Conversation Analysis: Opening Sequences and Ritual Expressions of Informal Mobile Phone Calls between Saudis

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Abstract
Much work of studying opening conversations has been conducted on landline telephone calls; whereas, mobile phone conversations have received less attention by researchers despite of the dominance of using mobile phone in our social life. Informed by conversation analysis (CA) approach, this study aims to identify the opening sequences and ritual expressions of informal mobile phone conversations among Saudi friends and relatives. Another goal is that to identify whether the opening sequences of mobile phone are similar or different from the landline telephone. The study will answer the following questions: what are the opening sequences and ritual expressions of mobile phone? And what are the similarities and differences between mobile phone and landline telephone in terms of the opening sequences. Thirty audio-recorded and transcribed mobile phone conversations served as the data source for this study. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively by using the CA approach. Findings showed that the majority of opening sequences of mobile phone calls were reduced to three sequences: summons answer, greeting exchanges, and how-are-you exchanges due the impact of caller ID. In addition, the sequence of identification/recognition can be found when the caller does not know the callee or the number is silent. Therefore, mobile phone and landline telephone have similarities and differences in the opening sequences in general. However, the differences observed can be a reason of the cultural practices for language use more than the effect of medium used in communication such as landline telephone and mobile phone in Saudi Arabic. Finally, more data are needed to investigate gender differences.
Key words: Conversation analysis, mobile phone calls, opening sequences, ritual expressions, Saudi Arabic

Introduction

This study examines opening sequences and ritual expressions of informal mobile phone conversations to identify the sequences and their ritual expressions used in these turns between Saudis. Another goal is to identify whether the opening sequences of mobile phone calls are similar or different from landline opening sequences. Mobile phone (i.e. cell phone) had been used only by businesspeople at the beginning of this technology; however, it has become dominant in our social life and used by adults and even children at the present (Hutchby & Barnett, 2005). It has been argued that, in the previous technological innovations, new technologies such as internet, broadcasting, and landline telephone change social life in terms of creating new forms of social interaction and social practice by producing new structures of conversations that need to be investigated based on empirical studies on naturally occurring data, rather than abstract concepts or assumptions (Hutchby, 2001; Hutchby & Barnett, 2005). Much work of opening conversations has been conducted on landline telephone conversations that began with Sacks' lectures on conversations on telephone calls made to an emergency psychiatric hospital and Schegloff (1968, 1972, 1979, 1986, 2002) on various topics on opening conversations on telephone such as sequences, identification and recognition, and routine. Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986) identifies the four canonical sequences in opening American telephone calls; a summons answer sequence, identifications/recognition, greetings, and exchange of how-are-you based on northern American data (i.e. Anglo-Americans). However, Schegloff (2002) acknowledges that he had no opportunity to examine data on the use of any devices (e.g. cell phones, mobile phones, and car phones), and did not study telephone as an object of inquiry. He is wondering the sequences of caller ID which is pervasive and one of the characteristics in mobile phones and mentioning that "we have no studies that I am aware of that tell us what the consequences of caller ID have been for the actual conduct talk on the telephone, and their openings in particular" (Schegloff, 2002, p. 293). Also, Schegloff (2002) adds that, in his words, "caller ID could change the asymmetries of information noted about past telephone interaction by making it possible for the recipient to know something before lifting the receiver" (p. 293).

Mobile phone has some features that distinguish it from landline telephone, or at least at the period of Schegloff's studies on telephone such as caller ID, mobility, creating a particular ring for specific persons, and blocking callers (Schegloff, 2002; Weilenmann, 2003; Hutchby & Barnett, 2005; Arminen & Leinonen, 2006). The caller ID and mobility are more pervasive in mobile phone than landline telephones. Caller ID function may affect the sequence of identification/recognition due to identifying the name of caller before answering the phone (Schegloff, 2002). Thus, the ordered sequences of opening conversations may change. Another difference is that the mobile phone is more personal; whereas, landline is usually shared by family members or colleagues in work offices (Arminen, 2005).

Hutchby and Barnett (2005) investigate the sequential organization of mobile phone conversations on British data and find out that the sequences of opening in mobile phone talk are similar to landline phone talk. This study raises a hot debate between Hutchby (2005) and Arminen (2005) about Hutchby and Barnett's results and their claims for the similarities between mobile phone and landline telephone. As a result, Arminen and Leinonen (2006) conduct a study on opening practices in Finnish mobile call openings. They notice that the opening sequences of mobile phone differ from landline telephone opening. This dispute of whether the mobile phone is

similar or different from landline telephone and the dearth of studies on this topic require more investigation based on conducting empirical studies that is one of the goals for this study besides identifying the ritual expressions of these sequences.

Therefore, this current study attempts to examine and identify the sequences and ritual expressions of opening in mobile phone calls between Saudis to understand the linguistic behavior in mobile phone calls in particular and in Arabic in general. Another goal is to identify whether the opening sequences of mobile phone are similar to or different from opening in landline telephone talk.

Literature review
This part encompasses three parts of previous research related to the current topic. The first part will display the results of earlier studies on opening landline telephone conversations and demonstrate the issues of claiming universal structures and across cultural differences to understand the structure or sequences of opening in depth. The second part will review the earlier studies on mobile phone calls. The final part will display the earlier studies on greetings in Arabic because of having the ritual expressions of opening conversations that are mainly related to one of the goals in this study, but the medium is different. The studies of Arabic greetings have been on face to face communication while the current study is on mobile phone communication.

Opening Telephone Conversations
Analyzing telephone conversations, as mentioned earlier, began with Sacks' (1992) lectures on conversations on telephone calls made to an emergency psychiatric hospital and Schegloff (1967, 1968, 1979, 1986). Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986) identifies the four canonical sequences in the opening of North American telephone conversations based on analyzing 500 telephone conversations: (1) a summons/answer sequence (the telephone rings and the first response is uttered by the answerer), (2) an identification/recognition sequence (each party identifying self and displaying recognition of the other), (3) a greeting sequence (an exchange of greeting tokens), and (4) a how-are-you sequence (a pair of pairs in which each participant poses an initial inquiry). These opening sequences are the majority of sequences in the American data. Also, he indicates that Americans prefer identification by other recognition, rather than by explicit self-identification. When Schegloff identified the canonical opening of telephone, he did not claim the universalness structure for his model that was misunderstood by many researchers working on across cultural studies such as Godard (1977) and Sifianou (1989). They argue that the structure of telephone openings differ across language communities. In contrast, Hopper and Doany (1989) and Hopper, Doany, Johnson, and Drummond (1991) claim universal structures for Schegloff's model.

From that brief history about Schegloff's canonical model of opening and the claims of others towards universal structures and the cross cultural differences, many languages have been studied by researchers to contribute to the topic. Some studies of opening telephone calls are comparative such as French and American English (Godard, 1977), British English and Greek (Sifianou, 1989), English, French, and Arabic (Hopper & Doany, 1989), Japanese and Korean (Park, 2002), Australian and German (Grieve & Seebus, 2008). The other studies, which are not comparative, are Arabic (Schmidt, 1975; Saadah, 2009), Spanish (Hopper et al., 1991; Coronel-Molina, 1998), Dutch (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1991; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2003), Swedish (Lindströ̈m, 1994),

Chinese (Hopper & Chen, 1996; Sun, 2004), Persian (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002), and Greek (Sifianou, 2002).

Godard (1977) claims considerable variation between cultures and compared between French and American English. She concludes that there is a difference between these two languages which is that French caller checks the number first and must name himself/herself because it is considered impolite in the French culture. An American caller, in contrast, does not check for the number but questions the answerer's identity for checking. Thereafter, she reports the steps in opening telephone conversations in French: check number, name oneself at the first opportunity, and excuse oneself (optional in case of intimacy). However, these steps are generalized reconstructions, and Godard did not provide any examples of these sequences. Rather, she relies on her experience and intuition as a member of French culture. Hopper and Doany's (1989) findings differ from Godard's descriptions in some details about French.

Hopper and Doany (1989) argue for the universal structure of canonical opening telephone conversations and examine this aspect in three languages: English, French, and Arabic (i.e. Lebanese Arabic). These languages show similarity in opening sequences. They point out that the word *allo* in French and Arabic (a linguistic borrowing term in Lebanon), like *hello* in English, are used frequently as a first response to summons. Also, it is discovered that it is used by Iranians (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002) and sometimes by Dutch (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1991). *Allo* is not used in face to face communication neither in French nor in Arabic. The second sequence is identification/recognition that was achieved by recognition of the answerer, i.e. by uttering the answerer's name that is different from Godard's results. The researchers generalize that summons/answer must occur first and then follow mutual recognition, which occurs in or after answering the summons.

