The functional components of telephone conversation opening phase in Jordanian Arabic

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Our study purports to examine the rhetorical structure of informal telephone conversation opening phase in Jordanian Arabic and the lexico-grammatical and stylistic encodings of these pragmatic options. To this end, a corpus of 100 telephone conversation recordings was collected from Jordanian Arabic. The recordings were based on the participants' personal cell phones with their families and friends. Our data analysis drew on House (1982) and Sun's (2004) models of interactional moves to find out the component options used to articulate this phase. The results revealed that although the group of participants use a set of functional components similar to those identified in other cultures, there are additional functional component options like 'ostensible invitation' and 'God-wishes' that are only used by Jordanians. Besides, they utilize various lexico-grammatical devices and stylistic options to articulate these components. These choices can be attributed to the socio-cultural background of the Jordanian Arabic native speakers.

Keywords: telephone openings, functional components, Jordanian Arabic culture

1. Introduction

Telephone conversation is a verbal form of interaction frequently used in daily social life as a means through which individuals relate to others. To describe this interaction, Schegloff, (1986); Sacks (1992); Schegloff et al. (2002) and other researchers suggest a triplicate structure consisting of three phases: Opening, main topic and closing. The main topic tends to carry information about the purpose of calling; thus, it relates to the ideational function, whereas the opening and closing phases are phatic in nature relating mainly to the interpersonal function of

https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.19034.ala | Published online: 25 August 2020
Pragmatics 31:1 (2021), pp. 6–32. issn 1018-2101 | e-issn 2406-4238
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language. They are phatic in that they facilitate a smoother transition from a state of non-talk to a state of talk in the case of the opening phase and from a state of contact to separateness in the case of the closing (House 1982, 54). The opening, the focus of the current study, is defined by Hopper (1992, 51) as a small talk in the first few seconds of telephone conversation that occurs between two or more parties simultaneously exchanging a sequence of turns in response to each other. Sun (2004, 1430) called the "conventionalized as well as individual expressions in the initial phase of telephone conversations before initiating the purpose of calling as the 'opening moves'".

However, these opening component preferences vary cross-culturally. Therefore, they create a sort of challenge to foreign language learners and remain a sensitive area in cross-cultural encounters, even for those who have mastered the basics of a foreign language and culture (Pavlidou 2004, 121). That is because they are not usually taught or exposed to the language of phone calls in real situations. Thus, they may not know whether to start with the main purpose of the phone call or to pave the grounds for such a purpose. As far as we know, no study has examined telephone openings in the Arabic language. Therefore, there is a pressing need for the present study to investigate the telephone conversation openings by Jordanian Arabic native speakers. It also attempts to identify the linguistic and stylistic options employed to realize these moves. Moreover, this study sheds light on the findings about telephone conversation's generic features in different cultures, but the discussion and conclusion sections will focus more on the distinction between American English and Arabic telephone opening components' preferences and the phatic utterances encoding them. Particularly, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the telephone conversation opening functional moves most commonly used by Jordanian speakers?
2. What are the linguistic and stylistic choices utilized by the participants to encode these pragmatic options?
3. What are the socio-cultural motivations that have given rise to these functional moves and their encodings?

2. Theoretical framework

The most significant contribution to the study of telephone openings is Schegloff's (1968) pioneer work, who examined the sequential ritual exchanges in conversation. Schegloff (1986) studies the openings of actual American telephone conversations. He identified four core sequences having the following order: (1)

a summons-answer sequence, which consists of the telephone ring (summons) and the answer which serves to ensure a working channel of communication and an available partner for communication; (2) an identification/ recognition sequence, in which the identities of the participants are established through self-identification or recognition displays; (3) a greeting sequence, in which greeting tokens are exchanged and (4) an exchange of how-are-you sequence, which "provides a formal opportunity for the other party to make some current state of being a matter of joint priority concern" (Schegloff 1986, 118). These opening component preferences vary cross-culturally in terms of the type and number of components used in the opening phase and the phatic utterances and linguistic expressions utilized to articulate these components. The following sub-section focuses on the issue of contrast between universality and culture specificity as it is reflected by a number of cultural studies of telephone openings, whereas the subsequent one sheds light on the broad categories of the functional phatic utterances accompanying these openings.

2.1 Cultural and cross-cultural studies of telephone opening phase

Some scholars (e.g., Godard 1977) view Schegloff's work as a culture specific issue (i.e., typically American) that cannot be applied universally to all languages in the same way, whereas Ferguson (1983) argues that the opening sequence model is used by all speech communities. Drawing on Schegloff's telephone opening model, many researchers have studied telephone openings of ordinary talk between participants of a particular language community (e.g., Lindstorm 1994; Hopper and Chen 1996; Coronel-Moline 1998; Sifianou 2002; Taleghani-Nikazm 2002; Lee 2006). Examining the way in which Americans orient to the identification and recognition sequence, Schegloff (1979) found that Americans display the preference of recognition to explicit self-identification. They tend to recognize each other by providing a minimal voice sample when articulating a greeting and tend to prefer the principle "over suppose and under tell" for mutual recognition. However, Hopper and Chen (1996) found that telephone identification/recognition in Taiwan is described by the principle "under suppose and under greet" (p.307). Hispanic families prefer to avoid self-identification and tend to recognize each other while performing greeting before asking about each other's well-being (Coronel-Moline 1998, 57). Lee (2006) reported that Korean callers showed a marked preference for other-recognition in the sense that callers tend to repeat the summons sequence purposefully in their second turn to provide a voice sample to invite telephone answerers to recognize their identity. According to Sifianou (2002), Greek recipients tend to provide an immediate apology whenever they fail to recognize the caller in order to maintain intimate relationships. In contrast

to the findings of the aforementioned studies, Lindstorm (1994) found that the majority of Swedish recipients tend to identify themselves explicitly in their first turn to answer.

