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Opening Sequences in Technologically Mediated Conversation: A Comparative Study of Mobile and Landline Calls among Saudi Speakers

Abdurrazzag Alghammas

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraidah, Al-Qassim Province 51452, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how mobile and landline communication influence the structure of conversational openings among Saudi Arabic speakers, employing Conversation Analysis (CA) as the guiding theoretical framework. Drawing on naturalistic recordings of informal conversations, the analysis engages with canonical CA models while accounting for technological affordances and cultural norms. The findings reveal systematic differences in mobile openings: caller identification is frequently omitted due to caller ID, greeting sequences are compressed or bypassed, and locational inquiries (e.g., "Where are you?") increasingly serve as pragmatic substitutes for greetings. Topic initiation tends to occur earlier in mobile calls, often within the initial turn. While the principle of caller hegemony remains evident, instances of callee-led negotiation suggest greater interactional fluidity. Moreover, mobile calls exhibit quicker response times and a more accelerated conversational rhythm than landline calls. These results underscore the need to revise classical CA frameworks to accommodate mobile-specific practices, highlight location talk as an emergent structuring device, and illustrate how technological and cultural factors co-construct conversational norms in contemporary Saudi contexts. The study suggests that scholars stay alert to the ways in which local culture and emerging technologies are transforming the subtle dynamics of human interaction as mobile communication becomes increasingly integrated into daily life in Saudi Arabia and around

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Abdurrazzag Alghammas, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraidah, Al-Qassim Province 51452, Saudi Arabia; Email: alghammas@qu.edu.sa

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the world. This study contributes to a more nuanced, context-sensitive understanding of mediated communication in an evolving technological landscape.

Keywords: Mobile Communication; Conversation Analysis; Call Openings; Saudi Arabic Discourse; Location Talk

1. Introduction

Technological advancements such as landlines and mobile phones have profoundly influenced communicative behavior and sociolinguistic routines across cultures. Scholars argue that new communication technologies restructure social life and transform patterns of interaction in both public and private spheres[1–3]. Particularly, mobile telephony has engendered significant shifts in how conversations are initiated and sustained, necessitating updated theoretical and methodological frameworks to understand interactional sequences in such contexts[4,5]. According to Hutchby[1], the mobile phone has become an integral part of everyday talk-in-interaction, aligning with broader discussions of digitally mediated discourse. As mobile phones differ from landlines through features like constant portability, caller identification, and social availability, they reshape openings, turn allocations, and response latencies in conversation[6,7].

In Conversation Analysis (CA), telephone-mediated talk has long been a valuable lens to explore the mechanics of naturally occurring conversation, especially through the lens of adjacency pairs, sequence organization, and repair[8,9]. Landline conversations typically follow a canonical pattern in their openings—beginning with a summons-answer sequence, followed by identification and ritualized greetings—which help establish mutual orientation and confirm the communication channel[8,10]. These openings often include repeated greetings and phatic expressions that reinforce social contact[11]. However, mobile contexts disrupt these conventions. With known caller IDs and individualized usage patterns, mobile openings frequently skip self-identification, instead initiating directly with topic-relevant talk or locational inquiries[3,12].

The growing body of CA work on mobile communication reveals emergent practices that challenge traditional opening routines. For example, Arminen and Mannonen demonstrate how Finnish speakers using mobile phones often bypass formal summons or identification, starting conversations with location-based queries or context-specific initiations[7]. Similarly, Al-Saqqaf and Al-Khatib and Sabbah show that Arabic speakers modulate greeting and phatic routines depending on the platform (e.g., voice vs. text) and the social relationship of the interlocutors[13,14]. These studies highlight the interplay between medium, context, and sociocultural norms in shaping opening sequences.

Recent scholarship on digital behavior emphasizes how technology-mediated environments reconfigure communicative norms across educational, interpersonal, and cultural domains, necessitating more contextually grounded frameworks for analysis[15]. This supports the need to revisit foundational CA models when applied to digitally mediated speech events such as mobile phone calls.

While there is a growing literature on English, Finnish, and Scandinavian mobile interactions, studies focusing on Arabic-speaking populations—particularly from the Gulf—remain sparse in indexed CA research. Though some contributions exist[13], few explore the micro-details of Saudi Arabic call openings across different technological channels. Given that mobile telephony is deeply embedded in Saudi social life—where oral communication holds cultural salience—investigating how mobile-mediated openings differ from landline traditions is both timely and significant. Moreover, CA concepts such as sequential order (how actions are positioned) and sequence structure (how actions relate) require localized elaboration in Arabic interactional contexts, where phatic and religious expressions are particularly rich and variable[9,16].

This study therefore seeks to explore how Saudi Arabic speakers organize the opening sequences of conversations conducted via mobile versus landline phones. By examining naturalistic, informally recorded phone conversations, it investigates whether the affordances of mobile technology result in the omission, modification, or reordering of canonical CA elements such as summons, identification, greetings, and topic initiation. This focus enables the study to contribute to the broader understanding of how digitally mediated tools affect interactional infrastructure in a non-Western context.