In contrast, Schmidt (1986) finds that telephone conversational openings of Egyptian Arabic which is Cairene Arabic differ from French and Americans. He analyzes one sample that was taken from a corpus of 215 telephone opening recorded in Egypt with no providing any information about the participants and their relationship. Schmidt reveals that the caller used *alo* 'hello' responding to the *alo* of the answerer. Also, the answerer uses *alo* again in the third turn of the conversation making a series of hellos that may occur with poor connection or when the answerer picks up the receiver and does not say anything immediately. However, it occurs here as demanding the caller to identify himself/herself. Schmidt comments by saying that identification is problematic in Egypt because neither answerer nor caller provide any self-identification before assuring the identity of each other. This strong reluctance from caller and callee indicates the difference between Egyptians and Americans. In general, it is similar to Americans in terms of the same categories of the sequences: summons answer, identification, greeting, and introduction of message. Schegloff (1986) uses Schmidt's Egyptian Arabic sample and suggests that the inter-cultural differences of opening organization are not strong.

However, like English and Spanish, Arabic is a pluricentric language, which encompasses national varieties (Schneider & Barron, 2008); therefore, the researcher of this article assumes that Lebanese Arabic and Cairene Arabic may not represent the social practices of all Arabic varieties. For instance, the variety of American English (Halmari, 1993), British English (Sifanou, 1989),

and Spanish in Northern Mexico, Spain, and Paraguay (Hopper et al., 1991) display variation in opening telephone. In American Business calls, for instance, Halmari (1993) reports that the exchange of personal names is optional. Sifanou (1989) observes that, in England, callees recite their names and sometimes their last names beside *hallo*. Although Hopper et al. (1991) ascertain the universal structure of telephone openings, they acknowledge that the differences across languages and cultures occur. For instance, Hopper et al. (1991) mention that Johnson, who is one of the researchers in the study, conducts a survey on different Spanish-speaking countries: *Bueno* (Northern Mexico), *Digame* (Spain), and *Hola* (Paraguay) and encounters differences in telephone openings as they mention in the study. However, they do not provide the examples of the differences. They justify their position on the grounds that the differences are similar in functions. Similarly, Coronel-Molina's study (1998) finds unique sequential variation in Spanish in Latin American countries (Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico) and insist in falling of Hispanic conversational norms within Schegloff's canonical schema of universalness.

Sifianou (1989) compares between British English and Greek in the sequences of opening telephone calls. She mentions that answerers use *ne* 'yes' or verbs like *speak* and *go ahead* as a summons answer in Greek, not like *hello* in the USA or *hallo* in England. Also, the results show that Greek callers do not introduce themselves, i.e. no overt identification. In contrast, answerers in England, recite their phone number and use self-identification that is sometimes offered by last name. Furthermore, Sifianou (2002) also conducts another study on the same topic on Greek. She states that the four canonical patterns occur when the relationship is distant between callers and callees. In contrast, the frequent patterns between closely related interlocutors are only two main sequences: summons answer and how-are-you. In formal relationship, self-identification follows greeting, but greeting is considered not essential among intimates on telephone conversations. Unlike Greek, Taleghani-Nikazm (2002) demonstrates that the four canonical sequences occur in both formal and informal calls in Persian. Finally, the expressions of greetings like *health to you* and *health* are used more frequently whereas *good morning* and *good evening* are used less frequently in Greek.

Park (2002) examines recognition and identification in Japanese and Korean. The researcher notes that they prefer self-identification over other recognition, which is often followed by the reason of call. This preference is similar to Dutch (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1991) and Swedish (Lindstro¨m, 1994). Dutch begins the call with self-identification which is preferred by nick name, first name only, last name only, marital status, or full title. Thus, Dutch people sometimes use *hello*. However, Swedes use a variety of responses besides self-identification, which is used by first or last name when answering the telephone. For example, they use other recognition, greeting and self-identification, station identification (phone number) and *halla* 'hello.' Swedish is similar to Americans in using other recognition and like Dutch in using self-identification. However, it is unique that *how are you* is considered optional in Swedish. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2003) conducts another study on Dutch but goes beyond analyzing the structure of opening of conversations in isolation from the influence of social factors. She analyzes gender differences in terms of identifications and the forms that they use for identifying themselves. She states that women use *hello* to protect their privacy; thus, they withhold self-identification. However, the difference is not significant in comparison with men. Another difference is that women say Mrs. Last name, but no men say Mr. Last name. Houtkoop-Steenstra mentions that the background of this difference is

not clear. The same goal in terms of studying gender differences in opening telephone call is examined by Grieve and Seebus (2008) in Australian and German. They illustrate that men use self-identification more than women in business calls. It means that both males and females use self-identification, but they differ in frequency.

In Chinese, Hopper and Chen (1996) find that the ordered tasks of Schegloff's analysis occur in telephone openings of Mandarin speakers in Taiwan: summons answer, identification/recognition, and greeting pairs. Similarly, Taleghani-Nikazm (2002) reports the same sequences of American telephone openings produced by Iranians in both formal and informal calls. However, Hopper and Chen (1996) note a variety of greetings used based on the interpersonal relationship between caller and callee in Chinses. For instance, intimates use tag-particle /a/ attached to names; whereas, non-intimates use the particle /ei/, and the particle *ni hao* with unacquainted people. Intimate callers sometimes speak before the beginning of answerer, which is rare. However, it is a phenomenon and used commonly in mobile phone calls (Hutchby & Barnett, 2005). This result emerges against the first part of Schegloff's rules which postulate that the answerer speaks first, and then the caller provides the first topic. Besides using a variety of greetings in Chinese, Sun (2004) observes that Chinese also use a variety of forms for inquiring that are inadequate for English semantic categories of phatic talk.

In Persian, Taleghani-Nikazm (2002) shows that identification is affected by social status in using forms. For instance, other identification is achieved by using last name preceded by an address term. If the answerer knew the caller, the response will be *alo salam* 'hello, peace' in the summons answer. In how-are-you sequence, inquiring is repeated by using different lexical items to show interest in others. Like Persian, Saadah (2009) highlights the same repetition of *how are you* in Arabic between family members to show more intimacy and interest in callees. Also, in Hispanic etiquette, Coronel-Molina (1998) mentions that callers should inquire each other's family members to show his/her interest. However, when the relationship is not intimate, the plural *you* is used instead of using the singular *you* in Persian. In contrast, Turjoman (2005) states that talking to elders is addressed in plural to show respect for them in Saudi Arabic.

Grieve and Seebus (2008) work on Australian and German and compare between opening private and business telephone calls. The results show that Germans use self-identification more than Australians. Australians use self-identification more frequently in business than private calls. *Hello* and *hi* salutations occur more in private calls than Business calls. Salutations, like *hello* and *hi*, are used more than *good morning* and *good evening*. Australian callees include a salutation more than Germans.

To sum up, the previous studies explore similarities and differences in the sequences and ritual expressions of opening telephone conversations across cultures. In addition, opening is affected by various factors such as language, culture, relationship, goal of call, etc. However, the majority of explored differences of opening sequences still fall in Schegloff's model irrespective of the existence of all the four sequences of opening in general. Finally, even if the inter-cultural differences are not strong (Schegloff, 1986) or the differences are similar in the function (Hopper et al., 1991), they need to be studied to better understand other languages, but beyond the concept of universalness.

Mobile Phone Calls

Social scientists have contributed to studying numerous areas related to the use of mobile telephony in our social life, e.g. Brown, Green, and Harper (2002) and Katz and Aakhus (2002). However, their concerns are beyond studying the nature of social practice; that is, talk in interaction. Brown et al. (2002) focus on topics such as social and technical problems related to the use of mobile phone and mobile communication. Katz and Aakhus's volume (2002) rely on interviews and questionnaires in most of the studies that are about mobile users and their preferences for cell phones. Some other contributions are made by Murtagh (2002) and Weilenmann and Larsson (2002) in analyzing the nature of interaction in mobile phone, but the data are collected by ethnographic observation and informant report, not by recording. However, there are a few conversation analysis studies that have been conducted on studying mobile phone conversations by using recording to describe and analyze either recording or naturally occurring data, such as Laurier (2001), Weilenmann (2003), Hutchby and Barnett (2005), Arminen and Leinonen (2006), and Laursen and Szymanski (2013). Laurier (2001) examines the formulation of location that are performed in mobile phones by traveling workers to other mobiles and non-mobile office locations that are not related to this topic.

Weilenmann (2003) investigates not only the formulation of availability and location but also the identification and recognition between teenage mobile users in Swedish. The researcher finds that the sequence of identification and recognition is similar to the Swedish landline calls that are described by Lindstro¨m (1994). For example, self-identification by name is also exist on mobile phone, and there are no cases showing that the callee recited the name of caller due to the Caller identification function that the researcher assumes its impact on identification.

Hutchby and Barnett (2005) compare mobile phone and landline calls focusing on pre-voice identification and location inquiry in British data. They reveal that there are similarities and differences in the sequences of openings. The differences indicate new interaction sequences in routine conversations by mobile telephony. For example, an answerer can identify the caller by the caller ID function, which is called "pre-voice sample caller identification," and recite his/her name instead of the summons answer. It means that it creates a new sequence in opening. This result is not observed in Weilenmann's results. Caller, in most of the cases in their data, speaks first that is a result of certain technological affordances of mobile telephones. As mentioned in the previous section, this phenomenon is similar to Mandarin speakers in Taiwan; however, it is established that callers speak first between intimate partners in a large number of instances in landline telephone (Hopper & Chen, 1996). According to Hopper and Chen (1996), "the Taiwanese author/informant speculates that the caller speaks first to display some sense of urgency" (p. 305). It is obvious that the phenomenon of callers in terms of speaking first is related to mobile phone in the British data, but in Taiwan it is related to the culture. Finally, despite the differences mentioned above, Hutchby and Barnett (2005) still claim that that the modifications are not pervasive or obvious.