Other researchers investigated how these telephone opening sequences vary across cultures (e.g., Godard 1977; Sifianou 1989; Grieve and Seebus 2008). They have found differences between telephone openings in different cultures and highlighted culturally specific aspects related to each culture such as self-identification. Sifianou (1989) noted that English participants identify themselves explicitly, while Greeks try to avoid self-identification as it is considered offensive. In a contrastive study between German and Australian participants, Grieve and Seebus (2008) concluded that in Germany, men and women tend to include reciprocal self-identification in their conversations regardless of the call type whereas in Australia men are more likely to identify themselves in business calls than women.

Some other researchers studied the sequence, number, type of sequential patterns used and occurrence of telephone opening moves. Sifianou (2002) noted that the organization of the opening sequence varies according to the frequency of contact and the degree of intimacy. For example, closely related friends with frequent contact tend to preempt greeting to the identification sequence and avoid explicit self-identification. Likewise, Taleghani-Nikazm (2002) found that the 'How are you' sequence in Persian does not occur between participants frequently in contact with each other; it rather occurs several times between less frequent contact parties. Regarding the type of sequential patterns used in the opening phase, House (1982) provided a broad framework including the following interactional moves that tend to occur in a face-to-face interaction between German and English native speakers: greeting, territorial breach apology, identification, question-after-you, remarks and topic introducers. Pavlidou (1994) proposed seven subcategories of phatic sequences in the opening phase for German and Greek conversants, including the addressee's state, lack of contact, wishes, the caller's intrusion modalities of the call, the use of V-form and phatic particles. Adopting House's taxonomy of interactional moves, but with some modifications, Sun (2004) identified the following interactional moves in addition to Schegloff's sequence in order to analyze the pragmatic functions of Chinese telephone openings: affirmation of recognition, voice recognition comments, disturbance check, and prioritized communicative act.

2.2 Phaticity in telephone openings

The opening phase of telephone calls is mostly phatic in nature. It includes a parcel of some conventional formulaic utterances and expressions selected from the

socio-cultural repertoire of social communities. The main function of these phatic expressions is mainly to establish links of fellowships and to maintain rapport between interlocutors.

Phatic utterances are ritual inquiries used in opening up the channel of communication (e.g., greeting formulae, questions about the well-being of the interlocutors). They are instances of what Malinowski (1923, 313–14) coined 'phatic communion' that contains "language used in free, aimless, social intercourse" oriented toward the interactional social aspect of communicating… [and that] "does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas", but mainly to achieve rapport through the use of these phatic utterances. Laver (1981) described the opening sequential patterns as functional units that are phatic in nature. He identified three broad categories of phatic sequences in terms of deictic reference: a *neutral* category that contains phrases about factors such as weather (e.g. 'Nice weather') or time common to both speaker and listener; a *self-oriented* category that focuses on factors related to the speaker (e.g., 'Hot work, this'); and an *other-oriented* category containing phrases that refer to the factors specific to the listener such as 'How is the family?'. This categorization was found inadequate for the analysis of Chinese telephone openings. Therefore, Sun (2004) proposed an additional category called 'relation-relation' remarks which is centered on the theme of the relationship (e.g., Long time no see/talking).

According to Laver (1975), the main social function of phatic expressions in the initial phase of conversation is to defuse "the potential hostility of silence in situations where speech is conventionally anticipated" (p. 221), "to allow the participants to cooperate in getting the interaction comfortably underway" (p. 220), and "to allow the participants to feel their way towards the working consensus of their interaction" (p. 220). Likewise, Arab researchers examined the functions of phaticity in Arabic conversation. For instance, Abu Hatab (2006, 20) argues that phatic expressions have the cosmetic function of defusing tension and making a request for information look as a form of inquiry rather than an imperative request. Al-Qinai (2011) described the initial greetings in Arabic as more elaborate including redundant phatic utterances about the hearer's health, wellbeing, whereabouts of his family, friends, job and even his acquaintances. Such superfluous repeated phatics are used as a gambit to keep the channel of communication open and to develop social solidarity.

Other researchers analyzed routines and their linguistic elements as part of the linguistic repertoire of politeness. Sifianou (1989) and Pavlidou (1994) interpret the phatic phrases related to phone calls in connection with politeness theory ascribing a positive politeness tendency to Greeks in comparison to English and Germans. Pavlidou (1994) found that Greeks use phatic utterances twice as frequently as Germans on the telephone, but these phatic utterances are used in

different ways and for different purposes. While the Greeks tend to use the phatic utterances to enhance the relationship with the interlocutor, regardless of the possible face threats, Germans use them to reduce these face threats connected not with the speech event of calling but with the reason for calling.

This theoretical background has exhibited differences in the way interlocutors from different cultures construct their telephone conversation openings and in the communicative purposes articulated by these openings.

3. Data collection and description of research instrument

For the purpose of the present study, we analyzed a corpus of 100 naturally recorded casual telephone interactions in Jordanian Arabic collected from Jordanian Arabic native speakers whose age ranged from twenty to thirty years old. Some of the Jordanians are undergraduates and others are graduate students with different academic majors.

All the interactions in this article are primarily between interlocutors having personal or familial relationship such as family members, friends and acquaintances. Telephone conversations were recorded by the participants themselves using their personal mobile phones. Participants were told to record incoming and outgoing calls using the "Automatic Call Recorder" application that records all conversations, stores them at a convenient location and allows these recordings to be shared with the researchers. This procedure is of considerable efficiency compared to previous methods used for collecting naturally occurring conversations because the application automatically records participants' conversations without the need to be activated before making a call. To obtain a naturally occurring data, the recipients were informed about the purpose of the recording only after the data had been recorded. Then it was their decision whether to authorize or deny the use of the recording. When anyone declined, the caller would immediately delete the recording. To better understand the relationship between participants, all subjects were also asked to keep a 'diary' of specific contextual information such as the relationship and the degree of familiarity between interlocutors, approximate age and the name of the party called.

4. Procedures of data analysis

In order to identify and provide an accurate descriptive account of the interactional functional sequential acts, the present study adopted Sun's (2004) model of interactional moves used to describe the interactional patterns observed in Chi-

nese telephone openings with some additions and modifications. That is to say, some of Sun's components were incorporated such as greeting, addressing, identification, questions-after-you, affirmation of recognition, and disturbance check. However, we identified some other additional components that are only related to Arabic culture like 'God wishes', and 'Ostensible invitation'.

