CONVERSATIONAL OPENING SEQUENCES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE CONVERSATIONS AT OFFICES

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Abstract: This study is to construct and describe opening sequences of English and Vietnamese conversations. The data were 120 conversational opening sections (60 English and 60 Vietnamese) gathered from movies. The method of qualitative content analysis is applied to code the data manually to find out opening sequences. Then, the method of conversation analysis is resorted to in describing these sequences. The findings display that English and Vietnamese opening sections follow three sequences: summons-answer, greeting, and phatic communication. Generally, the summons-answer and phatic communication sequences are exploited fairly equally by both Vietnamese and English speakers whilst the greeting sequence is much more preferred by Vietnamese ones. However, in details, the structures of and the content said in each sequence are extremely different between the two languages. These differences reveal that conversational opening is mainly to increase the work efficiency by English subjects but both to increase the work efficiency and to rapport by Vietnamese ones.

Keywords: content analysis, conversation analysis, conversational opening, conversational opening section, opening sequences

1. Introduction

Conversational opening is the first part of a conversation. It occurs when speakers want to raise a topic for discussion or it is a process of initiating a topic of concern (Schegloff, 1968). Historically, research in conversational opening has attracted the attention of a considerable number of researchers worldwide, including Schegloff (1968) who is regarded as a pioneer and groundbreaker in this area. With the method of Conversation Analysis, Schegloff examined 500 telephone calls to find out the structure of an opening section of a conversation. He proves that a telephone conversation is often opened with four core sequences namely *Summons-Answer, Identification-Recognition, Greetings,* and *How-are-you*. Following Schegloff, other researchers and scholars around the world have drawn their keenness in this area. His framework has been applied widely as "a canonical opening" or "a canonical format". While many researchers support Schegloff's framework such as Bui Thi Thu Hien (2005), Nguyen Thi Nhung (2012) and Taleghani-Nikazm (2002), some others reject it. For example, Hopper and Drummond argue that opening section of a telephone conversation is much shorter than one suggested by Schegloff with only one sequence for conversations between strangers and two sequences between intimates (Hopper & Drummond, 1992, p. 197).

Schegloff (1968, p. 1080) claims that these four core opening sequences can be applicable to naturally occurring conversations. However, when applying his framework in face-to-face conversations, researchers have realized limitations and inappropriateness; hence, they adapt and adjust this framework to make it suitable and applicable to other forms of communication. Among these researchers are some important names such as Krivonos and Knapp (1975), Schiffrin (1977), and Omar (1992).

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Four sequences in an opening section suggested by Schegloff (1968) include: *Summons-Answer, Identification-Recognition, Greetings,* and *How-are-you*. Typical features of language used in each sequence are depicted elaborately by Schegloff and other researchers. Firstly, a summons-answer sequence is used to refer to a ring in a telephone call (Schegloff, 1968). It is to establish a framework of participation, that is, by responding, the answerer shows his readiness to hear whatever is said while by producing the summons, the summoner obligates himself to talk (Sidnell, 2010, p. 202). Particularly, Schegloff (1968, p. 1080) suggests some other classes of summons which may occur in naturally occurring interactions including, *terms of address* (e.g., "John", "waiter"), *courtesy phrases* (e.g., "Pardon me") or *physical devices* (e.g., a tap on the shoulder, waves of a hand).

Secondly, the sequence "identification-recognition" is identified as a stage when parties get mutual identification and recognition of each other (Sidnell, 2010, p. 203). This sequence is similar to "cognitive recognition" in Schiffrin's classification (1977, p. 680) or "identification display" in Goffman's view (1963, p. 112). In naturally occurring conversations, this sequence is mainly accomplished visually (Hopper, 1989, p. 181) with some nonverbal behavior like *mutual glances, head gestures* and *smiles* (Krivonos & Knapp, 1975). As usual, verbal behavior is made use of only when nonverbal behavior is unachievable due to some visual obstacles (Schiffrin, 1977, p. 680).

Thirdly, the sequence "greeting" in naturally occurring conversations, "go right at the beginning of the beginning" because participants can make use of visual and non-verbal behavior to accomplish summons-answer and identification-recognition sequences (Sacks, 1970). Greeting can also be considered as a "verbal salute" in Krivonos and Knapp's (1975) definition or "access displays" in Schiffrin's (1977) classification. Social recognition displays arise via greeting to show that further access is ritually and socially permissible (Schiffrin, 1977, p. 681).