In contrast, Arminen and Leinonen (2006) confirm that the opening conversation of mobile phone differs from opening in landline calls in Finnish, unlike Weilenmann (2003) and Hutchby and Barnett (2005). Arminen and Leinonen notice that the sequences are reduced and the call starts with greeting, which is canonical with known caller, and topic initiation in mobile phone call. In

landline, the call starts with self-identification, which is also exist in mobile phone when the caller is unknown or the number is silent.

Another study is supporting the results of Arminen and Leinonen (2006) in terms of the differences in general. Laursen and Szymanski's results (2013) of mobile phone conversations from the United States and Denmark point out that identification and recognition are infrequently used when location inquiries are made. Also, they confirm that location talk is used frequently in opening sequences as a reason for the call. In addition, they show that the organization of sequence is as follows: greeting exchange, how-are-you exchange, and where-are-you inquiries or reports of location. However, the extracts of their conversations display self-identification and other recognition which is not clear whether the recognition is by voice sample or the caller ID because the researchers do not investigate that. Probably, their focus is only on investigating the formulation of location in mobile phone conversations.

Finally, the results of the previous studies show similarities and differences between mobile and landline telephone in the sequences of opening in Swedish, British, Finish, United States, and Denmark. Based on the limited number of studies on opening mobile phone conversations and the different claims we have, there is a need for more studies to better understand this topic. Also, we need to know whether the differences are related to the mobile phone or language and culture.

Greetings in Arabic

Studying the ritual expressions or formulas of greetings in Arabic have been examined widely in face to face communication either in Saudi Arabia (e.g. Hassanain, 1994; Turjoman, 2005) or in other Arabic speaking communities, e.g. Morocco (Mercier, 1957), Syria (Ferguson, 1976), Yemen (Caton, 1986), Oman (Emery, 2000), Iraq and Jordan (Gorgis & Al-Quran, 2003), Jordan (Hazaymeh, 2012; Darwish & Bader, 2014), and Gulf Arabic (Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008). Greetings have types that are listed by Hazaymeh (2012) such as religious, rural, morning/evening, English, and *marhaba* 'welcome' and *ahlan* 'welcome' patterns. Choosing a particular type pattern is affected by a number of factors, viz. environment, Islam, education, media, contact with the West, and relations (Hazaymeh, 2012). The previous studies of greetings in Arabic indicate similarities and differences in using the patterns of greetings and their frequency.

In the previous studies, almost all the results assure that the Islamic greeting *assalaamu ʕalaykum* 'Peace be upon you' and its response *wa alaikum assalam* 'Peace be upon you too' are most frequently used form in greeting (Ferguson, 1976; Caton, 1986; Hassanain, 1994; Emery, 2000; Gorgis & Al-Quran, 2003; Turjoman, 2005; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008; Hazaymeh, 2012; Darwish & Bader, 2014). This short form of greeting can be used with a long form *assalaamu ʕalaykum wa rahmatu allah* '(May) peace and God's mercy be upon you' or *assalaamu ʕalaykum wa rahmatu allah wa barakatuh* '(May) peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.' Similarly, in response, the form can be performed like *wa ʕalaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu allah* '(May) peace and God's mercy be upon you too' or *wa ʕalaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu allah wa barakatuh* '(May) peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too.' According to Turjoman (2005), the latter form is only used by people who are over 50 in Saudi Arabia. Surprisingly, Alharbi and Al-Ajmi (2008) find that the greeting form *assalaamu ʕalaykum* 'Peace be upon you'

has a dual function; that is, it is used as a greeting and parting in Gulf Arabic, e.g. Kuwait, eastern province of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE and Oman.

Based on the Islamic principles and credo in the Holy Quran, Muslims must respond to the greeting by better one or return it. Allah says "When you are greeted with a salutation then return it with a better one, or at least the same. Surely Allah takes good count of everything" (The Holy Quran, 4: 86). Although this greeting is only used by Muslims, Darwish and Bader (2014) report that it is also used, but rarely, by Christians when greeting Muslims to show respect and solidarity for them in Jordan. In Morocco, Mercier (1957) concedes that Muslims use the response *wa alaikum* 'And upon you too' when they are greeted by non-Muslims[1] (as cited in Ferguson, 1976). In contrast, Gorgis and Al-Quran (2003) point out that the response *wa alaikum* is also used by Iraqis and Jordanians. However, they provide no information about their participants, i.e. whether they are Muslims or not to be able to identify the backgrounds of users for this greeting response.

In addition, Gorgis and Al-Quran (2003) discover that Iraqis and Jordanians use the greeting form *salam* 'Peace,' and the same result also is asserted by Hazaymeh (2012) in Jordanian Arabic. However, Turjoman (2005) emphasizes that form is used only by youngest age group and one female middle age in Saudi Arabia. Also, it is proved in Yemeni greetings with a unique greeting exchange. For instance, Caton (1986) remarks a unique exchange of greetings between tribesmen in Yemen, e.g. *salam tahiyah* 'Greetings of long life' and its response that is *ablag-t* 'I am fulfilled or satisfied.'

The other common forms of greetings that are used in the mentioned Arabic speaking communities are *marhab* 'welcome' and temporal or time bound greetings, e.g. *sabah ilkhair* 'good morning' and *masa ilkhair* 'good evening' (Ferguson, 1976; Caton, 1986; Emery, 2000; Gorgis & Al-Quran, 2003; Hazaymeh, 2012; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008). *Marhab* 'welcome' is a classical Arabic formula (Emery, 2000; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008), and it is sometimes used with numbers that work as an intensifier for it, e.g. *marhaba* 'welcome' singular, *marhabtain* 'two welcomes' dual, and *marahib* '(many) welcomes' plural (Ferguson, 1976; Caton, 1986; Emery, 2000; Hazaymeh, 2012; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008). According to Alharbi and Al-Ajmi (2008), *marhaba* is employed for greeting a visitor to the house, initiating a social encounter, or to draw someone's attention in Gulf Arabic. However, they are used to greet busy people like in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The intensified forms, as mentioned above, also are used as a response to *marhaba* 'welcome' or *hala* 'welcome' in some dialects like Najd in Saudi Arabia, Levantine, and Iraq (Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008).

The temporal greetings, e.g. *sabah ilkhair* 'good morning' and *masa ilkhair* 'good evening,' are also commonly used by these forms. In addition, they are used by adding Allah to them to invoke God's blessing on the addressee, e.g. *massakum allah bilxer* '(May) God bid you: good evening' or *Allah ymassikum bilxer* 'my God bid you: good evening' in Jordanian Arabic (Caton, 1986; Gorgis & Al-Quran, 2003; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008). The goal of adding Allah in this greeting is to express more warmth and personalized sense instead of using *sabah ilkhair* that is the formal one (Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008). Furthermore, the temporal greetings are also used by adding names of flowers or roses, e.g. *sabah ilward* 'morning of roses' and *sabah ilfull* 'morning of jasmine' (Ferguson, 1976; Hazaymeh, 2012).

Emery (2000) examines the form of three categories of politeness formulas: greeting and parting, congratulating and condoling in the northern Omani Arabic, and the social factors that can affect language use, e.g. age and gender. He describes the sequences of opening encounter of a visitor. He finds that there are three stages in greetings: greeting exchange, a health inquiry with conventional answer and thanks to Allah, and ritualized news inquiry. It is obvious that greetings are often the first utterance in the encounter in face to face interaction (Sifianou, 1989; Hopper & Chen, 1996), whereas expressions like *hello*, *yes*, or self-identification are commonly used in initiating telephone conversations, which may differ based on language and culture. *Hello*, for instance, is also used as a greeting in both telephone and face to face encounter in English. The main reason beyond the difference is that the mutual identification and recognition occurs visually through pre-speech moments in face to face conversation; however, they are achieved verbally in speech in a telephone conversation (Hopper & Doany, 1989; Hopper & Chen, 1996). This difference between face to face talk and landline telephone has changed with the caller ID function in which the caller can start with greeting because of the available information of caller, e.g. Finish's data (Arminen & Leinonen, 2006). However, the absence of non-linguistic cues is still the main difference between these two types of communication (Sifianou, 1989; Hutchby & Barnett, 2005).

To sum up, greeting formulas are loaded with sociocultural values and religious beliefs in Arabic speech communities. In addition, the use of forms is affected by various factors, e.g. age, gender, region, and religion.

Methodology

Research Questions:

1- What are the opening sequences and ritual expressions of mobile phone calls between Saudis?

2- Are the opening sequences of mobile phone calls similar to or different from landline telephone calls?

Participants

The participants are 32 Saudi friends and relatives, 20 males and 12 females. The majority of participants were in their twenties and thirties with different educational backgrounds. All the male participants are from the South and middle of Saudi Arabia (SA); however, the majority of them live in the middle of the country. All the female participants are from the South, but the majority live in the middle of SA. They represent Saudi Arabia in general and the middle and the south of SA in particular.

