

Research Article

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Pushing against the boundaries: Entertaining impoliteness and taboo discourse in the Egyptian TV show *Abla Fahita*

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Abstract: Impoliteness can be defined as the use of “communicative strategies” which are “designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony” (Culpeper et al. 2003, 1564). The present study applies Jonathan Culpeper’s (2011a) model of “impoliteness” supplemented by the notions of jocular mockery, jocular abuse, and recipients’ responses (Bousfield 2008, 2010, Haugh and Bousfield 2012) to the Egyptian TV show *Abla Fahita*. *Abla Fahita* (Egyptian Arabic: أبلة فاهيتا [ʾabla fāhita]) is a puppet character that has regularly appeared on Egyptian television since 2011. The show is hugely popular and has been phenomenally successful, being watched on average by millions, according to the Egyptian Centre for Research on Public Opinion. It should be noted, however, that, due to the conservative nature of Egyptian culture, *Abla Fahita* and other similar TV shows are considered to violate Egyptian politeness standards radically. Hence, such shows have been condemned as degrading and of low moral standards and have been accused of causing a deterioration in the standards of Egyptian public taste. Despite all denunciations, *Abla Fahita* still enjoys a huge audience and dominates broadcast ratings. Part of the show’s popularity can be ascribed to its characteristic impoliteness, particularly *Abla Fahita*’s off-beat expressions in mocking her guests and her use of sexual innuendo, which is seen as entertaining by many viewers. The study, which reveals that *Abla Fahita* employs what can be called a humorous-impoliteness formula to entertain viewers, is an attempt to apply contemporary Impoliteness Theory across cultures, and to Colloquial Egyptian Arabic in particular.

Keywords: entertaining impoliteness, colloquial Egyptian Arabic, Egyptian TV shows, *Abla Fahita*

1 Introduction

The concept of politeness first attracted the academic concern of linguists in the 1970s (cf. Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987, Leech 1983). Politeness can be described as the discursive behaviours that participants use in order to avoid conflict and maintain harmonious relations (Holmes et al. 2012). It is considered the normative unmarked form of appropriate behaviour, i.e. “default behaviour” (Terkourafi 2002, 197), which complies with expectations and social norms and therefore passes unnoticed (see Culpeper 2011a, 2011b, Haugh 2013). Deviations from social norms may be perceived as violations of the appropriate behaviour. Such deviations almost always involve impoliteness (Culpeper 2011a). However, “there is no solid

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agreement [...] as to what ‘impoliteness’ actually is” (Locher and Bousfield 2008, 3). Impoliteness is a term that is “struggled over at present, has been struggled over in the past and will, in all probability, continue to be struggled over in the future” (Watts 2003, 9). Despite this difficulty, impoliteness can be broadly defined as the “use of strategies that are designed to [cause] social disruption” instead of maintaining social harmony (Culpeper 1996, 350); “communicative strategies designed to attack face” (Culpeper et al. 2003, 1545); “behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context” (Locher and Bousfield 2008, 3); and the “rudeness, aggressive language, the causing of offence” or linguistic behaviour which may be termed as “socially negative” (Bousfield 2010, 101).

When academic interest moved on from just studying politeness to include impolite discourse, the earlier studies (e.g. Culpeper 1996, Lachenicht 1980) were closely modelled on Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) classic work on politeness. Then, the notion of impoliteness was further explored in the works of Jonathan Culpeper (1996, 2003, 2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2013), Derek Bousfield (2008, 2010), and Michael Haugh (2010). Various discourse types have been investigated in order to calculate the usage and frequency of impolite or offensive language in them, such as army training discourse (Culpeper 1996), family discourse (Vuchinich 1990), adolescent discourse (Goodwin and Goodwin 1990), doctor–patient discourse (Mehan 1990), everyday conversation (Beebe 1995), radio talk shows (Hutchby 1996), fictional texts (Culpeper 1998), political discussions and courtroom interactions (Archer 2011a, 2011b, Harris 2011, Penman 1990, Tracy 2011), emergency calls (Tracy and Tracy 1998), customer settings and service encounters (Archer and Jagodziński 2015), and so on.

Impoliteness, it seems, is “ubiquitous” (Locher and Bousfield 2008). It can be sophisticated, creative, subtle, and “entertaining” (e.g. Bousfield 2008, 2010, Culpeper 1996, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, Culpeper et al. 2003). Culpeper (2005, 2011a, 2011b) and Lorenzo-Dus (2009) note that, in genres involving representation, impolite discourse can often have an “entertainment” or “aesthetic” value. Culpeper (2011a, 234–9) attempts to explore the reasons behind the pleasure we experience when viewing impoliteness as entertainment and posits five sources of such pleasure:

- (1) **Emotional pleasure:** We experience an inherent emotional enjoyment when viewing conflict.
- (2) **Aesthetic pleasure:** This type of pleasure is derived from “socially negative uses of verbal creativity” (Culpeper 2005, 46), which can be a very effective (and amusing) way of conveying face-attack (Culpeper 2011a, 239).
- (3) **Voyeuristic pleasure:** This kind of pleasure can be gained through the observation of others in conflictive situations.
- (4) **The pleasure of being superior:** We gain pleasant feelings of superiority when we compare ourselves favourably to others.
- (5) **The pleasure of feeling secure:** Entertainment-through-security can be gained from our appreciation of what we have when compared to the grave distress of others.

In other words, impoliteness can be used as a strategic vehicle for entertainment and humorous purposes since people are likely to laugh at the expense of others. This may account for the fact that some film and media productions market “comedies” which contain offensive or impolite language. The entertainment industry has a huge investment in making us laugh and considers “comedy” as a “giant” within television entertainment, particularly “comedies” which contain offensive language (Zillmann and Bryant 1991, 261). All this suggests that impoliteness can somehow be entertaining and humorous. This overlap between humour and impolite discourse has not been missed by television producers who have developed a large number of media productions using this “humorous-impoliteness” formula in the name of “entertainment.” Surprisingly, media communication researchers have acknowledged that the use of entertaining impoliteness, which has been described by Culpeper (2011a, 233) as “exploitative,” is a “ubiquitous phenomenon” (Zillmann and Bryant 1994, 437). They have defined it as any activity designed to delight and, to a smaller degree, enlighten audiences through the exhibition of the fortune or misfortunes of others, but also through the display of special skills (Zillmann and Bryant 1994, 438). This implies that (in certain contexts) being entertained can be encapsulated by being “delighted” at the misfortunes of others



Figure 1: Abla Fahita at the Dublex.

which endorses Culpeper's (2011a) argument that impoliteness, which is designed for entertainment purposes, functions to amuse others, particularly those who are not targets of the impoliteness.

In Egypt, television producers have followed this trend and exploited the humorous-impoliteness formula through initiating shows such as *Saturday Night Live in Arabic* and *Abla Fahita: Live from the Duplex* which is the focus of this study. Abla Fahita, a puppet without strings, rose to fame in 2011 after airing her show "El-Duplex" on the privately-owned Egyptian entertainment channel *CBC*. "The satirical show comments on societal problems in an ironic way; Abla Fahita's quick wit and humorous lines attracted large audiences almost instantly" (egyptindependent.com). The show has become a phenomenon, being watched by an average of 8 million Egyptians per episode, according to the Egyptian Centre for Research on Public Opinion. In the show, Abla Fahita is treated by her celebrity guests and the audience in the Duplex as if she were a real woman, supposedly the single mother of two children, a girl "Karo (aka Karkoura)" and a boy "Boudi," and the founder of the (fictional) *Association for Single Women, Widows and Divorcees*. In character, she represents an acid-tongued, middle-aged, Egyptian widow, and comes across as a frivolous cougar-type who likes handsome men. With her snide comments, sexual innuendoes, and distinctive appearance (i.e. trademark hair-rollers, thick eyeliner, and glamorous outfits – see Figure 1), Abla Fahita has gained enormous popularity.

Controversy has continued to surround Abla Fahita's show, particularly due to the fact that the male artist behind the puppet remains anonymous, although rumours have circled suggesting it could be Hatem al-Kashef, an actor and scriptwriter.¹ The controversy is also due to Abla Fahita's use of sexual innuendo which is unacceptable to the dominant conservative strand of Egyptian culture. Just as with humour, entertainment is highly culture-sensitive (Culpeper and Holmes 2013, 176) and Egyptian public culture does not normally accept sexual innuendo in TV shows which would be watched by whole families. Some lawmakers pressed for the program to be taken off the air and Egypt's judiciary allowed the satirical puppet Abla Fahita to be charged with "violating public morality."² The Egyptian Supreme Media Council also banned a Vodafone commercial featuring Abla Fahita, after accusing the commercial of "playing with words to give a different meaning than the original meaning of each, which lowers general taste," making it unsuitable for children.³

¹ (egyptindependent.com Edited translation from Al-Masry Al-Youm). <https://egyptindependent.com/abla-fahita-ad-pulled-state-run-tv-inappropriate-language/>

² <http://cbldf.org/2016/04/egyptian-parliament-outraged-by-puppets-insults/>

³ (egyptindependent.com Edited translation from Al-Masry Al-Youm). <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/television/abla-fahita-is-going-global-thanks-to-new-deal-with-netflix-1.955288>

Abla Fahita was called into court on 26 June 2016, accused of “violating public morality” with her bawdy jokes. The case against Abla Fahita was brought by the Egyptian lawyer Samir Sabry who claimed that, despite Fahita’s popularity, her ribald humour “runs contrary to the values and ethics of Egypt.”⁴ In addition, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation sent a letter to the CBC channel requesting the omission of explicit sexual references from the show, and from the episodes on YouTube. It also requested the channel to name the performer behind the famous Abla Fahita puppet in the title sequence, who thus far remains unknown to the public, so that he could be held accountable if found to be at fault.⁵ Due to such controversy and lawsuits, the show was taken off Egyptian television in 2018, but was back in 2019. However, Abla Fahita is about to become a global phenomenon with her very own Netflix series, which would be released in more than 20 languages and in 190 countries.⁶

2 Literature review

Culpeper first proposed his impoliteness model, which is a reversal of Brown and Levinson’s ([1978] 1987) face-based politeness model, in 1996, and then made significant revisions to this model in 2005 and 2011a, 2011b. Culpeper suggested that face-attacks can be used creatively for the specific purpose of entertaining a third party (in talent shows, the studio, and TV audience) and considered this an additional function of impoliteness (Culpeper 2011a, 2011b, 233–5 and 249–52). He postulates that impoliteness that targets its victims via sarcasm, mimicry, or implicatures can be considered humorous by many people. He adopts the line of the “Superiority” theories of humour (e.g. Bergson 1911), which advocate that humans find pleasure at the expense or misfortune of others. He argues that in watching TV shows which exploit the mixture of impoliteness and humour for the sake of entertainment, viewers tend to gain voyeuristic pleasure from observing others in a worse state than themselves (Culpeper 2005).

In this article, I adopt Culpeper’s (2011a) model in which he replaced the term “strategy” with “trigger” and suggests two types of impoliteness triggers: conventionalised impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness. The first type of trigger is inspired by Terkourafi’s frame-based politeness approach (2002). Culpeper (2010, 3240–1, 2011a, 135–6) provides a list of conventionalised impoliteness formulae, based on co-occurrences of particular linguistic realisations of impoliteness and particular contexts, including insults; pointed criticisms/complaints; challenging or unpalatable questions; and/or presuppositions, condescensions, message enforcers, dismissals, silencers, threats, and negative expressives (e.g. curses, ill-wishes). The second type, implicational impoliteness, involves “an impoliteness understanding that does not match the surface form or semantics of the utterance or the symbolic meaning of the behaviour” (Culpeper 2011a, 17). Culpeper classifies implicational impoliteness into three types, each involving mismatches of some sort: (1) Convention-driven (*sarcasm or mock politeness*), (2) Form-driven (*off-record impoliteness*), and (3) Context-driven (*deviation from expectations in the context*).

Culpeper (2011a, 223–35) does not only suggest forms of impoliteness, but also identify its functions. He lists three instrumental functions of impoliteness: affective impoliteness (an intense emotional display directed at the target), coercive impoliteness (imposing harm on the target’s social identity or forcing compliance), and entertaining impoliteness (the exploitation of a target for entertainment purposes, such as game shows). Entertaining impoliteness is particularly interesting for the purposes of this article.