For the analysis of the opening phase, Sun (2004, 1430) adopted House's (1982) notion of interactional moves as functional units and sequential patterns. In particular, he utilized the term 'opening moves' to refer to "conventionalized as well as individual expressions used in the initial phase of telephone conversations". However, it seems that neither of the two researchers has provided a sound definition of the term 'move' because of its controversial notion. For example, Halliday (1984, 14) equates the move to the speech function of the turn in a dialogue. However, Ventola (1987, 90–3) indicates that equating a move to a speech function is too indefinite as one does not know whether the speaker's whole speaking turn or only part of it (e.g., a clause or a short utterance) will be seen as a move where a speech function is realized. In this article, we also use the 'move' as a basic unit of analysis but we propose the following definition of 'move': It is a stretch of language having a function that is made up of one or a bundle of linguistic features signaling its presence. The status of the move can be confirmed if it occurs in other similar discourse contexts. In each speaking turn, each interlocutor makes one or more different moves, each of which has a different function. According to the functional ranking system of organization levels proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) which is also adopted by House (1982), 'moves' themselves combine to make one 'turn' and turns performed by different speakers combine to form an 'exchange'. Exchanges combine in identifiable ways to constitute a particular 'phase' in conversation, like the opening phase or the closing phase in a telephone conversation.

To facilitate the process of analysis and speakers' turn reference, each Arabic conversation example included the letters A and C. The former refers to the answerer, whereas the latter refers to the caller.

For the identification of moves, the researchers first listened to the calls and transcribed them in order. Then, the researchers assigned a function to each utterance (i.e., move) of the opening components. After discussing and presenting a definition of each move, the researchers coded the component moves in each opening and assigned a function to each one. Arabic calls were transcribed first and then translated into English.

5. Results

The analysis of the functional rhetorical components and the lexico-grammatical devices utilized in the course of Arabic telephone openings has shown ten components (see Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of Jordanian telephone conversation openings

	Arabic components	
Functional components	**No.**	**%**
Answer	70	70
Greeting	92	92
Address	90	90
Question-After-you (QAY)	88	88
Good wishes	60	60
Ostensible invitation	42	42
Lack of contact	14	14
Disturbance check	13	13
Territorial Breach Apology	32	32
Topic introducer	48	48

5.1 Answer

The first component of the TCO examined was the 'Answer', which is typically expressed by *ʔaluu* 'Hello' in response to a summons. It indicates that the channel of communication is open and the other party is available to talk (Schegloff 1986, 117). Typical answers to summons are usually achieved by *ʔaluu* or *ʔaywa* 'Yes'. This occurred in 70% of the Arabic openings. It is always the person who receives the call who has the first turn in the conversation (Schegloff 1968). However, the data revealed that this move also tends to be introduced by the caller as a 'second summons'. The caller starts speaking first once the channel of communication is opened. This phenomenon depends on the relation between co-participants. The following example is between two friends:

(1) **C:** *ʔaluu samaaħ*
'Hello Samah'
A: *hala wallah*
'Hi'

However, it is common for recipients in Arabic openings to answer telephone summons with a greeting.

5.2 Greeting

This component is a sign of recognition of the other party (Ventola, 1979, 271; House, 1982). It is the most frequently used component (92%) in the telephone openings. It is being marked for reciprocity realized by adjacency pair turns (e.g., *marħaba- ʔahliin* 'Hi- welcome').

The participants utilized different forms of greeting, but relied heavily on *marħaba* 'Hi' as the main option. The other common ways are time-specific greetings like *Sabaaħ ilxiir* 'Good morning' or *masaaʔ ilxiir* 'Good evening', and the Islamic term *ʔassalaamu ʕalaykum* 'Peace be upon you'. Young males and females sometimes indicate special intimacy by modifying and varying the time-specific formal greeting *Sabaaħ ilxiir* 'Good morning', using *Sabaaħ ilward* 'morning of roses' or *Sabaaħ ilʕasal* 'Honey mornin'. Moreover, this simple formal greeting may be combined with other lexical items to convey intimacy, especially when young males address young females with flirting intention (e.g., *Sabaaħ ilxiir ya ʔmar* 'morning, O moon' or *Sabaaħ ilxiir ya ʔuSta* 'morning, O cream'. These findings lend support to Al-Qinai (2011) and Abo Hatab (2006) observations related to this issue.

The data analyzed revealed that Jordanians use a variety of lexical forms to express and respond to 'Greeting'. For example, one can initiate a greeting sequence in Arabic by different types and forms like *marħaba* 'Hi', *ʔassalaamu ʕalaykum* 'Peace be upon you', *salaam* 'peace', *yaʿtiik il-ʿaafye* 'Be given the strength', etc. Likewise, it is often possible for each Jordanian response to greeting to have an array of responses. For example, English *good morning* has only one response, *good morning*, whereas Arabic *Sabaaħ-ilxiir* 'good morning' has a variety of responses like *Sabaaħ innuur* 'morning of light', *Sabaaħ ilward* 'morning of roses', *Sabaaħ illful* 'morning of jasmine', *miit Sabaaħ* '100 mornings', and *Sabaaħu* 'morning'. Further, this time-specific greetings, *good morning* and some others are rarely used in English openings in contrast to their Arabic counterparts, because they index formality between English interlocutors.

Likewise, the callees used a wide range of responses to the greeting term *marħaba* such as *ʔahla wsahla* 'welcome', *marħabtiyn* 'most welcome', *hala* or *yaa hala* 'Hi'. When reciprocating the greeting sequence, recipients tend to respond with a duplicated or elaborated greeting expressed either by a combination of two different terms like *yaa hala Sabaaħ innuur* 'hi, good morning' or by two similar forms of greeting such as *yaa hala yaa hala* 'Hi, Hi'.