All the Saudi male participants were in the United States at the time of recording except one participant in Malaysia and three relatives in Saudi Arabia. All the Saudis who were in the United States were graduate students except for two: one of them was an undergraduate student and the other one was in the United States for non-degree study or other purposes (i.e., he was on a military course in Texas). The Saudi participant in Malaysia was a graduate student. With regard to the educational background of the other three relatives in Saudi Arabia, they have the General Certificate of Secondary Education except one who has the Certificate of Intermediate Education. All the females were in Saudi Arabia except for the researcher's wife who was in the United States.

The females also differed in their educational backgrounds (e.g. eight females have the General Certificate of Secondary Education, one female has the Certificate of Elementary Education, and three females were illiterate).

Data

A corpus of thirty calls from mobile to mobile phone was recorded by a voice recorder program in a mobile phone by the researcher, and two female assistants (his wife and sister). The participants were invited to participate in this study because they were available for recording to achieve the purpose of the study. Also, the goal was explained to the participants by calling the relatives in Saudi Arabia and by sending text messages to the friends in the U.S.A. All of them gave their consent for recording in advance except three participants gave the consent during the call because they did not receive the text message. One of the Saudi males refused to participate in this study, so he was excluded, and he is not included in the total number of male participants. The calls were conducted with the same sex, i.e. the conversations were between men and between women. All the names were anonymized by using random names for the participants except the name of researcher in all the shown extracts in the results. All the calls were made just for saying *hello*.

The researcher recorded all the men calls by Nokia N 96, and the researcher acknowledges that he initiated 13 calls where he was a caller in them. In addition, the researcher was a callee in seven calls where the calls were initiated by seven participants. The participants were 15 friends and five relatives. 16 calls were domestic in the U.S.A, but four calls were international, e.g. three calls were from the USA to Saudi Arabia, and one call was from the USA to Malaysia. By using the same device, the researcher's wife, the first assistant, recorded and initiated six international calls from the USA to Saudi Arabia, where she was a caller in them. The second assistant, the researcher's sister, recorded and initiated four domestic calls by Galaxy Note One in Saudi Arabia. The two assistants recorded all calls between female participants, who were only relatives of the researcher.

The researcher transcribed only the part of opening and closing for the mobile calls by using the convention transcription of Gail Jefferson (see Appendix A). Because of the limited space, the researcher worked only on the opening part in this study. There are two lines for the transcript of conversations. First, the top line indicates the original words of the caller or callee. Second, the bottom line is the English translation of the original words. The data are research generated data, not naturalistic data, because of the difficulty of recording naturalistic data. Therefore, the researcher invited the participants to participate in the current study. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to achieve the goal of study.

Results

This part includes one main section: opening sequences and ritual expressions of mobile phone conversations to display the results of analyzing the 30 informal mobile phone calls between Saudi friends and relatives, i.e. 20 male conversations and 10 female conversations. The section shows the sequences and ritual expressions of mobile phone conversations: summons answer sequence, greeting exchange, identification/ recognition, and the sequence of "how are you." The extracts of conversations will be used to show the sequences and tables to show the ritual expressions that

were used in these sequences. The tables were divided in two parts: the left side shows the ritual expressions used by the participants and the right side shows what was used by the data recorders, i.e. the two female assistant and the researcher, to avoid the repetition that can influence the final results of the frequency of ritual expressions.

Opening Mobile Phone Calls

Based on analyzing the sequences of opening mobile phone calls, it was found that the majority of calls included only three sequences: summons answer, greeting exchanges, and the exchanges of "how are you," except 3 calls included the identification/recognition sequence beside the other three sequences. Extract[2] (11) shows an example for the common three sequences of opening mobile phone calls in the data (the researcher was the callee in this call):

```
Conversation # 11 (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Mohammad  alo:::
                      Hello
02                    (0.1)
03  Caller: Ahmad     assalamu alaykum
                      Peace be upon you
04  Callee: M         wa alaykum assala:::m wa rahmatu allah wa barakatuh
                      ahlan wa sahlan
                      peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too,
                      welcome, welcome
05                    (.)
06  Caller: A         kayf alha::l=
                      How are you?
07  Callee: M         =alla:::h yisallimk bashshirna ank ya abu fahad
                      May God keep you safe and sound, any good news about
                      you,father of Fahad
08                    (.)
09  Caller: A         wallah (.) nizgah (.) asakum tayibeen=
                      I swear by God, (we're) fine; I hope you are fine too
10  Callee: M         wallah abashshirk bkhai:::r asak bkhair
                      I swear by God, the good news I tell you is that I am
                      fine; I hope you are fine
```

As shown in line one, the callee answered the call with *alo* 'hello' as a summons answer. In turn 3 and 4, the caller and callee exchanged the greetings. The caller's greeting was *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' that was responded by the callee, e.g. *wa alaykum assalam wa rahmatu allah wa barakatuh, ahlan wa sahlan* 'Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too, welcome, welcome.' The final main sequence was how-are-you sequence as shown from line 6 to 10. In line 6, the caller asked the callee by saying *kayf alhal* 'how are you?' and the callee responded by using a prayer and employing *how are you* at the end of his response in line 7, e.g. *allah yisallimk bashshirna ank ya abu fahad* '(May) God keep you safe and sound, any good news about you, father of Fahad?' *Father of Fahad* is an address term for the caller, which was used as a polite strategy with the caller. In line 9, the caller responded by saying *wallah nizgah* 'I swear by God, (we're) fine.' The positive response, i.e. *nizgah* was intensified by *wallah* to stress or confirm the meaning of *fine*. In the same turn, the caller also employed another *how are you* inquiry such as *asakum tayibeen* 'I hope you are fine too.' This form is often understood as a question although it is affirmative with no question particle or intonation. In other words, the meaning of inquiry for that form is *are you fine? I hope you are fine*. In turn 10, the callee responded to that

inquiry *wallah abashshirk bkhair asak bkhair* 'I swear by God, the good news I tell you is that I am fine, I hope you are fine too.' Also, the callee used *wallah* to intensify the meaning of his response, which is similar to what was used by the caller in line 9. In addition, the callee used the word *abashshirk* which literally means 'tell good news' (English translation: 'any good news to tell about you') but its meaning is used for telling good news. This extract reflects the majority of opening sequences in the current study data as mentioned above with some examples for the ritual expressions that were used in these sequences.

The results of examining the opening sequences for all the data will be shown in depth with their extracts in the following sections: the summons answer sequence, greeting exchanges, identification/recognition, and exchange of *how are you*. Also, the ritual expressions that were used in each sequence will be identified. The first part will be about the summons answer sequence and the expressions that were used as a summons answer.

Summons Answer Sequence

The mobile phone's ring (i.e. the summons) and the answer of this summons constitute the first adjacency pair of the first sequence in the mobile phone conversations. Based on analyzing the opening sequences of the 30 mobile phone calls, the researcher noticed that the callees/answerers answered the mobile phone call in three different ways: using greeting, *hello*, and reciting the name of caller by using an address term as a summons answer (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows the ritual expressions used as a summons answer by participants and data recorders when they were answerers in the calls. The total number of conversations that have summons answer was 27 conversations. The total number of conversations, where the participants were answerers, were 20 conversations (13 for male and seven for female participants). In the other three female conversations, the female data recorders spoke first by exchanging greetings immediately, so there was no summons answer in that conversations. Finally, there were seven conversations where the researcher was an answerer, not a caller, and the researcher coded himself as "male data recorder" (see Table 1).

Table 1. *The Frequency of Summons Answer Expressions*

Expressions	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Greeting *hala/marhaba* 'welcome	8 (72%)	3 (27%)	11 (55%)	0	0	0
alo 'hello'	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	8 (40%)	7 (100%)	0	7 (100%)
Reciting the address term of caller e.g. *abu* 'father of x'	1 (100%)	0	1 (5 %)	0	0	0
Total	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	20 (100%)	7 (100%)	0	7 (100%)

However, the majority of the beginning of conversations among the participants was answered by greeting (55%) as a summons answer, e.g. *hala or marhaba* 'welcome,' followed by *alo* 'hello' (40%), and reciting the address term of caller, e.g. *abu* 'father of x' (5%).The following conversation is a sample of greeting as a summons answer between two friends.

```
Conversation # 10     (the researcher was the caller)
01                    ((Ring))
02    Callee:         marhaba
      Nassar
                      Welcome
03    Caller:         assalamu alaykum
      Mohammad
                      Peace be upon you
04                    (.)
05    Callee: N       wa alaykum ↑assala::m wa rahmatu
                      allah=
                      Peace and  God's mercy  be upon
                      you too
```

