’

The utterance above of Algernon is ambiguous. His reply to the question of Jack is not clear at all. He has not given a straight forward reason of his being amused at something; rather he said that he is anxious about poor Bunbury. The ambiguity in the meaning of the utterance comes from the fact that Bunbury is an ‘invented an invaluable permanent invalid’ (p. 13) friend of Algernon, invented for the reason that Algernon
might ‘be able to go down into the country whenever’ (p. 13) he chooses. Jack knows that for Algernon burying is always a different purpose with intention to avoid his family duties, and so the utterance could not be considered for its literal meaning. Algernon is amused thinking that Jack has come to the town as Earnest to see his (Algernon’s) cousin, Gwendolen, whereas he is planning to see Cecily, as the invented brother of Jack. The ambiguity involved in the utterance of Algernon makes it a violation of the maxim of manner. Algernon’s violation is an attempt to opt out from the situation as he is unwilling to reveal his true plan.

Example 6

CHASUBLE: Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK: My brother.

*Act II, p. 34*

In the garden at Manor house, Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism are engaged in a conversation when Jack enters ‘from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crepe hatband and black gloves’ (p. 34). The dressing and appearance of Jack surprises both Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble. They think that the ‘garb of woe’ predicts some ‘terrible calamity’ on his part.

The utterance above by Jack is a reply to Dr. Chasuble’s query to know the reason of Jack being dressed in the deepest mourning. The utterance is an obscure reply as it neither explains the reason of Jack being in the mourning dress nor does it explain any ‘terrible calamity’. His utterance gives rise to curiosity to the listener’s and demand further question. Jack has deliberately violated the maxim of manner by being obscure to generate the implicature that the reason behind his being ‘dressed in the
deepest mourning’ is related to his brother, as that would make it easier for him to directly state to them that his (invented) brother is dead. Jack’s utterance has gone against the first sub-maxim of manner. He is obscure in his reply so that his utterance would provide an implicature to Dr. Chasuble to put to him a direct question about his invented brother Earnest, and then he could be able to explain the reason of his deep mourning, which is false, with more confidence to mislead the listeners.

Example 7

ALGERNON: Do you really keep a diary? I’d give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY: Oh no. You see, it is simply a very young girl’s record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Earnest, don’t stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached ‘absolute perfection’. You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

Act II, p. 40

Algernon comes to the Manor house to see Cecily, with the false identity of being Earnest, Jack’s invented brother. Jack would not allow him to stay in the house and so asks him to leave the country as his ‘bunburying’ there would not be of great success. Algernon informs Cecily of his leaving the place as Jack has sent for the dog-cart. The parting is very painful for both Cecily and Algernon. During their conversation, Algernon tells Cecily that she is ‘in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection’ (p. 40). Cecily wants to copy his remarks into her diary. On hearing that she keeps a diary, Algernon shows his interest to have a look at it. He seeks her permission.
Cecily in the dialogue above utters- ‘Oh no’, which is sufficient enough to deny permission to Algernon to have a look at her diary. But she goes on to extend her dialogue and hence violates the third sub-maxim of manner by not being brief. By violating the maxim, she tries to explain that her diary is a ‘record of her own thoughts and impressions and consequently meant for publication’. Her violation of the manner maxim is to directly state that she would not like to cooperate with the request of Algernon, and hence her utterance is meant as an utterance to opt out. She violates by not being succinct in her utterance in order to make the point of discussion have a shift and that he would not request her further to have a look at her personal diary. She, then, asks him to go on so that she could record more of his remarks in her diary.

Example 8

ALGERNON: Oh, I don’t care about Jack. I don’t care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won’t you?