According to Schegloff (1968), the last sequence in a telephone opening is "How-are-you". However, in naturally occurring conversations, ritual inquiries like "how are you?" appearing at the beginning of a conversation are typical samples of "phatic communication" in Malinowski's definition (Malinowski, 1923, p. 313) or "phatic inquiries and phatic responses" in Omar's (1992) classification. Malinowski defines phatic communication as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" (1923, p. 315). Different from factual functions like informing, exchanging or expressing, in phatic communication, language is used in "free, aimless, social intercourse" (Malinowski, 1923, p. 313). In other words, exchanges of initial inquiries and responses do not carry much literal content (Hopper, 1989). Accordingly, phatic utterances are not primarily to communicate ideas but to be oriented to the interactional, relational aspect of communication (Malinowski, 1923, p. 316).

This study is limited in investigating the process of opening a conversation at office settings. Particularly, the study is only restricted to examining the conversations between a staff and his/her manager. In more details, the study aims at finding out verbal sequences English and Vietnamese staff and managers follow to open a conversation at offices by answering two research questions: (1) What are sequences English and Vietnamese staff and managers follow to open a conversation at offices? And (2) what are structures and content of these sequences?

2. Methodology

### 2.1. Data collection criteria

The results of this study are based on the data of 120 conversations (60 English and 60 Vietnamese) collected from American and Vietnamese films. To ensure equivalent contents and forms, American and Vietnamese films selected have to follow some common criteria such as broadcasting channels, production time and context. From these criteria, two American films namely *House of cards* and *Suits* and five Vietnamese films *Mưa bóng mây, Lập trình cho trái tim, Cảnh sát hình sự - Chạy án, Đối thủ kỳ phùng* and *Câu hỏi số 5* are chosen. These films depict current social issues in the official context like working environments of businessmen, politicians, congressmen, and police…Conversations chosen from these films must have opening sections and be between two participants – a staff and a manager aged from 20 to 60.

2.2. Data analysis procedures

The process of data analysis was divided into two stages with a combination of content analysis and conversation analysis methods. In the first stage, the method of qualitative content analysis was employed. The data were coded manually based on Schegloff's (1968) framework to identify recurrent patterns in the data and recognize the most and the least evident sequences as well as common content raised in each sequence. In coding process, new themes may emerge and need to be added or new sequences of conversational opening process may be found and built. After the first stage, the sequences and common content raised in them were built. In the second stage, the method of conversation analysis was restored to describe sequences and their content with some cross-cultural explanations. The comparison and contrast between English and Vietnamese subjects were made based on the frequency of appearance of each sequence in relation with 60 collected conversations.

3. Results and discussions

The findings reveal that, unlike Schegloff's framework, an opening section of a face-to-face conversation in English and Vietnamese follows only three sequences namely *Summons-answer, Greeting,* and *Phatic Communication*. The frequency of occurrence of these three sequences is illustrated in Figure 1 below:
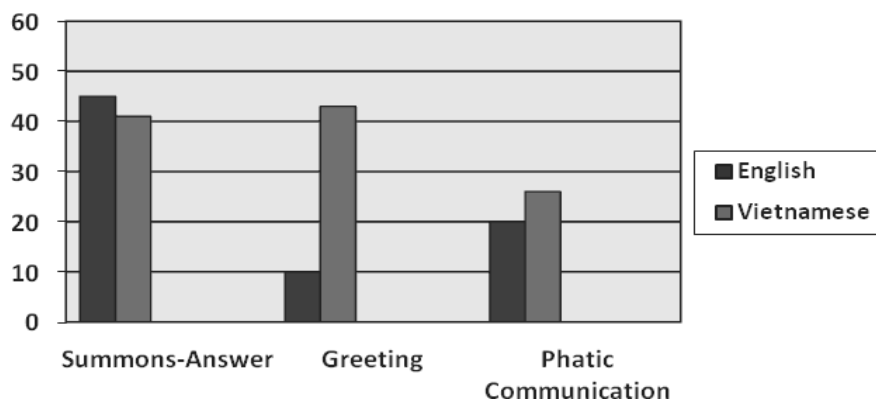
Figure 1. Conversational opening sequences in English and Vietnamese