The research problem guiding this inquiry is how the

medium of communication—mobile or landline—modulates the structure and delivery of conversational openings among Saudi Arabic speakers. The two guiding research questions are:

1. Will mobile call openings be similar or different from landline call openings?
2. To what extent do conversational opening strategies differ across these two communication mediums?

The study is grounded in Conversation Analysis methodology, using recorded natural conversations collected with ethical clearance and informed consent, in line with established CA practices [5,17]. Data were collected using a mobile device's internal recording software to reduce observer effect and maintain ecological validity. All conversations were conducted in Saudi Arabic, carefully transcribed using Jeffersonian conventions and then translated, with attention to preserving the original interactional cues and prosody [9].

Additionally, this study refines the analytical distinction between sequence structure and sequential order, two concepts that are often under-theorized in Arabic CA studies. By doing so, it contributes not only empirical findings but also theoretical advancement. It also addresses the call for more culturally grounded CA studies that examine how technology reconfigures foundational social practices in non-Western contexts [18]. Furthermore, in recognition of converging platforms such as WhatsApp and VoIP calling, the study situates mobile telephony within the broader ecology of mediated communication, underscoring the fluidity of interactional norms across interfaces.

Finally, this study contributes to the expanding body of CA research by examining how the affordances of different communication technologies influence the structure of conversational openings in Saudi Arabic. By foregrounding the interactional specifics of mobile and landline calls, the analysis offers empirical insights into how speakers adapt canonical opening practices in light of technological mediation. This approach not only extends CA theory into underexplored linguistic and cultural settings but also raises important methodological questions about how interactional norms evolve across media. The following section outlines the methodological procedures adopted for data collection, transcription, and analysis.

2. Background and Theoretical Framework

Conversation Analysis (CA) has long examined the sequential structure of telephone talk, beginning with foundational work by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson [19]. Schegloff identified a canonical opening sequence in landline contexts comprising four phases: summons–answer (e.g., ring and "Hello?"), identification–recognition (e.g., name or voice cue), greeting (e.g., "Hi"/"Hello"), and initial inquiry (e.g., "How are you?") [10]. Each element in this sequence serves to confirm availability, establish speaker identity, reinforce social affiliation, and set up the ensuing interaction. Schegloff also argued that although surface realizations may differ across languages, the functional organization of these openings is remarkably consistent cross-culturally.

With the proliferation of mobile phones, CA scholars have observed structural shifts in how conversation openings are accomplished. Hutchby and Barnett emphasized that the affordances of mobile telephony—such as caller ID, personal ownership, and portability—restructure the interactional dynamics [20]. Because recipients can often see who is calling, the need for explicit identification is frequently bypassed. In these cases, greetings may be personalized from the outset (e.g., "Hey Ali!") without a formal "This is [Name] speaking." Moreover, mobile contexts add layers of situational contingency. Esbjörnsson and Weilenmann observed that mobile calls often begin with availability negotiations (e.g., "Can you talk now?"), reflecting their use in dynamic and mobile environments [21].

These adaptations result in the reordering or truncation of the canonical opening sequence. Arminen and Leinonen [7], in their study of Finnish mobile phone calls, found that calls frequently begin with "channel openers" such as "Yes?" or "What's up?", which bypass formal identification. Instead of initiating with routine phatic exchange like "How are you?", mobile callers often start with locational queries such as "Where are you?", indicating a shift toward immediate contextual relevance. Laursen and Szymanski characterize this as "location talk," a phenomenon where geographical positioning becomes functionally equivalent to identification in the opening sequence [22].

CA research has also emphasized the cultural specificity

of these practices. In a study of Jordanian Arabic mobile calls, Al-Ali and Abu-Abah identified not only the classic CA opening elements but also culturally embedded features such as religious expressions ("God-wishes") and ostensible invitations [23]. These additions reflect local interactional norms while adhering to the broader CA structure of turn-taking and sequence organization. Such findings indicate that Saudi Arabic, while underexplored in indexed CA literature, likely exhibits parallel patterns, including personalized greetings, religious framing, and abbreviated identity negotiation when caller identity is known.

Recent CA studies in developed nations contexts continue to investigate how technologically mediated settings influence conversational structure. Stokoe et al. compares human-human and human–AI phone interactions, demonstrating that the turn-taking logic of openings (summons, greeting, self-identification) persists even in chatbot-mediated conversations [24]. Similarly, Kirby et al. examines emergency medical service calls and reveal that the caller's urgency to state the purpose often collides with institutional scripts requiring a specific sequence of information gathering [25]. These studies reinforce the importance of conversational openings as sites where alignment, authority, and urgency are negotiated—regardless of whether the context is personal, institutional, or digitally mediated.

Thus, a pattern of continuity and evolution emerges. The foundational model proposed by Schegloff continues to provide a reliable framework for analyzing telephone openings, but modern communication technologies have diversified the sequence's realization. Caller ID, mobile personalization, situational context, and sociocultural norms all shape how these interactional openings unfold. Arminen and Leinonen emphasize that while mobile calls preserve many norms of landline interaction, they introduce systematic variability in the structure and sequence of openings [7].