CECILY: You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

_Act II, p. 40-41_

Algernon has come to the Manor house to see Cecily with the fake identity of being Earnest, Jack’s invented brother. Jack does not like his stay at the house and order him to leave the place. Merriman has brought the dog-cart for him. Algernon decides not to leave the place till a week more. He tells Cecily that he does not care about Jack, and proposes to her to marry him. He is eager to know the reply of Cecily.
Cecily’s reply above is partly relevant whereas it is partly obscure. The first part of her utterance (‘You silly boy! Of course’) is enough as a reply to Algernon’s question about marrying him. But the utterance that states that she and Algernon ‘have been engaged for the last three months’ is an obscure expression as the meaning of it is not clear. Algernon has met her for the first time and so he is surprised that how could it be possible that he and Cecily are already engaged. On asking Cecily, he came to know that the engagement did happen in her imagination as she fell in love with Earnest, without even seeing him, just on the importance of the name ‘Earnest’. Cecily’s obscure utterance has created problem for Algernon to bring out the meaning as he was not even aware of the context of Cecily’s romantic imaginations towards the name ‘Earnest’. Cecily’s utterance is against the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner as she is obscure in her expression. The utterance is a violation of the maxim of manner which she deliberately violates to provide the implicature that she is deeply in love with the name ‘Earnest’.

Example 9

ALGERNON: You’ll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY: I don’t think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

Act II, p. 42

Algernon comes to Jack’s country place with an intention to see Cecily with the fake identity of Jack’s invented brother Earnest. Jack asks him to leave the house and forget about ‘bunburying’ there. Algernon falls in love with Cecily, and decides to stay for a week at Manor house. He
proposes to Cecily, and comes to know from her that in her romantic dreams and imaginations they are already engaged for the last three months. She also informs him that their engagement was once broken off. Algernon, on hearing about the engagement being broken off, asks her not to break off their engagement again.

The utterance of Cecily is ambiguous and could be taken in two parts for the convenience of analysis of the conversational maxim. The first part of the utterance (‘I don’t think I could break it off now that I have actually met you’) is a reply sufficient enough for Algernon’s indirect request to her. But Cecily adds to it that ‘there is the question of’ the name Earnest. The utterance referring to the name is a distinct violation of the maxim of manner as it is ambiguous in nature. The ambiguity of the utterance depends on the two different shades of meaning that each of the character means to understand.

For Cecily, the utterance (‘there is the question of your name’) means that she could not break off the engagement because she is particularly fascinated and in love with the name Earnest, so it is an act of assurance from her. Whereas, for Algernon the utterance does the job of creating doubt and makes him less confident about the bond of his engagement with Cecily.

The utterance acts as an indirect warning (theory of Indirect Speech Act) for Algernon as he knows that he has lied to Cecily about his name and whenever she would come to know the truth about his name she would surely break off her engagement with him. Cecily’s utterance goes against the second sub-maxim of the maxim of manner by being ambiguous for Algernon, as he could not workout the meaning of her utterance intuitively, and takes it as an indirect warning created out of his act of bunburying.
GWENDOLEN: The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as any one else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY: They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

*Act III, p. 54*

Cecily and Gwendolen come to know about the true name of the persons to whom they are engaged, after Gwendolen visits the Manor house. The secret of Earnest, brother of Jack, comes to light and the two ladies come to know that Jack has ‘no brother at all’ (p. 50). They become angry on their respective lovers and both of them retire into the house leaving the two lovers, Jack and Algernon, in the garden with muffins. Cecily and Gwendolen ‘are at the window, looking out into the garden’ to have a watch on their lovers so as to know what they are going to do. Gwendolen considers that as their two lovers have not followed their respective beloved it proves that ‘they have some sense of shame left in them’.

Cecily’s utterance above is a statement by her that is very obscure in meaning. The utterance does not produce any logical comparison between the two words, ‘muffins’ and ‘repentance’. Cecily tries to figure out that if they (Jack and Algernon) are eating muffins that mean to her that they are repenting on their act of telling lies to their respective beloveds. The obscurity of the utterance comes from the fact that Cecily is to eager to come to a favourable conclusion. Cecily’s violation of the first sub-maxim of manner is a deliberate act by her. She deliberately violates the maxim to produce the implicature that she is ready to forgive her lover for his act of lying to her and she wants to re-unite with him.
The obscurity of expression by Cecily in the utterance makes it an example of violation of the maxim of manner.