Although both English and Vietnamese subjects employ these three sequences, the frequency of occurrence of each sequence and the content said in each one are different in the two languages. The detailed analysis of each sequence is depicted below:

3.1. Summons-Answer sequence

The findings suggest that both English and Vietnamese subjects have a tendency to employ this sequence to open a conversation at offices. English subjects employ this sequence 45 times, accounting for 75% while Vietnamese ones utilize it 41 times, making up 68%. However, the ways of performing a summons are different in English and Vietnamese. In most of the cases, Vietnamese subjects carry out this sequence with a knock on the door and the invitation of "coming in". Factually, among 41 conversations in which summons-answer sequence is employed, a knock on the door and the invitation of "coming in" are present in 28 cases. This can be accounted by the typical working environment in Vietnam. Normally, in Vietnamese offices, managers usually work in separated rooms and when a staff wants to talk to the managers, he/she often enters the manager's room. For this reason, the acts of knocking on the door and inviting to "come in" are the first signals of their connection as in example (1).

> (1) Staff: (*Knocking on the door*)
>
> Manager: Xin mời vào
>
> Beg, invite in
>
> "Come in, please"
>
> [*Cảnh sát hình sự - Chạy án, season 1, episode 10 – 22:08*]

In contrast, the act of "knocking on the door" only occurs in seven of 45 English conversations. More interestingly, English subjects knock on the door and open it without an invitation of "coming in" from the other interlocutors, as in (2) below:

> (2) Staff: (*Knock on the door and open it*).
>
> You wanted to see me?
>
> Manager: Sit down. I looked through...
>
> [*Suits, season 1, episode 2 - 8:10*]

Instead of knocking on the door, English subjects perform the summons-answer sequence chiefly by terms of address or calling someone's name, as in example (3). Although Vietnamese subjects also use terms of address as a way to perform a summons-answer sequence, as in (4), but it is not common.

> (3) Staff: Mr. President!
>
> President: Morning, Frank. Linda fill you in?
>
> [*House of cards, season 1, episode 12 - 9:08*]
>
> (4) Manager: Anh Mạnh!
>
> Brother Manh
>
> "Manh!"

Man: Chào sếp ạ

Greet boss particle word (ạ)

"Hello, boss"

[*Lập trình cho trái tim, episode 7 - 20:37*]

3.2. Greeting sequence

A greeting sequence may follow the sequence of summons-answer or be the first sequence in a face-to-face conversation. The findings reveal a big difference in the habit of greeting of English and Vietnamese subjects. In the total of 60 conversations, Vietnamese subjects greet each other in 43 situations, accounting for 72%, whereas English subjects greet each other only in 10 situations, making up 17%. In fact, English subjects have a tendency to lead in the topic of concern as quickly as possible, that is, English conversational opening section tends to be short and brief. On the contrary, the frequent occurrence of greeting sequences in Vietnamese conversations suggests that Vietnamese subjects have the tendency to greet each other when initiating a conversation.

Particularly, the findings show that the choice of greeting patterns of English and Vietnamese subjects is also different. The detailed analysis of English and Vietnamese greeting patterns is illustrated as follows.

3.2.1. Greeting sequence in Vietnamese

Although the structure of a greeting utterance in Vietnamese is diversified, the act of greeting between a staff - a person of lower status with a manager - and a person of higher status in office settings has some typical features. The findings indicate that a greeting utterance can be formed with five main parts as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The main parts of a greeting utterance in Vietnamese

Formula	polite particle (Dạ)	subject (chủ thể)	"greet" (chào)	object (đối tượng)	polite particle (ạ)
Examples	Dạ, Dạ,	cháu em	chào chào	chú anh	ạ. ạ.

A greeting utterance is performed diversely by using one or a combination of several parts or all parts above depending on the level of intimacy as well as social status between interlocutors. Firstly, the most common structure of greeting is the combination of the verb *chào* (greet) plus an object (đối tượng). The object can be expressed in two ways: whether by using *kinship terms* or by using *titles*. Accordingly, the most common greeting structures are (1) "greet" (chào) + a kinship term, and (2) "greet" (chào) + a title. Depending on the disparity in age between interlocutors, different kinship terms are chosen, for example, some typical kinship terms are *chú (uncle), bác (uncle), cô (aunt), anh (elder brother), chị (elder sister), em (younger sister, brother), cháu (niece – nephew), etc*. The use of kinship terms in interacting makes the relation between interlocutors closer and facilitates the conversation. For instance, in (5), a male staff greets a male manager by combining the verb *chào* with a kinship term.