The following example illustrates the duplication of the greeting by repeating the same form of greeting in the second turn, whereas the same callee used a combination of two different forms in the fourth turn in order to index familiarity and intimacy with the recipient:

(2) **A:** *ʔaluu marħaba*
'Hello, Hi'
C: ***ʔahlan ʔahlan***
'welcome, welcome' 'Hi'
A: *Sabaaħ ilxiir*
'Good morning'
C: ***Yaa hala Sabaaħ innuur***
'Hi. Good morning'

5.3 Address

The analysis revealed that this move occurred in 90% of the openings. Participants address each other either by their first names or other forms of address. Our analysis revealed that Jordanian participants use diverse terms of address, some of which, like paedonymics, have never been encountered in other cultures. They employed absolute and relational address terms. Absolute social address terms are titles generally reserved for authorized addressees such as *ʔustaatð* 'Teacher', *zaʕiim* 'colonel' and titles of address for military ranks (e.g. Pasha, captain). However, Jordanian interactants, especially males, use these titles of address frivolously and infelicitously among friends. The data analyzed featured examples like Pasha, *ʕummdeh* 'mayor' or *zaʕiim* 'colonel', *ʔamiir* 'prince', and *sayid* 'master'.

Relational address terms are mainly related to kin terms. Youth participants employed kin terms like *xaalu* 'maternal brother', *xaaltu* 'maternal sister', *ʕammu* 'paternal brother' and *ʕammtu* (paternal sister) connotatively to address friends and acquaintances. Another addressing practice specific to Jordanians is the use of paedonymic, which is addressing parents by the names of their firstborn child. For instance, if a Jordanian man named Mohammed has a child named Ali, Mohammed will be addressed 'Abo Ali' (Father of Ali). This practice which consists of *ʔabu* + proper name is called *kunyah* in Arabic. These paedonymics are sometimes extended to be used in addressing bachelor Jordanian males in order to enhance social casual interaction among the interactants. It is frequently used as a social honorific by the Jordanian male participants.

The data also featured absolute titles of address that include affectionate social honorifics such as *ħabiibi* 'my beloved' addressed to males, *ħabiibti* 'my beloved addressed to females', *hayaati* 'my life' and *ruuħi* 'my soul', etc., which are anal-

ogous to affectionate address terms like 'love', 'honey', and 'sweetie', etc. used by Americans.

(3) **A:** *ʔaluu*
'Hello'
C: *ʔah kiifik nour ʃuu ʔaxbaarik*
'Hey, what's up **Nour**? How is it going?'
A: *ʔahliyn* ***ħabiibti*** *kiifik ʃuu ʔaxbaarik*
'Hey sweety, what's up? How are you doing?'

Terms of endearment such as *ħabiibti*, 'my dear' are widely used by Jordanians to express and emphasize intimacy between interlocutors.

5.4 Question-after-you (QAY)

This move refers to ritual inquiries oriented toward the addressee's health, family members and current activities. These inquiries are phatic expressions of ritualized nature for which the inquirer does not expect a factual account from the addressee (House 1982). This move is frequent in Arabic conversations (88%).

Our analysis indicated that the participants tend to inquire about the addressee's health and family members and/or his/her ongoing routine activities at the moment of speaking. The most commonly used in Arabic are inquiries about the addressee's health. The participants use utterances like *kiif ħaalak* 'how are you?', combining *kiif* 'How' with a noun, *ħaal* 'state' or *Siħah* 'health' followed by a pronoun ending *–ak* (masculine singular), *-ik* (feminine singular),

The responses to such inquiries are expressions of good health having two elements, one of them is more obligatory than the other, *mnieeħa*, 'good' or *mabSuuṭ* 'pleased', and a God-expression as is shown in (4).

(4) **A:** *kiif ħaalik mama*
'How are you, mam?'
C: *mnieeħa alħamdu lillaah*
'Good, I thank Allah.'

Example (4) is a case of interaction between a mother and her son. It indicates that in a call to one's mother, he phrased the inquiry in the form *kiif ħaalik mama* 'How are you, mam?', using *mama* rather than using the second person pronoun 'You' to show deference to parents. Such a practice is similar to what Sun (2004) observed in Chinese conversation; they tend to consider it impolite to address one's elders or parents using 'You'. A further observation is the use of the God-expression in the replier's response as an expression of praise or thanks to God

and not to the questioner. Sometimes, the expression of good health is likely to be omitted in exchanges.

Jordanian participants sometimes extend these inquiries to ask about other family members, especially if participants are close friends or relatives. The following example is a conversation between an uncle and his nephew. After the co-participants had asked about each other's well-being, the caller extended the inquiry to ask about her family.

(5) **A:** *ʔaluu*
'Hello'

C: ...

A: ...

C: *ʃuu ʔaxbarkum kiif ʔwlaadkum ʔinʃaallaah mnaaħ*
'How is everyone? How are your children? Hopefully everyone is good.'

A: *ʔalħamdulillaah kwayysiin*
'Thank God. They're good'

Other inquiries are about the addressee's ongoing routine activities at the moment of speaking (e.g., *ʃuu ʕam tiʕmali halla* 'what are you doing?'). Some others are about the addressee's specific activities. This usually occurs when participants contact on regular basis and are familiar with each other's daily activities. Inquires of such nature also exist and are used in Chines interaction (Sun 2004). In the following example, the caller asks his friend the three specific questions written in bold about his daily work before announcing the main purpose of calling:

(6) **A:** *ʔaluu*
'Hello'

C: ...

A: ...

C: ***xalaS rawwaħit***
'So, you went home?'

A: *ʔah wallah rawwaħit*
'Yea, I am home'

C: ***ṯaminnii kiif kaan ʔimtiħaanak***
'How was your exam?'

A: *taxbiiS ...*
'Terrible...'

C: ***mataa ʔimtiħaanak ʔiljaay***
'When is your next exam?'

A: *ilʔiθniin*
'On Monday'

C: *ṯayyib ʔismaʕ liflaaʃih ʔillii ʔaʕṭaytak ʔiaahaa fii malaffaat juwaahaa laa timsaħhum biddi iyyahum*
'Ok listen, you know the flash memory I gave you; it has some files I need, so make sure you do not delete them.'

It is interesting to note that each of the three inquiries above might be thought of as a genuine question indicating the topic or the main reason of calling, but, in fact, they are not; they function as inquiries about current specific activities both of the participants are familiar with. That is because as the conversation developed, the caller in this telephone call introduced the main purpose for calling later by the topic marker *ṯayyib ʔismaʕ* 'Ok, listen' that indicates the speaker's orientation to the presence of some pending business that prompted the call.