4.3.3 Violation of Maxim of Manner in *An Ideal Husband*

Example 1

LORD CAVERSHAM: Hum! Which is Goring? Beautiful idiot, or the other thing?

MABEL CHILTERN: I have been obliged for the present to put Lord Goring into a class quite by himself. But he is developing charmingly!

*Act I, p. 3*

Lord Caversham comes to the party of Sir Robert Chiltern where he meets Mabel Chiltern, sister of Sir Robert. Lord Caversham is engaged in conversation with Mabel Chiltern and talks about his son, Lord Goring. Miss Chiltern expresses her view of the London Society which she thinks is entirely composed of ‘beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics’ (p. 3). Lord Caversham is interested to know in which category she places her son.

The reply of Miss Mabel is in violation of the maxim of manner. She has violated the maxim of manner by not being straight forward about telling Lord Caversham in which category she has placed his son. She has not followed the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner and so her utterance has become obscure which leads to the violation of the maxim. She tells Lord Caversham that Lord Goring belongs to ‘a class quite by himself’ which she does not define and because of which Lord Caversham could not workout the meaning of her utterance intuitively. The obscurity of her utterance grows further when she tells him that Lord
Goring ‘is developing charmingly’ as that makes Lord Caversham confused as he could not understand whether her utterance has positive implication or a negative one. She wanted her utterance to produce an implicature that would have positive implication as she likes Lord Goring. Lord Caversham’s failure to understand the positive implication is evident from the next dialogue of his in which he asks her into what is Lord Goring developing.

Example 2

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: Good evening, Lady Markby! I hope you have brought Sir John with you?

LADY MARKBY: Oh! I have brought a much more charming person than Sir John. Sir John’s temper since he has taken seriously to politics has become quite unbearable. Really, now that the House of Commons is trying to become useful, it does a great deal of harm.

_Act I, p. 4-5_

Lady Markby comes to attend the musical party at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house. She comes along with Mrs. Cheveley. Sir Robert enters the party and meets Lady Markby. He was expecting Sir John to come with Lady Markby. He, therefore, questions her about Sir John.

The utterance that Lady Markby utters to provide, Sir Robert, the answer to his question violates the maxim of manner. She, instead of directly stating if Sir John has come with her or not, states in a roundabout way that she has ‘brought a much more charming person than Sir John’. Her violation of the maxim is because of the fact that she has not been brief in providing information to Sir Robert, which is against the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. Her violation is a deliberate one as her
utterance provides the implicature that Sir Robert should not worry about Sir John as he would find the new guest much more interesting than him. Lady Markby has not only, by way of violating manner maxim, presented Mrs. Cheveley as a charming person, but also has given the reason of Sir John’s not coming to the party with her.

Example 3

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: And what prizes did you get, Mrs. Cheveley?

MRS. CHEVELEY: My prizes came a little later on in life. I don’t think any of them were for good conduct. I forget!

*Act I, p. 5*

Sir Robert Chiltern is introduced to Mrs. Cheveley by Lady Markby in the party at his house. After being introduced to Sir Robert, Mrs. Cheveley informs him that she has found, after coming to the party, that she knew Lady Chiltern ‘already’ and that they were in school together. She also informs him that she has ‘distinct recollection of Lady Chiltern always getting the good conduct prize!’ (p. 5). After hearing about Lady Chiltern getting the good conduct prize, Sir Robert, in order to continue the act of communication asks her about the prizes that she got.

The utterance of Mrs. Cheveley above is a violation of the maxim of manner. She tells Sir Robert that the prizes that she got were not in her school days but those came later on in her life. The utterance of Mrs. Cheveley is an act of opting out or trying to avoid the question. She has been ambiguous in her utterance as she has not clearly stated what sort of prizes she was awarded in her life ‘later on’. Her utterance has the implicature that she should be asked for her award which would define her achievements and not her conduct. She rather wants that Sir Robert
should focus or ask questions about her awards and rewards after she left school, which should not be about good conduct as she has forgotten all about her school days awards that she could relate to good conduct.