(5)   Staff: Chào anh.

Greet elder brother

"Hello, brother"

Manager: Xin mời vào

Beg invite in

"Come in, please"

[*Cảnh sát hình sự - Chạy án, season 1, episode 10 - 22:08*]

Instead of using kinship terms, a speaker can also greet by combining the verb *chào* with a title which refers to the hearer's social status. Some typical titles commonly used at offices are *sếp (boss), thủ trưởng (chief), giám đốc (manager), tổng giám đốc (managing director), etc.* The occurrence of these titles in the examined conversations is due to the office settings and parties' relationships. The findings reveal that social titles are often employed by the person of lower status – the staff – towards the person of higher status – the manager. In Vietnamese society, the hierarchy is extremely respected; hence, the use of social titles in communication can be seen as a way of expressing the respect of the person in lower position towards the person of higher position. For example, a staff knocks on the door of the manager's room and greets him with the title *tổng giám đốc (chief executive officer)* in (6).

(6)   Manager: Chào anh Hà

Greet elder brother Ha (*name*)

"Hello, Ha"

Staff: Chào tổng giám đốc

Greet chief executive officer

"Hello, CEO"

[*Đối thủ kỳ phùng, episode 6 - 30:50*]

Secondly, to increase politeness in interaction, interlocutors may use kinship terms such as *chú (uncle), bác (uncle), anh (elder brother), chị (elder sister), em (younger brother / younger sister), cháu (niece / nephew),* referring to the subject (I) as in example (7) below:

(7)   Staff: (*Knock on the door*)

Manager: Mời vào

"Come in"

Staff: Em chào anh

Younger sister greet elder brother

"Hello, brother"

[*Đối thủ kỳ phùng, episode 24 - 21:05*]

Thirdly, Vietnamese subjects have a tendency to add the polite particles "*dạ*" at the beginning or "*ạ*" at the end of an utterance to make it more polite. These "polite" words are only used by the person of lower position to show respect towards the person of higher position. Because this study only concentrates on the relation between staff and managers, the use of these two polite particles is rather frequent. The polite particles "ạ" and "dạ" can be employed separately or in combination. Example (8) below illustrates the use of these two polite particles.

(8)   Staff: (*Knock on the door*)

Manager: Mời vào

"Come in"

Staff: Dạ, em chào anh ạ

Particle (dạ) younger brother greet elder brother *particle* (ạ)

"Hello, brother"

[*Đối thủ kỳ phùng, episode 8 – 27:50*]

Lastly, a greeting utterance may also be performed without the verb *chào*. Speakers may greet simply by calling out the kinship terms referring to the object *(Đối tượng chào)* or kinship terms plus his/ her name. Speakers may also use polite particles "*dạ*" at the beginning and/or "*ạ*" at the end of an utterance to increase politeness in interaction. For example, in (9), a staff greets his manager with a kinship term combined with the polite particle "*ạ*":

(9)   Staff: Chú ạ

Uncle *particle* (ạ)

"Hello"

[*Cảnh sát hình sự - Chạy án, season 1, episode 3 - 10:38*]

3.2.2. Greeting sequence in English

Greeting utterances exist in only 10 English conversations and English formulaic expressions of greeting are rather simple in comparison with Vietnamese ones. Firstly, the most common formulaic expression of English greeting is "Hi/ Hello" + "first name". This formulaic expression can be employed by both staff and managers in greeting as in examples (10) below:

(10)   Staff: (*Knock on the door and open the door*)

Manager: Hi, Donna.

Staff: Hi, Louis.

[*Suits, season 1, episode 12 - 25:47*]

Secondly, besides using "Hi/ Hello", English subjects also use greetings based on the time of the day. A speaker can choose such greetings as "Good morning", "Good afternoon" or "Good evening" plus the name or title of his interlocutor. Accordingly, the greeting structure in English is "Good morning/ afternoon/ evening" + name or "Good morning/ afternoon/ evening" + title. The findings indicate that people of higher status tend to address their interlocutors by first name whereas people of lower status have a tendency to use their interlocutors' titles. Normally, addressing by first name expresses closeness while addressing by title shows respect. For example, in (11), a manager greets her staff by using a time-based greeting "Good afternoon" plus his first name while in (12), a staff greets his manager by using a time-based greeting "Good morning" plus his title.

