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**UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

**FACE AND POLITENESS IN THE DIALOGUES OF  
MOTHER AND DAUGHTER OF THE COMEDY SERIES  
*ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS***

**A Pro Gradu Thesis**

**by**

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DAUGHTER OF THE COMEDY SERIES *ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS*

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää miten kohteliaisuusteorian rikkominen vaikuttaa fiktiivisten henkilökuviin rakentumiseen. Materiaali koostuu komediasarjan *Todella upeeta* kuuden eri jakson käsikirjoituksista, jotka valittiin tutkielmaan satunnaisesti. Aineisto on tiukasti rajattu vain sellaisiin dialogeihin, joissa sekä äiti (Edina), että tytär (Saffron) ovat läsnä. Muiden henkilöhahmojen osuus on sekundääristä. Tutkielmassa vastataan kysymyksiin: 1) Poikkeavatko äiti ja tytär kommunikaatiossaan kohteliaisuusteorian säännöistä? 2) Minkä verran äiti ja tytär poikkeavat stereotyyppisistä rooleistaan? 3) Voidaanko aineistossa esiintyvää huumoria selittää odotettujen roolien rikkomisilla käyttäen apuna frame-teoriaa ja kohteliaisuusteorian, kasvojen ja Gricean maksimien rikkomisia. Lähtökohtana tutkimukselle ovat kohteliaisuusteoria ja kasvojen käsitys kommunikoinnissa tapahtuvien valintojen vaikuttimena. Pohjalla on myös oletus, että kasvojen rikkomisilla voidaan luoda epästereotyyppisiä henkilökuvia.

Tutkituissa dialogeissa päähenkilöt uhkaavat kommunikaatiokumppaneidensa kasvoja lähes saman verran. Tapa millä kasvoja uhataan riippuu keskustelun aiheesta ja siitä kehen uhka kohdistuu. Saffron esimerkiksi käyttää paljon suoraan uhkaavia puhunnoksia äidilleen, esimerkiksi kommentaessaan häntä. Edina ei näytä suuresti pahastuvan tyttärensä komentavasta sävystä. Kun Edina puolestaan puhuu suorasti, hän käyttää puhunnoksissaan lieventäviä ilmaisuja, jotka vähentävät puhunnosten uhkaavaa vaikutusta.

Kohteliaisuusteorian valossa tehdyn analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että sarjan äiti omaksuu pienemmän interpersonaalisen vallan kuin mitä hänen äitinä voisi odottaa omaksuvan. Tytär puolestaan on kahdesta roolihenkilöstä selvästi hallitsevampi. Voidaan jopa ymmärtää, että sarjan kahden henkilöhahmon, äidin ja tyttären, roolit ovat vaihtuneet siten, että tyttärellä on monia äidillisiä piirteitä ja äidillä on monia vastuuntuntottoman teini-ikäisen piirteitä.

Sekundäärisenä havaintona tutkielmassa nousi esiin se, että kasvojen uhkaamisella herätettiin huumoria. Päähenkilöiden epätavallisen suora kommunikointitapa toistensa kanssa on poikkeavaa, koska englantilaisessa kulttuurissa se ei ole sosiaalisesti hyväksyttyä tai odotettua. On mahdollista, että juuri odotustenvastaisuus, siis se, että roolihenkilöt käyttävät useasti suorinta mahdollista puhetapaa, ilahduttaa katsojia, jotka eivät itse voi omassa elämässään harjoittaa vastaavaa tyyliä.

Tutkielmassa ei kiinnitetä paljon huomiota siihen, miten tietyt puheenaiheet, joita monesti pidetään tabuina, vaikuttavat henkilökuviin luomiseen. Alkoholi, huumeet, kuolema, liikalihavuus, jne. ovat useasti äidin ja tyttären välisen kiistan aiheina. Tulevaisuudessa tabu-aiheiden vaikutusta Edinan ja Saffronin välisessä kommunikaatiossa ja konfliktitilanteiden kipinästä olisikin syytä tutkia. Puheenaiheen arkaluontoisuuden vaikutus kasvojen uhkaamisessa toisi uuden näkökulman myös tähän tutkielmaan.

Asiasanat: face-threat. face-boost. politeness. Gricean maxims. humour. interpersonal power.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In real life, when speaking with others we are often concerned with wanting to maintain the equilibrium in communication. Generally, we do not want to offend anyone, nor do we want to be offended. To avoid this we need to be considerate to the faces of our interlocutors, so that they could show the same consideration to our face. Fictional characters can function differently from real life people. Even when they use the same language as we do they may be allowed some liberties we do not enjoy in real life, liberties such as not take other characters' face wants into consideration.

This study attempts to examine the effects of violating the politeness principle (PP) in the dialogues between mother and daughter in the scripts of the comedy series *Absolutely Fabulous (Ab Fab)*. The *Ab Fab* television series consists of three seasons (18 episodes altogether). However, due to the unavailability of published scripts for the third season, the selected data will be drawn only from the first and second seasons. In the present study six episodes out of the twelve available ones will be analysed. The episodes were picked arbitrarily from the first and second season episodes. Two episodes, *Fashion* and *Fat*, were taken from the first season scripts. Four episodes, *Death*, *Morocco*, *Poor* and *Birth*, came from the second season scripts. An analysis of all twelve available episodes seemed to be an impossible task due to the restricted length of this study.

There exist certain stereotypical characteristics generally applied to mothers and daughters. These include expectations as to how parents and children should communicate. In *Ab Fab* Edina and Saffron behave contrary to expectations. I am interested in examining the depiction of the two characters and to discover if an analysis of face-threat and face-boost reveal something of the relationship between the mother and daughter.

The central concept in the present study is that of face, a term which refers to a person's public self-image and is primarily used to account for the linguistic choices people make in social encounters. The face of an individual can be threatened, either by himself or by an interlocutor, through the use of face-threatening acts, or enhanced, through face-boosting acts. It is

generally understood in politeness research that every communicative event constitutes a threat to the participants' faces. As a consequence we are expected as communicators to attempt to maintain the faces of both our interlocutor and of our own. In some cases, despite our best efforts, events may turn into conflict situations.

I am more concerned about discovering how violations of face contribute to the creation of non-stereotypical images of mother and daughter, and through that to the creation of humour than I am in discovering the full array of potential outcomes these violations. In addition to exploring how violations serve to create the images of mother and daughter, I will use a relatively little known concept, face-boosting act, to examine turns of speech that do not constitute to any apparent face threat to the participants' faces.

'Framing' is another central concept that will be used to explain how potential conflict situations may be viewed as humorous. By using characters who violate the politeness principle by means of intricate linguistic devices, the author of *Ab Fab* gives the fictional mother and daughter characteristics and behavioural patterns that would be considered out of the ordinary in real life situation. In other words, the characters function differently from the expected frame of how mothers and daughters are expected to behave and talk.

The terms 'script' and 'series' will be used interchangeably when referring to the data. Also, the terms 'speaker' (S) and 'hearer' (H) will be employed, bearing in mind that the roles of participants in communication are not static. Speaker easily adopts the role of hearer and vice versa. In the context it will be apparent whose face is violated and who is doing the violating, if any violations to face do occur.

The study will proceed from reviewing the most pivotal area of this study, that of politeness research. This will provide the core of the theory with which the data will be explored. Then, we will get on to the notion of framing in communication and to reviewing research in family discourse, relevant to the present study. After these the study continues by discussing reactions to conflict situations to understand the difference in behaviour between the fictional characters and people in real life. Finally, before moving into

examining the data, in the light of the literature discussed in the theory, a closer look is paid to defining humour.

## 2 FACE AND POLITENESS - THEORY AND RESEARCH

The notion of politeness is viewed as a pragmatic, rule-governed aspect of speech that is firmly established in the basic human need to maintain relationships and to avoid conflicts (Lakoff 1973, 1975; Leech 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987). It has been contrasted with other pragmatic systems and also integrated with them, especially with Gricean (1975) conversational logic. Leech (1983) points out that in one sense the politeness principle has a higher regulative function than even the Cooperative Principle. If the social equilibrium — chiefly maintained by employing politeness — is not sustained, the channel of communication is likely to break down, at least to the extent that cooperation can no longer be assumed. The standard argument claims that if communication is supportive, and threats to face<sup>1</sup>, both to one's own and the hearer's, are avoided, the speakers maintain smooth relations (Lakoff 1989:102). A broad discourse analytic approach on politeness has shown that the institutional and situational contexts delimit the strategies and options available for the participants of an extended speech event where politeness functions in a complex manner (Piiirainen-Marsh 1995:31). In the current research on politeness the focus is on how politeness behaviour is determined through the discourse organisation and the global situational frame. In a communication event, politeness can be seen to motivate certain types of responses, and also to explain the structural variation these responses have (Brown and Levinson 1987:38).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory has probably been the most influential work on politeness to-date. They rely heavily on Goffman's (1972) concept of face and face work and also on the Gricean (1975) Cooperative Principle. Various definitions have been suggested to cover the politeness framework. Leech (1977:19) defines politeness as "strategic conflict

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<sup>1</sup> For closer definition of face see ch. 2.1 below.

avoidance". Lakoff (1989) strives to determine politeness through Brown and Yule's (1983) two discourse types; transactional and interactional. Transactional has the purpose of communicating information, and interactional discourse means the sustaining of interaction. Lakoff (1989:102) believes, then, that the more interactional the discourse is, the more there is need for politeness conventions.

Politeness, as a concept, can be said to be somewhat elusive. It has been suggested that the reason why the concept might be difficult to define is cultural idiosyncratic variation, and because it is impossible to detach the language of politeness from the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer (Koike 1989:188). Ferguson (1976:138) for instance defines politeness formulas in terms of 'interpersonal rituals'. For Lakoff (1975:53) politeness is displayed in both linguistic and non-linguistic forms. The essence of Lakoff's view on politeness is that a person is polite when he<sup>2</sup> says the *socially correct thing* (italics mine). In this way she, indirectly, attaches the concept of politeness to the social rules and norms of a particular society in which politeness formulas are being used. Held (1989:182) believes that "goal directed flattery, reduced truth value and ritualization" are all fundamental areas of politeness. Fraser's (1975:13) notion of politeness is more hearer based. He considers the phenomenon to be attached to an utterance where the speaker, in the hearer's view, has not exceeded any rights or failed to fulfil any obligations. Adegbija (1989:58) continues along the same lines as Fraser, defining politeness as residing within the point of view of the hearer. He believes polite communication to be something unobtrusive to the hearer.

Avoidance of strategic conflict seems to be one of the most important functions of politeness (Leech 1977:19). Lakoff (1989) seems to consider conflict avoidance the element in conversation that assures smooth dialogue. The use of politeness in discourse minimises the risk of confrontation. It may be that the use of politeness minimises the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, or it can minimise the effect of the perceived threat of confrontation (Bayraktaroglu 1991:11). Politeness is also used to

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<sup>2</sup> In this study the pronoun issue of *he* or *she*, *him* or *her*, *s/he* etc. has been resolved by using *he/his/him* where ever the agent is unknown and the discussion is on a general level.

reaffirm and strengthen relationships (Lakoff 1973:298) and to show consideration to other people (Kochman 1984:204).

Politeness research has concentrated primarily on dyadic conversation. In dyadic conversation all participants, the number of whom does not normally exceed that of a small group, take approximately equal turns on the floor. The same perspective will also be taken in the present study where the focus will be on the discourse between two intimates, mother and daughter - thus, the focus will be on dyadic communication. It might be added that in this study the discourse is also assumed to be reciprocal, i.e. all actors of a speech event are expected to be able to perform the same kinds of verbal activities which, in turn, can be expected to be understood the same way. Lakoff calls the paradigm case of dyadic reciprocal discourse "ordinary conversation" (OC) (Lakoff 1989:102). She also considers OC to be the form of conversation people use most and also the formula they learn first. Although fictional, the data of this study can be categorised as being "ordinary conversation" in that it is both dyadic and reciprocal.

It has been suggested that the use of politeness principle is expected in communication and its absence is easily marked (Lakoff 1989:102). As will be shown, the violation of the principle is easily detected in the present study. These violations often lead to conflict situations which can normally be avoided by employing the politeness principle.

In a speech event the speaker will have two concerns when he speaks. On the one hand he will want to defend his own face and on the other hand he will want to protect the hearer's (H's) face. Goffman (1972:319) calls the first concern "ego-oriented" and the second "alter-oriented."

Politeness is needed to assure the employment of smooth and unimpaired communication. We tend to employ different politeness devices depending on with whom we are dealing with and in what situation. People seen as superior frequently receive more polite behaviour than those inferior to us on a social scale. We would address a doctor with more polite forms of language than we would a beggar on the street. On the other hand, we might be more polite to the beggar than we would to our friend in refusing their request for money because we do not know the beggar. Similarly we would probably employ more deference when addressing our parents than we would when



talking to our siblings. Familiarity with our interlocutors affects the politeness level. The third factor that influences us is how we rank the act we are performing on a scale of social imposition. The more imposing or face threatening the act we perform (or are about to perform) is, more polite we are likely to be, and the more face redress we are likely to engage in. (Brown 1980:115.) Figure 1. below shows five strategies Brown and Levinson (1987) believe we choose from when delivering an FTA. The more threatening we perceive the face-threatening act we are about to perform to be, the more indirect strategy we are likely to choose in delivering it. Thus, in the case of a severe FTA, we would probably employ the fifth strategy: "Don't do the FTA".

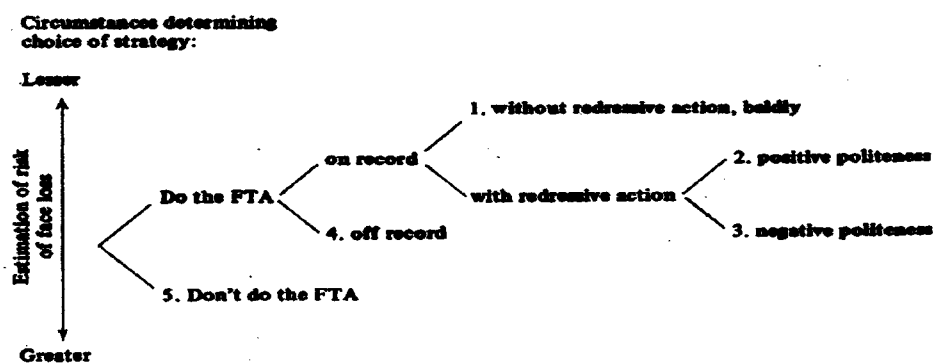


Figure 1. Strategies for doing FTAs. (Brown and Levinson 1987:60.)

## 2.1 Concept of face in politeness framework

Thus far we have been concerned with how to define the concept of politeness on a more general level. Now, we need to consider how politeness is actually manifested in communication. Essential to the PP is the concept of face, which derives from the English folk term often related to the idea of humiliation or embarrassment when one 'loses face'. It is also a term Erving Goffman used in his work in 1967 to mean something that is always emotionally invested in communication, something that one can enhance, maintain, or even lose when

interacting. In other words it is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61).

Every participant of an interactive event constantly attends to his interlocutors' and his own face. On the basis of the mutual vulnerability of face it is assumed that every rational member cooperates in interaction. The employment of PP is, then, expected and violation easily noticed. To maintain one's own face it is essential that one tends to that of one's interlocutor. Failing to do so is likely to invite retaliation on the part of the hearer, which ultimately damages one's own face. It is, then, self-beneficial to respect the interlocutors' faces (Brown and Levinson 1987:4-6, 61.). According to Goffman (1971) respecting each other's face leads to the maintenance of social order. He claims that to be a successful communicator one should be sensitive to one's own personal space without, however, expanding into others' space (Goffman 1971:42).

The concept of face is dual in nature. It is divided into positive face (PF) and negative face (NF). PF contains the self-image any member has of himself. It also includes the desire of wanting at least one, or more, of the members to share the same wants he has. These wants are called 'face wants'. NF, on the other hand, is related to a person's wish to have freedom of action. Since every individual has both PF and NF, it means that both the speaker's and the hearer's PF and NF need to be attended to in communication. This has led to the formulation of a four-way grid by Brown and Levinson:

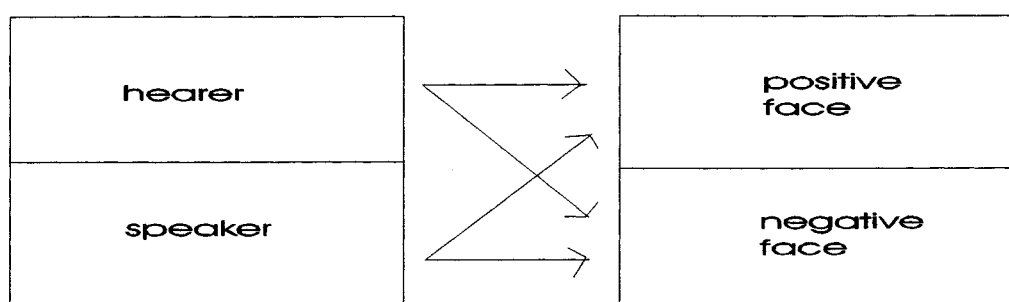


Figure 2. The four-way grid of face wants. (Brown and Levinson 1987:65-68.)

Even when PF and NF are opposite to one another, the first dealing with sociability and the second with aloofness, it does not follow that when something does not satisfy either the hearer's or the speaker's positive

face-wants this something is automatically satisfactory to the negative face-wants. For instance, when the speaker accuses the hearer, the accusation violates the positive face wants of the hearer, but it does not satisfy the hearer's negative face wants. The acts that are in compliance with the positive face-wants seem to be connected more with established social attributes, whereas the negative face-wants seem to be connected with impositions. They, therefore, belong to different categories. (Bayraktaroglu 1991.)

Nwoye (1992:313) suggests that the concept of face be further sub-classified into "individual face" and "group face". He considers individual face as an interlocutor's desire to look after his personal needs and to elevate his public self-image above that of others. Group face refers to the individual desire to conform with the culturally expected norms of behaviour. In the present study all definitions of face, PF, NF, individual and group face are valuable in making analysis. Even though the dual face of PF and NF receives more attention in the present analysis, it is useful to bear in mind the individual/group face distinction.

It has been claimed that all individuals basically have the same wants (Bayraktaroglu 1991). In interaction, one makes an effort to satisfy the interlocutor's face, while ensuring that this action does not clash with one's own interests. Goffman (1971) claims that as long as a member of a speech event is respectful of his interlocutors' rights as well as of his own rights, social order can be maintained. He states that it is important that the interlocutors be aware of the boundaries of their personal space. This is illustrated by the use of a bar at the supermarket checkout counters to separate one shopper's items from the next (Goffman 1971:42). This visualises the boundaries we experience in every day communication.

The inviolability of face is considered to be of great importance. There may be several reasons why a person may want to maintain his face in interaction. He may be quite attached to the value on which his face has been established. It could be that he enjoys the effects and perhaps even the power his face has given him. Also, he may need his face to achieve higher social esteem. These are only some suggestions as to why face is important and they show in how many ways we benefit from sustaining our faces. Other benefits

do exist but there is no point listing them here, since a comprehensive account would be impossible.

We establish our face time and time again before other individuals (Bayraktaroglu 1991:6). Every time we meet a person for the first time we engage in establishing an image of ourselves. When relationships with others continue, the face that has already been presented and established will be maintained and improved, or at least this is what we attempt to do, sometimes failing of course. It is generally agreed that first impressions are of great importance. The forming of an impression takes place during the time when we attempt to give a favourable image of ourselves to a newly acquired acquaintance. Similarly, first impressions are considered hard to change. This seems to allude to the amount of work we need to do to sustain and improve the face we have encouraged others to develop of us.

Having established his own face, an individual in any speech event usually works at developing and maintaining it. While one participant of a speech event is absorbed in doing this the other participants have similar considerations toward themselves. Goffman (1971) views these considerations the reason why participants work on the understanding that each will respect the other's face. This is why people are ready, for instance, to turn a blind eye to a blunder and pretend they did not even notice a potential damage to face. They are even prepared to disagree when an individual decides to do injustice to himself. This enables a participant of a speech event to self-depreciate himself in assurance that the other participants will not take his word seriously, and that they will contribute to his face developing better than he himself is allowed to do (Bayraktaroglu 1991:8). Often an individual downgrades himself in the belief that other members of a speech event will 'caress' his face by stating that he is wrong in doing so. When there is an understanding that the other participants will maintain and develop one's image for one it is a shock to the individual if his self-depreciating is taken at face value and no face reparation is done. This example of going against the norm, is used as one means to create humour in the data as will be pointed out in the analysis (see e.g. p. 55 below).

As one reads the scripts of *Ab Fab* for the first time, the image of the characters is established. The further we are drawn into the reading the

more we notice that the characters, even though they are family members, try to maintain a certain image of themselves. They often violate the image the other character tries to maintain, thus hurting each other's faces. In the scripts, violations of the characters' faces, both PF and NF, are presumably used by the author to 1) show a violation of the stereotypes of mother and daughter, and 2) to give rise to a humorous reaction in the readers of *Ab Fab*. The intensity of some violations of face, and through this infringements on face wants, in *Ab Fab* would probably be considered dangerous in real family discourse. They might even lead to break-up of relations. It can be argued that by violating one's interlocutors' rights, and occasionally one's own rights, the characters are made to lose control over the social order predominant in most speech events (Goffman 1971). Through the violations of the characters' face wants the author invites alternative interpretations of the speech events. In the case of *Ab Fab* the reader is lead to interpret the transgression of PP to have a playful, entertaining aspect. After all *Ab Fab* is labelled as comedy.

### 2.1.1 Damaging face

Acts that go against individuals' face wants intrinsically threaten face. These acts are called face-threatening acts (FTAs). In the cases where damage is done, the FTA maker — often the speaker, though not exclusively — tends to keep the face-threat to a minimum or tries to repair face after the FTA has already been made (Bayraktaroglu 1991:6). Usually damage to face, or at least responsibility for the FTA, is removed by employing the off-record strategy, which Brown and Levinson (1987:74) call the "maximum insurance policy". This is, however, not always the case. Sometimes off-record strategies are interpreted as being insincere and therefore in some situations may result in conflict. Often, and especially if participants are close in social distance, challenging questions such as "What do you mean by that?" are heard in connection to off-record strategies.

More often than not, face-threatening does not happen in a single speech act. Offence for instance can be carried in many different speech acts across turns of speech. When off-record strategies are applied, the meaning of

the message is left to be negotiated between the speaker and the hearer. This, in turn, is affected by the expectations the participants have of the speech event itself and of each other. The participants jointly determine in deciding what degree of politeness will be employed (Lakoff 1989:103). When expectations clash, the format that is seen, by all participants, as the most salient type for the discourse will win. Also, when determining if an utterance is polite, the framework of pragmatic context or situation has to be taken into consideration (Adegbija 1989:57). It would, therefore, be impossible to even attempt to evaluate an individual utterance without the context. Even if the context is known, we will tend to relate the situations to our own frames of reference — our own experience of the world — which determine how we perceive the messages sent in a speech event (Goffman 1974).