Moreover, we have also found that in 45% of the openings analyzed, 'How are you?' sequences occurred more than three times in each opening. In such cases, Arab interlocutors vary their "How are you" utterances lexically using expressions such as *kiifik, ʃuu axbaarik, kiif Sħtik, kiif ʔumuurik* (all mean 'how are you?'). The main function of such sequences is to keep the wheel of communication moving on until the reason for call is stated.

5.5 God-wishes

God-wishes are phatic expressions having the function of expressing the wish of favorable action of God. The internal structure of the God-wish formula has three constituents: the subject 'God', a verb expressing the wish, and a pronoun object suffix expressing the recipient of the favorable action. The following are typical examples: *ʔalla yaʕṭiik illʕaafyih* 'God- give-you the strength'; *ʔalla iyxalliik-* 'God spare you'; *ʔalla iyṯawwel ʕumrak* 'God lengthen your-life' and *ʕalla iysallmak* 'God keep you'.

(7) **A:** *ʔaluu*
'Hello'

C: ...

A: ...

C: *ʕalla iyxalliina iyyaaki-*
(God spare you for us)

A: *ʕalla yiħfaḏak*
God may-he-keep +you
'May God keep you'

It is worth mentioning that there is a difference between the referential meaning of these formulaic expression and their use. That is to say, the lexical meaning of

each God-wish does not always reflect when it is appropriate to say it. For example, *ʔalla yaʕṭiik illʕaafyih* 'God- give-you the strength' can be used as a salutation for somebody who is doing a heavy manual work, or a praise, or a thank you for a person who has finished a job, or an encouragement for somebody who is about to start a heavy task.

5.6 Ostensible invitation

According to Isaacs and Clark (1990, 493), the ostensible invitation is a speech act performed by a speaker who extends an invitation to an addressee, yet the speaker does not want this invitation to be taken seriously and the invitee knows that the inviter is insincere. It is called ostensible because the inviter does not have prior intentions and does not specify the time and place of the invitation (Salmani-Nodoushan 2012, 134); otherwise, it will be considered genuine. The absence of such cues wraps the invitation with ostensibly because the speaker violates the conversation principles when extending such pretentious insincere ostensible speech acts (Pinto 2011).

It was observed that Jordanian interactants use a considerable number of ostensible invitations in their telephone openings. They are used as phatic utterances in the sense that both the inviter and the invitee do not expect a factual response or to be taken seriously; they are meant to achieve rapport through the use of such invitations which are devoid of their propositional intention and to enhance the relationship aspect of communication. Example (8) illustrates this component.

(8) **A:** ...

C: *wain halɣayba. zamaan maa ʃufnaak*
'Where have you been? Long time no see you'

A: b*aayn ilʔayyadi*
'I am available'

C: *billahi xaliina nʃuufak yuum w-tiʃrab funjaan gahwah maʕna*
'By God let us see you and have a cup of coffee with us sometime.'

A: *ʔalla yisʕidak. inʃaʔallah, inʃaʔallah*
'May God make you happy. If Allah will. If Allah will'

The inviters tend to utilize lexical items such as *ʔibga murr* 'Come to visit', *xaliina nʃuufak* 'let's see you' and other synonymous expressions to realize these ostensible invitations. When issued, such invitations are not to be taken seriously, because the felicity conditions for the genuine invitation have not been fulfilled.

5.7 Lack of contact

It is a comment that expresses the lack of contact for a long time used by intimate friends (Pavlidou 1994, 498). This move, which occurred in 14% of the openings, is usually uttered by the caller to refer to specific previous unsuccessful contacts when s/he attempted to reach the respective callee. The following conversation illustrates this move between two familiar friends who usually maintained frequent contacts but have not talked to each other recently:

(9) **C:** *ʔaluu marħaba*
'Hello hi'

A: *ʔhlan*
'Hi'

C: ***wayn halɣaabih ʕam battaSil fiikii ṯuul ʔilwaʔit ʔutalifuunik muɣlaq***
'Where have you been absent?' I've been calling you this whole time but your phone was off!'

A: *wallahi ʕindi imtiħanaat ṯuul halfatrah*
'I've had exams during this period.'

As indicated in the interaction above, this comment is not phatic in nature but context-bound that cannot be encountered in all situations. Moreover, it usually occurs immediately after the greeting sequence but prior to (QAY) inquiries. It is worthwhile mentioning that such patterns bear resemblance to observations made by Sifianou (2002) on Greek telephone openings and to those noted by Sun (2004) between Chinese. This sequence may indicate a sense of unfriendly blame addressed to the callee; however, from a Jordanian point of view, given the elements of the context of this sequence including the intimate relationship between the interactants, the function of this comment is to emphasize intimacy and to keep in touch with the respective callee.

5.8 Disturbance check

This move is a direct inquiry by the caller to check if his call has disturbed the addressee in the middle of what he has been doing (Sun 2004). The probability of disturbance arises due to different reasons such as the time of calling, the duration of waiting while the phone is ringing and other contextual reasons such as the answerer's voice quality which may indicate that s/he has been engaged in something. This move is similar to what Pavlidou (1994) identified as "Caller intrusion" in the Greek data. The data revealed that this move occurred in 13% of the conversations. The next excerpt is a conversation between two friends in the morning:

(10) **A:** …
C: *ʔalla iysalmik yaa rab* ***ʃuu naaymih***
'God bless you, were you sleeping?'
A: *ʔah wallah*
'To be honest, yes.'
C: *ʃuu ʔaxbaarik*
'So how are you?'

In Example (10), it was the sleepy tone of the callee's voice that made the caller think that his call has woken up the recipient. Both clues, the quality of the callee's voice and the time of calling, have made the caller assume that the callee was being disturbed and to inquire whether the call has bothered her. The example also indicates that Jordanian participants continue the conversation in spite of the callee's response that she has been sleeping. They do not end the call or even make it brief when they feel that they have disturbed the addressee.