(11)   Manager: Good afternoon, Tom.

Staff: Legal?

[*House of cards, season 1, episode 5 - 15:00*]

(12)   Staff: Good morning, Mr. President.

         Manager: Hi, Frank.

[House of cards, season 2, episode 8 - 12:37]

Finally, the simplest way of greeting performed by English subjects is using the interlocutor's firtst name or title. While calling by title is often employed by the staff, the partners of lower status, as a way to express their respect, calling by first name is normally used by the managers, the partners of higher status, as a way to show the closeness and intimacy. For example, in (13), a congressman greets the President by title but in (14), a manager greets his assistant just by first name.

(13)   Congressman: Mr. President.

         President: Morning, Frank. Linda fill you in?

[House of cards, season 1, episode 12 - 9:08]

(14)   Assistant: (Knock on the door and open the door)

         Vice-president: Meechum.

[House of cards, season 2, episode 10 - 25:03]

In conclusion, it can be seen that the English and Vietnamese greeting sequences are notably different. Their higher frequency in Vietnamese but lower in English demonstrates that, in interaction, greeting is essential in Vietnamese but optional in English. Furthermore, compared with the greeting act by English subjects, that of Vietnamese speakers is much more complicated. Unlike English subjects, when calling out or exchanging a greeting, Vietnamese speakers have to take into account such factors as choosing appropriate kinship terms or titles, using or not using polite particles (dạ) or (ạ).

3.3. Phatic communication

The findings show that phatic communication sequence or phatic sequence occurs rather frequently in both languages. Among 60 conversations, it is present in 26 Vietnamese and 20 English ones, accounting for 43% and 33%, respectively. The fairly frequent occurrence of this sequence in both languages proves its vital role in opening a conversation. Unlike the summons-answer and greeting sequences which are quite formulaic with limited structures, the phatic sequence is much more open in language use. Phatic sequence is to express politeness; therefore, if parties do not know what to say or how to say it, they may sound impolite or rude. In this section, the types of phatic utterances encountered in examined conversations are categorized.

Despite the similarity in the habit of producing phatic sequences, the ways English and Vietnamese speakers perform it are extremely different. English people tend to produce a phatic sequence in only one or two turns while Vietnamese people are inclined to create it in many more turns, sometimes up to 11 turns. This indicates that the Vietnamese phatic sequence is much lengthier than its English counterpart. In addition, in terms of content of phatic utterances, English interlocutors mention only 23 themes whilst Vietnamese interlocutors state up to 47 themes. This reveals that compared with English partners, Vietnamese speakers have a wider selection of contents to mention the topic of the talk in the phatic sequence than English ones.

By content, English and Vietnamese phatic sequences examined are grouped into categories to provide language users with sufficient linguistic understanding. Laver (1981) divided phatic communication in initial phases of conversations into three categories, that is, *neutral, self-oriented* and *other-oriented*. Although Laver's (1981) categories are easy to follow, they are too broad and general. These categories do not provide a range of linguistic resources to help learners to imagine what parties really talk in this sequence. This study aims at providing Vietnamese users of English with specific content said in the phatic sequence; hence, phatic utterances in initial phrases of conversations will be grouped regarding to specific content.

From the data, phatic utterances are documented, analyzed and grouped into categories with inductive qualitative content analysis. In this method, similar content said in the phatic sequence will be categorized into a group which is titled. Gradually, all utterances are coded manually and the categories of content said in the phatic sequence are built as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding categories of content of phatic sequence

Polite behavior	Invitations to come into the room, take a seat and drink tea, coffee or wine.
Addressee's state	The addressee's current state such as their health, feelings, appearance, news, and so on. This category is similar to "other-oriented" category in Laver's (1981) classification.
Previous tasks	Previous work or tasks concerning both parties.
Life at home	Actions done outside work and before the conversation.
Travelling	Questions or statements on travelling, especially direction questions.
Addresser's state	The addresser's current state like their feelings, health or actions. This category is similar to "self-oriented" category in Laver's (1981) classification.
External circumstances	Objects or situations around the parties such as things surrounding the room, the weather, etc.
Offering help	Questions or statements used to offer help to the other interlocutors.