When an FTA is made, the participants may feel there to be a crack in the equilibrium of the speech event. This is difficult to overlook and therefore the disequilibrium easily leads to giving the threat direct attention. Frequently the participants try to correct the effects the FTA has made. In the act of offending, for instance, the target of the offence easily ends up defending his face and also, often, repaying the speaker that made the FTA. Offence, then, may lead to counter-offence which, in turn, may lead to an apology and with that restore the equilibrium of the speech even; but it can also it lead to a further offence by the initial speaker and start a conflict between the participants. Bayraktaroglu (1991:13) believes that the concept of ‘interactional imbalance’, originally suggested by Goffman (1972), explains face-work more adequately on a larger scale. The broader approach embraces the FTA-based approach that is much narrower in its view when accounting for polite conversation.

### 2.1.2 Face repair

Face can be attended to before the FTA has taken place. Reparation is also possible during the FTA and after the FTA has been done. Participants of a speech event often favour the avoidance technique of staying away from potentially face damaging situations and places (Bayraktaroglu 1991:7). To do this one usually wants to avoid dangerous company or topic of conversation, or

one simply gets out of the situation in time if a threat is likely to occur. People feel the need to be included in the groups they interact in. If one's attempt to communicate with others is not successful, it leads to anxiety about oneself (Turner 1988). To deal with the anxiety one tends to delimit one's interaction with people to those who are similar to oneself.

Sometimes avoiding a face-threat is not possible however. In those situations the individual whose face has been damaged may merely exhibit poise to convey to others that the face-threat was not as serious as it may have sounded. "Keeping one's chin up" seems to be one way to avoid damage to face. At least then the damage may be less severe. Adopting such behaviour, even when it is meant to suppress any signs of embarrassment, may end up being interpreted as something "cocky". It may be that the other members of the speech event start viewing the individual as arrogant or even shameless, not caring about the damage that was done to his face.

Keeping away from a potentially dangerous situation may be posited to be safer than adopting ignorance strategies. When 'staying clear' of dangerous situations is not possible, as it often is not, the second best thing is to make sure that face is attended to before, during and after uttering the face-threatening act. Goffman (1971) suggests that interlocutors monitor any FTAs made on themselves or on others in the context. If FTAs are not prevented, the assumed interactional balance that existed in the communication needs to be put back into force at the earliest possible time (see equilibrium and disequilibrium in interaction on p. 11 of this study).

Goffman (1971) is aware of politeness functioning both before and after the damage to face occurs. Brown and Levinson (1987) fill the gap Goffman has in his framework by including the time when the face-threatening act is being committed during the speech event. Although both face-threatening acts and face-boosting acts are important to the correct evaluation of a speech event, in the present study we will concentrate on FTAs for the simple reason that they seem to need more work before, during and after the message is sent than FBAs would seem to need.

Every day we find ourselves in situations, some more serious than others, where we may unintentionally, or even intentionally, offend someone. Offence often occurs when we violate social norms (e.g. passing

wind during a speech), but it can also arise because we have failed to live up to the expectations of the offended individual (e.g. forgetting to congratulate someone on his birthday). (Fraser 1981:259.) Goffman (1971:109) suggests that in such situations S should engage in restorative work to recover face. He believes that this changes the impact of the FTA that follows, if no face repair is done following the act. The remedial work is considered, in essence, to change the otherwise offensive act into more acceptable.

Apologising is one of the acts most frequently used as remedial practice after the FTA has been done. One can also tend to H's face prior of making the FTA. Often an apology, or a presentation of excuses is offered in this situation. In this way S conveys the message that he is aware that what he is about to say/do may offend H's face in some respect (more on apologising see Fraser 1981). Asking for a permission to violate some aspect of H's face is also in common use ("Could I ask you a question?"). Often the request for permission is directed to H's negative face. I aim to discover whether there is some remedial practice employed in the present data, since especially with strong FTAs one would expect remedial work.

## 2.2 Face-threatening acts

The infringements that occur during any interaction are called face-threatening acts (FTAs). Any act that goes against the face wants of H or S is intrinsically face-threatening. FTAs are acts that threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's positive or negative face (see Figure 2 on page 7 for the four-way grid of face wants). FTAs can occur both verbally and non-verbally. They do not have to be exclusively expressed in one act, or utterance; they can be spread across many. Because of this Brown and Levinson (1987:233) suggest that it might be more appropriate to call them face-threatening intentions. In the present study, however, the use of the term FTA will be employed.

Provided that one does not intend to threaten the other's face on purpose, common sense will dictate that the impact of an FTA should be softened. The more threatening an act is considered by S the more care he will take in its execution. Brown and Levinson (1987) devised five categories of politeness strategies that one can use to soften the impact of an FTA. These



offer an increasing degree of security in proportion to the increasing degree of risk that one is taking in doing the FTA (See Figure 1 on p. 6).

We have to bear in mind that although the speaker usually assumes the more conspicuous role in a speech event, it is not invariably the speaker who does the face-threatening. This is important to take into account when analysing any discourse. The hearer also may threaten S's face, for example, by ignoring a question S has asked him. The speaker or the hearer may also violate his own face. For example if the S or H loses control over their body, for instance belches; he does damage to his own face. To be more specific, he makes an FTA that directly damages his PF (Brown and Levinson 1987:68). Any loss of bodily control is considered to be an FTA against the face wants of the person losing bodily control, whether it be S or H.

As an example of those FTAs that threaten the speaker's negative face Brown and Levinson (1987:67, 210) propose "expressing thanks" where S puts himself on record as acknowledging a debt. He humbles his own face before the person he thanks (Brown and Levinson 1987:67). Edmondson (1981:279) considers it socially acceptable to "gush" in the act of thanking. With this he means that it is acceptable to employ over-expressions and superlatives such as "I am most grateful..." and "Thanks awfully". Another example of an act that threatens S's NF would be the case of giving an unwilling promise. If S pledges himself to a future act even when he does not want to he damages his own NF and, furthermore, if the unwillingness becomes apparent to H, FTA is also made on H's PF. Here we notice that it is not always unambiguously one FTA made by a single act. Any act can simultaneously perform a multitude of FTAs on different participants' faces (Brown and Levinson 1987:67).

Examples of acts that are potentially threatening to H's negative face are for instance those acts that potentially indicate that S does not intend to avoid hampering H's freedom of action. Orders are a good example. When S gives an order to H, he indicates that he wants the other either to do or refrain from doing something. This impedes H's freedom from imposition. It impinges on H's NF. Suggestions and advice do the same thing. By suggesting something S indicates that he thinks that H should do some act.

H's positive face is threatened when for instance the speaker indicates that he does not want the same wants as the hearer does. This can be done in a number of ways by ignoring H's feelings and desires: by any expression of disapproval or show of contempt, or by giving negative evaluation of some aspect of H's PF.

As mentioned above, S can violate his own PF, for instance through loss of control over his body. Also, any confessions or acts displaying guilt or responsibility, contradicting oneself or accepting a complement would hurt S's own face. When accepting a compliment, one may feel constrained to minimise the object of H's compliment. We often hear a woman saying to another for example "What a lovely dress you have!" and the other replying "Oh, this old thing," feeling the need to downplay the object of the compliment. Apologising is another FTA done on S's own PF. By apologising, S admits having done something regrettable and hurts his own face to some degree.

It is assumed that the mutual sensitivity of face tends to make the participants at least minimise the face threat they cause to their hearers if not to avoid making an FTA altogether. When a threat is minimised three things are taken into consideration, namely 1) the desire to communicate the content of an FTA, 2) the state of urgency in the given context, and 3) the desire to sustain H's face to any degree (Brown and Levinson 1987:60). It is claimed that unless the degree of urgency surpasses the desire to maintain H's face, S tends to minimise the FTA he makes in the speech event, at least to some degree. This would explain why in a state of emergency people tend to communicate the essential propositions of their message without applying face redress. Take for example a person who does not know how to swim and has dipped his boat and is now floundering in the water and attracting attention to the emergency by shouting "Help!" The passers-by will recognise this as an urgent call for assistance. Should the drowning man use forms of redress in his cries for help, the sense of urgency would be lost.

There is an overlap in the classification of the face-threatening acts. Some acts threaten both the positive and the negative face. Threats, for instance, threaten both sides of the face. Requests for personal information can be equally threatening to NF and to PF. Likewise, an act may equally

simultaneously threaten the faces of S and H, as is the case with e.g. reluctantly made promises (see above p. 14).

There are five strategies to do an FTA that Brown and Levinson (1987) use in their politeness framework. One of them, which covers the complete avoidance of making an FTA is the fifth strategy, "Don't do the FTA" (Brown and Levinson 1987:60). This means that S avoids altogether any situation that could put him in a position where he would make a face-threatening act. In other words silence or retreat from the speech event are employed. Brown and Levinson (1987:72) believe that this strategy does not have any linguistic materialisation.

Despite there being no overt verbal manifestation of the strategy being employed, it may still have an effect on the speech event. Take for example an argument between two people. If one person leaves the room where the argument is taking place, he can be said to be employing the 5<sup>th</sup> strategy. The leave-taking can easily be taken by the person left in the room as a sign of unconcern and may well be damaging to his positive face. The action is therefore taken as an FTA, even when there is no linguistic realisation of FTA. Thus, unlike Brown and Levinson, I will not be disregarding the fifth strategy, regardless of its not employing any verbal communication. Depending on the context, the fifth strategy can be an even stronger FTA than any of the other four strategies.

The four remaining strategies consist of three on-record strategies: 1) doing FTA baldly on-record, 2) doing FTA with positive politeness, 3) doing FTA with negative politeness, and one off-record strategy: 4) doing FTA off-record. As a generalisation it can be said that the greater the fear of loss of face, the higher the number of the strategy employed. Therefore, if there is hardly any fear involved, S is likely to choose the bald on-record strategy and, if there is high risk of losing face S is very likely to use the off-record strategy. (To see a figure representation of the strategies see Figure 1 on page 6 above.)

The bald on-record strategy has the least concern for face. It means that an act delivered with the bald on-record strategy is clearly an imposition, taken to be an imposition, and not to be mistaken as anything else. It is only undertaken when there is only little or no risk of loss of face.

When S has gone on-record, it should be easy for the other participants of the speech event to detect the intention behind the strategy employed. In other words the message has only one "unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur (Brown and Levinson 1987:69)." For instance "I will go to church tomorrow" unambiguously states the speaker's intention as to what he is going to do the following day. Whether it is meant as a promise or a threat is another issue, the core of the message still remains the same.

The bald-on-record strategy is frequently used when minimal or no redress is required on the hearer's face. This is especially common when the power distance is in favour of the speaker. "Bring the car in front" can be said to a butler by an English lord, for he has more relative power than his servant. If the lord was to say "Would you, by any chance, be able to bring the car in front of the house" it could easily lead to an interpretation by the servant that he may have failed his lord on some previous occasion, and is now being reprimanded at the same time as he is getting a warning how not to behave this time. Again, the context is of utmost importance in drawing conclusions as to what exactly is meant by a request, for instance. If we were to witness the request by the lord, without any idea of what preceded the request, we might think it extraordinarily polite of the lord to take his servant's face wants into consideration. At the same time we might think it odd that a man in that position would go to the trouble of presenting a simple order/request with such an elaborate formula. This, in turn, might lead us to think that there is more to the speech event than meets the eye.<sup>3</sup>

We would not expect the butler in the above example to use a bald on-record strategy in requests. Similarly, a child, for example, does not ordinarily authorise a parent to do something (Fraser 1990:233). It is not expected that if a child does not want to hear what a parent says that he would say "Shut up!" to his parent. In a situation when a parent is tired of listening to his child it would seem more acceptable to hear the same order. This is not to say that it would be seen upon favourably even then, but in terms of the parent having higher power status it is seen more allowable.

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<sup>3</sup> The film *Remains of the Day*, featuring Anthony Hopkins as the butler, Mr Stevens, inspired me to think up this example of the lord and the butler.

Bald-on-record, then, as a strategy deals with face-threatening acts in the most "direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible (Brown and Levinson 1987:69)." This is possible when there is no fear of retaliation from the hearer. If an FTA is done without redress, it is usually done on someone who the speaker does not think will retaliate. This is often possible only when, as said above, the speaker is in a more powerful position; but it is also possible when acts give only a minimal threat to H's face — when no retaliation is to be expected. It is also possible that when the participants of a speech event are close in social distance, even when the power relation between them is unequal (as would be the case with mother and daughter) that bald-on-record is used without the fear of retaliation.

It cannot be overlooked that in some cases, when the strategy is used, the speaker wishes to be intentionally rude. Normally this can be carried out by the socially acceptable acts of joking and teasing, although this is not always the case. Some individuals may wish to exhibit rudeness for the specific purpose of offending their interlocutor's face. In these situations it would seem that either there is no fear of retaliation, or the person who makes the FTA baldly-on-record does not feel he is going to lose anything, even if the other party were to take offence. Therefore, the FTA maker is either higher up on the social scale, or feels neither dependent on, or indebted to the receiver of the FTA. It cannot be overlooked that he may also be too incensed to care about anyone's face. Bald-on-record can be used to deliberately offend the hearer, but it is not the only politeness strategy with which this effect can be achieved. Provided the circumstances are right, any of the five strategies may be used to offend. (Blum-Kulka 1990.)

In the present data there is abundant use made of the bald-on-record strategy. One of my aims in the present study is to give tentative suggestions what the function of the bald-on-record strategy is in the data. Also attention will be paid to the possible explanations as to why the author of the data uses this particular strategy more abundantly than expected in mother-daughter interaction.

Positive and negative politeness are also on-record, but they show more concern for face. Positive politeness (PoP) addresses H's PF, i.e. his desire to be approved of by others. The general nature of PoP is asserting

common ground for both S and H. In essence, it can be seen as an assertion of some similarities between interlocutors. When participants of a speech event share the same background, the weight of the imposition is usually reduced. PoP is directed more to the general nature of the relationship between interlocutors. It is more concerned with a person's face than negative politeness (NP). Whatever the FTA in question is, it does not receive as much attention in PoP strategy as it does in NP strategy. (Brown and Levinson 1987:18.) On the other hand PoP, as a strategy, does not employ as much face redress as does NP. By face redress Brown and Levinson mean that S 'gives face' to the hearer. In other words, S tries to compensate any damage to the face he may have caused in doing an act A by making it clear that no FTA was intended or wanted. Both PoP and NP do employ such redress with different realisations depending on which face, negative or positive, the FTA is directed to. (Negative politeness will be dealt with more closely starting on p. 21.)

Positive politeness is directed to H's positive face in that S indicates he shares at least some of H's wants. S can, for instance, make it clear to H that he considers him to belong in the same group as himself. In this way H's positive face is complimented at least to some degree and he is made to feel that he shares some important characteristics with S (Brown and Levinson 1987:70). Although group similarities, according to Gudykunst (1994:218), seem to have a much more intense influence on the communication of relationship development in the early stages and not so much on the communication once you know your interlocutor, it still does not mean that group differences would not create problems in intimate relationships. For even in close relationships misunderstandings may arise due to group differences. This can happen especially in marital relationships, but also between parents and children.

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) formula the characters of the present study, being mother and daughter in the modern Western world, would be classified as having a close social distance. Despite their apparent closeness the characters of the present data seem to have misunderstandings, or sheer unwillingness to understand each other. I shall attempt to discuss this in more detail in the analysis and the discussion of the present study.

When using PoP strategies, one is always on record. This "allows S to satisfy a wide range" of H's constant desires (Brown and Levinson 1987:73). When the speaker displays the same wants H has on H's PF he is using the positive politeness strategy. Wants, in themselves, can be both material (wanting a ticket to a concert) or non-material (wanting one's friend to think a television programme as amusing as you do).

When PoP strategies are used, they frequently create a sense of unity between separate entities. Take for example the latter of the two examples above; if I enjoy a programme and laugh because I find it funny, I probably want to share with someone the feeling that the programme is good. Then, provided that there are 5 strangers present in the context watching the same programme, and two of them laugh at the same jokes as I do and the three that are left remain silent, I am more likely to connect with the ones who laugh than the silent ones, for I share something with them. They happen to enjoy the same jokes as I. PoP in this case is shown by appreciating the same jokes.

"[I]n general, persons want their goals, possessions, and achievements to be thought desirable not just by anyone, but by some particular others especially relevant to the particular goals (Brown and Levinson 1987:63)." This assumption can be costly in the sense that it leaves one vulnerable and may cause affront, for it is possible that one's interlocutor is not disposed to please one's desires of wanting the same things as oneself. Let us take an example from the present data: Edina, the mother, wants Saffron to encourage her in the attempt to get thinner. Saffron feels indifferent to her mother's wants, and seems not to care that Edina feels miserable with her weight. The assumption that Saffron would share the same interests in this respect leaves Edina vulnerable to any commentary, or lack of it, by Saffron.

Some examples of threats to H's positive face wants are criticism, accusation and complaint. Loss of control over one's own body, any bodily leakage, stumbling and self contradiction are just a few examples of direct FTA towards the speaker's own positive face wants.

The advantages of choosing the PoP strategy are for instance that the FTA can be minimised by assuring the hearer that S regards him as belonging into the same group as S himself and that at the same time S wants at least some of H's wants. With PoP, S is able to create a friendly atmosphere

allowing even criticism to be given without much damage to H's face. If criticism is given under the guise of play, the fear of retaliation is minimised. By using positive politeness in acts such as requests or offers, S is able to protect the faces of both H and S by alluding to a mutual benefit. "Shall we get going then" serves as an example of a request where mutual benefit is expressed by the use of inclusive 'we', with the additional pseudo agreement marker 'then' (Brown and Levinson 1987:72).

Negative politeness (NP) is addressed to H's NF, i.e. his right to independence of activity and autonomy in relation to the relevant social sphere. The essence of NP is deference. It acknowledges the seriousness of the imposition in the act of making it. NP is directed more to the specific act of imposition. (Fraser 1990:228-230.) In other words, it is more concerned with the face-threatening act being performed than with an individual's negative face. It is the face-threatening act that determines the use of negative politeness strategy, whereas in PoP it is the person's PF that is important.

NP is frequently attached to the notion of formal politeness and as such it may be more familiar. When S employs negative politeness he shows his desire to defer to H. He does not want to encroach on his wants or actions. Frequently it is enough to show H that S wishes to make no impingement on him. For instance, when making a request, S may state that he understands the request might infringe H's negative face. Thus S shows that he is aware of the seriousness of his act and is doing whatever he can to diminish the imposition on H's face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe NP as having "natural tension" within it. The tension arises between "the desire to go on record as a prerequisite to being seen to pay face, and . . . the desire to go off record to avoid imposing (Brown and Levinson 1987:70)." This can be solved by being conventionally indirect. There are, then, different indirect strategies that are employed to show redress to negative face. These strategies, when having been conventionalised (e.g. requests such as "Could you pass the bread, please") are no longer off-record or susceptible to other interpretations (Bayraktaroglu 1991). Any utterances may become conventionalised. This makes it possible that interlocutors may go on-record with each other more easily, without having to fear making face-threatening acts, or having to compromise the



message sent. When the FTA is done on record it is clearer to the participants in a speech event what is actually being talked about - easier, in other words, to interpret the messages. Compare this with an FTA done off record where the participants have to go through at least two or more possible interpretations to the FTA. If delivered off-record the FTAs are more difficult to interpret because of their inherent ambiguity. Employing the negative politeness method ensures that H understands that S is giving him chance to opt out even if the 'out' given is only a conventional one. Giving a conventional 'out' S shows that he has the H's face wants in mind by pretending to offer an exit from a situation without, in reality, doing so.

In sum, NP is based on avoidance. It can be characterised as being formal and restrained. When using the negative politeness strategy S essentially tends to pay respect to H's face to make up for the inconvenience an FTA possibly causes him. S can show that he is aware of the social distance between him and H, and by doing so, avoid any threat he might be making to H's negative face wants. (Fraser and Nolen 1981.)

As mentioned above the on-record strategies are likely to be used in cases where the FTA to face is not considered to be very threatening. According to Brown and Levinson's framework (1987) when the FTA is expected to be greatly damaging to face, the off-record strategy or even the 5<sup>th</sup> strategy is used.

The fourth strategy by Brown and Levinson is going off record. Where the risk is great, the FTA is phrased in such a way that if necessary it could be taken as a non-imposition. The fourth strategy is based on ambiguity. Two meanings are presented, giving H the option of responding either to the imposition or to the surface value of the utterance. It also gives an 'out' for S, who can claim to have meant the surface value of the utterance if H decides to respond to the imposition.

If S goes off-record the responsibility of the message is shifted to the hearer, and the speaker cannot really be held accountable for what he said (Tannen 1986:152-173). The off-record strategy is often employed when S does not want to take such responsibility of a message. The popular expression "I cannot quite put my finger on it" is frequently heard in connection with an off-record strategy having been used to carry a meaning. It is, indeed, the very

reason why the strategy is used, so that no one "can put their finger on" and the responsibility of interpretation is shifted onto H.

When we start interpreting an off-record message, then, we tend to use everything connected to the speech event to get to an interpretation. We often assess the speech event before, during and after the FTA is done off-record (Goffman 1971; Brown and Levinson 1987; Bayraktaroglu 1991). Also, going back to other speech events with the speaker to establish a pattern of behaviour is sometimes needed to uncover the message. Even assessing previous speech events of the same topic, or previous off-record messages the hearer has interpreted, may aid the hearer to come to a conclusion about the intent. Such factors as social distance (S), relative power (P) of S in relation to H as presented by Brown and Levinson (1987) will also influence the interpretation. The third sociological factor Brown and Levinson suggest which may influence politeness is the ranking of the imposition (R) factor. However, it is likely to affect the choice of the strategy to do an FTA rather than to the interpretation of an FTA done and therefore will be ignored at this point.

All aspects connected with the context become increasingly important when analysing the intended off-record message. When participants of a speech event are close to each other in terms of social distance it can be assumed that there is less need for off-record strategies (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Chun et al 1982; Gudykunst 1994). Thus, when messages are exchanged between people of close social distance using off-record that the intent is of a graver degree than usual. Irony is probably one of the most frequently used manifestations of an off-record strategy being used. Other signs of off-record usage are metaphors, hints, rhetorical questions, and even tautologies. Off-record strategies may encourage H to interpret the message as offensive to his positive face wants and therefore bring about retaliation (Drew 1984). This can happen when the message has been interpreted as e.g. criticism.