Whilst Culpeper’s (2011a) model is particularly useful as an overall view, I supplement it with Haugh and Bousfield’s (2012) notions of *jocular mockery* and *jocular abuse* as well as the notion of *recipients’ responses* (Bousfield 2008, Drew 1987, Everts 2003, Glenn 2003, Jefferson et al. 1987). Haugh and Bousfield (2012) get quite close to the notion of entertaining impoliteness while examining the use and interpretation

⁴ <http://cbldf.org/2016/04/egyptian-puppet-charged-with-violating-public-morality/>

⁵ <https://egyptindependent.com/cbc-denies-reports-of-abla-fahita-suspension/>

⁶ <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/television/abla-fahita-is-going-global-thanks-to-new-deal-with-netflix-1.955288>

of banter or mock politeness. They identify two distinct interactional practices *jocular mockery* and *jocular abuse*. Jocular mockery needs to be created within a jocular frame and can be induced by the speaker's "overdoing" or exaggerating particular actions. Jocular abuse, on the other hand, is a specific form of insulting whereby the speaker casts the target into an undesirable category or ascribes negative characteristics to him/her, using a conventionally offensive expression within a non-serious or jocular frame. The jocular abuse is executed by using a remark that "puts someone down, or ascribes a negative characteristic to them" (Hay 2002, 20), and by picking on or debasing "a person's physical appearance and mental ability, character, behaviour, beliefs, and/or familial and social relations" (Allan and Burridge 2006, 79).

Targets of (im)politeness are not passive but active co-constructors of (im)politeness (see Culpeper and Holmes 2013, 171). Hence, impoliteness is often reciprocated (see Culpeper 2011a, 2011b, 203–7, Culpeper and Holmes 2013, 171). Responses to jocular mockery or entertaining impoliteness will be more or less constrained by the context (Culpeper and Holmes 2013, 172). These responses may include laughter (Drew 1987, Everts 2003, Glenn 2003, Jefferson et al. 1987), explicit accord with or appreciation of the mockery, as well as (partial) repetition of the mocking remarks (Drew 1987, Jefferson et al. 1987). Generally speaking, Bousfield (2008, 195–202) suggests that responses to an offending situation may take two forms. The recipient of a situation of offending may either choose:

- (1) Not to respond.
- (2) To respond either by accepting the face-attack or countering the face-attack offensively or defensively.

In my study, there is an intensive use of *jocular mockery* and *jocular abuse* by Abla Fahita targeting both her celebrity guests and other celebrities. The very fact Abla Fahita is a puppet constructs a jocular frame within which mockery and/or abuse are considered humorous by the celebrity guest, the audience at the Duplex, and the viewers at home since the whole situation is not to be taken "too seriously." Such jocular insults or "banter," which constitute a form of entertaining impoliteness, create solidarity and establish or maintain "a bond of familiarity" among people (Leech 1983, 144).

The mix of humour and impoliteness creates a kind of formula that tends to be successful, attractive, and intimacy-promoting. Academic research has explored this humorous-impoliteness formula and analysed practices such as teasing (Butler 2007, Drew 1987, Everts 2003, Grainger 2004, Hay 2002, Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006, Mullany 2004, Schnurr and Chan 2011, Straehle 1993), jocular mockery (Haugh 2010, Haugh et al. 2011), jesting or mild banter (Grainger 2004, Haugh et al. 2011), humorous self-denigration (Holmes et al. 2012, Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006, Schnurr and Chan 2011), jocular abuse (Goddard 2006, Hay 2002), and so on.

A salient rationale behind my selection of Culpeper's (2011a) model is that it has been tested by Culpeper against impoliteness events reported by undergraduates from the UK, China, Finland, Germany, and Turkey (see Culpeper 2010, 2011a). It has also been applied to the TV show *The X Factor* (Culpeper and Holmes 2013). In addition, it has also been applied to other languages such as German and Japanese. This article provides another application of the model to a language other than English, namely, Arabic language and more particularly, Colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

2.1 Research questions

This article attempts to answer the following research questions:

To what extent is the humorous-impoliteness formula exploited in the TV show *Abla Fahita*?

Do the gender and age of the celebrity guest affect Abla Fahita's selection of particular humorous-impoliteness triggers?

To answer these questions, I investigated four interviews featuring Abla Fahita with celebrity guests (two males and two females) and extracted impoliteness events using mainly Culpeper's (2011a) impoliteness



Figure 2: Abla Fahita with Maged Elmasry.

model, supplemented by the notions of jocular mockery, jocular abuse, and recipient's responses from other models.

3 Data and method

My data include four episodes of *Abla Fahita*, downloaded from YouTube and fully transcribed. These particular episodes were selected because they achieved the highest number of views on YouTube and also for their entertainment value. The guests include two male and two female celebrities: Maged Elmasry, Hassan ElShafei, Elham Shaheen, and Rania Youssef.

Maged Elmasry (born 15 October 1963) is an Egyptian singer and actor (Figure 2). His episode with Abla Fahita, dated 6 April 2016, was deleted from YouTube after receiving more than 3 million views due to its violation of morality through the excessive use of sexual innuendo. It was then discreetly re-uploaded⁷ on 28 December 2016 without being labelled as the Maged Elmasry episode. The controversial 19-min interview,⁸ which was dubbed as “the most daring interview ever made in the show,” was later openly re-uploaded again on YouTube on 26 August 2018, and received 205,007 views.

Hassan ElShafei⁹ (born 9 October 1982) is an Egyptian musician, record producer, and media personality¹⁰ (Figure 3). He has produced and arranged music for famous singers from all over the Arab world, including Amr Diab, Hossam Habib, Angham, Sherine, Abdel Mejid Abdallah, and Nancy Ajram. He won the Best Music Producer Award at the Middle East Music Awards in 2009 and the DG magazine's Award for Best Music Arranger in 2007 and 2009. He has founded his own record label, Basement Records. His music helps both famous stars and talented young artists to introduce something different and new into the local market. He has also been a judge on multiple seasons of the TV programme *Arab Idol*, which premiered in 2011. In 2014, he was the only Arab to contribute to the international FIFA World Cup-oriented album *Pepsi Beats of the Beautiful Game*. He also cooperated with Abla Fahita in the hit song *Mayistahlūshī* [They don't deserve it]. His episode with Abla Fahita was posted on YouTube on 14 April 2018 and received 565,795 views.

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riWWah0IXM0>

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HM_IJSP0__Y&t=5s

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=Qw8F1t79iXw>

¹⁰ <https://www.arageek.com/bio/hassan-el-shafei>



Figure 3: Abla Fahita with Hassan Elshafie.

Elham Shaheen (born 3 January 1960) is a prominent Egyptian actress who joined the cinema industry at a young age. She has appeared in 100 Egyptian films and 60 television series and has won both Egyptian and international awards. She has been married and divorced twice. She is a controversial character particularly due to her views. She caused a controversy in 2016 when she vowed that she would marry the man who would kill the Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, promising to spend an unforgettable honeymoon with him. She expressed her belief that if Baghdadi were killed, the Middle East would be at peace again.¹¹ She also sued, won, and got sent to prison one of the islamists during the period of Muslim Brotherhood rule after he spoke ill of her and said she was a cheap woman. Her episode¹² in the sixth season of the Abla Fahita show (Figure 4) was uploaded on YouTube on 30 December 2017 and received 1,755,885 views.

Rania Youssef (born 1 December 1973) is also a prominent Egyptian actress. Her personal life attracts curiosity in Egypt, as she has been married and divorced three times and claims to have been physically abused in one of her marriages. She is also frequently criticised for wearing revealing clothing,¹³ being accused in the media of “inciting debauchery” through her style of clothing. Two Egyptian lawyers Amr Abdelsalam and Samir Sabry,¹⁴ who are known for taking celebrities to court and claim to police public morals by regulating attire, behaviour and even jokes, filed legal cases against her for which she could face 5 years in prison if convicted of public obscenity. Her episode¹⁵ with Abla Fahita (Figure 5), which was uploaded on YouTube on 13 January 2018, was in the sixth season and received 1,903,729 views.

¹¹ <https://www.arabiaweddings.com/news/elham-shahin-rare-picture-first-husbandhttps://www.rudaw.net/english/culture/18022016>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5YWNMLQ9Tw>

¹³ https://heavy.com/entertainment/2018/12/rania-youssefhttps://www.imdb.com/name/nm4416643/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_smhttps://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/02/world/middleeast/egypt-rania-youssef-dress.htmlhttps://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-46846286/actress-rania-youssef-facing-jail-term-over-revealing-dresshttps://heavy.com/entertainment/2018/12/rania-youssef/

¹⁴ https://www.arabnews.com/node/1566121/middle-easthttps://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/world/middleeast/cairo-lawyer-lawsuit.htmlhttps://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/an-egyptian-lawyer-who-chases-those-disloyal-to-cairo-has-a-new-target-wealthy-syrians-1.873722https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/egypts-conservative-crusader-puts-belly-dancers-and-pop-stars-in-the-dock/2019/09/28/1c8a70c4-c9a1-11e9-8067-196d9f17af68_story.htmlhttps://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150605-lawyer-samir-sabry-a-perfect-reflection-of-the-egyptian-legal-system/

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN_OKW7ah1c



Figure 4: Abla Fahita with Elham Shaheen.



Figure 5: Abla Fahita with Rania Youssef.

The four episodes were transcribed and then manually analysed applying the categories of the impoliteness model and the complementary notions mentioned in the previous section. In the process of transcribing the four episodes and qualitatively analysing them, I developed six hypotheses about the show:

- (1) All celebrities tend to enter the spirit of the jocular frame and treat Abla Fahita as a real person.
- (2) Abla Fahita tends to flirt with male celebrities, who usually playfully accept these flirtations.
- (3) Abla Fahita tends to use sarcasm and sexual innuendo the most.

- (4) Abba Fahita tends to comment on the appearance of the female guests and compare herself to them.
- (5) Abba Fahita tends to criticise absent celebrities and drags the guests into commenting on those celebrities.
- (6) The celebrities' responses to Abba Fahita's impoliteness events range from laughter, explicit accord or appreciation of the mockery, partial repetition of the mocking remarks, asking questions, defending themselves or others, to counterattacking.

I address these hypotheses with quantitative and qualitative analyses in Section 4

4 Discussion

In this section, I report the quantitative and qualitative evidence for the hypotheses formed in the previous section. All instances of impoliteness were identified in the light of Culpeper's (2011a) model. I noticed that all the impoliteness instances encountered in the data can also be classified as a sort of jocular mockery or jocular abuse in Bousfield's terms. It should be noted that the show generally involves constructing a playful, non-serious, or jocular frame, which creates a "context in which the impoliteness is understood to be untrue" (Culpeper 1996, 352). Within this jocular frame, the male artist behind Abba Fahita employs jocular mockery and/or jocular abuse.

To entertain viewers, the jocular frame is largely achieved through employing a visually striking but obvious puppet, which is treated by both the celebrity guests and the audience at the Duplex as a real woman. Abba Fahita, however, is not an ordinary woman, she is rather a voluptuous, acid-tongued, sarcastic widow with two kids and a great sense of humour. The celebrity guests join in the game, while quite aware that they are talking to a man due to his voice quality (falsetto), and jokingly indulge in conversation with the performer as if they were talking to a real celebrity show hostess in order to entertain and amuse the audience. The male guests address her using either '*ablah* [Miss]', '*abla fāhita* [Abba Fahita], or *fuffah*. The female guests, on the other hand, address her as '*ablah* [Miss] or by her first name *fāhita* [Fahita]. The guests willingly enter into co-constructing her "reality." Maged Elmasry asked her 23 questions about her trip to Dubai where they had met at the Film Festival, about her late husband and whether she intended to remarry. Hassan talked about their trip to Germany when they were producing their song *Mayistahlūshī* [They don't deserve it] and asked her about her relationship with her late husband, particularly in relation to raising their kids Karo and Boudy. Both Hassan and Maged treated her as a real woman flirting with them: Hassan stated that he missed her, while Maged, on the other hand, gave her a French kiss. Rania and Elham also treated Fahita as a real woman. There were many instances of comparisons being made between Abba Fahita's supposed beauty, elegance, and stardom to that of the female guest. Elham insisted that she is more beautiful, though she admitted Fahita's dress was elegant. She rejected Abba Fahita's claim that she is more successful and insisted that her own name would be mentioned before Fahita's if they co-starred in a film. Rania was more accepting of Fahita's haughtiness and endorsed her success, popularity, elegant style, and beauty. However, Rania warned her not to flirt with her new husband and not to envy her stunning appearance and flood of work coming out. Elham tended to counterattack Fahita's sarcasm the most, especially when referring to her celebrity friends. She explicitly brought out the similarities between herself and Abba Fahita, pointing out that both are single, strong, independent, beautiful, middle-aged women. She invited Fahita to accompany her to Dubai to visit a friend of hers who is a plastic surgeon in order to get a facial treatment. She also accused Fahita of abusing her daughter Karo and warned her that she would report this abuse to human rights associations. She also accused Fahita of instigating Elham's family to rebel against her and insisted on continuing as the dictator in her family. Elham was the only guest who managed to dominate the floor, even more than Abba Fahita herself, contributing 58% of the speech uttered during the episode.