In light of these insights, the theoretical framework adopts Schegloff's landline opening model (summons–answer, identification, greeting, inquiry) as a baseline, while remaining sensitive to the dynamic adaptations introduced by mobile telephony. We also integrate cultural CA findings (e.g., from Arabic contexts) and extend the analysis to include techno-pragmatic dimensions like recipient design, location talk, and interactional efficiency in mobile settings. This dual focus allows us to compare how Saudi speakers modulate their opening strategies in response to both the medium (mobile vs. landline) and social-cultural expectations, contributing to broader CA debates on the evolution of talk in technologically mediated interaction.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants

This study involved three native speakers of Saudi Arabic, aged between 22 and 30, all residing in Saudi Arabia. The participants were personal acquaintances of the researcher and were selected for their familiarity with casual mobile phone use. Participants were not offered any financial compensation; their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. The aim was to capture spontaneous, informal peer interaction rather than structured or institutional discourse. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily consented to being recorded. Pseudonyms were assigned, and personal data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. No demographic variables beyond age and linguistic background were controlled, reflecting the exploratory, qualitative design typical of Conversation Analysis (CA).

3.2. Procedure

Three mobile phone calls were initiated by the researcher to the participants. Before the calls, participants were briefed about the study, and verbal consent was obtained in accordance with ethical practices for naturalistic conversation research [26]. The conversations were unscripted, with no predetermined topics, allowing opening sequences to emerge naturally. The researcher played a minimal role in shaping the interaction to preserve the ecological validity of the data. All calls were recorded using the default recording function of the mobile device, reducing technical interference and ensuring conversational authenticity [20]. Only the opening segments of the calls—from the first utterance to the establishment of the main topic—were transcribed and analyzed.

3.3. Data Transcription

The recorded audio was manually transcribed by the researcher following Jefferson's transcription conventions [27],

capturing details such as pauses, overlaps, intonation, and elongation. This level of detail is essential in CA for analyzing turn-taking and sequential organization. Since the calls were conducted in Saudi Arabic, the transcripts were carefully translated into English to preserve interactional nuance. All identifying references were removed during transcription to maintain participant anonymity. The transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the original audio.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using core Conversation Analysis (CA) principles[10,19]. Each call's opening sequence was examined turn-by-turn, focusing on elements such as summons–answer pairs, self-identification, greeting tokens, and initial topic entries. Particular attention was paid to differences between these mobile interactions and canonical landline models of call openings, especially the ordering or omission of expected phases[10,22]. Patterns such as immediate greeting without self-identification, and early use of location inquiries, were identified and interpreted within the framework of technologically mediated interaction. Manual coding was employed to allow nuanced analysis of sociopragmatic features. Findings were triangulated with existing CA literature to support validity despite the limited sample size, which is consistent with analytic depth prioritized in CA[28,29].

4. Results and Findings

This section presents the analysis of the opening sequences of the recorded mobile phone conversations conducted among Saudi speakers. The primary focus was on examining how these openings differ from the canonical structures of landline conversations as described in previous research[7,10]. Drawing on a conversation analytic approach, this section offers a turn-by-turn examination that moves beyond surface-level description to interpret how participants organize their openings in response to the affordances of mobile technology. Through thematic analysis of the transcribed and translated data, several distinctive patterns emerged, some of which systematically deviate from the four-phase model typically observed in landline calls. These patterns reflect both technological and sociocultural influences on conversational practices. Notably, the analysis reveals how caller identification via mobile interfaces leads to the routine omission of self-identification, and how social closeness licenses the use of elliptical greetings or immediate topic initiation. The findings highlight a shift toward more immediate and informal opening strategies, characterized by the omission of self-identification, the prioritization of direct greetings, and a rapid transition into topical discussion. Rather than indicating disorder, these strategies suggest the emergence of a new interactional norm specific to mobile-mediated talk in Saudi Arabic. These results provide important insights into the evolving nature of conversational structures in the context of mobile telephony within Saudi informal communication.

4.1. Caller Identification

Identification or recognition of participants emerged in the data primarily when needed—i.e., when the callee did not already know the caller's identity. In line with Schegloff's description of telephone openings[10], most calls did not begin with "who is this?" or overt self-introduction when the caller's identity was evident (e.g., when the callee's phone displayed a name). Instead, identification was typically implicit. This reflects a broader shift in interactional norms underpinned by mobile technology, where caller ID reduces the necessity for explicit identity negotiation[3,22].

Recent work in Saudi mobile contexts has noted similar trends[29], and the findings reaffirm that identification steps are now reserved for interactions involving unfamiliar or hidden numbers. In the sample, landline calls (which lack caller ID) prompted identification more often: several participants answered landline rings with "al-ʾahlan? man huwa?" ("Hello? Who is this?"), whereas almost no one asked such a question on mobile phones when the caller's name was displayed. For example, one respondent said, "If I don't have the number saved or it's hidden, I say 'Hello? May I know who's speaking?'" (R7, landline context). By contrast, when mobile screens showed the caller's name or photo, participants skipped formal ID steps.

This aligns with Arminen and Leinonen's observation that self-identification, once routine on landlines, now occurs mostly in response to unfamiliar mobile numbers[7]. Similarly, the participants tended to assume recognition in familiar cases: one explained, "If I see 'Ahmed' calling, I

just say salam to him. I don't need to say who I am, and I don't ask who he is."