Usually no one chooses a strategy that gives H the impression that the FTA S makes is more serious than it actually is. One would not therefore expect to hear "Would you be able to have a seat, please." when S simply means "Please, have a seat." If, however, the first, negatively polite strategy was employed in a situation, it is likely that H would interpret it as an

off-record way to rebuke that he is still standing. Thus, we see that if a higher number strategy is employed than is called for, the interpretation is also made accordingly.

The strategy with which an FTA is delivered, then, is always expected to be appropriate to its context. Unless the want to be efficient in delivering an utterance — in cases of emergency for instance — is stronger than the want to minimise the potential face-threatening act, it is assumed that S will always seek to minimise the threat to H's face. (Brown and Levinson 1987:60.) In other words, any participant "will tend to choose the same genus of strategy under the same conditions - that is, make the same moves as any other would make under the circumstances (Brown and Levinson 1987:71)." This happens because different strategies of doing an FTA have different advantages in different situations. No matter who the speaker is, in similar situations any speaker would employ somewhat the same strategies.

The patterns in communication, as in the case of the five different strategies of delivering an FTA, allow the analyst to pinpoint reasons that lead to the choice of one strategy. In the present study the author of *Ab Fab* does not have the characters clearly state their motivations for their utterances, but instead, by using strategies of delivering FTAs, allows the reader to infer the characters' state of mind at the time of speaking. There may, for instance, be a severe conflict between characters reaching the point of physical violence, which in real life would probably not be considered humorous. However, the way the characters speak to each other in e.g. conflict situations is humorous precisely because the strategies they use in managing a conflict differ considerably from the way one would expect someone to behave in a similar real life situation.

### 2.3 Gricean maxims

Grice's four maxims figure closely into Brown and Levinson's account of politeness. These four maxims are: Relevance, Manner, Quantity and Quality (Grice 1975). Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that politeness gives a strong motivation for flouting the maxims and that deviation from these maxims ensures politeness. Even though Brown and Levinson acknowledge

that politeness may not be the only reason for deviation, they fail to elaborate on other motivations that may cause flouting the maxims, such as humour, sarcasm and irony (Fraser 1990:228). When taking the face-saving approach to account for politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) adopt the essence of Grice's framework. In the following they describe the quintessence of Grice's proposals.

[T]here is a working assumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk. It is against that assumption that polite ways of talking show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker's apparent irrationality or inefficiency." (Brown and Levinson 1987:4.)

Violation of Gricean Maxims is often used to invite alternative interpretation. Thus, Maxim violations can be used to be indirect but still conveying the wanted message. Brown and Levinson (1987:214) have developed the following chart to emphasise the significance of Gricean Maxims in off-record FTAs:

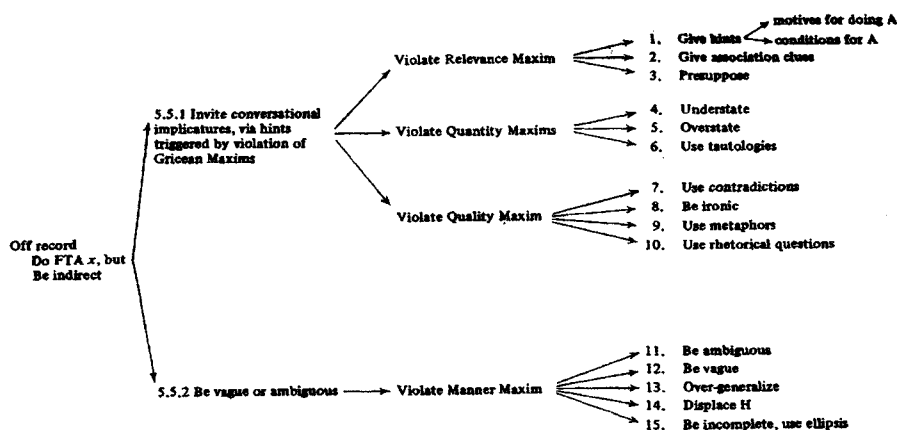


Figure 3. Off-record strategies. (Brown and Levinson 1987:214.)

In the analysis of the present data maxims will be mentioned but infrequently. Recognising which maxim in the data is being flouted will not be considered central to the analysis. What is of more importance is what purpose

the acts with which the maxims are flouted, for instance use of tautology, serve in the data.

#### 2.4 Face-boosting acts

As we have seen, Brown and Levinson focus on face-threatening acts. After having considered their FTA-based approach, it would be tempting to view all acts performed in a speech event as contrary to someone's face wants. But this would seem highly irregular. For instance, it cannot be said that if S for instance boasts, i.e. sees to his own positive face wants, that the act of boasting necessarily goes against his own negative face wants, or that it is in opposition to the hearer's negative or positive face. Whereas FTAs run contrary to the face wants of S and/or H, there also appear to be acts that satisfy the face want of S and/or H. In his work on politeness and interactional imbalance Bayraktaroglu (1991:15) suggests that we include a new concept of face-boosting acts (FBAs) into the FTA framework. FBAs are related only to positive face wants. As with FTAs, FBAs are thought to be inherent to certain activities but having impacts of different gravity depending on the context of those activities. He suggests that when acts boosting S's own face or H's face are called FBA/self and FBA/other, respectively. When dealing with FTAs, it is important in this study to define whether FTAs are done on H or S's positive or negative face. Thus, FTA/self and FTA/other get the further distinction of whether FTA is done to NF or PF.

When the speaker boosts his own face, he is doing FBA/self. A good example of this is boasting. It boosts the speaker's positive face without affecting the face values of the hearer. Compliments, on the other hand, involves FBA/other. The face-boosting acts thus satisfy the face wants of the speaker or the hearer, unlike the face-threatening acts that run contrary to S or H's face wants.

FBAs were already accounted for in Goffman's early work in 1971. There these acts were labelled as "supportive moves". The wants and desires of an individual provide a guideline for other individuals, to help them perform different ritual gestures that show that the desires of the individual have been noticed. (Goffman 1971:66.)

In the present study the concept of FBAs is applied extending Brown and Levinson's notion of how to maintain interactional balance. It is understood that FBAs together with FTAs are a way of working toward maintaining balance in interaction. To clarify what is meant by maintaining interactional balance we will return to the example from p. 15 above, where two women meet and one says to the other "What a lovely dress you have!", the other replying "Oh, this old thing." shows how the compliment exchange follows the procedure of balance restoration. The first woman makes an FBA/other. To balance this FBA done on H's PF, H feels the need to downplay the object of the compliment and therefore does an FTA to her own PF. (For more examples of balance restoration see Pomerantz 1978:100-105.)

### 3 COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOUR - INTERPRETING MESSAGES

In communication the need both to convey information and the need to be polite that is connected to the interactional side of communication are dominant factors in determining individuals' behaviour in speech events. Linguistic routines are a tool for polite behaviour and they serve in minimising the risk to face. According to Laver (1981:289) deviation from the norm of polite behaviour, however politeness may be defined in each cultural context, shows the attempt to negotiate the social relationship between participants of a speech event (for more on deviations in face-work see i.e. Goffman 1967, 1971; Fraser 1981; Brown and Levinson 1987; Piirainen-Marsh 1995.)

When communicating we may be quite unaware of how our behaviour appears to others in the speech event. We may react emotionally to something without giving much thought to the reaction and its linguistic manifestation in the communication. One of the sources of our behaviour is rooted in our habitual way of conduct. We can, indeed, react to a certain act in a very predictable manner simply because it is the way we frequently react to similar acts in different situations. Much of our behavioural acting is done out of habit. We engage in different routines and make different decisions out of habit without being very conscious of the reasons for our behaviour. We use appropriate scripts when communicating habitually. The term script means a

”coherent sequence of events expected by the individual involving him either as a participant or as an observer” (Abelson, 1976:33). Laver (1981:260) defines routine behaviour — when we do something or react in a certain way out of habit — as being polite. Routines aid in forming and negotiating social relationships. As linguistic manifestations of routine behaviour we can take the simple acts of thanking, apologising. Presenting excuses and engaging in small talk are also considered to be routine behaviour that is deemed polite. It has been shown that the use of linguistic routines is more dense in the peripheral areas of communication, for example in greeting and parting routines (Laver 1981; House and Kasper 1981).

The conscious, less routine, side of communication cannot be ignored. Often, when a certain strategy is chosen to carry a message, the choice is done intentionally to achieve a particular, or even many, objectives (Gudykunst 1994). Pre-sequenced flattery, for instance, may aid one to get one’s way when trying to obtain a favour. In this case using pre-sequence flattery is seen to be motivated purely for selfish reasons, but at the same time it does soften the possible imposition of a request for example.

We engage in establishing our face when we come in contact with unfamiliar people (Bayraktaroglu 1991:6; more on face see ch. 2.1 starting on p. 6 of this study). When we find ourselves in a new situation we tend to ”consciously seek cues to guide our behavior” (Gudykunst 1994:11). Langer (1978:39) believes that the more often we attend to an activity the more we rely on scripts. It would seem that the more often we can rely on a certain script, the less chance there should be of confrontations. Conventionalised indirectness (for instance in requests such as ”Could you pass me the salt, please?”) serves here as a perfect example of the importance of habitual behaviour in preventing much face damage. For instance when H’s negative face is in danger S can avoid encroachment by employing a conventionally indirect act that satisfies the needs of being direct and being indirect at the same time. With this strategy S achieves a comfortable balance of not imposing too much on H’s negative face, but at the same time ascertains that the act does not sound more threatening than it is.

### 3.1 Frames affect our interpretations

When we talk about polite behaviour we tend to automatically associate non-polite behaviour as an integral part or as the opposite of polite conduct. Lakoff (1989) claims that there is a three-fold categorisation as to the degree of politeness in discourse. She suggests that the category of "rude" be added into the dichotomy. According to her the mere polarisation of polite versus non-polite would seem inadequate in the evaluation of communication. She considers the utterances that conform to the politeness rules, whether or not they are expected in a discourse type, as polite. Non-polite behaviour departs from the politeness rules. In other words, when polite behaviour is not expected one behaves non-politely. Rudeness, on the other hand, is something that occurs when polite behaviour is expected but not shown.

There is much talk about expectations of participants of a speech event, but how, for example, do we know what interlocutors expect in a given situation? Initially, Bateson (1972) developed the concept of framing, to define people's expectations and behaviour in social contexts. In 1974 Goffman continued developing Bateson's idea in his work 'Frame Analysis'. The concept of frame can be explained through a simple example about a restaurant. On entering a restaurant, one expects to see waiters or waitresses working there. One also expects to have some sort of menu of which to choose meals. One does not expect to go into a restaurant, eat and then leave without paying. All this is connected to one particular frame.

Of course frames do not exist only in association with the tangible world. There are also feelings and reactions which arise from specific frames. Take for instance a person who has been drinking with his mates in a pub all night. He is expected to have at least a little hang-over in the morning. Because of the hang-over, he might not be expected to be in an especially good mood when his relatives pop over for a surprise visit. All this can be expected when the context is known. Note also that when it was said that this person has been drinking in a pub, we automatically expect him to have drunk something alcoholic. That, too, is framing. In sum, then, we use framing to show how anything we say or do should be understood and it is by framing that we understand others.



Using frames is to use a type of indirectness in discourse (Tannen 1986:82). The words we choose in communicating our meaning, together with extra linguistic signals such as pitch, intonation, tones of voice and facial expressions, set the frame for each utterance we produce whether it be joking, serious, angry, rude, polite, sarcastic, and so on. The small frames contribute to a larger frame. For instance giving advice can be of a larger frame where the speaker intends to be helpful by giving advice. It is not, however, necessarily this way that the hearer takes the advice. He can think that it is of a larger frame of patronising, or snubbing. When S has indeed tried to be helpful, and H has taken this helpfulness as patronising, we can say H has re-framed S's intention.

Tannen (1986) agrees with Goffman (1974) that framing is an indirect action. She notes, however, that it would be dangerous for communication if we were constantly too preoccupied with how others frame our messages we might not end up saying anything. If we had to label under what frame every word we utter belongs to, we would never be able to communicate our thoughts.

Every frame one uses can be re-framed. An example could be taken from family discourse context. Often, when I say my husband's name, "Matti", with only the intention of getting his attention, he comes out with "What did I do now?" He interprets the meaning of one word, his name, being in a completely different frame than what I intended. This gets me irritated, because I know under what frame he made his interpretation, and I resent not being able to say the simplest of things without being afraid of the impression it may give to my husband. In such occasions, frames can be called upon to explain what happened. As far as everything goes well, frames do their work inconspicuously.

So, when we need to define if discourse is polite, non-polite, or, even rude we need to view the linguistic devices employed in the context, in the light of the frame that is being employed. Take for instance the following situation. A sister compliments her brother on his driving skill. She says "You drive like daddy," since she thinks "daddy" drives really well. The brother does not feel comfortable with driving yet, since he just recently received his licence. He automatically interprets the compliment as a snide remark on his

abilities as a driver. This is only because he does not believe to be a good driver. Furthermore, he has never thought "daddy" drives especially well. This is an opinion his sister does not realise he has of his father. If the brother shared his sister's view on "daddy's" driving, he would probably take the remark in the intended frame, that of a compliment. We notice, then, that everything, including the participants' shared background, as well as their individual background and experiences of similar types of contexts, and their knowledge of different communicative situation all come to play when interpreting messages.

It is necessary to try to understand why we have certain expectations in discourse. Framing is essential to how we interpret what we hear. Frames are also in use when we interpret anything we read. However, when we decode a written message, e.g. the present data, we do not have all the extralinguistic devices at our disposal that we would in decoding an oral message. All the elements of voice quality is lost in written messages. This is why it is easy to miss the attitude with which the message was written. Nowadays, for instance, e-mail messages are often misinterpreted, especially if when the writer is someone one has never met face-to-face. Similarly, one must appreciate the difficulty in analysing a piece of writing, as in this case *Ab Fab* scripts.

We need to be aware of how humour is often created by violating the expected frame in which talk is assumed to occur. Humour frequently relies on our framing habits by "suggesting one line of interpretation, then suddenly switching frames at the end (Tannen 1986:88)." The following joke exemplifies the switch in frame:

A young man was delighted to finally be asked home to meet the parents of the young woman he'd been seeing for some time. He was quite nervous about the meeting, though, and by the time he arrived punctually at the doorstep he was in a state of gastric distress.

The problem developed into one of acute flatulence, and halfway through the canapés the young man realised he couldn't hold it in one second longer without exploding. A tiny fart escaped. "SPOT!" called out the young woman's mother to the family dog, lying at the young man's feet.

Relieved at the dog's having been blamed, the young man let another, slightly larger one go. "Spot!" she called out sharply. "I've got it made,"

thought the fellow to himself. One more and I'll feel fine. So he let loose a really big one. "Spot!" shrieked the mother. "Get over here before he shits on you!"

(from personal electronic mail, September, 1998)

Here, the reader most likely interprets "SPOT!" as a reprimand directed to the dog, when in fact it is a command to move away from the man who has flatulence. At the end, when the true meaning of the woman's orders is revealed, the reader notices how the essence of the joke is delivered at the end with the reversal of his expectations.

I intend to discover whether framing and going against expectations in terms of using re-framing of certain social concepts such as the expected behaviour of mother and daughter (see ch. 3.2) gives rise to humorous interpretations of the data. The writer of *Ab Fab* gives certain characteristics to the personalities of mother and daughter, which help the analyst in her work. The underlying assumption of this study is that the reader or viewer of *Ab Fab* can interpret the communication between mother and daughter as humorous because the events are fictional. If similar style of communicating were documented in real life, the outcome would probably not be humorous, but, indeed, hazardous for the relationship between the speakers.

### 3.2 Family discourse

Sociologically defined 'family' is a basic social group united through kinship or marriage (Queen et al. 1985). The unit we call 'family' is present in all societies. Ideally, the family functions as the provider of protection, companionship, security and socialisation. The structure of the family varies from society to society. In the West the single-parent family, in which children live with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed mother or father has become increasingly common. Whatever its manifestations, the family can be considered the basic unit of social organisation in most Western societies, including the British society from which the data of this study originates. "The only function of the family that continues to survive all change is the provision of affection and emotional support by and to all its members" (Microsoft Encarta).

Family members, then, probably share one of the most intimate relationships of any in-group. Blum-Kulka (1990) believes that there is minimal social distance between the members of the family but that the power relations are not always the same between different members. For example, parents in the Western culture are more likely to be of low power distance to each other, whereas their children tend to be lower on the power scale. It is implied that children are expected to show more deference to their parents than parents to their children. There seems to be a double role for the member of the family. Each member has to find a balance in the dualistic role of being an intimate, in terms of social distance, but at the same time an unequal constituent of the family, in terms of power.

Politeness figures differently in family discourse than it does in a discourse between friends or strangers. Family discourse is considered "essentially polite", but cultural and situational aspects affect the manifestation of linguistic devices for politeness (Blum-Kulka 1990). Garfinkel (1967) notes that families expect informality in the communication between its members. If, within a family, a more formal discourse type is adopted, it can easily lead to interpretations of disrespect and impoliteness. When deciding on the interpretation of a particular message the *expectations* present in the speech event determine the outcome of the act (*italics mine*). Brown and Gilman (1989) suggest that the asymmetry of power as well as the closeness and affect displayed in interaction are the three factors that determine the framework with which each member of the family interprets politeness.

Lakoff (1989:102,116) argues that power relations in ordinary conversation — the type of discourse people acquire first and use the most and which family discourse is part of — remain constant and equal, as opposed to other types of discourse, i.e. lectures, where power relations are unequal. Nevertheless, children are expected to be in a position of less power than parents in family discourse (Blum-Kulka 1990). Lakoff seems to ignore the significance of power relations, since studies in family sociolinguistics widely accept the asymmetrical power relation between family members, especially between parents and children, even in modern industrial societies (Queen et al. 1985). Role relationships are considered particularly relevant when studying the rules in family interaction.

In politeness literature there often seems to be a link made between indirect speech and polite behaviour and, vice versa, between directness and impoliteness or even rudeness (see i.e. Leech 1977, 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987). Butler (1988) believes that one does not have to use indirect speech acts to be polite. Not all utterances that are considered polite are syntactically marked as such. On the basis of this argument it would seem that even direct speech acts can be polite, provided that the setting is appropriate. It would seem that the social and power distance are key aspects that define the linguistic devices used for politeness. Take for instance an example offered by Butler (1988:125) where a drill sergeant says to a private: "Stand at ease." The reason why such direct utterance can be used without it sounding impolite is that the drill sergeant is ranked higher on the power scale than the private. It would seem rather ridiculous to hear the sergeant say "Could you possibly stand at ease?" to the private because of the very power relations between the two. Here the asymmetry of the relation makes redress to negative face unnecessary (cf. The lord and his butler-example on p.17). In fact, the request, "Could you possibly stand at ease?", in this situation could even be taken to mean something completely different, performing a completely different act, for instance rebuke for not having been able to stand at ease, because of the very reason that it is indirect where usually direct form is expected.

According to the study of Blum-Kulka (1990) directness is frequently used in speech acts of control by parents. She divides control acts used by parents according to six type of goals: 1) requests for action, 2) requests to stop or prevent an on-going activity, 3) requests for goods, 4) requests for verbal goods, 5) requests for permission, and 6) requests granting permission. As frequent as directness is in family discourse, there is also a high level of mitigation performed to soften the message sent. For instance in speech acts of control, mitigation is used to soften the coerciveness of the performed act. Take the data under study here: when the mother wants her daughter to do something, she is likely to start a direct speech act by using conventional terms of endearment such as 'sweetie' and 'darling'. These mitigating expressions in the pre-sequence are intended to lessen the impact the act would otherwise have on the daughter. In addition, they may have a persuasive function in the data, enabling the fulfilling of e.g. a request. I shall

look more closely at the functions of mitigation in connection with face-saving in the analysis section of this study.

### 3.3 Communication in conflict situations

Conflict research concentrates describing situations in real life situations. To understand the difference in reactions to potential conflict situations between the fictional characters in the present data and real life people in conflict situations we will review some of the conflict research done about real life conflict situations.

Interpretation of messages is not done separately from transmitting them. We engage in the processes of transmitting and interpreting messages simultaneously (Gudykunst 1994:10). When the communication channel is opened and messages are sent back and forth we automatically modify the messages we send according to the feedback we receive while message transmitting is in progress.

It is messages that are transmitted between participants, not meanings. Speaker has a meaning in mind when formulating his message, but the meaning may be quite different when the message is interpreted by the hearer. This difference between messages and meanings is pivotal for this study. It is messages that the author sends to the reader (or the viewer) by using fictional characters, the meaning of these messages is created by the reader himself. Gudykunst (1994) suggests that our perceptions of ourselves as well as the other participants involved in a speech event affect how we construct and interpret messages. Consider, for example, laughter. Depending of the context we may interpret laughter as a sign of congeniality or we can even think that it is launched at our expense, in which case it is easily taken as an insult. It may be that we often interpret messages sent to us negatively merely because we do not have enough confidence in ourselves. When we believe there having been a threat to our face, either negative or positive face, we easily perceive our self-concepts to be threatened (Lazarus 1991).

In the case of a perceived threat we try to improve the way we see ourselves. To accomplish this we use different methods, of which putting

others down is only one example. Belittling one's interlocutor/s is one way in which we can achieve the feeling of superiority and convince ourselves that others are inferior to us. Often down-putting is used to boost one's own ego if no other means are available (Tajfel 1978). Apart from down-putting it is easy to feel aggression or hostility toward others in situations where we feel our self-worth has been denigrated to any degree. Gudykunst (1994:3) believes this type of behaviour to be especially easy to resort to when we are in contact with people essentially different from us in some important way, for example people from a different age group or different cultural background. Even in close relationships, such as the mother and daughter relationship, misunderstandings may arise because of group differences. Parents and children, for instance, undergo this because apart from belonging in the family in-group they also belong to many other groups simultaneously (Piirainen-Marsh 1995).

When communication leads to conflict, different behaviours may be used to achieve the same ends. Conversely, the same linguistic devices may be used to achieve different ends. One act may be employed to arrive at multiple ends, and many acts to get to a single end. Behaviours used in conflict situations may have many consequences or only one or no consequence, depending on the context and the linguistic device/s employed. (Grimshaw 1990.) Conflict situations tend to be perceived according to the perspective the participant takes. He can see himself as a competitor or an ally, or he can be an interested or disinterested observer of the conflict situation. One tends to hear or see things from the view point one occupies when the conflict occurs (Goffman 1981).