4.1 Quantitative analysis

The results in Table 1 show that Abla Fahita tends to speak more than all guests, with the exception of Elham Shaheen, whose episode was included in a special New Year celebration broadcast. This may have allowed her to be given extra space – more time and opportunity to speak, tell anecdotes, comment on things – compared to the other guests due to her high-status career, degree of celebrity, older age, and, potentially, strong personality. Even when Fahita brought in two members of Elham's family, her brother and her niece, she gave Elham the opportunity to discuss things with them with very minor comments and interjections from Abla Fahita. Rania Youssef's turns, on the other hand, are much fewer compared to Abla Fahita's since, in part of her episode, Fahita also brought in Rania's new husband and her daughter as guests and directed many questions to them. The numbers of turns of both Maged Elmasry and Hassan Elshafei, on the other hand, are comparable with those of Abla Fahita.

The most common conventionalised formulae used by Abla Fahita are unpalatable questions/presuppositions and insults directed at a third person (Table 2). Unpalatable questions were used with all guests, and these questions tended to include sexual content much more in the cases of the male guests. Personalised third-person negative references were also used with all guests where Abla Fahita spoke ill of their celebrity friends and other celebrities in general, but with the male guests this included insulting their wives.

The most common implicational impoliteness triggers, on the other hand, include the use of sarcasm and sexual innuendo (Table 3). Sexual innuendoes tend to be more frequently used with male guests (73 instances = 84%) while sarcasm is more frequently used with female guests (183 instances = 72%).

Examples of these impoliteness triggers are provided below.

The responses of all guests to Abla Fahita's impoliteness included laughter, partial repetition of Fahita's remarks, accepting the impoliteness events, and countering the attack either defensively or offensively. Maged Elmasry accepted the impoliteness events, particularly the ones with sexual content, and went as far as including 19 instances of sexual innuendo in his own responses and 12 instances of sexual innuendo in the questions he asked to Abla Fahita. Hassan Elshafei, on the other hand, repeatedly told

Table 1: Number of turns and words for Abla Fahita and the guests

Duration in minutes	Fahita	Number of turns	Number of words	Guest	Number of turns	Number of words		
30.30		110	962	52%	Hassan Elshafei	105	878	48%
19		117	1,272	70%	Maged Elmasry	103	554	30%
60.43		446	2,927	42%	Elham Shaheen	430	4,000	58%
30.58		206	1,873	62%	Rania Youssef	159	1,157	38%

Table 2: Frequencies of conventionalised formulae

Impoliteness events	Conventionalised formulae						
	Insults			Challenging or unpalatable questions/presuppositions	Condescensions	Threats	Negative expressives
	Personalised negative assertions	Personalised negative references	Personalised third-person negative reference				
Hassan Elshafei	5	3	4	10	3	0	0
Maged Elmasry	1	1	7	20	2	0	2
Elham Shaheen	6	2	11	22	8	0	6
Rania Youssef	1	2	11	22	2	0	0
Total	13	8	33	74	15	0	8

Table 3: Frequencies of implicational impoliteness events

Impoliteness events	Implicational impoliteness				
	Convention-driven	Form-driven		Context-driven	Sexual innuendoes
	Sarcasm	Word play	Nicknames	Inappropriate responses	
Hassan Elshafei	32	6	51	3	19
Maged Elmasry	39	0	0	2	54
Elham Shaheen	124	3	6	0	3
Rania Youssef	59	8	14	7	11
Total	254	17	71	12	87

Table 4: Classification and frequencies of recipients' responses

Responses to Jocular Mockery	Laughter	Explicit accord of Mockery	Partial repetition of mocking remarks	Counter- attack	Defence	Referring to or implying exaggerated sexual content	Asking questions
Hassan Elshafei	2	31	1	5	14	6	13
Maged Elmasry	1	28	10	9	2	6	25
Elham Shaheen	19	43	8	35	14	0	2
Rania Youssef	17	14	9	19	10	4	2
Total	39	116	28	68	40	16	42

Fahita that she was going too far whenever she used any sexual innuendo. Only twice he played along with her sexual implications: when he referred to her desire for and admiration of a Lebanese singer, his co-star on the TV programme *Arab Idol*, Wael Kofoury; and when he agreed to take selfies with and kiss her supposed friends who fancy him.

The impoliteness events targeted by Abba Fahita towards Elham and Rania included sarcasm and they used all kinds of responses, as shown in Table 4. However, the female guests' responses included counter-attacking both defensively and offensively more frequently compared to the male guests.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

4.2.1 Conventionalised formulae

Abba Fahita's impoliteness triggers and her comments on the guests' responses indicate the skill and quick wit of the anonymous artist performing Fahita. Viewers are likely to find these triggers witty and humorous. The most common conventionalised formulae employed by Abba Fahita include insulting the guest and other absent celebrities and asking intrusive questions.

4.2.1.1 Insults – negative references to the guest

The personalities and habits of the guests are used as targets of abuse and mockery, including references to previously established "likes," "hates," "habits," "travels," "artistic works," "regular activities," "friends," and so on. In Examples (1) and (2), Abba Fahita casts Elham Shaheen as a dictator who derives her pleasure from controlling her siblings' lives:

-
- (1) (fāhita) 'āh hiyya dāyman issit il'ādrah manẓar 'ala ilfāḍi
[Fahita: Yes, the strong (tyrannical) lady is always an empty charade (just a big mouth)]
-

- (2) (fāhita) itgawwizt walla ilhām wa'fa ḥ'ālak
[Fahita: Have you got married or Elham gets in your way? (a question directed to Elham's brother)]
-

She presupposes Rania Yousef to have a manipulative nature, depicting her as a woman who would stop at nothing to achieve her ambition. This unpalatable presupposition is evidenced in Fahita's question in (3):

-
- (3) (fāhita) dusti ba'a fi ṭarī'ik 'ala kam waḥda 'ashan tiwṣali
[Fahita: How many women have you trodden on to get to the top?]
-

And in her sarcastic remark whereby she cleverly employs jocular mockery to refer to Rania Yousef's actions in pursuing her ambition in (4).

-
- (4) (fāhita) 'inti ma'amaltish zay ilbanāt ilḥilwah illi bitib'a 'ayza titshihir fat'ūm ti'mil 'i'lān 'aw tiṭla' fi miyuzik vidyu 'aw tikhush mis ijibt 'aw titgawwiz muntig ... 'inti ya ḥabibti 'amalti il'arba'a
[Fahita: You haven't followed the path of those beautiful fame-starved girls who become models in commercials and music videos, participate in the Miss Egypt Beauty Pageant, or get married to a film producer. You have done all four things, my darling.]
-

In (5), Fahita asks Hassan if he helps his wife in changing nappies for their 1-year-old girl. Hassan answered affirmatively, then added that he asked his wife if he could be involved in bringing up their daughter to strengthen the relationship between them. In Egyptian culture, men do not tend to help their wives in taking care of babies, and especially in changing nappies. Fahita's comment, which included addressing Hassan with the name *ya sūsū* [Oh, Susu] can be seen as a kind of jocular abuse since using this name usually ascribes an effeminate nature to a man, which is not acceptable in Egyptian and generally in Arabic culture.

-
- (5) (fāhita) wibtadit teghayyar elkawāfilah walla lissah?
(Fahita) Have you started to change diapers or not yet?
(ḥasan) āh 'ibtadit. 'ana dāyman ba'ul limirātī 'in 'ana 'āyiz yib'a liyya dūr muhim ba'milu bitikrār dah biy'awwī il'ilaqa bin iwi binha
(Hassan) Yes, I started to do so. I always tell my wife that I want to have an important role and do something repeatedly because this would strengthen the relationship between us.
(fāhita) ya sūsū
(Fahita) Oh, Susu.
-

In Example (6), Abla Fahita also employs jocular abuse in satirising Elham Shaheen's physical appearance, implying she has resorted to Botox and plastic surgery due to old age. She uses a sarcastic remark to point out rudely that the disproportion in the sizes of Elham's two cheeks may be ascribed to the famous slap on Elham's face by an older, long dead Egyptian actor, Mahmoud ElMelegy, in a well-known film scene rather than the failed application of Botox.

-
- (6) *(fāhīta) ya ḥabibti wana ba' ūl liyh 'andik khad 'akbar min khad wana illi fakrāh ilbutuks ṭili' maḥmūd ilmilīgi*
 [Fahita: Oh, dear! And I was wondering why you have one cheek larger than the other. [...] I thought it was Botox but it turned out to be Mahmoud ElMelegy.]
-

4.2.1.2 Insults – negative references to the guest's family or friends

There are also negative references to the guests' spouses (past and present). In the case of the male guests, Fahita brings out her jealousy of the guest's wife and her negative feelings towards her. In the case of the female guests, on the other hand, she would flirt with the guest's husband if he was present on the show as Rania Youssef's husband was. In (7), she tells Rania that she wants "to try" her husband, which implies a desire to have sexual intercourse with him, and that a good friend would not deny her friends anything. This can be taken as funny, despite the sexual content, since a husband is not something to be shared with others, particularly in the case of Egyptian women who are stereotypically depicted as highly possessive of their husbands and extremely jealous of other women.

-
- (7) *(fāhīta) hāḥ lā shawwa'tīni 'agarraḥ*
 [Fahita: Oh! You made me eager to try him.]
(rānya) lā lā shawwa'tik tishūfih mish tigarrabih 'iyb mat'ūlish kida
 [Rania: No No! I made you eager to see him not to try him. This is a disgrace! Don't say that!]
(fāhīta) lā 'ana 'aḥib ilṣāḥba illi matistakḥsarshi ḥāḡah fi ṣāḥbithā
 [Fahita: No! I like the friend who wouldn't deny her friend anything.]
(rānya) lā 'and hīna lā wimish hayinfa' hanikhṣar ba'd ya fāhīta
 [Rania: No! This wouldn't work. We will lose each other (spoil our friendship) Fahita.]
(fāhīta) khalāṣ 'atfarrag wimish lāzim 'adū'
 [Fahita: Ok. I will look and not necessarily taste (try).]
-

Fahita flirts with Rania's husband (in 8) and constructs herself as closer to him than Rania herself (in 9), which depicts a humorous attempt to snatch Rania's husband.

-
- (8) *(fāhīta) inta ya ḥabibi illi gāyzah. inta gāyziti imahārḍah*
 [Fahita: You, honey, are a reward. You are my reward tonight.]
-

-
- (9) *(fāhīta) ḥabibi wiṣḥāb min zamān wintī illi dakhīlah*
 [Fahita: He has been my lover and friend for a long time and you are an intruder.]
-

In Example (10), Fahita tells Hassan that he tied himself up with marriage at a young age. She expressed her intolerance of that fact by repeating twice that Hassan's wife has tied him up even more with the children. Her jealousy of Hassan's wife can be detected from the structure since she used an inversion starting with the verb *rabatitak* which included the enclitic feminine infix *t* [she] to refer to the wife and the enclitic object pronoun *k* [you], then the subject *mirātak* [your wife]. The inversion, the repetition of the structure as well as the contemptuous tone used by Fahita disparages the wife, so that the viewers infer that Fahita is (or, is pretending to be) jealous of Hassan's wife. The use of *bil'iyāl* [with the children] as the means of tying up reflects a common metaphor in Egyptian culture since it is usually said

that a wife binds her husband to her and takes away his freedom through hasting to get children. Hence, the metaphor of depicting the children as the binding or rope that links the man to his wife is quite common.