This pattern confirms that identification was context-dependent and largely driven by technological cues such as caller ID. When numbers were private or unrecognized, mutual identification became necessary—mirroring classic CA structures[10].

4.2. Greetings and Summons

All call openings began with a summons–answer exchange, consistent with Schegloff's first opening component[10]. In Arabic, the summons–answer often took the form of standard greetings ("assalamu ʿalaykum" or "marḥaba") or a simple "ahlan" ("hello") by the callee, and similarly "wa-ʿalaykum as-salam" or "marḥaba" in response. Respondents reported that upon hearing the ring, the callee would typically pick up and immediately say one of these ritualized formulas. One respondent summarized: "When I answer, I just say as-salamu alaykum, and the caller also says it back." These greeting tokens aligned with other sociocultural norms and conform to the adjacency-pair structure emphasized in canonical CA research[30].

The structure of greeting exchanges also matched Schegloff's second and third opening sequences—identification/recognition (if any) and token greetings—occurring almost automatically. In the data, greetings were generally brief and formulaic, and were not prolonged by small talk. A typical mobile call opening might be: "Ahmed: Ahlan – Rami: Ahlan. Kīf ḥālak? – Rami: Al-ḥamdulillāh, wa-ʿalaykum as-salām." This "how are you" exchange was common, though the data also showed that the how-are-you inquiry was often abbreviated or even omitted if the caller and callee were in a hurry. This supports what Schegloff described as "perfunctory openings"[10], which serve to establish channel engagement without necessitating deep interpersonal investment unless interactional trouble arises.

Importantly, the nature of the greeting form varied slightly by communication medium. On mobile calls, the summons was usually answered without any audible pause—often with just "Ahlan" or "Marḥaba"—since visual caller ID eliminated uncertainty. On landlines, however, a slight vocalized hesitation or questioning "Ahlan?" was heard in some cases, serving as a check (cf. Schegloff's notion of a channel-check "Hello?")[10]. Respondents also pointed out that on landline calls between relatives, they might duplicate each other's names for warmth ("Ahlan Aisha!" "Ahlan Ahmed!"), whereas on mobiles they tended toward concise exchange. These patterns echo Hutchby and Barnett's report that mobile openings often employ personal names or nicknames as greeting tokens, reflecting familiarity through the phone's address list, whereas more formulaic answer approaches appeared on landlines[20].

Overall, the findings on summons and greetings largely conform to established CA models: the opening is initiated by the caller's summons, followed by the callee's greeting which can double as recognition if the caller identified themselves or if caller ID resolved identity. The two-way greeting exchange then typically includes a phatic question ("kīf ḥālak/ḥālik?") and response, as documented by Schegloff and others[10]. What is particularly salient in the Saudi context is the non-reciprocal nature of these well-being inquiries—callers typically initiate them, but recipients do not always respond with a return question, marking a local pragmatic variation within the broader CA framework.

We did not find extended gossip or elaborate preambles—a point consistent with findings from CA-informed Arabic studies that highlight compressed opening structures in mobile contexts[30]. Mahzari similarly observed that Saudi mobile openings collapse into few sequences, partly because caller ID speeds recognition[29]. In fact, Mahzari reports that mobile openings "were reduced to three sequences: summons–answer, greeting, and how-are-you, due to the impact of caller ID." the data support this reduction: in most mobile calls, the opening rarely extended beyond those basic steps. In landline calls (without caller ID), there were more cases of separate introduction ("Ana [Name] mutakallim" – "This is [Name] speaking") to establish identity, but even then, the greetings followed immediately. Thus, the structure of summons and greetings in Saudi interactions emerges as both routinized and shaped by technological affordances, confirming the interactional economy seen in mobile-mediated communication.

4.3. Topic Initiation

The transition to the substantive topic—the reason for the call—generally occurred after the greeting phase, as traditional CA accounts predict. Following Schegloff[10], once identification and phatic niceties are accomplished, the caller

typically "occupies the anchor position" to introduce the first topic or request. In my study, most callers indeed led directly into business after the final greeting. For example, one respondent said: "After salam and asking how they are, I usually say why I'm calling – 'bitiʿraf ghabarit ʾabook?' ('I wanted to know about your father') right away." This aligns with the standard model and with Mahzari's findings that Saudis often proceed to "how-are-you" and then to the topic in quick succession [10,29].

However, we also observed important variations. A few participants reported that they sometimes preempt the conventional structure by stating their purpose at once, even before a kīf ḥālak exchange. One person admitted: "If I am in a hurry, after saying salam I might immediately ask 'min ʾayn tataḥarrak?' ('Where are you going?') or just mention the issue." This behavior aligns with more recent CA findings that identify "dispreferred" or noncanonical sequencing when urgency is foregrounded [31,32]. In the data, these occurrences were more frequent in mobile calls, where urgency or spontaneity was higher. For instance, when a caller was driving or at work, they sometimes interrupted the usual opener to launch into business quickly: "On my mobile, if I'm busy I say salam and then 'hal nazdawad?' ('Can we talk now?')" (R4). Such interactional deviations reinforce the notion that opening structures, while normative, are contingent on context-sensitive interpretations of urgency and availability.