Labov and Fanshel (1977) warn us not to see conflict where it does not exist. They believe that if studied closely enough any situation offers the chance of interpreting it as a potential conflict situation. When we start seeing things where they do not exist we might be seen to suffer from paranoia. When participants of a speech event have an established relationship — in that they are familiar with each others' communicative styles — it is easy for an outside observer to sometimes perceive that conflict is taking place when the participants, in fact, are merely employing the styles they habitually use.

These are only some of the factors influencing a speech event that may sound like an argument for an outsider, but which is not an argument to

the participants themselves. Instead it may be a heated discussion where no conflict is seen by either of the participants.

Cultural, but also individual characteristics of an individual determine the way in which he expresses emotion. In conflict situations, for example, one individual shows anger by becoming glib and another by becoming uncommunicative (Grimshaw 1990:295). For the participants of a speech event the importance of maintaining talk is noticeable in potential conflict situations. When the participants are still in speaking terms in the context, the potential conflict may be smoothed, provided that the participants are willing to cooperate, or one participant is willing to denigrate his own face. When a verbal response is no more felt to be sufficient in a potential conflict situation, it is more likely that the actual conflict takes place. Participants' orientations, their interpersonal relations of power and of influence, and their stakes in the ongoing discourse have an impact on whether the speech event increases in intensity (Goffman 1974).

Conflict can arise from many different things. They may

focus on beliefs, objects (things), persons, groups, or institutions. If any of the latter three is the focus, conflicts may be directed to behaviors or to attributes. The focus may be highly specific, it may be (or come to be) diffuse. The focus will not always be clear, both because we don't always know what is "bothering" us and because uncertainties about optimal resolutions. (Grimshaw 1990: 294).

Grimshaw (1990) believes it to be likely that participants of a conflict situation would agree what the conflict is about. It can be assumed that with sufficient background information of the context and the people involved in it also an outsider, e.g. an analyst, may come to the same conclusions as to the reasons of the conflict.

According to Lakoff (1989:101) dyadic conversation, the type salient in the present study, is especially likely to have occurrences of conflict situations. She considers this as one of the main reasons why politeness research is based more on dyadic than any other type of conversation. Also, because of its nature, it is probably the conversation type easiest to study. The talk in conflict situations can vary from one end to the other of different continuums. It can be hot and passionate or cool and aloof (or anything between), it can vary from direct to indirect, it may appear to be anything



between formal and informal, it can be based on facts or opinions and feelings, and so on (Grimshaw 1990:294). The talk in a conflict situation is likely to be somewhere between the extreme ends of each continuum. Grimshaw (1990) believes that some degree of negotiation of the participants' identities and the appropriateness of interpersonal organisation exists in all conflict talk.

#### 4 HUMOUR

For centuries researchers have tried to pin down the essence of humour. It is remarkable that despite frequent studies in the field of humour there is still little agreement about the nature of humour. As a concept, then, it can be considered somewhat elusive. The fact that the English word *funny* has two senses, 'amusing' and 'odd', suggests that our notion of what is odd or incongruous is neither more or less vague than our notion of the humorous. How humour is perceived depends very much on who is doing the interpreting of, for example, a humorous situation.

##### 4.1 Interpreting humour

Mulkay (1988:55) mentions that "[h]umour is created out of 'real life' events through the interpretative work carried out by participants." Therefore it is easy to understand that in an event there may be participants who find the situation humorous whereas other participants in exactly the same situation could very well see no humorous side to the event. It may even be that a participant finds a situation humorous at one moment but even annoying at some later stage.

As we see, then, humour is often dependent on the interpreter's state of mind. In the present study it is the context provided by Saunders, the author of *Absolutely Fabulous* that allows the reader to establish how a situation is to be taken. Our cultural expectations can also determine what we find humorous in the scripts and what we do not. Moreover, the personal background of the analyst, including such things as his age and the in-groups

he belongs into, is of major importance when analysing the situations in the scripts.

In making interpretations we rely on frames (see Goffman 1974) for knowledge that is widely available to members of different groups, even different cultures. An example of this would be seeing smoking as a part of a sexual event, at least in the Western tradition. Television series often play on this shared knowledge in showing a couple in bed smoking cigarettes (cf. pub example on p. 29). Showing a couple smoking in bed is most probably meant to be interpreted that they have just finished having intercourse.

How many times have we been bewildered by hearing two people talk about something and laughing where we see nothing humorous. The likely reason is that we do not share the same background information that would allow us to draw the comic interpretation from a stretch of talk or a situation. One aspect of humour essential to the present study is that the scripts for the television comedy *Ab Fab* draw on people's expectations and on the conventions applied in the British society (and much of Western cultural area) and make mockery of them.

Mulkay (1988: 26) believes that humour occurs "when there is a sudden movement between, or unexpected combination of, distinct interpretative frames." He continues by quoting Koestler, "the production of humour necessarily involves 'the perceiving of a situation or idea in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference'."

Humour often plays against the expectations that we have in hearing a joke, for instance. Jokes often rely on the expected interpretation, which the ending unexpectedly reverses to achieve humorous ends. This is the joke's punchline. As Nerhardt (1976:56) puts it "exposure to the altered picture is a violation of the expectancies built up during the preceding trials."<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2 Textual humour

Because we are dealing with scripts in the present study, the humour is delivered in written form. Nash (1985) notes some important differences

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<sup>4</sup> see for instance *Toot* joke on p. 31.

between oral and textual humour. He views textual humour as expanding through detailed networks that are seldom found in oral humour. The expansion is often accomplished by means of repetition of a joke type. Textual humour is more extensive and subtle in expansion. A situation in a text that starts as a game easily ends up as a design with multiple elements put together in a precise arrangement. The present data illustrates an interactional mode of humorous expansion. This means that in creating humour there are suppositions that create the pragmatic basis for the relationship between the executor of humour and the respondent. The interactional mode relies on the predictability of reactions. (Nash 1985.)

Fromkin and Rodman (1978:187) suggest that "[m]uch humour is achieved by characters who take everything literally." In the case of irony the opposite applies. It could be taken as an occurrence of an indirect speech act, as in the case "when one ostensibly praises someone while, at the same time, mocking him or her (Alexander 1980:25)." Irony, then, is understood as the negation of the propositional truth.

Leech (1969:172) defines sarcasm, the oral analogue of irony, as a "type of everyday irony." He continues: "Sarcasm consists in saying the opposite of what is intended: saying something nice with the intention that your hearer should understand something nasty." It is believed that sarcasm can often be detected in speech by its marked intonation, whereas in written texts the voice quality is added by the reader (Alexander 1980:25). In the case of irony it is not always easy to define meticulously what exactly is involved. Grice (1975:53) believes that in being ironical one flouts the first maxim of quality. At other times, the writer's choice of words with certain stylistic connotations, syntactic or lexical can deliver the ironic effect of an utterance or an act. On other occasions the reader may have to rely solely on the contextual cues provided by the author to make interpretations.

It is popularly believed — and it has also been noted in humour research — that the use of irony is endemic to British culture (Alexander 1980). Because the data of this study derives from that culture, it is understandable that readers come to expect the frequent, if not abundant, use of irony in the scripts of *Absolutely Fabulous*.

Grice's maxims seem to help in explaining the use of irony. It seems, indeed, that much humour can be explained by flouting one or more of the Gricean maxims. Take for instance a joke which by its very nature flouts the maxim of manner. Here, ambiguity and obscurity of expression may very well be the prerequisite for a functioning joke. In the case of irony, for instance, the infringement is made on the Gricean Maxims, especially on that of Quality. What is new in this study is that the infringements on the PP are used in analysing the emergence of humour in the scripts while taking into account possible Maxim violations, particularly when interpreting irony.

Brown and Levinson (1987) acknowledge that politeness may not be the only reason for deviation from conversational maxims. They fail, however, to elaborate on other possible motives such as humour, irony and sarcasm. (Fraser 1990:228.)

#### 4.3 The stereotypical mother and teenage child

Edina is not only a middle-aged woman, but also as a career woman and most of all as Saffron's mother. She incorporates other roles, too, such as the ex-wife of two men, Patsy's friend, Grandmother's daughter etc. For the present study it is most important to examine Edina in her role as a mother, since it is through motherhood that she relates with Saffron. To analyse Edina's character formation in the series, we need to review some general conceptions about women in connection with motherhood.

Women's role in society is an historical product. It is hard to account for whether women have an instinctual aptitude or biological propensity for mothering that goes beyond the experiments of pregnancy, giving birth and lactation. Merely because of their biological disposition, women are considered to take the primary responsibility for child care. There is some agreement in feminist literature that girls undergo cognitive training for becoming mothers. This notion of gender-role formation includes the girl's supposed identification with her mother, and through this identification the desire to become a mother herself. Chodorow (1979) believes these two forces to be insufficient in explaining why women mother. A woman cannot mother without a psychological attachment to the child, and this bond cannot be

coerced, but has to be desired by the woman at some level. (Chodorow 1979:23-33.)

To put aside the issue why women mother, it is more relevant for the present study to consider the current images that exist of mothers. According to patriarchal mythology the female body is "impure, corrupt, the site of discharges, bleedings, dangerous to masculinity, "the devil's gateway" (Rich 1991:34)." However, when the focus is on women and motherhood, a completely different image prevails. As a mother the woman is asexual, pure, nourishing, sacred, unselfish and altruistic. From this it can be deduced that women are evil and impure, but as mothers women are good and pure. Moreover, the mother is conventionally seen as a dual entity, either as a good mother or a bad mother, an angel or a whore. Good mothers are supposed to love unconditionally. For instance, female anger, which would threaten the institution of motherhood, cannot coexist with motherly love. (Rich 1991:34-46.) Therefore, no matter what the child does, a good mother is not supposed to feel hate or anger towards it. Thus, "a mother may feel that she must *control her own feelings* and emotions to produce good mothering (Ribbens 1994:156; italics original)."

Stereotyping, as in the case of defining what mothers are like, is as natural as would be for instance thinking ethnocentrically. Gudykunst (1994:89) describes the three essential aspects of stereotypes isolated by Hewstone and Brown:

- (a) we categorise others based on easily identifiable characteristics;
- (b) we assume that certain attributes apply to most or all of the people in the category, and that people in the category are different than people in other categories with respect to these attributes; and
- (c) we assume that individual members of the category have the attributes associated with their groups.

Stereotypes are, then, "the pictures we have in our heads for various social categories we use." (Gudykunst 1994:89.) Often stereotypes give negative impressions, but that they can also be positive. They are "fixed impressions of a group of people through which we then perceive specific individuals." (Klopf

and Thompson 1992:41.) Some stereotypes are uniquely based on our individual experiences. They become social in nature when certain generalisations arrived at by individuals are shared by social groups. When fictional characters are depicted to be the opposite of the perceived stereotypical images it may allow humorous interpretations merely because the depiction goes against what one expects.

It is natural as Tannen (1990:15-16) points out to see the world in patterns to make sense of what happens in it. Reference to stereotypes makes it easier, and perhaps even safer, to come to conclusions about the events, people or behaviour we encounter. Stereotypes reduce the threat of the unknown by making the world predictable. They continue to exist because they are strongly established as "myths" or "truisms". (Samovar and Porter 1997:374.) Klopff and Thompson (1992:41) view stereotypes as unfortunate but essential. Stereotypes enable us to react to individual elements of life by using categories to which we respond. In meeting someone we tend to perceive them as representatives of a group and assign them all the qualities we associate with the group.

The image of the Western mother is one that could be considered highly stereotypical. It is shared in the area of the Western cultural tradition, and it continues to guide our thinking. When a woman, a mother, deviates from this notion, she is seen as an anomaly. In the present data Edina deviates from the stereotypical mother, from the caring, sharing, all-understanding, unselfish and sacrificing mother. Saunders, the author of *Ab Fab*, breaks the stereotype of what a mother should be, for instance by giving Edina characteristics frequently associated with children. In the analysis of the data my attempt is to show how the violation of face and the enhancement of face aid creating Edina's character.

Edina's daughter, Saffron, is in her adolescence. She is depicted as a responsible, strait-laced, studious, conscientious, even punctilious girl, who will not accept any nonsense around her. She seems to be the epitome of virtue, which is not a characteristic generally associated with teenagers. There is much talk about whether teenagers are still children, or if they should be considered young adults. For the purpose of this study teenagers are viewed as children. It is, after all, in connection with her mother that we examine Saffron.

Children, including teenagers, are typified as being anarchic and anti-social; they need guidance and sense of direction, which primarily is offered to them by their parents (Ribbens 1994). The stereotypical teenager lacks in confidence in relation to other teenagers. He tries to define his limits by testing his parents about what he can and cannot do. Parents stereotypically think that if children are unrestrained anything might happen. They are potentially disruptive in the absence of restriction (Ribbens 1994:150).

Children are expected to have good manners, the definition of which varies between different individuals, social groups and cultures. Society expects parents to set rules for their children, to exert proper control inside the home. This is how children learn to be socially acceptable. In the present study the stereotypical expectations of what we consider teenage behaviour is violated by depicting a teenage girl, Saffron, who is not at all rebellious against the norms set by society. For instance, she likes to study, which goes against our expectations. In fact, it seems to be Saffron who has to set rules for her mother and tell how she should behave, rather than Edina setting limits to her teenage daughter. Edina tries to encourage Saffron to have sex and use alcohol and drugs — something, I suspect, few mothers would do. Saffron seems to share the values propagated in the modern Western world, quite contrary to the values her mother seems to hold dear. These values seem to give rise to constant potential conflict between mother and daughter and they contribute to the image the characters assume in *Ab Fab*.

In the analysis I will attempt to demonstrate how Saffron's character is developed through specific linguistic devices connected to face. She both performs and is the target of much face-threat. She does, however, show a side to her that is less relentless than the general image given to her, when occasionally she supports her mother.

## 5 THE PRESENT STUDY

The aim of the current study is to observe how politeness framework and the Gricean maxims, frame analysis and conflict research, can shed light on how humour occurs in the dialogues between mother and daughter in *Absolutely*

*Fabulous*. A relatively unknown concept, face-boosting acts, is introduced to explain humour in situations that do not constitute any face threat to the participants' faces.

### 5.1 Research questions

The present study has three primary research questions. The first question — divided into three questions — is meant to elucidate the linguistic devices in use in the data. It concentrates on establishing the linguistic forms and their functions the possible violations take in the fictional discourse as well as determining their significance in delivering certain role images of the characters.

**RQ1** Do Edina and Saffron communicate with each other complying with the rules of the politeness principle? If there are deviations from the politeness principle how are they marked and what are their function in the data? Do the linguistic devices serve to show the characters in certain roles?

The nature of the second research question is directed toward sociolinguistics, in that it is concerned with language and its social aspects.

**RQ2** To what extent do Edina and Saffron conform to the stereotypical roles of mother and daughter?

The third question concentrates on compiling and analysing the information provided by the first two questions and on explaining the humour present in the data.

**RQ3** How far can the emergence of humour be explained through the violations of the expected roles of mother and daughter by examining them through frame analysis and violations of the politeness principle and the Gricean maxims.



## 5.2 Data

The data of this study consists of scripts of six episodes of the series *Absolutely Fabulous*<sup>5</sup> that were chosen arbitrarily from the first two season's scripts (altogether 12 episodes) available in print. The episodes of the third season were disregarded from this study on the basis of unavailability of published scripts. The research concentrates on analysing the dialogue produced by the two main characters of *Ab Fab*, Edina (the mother) and Saffron (the daughter) leaving any other character, and their contribution to a speech event, secondary. In the printed scripts the setting is provided for the reader, but this is not as detailed as when viewed on television. The reader is provided with a background against which he is be able to understand the characters created by the author and is left

to visualise the setting and other aspects to do with the context.

The text progresses in scenes comprised of continuous action set in one place. The data consists essentially of dialogue, with some stage directions to help the reader establish the mood of the characters and the physical context. If the context is not clear from the dialogue, an attempt will be made to describe it with necessary detail for the reader of this study. The context is essential for understanding the analysis undertaken here. In the actual analysis short extracts from the data are given not only to demonstrate what the characters say, but also to ensure an understanding as to what the analyst is referring to and talking about.

The dialogue in the scripts is not what we hear in every day conversation. In other words it is not as complicated as a real life speech event (Novakovich 1995). The data rarely shows the characters speaking simultaneously. The prosodics of their voices cannot be described with accuracy and on only rare occasion does the author provide the reader with the body

language of a character. This is done only when it gives an additional indication of the mood of the character. Reality has been approximated by using hesitations and redundancies in speech, for example. These convey the sense of spontaneity we usually would have in real world speech events,

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<sup>5</sup> See ch. 5.2.1 for a more detailed description of the series and its background.

without being as redundant as real life speech. Also the informal features of spoken language have been approximated by the use of "I mean's" and "sort of's" which help to recreate a sense of reality.

Some studies of humour were consulted to give foundation to understanding the humour in the present data. Some friends of the analyst contributed to the development of the present study through discussions about humour and the series *Ab Fab*. It became more and more apparent that there must exist some rules where the participants of a speech event expect certain behaviours in particular contexts. When these rules are broken, so are the expectations. As a result, a disruption of an existing pattern is achieved. One explanation for humour arises from the challenging of an accepted pattern in society by the appearance of another, more unfamiliar pattern (Douglas 1975:96). Goffman (1974) introduced the notion of frame which can be used to help explain both the fictional characters' social expectations and those of the readers'. For this reason frame-analysis is an integral part of the present study. (For more details on framing see starting on p. 29 above.)

### 5.2.1 About Absolutely Fabulous

*Absolutely Fabulous* is better known as *Ab Fab* by its British fans (*Ab Fab* site). It evolved from a small skit, called *Mother and Daughter*, that was presented on a television comedy show, *French and Saunders*, featuring Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders (Wilmot and Rosengard 1989:75). In Finland it was broadcast under the name *Todella upeeta*, first run in Finland on YLE 1 from 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1995 to 22 April 1995. The series consists of 3 seasons, and as in most British series, one season consists of six episodes, so 18 episodes in all. There is also a television film called *Absolutely Fabulous* which was aired in Finland on the 18th of January 1997. The series has won two international Emmys in the popular art category (*Ab Fab* site).

*Ab Fab* stars Jennifer Saunders, who is also the writer of the series, as Edina Monsoon (Eddy). Joanna Lumely plays Eddy's best friend Patsy Stone (Pats). They are two chain-smoking, trend-chasing boozers and substance abusers in their forties who have grandiose illusions of taking

London fashion by storm. Edina is a twice-married, single, working mother of two, who struggles to combine her professional career as a fashion publicist with her social life while raising her strait-laced, virtuous teenage daughter Saffron Monsoon (Saffy) who is appalled and disgusted by her mother's lifestyle. Saffron is played by Julia Sawalha.

Eddy is a desperately trendy woman. "Edina is reputedly modelled on real-life self-styled PR-guru Lynn Franks" (*Ab Fab* site). Saffy is a hard working and conscientious girl, who is more interested in work in than boys. She has a much stronger sense of morals than her mother and a generally clean image which contrasts sharply with that of Edina (and Patsy) and this seems to be one of the main sources of friction between them.

### 5.2.2 Method of analysis

When the characters' behaviour in this study is examined it might be good to bring to mind the distinction between "emic" and "etic" perspectives of behaviour. According to Pike (1967) the emic standpoint is adopted when something is studied relative to the context and function within a specific cultural system. The "etic" view of behaviour, on the other hand, is related to a given cultural system as viewed by an "outsider". In this study the emic view is employed. I attempt to view the present data in the light of the cultural system it derives from. Notwithstanding, some aspects of the etic standpoint may influence the evaluation, since I do not have the same cultural background as the data.

It is generally agreed that the same utterance may have quite different functions in different contexts (Firth 1957). The current study adopts and emphasises the notion of language being meaningful only in its context of situation. In search for meanings we have to draw on common knowledge (Bloomfield 1984).

The analysis aims to describe what type of relationship the fictional characters have with each other. This is examined by looking at the way the characters communicate with each other, which defines the relationship between them. Thus, the relationship dimension of a message is inferred from how the message is transmitted (Gudykunst 1994:10). When

analysing the transmission of messages the employment of PP to explain different acts becomes useful. The dialogue between mother and daughter models the relationship between the two. The violations of PP in transmitting messages back and forth create certain images about the characters, as well as their relationship. These violations are the core of this study. Through explaining how the politeness framework is violated, I will try to explain how the author of *Ab Fab* creates an image of a non-stereotypical mother and daughter. The outcome of these violations can be considered humorous.

As a result of either an FTA or FBA having more than one function in a context (for instance an FTA on H's positive face can at the same time be taken as an FBA on H's positive face) it was impossible to make comprehensive quantitative analysis of the data. Furthermore, the present study concentrates on matters that would be difficult to measure quantitatively with precision. The objective is to describe the fictional data, to find how an event in the story affects other events - to make interpretations of how one character's acts are shown to affect the behaviour of another. Therefore a more qualitative approach is adopted, with some quantitative aspects.

Altogether, six episodes are taken into the analysis out of twelve available in print. The episodes *Fashion* and *Fat* are from the first season scripts of *Ab Fab*, and the four remaining, *Death*, *Morocco*, *Poor* and *Birth*, are from the second season. The episodes were analysed examining only those dialogues where mother and daughter were present. This means that they may have been the only two people in the situation, or that there may have been other characters present. All the dialogues between the mother and other people, or the daughter and other people, without the other character being present in the situation were excluded from the data. Any sections quoted from the episodes will be marked with the name of the episode, and the page number.

The following marking is used: FTA/other to PF (S/H makes a face-threatening act to her interlocutor's positive face), FTA/other to NF (S/H makes a face-threatening act to her interlocutor's negative face), FTA/self to PF (S/H makes a face-threatening act to her own positive face), FTA/self to NF (S/H makes a face-threatening act to her own negative face), FBA/self (S

makes a face-boosting act to her positive face), FBA/other (S makes a face-boosting act to her interlocutor's positive face).

The acts, either FTAs or FBAs, were counted in the data the following way:

- 1) In one turn, only one category of each act could be counted. This was done because of the difficulty that occurred when trying to define where one act stops and another, of the same category, begins. The decision, then, to count acts in this way was done for the sake of clarity. Clearly this procedure of counting has margin for error, but there would have been a similar margin of error if one sentence had taken to equal one act, since in reality an act can be carried out by the use of multiple sentences.
- 2) If one act (e.g. FTA on H's PF) could be readily interpreted as having another function (e.g. FTA on S's NF) the same act was counted twice, once into each category.