-
- (10) (*fāhita*) *bas 'inta rabaṭ nafsak badri ya sunsun*
 (Fahita) But you have tied yourself up quite early on, Sonson.
 (*ḥasan*) *'aḥla ḥāḡah*
 (Hassan) It is the best thing.
 (*fāhita*) *rabaṭitak bil'iyāl mirātak rabaṭitak bil'iyāl*
 (Fahita) She bound you to her with the children, your wife. She bound you to her with the children.
-

In (11), Fahita uses her catchphrase structure, a present tense third-person singular verb with an enclitic object pronoun *yihiddaha* [Damn her], to curse Maged's wife when Maged used the expression *mirāti* [my wife] which itself has the enclitic possessive pronoun.

-
- (11) (*māgid*) *ma'ḍarshi 'a'ul 'ana mirāti 'ā'dah*
 [Maged: I can't say because my wife is here.]
 (*fāhita*) *yihiddaha*
 [Fahita: Damn her]
-

Abla Fahita's jocular abuse extends to encompassing the guests' friends, other celebrities, women in general, and so on. In (12), she negatively refers to Elham Shaheen's friends using the Colloquial Egyptian plural forms *sharrāniyyīn wi ḥarābī?* for *evil* and *chameleons*. The paradox is that the same utterance is likely to be found humorous since she uses the negative description *sharrāniyyīn wi ḥarābī?* followed by the colloquial coordinating conjunction for contrast *bas* [but] and a metaphor *intu min guwwah khaṣṣa khaṣṣa* [on the inside you are lettuce, lettuce]. This metaphor is quite common in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic to refer to loveableness humorously. The metaphor may also, for some generations, evoke intertextual relations with a famous TV show in the 90s, namely *Candid Camera with Ibrahim Nasr*, in which the plus-size actor, dressed as a lady with excessive make-up, involved ordinary Egyptians in pranks in public places including restaurants, clinics, butchers' shops, among others. He used to say to people when they reacted badly *inta 'aṣabi bas min guwwah 'albak 'alb khaṣṣāya* [you are nervous but on the inside you have the heart of a lettuce].

-
- (12) (*fāhita*) *bas 'inti 'alīki shillāh ya ilhām mish nā'iṣku ghiri – huwwa illi yishufku biḥa'r'i min barrāh yi'ul sharrāniyyīn wi ḥarābī? bas intu min guwwah khaṣṣa khaṣṣa*
 [Fahita: But you have quite a coterie, Elham, that only lacks me [...] whoever sees you all would truly think you are evil chameleons but deep down you are lettuce (loveable).]
-

4.2.1.3 Insults – negative references to other celebrities

Fahita makes a sarcastic comment regarding the age of Ghada Abdel Razeq who is co-starring in a TV series with Maged in (13). This is considered a taboo area for Egyptian female actresses who tend to keep playing characters much younger than their real age in both TV and cinema. The structure *maybānshi 'aliyha 62 sana* [she doesn't look 62 years old at all] is an unpalatable presupposition since she gives the number as a fact. It is possible that this remark, which may be taken as a joke through obvious exaggeration, aims at

stressing that Ghada always plays the role of a much younger woman who is the object of love. Fahita's sarcastic remark on Ghada's age forms a kind of paradox with the following statement that she loves her.

-
- (13) (*fāhīta*) *maybānshi 'aliyha 62 sana ... lā li'ilmak 'ana 'aḥibbahā khāliṣ ... ghāda dūn 'an jilhā kulluh*
 [Fahita: She doesn't look 62 years old at all. [...] for your knowledge, I love her so much. Ghada, above all of her generation of actresses.]
-

It should be noted that Fahita only uses age as an element of jocular abuse in reference to female actresses. This may be because most actresses resort to plastic surgery and continue to star in works that are not suitable for their age.

She also satirises Hany Shaker, a famous Egyptian singer and the head of the Syndicate for Musical Professions in Egypt, for his sad songs (14). She makes a further sarcastic remark stressing that Rania was patient enough to act as a model in three of Hany Shaker's music video clips without committing suicide.

-
- (14) (*fāhīta*) *lā kifāya ya ḥabibti innik istaḥmilti talāta miyuzik vidyu ma'a hāni shākir wimantaḥartish*
 [Fahita: It is enough, darling, that you have tolerated three music videos with Hany Shaker and you haven't committed suicide.]
-

4.2.1.4 Condescension

Not only does Abba Fahita abuse others with her snide comments but she also praises herself and presents herself as superior to others. She tends to present herself as a superstar and always refers to the success of her programme, the number of her viewers and the jealousy others hold towards her. An example of her haughtiness can be found in (15) when Maged asked her about the reason why she went to the Dubai Film Festival.

-
- (15) (*māgid*) *'aywa ya'ni 'inti 'ih 'ilaqtik bilmahraganāt rāyḥa ilmahragān liyh 'aşlan*
 [Maged: Yes, but what is your relation to festivals? Why did you go to the festival in the first place?]
 (*fāhīta*) *stār sūbar stār buṣ ba'a kul da wibitis'alni liyh wilgumhūr illi 'ā'id dah*
 [Fahita: (I am) a star, a superstar [...] look around you! All this and you are asking me why? And the audience present here?]
 (*māgid*) *ya'ni 'inti kida ba'iti stār lamma ti'mili kida*
 [Maged: You mean that you become a star when you do so?]
 (*fāhīta*) *imm ilṣarf da kulu wilkamirāt wi 'uddāmi muzz 'ā'id 'uddāmi mithabbītah wi mimaṣmarāh wilnās illi 'ā'dah wil'i'lanāt. kul dah stār sūbar star*
 [Fahita: All the expenses (on the Duplex set) and the cameras. And I have a stunning muscular guy pinned with me (who has to stay with me), and all the people present here, and the advertisements. All this. (I am) a star, a superstar!]
-

Fahita's haughtiness is also clear in (16) when she states that she has her own show while Hassan only costars in *Arab Idol* with three other colleagues. She further implies her superiority to Hassan when she mocks his sitting position at the side of the judges' table, because the seating arrangement has the two male judges on the sides and the two females in the middle.

- (16) (*fāhita*) *Bas inta 'ārif 'aktar ḥāgah baḥibbaha fi 'ilāqitna yā sunsun*
 [Fahita: Do you know what the best thing I like about our relationship, Sonson?]
 (*ḥasan*) *'aywa*
 [Hassan: Yes.]
 (*fāhita*) *in iḥnā il'itnin ṣadda'na fi ba'd*
 [Fahita: That we both believed in each other.]
 (*ḥasan*) *ṭab'an ya fuffah*
 [Hassan: Sure, Foffa.]
 (*fāhita*) *mm inta kunt muwazzi' maghmūr wana kunt 'ala qadr shiwayyah min ishshuhra 'amalna*
il'ughniyyah naṭaritna lifu' dilwa'ti 'ana 'andi birnāmig liwaḥdi winta bititla' wist' 'arba'ah
 [Fahita: mmm you were an obscure music arranger and I was a bit famous. We made the song and it was a hit that took us up. Now, I have my own show but you share with three people.]
 (*ḥasan*) *ḥa''ik ḥilwah ḥilwah ḥa''ik*
 [Hassan: (laughter) you have a point. This is a good one. A good one. You have a point.]
 (*fāhita*) *winta ya ḥabibi 'ā'id 'ala iṭṭarf wana banzil fi nuṣ ilkādr*
 [Fahita: And you, my love, are sitting on the side far from the centre and I am at the focal point of the shooting angle.]

Again, in (17), when Fahita refers to Elham's new film project, she pretends to want a bigger part than Elham's, insinuating that Elham's older age would not make her the star she used to be, and stresses her (Fahita's) ability to achieve the difficult formula of combining true art and financial success. The difficulty of this combination is stressed as a sarcastic reference to the low standard of many Egyptian films which sacrifice art in order to make money.

- (17) (*fāhita*) *ḥabibi 'āwzīn film iyh ba'a taksīr bas lāzim dūri 'akbar min durhā wi 'aham*
 [Fahita (addressing Tamer Habib the suggested author of the film and who was present in the audience because he is one of Elham's close friends): Honey! We want a smashing film but my part has to be bigger and more important than hers (Elham's)]
 (*ilhām*) *ṭab'an 'inti 'awwil marrah lākin 'ana sit ba'd mīt film falāzim barḍu tiḥtirmi il'a'damiyyah*
'ana mish 'akbar minnik sinnan
 [Elham (stressing that her name has to be written first in the film credits): Of course! This is your first time but I have 100 films. You have to respect seniority[...]. I am not older than you!]
 (*fāhita*) *imm iskut ya lisāni iskut ya lisāni*
 [Fahita: I would keep silent! I would keep silent!]
 (*fāhita*) *lā maḥna hani'mil ba'a ilmu'ādlah ilṣa'bah gawā'iz wi 'iradāt*
 [Fahita: We will achieve the difficult formula – awards and revenue. (The difficulty being balancing quality with popularity)]

Fahita always stresses the jealousy of other female show hostesses of her success. She continually mentions two famous Egyptian hostesses, namely, Mona Elshazly and Lamees Elhadeedy (18).

- (18) (*fāhita*) *illi 'ana fih dah. da lamīs wi muna haymūtu nār*
 [Fahita: What I have here. Lamees and Mona are dying of jealousy of me.]
 (*ilhām*) *wallāhi ghayrānīn minnik*
 [Elham: By God, they are jealous of you?]

In (19), she tells Rania Yousef that she (Fahita) is a pioneer, that she is beautiful and that she does not stop amazing herself everyday. Note that she describes herself as *pioneer* three times in the same utterance. The English word *bayunir* [pioneer] is commonly used as a loan word in Colloquial Egyptian.

-
- (19) (*fāhita*) 'ana sabbāqa bayunīr bayunīr
 [Fahita: I am a pioneer, pioneer pioneer.]
 (*fāhita*) ḥilwa wallāhi 'ana babbir nafsi kul yūm 'aktar wi 'aktar
 [Fahita: I swear to God I am beautiful and everyday I amaze myself more and more.]
-

4.2.1.5 Negative expressives (curses and ill-wishes)

Abla Fahita also curses her guests and expresses ill wishes towards them, their spouses, friends, fans, and the audience (see Examples 20 and 21). She frequently uses the curse *yihiddik* [damn you], with all its morphological variations: the present tense second-person singular with enclitic pronoun which can be used for both masculine and feminine with variation in the pronunciation between *yihiddik* (*f*) and *yihiddak* (*m*), the present tense third-person singular with enclitic pronoun for a feminine object *yihiddaha*, the present tense second-person plural with enclitic pronoun for both masculine and feminine *yihiddiku*, and the third-person feminine singular *tithad*.

She curses one of the female fans who has supposedly submitted a question with sexual content to be put to Maged.

-
- (20) (*fāhita*) *yihiddik ya fay'ah 'ala da su'al*
 [Fahita: Damn you, Fayqa, for this question.]
-

She expresses her ill wishes for Elham, who acts as the head of her family and controls the lives of her siblings, that she will grow old and they will be happy to avenge themselves and get rid of her.

-
- (21) (*fāhita*) *bukrah tikbari wi tithaddi wi yinti'mu minnik*
 [Fahita: Tomorrow, you will get old and weak and they will have their vengeance.]
 (*fāhita*) *ilḥala'a bitikhlaṣ wilsana bitikhlaṣ wi lāzim 'ukhtak di tithad*
 [Fahita: The show is almost finished and the year is almost finished and your sister has to be destroyed (brought down from an undeserved higher position)!]
 (*ilḥām*) *rabbina yihiddik*
 [Elham: May Allah destroy you!]
-

4.2.1.6 Challenging/unpalatable questions or presuppositions

Within the jocular frame, Abla Fahita employs jocular mockery during most of the show. She establishes intimate relations with the guests, which appears in her inventing nicknames to address her guests: Hassan was addressed as *Soona* and *Sonson*, Elham as *Elly*, and Rania as *Ranooty*. She also metaphorically invades the guests' private spaces with intrusive questions about bank accounts, wages, and wealth.

In (22), she asks Elham where she got the money from to get her expensive diamond earrings and sarcastically identified the source as either the revenues of film hits or tax evasion. The reference to film hits is quite sarcastic since it is common knowledge that Elham lost a lot of money producing a number of films that did not achieve any financial success. The question about the state of Elham's bank account also supports the irony about her losses in film production.