5.9 Territorial breach apology (TBA)

This move, which occurred in 32% of Arabic openings, contains explicit apologetic expressions used to express the caller's immediate apology for calling. It has two types of occurrences: context-free and context-bound occurrences.

Regarding the former type, the fact that Arab callers tend to provide a straightforward apology at the beginning of the conversation without checking if a disturbance has taken place makes us regard this apology as phatic. Such apologies seem to be devoid expressions with no semantic content. They are seen as conversational formulaic utterances that are 'part of the linguistic repertoire of politeness' (Laver 1981, 291) reflecting the social values prevalent in this particular culture:

(11) **C:** …
A: *haluu*
Hello
C: ***ʔaasfih ʔazʕajtik***
'Sorry to bother you'
A: *laʔ ʕaadii miʃ muʃkilih*
'No. It's okay, no problem.

The latter type is a genuine apology. What makes this type not mix up with the former phatic utterances is the fact that it co-occurs with the QAYs, which are focused on current activity of the callee. If the callee admits of being disturbed, the

caller overtly apologizes for having disturbed him/her on that particular occasion. This type is observed in very few instances (4%), as illustrated in Example (12).

(12) **A:** *marħaba*
'Hi'

C: *marħaba ħabiibti. ʃuu btiʕmali*
'Hi sweetie! What are you doing?'

A: *wala ʃii. baħaawil artaaħ wa-rraiyħ raasi min il-ʔizʕaaj*
'Nothing at all, just taking some rest and trying getting away from distractions.'

C: ***ʔaasif ʔana*** *ʔazʕajtik. ʔana kunt bsurʕah baddi ʔasʔal ʕan maamtik*
'I am sorry. I have disturbed you. I just wanted to check on your mom very quickly.'

The question which arises is to what extent the context-free apologetic utterances, which constitute 28% of Jordanian telephone openings, can be considered phatic. From a non-Arab perspective, using an apologetic expression is perceived as a genuine apology for having disturbed somebody. However, apologies of this nature, which are uttered regardless of whether a disturbance has taken place, are perceived as phatic.

5.10 Topic introduction

This move marks the end of the opening part of the telephone conversation (House 1982). This move is introduced by the caller to inform the callee that the reason for the call is about to be disclosed. This component occurred in 48% of the Arabic data. The most frequent signals used to mark this component are *ʃuu bidii ʔaħkiilik* 'what I want to tell you'), *bas kunt bidii ʔasʔalik* 'I just want to ask you). The following extract illustrates this move:

(13) **A:** ...

C: ...

A: ...

C: ***yaa ʔaxii bidi ʔasʔalak*** *ʔiza fii ħuualikuu daar llʔijar*
'Hey brother **I want to ask** if you have any houses near you for rent.'

6. Discussion

The pragmatic analysis of the telephone conversation openings reflects the functional options and the linguistic choices available to Jordanian participants to

articulate these openings. We turn now to discuss the socio-cultural values and motivations that have given rise to these component moves and the lexico-grammatical choices utilized to express them. These cultural issues specify and constrain how members make choices, behave and interact in a particular communicative context (Al-Ali 2010; Samovar and Porter 2004).

As regards the component options used to open telephone calls, Table 1 shows that the participants employed the following functional component moves frequently: Answer, Greetings, Address, Question-after-you. This result is consistent with the findings reported by the researchers who investigated the initial phase of TCOs in particular communities' languages (e.g., Schegloff 1986; Lindstorm 1994; Hopper and Chen 1996; Coronel-Moline 1998; Sifianou, 2002; Taleghani-Nikazm 2002; Lee 2006) and in those of cross-cultures (e.g., Godard 1977; Sifianou 1989; Grieve and Seebus 2008). The occurrence of these particular options in the initial phase of conversation indicates that interactants tend to resort to these conventionalized four components irrespective of cultural variations due to the fact that they serve similar communicative purposes (i.e., establishing a mutual availability of the two conversants before initiating the purpose of calling). These functional patterns have been schematized to the extent that they have become ritualistic in different cultures because of their repeated use.

On the other hand, there are particular functional options that are found in the Jordanian data such as 'ostensible invitations' and 'God-wishes' but have not been reported in other studies of other cultures. For illustration, 42% of the Arabic openings include ostensible invitations, which express hospitality. They are used as phatic utterances for which no factual responses are expected to enhance the relationship between the conversants.

According to Abdel-Hady (2015), Jordanian ostensible invitations are part of a large category of ostensible communicative acts. This move can be explained with reference to Arab hospitality expressed by extending invitations to in-group members, friends and even to strangers. To have a clear understanding of the nature of this Arab custom, we need to look at the socio-cultural and religious affiliations that go into producing this virtue. Hospitality, as an Arab social custom, is considered an act of openness to the other that brings the guest, even a stranger, temporarily within the sphere of family or group (Kuokkanen 2003). It is inherent not only in Arab Islamic heritage (Janardhan 2002) but also omnipresent among Arabs before Islam. Arabs place a high value on generosity (*karam*) as an in grained habit of which Arabs are proud (Shryock 2004). According to Sobh et al. (2013), generosity toward guests is an integral part of Islamic faith. This is evident in many Qur'anic verses and *ahadith* (Prophet Mohammad's sayings). The Qur'anic surah 11, verse 69 is about the story of Prophet Abraham who immediately proceeded to perform the rites of hospitality when he received the strangers

with a salutation of peace. He brought a sumptuous meal of roasted calf and placed it before them to eat.

> There came Out Messengers to Ibraham with glad tidings. They said, "Peace!" He answered, "Peace!" and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf.
>
> (surah 11, verse 69)

One of the Prophetic sayings that bring evidence of hospitality as a sacred duty is: "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should honor his guest." (Bukhari, Muslim)

Therefore, it can be argued that hospitality as a social Arab Islamic custom has been extended to be used ostensibly in Jordanian daily activities for social purposes to enhance social interactions. Eslami (2005) and Salmani-Nodoushan (2006) consider such an invitation as a manifestation of ritual politeness to enhance positive face.