When extracts are drawn from the data to illustrate how acts are carried out the following marking is employed when dealing with acts directed to Positive Face:

blue	=	FTAs/other to PF
red	=	FTAs/self to PF
green	=	FBAs/self
light blue	=	FBA/other

When one act serves two or more purposes, e.g. FBA/self is also FBA/other, it is impossible to indicate the utterances in two or more colours. In such cases there will be a mention in the analysis for the multiple function of the act/s. The extracts, then, will not give out all the functions the acts may have. They will be marked in the colour corresponding to the act most readily interpreted in the context.

When acts are directed to Negative Face:

red	=	FTAs/other to NF performed on record
green	=	FTAs/other to NF performed off record
blue	=	FTAs/other to NF using the fifth strategy

The same definition of marking, as with the acts directed to PF, is applied with respect to NF, too. Thus, if the FTAs to NF coincide with each other or with

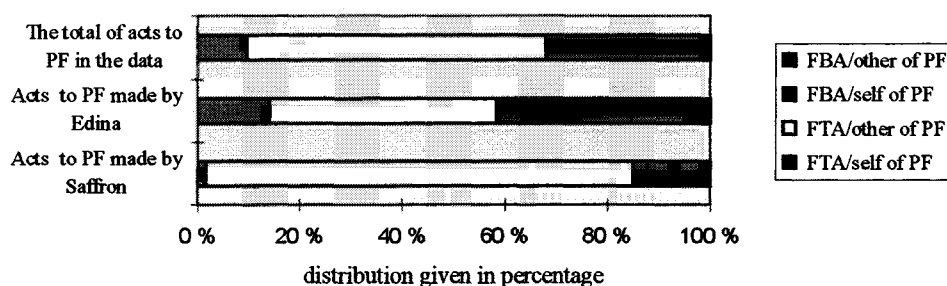
acts directed to PF, the most readily interpreted FTA determines the colour of marking.

## 6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 6.1 Face-threatening acts and face-boosting acts directed to positive face

Both hearer and speaker may experience threats to their positive face. The acts can be performed not only to the interlocutor's face, but also to one's own. In this section of the study, I will first attempt to create a general idea of what types of acts to PF are performed in the data, and, also, how frequent they are. To demonstrate the distribution of different acts directed to either speaker's or hearer's positive face, three tables were converted into Figure 4 below. The four colours symbolise different acts directed to PF done either by Saffron, by Edina or by the two characters together, marked 'total' in the figure. The figure is presented here to give an overall picture of the acts directed to Positive Face in the episodes analysed. The analysis, at this point, only deals with the positive side of the face.

Figure 4. The distribution of turns with acts directed to positive face in the entire data



In all, Edina performs 324 acts directed to positive face. Saffron makes altogether 187 acts to PF. The presentation above is given in percentages. So, when interpreting the figure, we have to bear in mind that the colours for the different acts are always related to the whole amount of acts by the two characters together, by Edina alone, or by Saffron alone. Thus, the 324 acts

constitute 100% when dealing with Edina's acts, but with Saffron 187 is the number that constitutes 100%. This fact may distort the presentation to a degree, as is the case below when dealing with FBAs/other.

When we compare the acts performed by Saffron and Edina, we notice that Saffron performs a higher amount of FTAs to H than Edina does. Most of these acts are directed toward Edina's Positive Face, but also Edina's friend, Patsy, receives violations by Saffron. The FTAs to H performed by Edina are frequently distributed between different characters. They are directed toward her own mother, her ex-husband, Justin, Saffron, Patsy and others. So, whereas Saffron repeatedly violates mostly Edina's PF, Edina, in turn, tends to violate many other characters' PFs.

The FBA/other category in the dialogues between mother and daughter is more frequently used by Edina (50 times). Saffron only does an FBA/other 23 times in the data, but when the share of these acts is given in percentage, as in the above figure, it may look as if Saffron performs nearly as many FBAs/other as Edina. In reality, the 23 times are related to the total of Saffron's acts to PF (187), whereas Edina's 50 times is related to the total of Edina's acts (324).

It is remarkable to notice the differences in the use of FBA/self and FTA/self to PF between the two characters. Proportionally, Edina makes a considerably higher number of FBAs. When we consider the amount of FTAs/other Saffron performs, and when we know that most of them are directed toward Edina's PF, it could be suggested that the number of FBAs/self by Edina is high because she often reacts to these FTAs by boosting her own face. She uses FBAs also as a reaction to the FTAs she performs on her own PF. She does, however, use FBAs in other situations as well, for instance in attempting to show personal accomplishment and ability (cf. extract on p. 57).

The category of FTAs/self in the data occupies the least used place of the four act types. Indeed, they are rarely used by Saffron (only three times in the data), but Edina, even though this is also her least used category of acts, still performs an FTA/self forty-six times in the data. Often, especially when performed by Edina, the FTAs/self function as a request for Saffron to boost Edina's PF for her. It is believed (Bayraktaroglu 1991:8) that one's interlocutors are allowed to develop one's face more than oneself.

### 6.1.1 Face-threatening acts and face-boosting acts directed to Edina's positive face

There are a number of instances in the data where Edina makes FTA/self to her PF by non-verbal action. These occasions are taken into the analysis as such, because they are conveyed to the reader in the stage directions. The FTAs/self to PF by Edina are either involuntary blunders, such as stumbling around drunk, or they are used to invite sympathy from her interlocutors, mostly from Saffron, as Edina hurts her own face and then expects hearers to tend to it. An example of the involuntary blunders is the following brief quotation from the episode *Fashion* where Edina comes home after a night out. Saffron is there to witness her mother's state:

*Saffron appears at front door. Patsy gets back into the car, and it drives off. Edina stands, shakily focusing on the door and tries to make her way to it.*

01 Edina: Sweetie, you needn't have waited up.

*She staggers and falls into the window well beside the front door, bottom-first, so no danger of real injury.*

(*Fashion*:24.)

With the FTA/self marked in red the reader is given an image of a woman who seems to be incapable taking care of herself. This is not an image that prevails of the stereotypical mother, the one that not only knows how to take care of herself, but also how to take care of everyone else in the family. With the FTA/self above the reader is shown that unlike the stereotypical mother, this mother does not have everything under control. By not being able to stand on her two feet, Edina is converted into the person who is expected to need caring, into the child. The stereotypical mother, the pure mother, would not get as drunk as Edina. The FTA/self seems to be used to create an image contrary to what is expected. The primary outcome of the use of this linguistic device is to show a violation in the stereotype, and, I would argue, the secondary outcome is humour. Finding the above situation humorous, however, is entirely dependent on the reader.



As an example of sympathy seeking FTAs/self to PF is a scene from the same episode, *Fashion*, where Edina is trying to persuade her daughter make her a cup of coffee. Saffron gives Edina instructions how to make the coffee herself. Edina, by referring to injuries, hopes to coerce Saffron into making her the coffee.

- 02 Saffron: Flattery won't turn me into your servant. The coffee is on the table in front of you ... Pick up spoon ... Put coffee in cup ... Pour boiling water.
- 03 Edina: Scald hand ... Third degree burns ... Screaming in agony. Do you really want that on your conscience, darling?

(*Fashion*:8.)

The FTA/self marked in red also performs an FTA/other to Saffron by accusing her off-record of neglecting her mother's well-being. This would seem to be the primary motivation for the act. It is frequently considered the mother's responsibility to be concerned about others' welfare, especially that of her children. Edina does an FTA/self by admitting indirectly that she has neither the will nor the ability to make a cup of coffee herself. Presenting herself as helpless as a child reverses the expected roles. The stereotypical mother is frequently the one who pampers and does things for her children. She is not viewed as self-serving nor does she expect anything in return from her children (Rich 1991). This, of course, is a myth, which is played on in the above extract, and also throughout the data, by creating a mother who seems to be almost the exact opposite. She thinks of her own best interests and wants everything for herself.

In turn 03 Edina reveals off-record her own incompetence. By hurting her own face Edina tries to shame Saffron into doing what Edina wants her to do. There are some humorous aspects that rise not only from the FTA/self to PF, but also from the way the FTA is performed — Edina continues the same style of discourse that Saffron uses in the previous turn, a style found in written instructions. The tone in Edina's turn is not used to instruct, but to tease Saffron for her previous turn by using the same style.

Edina tends to exaggerate a great deal to achieve the desired effect. She shows this manipulative streak of her character over and over again in the data. Most of the time, as is the case in the above extract, Edina manages to get her way with Saffron. Here, Saffron does end up making her mother the cup of coffee. It is the daughter that tends to her mother's needs and desires. Stereotypically it would be the mother who is expected to tend to her daughter's needs.

An even clearer example of the sympathy-seeking function of FTA/self to PF by Edina is the following quotation from the episode *Birth*:

04 Edina: Oh, God, I just hate all my clothes. Why have I never got anything to wear. What shall I put on? What, what, what shall I put on? I'm just fat, fat, fat. Why won't my cells stop dividing and multiplying?  
(*Birth*:118.)

The purpose of the FTA/self to PF is clearly to encourage Saffron to say something nice about her mother so that she would feel better about herself. Usually, the expectation is that if S violates his own face, his interlocutor/s contribute to developing his face. When an individual debases himself, he does it in the assurance that other participants will not take his word seriously and that they will "contribute to his image building better than he himself can or is allowed to do." (Bayraktaroglu 1991:8.)

Although Edina repeatedly violates her own positive face here, she does not achieve the desired reaction from Saffron. When Edina violates her own PF, she leaves herself vulnerable to Saffron's reply. Saffron does not disagree with Edina's statement about herself, thereby hurting Edina's face even further. It is unexpected that H would contribute to the FTA/self made by S, since it shows disrespect to S's face. It seems here that the FTA/self is used as a linguistic device to depict a very uncertain woman. The characteristics commonly associated with teenagers, such as, in this case, insecurity, are often assigned to Edina, giving yet another piece of evidence that there may be a role-reversal between mother and daughter. That the insecure mother should ask for confirmation from the secure teenager seems ridiculous. Stereotypes are continually challenged in the data by the use of violations of the politeness

principle. In this case the violation was done to the speaker herself. It may be humorous to see other characteristics than the stereotypical ones assigned to both mother and daughter.

Not only does Edina make proportionally more FTAs/self, but she also tends to boost her own PF a great deal more than Saffron. Often this is done as a reaction to an FTA performed either by herself or by someone else, frequently by Saffron. In *Fat*, Edina violates her own PF in a conversation about Saffron's future, but, in the same turn, she attempts to redress the damage done to her PF by trying to boost it herself by using *marvellously*:

05 Edina:           Anyway, I want better for Saffy. I don't want her ending up looking like me with all my very marvellously complicated hang-ups.

(*Fat*:42.)

Edina breaks the expectations by pre-modifying 'hang-ups' as something 'marvellously complicated'. *Hang-up* refers to an emotional problem or inhibition and has a negative connotation (*The Dictionary*). Edina, however, chooses to pre-modify it with the positive adjective *marvellous*, to boost her own Positive Face. The attempt of trying to make 'hang-ups' sound glorified may be seen as humorous. By juxtaposing 'hang-up' with 'marvellous' the utterance goes against the expected frame when one hears the word 'hang-up'. While the utterance above, marked in green, performs a face-boosting act to Edina's own face (remember that FBAs are always directed to the positive side of face), she performs an FBA to Saffron's face in the same sentence by saying "I don't want her ending up looking like me," too. Edina indicates that she wants better for Saffron by damaging her own positive face. This could indicate that she does sometimes have stereotypical characteristics as a caring mother. Edina tries to correct the damage to her own face that occurs when she boosts Saffron's face in turn 05 by performing an FBA/self in the same turn. This is a point where Edina slips back into her expected behaviour. She attempts to see something good in herself. In sum, it seems that the momentary lapse into a caring mother is corrected by a swift return to the self-centred person, the unconventional mother which she is depicted as throughout the data.

Edina also uses FBAs/self to give an air of personal accomplishment. The following quote is from the episode *Morocco*, where Edina explains to Saffron her perception of the local people:

06 Saffron            Tut-tut-tut-tut.  
 07 Edina:            Sweetie, we dragged these people screaming into the twentieth century. We gave them all the mod-cons, darling. We gave the non-squat toilet, toilet tissue, darling. I mean, how do you think they used to wipe their bottoms before we came along...?  
(Morocco:57.)

She uses the inclusive ‘we’ to show that she has participated in the civilising the Moroccan people. She questions how it has been possible for the people to Morocco to survive before the Western inventions reached the country. By saying “...before we came along,” she assumes an active role in the civilisation of this culture and its people. This underlines the wish to be acknowledged, at every turn.

Face-boosting acts, as seen above, often function as reactions to FTAs Edina’s PF made by Saffron. Frequently, when Saffron shows signs of contempt, as in her turn above, Edina attempts to justify her opinions or actions to Saffron by boosting her own face. A clearer example of the function of justification is given in the following extract taken from the episode *Poor*. Saffron has been concerned about the amount of money her mother spends and has urged her mother to switch her enormous car into a smaller one, for economic reasons. Money-spending is usually considered more the parents’ concern in relation to their children. When Saffron notices that Edina has, indeed, done as she wished, only not switching to a cheaper, smaller car, but to a very expensive smaller car, she is appalled.

08 Saffron:    (*Appalled.*) That’s not the car?

*Edina and Patsy are getting into a spanking new Alfa Romeo Spyder.*

09 Edina:        Smallest one I could find, darling. It’s tiny, look. There’s barely room for the basket in here, darling. No room for you, I’m afraid. I told you so, unless Patsy wants you on her knees. (*To Patsy.*) Do you,

darling? No? (*To Saffron.*) She doesn't want you, darling. Safety first. Bye, sweetie.

*They drive off erratically.*

(*Poor: 108-109.*)

Edina boosts her own face by taking the credit for having conformed to Saffron's wishes, which she obviously has failed to do. Again, we notice that it is the mother that assumes the characteristics frequently assigned to children. It is children that usually obey their parents, not parents their children. The stereotypes are challenged by Edina attempting to attest that she has, indeed, done what Saffron wanted. She also tries to boost Saffron's face to avoid any rebuke from her daughter. So, Edina's FBAs here are not only directed to her own positive face, but also to Saffron's, since she tries to assure her daughter how cooperative she has been. And, they function not only as a reaction to Saffron's statement of disbelief, which has a disapproving tone, but also as a preventive measure against Saffron's future reprimands. By exiting from the speech event, using the fifth strategy, Edina leaves no possibility for a conflict situation with her daughter.

A further feature here that cannot be ignored is the use of tautology, which Edina uses to further emphasise how much in agreement she is with Saffron in needing only a small car. By using analogous ways of expressing "small", she tries to convince Saffron of how cooperative she has, in fact, been. The fact that a mother tries to convince her daughter that she has cooperated seems humorous, even ludicrous. By attesting that she has done everything she was expected, Edina seems to reduce her own power status as a parent. Again, it seems that the roles of mother and daughter are turned around: mother assuming the power status and characteristics of the daughter, and daughter assuming the more powerful position, behaving as a responsible adult. By saying "Safety first," Edina tries to stress how responsible she is. This, too, is a reaction to Saffron's earlier rebukes of how mindlessly and immaturely her mother behaves; but it also functions as a pre-emptive measure for any future implications to the alleged behaviour.

Edina's FBAs to her own face may help create humour because we are often expected to be somewhat humble about ourselves. They may be seen to be functioning as a sign of Edina's wish to be viewed as an agreeable

person. The context of the FBAs, together with the Edina's characteristics, provide the necessary background, against which Edina's feeble attempts to boost her face appear humorous.

Although Saffron's image is that of a very uncompromising girl, she does sometimes try to give her mother the confidence she seems to want. This happens especially, it seems, when the topic revolves around Edina's belief that she is fat. The following extract from the episode *Fat* serves to demonstrate that Saffron does not always only offend her mother's PF. The instances where she boosts Edina's face usually do not make a long-lasting impression, since Saffron tends to go back to hurting Edina's face soon after the face-boosts.

- 10 Edina: Coffee, black. I shouldn't drink milk. Oh, god, why am I so fat?  
 11 Saffron: You're not *so* fat.  
 12 Edina: I am. Why?  
 13 Saffron: Mum, you eat too much. You drink too much and you take no exercise.

(*Fat*:29.)

The FBA on Edina's PF functions as a mitigation for the FTA/self Edina performs to her own PF in the previous turn. Saffron attempts to deny, at least partly, the truthfulness of her mother's claims that she is fat. The reason why the truth-value is challenged only partially, is because there is an underlying implication that Saffron agrees that her mother is 'a little' fat, but not as fat as she perceives herself to be. This partial denial is indicated by the repetition of "so fat", with the 'so' italicised, to give it stress. By saying this Saffron indicates that her mother is exaggerating her condition and that Saffron does not view the situation as serious as Edina does. Partial disagreement may be taken as Saffron's attempt to boost Edina's face. But, even if there is some attempt to make Edina feel better about herself the weak face-boost is undermined by Saffron's turn 13, where she in fact confirms, off-record, her mother's fear that she is fat. So, whatever beneficial impact Saffron's FBA may have in turn 11, it is altered by the FTA in turn 13. This creates an image of a brutally honest daughter who does not consider her mother's feelings.

Perhaps this indicates the selfish side of Saffron and depicts her as more like the "normal" teenager.

We notice that in the quoted sequence Saffron is the one Edina solicits for understanding and sympathy. She is the one Edina turns to for answers as to why she is fat. It seems that Saffron assumes the role of a person with more knowledge and more power. It is the mother, and not the daughter, that normally has these associated characteristics. Furthermore, stereotypically one would expect it to be of more concern for the teenager to be slim, especially in the 1990s when women are expected to be very slim (even when the counter-culture, the emphasis on health rather than slimness, exists). And more often it is expected that the teenager is the one needing the boost for her ego from the mother, than vice versa. Edina's need to consult her daughter for advice seems humorous in light of what one would normally expect.

Now, we will look at the FTAs to Edina's PF by Saffron. The FTAs may aid us in explaining how the stereotypical image of a mother is violated in the present data and what the outcomes of these violations are.

There seems to be a tendency in *Ab Fab* for Saffron to make frequent infringements on her mother's PF, either on or off record. There is an abundance of bald on-record face-threatening acts in the data. Some of them will be cited to demonstrate the function they have in creating the images of the two characters and also to demonstrate what reaction on-record action receives from the interlocutors. On the one hand, since an on-record FTA has only one possible interpretation, the speaker in these instances is always under tremendous danger of face retribution on the part of the hearer. On the other hand, S can get credit for outspokenness and avoid the danger of being misunderstood (Brown and Levinson 1987:71). When using the off-record strategy S can evade responsibility of the FTA. Off-record FTAs are frequently interpreted to be strong in the FTA intensity. The use of both on-record and off-record strategies are discussed using examples to give the reader an idea how the strategies function in the scripts. Also, an attempt is made to point out the possible reasons for comic outcomes.

Saffron can talk to her mother in the most disrespectful ways, without too much fear of retaliation. The fact that Saffron can do many FTAs to Edina's PF, seems to indicate that Saffron ranks herself higher on the power

scale than Edina. This in itself is peculiar and goes against the conventional understanding of where mothers and daughters stand in relation to each other. A further peculiarity is that Saffron also is shown to be free to do the FTAs (either on PF or NF) baldly on-record. All this helps creating an image of a daughter who assumes characteristics commonly related to mothers, with the reservation that few mothers would behave as bluntly toward their children as Saffron does in the following example taken from the episode *Fashion* with bald on-record acts marked in blue:

14 Saffron:        You stupid, sad, old cow.  
15 Edina:         Oh, shut up. I will look fabulous.

(*Fashion:5.*)

Although this extract is from a sequence describing what happens in Edina's dream, it still shows how Saffron is given the character of a blunt, even rude, daughter. She calls her mother names baldly on-record. None of the attributes ('stupid,' 'sad,' and 'old') Saffron gives her mother is positive in nature. It has been argued that the speaker chooses the on-record strategy when he (or she as is the case above) does not fear retaliation from H. This can be done when S is in a higher power position than H, or when he does not feel the FTA is very strong. (Brown and Levinson 1987.) Here, however, the FTA is very strong and aimed directly at Edina's PF. Still, it is uttered. Here, the violation of PP, I argue, is done to create a surprise element into the text to amuse the reader.

We have to remember that this is Edina's dream and, as such, it seems to describe the view Edina has of her daughter (blunt and rude) and of herself (assertive, putting stop to her daughter's comments). The sequence may be viewed as a demonstration of the person Edina would like to be — nipping a flow of nasty comments from her daughter in the bud. This is shown by turn 14 receiving an on-record FTA from Edina. She only directs her FTA to Saffron's Negative Face. In intensity this counter FTA seems to be milder than Saffron's FTA, even when it, too, is delivered baldly on-record. One would normally expect a stereotypical mother to tell her daughter off in case of such appalling behaviour. Apart from the FTA/other there is no graver retaliation from Edina.



This seems to further indicate that Edina acknowledges Saffron's higher position in terms of power between the two.

Edina seems to ignore the bald on-record violation of her face as a non-serious act. Having paid it some attention, she quickly moves to boost her own face with "I will look fabulous". This may be seen as one way to reduce the gravity of Saffron's FTA. Edina indicates to Saffron how little importance her opinions are to her, by contradicting, off-record, the proposition of Saffron's FTA. Through the attempt to restore face Edina may be trying to assume some of the power commonly associated with parents. The FTA to Saffron's NF may be viewed both as a defence mechanism, putting a stop to further abusive language, or even as a sign of contempt for the FTA Saffron uttered. Unfortunately, since written text lacks any paralinguistic features, such as intonation and pitch, these interpretations are only suggestions.

Whatever the case may be in terms of Edina's turn, we can agree that it is most unexpected to hear a teenager addressing her mother in the manner above. Even if it were the mother saying such things to her daughter, it would be highly unexpected. Thus, it may be the topic, the words, Saffron uses and their connotations in the context, rather than how the FTA is delivered (baldly on-record) that gives the effect of such utter contempt and disrespect. If Saffron had said "You silly woman," even if the utterance were delivered baldly on-record, it would still not carry the force it does with "You stupid, sad, old cow." It can be suggested that here rather than challenging the stereotypical daughter and mother, it is the appropriate behaviour of any two people, however close in social distance, that is being violated.

To view an example that is more off-record we now move to a sequence taken from the episode *Morocco*, where Edina has just disposed of Saffron's luggage, leaving Saffron with nothing to wear apart from the clothes she is in.

- 16 Edina:            (*To Saffron, who is sulking about her rucksack.*)  
                           Take that look off your face. I've got enough stuff  
                           here you can borrow.
- 17 Saffron:         I'd rather wear a yashmak.