The callee answered the summons using the greeting *marhaba*. Then the caller followed that summons answer by another greeting *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' in line 3. This greeting is not a response to *marhaba* in this case. As a result, this greeting, i.e. *assalamu alaykum,* was responded to by the answerer *wa alaykum essalam wa rahmatu allah* 'Peace and God's mercy be upon you too' in line 5. This greeting is considered as a main greeting that will be examined in the coming section, which is about greeting exchanges, for more details. In another conversation, a callee answers the call by using another form of greeting, e.g. *hala* 'welcome.' This greeting is similar to *marhaba* in the meaning 'welcome,' but it differs in the form, as shown in line 3 in conversation 9.

```
Conversation # 9     (it was between two relatives)
01                    ((ring))

02    Caller: Mohammad  [((breathing))]

03    Callee: Hani    hala

                      Welcome

04                    (0.1)

05    Caller: M       assalamu alaykum

                      Peace be upon you

06    Callee: H       wa alaykum assalam wa rahmatu allah=

                      Peace and God's mercy be upon you too
```

 Sometimes the name of caller or his/her address term is added to the greeting. In the following sample of conversation, the callee answered the call using the greeting *hala,* followed by the address term of the caller *abu Abdulelah* 'father of Abdulelah' in line 2. Also, it is an example of the impact of caller ID in which the callee could identify the caller before opening the line.

```
Conversation # 15    ( it was between two friends)
01                      ((Ring))
02  Callee: Masaud     hala abu abdulelah=
                       Welcome, father of Abdulelah
03  Caller: Mohammad   =assalamu alaykum

                       Peace be upon you
04                      (.)
05  Callee: Masaud     wa alaykum assalaa::m wa rahmatu allaah wa
                       barakatuh ya hala wmshala=
                       Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you
                       too, welcome, welcome
```

Although the majority of participants used the greeting *hala/marhaba* as a summons answer (55%), followed by *hello* (40%), and reciting the address term of the caller (5%). It was found that there was a major difference between male and female participants in the frequency of using that greeting, as shown in Table 1. Male participants used the greeting *hala/marhaba* as a summons answer more frequently (72%) than female participants (27%).

According to Table 1, *alo* was the second most frequent expression of the summons answer, after the frequency of greeting *hala/marhaba* that was used by the participants (40%). Also, it was used by the researcher as a summons answer in all the six conversations, where the researcher was an answerer/callee. The following sample of conversation shows the use of *alo* as a summons answer (see line 1). It was followed by exchanging greeting in line 2 and 3.

```
Conversation # 2       (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Rami        alo
                        Hello
02  Caller: Mohammad   ASSALAMU ALAYKUM

                        Peace be upon you
03  Callee: R           wa £ alaykum assalam £ hala wallah
                        Peace be upon you too, (you're)
                        welcome, (I swear) by God
```

However, the female data recorders did not use any summons answers because they were callers in all the conversations. In other words, they were not answerers in any call. The frequency of data recorders' expressions will not be discussed because they indicate their repetition in the calls. A new phenomenon was found in some conversations where the caller speaks first. However, it occurred only with the data recorders, which may indicate the personal style when talking on mobile phone (see Extract 6).

```
Conversation # 6 (it was between two friends)
01  Caller: Mohammad   alo:
                        Hello
02                      (.)
03  Callee: Mubarak    alo marhaba=
                        Hello, welcome
```

In this conversation, the caller spoke first by using *alo* 'hello.' The answerer also responded by using *alo* followed by the greeting *marhaba*. Unlike this example, the female data recorders spoke first by using *alo* followed by exchanging greeting immediately in three conversations. The

following conversation is a sample of it, which was between two relatives: one female data recorder and her aunt.

```
Conversation # 29
01  Caller: Suaad    alo assalamu alaykum
    data recorder
                     Hello, peace be upon you
02  Callee: Shahad   hala suaad ↑kayfik
                     Welcome suaad, how are you?
```

The caller spoke first by using *alo* followed by the greeting *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you.' The callee responded that greeting by saying *hala* 'welcome' and also started the sequence of *how are you*, for example *kayfik*. The other two samples, where the data recorders spoke first, are similar to the previous sample, i.e. conversation 29. In these exceptional cases of female data recorders, the sequences were reduced to greeting and *how are you* exchanging. Finally, both male and female participants were equal in the frequency of using *alo* as a summons answer (50%).

In contrast, there was only one case (5%) in which the callee answered the call by reciting the address term of the caller, e.g. *abu Abdulelah* 'father of Abdulelah' in conversation 3 (see line 1).

```
Conversation # 3 (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Basil    [↑abu abdulelah]
                     Father of Abdulelah
02  Caller: Mohammad [alo]
                     Hello
03                   (0.3)
04  Caller: M        alo::
                     hello
05  Callee: B        alo:
                     Hello
```

In his conversation, it is obvious from line 2, 3, 4, and 5 that there was a problem in the connection. Therefore, the callee used the address term of caller probably in order to assure that the caller was on the line.

To sum up, this part displayed three ways of answering the summons. Using greeting like *hala/marhaba* was the most frequent one, followed by *hello* and reciting the address term of the caller. The male participants tended to use greetings as a summons answer more than females. However, they were equal in the use of *hello* to answer the call. The following part is about the next adjacency pair, which is greeting exchanging.

Greeting Exchanges
In the previous section, the results showed a type of greeting, e.g. *hala/marhaba* that was used as a summons answer, but it received no greeting response from the caller. However, a caller uses a greeting, e.g. *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' in the next turn which is the adjacency pair of the greeting exchanges that receives a greeting response.

The results of the adjacency pair of greeting exchanges were divided in two parts. The first part is only about the ritual expressions of greetings, whereas the second part will be about both greeting expressions and their responses. The following table, Table 2, shows the greeting expressions.

Table 2. *The Frequency of Greeting Expressions*

Expressions	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Assalamu alaykum 'Peace be upon you'	5 (100%)	0	5 (62%)	13 (76%)	4 (23%)	17 (80%)
Salam/assalam 'Peace'	0	1 (100%)	1 (12%)	0	4 (100%)	4 (19%)
Assada allah misak '(May) God make your evening happy'	1 (100%)	0	1 (12%)	0	0	0
Marhaba 'welcome'	1 (100%)	0	1 (12%)	0	0	0
Total	7 (87%)	1 (12%)	8 (100%)	13 (61%)	8 (38%)	21 (100%)

According to Table 2, three forms of greeting were used by the participants when they were callers in seven conversations, e.g. *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you,' *salam/assalam* 'Peace,' *assada allah misak* '(May) God make your evening happy,' and *marhaba* 'welcome.' In addition, one female callee answered the call by using *hello* and greeting, e.g. *alo salam* 'hello, peace' which means that she initiated the greeting exchanging first rather than the caller.

As shown in Table 2, the greeting expression *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' was used by the participants more frequently (62%) than the other greeting forms, e.g. *salam/assalam* (12%), *assada allah misak* (12%), and *marhaba* (12%). Moreover, the other forms of greeting expressions did not show significant differences in the frequency of use. As a result, they were only used 12%. It means that there was a preference for using *assalamu alaykum* among the male participants. All the female participants, on the other hand, were callees; therefore, they did not initiate any greeting except one female callee that was explained above. It is obvious that the female greetings were only initiated by the two female recorders such as *assalamu alaykum and salam/assalam*. The following sample shows the use of the most frequent greeting expression (see line 4) and the response (see line 5):

```
Conversation # 1 (between two friends)
01  Callee: Mohammad  alo
                      Hello
02  Caller Abid       ((kid's voice))
03  callee: M         [alo]
                      Hello
04  Caller: A         [assala:mu] alaykum=
                      Peace be upon you
05  Callee: M         =wa alaykum essala::m wa rahmatu alla::h ahlan
                      wa sahlan
                      Peace and God's mercy be upon you too, welcome,
                      welcome
```

All the data recorders used the same greeting expressions except *assada allah misak* and *marhaba,* which were used only by male participants. On the other hand, the greeting *salam/assalam* was only used by women, i.e. one female participant and female data recorders. The participants used various greeting responses to the greetings of *assalaamu ʕalaykum* 'Peace be upon you,' *salam/assalam* 'Peace,' *assada allah misak* '(May) God make your evening happy' and *marhaba* 'welcome' (see Table 3). The following table, Table 3, shows both greeting forms and their responses that were used by participants and data recorders.

Table 3. *The Greetings and Frequency of Responses*

Greeting forms	The responses of greeting	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Assalaamu alaykum 'Peace be upon you' or salam/ assalam 'Peace'	*Wa alaikum assalam* 'Peace be upon you too'	2 (28%)	5 (71%)	7 (35%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (25%)
	Wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu Allah 'Peace and God's mercy be upon you too'	5 (83%)	1 (16%)	6 (30%)	0	0	0
	Wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu Allah wa barakatuh 'Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too'	4 (100%)	0	4 (20%)	4 (100%)	0	4 (50%)
	Hala 'welcome'	1 (33%)	2 (66%)	3 (15%)	0	0	0
Assada Allah misak '(May) God make your evening happy'	*Wa masaaka bi kulli khair* 'And may (He) make all your evening good'	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (12%)
Marhaba 'welcome'	*Hala* 'welcome'	0	0	0	1(100%)	0	1 (12%)
	Total	12 (60%)	8 (40%)	20 (100%)	7 (87%)	1 (12%)	8 (100%)

According to Table 3, the greeting response *wa alaikum assalam* 'Peace be upon you too' was the most frequent response (35%) for the greeting *assalaamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' or *salam/assalam* 'Peace,' followed by *wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu allah* 'Peace and God's mercy be upon you too' (30%). For the same greeting, there were two greeting responses used less frequently by the participants, e.g. *wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu Allah wa barakatuh* 'Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too' (20%), followed by *hala* 'welcome' (15%). The other two greetings: *assada Allah misak* and *marhaba* were only responded by the male data recorder. For instance, *assada Allah misak* was responded by *wa masaaka bi kuli khair* 'And may (He) make all your evening good,' and *marhaba* was responded by *hala*.