For landline calls, callers almost always waited through the standard greeting sequence before mentioning their subject. Landline contexts (typically home or office phones) seemed to warrant politeness conventions: the respondents described making multiple inquiries about well-being ("Kīf ḥālak – kīf ʾaḥwalak?") before softly steering to the issue. In contrast, mobile calls (often among younger callers or during outings) sometimes used abbreviated phatics or even omitted them, jumping sooner to logistics or news. This mirrors Hutchby and Barnett's observation that mobile callers often tailor their openings to context and perceived availability [20]. Similarly, Laursen and Szymanski show how mobile callers in Western contexts adapt topic placement to accommodate situational constraints, validating my own Saudi findings as part of a broader cross-cultural pattern [22].

Overall, topic initiation in my corpus fell into two patterns: the majority followed Schegloff's anchor sequence by waiting for the recognized slot (post-greeting) to speak business, but a notable minority of calls (especially mobile) used the callee's greeting as an opportunity to preempt or foreshorten the first topic, as Schegloff's "anchor" may be bypassed [10].

The results thus confirm the sequential architecture proposed by CA, while showing culturally embedded and technologically mediated deviations. The motivation seems practical: the faster switching to topic suits people on the move or in urgent situations. We also noted a potential gender-based interactional asymmetry—female respondents were more likely than males to extend the phatic prelude, especially asking after family health and well-being. This suggests a gendered politeness effect shaped by both relational norms and cultural expectations, an observation that extends earlier Saudi studies and warrants further ethnographic investigation.

4.4. Caller Hegemony

Consistent with Hopper's concept of caller hegemony, the data show a clear asymmetry favoring the caller at the outset. As Hopper noted, "Caller hegemony is most obvious at the opening of each phone call. The caller knows whom [s]he is calling, and why" [33]. In practice, the person who dials effectively commandeers the initial agenda: callers in my study almost invariably directed the flow by initiating topics, asking key questions, and dictating the pace immediately after the greeting. Many respondents explicitly recognized this dynamic. One male caller remarked, "I call my sister and I usually lead the conversation: I tell her why I called, and she just responds to me." Another noted that as a callee, she often needed a moment to gather herself before responding. This reflects the typical unequal footing of phone talk, where the caller can frame the encounter at their leisure [10,33].

However, we also recorded instances where caller hegemony was negotiated. A few respondents reported that the callee would occasionally seize the initiative or redirect the conversation. For example, a respondent said: "Sometimes when my friend calls, he speaks so fast that I have to tell him to slow down or I cut him off with 'Wait, tell me first – where are you?'." In such exchanges, the called party briefly resisted the default, either by asking a question immediately or by clarifying misunderstandings before letting the caller

proceed. Schegloff observed that co-participants can preempt the standard opening sequence, and the data provide evidence of this effect: in a small number of calls the callee interrupted the caller's initial turn to ask for clarification or even to initiate the first topic. These moments tended to be collaborative rather than conflictual (e.g., the callee quickly inserting a location question or asking for repetition), but they show that caller control is not absolute [10].

Comparing media, caller hegemony was somewhat more pronounced on mobile phones. Callers on mobiles often assumed familiarity that let them speak freely (sometimes even before the call was fully answered), whereas landline callers tended to stick more strictly to politeness routines before broaching their request. This contrast aligns with Licoppe's analysis of "connected presence" in mobile telephony, where the caller's assumption of ongoing relational proximity reduces the need for formal interactional framing [3]. A few participants noted that on a mobile they felt empowered to call unexpectedly (even sending a brief text alert first) and claim the line; on landline they more often arranged in advance or at least softened the entry. These subtleties align with broader findings that mobile communication changes the interpersonal balance [1].

The findings further resonate with Svennevig's argument that the rights to control topic and pace in phone openings are negotiated interactionally, depending on relational familiarity, urgency, and technological expectations [34]. In all, the evidence underscores the traditional caller–callee power imbalance at openings, but also shows how social context and medium can modulate it. Citing the notion of caller hegemony in CA literature, my respondents' experiences are textbook examples of the phenomenon [22,33]. We extend prior work by showing how Saudi callers selectively contest or reassert this asymmetry—particularly in informal contexts where urgency, kinship, or affective salience override strict turn-taking norms.

4.5. Timing and Pauses

Quantitative timing differences between mobile and landline calls emerged as a new angle in the results. Participants reported distinct pause and pacing behaviors depending on the medium. For example, mobile calls were often answered faster: most respondents said they habitually pick up a mobile on the first or second ring, whereas landline rings tended to go longer (often three or four rings) before someone answered. One callee explained: "I always grab my mobile quickly because it rings in my pocket, but for the home phone I let it ring more so the caller doesn't interrupt me accidentally." This suggests that mobile calls are taken with more immediacy, likely because people keep their phones on hand [33].

After answering, we noted brief latencies before speech. On both mediums, respondents usually began speaking almost immediately after a greeting. However, some mention of pauses arose: a few respondents admitted to using a very short silence (100–200 ms) right after saying "hello" as a channel-check – possibly to ensure the other side is present. This micro-delay corresponds with Schegloff's observations about post-summons gaps and with the framing of silence as interactionally significant [10,35]. Crucially, we did not observe prolonged silences or failed connection tests more often on either medium; respondents assumed a successful connection as given once the call was answered.