(*Morocco:55.*)

In her turn, Saffron makes an off-record FTA on Edina's PF by indirectly refusing her offer of the use of her clothes. Not only is Saffron's turn an off-record refusal, but it is, perhaps even more so, an off-record attempt to show her mother that she resents her for getting rid of her bag, as well as demonstrating, off-record, how undesirable she views Edina's clothes. The intensity of the statement, even when off-record, can be readily interpreted. A Yashmak is a veil that conceals the face except the eyes, worn by some Muslim women when in public. A Western woman is very unlikely to have any aspirations of wearing such an outfit. This reveals the intensity of Saffron's turn is revealed despite it being off-record.

When turn 17 is viewed as a separate entity from the whole episode, as is done here, there seems not to be any amusing aspect to it. However, when we take into consideration the way Saffron managed to convince her mother to let her go on the trip to Morocco with Patsy and Edina, using Edina's ignorance<sup>6</sup>, we may be persuaded to view the sequence quoted as one of the pinnacle points of the comedy. It reveals the resentment between the two characters, which, as a rule, is the source of much of the humour used in *Ab Fab*. Edina's resentment becomes apparent when she gets rid of Saffron's luggage and Saffron's resentment of her mother and her actions become apparent in her off-record statement about rather wearing a yashmak. According to the mother myth, mothers are not 'good' if they resent their children (Rich 1991). Teenagers, on the other hand, are almost expected to resent their parents in their adolescent years.

In the episode *Morocco* Edina's resentment toward Saffron is taken a step further when she does not resent Patsy having sold Saffron to someone in exchange for, not a camel this time, but for very little money. The amount of money received for Saffron seems to implicate of how little value she is. When Saffron finds her mother again, after a while, Edina saves her own face by hugging her daughter as to show she was worried about her daughter's absence and by implying that they, Patsy and Edina, have in fact been searching her, which is to the reader an obvious lie.

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<sup>6</sup> Saffron: Let me go to Morocco.  
 Patsy: No.  
 Edina: (*Relieved*) Well, why not? Let her go to Morocco ... We're going to Marrakesh!

### 6.1.2 Face-threatening acts and face-boosting acts directed to Saffron's positive face

In the following some on-record and some off-record infringements to Saffron's PF by Edina are dealt with. In the analysis of Saffron's PF the focus will be on face-threatening acts. The FTAs performed by Saffron on her own PF will be disregarded in the analysis, because of the infrequency of such acts (out of all acts she makes on PF, only 1.6% is given to FTA/self to PF). For the same reason — infrequency — the FBA/self-category, too, will be ignored.

As an example of an on-record FTA by Edina to Saffron's PF is the following extract from the episode *Birth*:

- 18 Saffron: Well, at least Gran loved you, Mum. I know you never wanted me. I know I was a mistake.  
 19 Patsy: Pretty accurate so far.  
 20 Edina: You're not a mistake, sweetie. You're just a little miscalculation, yeah, but, I mean, it doesn't matter now, sweetie. It doesn't make any difference now, sweetie.

(*Birth*:132.)

Here, Edina states, on-record, that Saffron was not wanted. She does not use the exact words of never having wanted Saffron, which Saffron uses in her turn, but she does admit that Saffron is right, thus making the FTA go on-record. There is, however, an attempt to mitigate the strong FTA on Saffron's PF. Edina denies that Saffron is a mistake, but then in the same turn admits that she is a 'miscalculation' which, in the context, is assumed to mean the same as 'mistake' but is a weaker word than 'mistake'. The denial functions as mitigation. Also, 'miscalculation' is mitigated by the pre-modification 'just a little'.

The strongest mitigation comes after the FTA, namely the repetition that Saffron's birth not being planned does not signify anything at present. The redundancy of the statement also has the effect that it is of great importance to Edina to have Saffron believe that what was in the past is not important. Usually, the two mitigating utterances would be interpreted positively, but depending who does the interpreting they can also be interpreted negatively. In a way, one could think that what Edina here means is that "It

does not matter now, since the damage is already done and Saffron is born". This interpretation is probably the correct one considering the type of mother Edina is.

In a flash-back, in the same episode, to the day when Saffron was born it is clearly indicated that Edina was not at all interested in having her daughter. In fact she was expecting a lady from the adoption agency to "turn up." It is left up to the imagination of the reader to figure out what happened afterwards, whether Edina actually decided to keep Saffron, or if it was merely an accident that she was left with her. Edina's truthfulness, however mitigated, about Saffron not being a wanted child seems to give rise to humour, perhaps based on the fact that the stereotypical 'good' mother would never allow herself to state such a fact to her child, perhaps she would not even allow herself feel this way. Despite the attempt to mitigate the message, the core of the message remains strong, and results in a strong on-record FTA to Saffron's PF.

In the present data doing FTAs on record seems to be a frequent device for creating humorous effects. Here outspoken characters ignore each other's face wants and needs. If this technique were applied in real-life conversations the speaker would easily receive a reputation of an ignorant and even boorish person. The speaker is normally expected to attempt to pay back in face what he takes away by doing an FTA (Brown and Levinson 1987:71). In the data, however, there is very little attempt to do this. Even when mitigation is used, the effect frequently is the same as in the extract above — almost non-existent in connection with the core-message delivered. Why going on-record about sensitive topics, such as above, may be experienced funny is probably because we often feel the need to stifle the impulses of wanting to say something on-record in real life. To read about characters that risk behaving this way is both surprising and exhilarating. That the characters go on-record so often is something that goes against expectation. The apparent lack of tact of the characters, in the above case Edina, appears to be one of the most important characteristics of both mother and daughter.

Ultimately, the topic of the conversation is too inflammable and the end result is that Saffron and Patsy go at each other physically. The topic

then together with organisation of the interaction result in an open conflict, which is never really resolved.

Even though many violations to Saffron's PF are also performed by Patsy, Edina's best friend, only one incident will be viewed (see p. 86) because it takes the conflicts that exist in the data to another, physical, level. The mother and daughter never reach this intensity, no matter how severe the face-threat has been. We will now move to inspect violations of Saffron's PF delivered off-record by examining some extracts from the data. These extracts will point out the ways in which off-record violations of PF are done and also give suggestions what the functions of these violations are in the discourse of the present data.

It is said that when a speaker goes off-record there is always more than one communicative intention applicable to the act (Brown and Levinson 1987:69). This causes ambiguity of the FTA, which, in turn, enables the speaker to remain unaccountable for her/his actions. Making questions, including rhetorical questions, is merely one off-record strategy employed in the data. Others include irony, repetitions, and any hints that enable S not to be in the position where he could risk his own face and possibility of receiving retribution. As previously mentioned, irony is deemed endemic to British humour (Alexander 1980). Much of this can also be seen in the data at hand.

Both characters, Edina and Saffron, use the off-record strategy quite frequently to criticise each other's behaviour. Criticism that hurts H's PF is often accomplished by using questions (Brown and Levinson 1987:128). The critique is successful if H is asked something of past action or actions and he cannot provide a reasonable explanation for it/them. As an example of off-record critique and consequently a PF violation, let us examine the following extract from the episode *Death*, where Saffron and Edina's mother have tried to break Edina the news of her father's death, and Edina's mother has finally uttered the words "Your father is dead". In the extract, shown below, Saffron is congratulating her Grandmother for having been able to tell the news to Edina:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 21 Saffron: | Well done, Gran.   |
| 22 Edina:   | Well done? Has she finished him off or something?                                    |
| 23 Mother:  | ( <i>To Saffron.</i> ) That <i>was</i> it, wasn't it, dear? I'm not going mad, am I? |

24 Saffron:           (*Crying.*) Grandad has died. Is that all you can do,  
all you can say? Don't you think Gran needs a little  
bit more?

(*Death.31.*)

In turn 22 Edina criticises Saffron for her prior utterance in turn 21. This off-record criticism is accomplished by using the question: "Well done?" The clarification as to why Edina's first question is a criticism is provided in the second question that declares how Edina could interpret Saffron's encouragement to her Grandmother. Edina is indirectly criticising Saffron for the FBA she performs to Grandmother's PF in turn 21. Turn 22 turn has many functions, one of which being the function of off-record criticism of Saffron. Another function is an apparent attempt to create humour by addressing a taboo topic in an off-record manner. The use of an interrogative is easily interpreted as irony. Edina gibes at her mother by implying that she could have had a hand in her father's death. In a similar situation in real-life discourse this type of humour would be found inappropriate for the occasion. Here, however, even taboo subjects such as death, are made fun of.

Edina's turn seems to indicate that she does not take her father's death seriously. She knows he is dead, but it seems not to affect her in the least. Here Edina is briefly seen in the role of the daughter. Even in the role of a daughter she deviates from the norm. It is expected that a daughter grieves over the loss of her father. The apparent disregard for his death shows that she is not 'good' as a daughter, either. In fact, outside the quoted sequence, the reader learns that Edina is more concerned that no one in the wake touch her precious art, which is precious to her only because it is so expensive.

To see how the off-record FTA on Saffron's PF makes her react, we continue examining the sequence. Saffron responds to her mother's criticism by returning the same off-record criticism. In turn 24 she appears to be criticising her mother of being unable to show concern or being incapable of grieving by asking her the two questions in blue in the extract. This is Saffron's reaction to her mother being quite untouched by her father's death, which shows in turn 22. Although the remark in turn 22 is probably intended to humour the reader (ultimately the viewer), Saffron, here, interprets it seriously and takes offence which is reflected in her critique of her mother. She shows

dismay and disapproval at her mother's lack of emotion. Again, it can be seen how Saffron adopts the role of the one who is more sensible and knows how to behave correctly and appropriately. This underlines not only the inappropriate feelings Edina seems to hold, but also the irreverent behaviour she displays. Once more we see an apparent role-reversal.

Saffron's character is prudent and sensible. This feature is often the target of her mother's off-record critique and mockery, because she seems to think of herself as a modern, youthfully wild person and would like her daughter to adopt some of those characteristics. In the following extract Edina does an off-record FTA to Saffron's PF. The extract is from the episode *Morocco* where Edina, Patsy and Saffron are at the pool by themselves. As they arrived to Marrakech, Morocco, Edina caused Saffron to lose her luggage at the airport. For this reason Saffron is now relying on her mother for a bathing suit:

- 25 Edina:            (*To Saffron.*) Did you find any swimsuits?  
 26 Saffron:          Haven't you got any low-cut ones?  
 27 Edina:            We haven't any knee-length swimsuits, darling, with  
                           us.  
 28 Saffron:          (*Worried about sunburn.*) Have you got cream on,  
                           Mum?

(*Morocco:61.*)

The two turns in blue indicate the off-record violations to H's PF. In turn 26 Saffron's question may be taken as a simple request for information. It does, however, have an alternative interpretation. With this question Saffron answers Edina's inquiry by indicating that she has, indeed, gone through the swimsuits available, but she did not find anything she liked. Further, an element of off-record critique can be detected from Saffron's turn. She criticises her mother's supply of bathing suits by indirectly referring that she was not happy with the ones she saw. After all, throughout the data, it is understood how Saffron dislikes, at times even despises, her mother's taste in clothes. On the surface this would be quite normal teenager's view of her mother's clothes. Only, the fact that Edina is always very fashion conscious, or at least obediently follows every trend set by the fashion world, suggests that it is Saffron who behaves unlike a teenager, assuming that teenagers are more aware, and more keen on

following the trends. This portrays Saffron as being old-fashioned, something that mothers are often thought to be by their teenage children.

Edina appears to pick up on Saffron's off-record critique by doing an off-record FTA/other to Saffron's PF herself (turn 27). She repays Saffron for her off-record criticism about the swimsuit selection. She provides an answer to Saffron's inquiry. This gives the sense of cooperation. However, by exaggerating ("We haven't any knee-length swimsuits, darling, with us."), and off-record implying that her daughter is too prudent, she uses irony to effect. The use of the term 'knee-length swimsuits' when Saffron has indicated that she is not happy with the revealing cut of the swimsuits she found in her mother's wardrobe, indirectly tells the reader that Edina is mocking her daughter's taste and teases her, off-record, about her apparent shame to wear any swimsuit Edina has to offer. On the surface level, Edina's turn seems cooperative and amicable. She even uses a term of endearment when answering to Saffron. This term, though, could, in this context, be also taken as a device for condescension.

This sequence gives rise to humour. When the context is given, and the personalities of the two characters are known, one prudent and the other imprudent, the clash between the two features can be seen as funny. Most probably the humour has more to do with the fact that it is indeed the daughter who is prudent and the mother who is imprudent rather than vice versa, as one would frequently expect. Additional humorous flavour is provided by the indirect mocking of Saffron's shame, when, in real life, mothers would probably not encourage their teenage daughters to show off their body. Again, then, we detect a re-framing of a conventional frame to create a flash of humour in the text.

Saffron's reaction to turn 28 is merely that of directing Edina's attention to something else, to prevent any further face-loss. Often, when a topic is too 'hot' it is dropped to maintain one's own face (Barnlund 1989). This is precisely what Saffron does. She directs Edina's attention to another topic by showing concern for her skin.

In the data, when an FTA is done off-record, or even on-record, the effect to the reader is, often, that the hearer is offended or insulted to some degree. However, there seems to be little, if any, apology after an offence is



made. It has been claimed that often when apologies are uttered, S can be thought to anticipate a complaint on the part of the hearer about the act S is apologising for, which prompts him to express apology (Fraser 1981:256). Are we to understand that in the scripts of *Ab Fab* the two main characters are not at all sensitive to each other's face wants, let alone aware of the severity of the FTAs they do to each other? This might explain the humour in *Ab Fab* from, yet, a different aspect. Brown and Levinson (1987:68) claim that by apologising S accepts responsibility of the FTA by damaging his own face. When, then, the two characters seldom apologise for any FTA they do on H's face, they go against the norm of the politeness principle and the expected mode of behaviour in English language communication.

It is often not easy to identify precisely the meaning behind an FTA made off-record. In real-life situations, shared knowledge between S and H is required to decode the intended messages. Often an out-group member would not be able to do this task without extra information about the interlocutors and their background. An in-group membership would, then, seem desirable in making interpretations of any speech events. In the data the background is provided by the author and, thus, making interpretations is fairly straightforward, for the reader is given a position of an in-group member by giving him a lot of information about the characters, both through the dialogues, and the stage directions.

Most of the face-boosting acts Edina directs to the hearer are directed not to Saffron but to her friend Patsy with whom Edina wishes to be agreeable. Here, however, we will concentrate on examining the FBAs done to Saffron. I am interested in establishing any possible generalities that motivate Edina's use of FBAs to her daughter's PF. The extract given here is from the episode *Fashion*. It seems that Edina's goal in boosting her daughter's PF is not to please Saffron as such, but to benefit herself from the positive mood the FBA may cause in her daughter:

29 Edina: Sweetie, darling, please fetch mama a cup of coffee. You're so clever, darling, you know where everything is, sweetie. I think it's so clever to know exactly where things are. I do think you're marvellous.

30 Saffron: Flattery won't turn me into your servant. The coffee is on the table in front of you ... Pick up spoon ... Put coffee in cup ... Pour boiling water.  
(*Fashion:7-8.*)

Edina attempts to boost Saffron's face continuously in turn 40. We may view the turn either as having one long FBA to Saffron's PF, or may think that the turn consists of many FBAs made in sequence. In the quantitative analysis of the FBA or FBAs in this turn we counted as one, since they appear within a single turn of speech.

When we examine the turn, we notice that in making the FBA Edina uses redundancy in speech. This violates the maxim of Quantity. Tautologies may function as excuses and criticisms, but in the above case repetition is used more to invite Saffron to look for an informative interpretation in the otherwise non-informative utterance (Brown and Levinson 1987:220). Edina repeats, by using slightly different words, that she feels Saffron is a very aware person. Knowing what a studious, serious, sensible and astute person Saffron is, this may be just the topic with which her face can best be caressed. But because of her smartness, and a life long acquaintance with her mother, Saffron is very likely to immediately interpret the real meaning behind her mother's FBA. That, and the utterance prior to the FBA reveals that Edina wants something. There is no reason to doubt that the only reason why Edina goes through the effort of boosting Saffron's PF is to get her daughter to make her a cup of coffee. Thus, Edina's comments are not motivated by altruistic reasons, but are entirely self-serving.

To make the FBA more appealing, in terms of its effect, Edina uses terms of endearment, such as 'darling,' and 'sweetie.' She does not restrict the use of these terms to the contexts where she wants something, but also uses them generously in any other situation. They may be described as two of her favourite words in terms of how often they appear in the data.

Edina's use of the overstatement "everything" and the precision adverb "exactly" are used in connection with the FBA to further aid her want to be fulfilled. In this case the FBA does not work — at least not immediately. Saffron, in her turn, clearly refuses to comply with her mother's request, even when the refusal is done off-record. At the end of the sequence, however,

Saffron does serve her mother's wants. It is unlikely, though, that the surrender by Saffron is accomplished by the FBA made here. It is more likely that Edina's persistence wears Saffron down, and she gives in to shut her mother up.

The use of the FBA here functions against the expected frame. In real life parents often fulfil their children's wants and needs. There are many occasions that could be related about children's perseverance when they want something. They are known to use various tactics to achieve their goal, one of them possibly being FBAs, especially if we deal with older children.

In the above extract, however, the mother is the one trying to convince her daughter to do something for her. Often, if a parent were to ask a child for a performance of an act, he is unlikely to resort to flattery to get the request fulfilled. Often much more direct requests, perhaps with mitigation, but with no real option to opt out, would be used by parents (Blum-Kulka 1990). However, here it is Edina here who behaves in the way a child is expected to behave. Why she needs to go through so much trouble in making her request, cushioning it with FBAs and mitigation, is perhaps explainable by her perceived inferior power status in relation to her daughter. This may be the case at least in this extract.

Edina uses FBAs/other to Saffron either when she wants an act to be done for her by Saffron. Other main functions for the face-boosting would be to either indirectly criticise by using irony, or attempting to soften a message that would otherwise be devastatingly offending to Saffron, as in the following extract:

- 31 Saffron: What was my birth like?  
 32 Edina: Your birth!  
 33 Patsy: Ho-ho-ho!  
 34 Edina: (*Glares at Patsy.*) Shut up, shut up! (*To Saffron.*)  
 Beautiful, darling. It was gorgeous. It was lovely. I  
 knew it was the best moment of my life, darling. It  
 was like that ... **What's that, what's that lovely film?**  
*Bambi!* It was like *Bambi*. In a little forest glade,  
 darling. We were like those little ... dogs, darling.  
**What were they?**  
 35 Saffron: Deer.  
 36 Edina: Deer! We were like those little deer, darling. It was

lovely — so beautiful, sweetie.

(*Birth*:135.)

Frequently, when Edina attempts to soften the impact of her previous FTAs or the ones Patsy has performed on Saffron, she fails in the attempt. This is one way to create humour in the data. The redundancy in speech, as in the above example, gives an image that Edina does not believe in the content of her message herself, but that she tries to make it believable by tautology. Another point worth taking up here is that whenever the function of Edina's FBAs/other is the above, she seems to impair the message by her apparent lack of knowledge. For instance, in the above case, not knowing that Bambi was a deer undermines the message sent to Saffron. It is as if she was telling Saffron that "even though I'm telling you it was wonderful, I don't really, honestly, think that," which is the meaning that comes across at least to the reader.

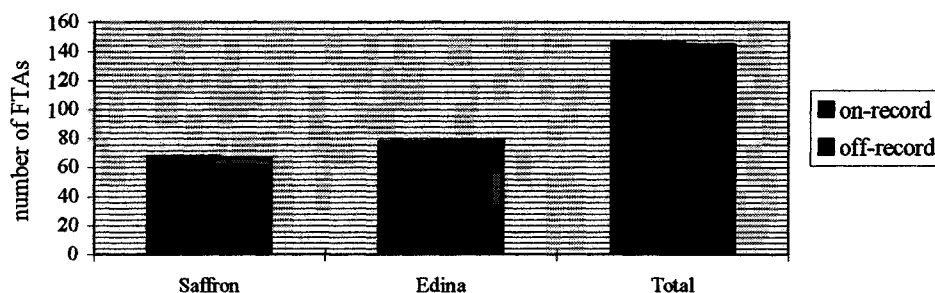
So boosting her daughter's face is of no real importance, and is merely done here, it seems, to keep up appearances. What also aids in coming to this conclusion is the dialogue preceding the quoted extract, where Patsy reveals that they, Edina and Patsy, had tied Saffron to the central reservation of the motorway when she had been three-years-old. Edina tries to stop Patsy from telling this, and ends up having to tell Saffron that nothing really happened: "you were like a homing pigeon." This, too, seems to undermine the feeble attempt to anoint Saffron's positive face in the above extract.

## 6.2 Face-threatening acts on negative face

In the following aspects of FTAs on NF will be examined to discover if the roles of the mother and daughter could be explained through the framework of negative face violations. Examining the data from this angle gives additional support to the role reversal of mother and daughter. The role reversal is shown, for instance, by Saffron's use of control acts on her mother. Regularly the style of parental control is according to Blum-Kulka (1990), "both highly direct and richly mitigated". In the data, Edina used more direct FTAs on Saffron's Negative Face than Saffron on hers, but as will be shown in the figure below, Saffron, too, uses the on-record strategy frequently in influencing her mother to

do what Saffron wants. It is, perhaps, not very frequent in real-life family discourse to find such an abundance of direct control acts, i.e. on-record FTAs on parents' NF, as is the case in the data at hand. Edina, uses much more mitigation in her FTAs to Negative Face than Saffron. In Figure 5. the mother and daughter's FTAs to NF are shown by percentage in relation to each other.

Figure 5. Distribution of FTAs directed to Negative Face



The total amount of FTAs performed in the data was 291. Out of these Saffron made 134 and Edina 157, so they were fairly equally divided between the two characters. The number of FTAs performed on record by Saffron was 68 as opposed to 66 times when she made FTAs to NF off record. The same numbers for Edina were 78 and 79. So, even the use of strategies with which the FTAs were delivered was quite even. The figure does not, however, reveal whether the FTAs were performed to H's NF or to that of the speaker herself, which would be the case, for instance, in offers. In counting the on-record FTAs, no attention was paid to whether the acts appeared baldly on-record, or on-record with some redress to H's face. The difference between the FTA being on-record or off-record was considered more pivotal in the analysis of the data. (To see more about the procedure applied in counting the FTAs please see p. 50 above.)

Since this section of the analysis deals with the negative side of face, it is automatically assumed that the FTAs are directed to that side, unless otherwise mentioned.