The salience of the second additional component, God-wishes, used by Jordanian participants also furnishes indications about the impact of religious belief as a contextualizing cue. This tendency has been noted by many scholars. For example, Morrow (2006) points out that

> Arabic Language is saturated with a rich variety of expressions invoking Allah explicitly and implicitly and [...] the name of Allah permeates both spoken and written Arabic to the point where we can speak of the omnipresence of Allah in the Arabic language. As a result, an Arabic speaker could scarcely conceive of a conversation where the name of God would not appear. (p. 45)

These findings are consistent with Ferguson's (1983) that God-wishes are of frequent occurrence and constitute a major form type among Syrian Arabic politeness formulas. Helani (2010, 373) also noted that invocation to God, expressed overwhelmingly by *inshallah*, is a resource for interlocutors either to move away from a prior topic or to move to a new one.

Regarding the linguistic and stylistic options utilized by the participants to express the component moves of TCOs, we found that the participants utilized various terms of address, greeting forms, and Question-after-you expressions to articulate these opening moves. Jordanian participants use kinship terms and titles of address connotationally for social purposes. To illustrate, our analysis featured affectionate kinship terms that are extended to be used as intimacy enhancers to address acquaintances. For instance, the data analysis revealed that Jordanian youth participants use kin terms like *xaaluh* 'maternal mother', *xaaltu* 'maternal sister' and *ʕamuhu* 'paternal brother' and *ʕamtu* 'paternal sister' to address friends and acquaintances. A possible explanation is that Jordanians deal

with their acquaintances as if they were their relatives and part of their extended family in order to express closeness and intimacy.

Kunyah 'paedonymic' is another widely used address term among Jordanians to address acquaintances and friends. The *kunyah* is something with which a person is praised or honored. It is given to any person regardless whether he has children or not, or not married and it is even given to children. However, this practice never surfaces in other cultures. What has given rise to this practice is the fact that it is an established part of the Islamic Sunnah. In *al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fighyyah* (35/170,171), it says, the scholars said: They used to give *kunyahs* to children, both males and females, as a sign of optimism that the child would live until he grew up and had a child, and so as to avoid nicknames. It was narrated from Abdullah ibn Mas'ood that the messenger of Allah, Mohammed, gave him the *kunyah* Abu 'abd ar-Rahmaan when he had not had a child.

Arabic data also featured absolute titles of address that include affectionate social honorifics such as *habiibi* 'my beloved' addressed to males, *habiibti* 'my beloved addressed to females, *hayaati* 'my life' and *ruuhi* 'my soul', etc. These affectionate honorifics are used among Jordanians of the same sex only, whereas they are culturally condemned if used among the interactants of the opposite sex. However, such terms are often tolerated in other cultures when used across opposite sexes. The data also features examples like Pasha, *'omdeh*, 'mayor' or *zaʕiim* 'colonel', *ʔamiir* 'prince', *sayid* 'master' that are infelicitously used by the Jordanian male participants as social honorifics. They sometimes use such honorifics as titles of address frivolously or ironically (Farghal 2002) to address acquaintances and friends.

Another instance illustrating the various linguistic clues and stylistic options utilized by the participants is the use of a variety of lexical forms to express and respond to the 'Greeting' sequence component. For example, one can initiate a greeting sequence in Arabic by different types and forms like *marħaba* 'Hi', *ʔassalaamu ʕalaykum* (Peace be upon you), *salaam* (peace) *yaʕtik il-ʕaafye* 'Be given the strength', etc. Likewise, in Jordanian Arabic, unlike English, it is often possible for each Arabic response to greeting to have an array of responses (Abu-Abah 2016). For example, English *good morning* has only one response, *good morning*, whereas Arabic *Sabaaħ-ilxiir* 'good morning' has a variety of responses like *Sabaaħ innuur* (morning of light), *Sabaaħ ilward* (morning of roses), *Sabaaħ illful* 'morning of jasmine', *miit Sabaaħ* '100 mornin'), *Sabaaħu* 'morning'. Further, this time-specific greetings, *good morning* and some others are rarely used in English openings, because they index formality between English interlocutors (Ferguson 1983).

Likewise, when reciprocating the greeting sequence, Arab recipients tend to respond with a duplicated or elaborated greeting expressed either by a combina-

tion of two different terms like *Yaa hala, Sabaaħ innuur* 'hi, good morning' or by two similar forms of greeting such as *Yaa hala, Yaa hala* 'hi, hi'. Duplicating responses to greetings in Arabic culture reflects the warmth of reception, love and intimacy towards the addressee (Hazaymeh 2012, 419; Rababa`h and Malkawi 2012, 17). This response agrees with the religious principle, "the same or more so" in Arabic (Ferguson 1981, 27). Holy Quran says:

wa ʔiðaa ħuyytum bitaħiyatin faħayyuu biʔaħsani minhaa ʔaw rudduuhaa …
[An-Nisa', 86]

'If someone greets you, either return the greeting or greet him better'.
(Ferguson 1981, 27)

Another finding illustrating the use of various linguistic and stylistic choices indicating the effect of religious affiliation is related to Question-After-you (QAY) component. Unlike English and Americans, Jordanians' responses to inquiries about health and family members do not include thanking for the questioner, but thanks to God who is thought of as the well-being. Moreover, Jordanian participants tend to extend these QAY phatic inquiries to ask about each addressee family member's well-being (Abu-Abah 2016). This practice agrees with what was observed in Spanish (Coronel-Moline 1998) and Iranian (Taleghani-Nikasim 2002) cultures. What has given rise to this tendency is that Jordanians, as it is the case in most Arab countries, tend to feel that they are not only connected to their kernel family, but also are simultaneously tied to their immediate family members (i.e., parents, brothers and sisters) and see themselves as members of an extended family. That is because the nature of Jordanian social relationships is primarily founded upon a larger scope of the concept of self, which includes immediate and extended family relations that are not predicated in western society, which is primarily founded upon the person or the 'self'.