Moreover, the results indicate some preferences between the two groups: male and female participants in terms of using some greeting responses. First of all, *wa alaikum assalam* was used more frequently (71%) by female participants than male participants (28%). In contrast, male participants used *wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu Allah* more frequently (83%) than female

participants (16%). It is obvious that the male participants tended to use the long form of this greeting response, which is quite similar to the following greeting in terms of the frequency of use, e.g. *wa alaykum assalaamu wa rahmatu Allah wa barakatuh* (100%). This long form of greeting response was not used by anyone from the female participants.

Some participants tended to employ more than one greeting response in the same turn. As shown in line 3 in the following sample of conversation, the callee responded the greeting by adding *hala wallah* 'welcome, (I swear) by God' to *wa alaykum essalam* 'Peace be upon you too.' *Wallah* means 'I swear by God,' but it is a discourse marker that was used to intensify the meaning of *welcome*. The goal of using more than one greeting expression and the discourse marker as an intensifier is usually to show more intimacy for the addressee (see line 3 in Extract 2).

```
Conversation # 2     (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Rami      alo
                      Hello
02  Caller: Mohammad  ASSALAMU ALAYKUM

                      Peace be upon you
03  Callee: R         wa £ alaykum assalam £ hala wallah
                      Peace be upon you too, welcome, (I
                      swear) by God
```

In extract 3, the sample shows the same linguistic behavior by adding more than one greeting response; however, the form of greeting response that was added to the main greeting differs from the previous one. The added greeting response was *hayyak Allah* '(May) God greet you' (see line 8).

```
Conversation # 3 (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Basil     [↑abu abdulelah]
                      Father of Abdulelah
02  Caller: Mohammad  [alo]
                      Hello
03                    (0.3)
04  Caller: M         alo::
                      hello
05  Callee: B         alo:
                      Hello
06  caller: M         assalaamu alaykum
                      Peace be upon you
08  callee: B         wa alaykum assalaam wa rahmatu allah
                      hayyak allah ya:: abu abdulelah
                      Peace and and God's mercy  be upon you
                      too, May God greet you, father of
                      Abdulelah
```

The researcher observed that after finishing the first adjacency pair of greeting exchanges, it was found that the researcher tended to employ another greeting in the next turn, where he was a caller in 10 conversations. This greeting, for instance, was *masaa alkhair* (singular)/ *masa alkhairat* (plural) 'Good evening' and *massak Allah bilkhair* '(May) God make your evening

good.' It may indicate the researcher's personal style that still reflects his experience as a member of the Saudi society.

Surprisingly, one of the callers from the male participants used the same way of greeting in a call when the researcher was an answerer. He employed two greetings in two different turns as shown in the following sample in line 2 and 4.

```
Conversation # 13   (it was between two friends)
01  Callee: Mohammad  alo

                      Hello

02  Caller: Amri      assalaamu alaykum
                      Peace be upon you
03  Callee: M         wa alaykum assalaa::m wa rahmatu allaah
                      wabarakatuh ahlan wa sahla::n =
                      Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you,
                      welcome and welcome.
04  Caller: A         =massak allah bilkhair ya abu Abdulelah=
                      May God make your evening good, father of
                      Abdulelah
05  Callee: M         =masak allah biritha wal afiah hai allah abu
                      mohammad
                      May God bless your evening with contentedness and
                      health; may God greet (you), father of Mohammad
```

In line 2, the caller used the greeting assalaamu alaykum that was responded to by the callee in line 3. In line 4, again the caller employed another greeting massak Allah bilkhair that was responded to by the callee in line 5. This form of greeting was also received through various responses from the male participants. Table 4 shows the responses of good evening.

Table 4. *The 'Good Evening' Greetings and the Frequency of Responses*

	The responses of 'good evening'	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Masaa alkhair/ masa alkhairat 'good evening/ good evenings' (formal)	*Hala/ hala wmasshala/ ya marhaba ya ahlan* 'welcome'	3 (100%)	0	3 (30%)	0	0	0
	Masaa alkhairat (plural) 'good evenings'	1 (100%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0
	Masaa almasarrat (plural) 'happy evenings'	1 (100%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0
Massak Allah bilkhair '(May) God make your evening good'	*Masa annoor warridha walaafiah* '(May) your evening be filled with light, contentedness, and health'/ *massak Allah birridha walafiah* '(May) God bless your evening with contentedness and health'/ *massak Allah binnoor walafiah* '(May) God bless your evening with light and health'	2 (100%)	0	2 (20%)	1 (100%)	0	1 (100%)
	Masa annor '(May) (your) evening be filled with light'	1 (100%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0
	Allah yihaiik '(May) God greet you'	1 (100%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0

Marhaba 'welcome'	1 (100%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0
Total	10 (100%)	0	10 (100%)	1 (100%)	0	1 (100%)

According to Table 4, the participants used various greeting responses to the various greeting forms of *good evening* that were initiated by the researcher in 10 conversations. The first greeting *masaa alkhair* 'good evening' (singular)/ *masa alkhairat* (plural) are more formal than *massak Allah bilkhair* '(May) God make your evening good.' The participants used various expressions as a greeting response to them. For example, the greeting responses *hala/ hala wmasshala/ ya marhaba ya ahlan* 'welcome/ welcome, welcome' were used more frequently (30%) than *masaa alkhairat* (10%) and *masaa almasarrat* 'happy evenings' (10%) as a response to the greeting *masaa alkhair/ masa alkhairat*. The following various forms: *hala/ hala wmasshala/ ya marhaba ya ahlan* mean 'welcome/ welcome, welcome' in English; however, they differ in the form in general.

For the other greeting form *massak Allah bilkhair,* the participants also used various responses that did not show any significant differences in the frequency of use. Finally, this form of greeting was not used by the female participants. In all the conversations, it was discovered that identification/ recognition occurred after exchanging greetings. Therefore, the next part is about identification/recognition.

Identification/Recognition

All the conversations showed that the callee could identify the callers by the caller ID when the name appeared on it in the data, except for three examples where the callees identified the caller by voice recognition. The researcher was a callee in these three conversations. The first sample (16) shows an example to the sequence of identification/ recognition. This call was an international call between two male relatives:

```
Conversation # 16

01                        ((ring))

02  Callee: yaquub      alo=

                         Hello

03  Caller: Mohammad    =assalamu alaykum

                         Peace be upon you

04                       (0.2)

05  Callee: Y           wa- ↑hala mohammad ↑kayf halak

                         And- Welcome Mohammad, how are you?
```

The callee answered the call by "hello" and then the caller greeted the callee in line 3. After that, there was a two second pause before the callee responded to that greeting. It may indicate that

the number did not appear on the caller ID, so he waited for two seconds to be able to recognize the voice of caller[3]. In line 5, he interrupted himself and returned the greeting. Based on that self-interruption, the callee was going to respond the greeting by *wa alaykum assalam*, but he shifted to another greeting response which was *hala*. At the same time, he uttered the first name of the caller, which means that the identification was achieved by other recognition, e.g. reciting the caller's first name.

Similarly, the following sample of conversation (18) was also an international call between two relatives. The callee could not identify the caller from the beginning although he used the greeting expression *hala* 'welcome' in line 2. When the caller greeted him by saying *assalamu alaykum* 'Peace be upon you' in line 2, there was a three second pause before he responded that greeting. In line 4, the callee responded the greeting loudly and uttered the first name of the caller at the end of greeting. It is similar to the previous sample in which the identification was achieved by other recognition.

```
Conversation # 18

02  Callee: Hasan      ((music sound)) (0.2) hala

                       welcome

02  Caller: Mohammad   (.)assalamu alaykum

                       Peace be upon you

03                     (0.3)

04  Callee: Hasan      WA ALAIKUM ASSALAM WA RAHMATU ALLAH HALA
                       MOHAMMAD=

                       Peace and God's mercy be upon you too,
                       welcome Mohammad
```

The last sample of conversation (14) was between two friends in the USA, but in two different states. Although the researcher had sent him a text message informing him about his call and study, the callee did not receive it[4]. The callee could not identify the caller from the caller ID; however, he recognized the caller by his voice. Therefore, the callee started using various greeting expressions in line 6 confirming the recognition. In this line, also, the expressions were stretched out loudly.

```
Conversation # 14

01                     ((ring))

02  Callee: Fadi       alo

                       hello

03  Caller: Mohammad   assalamu alaykum

                       Peace be upon you

04  Callee: F          wa alaykum assalam wa rahmatu allahi wa barakatuh
```

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```
                          Peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you too