Example 4

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: Well, at any rate, may I know if it is politics or pleasure?

MRS. CHEVELEY: Politics are my only pleasure. You see nowadays it is not fashionable to flirt till one is forty, or to be romantic till one is forty-five, so we poor women who are under thirty, or say we are, have nothing open to us but politics or philanthropy. And philanthropy seems to me to have become simply the refuge of people who wish to annoy their fellow-creatures. I prefer politics. I think they are more…becoming!

*Act I, p. 6*

Mrs. Cheveley and Sir Robert Chiltern are engaged in a conversation at Sir Robert’s house where she has come to attend a musical party given by Sir Robert and his wife. They talk on various topics that centre on the interests of Mrs. Cheveley. During the course of communication, Sir Robert wants to know from Mrs. Cheveley what she prefers politics or pleasure.

The reply of Mrs. Cheveley is not brief. She gives an unusually lengthy reply concluding to support her preference of politics. The first part of her utterance (‘Politics are my only pleasure’) is sufficient enough for her to state that she prefers politics. She states her preference politics by going against the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner and hence leads to the violation of the maxim. She goes on to state about the her
and the things to be done at her age, or by the woman of her age as for
the society ‘it is not fashionable to flirt till one is forty, or to be romantic
till one is forty-five’ and she is under thirty, so she prefer politics. Her
violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate one. She deliberately
uses lengthy utterance so that her utterance should provide Sir Robert
with the implicature about her interest and success in politics and nothing
else.

Example 5

    LORD GORING: May I ask are you staying in London long?
    MRS. CHEVELEY: That depends partly on the weather, partly on
the cooking, and partly on Sir Robert.

    Act I, p. 8

Lord Goring, Mrs. Cheveley and Sir Robert Chiltern are engaged in
conversation at the musical party given by Sir Robert. From the
conversation it becomes clear that Lord Goring and Mrs. Cheveley are
known to each other prior to their meeting at the musical party at the
Chilterns’. Lord Goring casually asks her about how long the duration of
her stay in London is going to continue.

Mrs. Cheveley is not a lady to provide a straight forward reply to any
question. Her utterance above is goes against the second sub-maxim of
the maxim of manner as her utterance is ambiguous. The ambiguity of
her utterance is visible from the fact that she instead of providing a direct
reply about the number of days she is going to stay in London; she
makes an ambiguous statement in which she gives three reasons on
which her stay in London would depend. The ambiguity of her utterance
did not provide any answer to Lord Goring. The violation of the maxim
of manner by her by being ambiguous is a deliberate one. Her ambiguous
utterance provides the implicature that her stay in London has something serious to do with Sir Robert Chiltern, and which she wants that Sir Robert should mark.

Example 6

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: I fear I have no advice to give you, Mrs. Cheveley, except to interest yourself in something less dangerous. The success of the Canal depends, of course, on the attitude of England, and I am going to lay the report of the Commissioners before the House tomorrow night.

MRS. CHEVELEY: That you must not do. In your own interests, Sir Robert, to say nothing of mine, you must not do that.

_Act I, p. 14_

Mrs. Cheveley is at the house of Sir Robert Chiltern where she has come to attend a musical party. But, her real intention to come to the house of Sir Robert was to ask for help or to better say to blackmail him in order to get his help, by hook or by crook, on the Argentine Canal Scheme. She informs him that she has invested largely on the Argentine Canal Scheme on the advice of Sir Robert’s friend Baron Arnheim. He tells that the Argentine Scheme is ‘a commonplace Stock Exchange swindle’ (p. 13) and adds that he would lay the report of the commissioners before the House the next night. On hearing that Sir Robert is going to lay the report about the Argentine Scheme, Mrs. Cheveley is afraid of her investments. She, therefore, utters the above.