- (22) (*fāhita*) *ilḥala' il'almāz hayākul min il'uṣṣah ḥittah... da 'ih ḍarabāt 'aflām walla taharrub ḍaribi 'ādi 'ashan 'ab'a 'astilfuḥ minnik ḥatta yib'a ḥilw 'alayya 'awi 'awi wi'ana ḥatta widni 'aḥla min widnik*
 [Fahita: The diamond earrings match the fringe. You got (the money to buy) it from film blockbusters (hits) or normal tax evasion? I may borrow them from you. It would definitely suit me since my ear is more beautiful than yours.]
 (*ilhām*) *liyh 'ana widni 'aḥla*¹⁶
 [Elham: Why? My ear is more beautiful!]
-
- (*fāhita*) *bas 'akhbar ilḥisāb fi ilbank 'ih ya ilhām*
 [Fahita: How is your bank account, Elham?]
 (*ilhām*) *madyūna wallāhi madyūna*
 [Elham: I am in debt! I swear to God I am in debt.]
-

Fahita directed a similar question to Rania who is known to be very prolific as she acts in both TV series and films every year (23). Fahita, in reference to Rania's accumulating wealth, used a quite common metaphor in Colloquial Egyptian in which getting a lot of money is depicted as the rolling of dice. This metaphor may also evoke an intertextual link with a famous folk song which was a hit at the time Rania's episode was first broadcasted.

- (23) (*fāhita*) *wi lissa ba'a ya ḥabibtī 'ā'dah fi masr ilgididah walla ilḍahr li'ib*
 [Fahita: Do you still stay in Misr Elgedeedah or have the dice rolled (you made a killing)?]
-

She also asks intrusive questions about personal activities related to hygiene and beauty maintenance. In (24), she asks about the amount of time Rania spends in the toilet.

- (24) (*fāhita*) *ṭayyib rānya bitu'ud 'ad 'ih fi ilḥammam*
 [Fahita: How long does Rania stay in the toilet?]
-

Fahita also mocks Hassan's disorganised wardrobe in (25). Her use of the action verb *tulṭum* [slap your face] is cultural since this physical gesture is associated with severe shocks in Egyptian culture.

- (25) (*fāhita*) *bitiftaḥ dūlābik inta tulṭum?*
 [Fahita: When you open your wardrobe, you slap your face?]
 (*ḥasan*) *āh biḥḥabṭ*
 [Hassan: Yes. Exactly.]
 (*fāhita*) *ṭab mish kifāya ba'a wi ni'dil ilḥāgah di ya ḥasan wi tinazzam*
 [Fahita: Isn't it enough? It is time that you tidy things up, Hassan.]
 (*ḥasan*) *di ba'a 'uyūb ya fuffah wi 'ādi*
 [Hassan: These are personal defects, Foffa.]
 (*fāhita*) *ba'a il'amar dah warāh hargalah*
 [Fahita: This handsome man is careless and disorganised?]
 (*ḥasan*) *bizzabṭ kiddah*
 [Hassan: Exactly.]
-

¹⁶ The word *widni* [my ear] is used in the singular in Arabic, as shown in the example above, though the English equivalent would always be plural.

4.2.2 Implicational impoliteness

In addition to Abla Fahita's intensive use of conventionalised formulae as clearly manifested in her insults, intrusive questions, and curses, she also deploys implicational impoliteness to a great extent. Indeed, a great deal of Abla Fahita's appeal is likely to be ascribed to her implicatures and word play. Instances of implicational impoliteness in *Abla Fahita* are found to be convention-driven and form-driven. Indeed, the majority of examples fall within the category of form-driven impoliteness since Abla Fahita exaggerates by using insinuation and sexual innuendo.

4.2.3 Convention-driven impoliteness (*sarcasm and mock politeness*)

Convention-driven impoliteness is manifest in Abla Fahita's sarcasm and mock politeness. In (26), she implies a negative view of Elham Shaheen's early films, referring to one of her films as *ilgarimah ilfaniyyah* [the artistic crime] due to its low standard.

(26) (*fāhita*) *ha ya ili ba'a. ilgarimah ilfaniyyah di kānit fi 'ay film*
[Fahita: Elly, in which film was this artistic crime?]

It should also be noted that Fahita's sarcasm is not confined to her words. It is also conveyed by her intonation which gives the impression that she is not genuine. In Example (27), her intonation indicates the opposite meaning of her utterance while talking to Elham about her diamond earrings.

(27) (*fāhita*) '*ana ya ilhām mish 'awzālik ya ḥabibtī ghir ilkhīr*
[Fahita: I only wish the best for you, my dear Elham.]

Also in (28), she is not genuine in praising Elham's capacity in performing action scenes in her films, in stressing people's inability to forget one film, and in referring to Elham's convincing performance in one scene.

(28) (*fāhita*) *ya wa'di 'ala il'akshan*
[Fahita: Oh my God! What an amazing action!]
(fāhita) huwwa dah ḥad yinsāh
[Fahita: Can anybody forget that (film)?]
(fāhita) biṣarāḥa il'adā' muqni' khālīṣ
[Fahita: Honestly, the performance is very convincing!]

4.2.4 Form-driven implicational impoliteness

Instances of form-driven implicational impoliteness are abundant. Sexual innuendoes are frequently employed by Abla Fahita.

4.2.4.1 Sexual innuendoes

Sexual innuendoes are Abla Fahita's trademark. Many people must enjoy the hidden meanings or sexual content which lie at the core of Fahita's jocular remarks. In fact, academic research has shown that people

tend to enjoy jokes involving taboo topics more than non-taboo topics (e.g. Kuhlman, 1985). As well as the audience, the guests are quite sure that Fahita's jocular remarks might not be entirely innocent. The laughter they receive points out how much people are actually enjoying her sexual innuendoes. They usually involve references to the sexual appeal and good looks of the male celebrity guests and others.

We have to take into consideration that Abla Fahita is performed by a man, whose identity is unknown to both guests and viewers, despite some rumours circulating. The guests in the show, as well as the viewers at the Duplex and in front of TV screens, are well aware that the sarcastic and sexual comments are not really being made by a woman (i.e. by a woman behind the female puppet, in which case their identity parameters would not be in disagreement with each other), but by a male artist behind a female figure. This male artist acts his emotions and reactions out in his female guise, but is, in fact, seen by audiences as a male due to his voice qualities. He manifests impolite behaviour for entertainment at the cost of celebrities, but his disguise adds to the expression of impolite meanings through the satirical/stereotypical representation of a middle-aged, rich woman as viewed from a male perspective. This manoeuvre can be considered as an additional source of entertainment as well as impoliteness (evoked by a man ridiculing women of the Abla Fahita-type). It should also be noted that, despite the female figure, it is man's language that the audience is presented with and reacts to. In Egypt, as a conservative Middle-Eastern society, which is masculine in character and marked by high power distance, such manifestations of impoliteness, particularly sexual innuendoes, are surely perceived differently (and accepted more) when they are performed by a man than if they had been acted out by a real woman. It is a fact that the show is popular and Fahita's banter and impolite behaviour are widely acclaimed; however, the reception would not have been the same if the person behind the puppet had been female. In this case, a female would have faced the wrath of society and her remarks would not have been accepted.

In the selected data, the sexual innuendoes are present from the very beginning when she welcomes the two male guests to the Duplex. She welcomes Hassan with a song (29), in which she mentions that all her friends fancy him and want to share him with her.

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- (29) (*fāhita*) *kul iṣḥābi 'inhum fih yāma sa'alūnī 'ih gara 'ih wakhdāh liwahdik 'āfla 'alih hāti ya 'abla nikhammis fih ḥinni 'alina ilwād warrīna daḥna khalāṣ riglina wil'abr*
 [Fahita: All my friends fancy him (have their eyes on him). They always ask me why I lock him up to keep him only for myself. They demand "Let's all share him, Abla!." Have mercy on us and show us the young man. Our feet approach the grave (We are about to die)]
-

The use of *nikhammis fih* (share him) evokes the metaphor *lust is hunger*. This expression is usually used in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic to refer to sharing a cigarette. Hence, Fahita metaphorically depicts Hassan as a cigarette that middle-aged ladies crave to share. This metaphor is further extended by the women's plea to Abla Fahita to have mercy on them by showing them Hassan. Fahita's reference to Hassan as *ilwād* [the young man] emphasises his desirability, particularly with depicting her friends as cougars and stressing their old age. The use of the metaphor *riglina wil'abr* [our feet approach the grave] is quite common as an abusive remark made about old people in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic, particularly when referring to the old people who disregard their age and act as if young.

In Maged's episode, Fahita welcomes him with an extended metaphor depicting him as a local product (since he is Egyptian) and wondering why people would complain about the home industry if the product in front of her is perfect (30). The metaphor has a sexual innuendo as she says to the audience at the Duplex *nigarrabuh ma'a ba' ḍ* [we will try together], with *trying* here implying having a kind of sexual activity with Maged.

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- (30) (*fāhita*) *gibnālkum muntag maşri nigarrabuh ma'a ba' d... raḥḥabu ma'āya bilmuntag ilmaşri māgid ilmaşri ... lā muntag yifriḥ... maşşinā'ah ilmaḥaliyyah ḥilwa ahu... 'ummāl ilnās bitishtiki liyh*
 [Fahita: We brought for you an Egyptian product that we will try together. Welcome with me the Egyptian product, Maged ElMasry. The product is satisfactory. The local industry is really good so why are people complaining?]
-

As shown in Example (31), Maged is quick to join her in this metaphor. He also wonders why people would claim that the Egyptian product is defective and states that it is perfect. It is possible that Maged's ability to quickly take up and run with Abla Fahita's sexual innuendoes motivated the artist performing Fahita to take things a step further, thus making the sexual innuendoes clearer and more intense. What Fahita says next to describe the still unspecified Egyptian product can be taken to refer to a penis: *biy-karmish* [it shrinks] and *biy'ish* [it lives longer]. Again, Maged adopts the same line and adds that the product *biy'iysh ya'ni wibyistaḥmil* [lives longer and endures]. This leads Fahita to extend the metaphor further and ask him about the number of times he washes it everyday. The use of the enclitic pronoun with the present tense second-person verb *bitighsilu* [washes it] rather than mentioning the word *product* makes the implication a penis is being referred to even stronger and would lead most people to interpret the question as a query about the number of times Maged has sex everyday.¹⁷ Fahita herself confirms and encourages this interpretation when she says that *ilniswān dimāghha wiskha* [Women are so dirty-minded] and refers to *il'ihṭibās ilḥarāri waşal ildubliks* [the global warming (which) has inflicted itself on the Duplex]. Note that the selection of words like *ilniswān* for *women* and *wiskha* for *dirty* (instead of *issittāt* and *qazirah* which have the same meaning) is not quite acceptable in Colloquial Egyptian. They are considered to be taboo words by many people in Egyptian society. They are not the kind of words that parents would like their children to use.

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- (31) (*māgid*) *bas mish 'ārif liyh dāyman biy'ayyibu fi ilmuntag ilmaşri. da ilmuntag ilmaşri tamām*
 [Maged: I don't know why they speak ill of Egyptian products. The Egyptian product is perfect.]
 (*fāhita*) *imm biy' ūlu biykarmish*
 [Fahita: They say it shrinks.]
 (*māgid*) *huwwa 'ih illi biykarmish*
 [Maged: What shrinks?]
 (*fāhita*) *'āh... bas biy'ish biy' ūlu biy'ish*
 [Fahita: Yes! But it lives longer. They say it lives longer and endures.]
 (*māgid*) *huwwa min nāḥyit biy'ish... biy'ish ya'ni wibyistaḥmil*
 [Maged: Yes, it lives longer and and endures.]
 (*fāhita*) *wibtighsiluh kām marrah ba'a flyūm ... da mish ma'ūlah ilniswān dimāghha wiskha khāliş. il'ihṭibās ilḥarāri waşal ildubliks*
 [Fahita: How many times do you wash it everyday? (laughter) [...]] It is unbelievable. Women are so dirty-minded! [...] Global warming has inflicted itself on the Duplex.]
-

¹⁷ It should be noted that in Islamic culture it is obligatory to wash/take a shower after sex.

The focus on the male guests' sexual appeal and sexual activities continues throughout both episodes. In (32), she asks Hassan if his daughter has taken after him in his cuteness or has taken her mother's annoying behaviour instead. Fahita implies Hassan's sexual appeal and, at the same time, she abuses his wife.

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- (32) *(fāhita) wi ya tara ba'a ilbannūtah wakhda ḥalāwit babāha walla zan māmitha?*
 Fahita: I wonder whether the girl has taken her father's cuteness (beauty) or her mother's buzzing?
(ḥasan) lā wakhda ḥalāwit māmitha ṭab'an
 [Hassan: (laughter) No, she has taken her mother's beauty, of course.]
-

Fahita stresses Hassan's physical appeal (33), by enumerating his charms and referring to the presence of some people who are jealous of him.