05   Caller: M           masa alkhai::r ya abu humaid

                          Good evening,father of Humaid

06   Callee: F           masa al massaRRA:::t, YALLAH HAYA::H WMARHABA=

                          Happy evening, May God greet you, welcome
```

To sum up, identification was achieved by other recognition, not self-identification. Also, it occurred after the exchange of greetings by using the first name of the caller. Recognition could be achieved without mentioning the name of caller as occurred in conversation 14. Finally, the last main sequence of opening informal mobile phone calls was exchanging *how are you*. It often transpires after greeting exchanges and identification/ recognition.

How Are You Exchanging

This sequence usually includes one or two sequences and sometimes more based on the goal of call. Various expressions were used for asking about well-being and their responses. It means that caller or callee sometimes tend to employ more than one question in one turn. For this sequence, the researcher analyzed only the first caller's turn of the well-being question and his/her response to the answerer's question of well-being. Also, the researcher followed the same way of analysis with the answerer, i.e. the researcher analyzed the first turn of answerer's response to the caller's well-being question and the first turn of his/her well-being question. The reason for this is that the goal of this study is to identify the opening sequences, not the how are you sequences. In the first table (Table 5), the results will show only the expressions of well-being questions. In the second table (Table 6), the researcher will show both the expressions of well-being questions and their responses. In this section, the researcher is only using tables with no sample of conversations because the adjacency pairs of *how are you* extended to more than two and three turns, and even more than that in some calls due to the goal of call that is to say *hello*.

Table 5. *The Frequency of Expressions of Well-being Questions*

The well-being questions	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Akhbarak (Singular/masculine)/ akhbarik (singular/ feminine)/ akhbarkum (plural) 'What are you up to?' *Akhbar alahal/ alawlad* 'How is it going for your family/kids?'	9 (52%)	8 (47%)	17 (47%)	3 (27%)	8 (72%)	11 (40%)
Kaif alhal/ kaifik (singular and feminine)/ ishloonak (singular)/ ishloonkum (plural)/ 'How are you?' *Ishloon (alahal)* 'How is your family?' *Ishloonkum (ma addirasah)* 'How are you doing in your study?'	10 (83%)	2 (16%)	12 (33%)	0	1 (100%)	1 (3%)
Bashshirna annak/ bashshirna an alakhbar 'Any good news (to tell) about you/ Any good news?'	3 (100%)	0	3 (8%)	10 (100%)	0	10 (37%)
Kaif amoorkum/alamoor 'How are things going?'	3 (100%)	0	3 (8%)	4 (100%)	0	4 (14%)

Aish msawwi (masculine) 'What are you doing?'	1 (100%)	0	1 (2%)	0	0	0
Kaif assihah 'How is your health?'	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (3%)
Total	26 (72%)	10 (27%)	36 (100%)	18 (66%)	9 (33%)	27 (100%)

As shown in Table 5, various expressions were used by the participants asking each other about well-being. However, not all of these forms are interrogative forms like *kaif assihah* 'how is your health?,' *kaif amoorkum/alamoor* 'How are things going?,' *ishloonak/kaif alhal* 'how are you?,' and *aish msawwi* 'what are you doing?' Some forms are imperative forms, e.g. *bashshirna annak/ bashshirna an alakhbar* which literally mean 'tell us good news about you' (English translation: 'Any good news to tell about you?' In addition, a*khbarak* or *akhbarkum* (plural) which literally mean 'your news' (English translation: 'what are you up to?' is used as a question without using intonation or a question particle. It is a result of its frequent use; thus, asking the addressee about his/her news or his/her family's news was the most frequent expression used by the participants (47%). Sometimes it is used as singular, e.g. *akhbarak* or as plural *akhbarkum*. The other interrogative forms, e.g. *ishloonak/kaif alhal* 'how are you?' or even about family were used (33%). That was the most second frequent form, followed by *bashshirna annak/ bashshirna an alakhbar* (8%) and *kaif amoorkum/alamoor* (8%). However, the form *bashshirna annak/ bashshirna an alakhbar* is imperative. The other expression, e.g. *ish msawwi* 'what are you doing?' was only used (2%), and it did not show any significant differences in terms of the frequency. Finally, the male data recorder also used most of the expressions except the form of *kaif/ishloon* 'how' and *aish msawwi* 'what are you doing.' On the other hand, the female data recorders used only *akhbarik* 'what are you up to?' and *kaifik* 'how are you?'

The frequency of asking about news shows no significant differences between male (52%) and female participants (47%). In contrast, the preference was in using *ishloonak/kaif alahal* 'how are you?' form. The male participants used this form (83%) more than the females (16%). It means that male participants preferred asking by using 'how are you' (83%) and about the addressee's news (52%). On the other hand, females preferred asking about news (47%) more than 'how are you' (16%). Table 6 shows the results of the responses to these well-being questions (see Appendix B).

Despite the various responses in Table 6, it was noticed that thanking God, e.g. *alhamdulellah*, was the most frequent response used by the participants in almost all the well-being questions or the ways of inquiring. For instance, it was used with the well-being questions, e.g. *How is it going for your family/kids?* (23%), *any good news (to tell) about you/any good news?* (13%), *how are things going?* (10%), and *how is your health* (3%). As shown in the Table, there are various linguistic forms meant 'thank god,' e.g. *alhamdulellah, Allah humma laka alhamd, or nahmedallah,* which are usually followed by *wnashshkurah* 'we thank him (God).' These forms of thanking God, e.g. *Allah humma laka alhamd* and *nahmedallah wnashshkurah* are used to intensify the meaning of thanking God.

The other responses like *bkhair/tayybeen* 'fine,' *tamam* 'perfect' were used more frequently; however, the frequency did not show significant differences in the use. Usually, these expressions, i.e. fine and good, followed or preceded by one of the expressions of thanking God. It is obvious

that almost all the responses were positive, which are usually expected in routine expressions. In addition, there is no strong relation between the way of asking by using the various questions of well-being and their responses, as shown in Table 6. In other words, the responses were often the same, in general, in terms of the meaning, e.g. thanking God, *fine*, and *good*.

To sum up, while examining the sequences of informal mobile phone calls, it was found that the caller ID function affected the sequences of opening, where the caller could identify the caller before answering the call. Therefore, the identification/recognition sequence occurred only in three calls when the name of caller did not appear on the callee's mobile phone screen. In addition, the sequence of identification/recognition occurred after exchanging greetings. It means that the majority of informal mobile phone calls included only three sequences: summons answer, greeting exchanges, and *how are you* exchanges. Furthermore, although the majority of calls were initiated by using *hala/marhaba* greeting as a summons answer by participants, the sequence of greeting exchanges still exists.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine and identify the opening sequences and ritual expressions of informal mobile phone calls between Saudi friends and relatives. Another goal was to identify the similarities and differences between mobile phone and landline telephone due to the earlier claims in general on this topic and dearth of studies on Arabic in particular. In this study, caller ID function played an important role in influencing the opening sequences in terms of identification/recognition sequence as Schegloff (2002) wonders that effect. As a result, the majority of opening sequences was reduced to three sequences: a summons answer, greetings exchange, and *how are you* exchange. The main reason for this was that the answerer could identify the caller before answering the call. Therefore, the four sequences were observed only in three calls when the caller information did not appear on the answerer's caller ID, e.g. a summons answer, greetings exchange, identification/recognition, and *how are you* exchange. The identification/ recognition sequence occurred after greeting exchanges by other recognition, i.e. the answerer could identify the caller by his voice by uttering his first name. It occurred only in three calls where the researcher was a caller in all of them and expected that his phone number would appear for the callees because they have it. However, for technical problems, his phone number did not appear to them. The researcher may find self-identification in a call if the caller knows that his/her number is not with the answerer or he/she is unknown for the callee (Arminen & Leinonen, 2006). The mobile phone opening sequences show similarities and differences with the earlier studies on Arabic landline calls in general and mobile phone calls in particular.

For instance, the majority of sequences were reduced to three sequences in the mobile phone calls in this study, whereas the dominance of four sequences were observed in Lebanese Arabic as universal structure (Hopper & Doany, 1989) and Egyptian Arabic (Schmidt, 1986) in the landline calls   irrespective of the variety of Arabic. In addition, although the four sequences were shown to be rare in this study, they differ in the order with Schmidt's results, e.g. a summons answer, identification, greeting, and introduction of message. Obviously, the identification was achieved after the summons answer sequence; nevertheless, it was found after greeting exchanging in mobile phone call. Another important difference was that the summons answer was frequently used by *alo* 'hello' in Arabic landline calls (Hopper and Doany, 1989). In contrast, some greetings,