### 6.2.1 Face-threatening acts directed to Edina's negative face

In the following three extracts from the data, all of which are taken from the episode *Death*, it will be shown in the context how Saffron uses direct control acts that violate Edina's NF. Each of the three will be analysed in turn. Note that Saffron uses some of the six types of control acts<sup>7</sup> Blum-Kulka assigns to parental use even though she is the daughter, and not the mother. In the first extract Edina and Patsy are dancing in Edina's sitting-room in the middle of the night, playing heavy music. Saffron wakes up, goes downstairs, opens the sitting room door and says:

37 Saffron:           Keep the noise down. (Death:28.)

This is a request to stop an on-going activity. Saffron makes a bald on-record FTA to both Edina and Patsy's Negative faces. Because it is bald on-record, Saffron is assumed to have the power to say the FTA without fearing retaliation. Also, when considering Blum-Kulka's (1990) taxonomy, it is clear that such request is typically assigned to parental use. Here, however, it is the daughter who uses the control device.

In the second extract Saffron has just learned that her Grandfather is dead. She is now upstairs trying to get Edina to come downstairs to hear the news. Edina is being wrapped in hot-mud bandages head to foot by a beautician and for this reason is not keen to move downstairs. In the same sequence Saffron has already asked Edina, using conventionalised indirectness (Bayraktaroglu 1991:10), to come downstairs.

38 Saffron:           Gran is downstairs and she wants to see you.  
 39 Edina:            Oh — well, that's never really worked as a threat,  
                           that one, has it?  
 40 Saffron:           She's got some very *sad* news.  
 41 Edina:            Oh how tragic! Oh, what? What?  
 42 Saffron:           (*Begins to cry.*) I think she should tell you.

<sup>7</sup> See ch. 3.2 above for types of parental control acts.

- 43 Edina: Oh, come on. I'm doing something. Oh, God. What are you blubbing for now?
- 44 Saffron: Mum! Come downstairs now.  
*Edina gets up with difficulty and starts to go. Saffron looks at her.*  
 (Death:29-30.)

First, in turn 38, Saffron goes off-record to get her mother to come downstairs with her. She has already tried to persuade Edina to go to the kitchen, but now she is referring to Grandmother to make her wish to sound stronger. It is often stronger when S reports someone else having a part to play in the want S wants (Tannen 1986:165). This is why Saffron mentions that it is not only she who wants Edina to come downstairs, but also Grandmother. The FTA is off-record, and because of that it is seen that Saffron feels the need to pay redress to Edina's face, and that she considers the FTA as fairly strong. Here, we detect that Saffron does not assume the same power with her mother than she did in the extract above.

Edina bypasses the off-record request by off-record refusal that hurts Saffron's PF. In turn 40, Saffron continues to insist by remaining off-record and enticing Edina to be curious as to the topic of the sad news. Edina uses irony by breaking the Maxim of Quality and conveys a meaning of the topic of the sad news being of no real importance to her. She does, however, ask Saffron for explanation by asking "What?". The repetition here receives the function of telling the reader of Edina's annoyance about Saffron's insistence.

Saffron begins to cry, thus making an FTA/self to her PF and continues to refuse to tell her mother about the topic until Edina has done what Saffron is asking her to do, which is to come downstairs to hear the news. Saffron's last turn, it seems, gives an image of her being quite tired of performing FTAs off-record, and she suddenly assumes more power than daughters regularly have and commands her mother to come downstairs. It is as if in this sequence Saffron resorts to using an on-record FTA to Edina's NF as the last measure of getting her mother to do what she is asked to do.

Saffron uses Blum-Kulka's (1990) first type of control act — request for action. "Mum!" reflects Saffron's impatience in having to justify her want to get her mother downstairs. It can be labelled as an attention getter, or summons (Schegloff 1972), though it has the function of revealing

annoyance. It also continues the off-record attempts to get Edina downstairs. After the summons Saffron goes baldly on-record. This way she avoids giving her mother any more opportunities for off-record refusals. In the stage directions the reader notices how Saffron's control act bears fruit in that Edina actually gets up. It is assumed that the reason for this is Saffron's command. Later on the reader would find that Edina does, indeed, go downstairs.

In the third extract the context is as follows: Edina has been told about her father's death, and even though news about death of a close relation often leads to immense sorrow, Edina has not reacted according to the frame expected in situations such as these. Thus, Saffron is getting annoyed with her mother, and is telling her indirectly, by using bald on-record FTAs on Edina's NF, i.e. by commanding, that she is behaving inappropriately.

- 45 Saffron:        (*Angrily.*) Mum! Just go back upstairs and don't  
                          come down until you've really thought about it.  
46 Edina:           I have thought about it now, darling. I realize ...  
                          Come away from the old woman! Look, Mummy's  
                          upset ...  
47 Saffron:        Go!

(*Death:31.*)

In turn 45 Saffron's angry summons is uttered without any face redress. This particular summons is in a similar context as the one uttered by Saffron in the second extract above. Here, too, it has the function of showing the degree of annoyance displayed by Saffron about and to her mother. The summons is followed by a longer utterance where Saffron uses the first type of control act, request for action (Blum-Kulka 1990). Turn 45 functions as a command rather than a request. It is directed to Edina's NF. It also functions as a rebuke. The FTA seems to aid in creating a new type of frame, where it is the daughter, and not the mother, who does the reprimanding. Stereotypically, it would be more likely for the mother to scold her off-spring than to be in the receiving end of such action. So, we can categorise this as being yet another piece of evidence that there is a role reversal of mother and daughter, the daughter assuming behavioural patterns frequently associated with parents.

It should be noted that when Saffron says "... and don't come down until you've really thought about it." she tells her mother, off-record, to



go upstairs and think about her behaviour in hearing about Grandfather's death. Instead of saying "go and think about your behaviour" she says "don't come down until...". Saffron, then, seems to assume the power of deciding when her mother is allowed back with the rest of the people. Again, the power position seems to indicate that Saffron is functioning as the one in control. This frame breaking seen through the violations of Negative Face can be considered amusing in the Western cultural context. A mother's tolerance of her daughter's commanding tone is humorous because of the context created around the FTAs. Edina behaves like a child in refusing to see beyond herself. Her childish behaviour is amusing because it does not correspond to real life expectations. Edina's behaviour humours the reader probably because she seems to be allowed to act in a way that most adults are not.

We now continue the examination of the extract. In her reply, Edina boosts both her own and Saffron's face in "I have thought about it now, darling, I realize..." This functions as a sign of remorse for her behaviour and it is shown through submission (Vuchinich 1990:120, 123-125). The utterance is not finished, though. Instead, Edina moves on to request Saffron for action. "Come away from that old woman!" is also stated baldly on-record, and to add intensity to her utterance an exclamation mark is used. With 'old woman' Edina refers to Grandmother. This gives an image that Edina's mother is not important to her, since the connotation of the 'old woman' in this context signifies contempt. This command, bald on-record FTA to Saffron's NF, is used here predominantly to redirect Saffron's attention from whatever caused Saffron to rebuke Edina. Edina continues, in the same turn 46, on-record to Saffron. She summons Saffron's attention and continues to give reasons why Saffron should be more concerned about Edina than Grandmother by stating off-record that Saffron should console her. Thus, "Mummy's upset," although a statement in form, its function is to draw Saffron's attention to being concerned with Edina. At the same time "Look..." keeps Saffron's focus redirected on other issues than the one that got her upset.

Saffron, turn 47, clearly ignores Edina's attempts to distract her from the topic by remaining bald on-record with her mother. Her "Go!" is a direct control act, stated baldly on-record. Its function is to show Edina that her appeals to Saffron do not work. With this same command Saffron also tells her

mother that she is refusing to pay attention to her the way she would like Saffron to pay it. Again, Saffron assumes the power normally associated with parents rather than with children. Perhaps the intensity, emphasised with the use of an exclamation mark, of this FTA to Edina's NF, in combination with reverse power distribution, is what makes it so ludicrous.

Overall, the FTAs made on record to Edina's face by Saffron serve the function of either stopping Edina from doing an act or of commanding her to do something. There is very little use of redress unless the requests for action are off-record. In sum, Edina usually obeys Saffron, as we saw in the extract above. She may try to refuse her daughter, in the way children try to avoid doing something their parents ask them, but eventually she nearly always complies with Saffron's wishes or commands.

#### 6.2.2 Face-threatening acts directed to Saffron's negative face

So far, I have demonstrated Saffron's higher power position in terms of her having adopted characteristics normally applied to mothers and how this re-framing of roles may cause sequences to be amusing. There are, however, sequences in the data where it is Edina who employs on-record strategies to Saffron's NF. These occasions can be considered equally amusing. The use of on-record strategies in situations where more conventionally indirect strategies are expected may aid the interpretation of stereotypes being broken. It is, I believe, the employment of these unconventional strategies that helps display the characters in their reversed roles.

The importance of mitigation has been relatively ignored in the politeness literature, and its importance is often seen as secondary to indirectness in contributing to politeness (see e.g. Fraser 1981, Edmondson 1981, Brown and Levinson 1987, Faerch and Kasper 1989). For instance in Brown and Levinson's account, mitigation receives a sub-strategy status to positive and negative politeness. Such an account does not reveal the centrality of mitigation to family discourse. In the present data the FTAs Edina delivers on record to Saffron's NF seem to be frequently mitigated, whereas Saffron appears not to mitigate her on-record FTAs to Edina's NF. Next, we will

examine a few samples of Edina's bald on-record FTAs, many of which are mitigated. The following extract is from the episode *Poor*.

- 48 Edina: Oh, darling — make Mummy a cup of coffee, darling. Would you, sweetie, from the new machine, darling?  
 49 Mother: Oooh, a chappaccino.  
 50 Edina: (*Spelling it out.*) C-A-P-P-U-C-C-I-N-O. All right. (*To Saffron.*) Oh, go on, darling, make the most of Mummy while you're still at home, before you run away to be a student.

*Saffron goes to coffee machine.*

(*Poor:96-97.*)

In turn 48 Edina starts by using an attention getter, not only does this function as a summons for Saffron's attention, but it is also intended to redirect Saffron's attention away from the topic at hand, since in the turn before Edina's, Saffron complains about her childhood. "[M]ake Mummy a cup of coffee, darling," is then the message Edina wishes to say. This utterance is an FTA made baldly on-record, but is mitigated by using the term 'Mummy' that makes Edina a third person, and therefore, on the surface, the fulfilling of the request would not seem to benefit Edina, so much as it would benefit 'Mummy'. According to *The Dictionary* 'Mummy' is a colloquial term to 'mother' and has its etymology in imitation of child's pronunciation. This would seem to indicate that Edina uses it to give an image of herself as an innocent and dependent person, just like a child. Perhaps it is meant to evoke maternal instincts in Saffron, so that she would do what she is asked to do.

As an additional mitigation, Edina uses a term of endearment 'darling'. The most frequent terms of endearment employed by Edina are, indeed, 'darling' and 'sweetie'. According to Blum-Kulka (1990:278) they are conventional forms of endearment as opposed to innovative as would be a term 'doodlebing' in "my little doodlebing" for instance. The function of 'darling' is to soften the impact Edina's FTA might otherwise have on her daughter and perhaps aids her getting her way. On the other hand, the redundancy of forms of endearment as in turn 48 above could also be irritating to Saffron who decides to put a stop to it by complying with her mother's wishes.

In the same turn, Edina continues by moving from bald on-record strategy to conventionally indirect strategy, thus paying redress to Saffron's NF (negative politeness). Instead of expressing her request another time in a more conventionally indirect form, she merely uses a form that is conventionally indirect, "Would you", with ellipsis. The reader, then, draws on the previous utterance for the elliptic part, and concludes that Edina still wants Saffron to make her a cup of coffee. Also, as pointed out above, here we notice an excess of terms of endearment. The repetition causes humour by giving a beseeching image of Edina, when frequently it is the child that begs to her parents for something. It does, however, also give an idea of the intensity with which Edina wants an act, in this case making the coffee, to be done.

At this point Saffron does not answer either yes or no to her mother. In turn 50, Edina continues to appeal to her daughter for a cup of coffee. To the reader, this gives an image of a lazy and stationary woman with not enough willpower to even make herself a cup of coffee. She reverses the beneficiary of the fulfilment of the request, making it sound as if Saffron is the one who would be on the receiving end, "making the most of Mummy", while Edina would be sacrificing something in receiving the cup of coffee. "[M]ake the most of Mummy..." is made baldly on-record, but, indeed, has a more invisible off-record side to the FTA — it continues off-record the request of trying to persuade Saffron to do what Edina wants her to do. In other words it is both an on-record control act, as well as an off-record control act. The off-record interpretation is the real function of the FTA and is the one more readily interpreted in this context.

Saffron submits nonverbally by going to the coffee machine, indicating that she has the intention to fulfil her mother's request. The off-record strategy seems to be the strategy that finally convinces Saffron to do what her mother wants her to do. Either that, or the reader can also assume that Saffron is by that time so fed up with hearing her mother's constant appeals for action that she gives in. Whatever the interpretation, it is more important to notice how Edina's begging is unlike something mothers are expected to do. Moreover, Edina indulges in childish behaviour by appearing almost incapable of making herself a cup of coffee. This is seen in the use of "Mummy". It is also amusing to note how Edina is able to twist a simple thing such as a request

for coffee for herself to something that seems to benefit Saffron more as is the case in turn 50.

It has been claimed in politeness literature that when an FTA is not done – when there are no linguistic reflexes – it is the safest strategy if one wants to show redress to someone’s face (Brown and Levinson 1987:72). Moreover, it is assumed that when S uses Brown and Levinson’s fifth strategy, the FTA is of such threat to H that it is rather left undone and by leaving it undone it does not perform the face-threat. Brown and Levinson seem to ignore the potential face-threatening function silence may have.

In the data at hand there are occasions where the two characters can carry a face-threatening act by remaining silent. According to Sifianou (1995:96) drawing on Bronikowska silence, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) fifth strategy, is a ”complex and varied phenomenon, which is the result of the same strategic choices motivating speech act performance and which plays an equally essential role in the management of communicative encounters as talk does.” Often when participants of a speech event are close, even intimate, words are not needed to make interpretations as to the meaning of the silence. A certain look, for instance, may have the same effect as would a request uttered orally. This is the case in the following extract from the episode *Fashion*, where Edina wants Saffron to model for her in her fashion show. They have already established, in the previous dialogue, how Saffron opposes Edina’s fussing about her fashion shows and how she does not feel there to be anything special in them. In Saffron’s view, then, Edina makes much ado about nothing. Here Edina makes an off-record FTA on Saffron’s NF, even when she, in fact, uses the ”don’t do the FTA” strategy that is claimed to have most redress to the face:

*After a moment Edina slinks slowly back into the room, looking at Saffron with a pathetically sad expression on her face. Saffron doesn’t look up. She knows what is coming.*

51 Saffron: No  
 52 Edina: Darling, please...angel...sweetheart...baby doll.  
 53 Saffron: It’s your drama – you act in it.

*(Fashion:11.)*

In the stage directions the reader is told about Edina's non-verbal gestures. Because the context is clear to both the characters, as well as the reader, there need not be any explicit mention as to what the look might mean. Obviously, if Edina is merely looking at Saffron, and there are no lines attached to the description of this action, one must assume that there is complete silence during the act. Silence, in itself, can be considered significant. It may be that it is, indeed, the silence that gives Saffron the impression that her mother is actually doing something, i.e. "looking at Saffron with a pathetically sad expression on her face." Since Saffron has known Edina all through her young life, she guesses the intent of the silence.

Saffron ignores her mother's look by not looking at her in return. In the stage directions it is stated that Saffron knows what is coming - that she knows the look is merely an opening to bring up the same subject they had talked about only moments before. The stage directions would seem to signify that Edina is humbling herself before Saffron to achieve the wanted reaction.

When Saffron ignores the look, she does not ignore what her mother is trying to do. She simply says "No," to a request that has not even been verbalised that moment. She draws on information, as does the reader, that has been given in the same sequence some turns before. "No," then, is an bald on-record FTA on Edina's PF.

Edina confirms Saffron's interpretation as having been correct when she begs to her daughter in turn 52. By begging she underlines her lower power position, at least in this context. The use of the conventional terms of endearment function again as a persuasive device, enabling Edina to get her message across without having to go on-record and risk both her own face, as well as Saffron's. The same turn can also be considered as a pre-sequence of an actual request (Atkinson and Drew 1979). Only here, the pre-sequence does not have the actual request. It is ellipted into the meaning of the pre-sequence. By using merely the pre-sequence in making a request, Edina protects her own Positive Face in case of a refusal. We can consider turn 52 to be Negatively Polite in trying to convey the message. It shows redress to Saffron's Negative Face. We must not forget, though, that it protects Edina's face, too.

Turn 53 indicates Saffron's determination not to give in to her mother's wishes. She refuses her mother's plea for the second time. The refusal

is done off-record, making clear to Edina that Saffron does not feel responsible for her mother's shows, and therefore intends to have nothing to do with them.

This sequence breaks the reader's expectations, since Edina gives an image of being dependent on Saffron, rather than vice versa. A prevailing image exists of teenagers trying to get their way with their parents by begging to them. The stereotype of a mother would not permit her to be the one begging to her children. A more direct approach could be expected, e.g. by using direct imperatives. Furthermore, redundancy in the use of conventional terms of endearment also helps creating a humorous effect, because instead of functioning as mitigation, for example, they serve the purpose of a request, even when no direct request is uttered.

### 6.3 The significance of potential conflict situations in Ab Fab

*The Dictionary* makes the following definition of conflict: it is a state of opposition or hostilities often followed by the clashing of opposed principles. From a psychological point of view conflict is seen as a) the opposition of incompatible wishes or needs in a person, b) an instance of this, and c) the distress resulting from this. In the data, however, we mostly deal with potential conflict situations. This means that there may be feelings of incompatible wishes or needs (of course these are a matter of interpretation) but often no distress results from these. Thus, when addressing the issue of conflict, for the present purpose we assume these to be mostly potential in nature than actual occurrences in the data.

It seems that all conflict situations in the data involve some negotiation of who the characters are and what they represent to each other. Often, as in the two extracts below, there is an agenda of discussing what kinds of persons the participants of a speech event are and also what the nature of their social relations should be. There seem to be different focuses of conflicts in the data. Some conflicts focus on persons or groups where the conflicts are often directed to behaviours or attributes. Others focus on objects and beliefs. The focus on persons or groups seems to spark more heated conflicts, for personal attributes or behaviours are then often the target of heavy criticism,

and therefore the messages are frequently sent off-record, making possible the interpretation that the FTAs are strong (Brown and Levinson 1987:60).

As previously mentioned, off-record utterances tend to be used with FTAs that are considered stronger than the ones delivered on-record. Still, there is also an abundance of situations in the data where going on-record results in serious FTA. This is especially so when the on-record FTAs are directed to H's PF. According to the studies of Brown and Levinson (1987), Lakoff (1989) and O'Donnel (1990) the use of on-record strategies is not very frequent in real-life situations if the FTAs are as strong in nature as they are in the first extract below. The humour would seem to arise from just that — the unexpectedness of the characters' behaviour when they break conventions of ordinary discourse. At times, though, it depends who is doing the FTAs rather than how they are delivered that determines how they are taken by the interlocutor (see the first extract below). Also, the topic affects whether the FTAs are interpreted as strong. When the threats are perceived as strong, there is more likelihood of having a potential if not a real conflict situation. We have to remember, however, that the conflict situations here serve the purpose of creating humour. Perceiving it is entirely dependent on the reader.

Having already established that *Absolutely Fabulous* breaks many aspects of "ordinary" interaction (Lakoff 1989:102), we now move on to examining how the author of *Ab Fab* has used different conflict situations to create humour. Laver (1981:290) believes that routine behaviour is always polite. What is seen in the data, however, is frequently non-polite, or even rude. Rude behaviour, according to Lakoff (1989:103), is behaviour that "does not utilize politeness strategies where they would be expected". She defines non-polite behaviour as being used when no polite behaviour is expected. Rudeness, then, seems to be the concept applicable to the current data. It is not clear as to when the characters expect polite behaviour and when they do not. Nevertheless, to the reader the communicational behaviour in the data is often rude. Often the characters do not seem to react as strongly to offences as the reader might expect them to. The frequency of serious FTAs and no face redress seems to be more of a rule than an exception in the scripts. This creates the impression that it is not important for the two characters to save face, at least not to the extent it is considered important in ordinary conversation. In the



course of the data one comes to expect communicative behaviour not frequently found in real-life events. This may be one of the key elements the author capitalises on to create humour.

Despite their ‘normal’ communicative behaviour there are occasions when the characters no longer can keep their calm and end up in serious conflict with each other. Often, such occasions occur between Saffron and Edina’s friend Patsy, who loathes Saffron and is quite explicit that she has disliked, even hated, Saffron from the day she was born. The two characters loathe each other for what they represent: Saffron loathes Patsy’s lifestyle as a free-loading friend; Patsy loathes Saffron for having disturbed her life by being born to her friend, Edina. When the background between the characters is already somewhat disagreeable, the discourse between them is frequently overtly hostile. This, in turn, tends to lead to conflict, even to physical confrontation.

In the following some samples are drawn from the data to study what exactly causes the conflicts, and to find out whether the function of the conflicts is to amuse.

Edina, Saffron and Patsy have been talking about Saffron’s birth. Patsy has made it abundantly clear that she does not appreciate Saffron’s existence. Saffron, in turn, questions Patsy’s intelligence. This results in a conflict between the two characters. Here it is the positive side of face that is threatened, and thus, the colours used in relation to positive face are also used here (see page 50 for the marking of the FTAs) The colours will help in the interpretation as to what causes the conflict.

- 54 Patsy:           *(Dramatically.)* I could have been clever!  
 55 Saffron:        Could you?  
 56 Patsy:           Yes. I could have gone to university ... and all those years wasted ... and there you are rubbing it in. I resent you.  
 57 Edina:           No, you don’t.  
 58 Patsy:           Yes, I do. *(To Saffron.)* I hate you. Just when my life hit a good patch, along you came, you miserable piece of flesh. You should have ended up in the dustbin — the incinerator was too good for you. You know, when I heard Ed was pregnant, I told her to abort. Abort! Abort! Abort! I said, chuck it down the pan, bring me ...

59 Saffron: A knitting needle?  
 60 Patsy: A knitting needle! Err! Oh ...err!

*Saffron slaps Patsy hard. Patsy tried to hit back. A fight ensues. Edina tries to break it up. She eventually manages to pull them apart. There is a tense silence. Eventually they settle down.*

61 Edina: Still, the more you quarrel the less you hate, that's what Sag Aloo says ...

(*Birth:134.*)

The intensity of the setting is apparent. One of the things that affects this situation resulting in a conflict is essentially the topic the speech event is about: Saffron's birth. Since the reader knows that Edina has admitted that Saffron was "a little miscalculation" (*Birth:132*), indicating that she was not planned, the background of this conflict situation is acute to begin with.