A further characteristic of Arabic opening conversation style is the repetition of exchanges at the same conversational encounter which often occurs as doublets or triplets. Arabic openings are observed to be more elaborate; they consist of repeated 'Question-after-you' or repeated greeting sequences that are exchanged between participants when there is calmness in the talking after the initial greetings. For example, our data indicates that 45% of the Arabic telephone openings include a sequence of 'How are you' inquiries repeated three to four times in the opening phase. Each time, speakers tend to vary their lexical choices in a sequence of phatic inquiries but having the same meaning, like *kiif ħaalik, kiif Siħtik or ʔinʃallah kwaysih* 'how are you?'. What gives rise to the repetition of this component is the fact that they tend to extend their inquiries to exchange news and chats asking about the recipient's family members or relatives, taking into

account that these chats have replaced the casual, unexpected visits people used to pay in the past.

The findings also revealed that the participants tend to utilize and repeat certain phatic patterns and linguistic utterances from the repository of their possible socio-cultural options in order to emphasize the relationship aspect of communication. This tendency is evident in the repetition of inquiries oriented toward the addressee's health, family members, current activities and God wishes; *relation-relation* remarks realized by ostensible invitations, lack of contact, territorial breach apology (TBA); and address terms. Some of these utterances have a kind of pedigree in social genuine invitations that have been extended to be used ostensibly (e.g., ostensible invitations) or religious affiliations (e.g., God-wishes, Paedonymic, *kunyah*), others are apologetic expressions that have been devoid of their semantic meaning (e.g., Territorial breach apology), and some others are kin terms used connotatively to address acquaintances as if they were their relatives. These findings lend support to Al-Qinai's (2011) who described the initial greetings in Arabic as more elaborate including redundant phatic utterances about the hearer's wellbeing, family and acquaintances. They are used to show greater intimacy and involvement, which in turn enhance the positive face of the addressee and emphasize interaction. Therefore, it could be said that Jordanian participants are strongly oriented toward the interactional aspect of communication; they could be characterized as rapport-oriented. Such a characteristic is similar to that in Greek telephone conversation, which is said to be rapport-oriented rather than report-oriented (Pavlidou 1994).

7. Conclusion

In this article, we have addressed Jordanian TCOs and the lexico-grammatical encodings of these pragmatic options and discussed the socio-cultural motivations and values that have given rise to such practices. The corpus showed that the participants tend to use a set of functional components that are similar to those used in other cultures and languages to structure their TCOs. However, there are few culture specific functional components that surface in Jordanians' responses. Another significant finding is that the participants tend to use various lexico-grammatical devices and stylistic options to articulate each functional move.

There are at least three factors that have possibly influenced the selection of the additional culture specific strategies and linguistic devices: religious affiliation, social customs and kinship ideology. Regarding the first point, the high frequency of God-wishes encoded by religious expressions and the concept of generosity are derived from the Islamic values based on Qur'anic verses and

prophetic sayings. This also applies to the lexical choices related to the specific Islamic greeting terms, thanking God in response to inquiries about health and family members (i.e., QAY) instead of thanking the questioner, and the duplicated and elaborated responses to greeting. Regarding the second factor, participants' use of invitations is an inherent Arab social custom. Likewise, QAYs component is a reflection of the Jordanians' kinship ideology. The Jordanian society tends to hold genealogical kinship ideologies emphasizing larger groupings like the 'clan' (Said 1978, 312) in order to protect the public image of the group the person belongs to. That is to say, the nature of Jordanian social relationship is primarily founded upon a larger scope of the concept of self than that of the American and Western cultures which is primarily founded upon the concept of individualism. Concerning the third factor, Jordanian kinship ideology is overemphasized by the type and various forms and terms of address that are not only used to address relatives, but also extended connotationally to address acquaintances as if they were members of their extended family in order to express closeness and intimacy. Such a conclusion supports Feghali's (1997, 352) view that the collectivism value of social life for Arab people influences social interaction patterns between them, in contrast to Americans' 'individual centered' approach to social life.

It can also be concluded that the delayed switch to the main topic because of the frequent use of repetition can be attributed to the principle of indirectness. Such a cultural peculiarity confirms Zaharna (1995); Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) and Al-Ali and Sahawneh's (2011) findings that Arabs would like to be more indirect and prefer to go through a set of ritual moves before talking about the main topic in contrast to American communication preference for clear and direct communication styles.

It is worthwhile noting that the high frequency of occurrence of the common functional moves in the social practices in telephone openings reflects indications about shared universal cultural interactions, while the occurrence of the additional specific functional options and the peculiar lexico-grammatical linguistic features of the communication style reflects sub-culture's social relations, specific cultural values and religious affiliations. Therefore, it can be concluded that when interlocutors use language in communication, they resort to two types of contexts incorporated in their community: a universal cultural context which is common to all communities (i.e., sub-cultures), comprising a constellation of common communicative events each of which is articulated by common core functions reflecting the practices common to most communities; and the sub-culture specific context, incorporating the socio-cultural values and belief system prevailing in the community itself.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the organizational structure of the telephone's opening phase and how the Jordanian inter-

locutors who belong to Arab Islamic culture navigate the transition to the business phase (i.e. first topic). Despite the fact that most sub-cultures have available to them some common pragmatic functional moves, each community marshes peculiar functional moves and lexico-grammatical devices as well as stylistic options that can be understood in the particular sociocultural context of that sub-culture. Understanding how such patterns of interaction and functional options vary according to culture may serve to enrich our understanding of social relationships between interlocutors in conversation, and may lead to new insights for pragmatic competence.

Transliteration

The most noteworthy symbols used in transcribing Arabic words given in this article are: ʔ glottal stop, q voiceless uvular stop, g voiced velar stop, d̲ emphatic voiced alveolar stop, ð̲ emphatic voiced alveolar fricative, ð voiced interdental fricative, θ voiceless interdental fricative, j voiced post-alveolar affricate, y palatal glide, ʃ voiceless alveolar fricative t̲ voiced dental emphatic stop, s voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative, h voiceless glottal fricative, ħ voiceless pharyngeal fricative, x voiceless uvular fricative, ɣ voiced uvular fricative, ʕ voiced pharyngeal fricative, a short central low vowel, aa long central low vowel, u short back high vowel, uu long back high vowel, i short front high vowel, and ii long front high vowel.

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Publication history

Date received: 10 September 2019
Date accepted: 15 April 2020
Published online: 25 August 2020