She tells Sir Robert, in the utterance above, that he should not lay the report. She, further, tells that if he is going to lay the report then that would not be beneficial for him. Sir Robert could not make out what she
was trying to tell or what she meant. Her utterance is obscure as the meaning of it is not clear to the listener, which is evident from the next continued dialogue by Sir Robert ‘what do you mean?’ (p. 14). She has not obeyed the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner of not being obscure and so has violated the maxim of manner. The violation of the maxim of manner by Mrs. Cheveley is a deliberate act, as she deliberately does so to provide Sir Robert Chiltern with the implicature that if he would lay the report of the commissioners in the House then that might have serious consequences for him. Her utterance is an act of indirect warning (theory of Indirect Speech Act) as literally her utterance sounds like that of having the illocutionary force of suggestion.

Example 7

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: Wait a moment! What did you propose? You said that you would give me back my letter, didn’t you?

MRS. CHEVELEY: Yes. That is agreed. I will be in the Ladies’ Gallery to-morrow night at half-past eleven. If by that time – and you will have had heaps of opportunity – you have made an announcement to the House in the terms I wish, I shall hand you back your letter with the prettiest thanks, and the best, or at any rate the most suitable, compliment I can think of. I intend to play quite fairly with you. One should always play fairly … when one has the winning cards. The Baron taught me that …amongst other things.

_Act I, p. 16-17_

Mrs. Cheveley tries to persuade Sir Robert Chiltern to withdraw the report of the commissioners that he is going to lay before the House, regarding the Argentine scheme. Sir Robert tells her that it is impossible
to withdraw the report as ‘the success of the Canal depends...on the altitude of England’ (p.14). Mrs. Cheveley finds that she could not make Sir Robert to do what she wants. She, then, blackmails him by saying that if he would not do what she wants and according to her terms then she would make public the letter which has the secret of the origin of Sir Robert’s wealth. She proposes to him that if he does what she wants and according to her terms then she would give the letter back to him. On hearing the proposal of Mrs. Cheveley, Sir Robert utters the above questions.

The utterance of Mrs. Cheveley is in non-compliance with that of the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner which states that in communication one should be brief. The reply of Mrs. Cheveley, therefore, is a violation of maxim of manner as she goes on without being brief. She, after stating that the condition of giving the letter back to Sir Robert ‘is agreed’, which was a sufficient reply and also was in compliance with the maxim of manner, goes on stating when he will have to make the announcement and how she would be giving him the letter back. She unnecessarily states how she would compliment him and that she would be playing fairly as she has the ‘winning cards’. She has deliberately violated the maxim of manner in order to provide Sir Robert with the implicature that he should follow her instructions without having any other plan to follow which could go against her. Her violation is a show off of the expression and confidence that she has on being the winner by making Sir Robert agree to her terms to withdraw the report.

Example 8

MRS. CHEVELEY: Oh, pray don’t trouble, Lady Chiltern. I dare say I lost it at the Opera, before we came on here.
LADY MARKBY: Ah yes, I suppose it must have been at the Opera. The fact is, we all scramble and jostle so much nowadays that I wonder we have anything at all left on us at the end of an evening. I know myself that, when I am coming back from the Drawing Room, I always feel as if I hadn’t a shred on me, except a small shred of decent reputation, just enough to prevent the lower classes making painful observations through the windows of the carriage. The fact is that our Society is terribly over-populated. Really, someone should arrange a proper scheme of assisted emigration. It would do a great deal of good.

*Act II, p. 37*

Mrs. Cheveley and Lady Markby come to the house of Sir Robert in search of a diamond brooch which Mrs. Cheveley has lost. Mrs. Cheveley noticed that she has lost the diamond brooch when she ‘got back to Claridge’s’ (p. 37) and she thought that she might have dropped it at the house of the Chilterns’ when she visited them to attend the party given by Sir Robert Chiltern. Lady Chiltern tells her that she has not heard anything about the lost brooch, though she tells that she would ‘send for the butler and ask’ (p. 37). Mrs. Cheveley tells her not to trouble as she might have lost it at the Opera before coming to the party.