When Saffron questions Patsy's intelligence, Patsy reacts by going on-record about her feelings. On-record FTAs easily lead to retribution on the part of the hearer. Edina tries to boost Saffron's face by giving Patsy the opportunity, in turn 57, to regret the FTA "I resent you". Patsy does not take up on this opportunity, but instead continues to be on-record about her feelings about Saffron. She declares her hate for her friend's daughter and indirectly blames Saffron for having ruined her life and also states her opinion about Saffron's right to live.

Patsy emphasises her past want to have Edina abort Saffron. This is emphasised by superfluity of language use; Patsy repeats the word 'abort' many times to gain more power and intensity. In a way Patsy invites Saffron to make a negative interpretation of the repetition (Brown and Levinson 1987:220). At no point does she give face to Saffron, who, in turn 59, ends up uttering an off-record criticism about Patsy's thoughts. Saffron gives Patsy, again, a chance to pay face to Saffron by denying Saffron's accusation of turn 59. Patsy is also given a chance to avoid the actual physical conflict that arises between the two from the situation. Predictably, she refuses this opportunity too and, instead, agrees with Saffron about the severity of her thoughts in the past.

This is too much for Saffron and she resorts to violence to retaliate for the damaging acts Patsy has performed. Because of the characters'

background it is easy to see how the existing tension between the two and the sensitive topics they deal with result in open conflict, reaching the intense proportions seen in the extract. If this were a real-life conflict, it would naturally be very serious. Here, however, it must be remembered that these conflicts serve the purpose of entertaining the readers.

Resorting to physical means to resolve conflicts never happens between the mother and daughter in the data. They seem more able to ignore each other's face-threatening acts. Perhaps this is because they do not deal with topics in such an intense way, or perhaps because they do not resent each other as strongly as Saffron and Patsy.

The conflict under scrutiny here shows that the formats the two characters use in conflict talk are by no means symmetrical (see more on asymmetry of conflict talk in Conley and O'Barr (1990) and O'Donnel (1990)). Whereas Patsy uses both on-record and off-record strategies to violate Saffron's PF, Saffron often stays silent, instead of taking over the turn. Here, too, we have to consider that this is an extract from fictional writing, and assume that there might be more interruptions and turn-changes if the dialogue was from a real-life situation.

Although, Grimshaw (1990) for instance believes that conflicts do not always have a clear focus, this is not the case in the extract above. Conflict is most likely to occur in dyadic conversation, as is seen here (Lakoff 1989:101).

Patsy does have several opportunities to retreat from heavy conflict by showing redress to Saffron's face. Since this does not happen, the conflict is sustained and because the conflict is sustained, and the participants do not use any means to withdraw from the situation the intensity of hostility, increases. Since the participants' relationship is already inflamed and they have no affection toward each other, the situation culminates in a physical fight. In Grimshaw's (1990:294) categorisation this particular conflict situation is direct in orientation, passionate in nature, based on opinions and takes procedurally an informal mode. It also deals with issues of morality in that Patsy considers it justified to think that Saffron should not have been born because the act disrupted her own life. Saffron seems to show her anger first by becoming taciturn until she no longer can be passive and attacks Patsy physically.

Sometimes defining a conflict is not that clear-cut. It is easy for an analyst to see conflict in situations where it does not exist (Labov and Fanshel 1977). The way in which we as readers interpret the above conflict situation as humorous or not depends heavily on our own footing (Goffman 1981). When one knows the personalities of the characters and has read the scripts, it would be reasonable to conclude that although the situation here seems very 'flammable' it still has comical aspects to it. The situation itself may not be humorous, but the way the seriousness of the situation is quickly dismissed by Edina, who does not take either side in the fight, can be understood as amusing. In the last comment she quotes her mentor, Sag Aloo. The name of her mentor itself has a humorous effect in the shape of a pun, since the last name can be understood 'a loo', meaning a toilet. Edina justifies the two other characters' behaviour and with this brings the relief needed to stop the conflict.

According to Vuchinich (1990) a dominant third-party intervention occurs here that puts an end to the conflict. "In the family setting the intervening third party is usually a parent (Vuchinich 1990:125)." In breaking the two up Edina adopts the role of a parent to both Patsy and Saffron. What happens is that the conflict increasingly gains in intensity, and at the end there is a quick release of pressure that almost mocks the seriousness of the situation - resulting in humour.

Still, it must be noted that even when Edina adopts the role of a parent in the above extract, she does not take her daughter's side in the conflict as a mother is expected to do. In fact, if there is any quarrel between Patsy and Saffron, Edina usually takes a stand for Patsy rather than for her daughter. This would seem to indicate that she values Patsy over her own daughter. If this is the case, then it seems that Edina's behaviour, again, goes against the expected frame by creating a new one. Stereotypically thinking, a mother is never supposed to value anyone above her children, and as a consequence, it is not expected that parents would take their friends' side in conflicts, at least not so openly. This is not to say that they would defend their children in a conflict either. Perhaps it is more expected of parents that they interfere in a conflict that looks like is going to be too intense, before it becomes that.

Moving on to another extract from the data we have Saffron trying to prove to her mother that there is no reason why she cannot be slimmer if she only tried. Also she is pointing out all the things her mother has done to be thin without any success. Since Edina is a modern woman with the same want to be thin as millions of Western women the conversation topic here can be considered easily flammable.

- 62 Saffron: You have been tested for everything under the sun.  
You are not allergic to anything.
- 63 Edina: Wrong! Jellyfish!
- 64 Saffron: There's more of your blood sitting in test-tubes  
around the world than presently circulating in your  
veins. You have tried every fad diet, every fad drug  
that has ever existed. More money has been poured  
into your quest for 'Twiggy' than goes in aid to  
most third-world nations...and somehow you're two  
stone overweight.
- 65 Edina: One stone.

(*Fat.31.*)

In turn 62 Saffron is pointing out to her mother that she has no excuse for not having lost any weight but the fact that she has not eaten the right foods. Edina tries to disprove Saffron's argument in turn 63 by boosting her face. However, knowing that much of English diet is not based on jellyfish, Edina might have left the FBA undone, for it has only a nominal value in denying the truth value of Saffron's FTA. Saffron ignores her mother's attempt to prove her wrong by continuing to point out, though mostly off-record, all the things her mother has done in her "quest for Twiggy".

Overstatement violates the Quantity Maxim by saying more than is necessary (Held 1989:174). Exaggeration gives the hearer an invitation to make conversational implicatures (Brown and Levinson 1987:213) and gives hints to H as to what the real meaning of the utterance is. Saffron uses a lot of overstatement such as the pronoun 'every' and 'ever', in "every fad diet, every fad drug that has ever existed," to invite Edina to make interpretations as to why she is overstating - it is to emphasise how her mother really has gone through a lot to get thinner and the underlining message is that Saffron wants to point out how futile Edina's attempts have been. Another overstatement visible

in turn 64 is when Saffron compares the amount of money Edina has used on the mission of getting thin than has been used to the aid to developing countries. As readers we need to have an idea of the charities that help third-world countries, as well as of the amount of money Western governments pour to those countries to get an idea as to the level of exaggeration here. The violation of Gricean Maxims is often used to invite alternative interpretation. Thus, Maxim violations are frequently used to be indirect but still conveying the wanted message (see ch. 2.3 above for the significance of maxims to off-record strategies).

In the extract from the data, Saffron also uses tautology ("*every fad diet, every fad drug*"), which invites H to make interpretations as to what S means. Tautologies, as seen in Figure 3 on p. 25 of this study, violate the Quality Maxim. She finishes her FTA to Edina's PF by stating that despite all the efforts, which are immense, Edina is still overweight. The last statement is an on-record FTA about a very sensitive subject to Edina. Despite the sensitivity of the subject, instead of retaliating, Edina strives to maintain her own Positive Face by trying, again, to annul what Saffron says about her. Here, then, no actual conflict arises. The elements for a conflict are present, though. Saffron's off-record FTAs invite Edina to make negative interpretations, as often is the case with indirectness.

When something is uttered off-record, it is assumed that the speaker is aware the FTA being of much greater degree of threat to H's face than, for instance, if he used an on-record strategy. This is why Saffron's off-record FTAs could be assumed to cause a conflict more easily than for instance some on-record statements. However, Edina seems to be more concerned to maintain her own face than to revenge. She makes a weak attempt at enhancing her PF by making an FBA/self in turn 65.

Judging by the frequency with which the topic of fatness figures in the dialogues it seems to be of constant concern for Edina. Talking about it, however, never goes beyond just being a potential conflict situation. Other topics that Edina seems to be sensitive to, since they are issues in her life are those of alcohol, drugs, and money-spending. She never, it seems, takes other people's criticisms to heart, even if they are strong in their intention. The same does not apply to Saffron, as was pointed out in the first extract above. It is

surprising how few incidents actually could be marked as being real conflict situations (as real as it can be in fictional data) as opposed to mere potential ones, knowing how much face-threat takes place in the data.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to examine face and face-work between mother (Edina) and daughter (Saffron) in the scripts of the comedy series *Absolutely Fabulous*. The data was drawn from six arbitrarily chosen episodes of the first and second season scripts. The third, and final, season was omitted on the basis of unavailable published scripts. The data was strictly narrowed down to any speech events where the two main characters are present, leaving any other character's contribution to the speech event secondary. Throughout the analysis it was important to remember that the characters being studied are fictional, and that everything they say or do in the course of the dialogues serves to create a certain representation of them, which, in turn, might invite the reader to make humorous interpretations of the events and the characters.

On the basis of the politeness framework, Gricean maxims and the concept of frame analysis the present study examined three interrelated questions. First, attention was paid to whether the two main characters comply with the rules set by the politeness principle, and to discover possible deviations from the rules, their form and function. Secondly, the roles of the two characters were observed in order to determine whether the image given to the reader agrees with the stereotypical images of mother and daughter. Thirdly, while examining whether face-violations — performed by making face-threatening acts (FTAs) — or face-boosting acts (FBAs), which do not violate any participants' faces, helped to form the characters, attention was paid to determine how humour is created in the series. Altogether six different types of acts were discovered. These included FTA/self to PF, FTA/self to NF, FTA/other to PF, FTA/other to NF, FBA/self to PF and FBA/other to PF.

I started the investigation by mapping out instances where FTAs and FBAs are used. This resulted in a demanding task: at times an FTA has several functions; it can function e.g. to violate the speaker's (S's) and hearer's (H's) faces simultaneously. A further point that had to be attended to was

whether the FTAs are directed to S's or H's positive or negative face. With FBAs no such determination is necessary, for they are always directed to S or H's positive face. In resolving how to count the FTAs and FBAs I came to the conclusion that the most straightforward solution would be to determine what acts there are in each turn and then count each act once<sup>8</sup>. This seemed more reliable than trying to determine where one act ends and another begins, as the division between different acts is not always clear.

The analysis of the dialogues was divided into two separate areas. First, I concentrated on finding patterns with regard to the positive side of face. Here, four of the categories mentioned above were employed in the analysis: FTA/self to PF, FTA/other to PF, FBA/self and FBA/other. The second area dealt with the negative side of the characters' face. In this case, in addition to paying attention to whether the characters employed FTAs/self to NF or FTAs/other to NF, additional attention was paid to whether the face-threatening acts are delivered on-record, either baldly or with negative or positive politeness strategies, or off-record. In addition to the four strategies Brown and Levinson's (1987) fifth strategy ("don't do the FTA") was included - even when this strategy has no linguistic manifestation in the dialogues themselves but only in the stage directions.

Parents and children are bound in an asymmetrical power relation (Queen et al. 1985). In the present data, however, the relationship between the two characters is often asymmetrical in a manner opposite to the expected, giving the daughter the more powerful role. The analysis revealed that when dealing with the characters' positive side of face both Saffron and Edina employ FTA/other the most out of the four categories. Edina distributes her FTAs/other more evenly between all the characters in the series, whereas most of the FTAs/other Saffron performs on H's PF are directed to Edina. She seems to take the liberty of addressing her mother in a rude and abrupt manner. By often violating her mother's face on-record Saffron seems to assume the more powerful role of the two.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) if S feels that he has more relative power than his interlocutor he may not feel the need to redress

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<sup>8</sup> To find out more about the method of counting the FTAs and FBAs, please see ch. 5.2.2



the face-threat. The bald on-record strategy Saffron frequently uses to Edina's positive and negative face appear to testify this. When, then, it is usually the parent who assumes more power, we could deduce especially from Saffron's on-record delivery of FTAs that it is Saffron who has adopted the role of the parent and Edina that of a child. It is probable, then, that the two characters have undergone a role-reversal. Since the daughter is seen in a higher power status, it seemed to indicate that she had assumed the power stereotypically assumed by the parent. That Edina did not perform as many FTAs to her daughter's PF nor retaliate for many Saffron's FTAs seemed to give further evidence to this interpretation and showed that Edina is allowing Saffron the power she assumes.

The employment of the bald on-record strategy in delivering an FTA could be explained by the close relation between the characters. On the other hand, perhaps the more feasible explanation could be that since the data is written to entertain, it uses the bald on-record strategy simply because it is not as common in ordinary conversation<sup>9</sup>, in the English context, as are the strategies that redress face. The irregularity of this type of communicational strategy invites added attention to the characters' relationship with each other.

The FTAs Edina performs on her own PF gives further evidence of reversed power positions between the two main characters. Edina frequently performs FTAs to her PF to invite Saffron's sympathy, more often than not failing in the attempt. It is Edina, then, who is searching for support from her daughter, when the common perception is that children want to have their parents' approval.

Edina also often boosts her own face as a reaction to Saffron's FTAs. Instead of retaliating against Saffron for the FTAs, Edina boosts her own face to minimise the damage done to it. This gave the impression that she did not feel that Saffron's FTAs were strong enough to be worth retaliating against, or that she felt she was in a powerless position to retaliate. However, perhaps the most feasible explanation for the FBAs is their function as a source of humour. This was not because they were uttered in reaction to Saffron's FTAs, although that probably also contributed to the humour in the context, but

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<sup>9</sup> For a definition of ordinary conversation (OC) see p. 33 of this study.

because they were seen as something often socially disapproved of in the real life context. After all, FBAs may be seen as boasting, which is often considered socially unacceptable. It would be more acceptable to wait until one's interlocutors enhance one's face than do it for oneself (Bayraktaroglu 1991). Thus, the occasions in the fictional context may have a liberating effect on the reader — Edina can say anything without fear of disapproval, which results in humour.

Edina is often depicted drunk. Sometimes she loses bodily control because of her intoxication. By losing control over her body, by making such FTAs to her own PF, Edina draws attention to alcohol and its excessive consumption. This is something mothers are not commonly allowed to do. After all, they have responsibilities to their children, and most likely would not be able to take care of them if they drank as much as Edina. Edina's drunken stumbling around implies that she is not a responsible mother. Often, irresponsibility is associated with teenagers. Adults are expected to be responsible, especially when they have children. Saffron, on the other hand, is never drunk, and never loses control over her body. Because teenagers are expected to experiment with alcohol, Saffron's abstinence may serve as further proof to the apparent role reversal between mother and daughter. The fact that Edina could get into such a state of drunkenness that she no longer had control over her body may serve to give rise to humour, because this is not socially acceptable in the real life.

Perhaps the best evidence for role reversal is provided by the acts directed to negative face. Even though the distribution of FTAs to NF is fairly even between the two characters in that they perform an almost equal number of them, both on record and off record, it is Saffron who directs most of her FTAs to Edina's face, whereas Edina distributes her face-threatening acts more evenly between all the characters. Saffron's FTAs show that she, indeed, assumes more power in relation to her mother and that she is the one "in charge." She frequently orders her mother about using bald on-record FTAs to Edina's NF. This behavioural pattern, stereotypically, would more commonly be associated with the mother. The frequency of this behaviour again suggests that the roles of mother and daughter were inverted by creation of new frames.

As a secondary outcome it was discovered that the unexpected use of FTAs and FBAs is the means with which humour is elicited. The breaking of frames, by creating new ones, gives an image that would be best categorised as being anomalous to the image 'normally' expected of a mother and daughter. This seems to be one of the reasons why the scripts may be viewed as humorous. The creation of humour in the data is also aided by the choice of topic the characters deal with. The emergence and light treatment of topics such as sex, alcohol, drugs, fat, death, which are still considered quite taboo by some people, give an air of something forbidden. The effect of topic on humour was not examined in depth due to the restricted length of this study.

In her study, Blum-Kulka (1990) considers it misleading to associate directness with impoliteness and indirectness with politeness in family discourse. This applies to the present data, too, where directness and mitigation interact. Mitigation applies differently to negative and positive face needs. For instance, by using a term of endearment the speaker, usually Edina, emphasises her emotional bond with the hearer. She employs mitigation, whereas Saffron usually delivers her FTAs without it. In connection with direct acts Edina uses mitigation mostly when she wants to get her way with Saffron. With using endearment terms rather redundantly Edina violates the maxim of Quantity. This invites some humorous interpretations of the events where mitigation is used - perhaps because the exaggerated repetition of terms of endearment signifies that Edina does not really mean them to be taken as a sign of fondness, or perhaps because the apparent desire to mitigate her FTAs, to such degree, displays the fierce underlying desire to get her way.

The apparent lack of mitigation from Saffron shows that Saffron is allowed to address her mother directly without any mitigating features. It also seems to indicate that Saffron does not fear retaliation from Edina, which would seem to imply her superior power status.

Apart from the instances where mitigation is employed by Edina, there seems to be frequent lack between the two characters of any compensatory linguistic means to soften the impact of the performed FTAs. Even when the FTAs are strong it seems that there are hardly any instances of remedial work.

In the dialogues of the present data interactional balance was not maintained by the two characters the way one would frequently expect it to be. There were instances in the data where Edina would perform an FTA to her own PF in the hope of the hearer, Saffron, to enhance her face for her. Often, instead of doing what one normally expects in such situations, i.e. the hearer (Saffron) to soften the impact the speaker (Edina) has performed and develop S's face for her, Saffron would agree with the FTA her mother directed to her own face. This was a pattern that frequently emerged in the data. Perhaps the lack of sensitivity Saffron demonstrated as the hearer, by not conforming to the expected rules of interaction — when S downplays himself, he can expect others to restore his face — served as an element of surprise in the data. This would seem to conform with the notion that humour is often delivered by a sudden emerging feature that the hearer/reader cannot predict (Mulkay 1988: 26).

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) formula the characters of the present study, being mother and daughter in the modern Western world, would be classified as being of close social distance. Nevertheless, they could have misunderstandings and also clashes in their communication since they belong to different groups i.e. one is older than the other (different age group), one belongs in the mother group and the other in the daughter group (different 'role in the family'-group), etc. Edina belongs in a group, with Patsy, who live it up and behave as if they were still living the 60s era, whereas Saffron is a sensible daughter of the 80s who cannot understand her mother. Group difference is the factor which gives rise to the conflicts between the two main characters. Edina is stuck, in some respects, in the past whereas Saffron has a hard time understanding — having never lived during the 60s —her mother's behaviour.

The differences between the two characters seem to be a constant source of potential conflict situations. These situations seemed to be more related to the topic they dealt with, such as alcohol, drugs, sex, death, fat, fashion, age, etc. than with the way the messages were delivered, and whether the FTAs done on or off record, etc. However, the intensity of any conflict situation are marked by moving from off-record to on-record and bald on-record strategies. The more intense a conflict situation gets, the more chance

there is that the bald on-record strategy is used. Therefore, the most intense conflict situations are arguably intense enough for the characters not to care at all saving each other's face. The bald on-record and the on-record strategies, however, are employed even in the most harmonious situations. This seems to indicate that all in all the characters are not very concerned about maintaining face in any situation.

Edina and Saffron are not ascribed the characteristics stereotypically expected of mothers and daughters. The use of the bald on-record strategy, for instance, seems to indicate that the characters are not constricted by the politeness principles in any apparent way. Perhaps it is this very unrestricted behaviour that gives rise to humour in the data. Deviation from the norm, e.g. the stereotypical "good" mother, may be appealing to the readers who themselves are bound by social expectations. Indeed, the very desire within us, for instance to say something sometimes baldly on-record without fearing retaliation seems appealing. That the characters of the present data are frequently able to disregard the politeness principle might be humorous to the reader for the simple reason that the characters do something that we often feel unable to indulge in doing because of the social norms attached to our language use.

In the course of the present research some problems arose. Since the data was made to create a series on television, it would be reasonable to assume that the visual side contributes to the violations of stereotypes as well as to the creation of humour. In this study, however, the visual side is completely disregarded, and the analysis is based solely on the written material. It seemed possible to account for stereotype violations even without the visual side. But the question remains whether it is possible to come to accurate conclusions of how humour comes about in the dialogues between mother and daughter without including the visual aspects of the comedy series.

Another problem was the undeniable fact that I did view the television series, and saw the visual elements of its humour, before undertaking the analysis. I recognise the possibility of having been influenced, at least to some degree, by the visual elements. It is possible that the analysis of the data in the present study would have been done differently, or perhaps there would have been different outcomes, if I had not seen *Ab Fab* before doing the

analysis. It was admittedly difficult to exclude all the facial expressions and other extra-linguistic features one remembered the actors having had/performed when speaking to each other in character.

Because the data was taken from written material, I had to ignore any kinesic detail, since the intonation, stress or other quality to sound was not provided by the text in any detail. It may be suggested that had it been possible to consider kinesic features into the framework, the outcome of the study might have been slightly different.

When making the analysis I needed to be constantly aware that I was dealing with fictional characters. Sometimes it was difficult to bear in mind that the subjects of my study were merely products of Saunder's imagination. The way the characters behaved with each other, the linguistic strategies they employed were written to achieve a particular end — to amuse the readers, and ultimately the viewers of *Ab Fab*. So, it has to be noted that because the subjects are fictional people, I, as an analyst, am automatically an outsider to situations they engage in. Furthermore, I am not only an outsider to the fictional events and the familiar background the characters share, but also to the cultural context both the author and the characters are from. Even though I have aspired to use the emic standpoint that refers to the relativity of context and function within a specific cultural system, without a doubt some etic aspects, which take the view of an outsider to a cultural system, have influenced the analysis (Pike 1967). Not sharing the cultural background with the data is then an important point that probably has affected the outcomes of this study; how, is anybody's guess. Also, another issue worth considering is that the analysis of the data is based on the interpretation of a single person, and therefore cannot be considered omnipotent.

This study showed that deviations from the politeness principle may be motivated by the intention to create an unorthodox image of fictional characters. An attempt was made to demonstrate that when something or someone is seen as anomalous, it serves a means to create humour. In the present study, it was found that the politeness principle can account for much of the humour that is created through stereotype violations. With this study I showed how the politeness framework can explain the processes with which an unsterotypical image of a character can be developed. An ethnographic tool

such as PP can be usefully employed to explain social relations of fictional characters as well as real-life people.

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