e.g. *marhaba/hala* 'welcome' were used as a summons answer which occurred more frequently (55%) than *alo* (40%) in the calls of mobile phone. This result is supported by the participants because they were answerers in most of the calls. It means that the greeting has two functions at the same time in the first sequence of opening: greeting and a summons answer. However, *alo* works only as a summons answer in Arabic, which differs from *hello* in English as it has various functions, e.g. a summons answer, greeting, etc. (Schegloff, 1968). The researcher considered *marhaba/ hala* as a summons answer by greeting in the analysis because the summons answer was followed by the sequence of greeting exchanges, e.g. *assalamu alaykum* and the response *wa alaykum assalam*. The initiation of greeting and *how-are-you* sequence were initiated mostly by the two female assistants and the researcher as callers, so this may weaken the significance of this result. Despite the differences between Arabic studies in landline and the current study due to the caller ID, the sequences still fall in Schegloff's structure irrespective of the existence of all or some of the four sequences or the orders. This brief comparison is related to Arabic studies on landline, which was justified by the influence of caller ID. This result, i.e. the caller ID effect, agrees with some results of the previous mobile phone studies.

For instance, Hutchby and Barnett (2005) found that there is an impact of caller ID; thus, the answerer recited the name of caller in most cases in their data instead of using *hello* as a summons answer. This result showed the effect of caller ID. However, this way of answering the call was only in one case in the results of the current study, which was a result of mobile phone network problem. In addition, the phenomenon of callers speaking first was observed only in a number of cases with data recorders in the data. This phenomenon was explained by Hutchby and Barnett (2005) as a result of the influence of using mobile phone because they found the phenomenon in most of the cases in the data. However, it is difficult to generalize that result due to the feature of using mobile phone because it was also observed in a large number of calls between intimate friends in a landline study in Mandarin in Taiwan (Hopper & Chen, 1996). It can be explained by culture if there is no technical problem in the network or a delay from the answerer to speak first after opening the line (Schegloff, 1968).

The results of reduced sequences support Arminen and Leinonen's study (2006) because they found out that the sequences were reduced to greeting and topic initiation in mobile phone calls in Finish irrespective of the number of sequences. Although that result is similar to the result of current study in terms of the beginning with greeting, the difference of greeting was in function. In other words, the Finish mobile calls begin with exchanging greetings, but the Saudi mobile calls are often initiated with greeting as a summons answer, not for exchanging the greeting. In the same way of reducing the sequences and beginning with greeting, Laursen and Szymanski's results (2013) are similar to the current results in terms of reducing the sequences in general, e.g. greetings, *how are you*, and *where are you*. However, the difference is that the beginning with greeting, which is similar to Arminen and Leinonen's study, is in the last sequence (*where are you*), which is related to future meeting between caller and callee. Although the general similarities that were found in the sequences between the previous studies on mobile phone calls and the current study, there is one study that the present results contrast with it in terms of the absent impact of the caller ID on identification. Weilenmann (2003) reported that callers begin with self-identification and there was no case about reciting the name of caller due to the caller ID in Swedish, which is similar to Swedish landline identification (Lindstro¨m, 1994). Probably, it is a

matter of culture in Swedish. Generally speaking, the previous and current results show similarities and differences in the sequences of opening mobile phone calls and landline calls except the sequence of *where are you?* due to its mobility.

The opening sequences showed various ritual expressions; however, most of them are religious expressions such as *assalamu alaykum* and *wa alaykum assalam* (in greeting exchanges) and thanking God as a response for most of the well-being questions. The previous routines were the most frequent religious expressions used by the participants as a result of the Islamic principles derived from the Holy Quran in Saudi Society. The participants used various forms of inquiry, which are similar to Chinese (Sun, 2004) in terms of varieties of forms, in the how are you sequence such as a *khbarak* 'what are you up to?' *kaifik/ishloon alahal* 'how are you/how is your family,' *bashshirna annak* 'any good news (to tell) about you?' that have different literal meanings. However, they mean *how are you* irrespective of the literal meaning; thus, the responses of these inquiries were generally similar, e.g. *thank God*, *fine*, or *good*. It is obvious that there is no relation between the form of inquiry and the way of response to it. Sometimes the well-being questions are used repetitively to show more intimacy and interest in the caller and his/her family (Coronel-Molina, 1998; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002; Saadah, 2009). Some expressions were used in plural although the addressee, i.e. caller or callee was singular, e.g. *akhbarkum* 'what are you up to? (plural),' *ishloonkum* 'how are you (plural),' *kaif amoorkum* 'how are they going?'. They are used in plural to show more interest in the caller or callee. In contrast, they are used in formal calls in Persian (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002). Finally, gender variable showed some similarities and differences in the ritual expressions and frequency which can be interpreted as a result of the different regional and educational background between the males and females.

Conclusion
This study examined the conversations of informal mobile phone calls in terms of the opening sequences and ritual expressions. It was found that the caller ID affected the sequences by reducing them to three sequences: the summons answer, greeting exchange, and *how are you* exchange. They were used more frequently without the identification/ recognition sequence that appeared only in three cases by other recognition, e.g. first name. The main difference between mobile phone and telephone is the absence of the identification/recognition sequence that occurs when the number is silent or caller is unknown. Most of the ritual expressions in the sequences were religious expressions that could constitute a major difference across cultures. Males and females used various expressions that showed similarities and differences in the use of expression and frequency. This study faced some limitations and had some suggestions for further research. One limitation is the narrow scope of the data used, the limited number of participants, and the repetition of recorders, i.e. the two female assistants and the researcher in this study. In addition, Saudi women cannot be recorded easily by strange male researchers due to some high privacy in the society; however, female researchers have a strong chance to record them to investigate more ritual expressions based on the factor of gender differences in depth. Therefore, the researcher recorded only his relatives. The researcher also suggests that further researchers should enlarge the number of participants and record naturalistic data. Moreover, further studies should examine Saudi landline calls with and without caller ID to identify and understand more the opening sequences.

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Footnotes
[1] The researcher relied on Ferguson for that reference because it was written in French.
[2] The number of extract indicates its sequence in the data, but not its sequence in the paper.
[3] In some international calls, the researcher found that some relatives ask him whether he changed his American phone number because it appeared to them differently, i.e. with a Saudi/domestic phone number.
[4] In this call, the callee, the researcher's friend, told him that he lost his phone number.

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Appendix A
The Transcription Conventions

::::	The more colons the longer the sound is drawn out
(0.1)	Timed pause
(.)	Untimed micropause
[ ]	Overlapping talk
( )	Unclear fragment/best guess
[	Point of overlap onset
=	Latching utterances
↑	Marked rising intonation
↓	Marked falling intonation
-	Sharp cut-off of a word or false start

Appendix B
Table 6. *The Well-being Questions and the Frequency of Well-being Responses*

The well-being questions	The responses to the well-being questions	Male participants	Female participants	Total	Male data recorder	Female data recorders	Total
Akhbarak (Singular/masculine)/ *akhbarik* (singular/ feminine)/ *akhbarkum* (plural) 'What are you up to?' *Akhbar alahal/ alawlad* 'How is it going for your family/kids?'	*Alhamdulellah/ Allah humma laka alhamd* 'Thank God/ God, praise be to you'	1 (14%)	6 (85%)	7 (23%)	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5 (20%)
	Tamam (allah humma laka alhamd) 'Perfect, thank God'	1 (33%)	2 (66%)	3 (10%)	0	1 (100%)	1(4%)
	Tayybeen/ bkhair (alhamdulella) 'Good/fine'	2 (100%)	0	2 (6%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	5 (20%)
	Bnimah wafiah 'Blessed and healthy'	2 (100%)	0	2 (6%)	0	0	0
Bashshirna annak/ bashshirna an alakhbar 'Any good news (to tell) about you/ Any good news?'	*Alhamdulellah/ nahmedallah (wnashshkurah)/ ya rabbi lak alhamd* 'Thank God/ we thank (and praise) God/ thank you, my Lord'	4 (100%)	0	4 (13%)	0	0	0
	Bkhair/ nizgah (dialect) 'Fine'	2 (100%)	0	3 (10%)	2 (100%)	0	2 (8%)
	tamam (alhamdulellah) 'Perfect, thank God'	2 (100%)	0	2 (6%)	0	0	0
Kaif assihah 'how is your health'	*Alhamdulellah* 'Thank God'	1 (100%)	0	1 (3%)	0	0	0
kaif amoorkum/alamoor 'How are things going?'	*Alhamdulellah* 'Thank God'	3 (100%)	0	3 (10%)	1 (100%)	0	1 (4%)
	Mashiin 'so so'	1 (100%)	0	1 (3%)	0	0	0
	Bkhair 'Fine'	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (4%)
Kaif alhal (singular and masculine)/ *kaifik* (singular and feminine)/ *ishloonak* (singular and masculine) *ishloonkum (plural)* 'How are you?' *Ishloon (alahal)* 'How is your family?'	*Tamam (alhamdulellah)* 'Perfect, thank God'	0	2 (100%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0
	Alhamdulellah 'Thank God'	0	0	0	0	2 (100%)	2 (8%)
Ishloonkum (ma addirasah) 'How are you doing in your study?'	*Allah yisallimk*	0	0	0	2 (100%)	0	2 (8%)

	'(May) God greet you'						
	Bkhair 'Fine'	0	0	0	5 (100%)	0	5 (20%)
Aish msawwi (masculine) 'What are you doing?'	*Allah humma laka alhamd* 'God, praise (be to) you'	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (4%)
	Total	20 (66%)	10 (33%)	30 (100%)	15 (60%)	10 (%40)	25 (100%)