-
- (33) *(fāhita) inta tā'ib nafsīyyit nās kitīrah ya sunsun*
 [Fahita: you are causing psychological problems to many people, Sonson.]
(ḥasan) lih ya fuffah?
 [Hassan: Why, Foffa?]
(fāhita) māl wi gamāl wi 'iyāl wi 'uṣṣah shimāl
 [Fahita: You have money, beauty, children, and stylish hair (a fringe on the left side).]
-

In Example (34), she also expresses her admiration for Maged's grey beard and then asks a question about *mīn biyil'ablak fiḥā* [who plays with it]. In Colloquial Egyptian, using the expression "play in/with it" without specifying the object of play can always be taken as a sexual innuendo.

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- (34) *(fāhita) mish ma'ūlah ḥilwa khālīṣ idda'n ilbiyḍah di ... mīn biyil'ablak fiḥa*
 [Fahita: It is unbelievable how sweet is this greyish beard. Who strokes it for you (play in/with it)?]
-

Then, further into the male guests' episodes, many of her questions and remarks imply a sexual content. In Maged's case, she brings a list of questions which are supposedly sent in by his female fans when they knew he would be Abla Fahita's guest. All the questions have explicit and/or implicit sexual references. The questions addressed to Maged (35) include whether his lips are natural or augmented. In the question, Fahita ascribes to Maged's lips the modifier *ilmistiwiyyah* [ripe] which is usually used with fruits and vegetables. This use builds on her use of the conventional metaphor depicting lust as hunger and sex as food.

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- (35) *(fāhita) bitis'alak ba'a bula ya magid ishshafāyif ilmistiwiyyah di ṭabī'i walla manfūkha*
 [Fahita: Paula asks you, Maged, these ripe lips are natural or augmented/silicone?]
-

Note that the SEX IS FOOD metaphor is employed clearly in Maged's episode when both Fahita and Maged depict having sex with people from different nationalities as tasting and eating dishes from different cuisines. This metaphor is supported in the interchange in (36) below when Fahita used the word *du'tuh* [tasted it] to refer to being married only once. Maged's question *wi du'ti 'ih ba'a ilfatra illi fātīt* [and what have you tasted recently?] and his selection of the word *biygīb* [comes] which is used in Colloquial Egyptian for sexual ejaculation further elaborate the metaphor.

-
- (36) (*Māgid*) *bismillāh mashā'a allāh itgawwizti kām marrah*
 [Maged: How many times have you got married?]
 (*fāhita*) *hiyya marrah yatimah*
 [Fahita: Just once.]
 (*Māgid*) *marrah*
 [Maged: Only once?]
 (*fāhita*) *'āh 'āh mish du'tuh ghiyr marrah*
 [Fahita: Yes, yes. I have tasted it only once.]
 (*Māgid*) *wi du'ti 'ih ba'a ilfatra illi fātīt*
 [Maged: And what have you tasted recently?]
 (*fāhita*) *du't illibnāni wilmaghribi wilhindi bas kām hāmi shiwayyah*
 [Fahita: I have tasted the Lebanese, the Moroccan, and the Indian but the Indian was a bit hot.]
 (*Māgid*) *'āh ilhindi 'āh biygīb*
 [Maged: Yes, the Indian (comes)!]
 (*fāhita*) *ilhindi harrā'*
 [Fahita: The Indian is Hot!]
 (*Māgid*) *'āh harrā'*
 [Maged: Yes! It is hot.]
-

The question in (37) from a fan called *māma shmū'* enquires whether Maged has been bulking up his chest. The name of the fan, which can be literally translated as *Mother Candles*, is itself humorous since the name is not common in Egypt and the description *māma* is likely to suggest an older person. Thus, the name together with the fan's mentioned job suggests a kind of person who would hardly come up with such a question. The question itself is musical due to the repetition of the consonant *binshak mitdafnīsh* but the words, however, are not common and probably used only in the context of bodybuilding.

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- (37) (*fāhita*) *ṭayyib issu'āl da ba'a min māma shmū'. di rabbit manzil wi 'andaha ṣafḥa 'ala ilfiysbuk bitbī' nabatāt wi 'akl biyti bitis'alak ba'a wibit'ulak inta binshak mitdafnīsh*
 [Fahita: This question is from Mama Shmooa (candles). She is a housewife, and she has a Facebook page which she uses to sell plants and home-made food. She asks you whether you are bulking up your chest?]
-

The sexual content in the question, in (38), from a fan called Fayqa, who is supposed to be Fahita's friend, is confirmed even before mentioning the question itself when Fahita curses her for coming up with that question. The expression *wibtil'ab bas fu'* which can be literally translated as *you only play in the upper part* may have a sexual implication that he does not have full sexual intercourse.

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- (38) (*fāhita*) *yihiddik ya fay'ah 'ala da su'āl. ilmuḥim fay'ah ṣaḥḥbiti hiyya 'alaṭūl bitshūfak fī ilbūlz jim fabit'ul in inta mish muhtam bilrigliyn wibtil'ab bas fu' ya tara liyh*
 [Fahita: Damn you, Fayqa, for this question. Anyway, my friend, Fayqa, sees you all the time in the Bulls' Gym, and she says that you are not exercising the legs and that you only work out the upper part of the body. We wonder why?]
-

Then, there is a question about the kind of clothing Maged wears while sleeping (39). Translated literally, the question would be *"how do you sleep at night wearing shorts or English?"* The use of *English* as the other option to wearing shorts matches the stereotypical assumption among Egyptians that Europeans tend to sleep naked.

(39) (*fāhita*) *mis fina bitis'alak bitnām bi'ih biliyl bilshurt walla inglīzi*

[Fahita: Miss Feena asks you, how do you sleep at night wearing shorts or English (naked)?]

The description provided in Example (40) of the fan sending this question is incredibly humorous: a 52-year-old virgin running a prostitution network. Even Maged notices the humorous combination and asks Fahita to confirm whether the lady concerned is a virgin. Additionally, as running a prostitution network is a criminal act in Egypt, this makes it impossible that any woman involved in such a business would simply confess it. The question itself concerns Maged's sexual preferences in women.

(40) (*fāhita*) *yallah ba'a issu'āl ilmarrah di min il'ānisah muhgaḥ*

[Fahita: The question this time is from Miss Mohga.]

(*Māgīd*) *'ānisah*

[Maged: A virgin?]

(*fāhita*) *'āh itniyn wikhamsīn sanah wi bitdīr shabakah munāfyā lil'ādāb. binnisbalak ba'a innak nigm sinimā'i muzz wi mitābi' ilfan fi il'ālam kulluh mīn 'aktar sit siksi fil'ālam binnisbalak*

[Fahita: Yes. She is 52 years old (laughter) and she runs a prostitution network. Since you are a sexy film star and a follower of art all over the world, who is the sexiest woman on the earth for you?]

The description of the next fan, in Example (41), as a 27-year-old woman who has been convicted in a legal case for religious contempt is incongruous with the content of the question which has a religious aspect. It is known that Islam allows polygamy, giving men the licence to marry four wives. It is ironic, of course, that the fan would express contempt for religion except for this aspect. There is also an unpalatable presupposition in the question itself that Maged cheats on his wife. Maged's sexual appeal is highlighted with the reference to him as *ilmuzz* [the sexy guy]. The use of the words *ilmuzz* to refer to a sexy guy and *ilmuzzah* to refer to a sexy woman is currently quite common in Colloquial Egyptian.

(41) (*fāhita*) *ṭab yallah fi su'āl min bibisān sab'ah wi'ishrīn sanah mamsūkah fi 'aḍiyyit 'izdīrā' 'dyān bit'ulak mawḍū' izzūgah ittanyah da kitir khālīš ya tara ilmuzz mumkin yi'miluh walla inta muktafi bilkhiyanah. khalāš 'irifna il'igabah muktafi 'āh muktafi*

[Fahita: There is a question from Bebesan, 27 years old and a convict in a contempt of religion case. She tells you that bigamy (having a second wife) is widespread. Would the sexy guy do it or is he satisfied with cheating? Now we know the answer, satisfied! Yes, satisfied.]

The next question in (42) also includes a reference to Maged as *ilmuzz* [the sexy guy]. The fan's question seems innocent at first. She asks about the age when Maged was first hit on. Maged's answer, that in his hometown, Tanta, adolescence starts early probably at the age of 10 or 12 years, leads Fahita to make a shocking remark about the young age Maged reached sexual puberty. This is a sensitive issue in Egypt and not normally acceptable to discuss.

(42) (*fāhita*) *ṭanṭ kārīmān ... bitis'alak ba'a wit'ullak kān 'anduh kām sanah ilmuzz lamma 'awil marrah 'it'ākis*

[Fahita: Aunt Kareeman asks you how old the sexy guy was when he was hit on for the first time?]

(*māgīd*) *min sin ilmurāḥqah min 'awil sittāshar sanah. iḥna fi ṭanṭa binibda' ilmurāḥqah min badri itnāshar sanah 'ashar sinīn murāhiq 'alaṭūl*

[Maged: In adolescence beginning from 16 years old. In Tanta, we start adolescence early. 12-year-old and 10-year-old boys are adolescents.]

(*fāhita*) *ma'ūlah balaght 'andak 'ashar sinīn*

[Fahita: Is it possible that you reached puberty when you were 10 years old?]

Although the fan did not want to say her name and only used initial letters, Fahita mentioned the name humorously and did not respect the fan's desire for anonymity (43). The question itself has the unpalatable presupposition that the sexual scenes in films are real since the actor may be enjoying them. Maged's reply to the question which refers to his meeting with Abla Fahita as sexual intercourse or sexual interview (note that the expression *illiqā' ilginsi* in Arabic can be translated in both senses) highlights the sexual nature of the questions. Fahita's answer to Maged's remark *'arāmil ba'a* [typical widows] presupposes the sexual starvation of widows and can be taken as an abusive remark about widows in conservative Egyptian culture where most widows prefer not to remarry and spend the rest of their lives raising their children.

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- (43) (*fāhita*) *yallah ba'a issu'āl da 'ala lisān issadiqah nūn mīm illi hiyya nirmīn miḥammad 'ashān mish 'āyzaḥ ti'ūl ismaha bit'ullak law kunt mumaththil kunt tiḥib ti'mil mashhad sākhin ma'a mīn*
 [Fahita: This question is from a friend N. M., who is Nermeen Mohamed, but she doesn't want to say her name. She asks you, if you were an actor, which actress would you like to have a sex scene with?]
 (*māgid*) *huwwa 'ih illiqā' ilginsi illi 'ana fih dah. mish fāhim ya'ni*
 [Maged: What kind of sexual intercourse/sexual meeting I am in right now? [...] I don't get it.]
 (*fāhita*) *'arāmil ba'a*
 [Fahita: Typical widows.]
-

The descriptions of the fans sending in the questions continue to use the conventionalised formula of negative third-person references. The fan sending the question is described as *marīdah nafsiyyan wi 'āyshah 'ala gihāz ilkahraba* [a patient suffering from psychological disorders and is kept going by an electric device] (44). Maged's sexual appeal is further highlighted through referring to him as *ilḥilw*, which can be translated as *the sweet guy* or *the handsome guy*. This reference maintains the use of the LUST IS HUNGER/SEX IS FOOD metaphor. The question, which on the surface appeared to be an innocent query about the number of push-ups Maged can do, has a deeper meaning since it can be understood as an enquiry about the number of ejaculations he can have. The deeper meaning comes to the surface more explicitly when Fahita rephrases the question saying *bitgīb kām marrah* [How many times do you come?]. This question is typically used in sexual talk in Colloquial Egyptian to enquire about the number of ejaculations. Maged's answer which is accompanied by laughter supports the sexual interpretation since he stated that it depends on the place he is playing at. Fahita, then, invites him to "play" at the moment *ṭayyib mat'ūm til'ab kida* and declares that the episode will be banned anyway, implying her awareness a boundary has been breached. Unsurprisingly, the episode was removed from YouTube due to its heavy sexual content.