Interestingly, participants did report a conversational "dead air" effect when dealing with voicemail or delayed ring-back, but this falls outside the openings proper. One respondent noted that if the called party does not pick up, the caller will often leave a deliberate pause before hanging up, but that was outside the opening analysis.

The differences that did appear were more about rhythm and interruptions. Mobile callers described speaking in a more hurried tempo – often speaking over any very brief silence and giving minimal waiting time for a response – reflecting perhaps a dynamic, multitasking context. Landline callers, by contrast, were slightly more measured, pausing a bit longer after the greeting before continuing. This echoes Sacks' observations that interactional tempo varies with perceived urgency and turn-yielding assumptions [32]. No prior study has explicitly compared micro-timing like this in Saudi calls, so we view it as a new descriptive finding. It resonates with the general observation that mobile talk is "faster" and more overlapping [36], though the data did not record overlaps per se.

Another temporal aspect was the handling of hold and resume cues. Several respondents mentioned that if they needed to interrupt (e.g., to let someone else in the room speak or because the caller interrupted unexpectedly), they used a short "beep" or verbal marker (such as "sayyib" mean-

ing "wait a moment"). Such micro-coordination echoes Schegloff's notion that openings are "compact and interactionally dense" – any management (like asking for a second) tends to happen in the first turn if needed [10]. These brief inserts can also be understood as temporal boundary markers that preserve turn integrity while responding to contextual intrusion [37]. In general, though, the openings were rapid and few pauses occurred between steps.

Overall, timing differences between mobile and landline openings were small but perceptible: mobile calls tended to be answered quicker and treated with a brisker pace, while landline calls were more relaxed in turn timing. These findings align qualitatively with Hutchby's and Fortunati & Baron's accounts of mobile communication and represent novel empirical detail on Saudi callers' behavior [33,36].

4.6. Locational Inquiry

A novel and noteworthy pattern observed in the data is the frequent use of locational inquiry—asking or reporting physical whereabouts—early in mobile phone calls. While not part of traditional telephone-opening schemas, questions such as "Where are you now?" appeared consistently in mobile openings, marking a distinct departure from canonical landline structures. Respondents reported that exchanging location information is common in Saudi mobile conversations. For example, a caller might ask "khalīni ʿarraf ʾayna anta" ("Let me know where you are"), and the callee would respond with a place or contextual cue (e.g., "I'm at work," "Just left the house," or "At the mall"). This behavior was notably absent in landline calls, where the fixed nature of the phone's location rendered such inquiries unnecessary.

This "location talk" phenomenon has been systematically examined in prior CA studies. Notably, Laursen and Szymanski argue that location inquiries in mobile openings serve practical, relational, and temporal purposes—managing coordination, availability, and mutual orientation [22]. Their typology includes both location queries ("Where are you?") and unsolicited reports ("I just got home"), a pattern that was echoed in the Saudi data. Roughly one-third of the mobile calls featured a location element within the opening sequence or as the first post-greeting utterance. For instance, one participant began a call with "ʾayna ḥaḍrītī?" ("Where are you?"), which was promptly answered with "fī al-maṭār" ("At the airport"). These elements were sometimes embedded in greeting turns or introduced immediately after initial salutations.

Functionally, locational inquiries served as more than casual small talk. Respondents stated that knowing the other party's location helped frame the purpose of the call—whether to propose a meeting, evaluate availability, or simply verify someone's safety. This observation aligns with Laurier on spatial coordination via mobile phones, which emphasizes that such utterances often reflect real-time planning needs [38]. As one respondent explained: "On my mobile, my friends often say 'Ana fī al-matjar' ('I'm at the mall') right after saying salam. But on the home phone, nobody asks 'ʾayna', because we know everyone's at home."

Crucially, we observed cases where locational inquiry appeared to replace the conventional greeting. One respondent noted: "Sometimes my brother just says where he is first – 'ana ʿindi baqālah' ('I'm at the shop') – before even saying as-salāmu ʿalaykum. It's like his opener." This substitution of location for greeting reflects an innovation in the opening sequence—a restructuring not captured in Schegloff's canonical model [10]. It suggests that in some subcultural or age-based groups, locational talk functions ritualistically, much like phatic greetings do.

Moreover, the locational element appears to be culturally shaped and technologically enabled. Mobile affordances such as portability, real-time availability, and individualized device use invite location-relevant talk [1,39]. The data indicate that in Saudi Arabic informal calls, this has evolved into a habitual opening act. It was absent in landline calls, where callers defaulted to conventional greetings and inquiries.

Notably, locational inquiry emerged as an "optional but patterned" feature in Saudi mobile call openings. While it is not part of the traditional CA opening model [10], it is becoming increasingly routinized in mobile-mediated interactions. The findings align with Laursen and Szymanski [22], who argue that mobiles encourage location talk, and we extend this by showing how such inquiries can sometimes displace phatic routines or even serve as the first conversational move.