The occurrence of these categories in English and Vietnamese is shown in details in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Categories of content of phatic sequence

Categories	The frequency of occurrence	
	English	**Vietnamese**
Polite behavior	5	18
Addressee's state	8	13
Previous tasks	4	8
Life at home	1	3
Travelling	2	2
Addresser's state	1	2
External circumstances	1	1
Offering help	1	0
Total	**23**	**47**

Among 26 Vietnamese conversations in which the phatic sequence is employed, 47 phatic utterances are created. In contrast, among 20 English conversations, only 23 phatic utterances are produced. It is notable that Vietnamese parties have a preference to produce several phatic

utterances in one conversation whilst English parties produce only one or two utterances in one conversation.

Regarding to content said in the phatic sequence, utterances to perform *polite behavior* are the most common. They are invitations to take a seat, drink wine, tea or coffee. It seems to be common for Vietnamese parties to perform some polite behavior before raising the main topic of concern. This behavior occurs in 18 of 60 conversations, accounting for 30%. Conversely, this sequence is present in only 5 English conversations, making up 8.3%. More interestingly, English parties invite the other interlocutors to drink wine or coffee whilst Vietnamese ones invite them to drink tea. For example, in (15), an English manager opens a conversation by inviting his staff to drink wine whilst in (16), a Vietnamese staff initiates a conversation by inviting her manager to drink tea.

(15) Congressman: Drink?
        Staff: Sure, what have you got?
        Congressman: Whiskey. Blended.
        Staff: If you're offering.
        Congressman: So, how are things in the City of Brotherly Love?
[*House of cards, season 1, episode 1 - 44:29*]

(16) Staff: Anh uống nước đi.
        Brother drink water go
        "Drink water, please."
        Manager: Ờ.
        "Yes"
[*Lập trình cho trái tim, episode 20:30*]

Secondly, in both languages, it is rather common for both English and Vietnamese speakers to show their concern on the current state of their interlocutors. The concern is mainly on the addressee's feelings, health and appearance. By showing regards to the other interlocutors, the parties appear positively polite. Vietnamese speakers appear to be more concerned about their interlocutors than English ones while producing inquiries and responses on their interlocutor's state in 13 conversations (21.7%), compared with only 8 conversations (13.3%) by English speakers. Particularly, while English interlocutors focus chiefly on their partners' availability for talking, Vietnamese speakers mainly care for their health and feelings. For instance, in (17), an assistant wants to talk to her manager, the president, and before initiating the conversation, she asks for his availability for talking as a way to limit the imposition on him. However, in (18), a Vietnamese staff opens a conversation with his manager by asking about his manager's current state of health as a way to show his care and concern to his manager.

(17) President: I thought you went home.
        Assistant: No, not yet. *Do you have a moment?*
        President: Is there something wrong?
        Assistant: I know you are reconsidering...
[*House of cards, season 2, episode 8 - 28:57*]

(18)   Staff: Hình như anh không được khỏe có phải không?

                    "You seem to be sick?"

        Manager: Có lẽ vì thay đổi thời tiết chăng. Tôi mệt lắm.

                    "May be due to the weather. I'm very tired."

        Staff: Không phải, chuyến đi vừa rồi của anh khá vất vả phải di
                    chuyển hết nước nọ đến nước kia. Như thế sức khỏe của
                    anh còn khá tốt đấy ạ.

                    "No. It is due to your last business trip. You had to travel
                    through many countries. Your health like that is pretty
                    good."

        Manager: Sáng sớm nay tôi đã nói với bộ trưởng một lần nữa về
                    trường hợp của anh…

                    This morning, I talked with the minister about your
                    case………

[*Cảnh sát hình sự - Chạy án, season 1, episode 5 - 5:40*]

Thirdly, the utterances on previous tasks are also produced by both parties in initiating a conversation. These utterances are present in four English conversations (6.7%) and eight Vietnamese ones (13.3%). The employment of phatic utterances on previous tasks or actions is due to the typical settings and particular relationship in which the conversations occur. For example, in (19) an English staff initiates the conversation by mentioning a previous action of her manager.

(19)   Staff: You called me?

        Manager: Sure did. Have a seat.

        Staff: I'd prefer to stand.