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- (44) (*fāhita*) *ṭanṭ shushu 'allāh yishfīha marīdah nafsiyyan wi 'āyshah 'ala gihāz ilkahraba bitis'alak imm ilḥilw biygīb kām fiḍḍaght*
 [Fahita: Aunt Shushu, may Allah grant her recovery, who suffers from psychological disorders and is kept going by an electric device, asks how many push-ups the handsome guy can do?]
 (*māgid*) *ḍaght*
 [Maged: Push-ups?]
 (*fāhita*) *imm bitgīb kām marrah*
 [Fahita: How many times do you come?]
 (*māgid*) *'ihim 'ihim... wallāhi 'ala ḥasab ilmakān illi 'ana bal'ab fih*
 [Maged: mmm It depends on the place I am playing in.]
 (*fāhita*) *ṭayyib mat'ūm til'ab kida. il ḥal'a di mish hatitzā'*
 [Fahita: Why don't you play now? [...] This show will be banned.]
-

Sexual content is also present in Hassan's episode but to a lesser extent than in Maged's. Anyone watching both episodes can come to the conclusion that Hassan did not welcome the sexual insinuations and repeatedly asked Fahita to have limits while Maged, on the other hand, adopted the opposite attitude and went along with Fahita as if they were in a competition to see who could load their remarks with more sexual content.

In Example (45), when Fahita welcomes Hassan to the show and he says *waḥashtīni* [I missed you], since almost 2 years had passed since their earlier encounter when they co-starred in their hit song, Fahita hastily says *ikhtishi ba'a ya sunsun* [Be shy]. The colloquial Egyptian Arabic command *ikhtishi* is typically used when someone does something obscene or unacceptable, particularly related to sexual advances. A sexual context is evoked further when Fahita adds that Hassan's wife is her friend, pretending that this would prevent her morally from accepting Hassan's sexual advances. Hassan's response to this remark *hatibtidi* [she will start] indicates his familiarity with Fahita's tendency to continually make sexual insinuations.

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- (45) (fāhita) 'āmil 'ih ya ḥabībi
 [Fahita: How are you, my love?]
 (ḥasan) ilḥamdu lillāh waḥashtīni
 [Hassan: Thank God. I missed you.]
 (fāhita) ikhtishi ba'a ya sunsun da inta mirātak ṣaḥbiti
 [Fahita: Stop it, Sonson (be shy). Your wife is my friend.]
 (ḥasan) 'allah hatibtidi ba'a
 [Hassan: Oh my God. She is going to start.]
-

Then, Fahita brings Hassan's wife into the conversation again in (46) by asking whether his wife was present at the Duplex or not, as if she was negotiating permission to speak more freely. Hassan rejects Fahita's attempts to delve into stronger sexual content using a common metaphor in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic *limmi iddūr* [end the round in a game] and stressing it even more by the adverb *khalāṣ* [enough].

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- (46) (fāhita) hiyya mirātak hina walla mish hina?
 [Fahita: Is your wife here or not?]
 (ḥasan) ma khalāṣ ba'a limmi iddūr ya fuffah
 [Hassan: It is enough. Don't go too far, Foffa.]
-

Fahita, however, insists on sticking to the habit of using sexual insinuations and refers in (47) to a sexual encounter with Hassan during their work on their hit song in Berlin. Fahita's intonation, the intentional mispronunciation of Berlin (barlīm), and the repetition of the structure *ghaṣb 'anni wi 'annuh* [was couldn't help it/it was forced on us] can be found humorous. Hassan defends himself by depicting what Fahita is saying as casting catastrophes on him (an extreme form of "get me into trouble") and indirectly accuses her of lying, saying that Fahita and her daughter Karo (in a previous section of the episode) *'ammālīn tikhtir'ū qīṣaṣ kitīr* [are making up a lot of stories]. Then, again he asks Fahita not to go too far in sexual content *lāzīm ya'ni matzawwidihāshi*. The use of the adverb *lāzīm* [it is necessary] stresses his desire not to be dragged into sexual conversation.

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- (47) (fāhita) 'illi ḥaṣal fī barlīm fī wa't mayistahlūshi dah
 [Fahita: What happened in Berlin at the time of (we were shooting) Mayestahlushi[...]]
 (ḥasan) 'inti hatirmi 'alayya balāwī
 [Hassan: You are going to (cast catastrophes on me) get me into trouble?]
 (fāhita) wallāhī kān ghaṣb 'anni wi 'annuh ghaṣb 'anni wi 'annuh ṭab fakir lamma kunt hatwa''a' ni min 'ala il'agalah?
 [Fahita: I swear we couldn't help it! We couldn't help it. Do you remember when you almost knocked me off the bike (while we were riding together)?]
 (ḥasan) fuffah 'ana shāyif 'inti wi kārū 'ammālīn tikhtir'ū qīṣaṣ kitīr 'ihna ḥabāyib bas barḍu lāzīm ya'ni matzawwidihāshi
 [Hassan: Foffa – I think you and (your daughter Karo) are inventing a lot of stories. [...]. We are close to each other, but you must not go too far.]
-

Again in (48), Fahita makes another sexual innuendo, reminding Hassan of the incident when his wife came across Fahita's sandals in Hassan's luggage after they returned from their trip to Germany. Through this question, Fahita wants to evoke the scenario of a wife coming across evidence that her husband is cheating on her and is having an affair. The use of the verb *'afashit* [arrested, caught], which is a Colloquial Egyptian verb often used in the context of criminals being arrested and carries negative connotations of bad consequences, further supports this scenario.

(48) *(fāhita) fākir lamma mirātak 'afashit ṣaṇḍali ilfushya fi shanṭitak?*

[Fahita: Do you remember when your wife found/caught my fuchsia sandals in your luggage?]

In (49), Fahita reminds Hassan of an incident that happened to him when he was a boy in which he mistakenly entered the hotel room of a famous actress while she was undressed, having a massage, and the actress had a big argument with Hassan's family. Fahita stresses the fact that the actress did not welcome Hassan's breaking into her room because he was young at that time, and playfully remarked that if Hassan entered Fahita's room at this time she would never let him out. Fahita's intonation and swearing by God that she will not let Hassan out of her room stresses her sexual insinuation.

(49) *(fāhita) bas hiyya ma'agabhāsah ba'a 'innak dakhalt'alihā?*

[Fahita: So, she didn't like that you entered her room?]

(ḥasan) mā ṭab'an wāḍiḥ 'innu ma'agabhāsah

[Hassan: Of course. It is clear she didn't like that.]

(fāhita) ṭab'an kunt ṣughayyar 'ana dilwa'ti law dakhalt wallāhī mā 'aṭalla'ak

[Fahita: Of course. You were young at that time. If you enter my room now, I swear to God I will not let you out.]

Hassan adopts Fahita's line of sex-related joking only twice. The first instance (50) is when Fahita told Hassan that she would allow her friends to have selfies and kisses with him for money. She gave him a list of the prices that range from 50 Egyptian pounds [about 3 dollars] for a selfie to 350 [about 22 dollars] for a selfie with a kiss. Hassan's question about the money presupposes his agreement to offer these favours to her friends. Fahita quickly reacts to Hassan's accord with the sexual joking by extending it through telling Hassan that it is shameful to sell sexual favours for money.

(50) *(fāhita) ṣaḥbāti ba'a ya sunsun 'arafūnī lamma ti'ibt khālīṣ fa'ana ba'a qarrart 'akhlaṣ min zannuhum wi 'azamtuhum yiṣawwarū ma'āk silfī bi khamsīn ginīh issilfī wi law būsah miyyah wi law silfī bi būsah tultumiyyah wi khamsīn*

[Fahita: My friends have annoyed me, Sonson. I got really sick of it. So, I decided today to get rid of their annoyance and invited them to take selfies with you. [...]. 50 pounds for a selfie; 100 pounds for a kiss; 350 pounds for a selfie with a kiss.]

(ḥasan) ṭab ilfulūs rāyḥa fīn?

[Hassan: Where would the money go?]

(fāhita) 'ib ya sunsun hatbūs ṣaḥbāti bilfulūs? Gāy 'āwiz yibūs ṣaḥbāti bilfulūs

[Fahita: Shame on you, Sonson. Are you going to kiss my friends for money? He wants to kiss my friends in return for money.]

The second time occurs when Hassan talks about Fahita's desire for Wael Kafoury (51). Fahita started by asking Hassan for a favour but he was the one to bring Wael Kafoury and Fahita's desire for him into the conversation. Of course, this was instantly seized on by Fahita and she adopted the imagined line of Wael Kafoury pleading for Hassan to set them up. The use of the plea *winnabī* [For the Prophet's sake] relates to

Egyptian culture. It is quite common in Egyptian Arabic to swear by or plead to other people (as a stronger meaning of please) with the Prophet. In Islam, however, it is only acceptable to swear by Allah and any other swearing is *Haram* [forbidden].

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- (51) (*fāhita*) 'ana 'āyzah minnak khidmah basīṭah khālīṣ
 [Fahita: I need a small favour from you.]
 (*ḥasan*) 'insī
 [Hassan: Forget it.]
 (*fāhita*) lih bas ya sunsun?
 [Fahita: Why Sonson?]
 (*ḥasan*) wā'il kāfūrī la'
 [Hassan: Wael Kofoury, NO]
 (*fāhita*) winnabī ya sunsun
 [Fahita: For the Prophet's sake, Sonson.]
 (*ḥasan*) lā ya fuffah
 [Hassan: No, Foffa.]
 (*fāhita*) tiṣabbatnī ma'āh
 [Fahita: Set me up with him.]
 (*ḥasan*) lā ya fuffah lā ya fuffah 'intī wi kārū 'inkum min wā'il 'ana 'ārīf
 [Hassan: No Foffa No. No Foffa No. You and Karo crave (have your eyes on) Wael, I know.]
-

Hassan's reactions to Abla Fahita's sexual innuendos are typically different from those of Maged. Hassan repeatedly stressed that Fahita should not go too far and adopted the sexual line only twice, which reduced the number and the intensity of Fahita's sexual remarks in his episode. Maged, on the other hand, challenged Fahita through adopting the same line of joking, which led rapidly to a stronger sexual content. Undoubtedly, Maged's responses to Fahita's sexual remarks are affected by his knowledge of the fact that there is a man behind Fahita. If he was talking to a woman, he would possibly have ignored or refused the sexual implications. But being aware that he was not talking to a real woman granted him more liberty and encouraged him to adopt the same line. It is quite common in Egyptian culture that when men gather, they can talk freely about sensitive issues such as sex. However, it is not acceptable to have such content on TV, which accounts for the controversy around Maged's episode.

4.2.4.2 Word play

There are other instances of form-driven implicational impoliteness in Fahita's use of word play to create humorous effects. In Example (52), referring to Fahita riding the bicycle behind him in Germany, Hassan uses the word '*arūṣah*' which can be interpreted as a puppet, a bride, or a youthful girl (in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic). Fahita was quick to respond to the use of this word denying the stronger contextual interpretation of it as a puppet, since this would undermine the construction of reality which is the basis of the whole show. Hence, Fahita playfully resents being called a puppet, particularly when having significant feminine curves.

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- (52) (*ḥasan*) māshī ṭayyib 'ana has'al innās māshī fī 'almānyā rākīb 'agalah wiwarāyā 'arūṣah innās 'ā'dah bitbuṣ 'alīnā
 [Hassan: Ok, then. I will ask those people. I was riding a bicycle in Germany with a puppet/pride/beautiful woman behind me. People were looking at us.]
 (*fāhita*) 'arūṣah? Kul ittaḍārīs dī wi 'arūṣah?
 [Fahita: (laughter) A puppet? All these curves and (you say) puppet?]
-

In Example (53), talking about Wael Kafoury, Fahita plays on the resemblance of his last name with the well-known hypermarket franchise, Carrefour. Hence, she said *kārfūrī* instead of *kāfūrī*, then she described him as *hāybar* [hyper], which is typically used to refer to bigger supermarkets, to stress his muscular, appealing physique. She extends her word play by describing him as something reminiscent of the luxury of the past *khīr zaman*, which is the name of another chain of hypermarkets in Egypt.

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- (53) (*fāhīta*) 'ana min zaman wana bashūf wā'il kārfūrī da hāybar wallāhī rāgil hāybar ḥāgah kida min khīr zamān
 [Fahita: For a long time, I have seen Wael Karfoury. He is Hyper. I swear he is a Hyper man. He is something from Kheir Zaman (the luxury of the past)]
-

In another example of word play (54), Fahita remarks that the name of a female singer, who has been singing with Hassan and who had been the winner of an earlier season of *Arab Idol*, is Karmen. She also confirmed with Hassan that his wife's name was Zeina. Then, she played with both names since they are also the labels of famous tissue paper brands in Egypt saying that Hassan is missing only Fine (the name of a third brand of tissue paper) and he can open a kiosk, since kiosks are outlets for tissue paper, among other things.