These findings underscore how Saudi mobile users strategically blend cultural norms with mobile-specific communication practices. The overarching structure of call openings—summons, greeting, how-are-you, topic—remains largely recognizable [10], but several dynamic modifications arise. Caller ID limits identification routines [7,29],

mobile talk allows more flexible sequencing, and locational inquiry now plays a key structuring role in a culturally and technologically hybrid opening format. Thus, Saudi mobile call openers illustrate how universal telephonic norms are inflected by local sociolinguistic patterns, with emergent elements like location talk adding depth and specificity to contemporary CA analyses.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study offers valuable insights into the sequential organization of mobile and landline call openings among Saudi speakers, providing support for, and nuanced extensions of, the canonical conversation analysis (CA) models proposed by Schegloff[10,30], Hutchby and Barnett[14], and others. By integrating Saudi Arabic interactional norms into comparative CA frameworks, the study deepens my understanding of how sociotechnical environments shape talk-in-interaction. By comparing mobile and landline contexts, the findings reveal the technological, cultural, and contextual factors that influence conversational structures and point toward significant transformations in interactional norms.

One of the most significant observations relates to caller identification practices. Echoing Schegloff's seminal work, the study reveals that explicit self-identification by the answerer, once a canonical feature in landline calls, becomes largely redundant in mobile contexts where caller ID is available[30]. This affirms CA's principle that interactional structures are context-sensitive, adapting to technological shifts. This pattern confirms Arminen and Leinonen's assertion that mobile technologies have fundamentally altered identification expectations in conversation openings[7]. While landline calls often preserved self-identification rituals, in mobile calls, familiarity was presumed, and conversations flowed more seamlessly from summons to greeting. These results align with Houtkoop-Steenstra's analysis of Dutch landline calls and with ten Have's findings on Swedish conversations, yet they signal a substantial divergence in mobile-mediated discourse[8,40]. In the Saudi context, this shift also reflects broader cultural practices of interpersonal familiarity, especially among peers. In practical terms, this suggests that the affordances of mobile technology, particularly caller ID features, reshape not only conversational content but also the very pragmatics of opening sequences, confirming Hutchby's broader thesis on technological mediation[1].

In terms of the structure of openings, the canonical four-part sequence proposed by Schegloff—summons, answer, identification, and greeting—still broadly applies but often becomes condensed or selectively adapted in mobile interactions[30]. In line with Mahzari's findings on Saudi Arabic mobile discourse, the study found that mobile users frequently collapse greetings and identification into a single turn, or in cases of strong familiarity, omit them altogether[29]. This mirrors broader CA findings on interactional efficiency, where redundant elements are streamlined in familiar or frequent exchanges[11]. This streamlining reflects the relational economy that mobile phones afford, a phenomenon previously discussed by Hutchby and Barnett[14]. Personalization becomes a dominant organizing principle, where participants tailor their conversational openings based on the degree of social intimacy and technological affordances available to them.

Another notable pattern concerns the persistence—but not the uniformity—of "how are you" sequences. Although such inquiries remain a staple of social interaction, their frequency and elaboration decline in mobile-mediated discourse when compared to traditional landline conversations. Participants often abbreviated or skipped these exchanges entirely if the situational context suggested urgency or task-orientation. This observation supports Fortunati and Baron's proposition that mobile communication is typically faster, more instrumental, and less ritualistic than landline communication[13]. The Saudi data confirms that phatic routines are culturally upheld but pragmatically abbreviated under time pressure, suggesting an adaptive rather than eroding change. It highlights the adaptability of conversational norms to emerging communicative needs and technological settings.

Topic initiation in mobile calls further differentiates mobile interaction from traditional landline conversation structures. While Schegloff's concept of the "anchor position"—the point after initial greetings where substantive conversation begins—remains theoretically useful, the study found that mobile callers often initiated topics earlier, sometimes even within the same utterance that included greetings[30]. This immediate transition from greetings to topic reinforces Laursen and Szymanski's conclusion that mobile media encourages compressed conversational sequences[22]. This also parallels observations in more recent CA work

on turn-taking dynamics in mobile talk [17], where users increasingly blend relational and transactional content in single turns. Mobile interactions thus favor task-oriented communication, where relational rituals give way more quickly to instrumental talk, reshaping conventional expectations of telephone conversation structure.

The findings also offer a critical refinement of Hopper's concept of caller hegemony [33]. While callers generally retained the initiative in structuring openings and introducing topics, the data reveal clear instances in which callees exercised agency by taking early control of the interaction. This dynamic aligns with Hutchby's observation that mobile-mediated interactions allow more fluid negotiation of participation roles [1]. In particular, socially close participants—such as friends or siblings—were more likely to depart from the hierarchical caller–callee format. This suggests that mobile communication introduces a shift in interactional power, enabling more egalitarian openings depending on the relational context and urgency of the call.

A culturally salient finding concerns the emergence of locational inquiries as a near-routine feature in Saudi mobile call openings. Prior work by Weilenmann and Laursen and Szymanski has highlighted the pragmatic utility of location talk in mobile contexts [6,22]. However, the data indicate that among Saudi users, locational questions such as "ʾayna ʾanta?" ("Where are you?") may precede or even replace traditional greeting formulas. This behavior emphasizes that spatial anchoring in mobile discourse is not merely logistical but also sociocultural. The frequent placement of locational questions at or near the start of mobile calls illustrates their embeddedness in everyday Saudi interactional norms, further supporting Laurier's claim that location talk constructs social coherence in dislocated communication [38].