Lady Markby’s utterance (Ah yes, I suppose it must have been at the Opera.) is sufficient to mark the utterance of Mrs. Cheveley emphasizing that the brooch might have been lost at the Opera. But, Lady Markby’s utterance is not brief. Her utterance is against the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. She goes on with her talk and violates the maxim of manner. She talks of the habits of the ladies of the time who ‘scramble and jostle’ so much that many a times they are left with nothing on them ‘at the end of an evening.’ She gives the reason that all the ‘scramble and
jostle’ is because of the Society being ‘terribly over-populated’. Her violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate act which she uses to provide the listener with the implicature that to lose things is not a strange thing to react as the society is so ‘terribly over-populated’ that she too is afraid of not having a shred on her by which she boasts of the upper class society to which they belong.

Example 9

**LORD GORING:** No, father, I am not married.

**LORD CAVERSHAM:** Hum! That is what I have come to talk to you about, sir. You have got to get married, and at once. Why, when I was your age, sir, I had been an inconsolable widower for three months, and was already paying my addresses to your admirable mother. Damme, sir, it is your duty to get married. You can’t be always living for pleasure. Every man of position is married nowadays. Bachelors are not fashionable any more. They are a damaged lot. Too much is known about them. You must get a wife, sir. Look where your friend Robert Chiltern has got to by probity, hard work, and a sensible marriage with a good woman. Why don’t you imitate him, sir? Why don’t you take him for your model?

*Act III, p. 47-48*

Lord Goring is in his evening dress at the Library of his house. He asks Phipps, his butler, about any letter for him and then he picks up a pink letter from which he comes to know that Lady Chiltern his going to visit his house. While he is eagerly waiting for the arrival of Lady Chiltern, Lord Caversham arrives. He is not interested to entertain his father and wishes that his father should leave the house as early as possible. His
father, Lord Caversham, wants ‘to have a serious conversation with’ him (p. 47). The topic of his conversation with his son is about his (Lord Goring’s) marriage. When Lord Goring states the fact that he is not married, Lord Caversham speaks the above dialogue.

Lord Caversham’s dialogue above (‘Hum! That is what I have come to talk to you about, sir. You have got to get married, and at once’) is sufficient enough to tell his son to get married. But he goes on to produce a lengthy dialogue which is not at all brief, as required by the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner, and hence it leads Lord Caversham to violate the maxim of manner. The utterance of Lord Caversham contains unnecessary information which does not allow Lord Goring to speak. Lord Caversham’s violation of the maxim of manner is a deliberate one. He violates the maxim to provide the implicature to his son, Lord Goring, that he should take his words seriously. Lord Caversham violates the maxim to make his utterances an act of convincing his son or better to say to brainwash his son so that he could easily get ready to get married.

Example 10

   LORD CAVERSHAM: Do you always really understand what you say, sir?
   LORD GORING: Yes, father, if I listen attentively.

   Act III, p. 49

Lord Caversham visits the house of Lord Goring when he is expecting Lady Chiltern. Lord Goring is not happy with the arrival of his father as he thinks that ‘parents always appear at the wrong time’ (p. 47) and so is very non-cooperative in communication with his father. His reply to his father is quite obscure. During their conversation they talk on sympathy
and Lord Goring presents his view that ‘if there was less sympathy in the world there would be less trouble in the world’ (p. 49) to which Lord Caversham tells that it ‘is a paradox’ (p. 49). Lord Goring tells his father that ‘everybody one meets is a paradox nowadays’ (p. 49). After hearing a lot of utterances that sounds quite obscure in nature Lord Caversham utters the above to ask his son if he really understands what he says.

Lord Goring’s reply above (Yes, father, if I listen attentively) is again an utterance that is obscure. Obscurity of expression is a common tool used by Lord Goring in the play in order to avoid or to show disinterestedness in the act of communication. His utterance is against the first sub-maxim of the maxim of manner which leads him to violate the maxim. Lord Goring states that he could understand his sayings only when he listens to his own talks, which itself seems to be obscure and without much meaning. He deliberately violates the maxim of manner in order to provide his father with the implicature that he is not interested to continue the conversation with him. He utters it to avoid much communication with his father as he is expecting Lady Chiltern as a guest at that very moment.