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- (54) (*fāhīta*) hiyya ṭili' 'ismahā kārmin?
 [Fahita: Her name turned out to be Carmen?]
 (ḥasan) kārmin 'āh
 [Hassan: Yes, Carmen.]
 (*fāhīta*) wi mirātak 'ismahā zīnah?
 [Fahita: And your wife's name is Zeina?]
 (ḥasan) 'āh
 [Hassan: Yes.]
 (*fāhīta*) da 'inta nā' šak fāyin wi tiftaḥ kushk
 [Fahita: You are only missing Fine and you will open a kiosk.]
-

Generally speaking, it is rude to make remarks about age particularly with women. For actors and actresses, more specifically, the age issue is even more sensitive since it is vital for them to look young and attractive to maintain their stardom and keep receiving offers for leading roles. The selected guests vary in their age: Maged is 57 years old; Hassan is 38; Elham is 60, and Rania is 47. Age, together with gender, can be seen as a variable that possibly plays a role regarding the type of triggers used by Fahita. As shown in the analysis, Fahita uses different triggers depending on the age of the guest or the third-person celebrity she is talking about. With the females, she generally uses insults including variations between *Personalised Negative Assertions*, *Personalised Negative References*, and *Personalised Third-Person Negative References* as well as *Challenging or Unpalatable Questions/Presuppositions*. There are remarks about Elham's old age and her continuous use of plastic surgeries and Botox, about Rania's facelift and liposuction surgeries as well as revealing clothes, and about other female celebrities playing roles younger than their true age. With male guests, however, Fahita uses *Sexual Innuendoes* and *Challenging or Unpalatable Questions/Presuppositions*. There are remarks about Hassan (who is in his 30s) stressing his current sexual appeal and being desired by women. As for Maged, who is in his 50s, Fahita refers to his sexual experiences and his sexual potency. The fact that Abla Fahita uses implicational impoliteness intensively is something which, in my opinion, makes the show entertaining for its viewers due to the creative ways in which Abla Fahita formulates her jocular mockery and abuse.

4.2.5 The guests' responses to impoliteness events

“[I]t is a convention about interaction that frankness, rudeness, crudeness, profanity, obscenity, etc., are indices of relaxed, unguarded, spontaneous, i.e. intimate interaction” (Jefferson et al. 1987, 160). Fahita can therefore be seen to be exploiting this convention by mocking her guests. Although ridiculing others is characterised as a basic impoliteness strategy (Bousfield 2008, 114–5, Culpeper 1996, 358), Abla Fahita's ridicule is somewhat different in quality in that it is interactionally achieved within a jocular frame, and the targets of ridicule are known not to take it seriously. This is clear in the guests' responses to the mockery and abuse which range from accepting the ridicule with just laughter, and even going along with it, to counter-attacking defensively and offensively.

Fahita's question to Maged, provided in (55), implies that the actress Ghada Abdel Razeq always takes the major role in the TV series at the expense of her co-stars. The expression *zay kul marrah* [like every time] implies that this is a habit which occurs frequently. Maged defends himself using *mitbarwiz*, which is a variation of the same Colloquial Egyptian word used by Fahita in the question *mibarwizāk* which literally means “to provide a frame for a picture.”

(55) (*fāhita*) *imm ṭayyib wi mibarwizāk ḥilw fi ildūr*

[Fahita: Has she given you a lead role (in the TV series)? Or just like every time?]

(*māgid*) *lā 'ana ṭul 'umri mitbarwiz*

[Maged: No. I am always getting lead roles.]

Elham also defends herself against the unpalatable presupposition in Fahita's question that actresses receive expensive gifts and money from rich men (56). She denies the implied accusation stating that all her money has been earned through her work as an actress.

(56) (*fāhita*) *manti ya ilhām barḍak ḥad yisīb ittamtḥil wishshikāt wilhadāya wil'aṭāya wiyrūḥ yintig*

[Fahita: Elham, nobody would leave acting, cheques, gifts and grants and go into film production?]

(*ilhām*) *'ana labiygīl shikāt wala hadāya wala 'aṭāya – 'ana ilfilūs illi ishtaghāl bihā fi ḥayāti ruḥt kida zay ishshaṭrah ḥaṭithā fil'intāg*

[Elham: I don't get any cheques, nor gifts, nor grants. I was clever enough to spend the money I accumulated while working all my life in film production.]

Rania also defends herself against Fahita's sarcastic remark about Rania's participation in two German and Japanese films (57). Fahita's humorous remark that Rania was trying to buy a car rather than getting international fame depends on the fact that both Germany and Japan are better known for their car manufacturing than for their cinema industry. Here, Fahita looks down upon Rania's international ventures since international fame in Egyptian culture is stereotypically associated with getting a part in a Hollywood film. Rania defends herself saying that it was only an attempt to get to know people, learn, and work at the same time.

(57) (*fāhita*) *'āh bas yābāni wi 'almāni – 'inti biṭḍawwari 'ala ishshuhra walla 'ala 'arabiyyah kuwayyisah*

[Fahita: But Japanese and German? Are you searching for fame or a good car?]

(*rānya*) *lā 'ana makuntish baḍawwar 'ala ḥāgah – 'ana kān biygīl 'urūd in 'ana 'a'mil ḥāgah laṭifah 'at'allim fihā 'at'arrāf 'ala nās 'abtidi ashtaghāl wat'allim fakunt baḥāwil 'at'allim washtaghāl*

[Rania: No. I haven't been searching for anything. I had offers to do something nice in which I can learn something and get to know people. I just wanted to start working and learning so I was trying to do so.]

The guests' replies may take the form of repeating part of Fahita's remarks. The repetition implies that they cannot believe what she is implying or are shocked by her impoliteness. Maged, in Example (58), repeats Fahita's remarks at the very beginning of his episode, being struck by her sexual implications.

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- (58) (*fāhīta*) *imm biy' ūlu biykarmish*
 [Fahita: They say it shrinks.]
 (*māgid*) *huwwa 'ih illi biykarmish*
 [Maged: What shrinks?]
-

The guests' replies may also take the form of a jokingly offensive counter-attack. In Example (59), Elham first repeats Fahita's description of her as a tyrannical lady. Then, she denies this claim and stresses that she is a nice person while Fahita is tyrannical and abusive of all people.

-
- (59) (*fāhīta*) *'āh hiyya dāyman issit il'ādrah manẓar 'ala ilfāḍi*
 [Fahita: Yes, the strong (tyrannical) lady is always an empty charade (just a big mouth)]
 (*ilhām*) *il'ādrah*
 [Elham: The tyrannical?]
 (*fāhīta*) *dāyman manẓar*
 [Fahita: Always an empty charade!]
 (*ilhām*) *ṭab 'inti 'ādrah wi muftariyyah 'ala ilbashar kulluhum lākin 'ana 'ana ṭayyibah*
 [Elham: It is you who are tyrannical and abusive of all people while I am nice.]
-

Elham also attacks Fahita, when she mentions that she is younger than her (60).

-
- (60) (*fāhīta*) *lā 'ana ha'ullik naṣiḥah tisma'ihā min waḥdah 'aṣghar minnik bas ti'raf 'aktar minnik*
 [Fahita: I will give you a piece of advice coming from a person who is younger than you but knows more than you.]
 (*ilhām*) *bas 'inti mish 'aṣghar minni 'inti mish 'aṣghar minni*
 [Elham: But you are not younger than me. You are not younger than me.]
-

Rania also attacks Abla Fahita when she praises her beautiful looks when she was younger and accuses her of giving her the evil eye (61). This is kind of humorous since it matches the cultural belief in Egypt that when people praise your good looks or skills, they may be envying you which may lead to the loss of that beauty or skill.

-
- (61) (*fāhīta*) *ilwish mashdūd wishsha'r mafrūd widdihn mashfūt*
 [Fahita: The face lifted, the hair straightened, the fat sucked!]
 (*rānya*) *'inti mish bitdardishi 'inti 'ammalah tiḥsidi*
 [Rania: You are not chatting with me. You are envying me.]
-

Hassan also counter-attacks Fahita when she accuses him of almost knocking her off the bicycle. In (62), he tells Fahita that she was the one that almost knocked him off and added the question *'inti hatistahbilī?* [will you play crazy? (are you kidding?)] to further stress her fabrication of stories.

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- (62) (*fāhīta*) *ṭab mish kunt hatwa''a'nī min 'ala il'agalah?*
 [Fahita: You almost knocked me off the bicycle, right?]
 (*ḥasan*) *'inti 'illī kunti hatwa''a'ni min 'ala il'agalah 'inti hatistahbilī?*
 [Hassan: You were the one who almost knocked off the bicycle. Are you kidding?]
-

Note that the guests' remarks are always interspersed with laughter, thereby expressing "appreciation" of *Abla Fahita's* acid-tongued humour.

A number of themes, comprising the content of *Abla Fahita's* jocular mockery and abuse, as targeted at her guests, have been found in the course of my analysis. There are a number of common themes when talking to male celebrities including emphasising their sexual appeal and *Fahita's* making sexual advances towards them. Different themes appear when she hosts female guests including displays of stereotypical female jealousy, with *Abla Fahita* claiming that she is more beautiful and more desirable. Common themes for both male and female guests have been identified as follows: current and past relationships, friends and family, as well as habits and personality.

It should be noted that prosodic cues such as intonation and mimicry, which Culpeper defines as "caricatured re-presentation" (2011a, 160), also play a significant part in *Abla Fahita's* success. In addition, facial or gestural cues, such as winks, hugs, and kisses, are also quite prominent in the show. However, this falls beyond the scope of my article.

5 Conclusion

In this article, I have combined Culpeper's (2011a) model with the notions of "jocular mockery" and "jocular abuse," and also considered the recipients' responses to impoliteness for a comprehensive analysis of impoliteness in *Abla Fahita*. Due to the analysis conducted in this study, it can be argued that impoliteness, which arises mainly through deviating from the expected or the socially accepted, has the potential to provoke laughter and amusement. Hence, the meaning of impoliteness, as the use of "communicative strategies" which are "designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (Culpeper et al. 2003, 1564), is likely to change in relation to my data. Although the impoliteness is recognised as having the potential to create conflict and disharmony, it fails to create sincere conflict and disharmony immediately, though it often provokes mock conflict and disharmony, through which it creates good humour instead. Disharmony, on the other hand, is created elsewhere (among social conservatives).

The humorous-impoliteness formula, which is manifest in *Abla Fahita*, is based on the concept of "tendentious" humour, i.e. we experience pleasure when seeing other people targeted by ridicule or derision and occupying a less favourable position than ourselves. As viewers of *Abla Fahita*, we enjoy a sense of social release as we watch someone else break taboos or social conventions.

Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses, I have answered both research questions. *Abla Fahita* uses a mixture of conventionalised formulae and implicational impoliteness triggers. For the former, she tends to use negative third-person references and unpalatable questions as triggers the most. For the latter, the most used triggers are sarcasm and sexual innuendo. I also found that the triggers differ according to the gender and age of the guest. The most frequent trigger with male guests is sexual innuendo, whereas it is sarcasm with female guests.

The *Abla Fahita* show has brought something different and controversial onto Egyptian Television due to *Abla Fahita's* mixed identity: *Fahita* is a puppet, not a real woman; the voice behind it is a male one; and the language used is not typical for women in Egyptian culture. Indeed, *Fahita* epitomises a satirical representation of a rich and independent, middle-aged woman seen from a male perspective. Hence, *Fahita* is represented as a stereotypical cougar type of woman, being flirtatious towards men and jealous and envious of, and judgemental towards other women. The *Abla Fahita Show's* success in transgressing social convention and avoiding censorship, supported by the immense popularity of the show among millions of viewers in Egypt and across the Arabic speaking world is evidenced by its ability to move beyond television to the big screen. At the time of writing, a full-length film has just been commissioned by and released on Netflix,¹⁸ which offers the possibility of global fame.

¹⁸ *Abla Fahita: Drama Queen* | Official Trailer | Netflix - Bing video <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=fahita+film+trailer+netflix&&view=detail&mid=5228EF9EFD80C6406EC25228EF9EFD80C6406EC2&rvsmid=78A52C477FA60AD4494D78A52C477FA60AD4494D&FORM=VDQVAP>

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