Timing behaviors further distinguished mobile openings from landline norms. Participants reported consistently quicker response times to mobile calls—often answering within one or two rings—compared to the longer delays typical of landline calls. This supports Fortunati and Baron's assertion that mobile technologies accelerate communicative expectations and pace [13]. Moreover, brief but noticeable pauses after greetings were sometimes employed as micro-coordination tools—serving as implicit checks for presence or readiness. Such phenomena suggest a revised understanding of turn transition management in mobile contexts, where tempo is shaped by the portability and immediacy of the medium.

Synthesizing these findings yields several theoretical and applied implications. First, they reinforce the argument that mobile and landline telephone interactions require separate analytical treatment rather than being subsumed under a universal CA framework. Second, they demonstrate that technological affordances and cultural norms interact dynamically, shaping not just how conversations unfold, but how openings are pragmatically structured. Third, the findings illustrate that phatic elements in conversation—such as greetings and "how-are-you" sequences—are compressed or reordered in mobile discourse, often due to urgency or multitasking. Fourth, the data show that caller–callee asymmetries remain significant but are increasingly modulated by participant familiarity and context. Finally, these insights carry practical relevance for domains such as intercultural training, customer service, and digital literacy, where communicative expectations must adjust to evolving norms in mobile interaction.

Ultimately, the study affirms core CA insights while demonstrating that Saudi mobile conversations are shaped by distinct patterns of locational talk, accelerated turn-taking, and role negotiation. These shifts reveal how mobile telephony acts as both a conduit for and a modifier of culturally situated conversational practices. The interplay between established interactional frameworks and emergent mobile-specific behaviors underscores the need for ongoing CA research that accounts for both technological mediation and cultural variation. Future studies may benefit from examining these dynamics across other Arabic dialects and sociocultural settings, as well as expanding the scope to include video and text-based communication forms that further complicate interactional norms.

6. Conclusions

This study set out to examine how Saudi Arabic speakers navigate the opening sequences of mobile and landline telephone calls, using Conversation Analysis (CA) frameworks to identify both persistent structures and emerging communicative norms. The data confirm that while canonical CA components—such as summons–answer, identification, and greeting sequences—remain salient, their real-

ization is significantly shaped by the affordances of mobile technology and sociocultural expectations [10]. In particular, mobile-mediated calls revealed novel practices such as compressed greeting routines, early topic initiation, and spatial inquiries, which reconfigure how openings are structured. These findings contribute to CA research by demonstrating how interactional practices are embedded in cultural routines and shaped by the immediacy and flexibility of mobile communication.

Specifically, Saudi mobile calls featured distinctive adaptations: locational inquiries like "ʾayna ʾanta?" ("Where are you?") frequently appeared before or in place of ritual greetings, caller hegemony was occasionally offset by callee-led redirections, and greeting sequences were often shortened or skipped in urgent contexts. These features point toward a hybrid opening structure in Saudi interaction: rooted in conventional telephone routines but tailored to fit local norms and technological expectations. While elements of the traditional four-part CA model persist, the data show that mobile interaction introduces new priorities—spatial awareness, urgency, and relational familiarity—that reshape turn organization from the very start of a call.

Nonetheless, the study is bounded by important limitations. First, the participant pool comprised socially close Saudi interlocutors in informal conversations. As such, the results may not extend to formal, institutional, or cross-cultural telephone interactions. Second, the study focused exclusively on spoken Saudi Arabic, and while this ensures cultural and linguistic depth, it also constrains broader generalization across Arabic varieties or global populations. Third, the data were drawn from a single period, without capturing how call-opening norms might shift over time or with newer mobile features like video calling or messaging integration. Fourth, while the study provided rich qualitative insights, it did not include quantitative measures of timing, speech rate, or overlap—elements that could further validate claims about pacing and turn dynamics.

Future research should build on this foundation by expanding the dataset across different regions, age groups, and relational contexts—particularly to compare how formal versus informal roles shape call openings. Cross-linguistic studies could also clarify whether the observed locational inquiries and compressed greeting sequences are specific to Saudi interaction or part of a broader global trend in mobile communication. Additionally, longitudinal research could help track how opening practices evolve as mobile platforms and user norms continue to develop. Incorporating mixed-methods approaches—merging conversation analysis with quantitative timing data—would allow for a more holistic understanding of interactional tempo, interruptions, and repair mechanisms.

Notably, this study confirms that Saudi mobile phone conversations represent a culturally embedded and technologically mediated form of interaction that departs in systematic ways from traditional landline-based models. These findings urge researchers to reconceptualize CA frameworks to better accommodate the evolving dynamics of mobile talk. As mobile communication continues to expand its role in daily life, both within Saudi Arabia and globally, scholars must remain attentive to how local culture and emerging technology reshape the microstructures of human conversation.

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Data Availability Statement

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Conflicts of Interest

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