

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

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