Example 11

    LORD GORING: Phipps, there is a lady coming to see me this evening on particular business. Show her into the drawing-room when she arrives. You understand?

    PHIPPS: Yes, my lord.

    Act III, p.49

Lord Goring is in the Library of his house. He sees the letters for that day that he has received and finds that there is a pink envelope which contains a letter from Lady Chiltern which states that she is coming to
him. Lord Goring is eagerly waiting for her when his father, Lord Caversham, visits him and wants to have some serious talk on his (Lord Goring) getting married. Lord Goring is not interested to spend much time with his father. He informs Phipps, his butler, about the arrival of Lady Chiltern and if she arrives he should make her sit in the drawing-room.

The utterance of Lord Goring is a violation of the maxim of manner as it is ambiguous. He has gone against the second sub-maxim of the maxim of manner by producing an ambiguous utterance. The meaning of the utterance is not clear at the time when the utterance was made. It seems that the utterance has very specific meaning about the arrival of a lady and carries clear instructions from Lord Goring to Phipps to show her into the drawing-room, but his utterance becomes ambiguous if seen against the context of the progress of the plot. The utterance gets its ambiguity from the fact that Lord Goring has not mentioned any specific name of the lady to come, that is, he had not mentioned the name of Lady Chiltern, as a result when Mrs. Cheveley arrives to the house, Phipps thinks that the lady mentioned by his master is Mrs. Cheveley herself and he shows her into the drawing room, due to which a lot of complications crop up in the story. The utterance is ambiguous against the context of the progress of the story and the action performed by Phipps.

Example 12

LORD GORING: Has she never in her life done some folly – some indiscretion – that she should not forgive your sin?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN: My wife! Never! She does not know what weakness or temptation is. I am of clay like other men. She stands apart as good women do – pitiless in her
perfection – cold and stern and without mercy. But I love her, Arthur. We are childless, and I have no one else to love, no one else to love me. Perhaps if God had sent us children she might have been kinder to me. But God has given us a lonely house. And she has cut my heart in two. Don’t let us talk of it. I was brutal to her this evening. But I suppose when sinners talk to saints they are brutal always. I said to her things that were hideously true, on my side, from my stand-point, from the standpoint of men. But don’t let us talk of that.

*Act III, p. 53*

Lord Goring seems to be very busy waiting for Lady Chiltern to arrive at his house. His father even received a very cold welcome from him and he has asked his butler to tell anyone who comes to visit him that he was not at home. Sir Robert comes to the house of Lord Goring and finds him (Lord Goring) on the doorstep. Sir Robert has come to take the advice of his friend, Lord Goring, and informs him that his ‘life seems to have crumbled about’ him and he is ‘a ship without rudder in a night without a star’ (p. 53). His wife has found him out. He wants to have suggestions from Lord Goring. Lord Goring wants to know if she has ‘never in her life done some folly…that she should not forgive’ his sin.

The reply of Sir Robert is not brief. He goes on to talk without following the third sub-maxim of the maxim of manner. The first part of his utterance (‘My wife! Never!’) was sufficient enough to reply Lord Goring’s question and that would have been in accordance with the maxim of manner. But, he continues with his utterance and tells that his wife has never done any folly and ‘she does not know what weakness or temptation is’. Sir Robert, further, adds more about his wife and thus is not brief. He tells about the nature and character of his wife along with
the fact that he loves his wife very much. He even requests his friend not to talk much on the topic as his behavior to his wife was ‘brutal’ that evening. He regrets for his behaviour ‘from the standpoint of men’ to his wife. He deliberately violates the maxim of manner which bears the implicature that he is repenting for his behaviour towards his wife and he wants that Lord Goring should understand his situation and help him out of the situation and get rid of Mrs. Cheveley.

4.4 Conclusion

The present chapter contains an in-depth analysis of the selected data from the selected plays of Oscar Wilde. The analysis of the data’s done is against the background of the violation of the maxim of Relation and the maxim of Manner. The researcher has presented the violation of both the maxim, and she has drawn out the significance of the violations with a better insight into the utterances of the plays.