        Manager: Fair enough. Uh, I made a mistake…

[*Suits, season 1, episode 9 - 40:13*]

Fourthly, "asking about life at home" may be also a choice for parties when initiating a conversation at offices; however, this behavior is not really popular in both languages. It is only present in one English conversation and three Vietnamese ones. The infrequency of occurrence of this behavior is due to the setting and relationship in which the conversations happen. Questions on life at home may make conversations more personal and less formal, which seems to be inappropriate with the relationship between staff and managers at offices. For example, in (20), a Vietnamese manager initiates a conversation by asking his staff what she did the night before.

(20)   Staff: (*Opening the door*). Em chào anh ạ!

                    "Hello, sir"

        Manager: Em ngồi đi. *Đêm qua 2 anh chị đi đâu, làm gì?*

                    "Take your seat. *Last night, you went where and did what*?"

        Staff: Ai cơ ạ?

		"Who?"
Manager:		Ừm. Em với thằng Lâm chứ còn ai nữa
		"Uhm. You and Lam"
Staff:		Em có đi đâu đâu, mấy hôm lo làm chẳng có đêm nào được ngủ ngon cả. Tối hôm qua em ngủ như chết mà.
		"No. I was so busy at work; hence, did not have enough sleep. Last night, I had a good night"
Manager:		Thôi vào chuyện nghiêm chỉnh nhá...
		"All right. Now lead to the problem…"

[*Lập trình cho trái tim, episode 3 - 18:00*]

Lastly, speakers can also choose some other phatic utterances relating to "travelling", "addresser's state", "external circumstances" or "offering help". These utterances occur in only one or two English and Vietnamese conversations; hence, it cannot be concluded that it is habitual for both English and Vietnamese interloculators to say so. The infrequency of these utterances may help to conclude that it is acceptable but not common for English and Vietnamese speakers to produce these utterances in opening a conversation. For instance, a Vietnamese staff opens a conversation by greeting his manager and asking about her travelling in (21) or an English manager opens a conversation by referring to a newspaper her staff is reading as an external circumstance in (22).

(21)	Staff:	Chào sếp, sếp đi đâu đấy ạ?
		"Hello boss, where are you going?"
	Manager:	Ừ mình lang thang một tí cho thư thái. Căng thẳng quá!
		"I'm just going for a walk. I'm so stressed"
	Staff:	Đi lang thang tức là không bận gì cả. Thế là không có quyền từ chối đâu đấy nhá!
		"Going for a walk means you are free. So you can't refuse!"

[*Mưa bóng mây, episode 8- 18: 38*]

(22)	Manager:	What's that? (Look at the newspaper the staff is holding)
	Staff:	It's an article where Clifford Danner took his plea.
		Do you want me to read it to you?
	Manager:	No.
	Staff:	Clifford Danner had a history of violence.

[*Suits, season 1, episode 12 - 6:11*]

In summary, the more frequent occurrence of the phatic sequence in Vietnamese conversations compared with English reveals that Vietnamese conversational openings are much more roundabout and lengthier. Additionally, the English phatic sequence is work-oriented whilst Vietnamese one is rapport-oriented. Notably, the English phatic utterances are mainly concerned with *work, the availability of the other for further speaking* or *invitations of sitting and drinking*. In contrast, the Vietnamese phatic utterances are chiefly on *invitation of sitting and drinking, the partner's feelings or heath* and *previous actions or activities.* These

differences suggest that in English, conversational openings are primarily to contribute to work efficiency while in Vietnamese they are principally to create rapport between parties which then helps increase work efficiency.

4. Conclusion

Face-to-face conversational opening follows three sequences, namely *summons-answer, greeting* and *phatic communication*. While the summons-answer and phatic communication sequences are employed rather frequently by both English and Vietnamese speakers, the greeting sequence is preferred by Vietnamese subjects than English ones. Furthermore, the exploitation of each sequence in conversational opening is also different between the two languages. Firstly, the summons-answer sequence is mainly performed with the act of knocking on the door and inviting to "come in" by Vietnamese subjects but accomplished chiefly with terms of address or the act of calling someone's name by English ones. Secondly, the greeting sequence seems to be a crucial part of the Vietnamese opening section but an optional part of the English one. The culture of "greeting" and "asking" in Vietnamese accounts for the high frequency of this sequence while the focus on tasks rather than on rapport explains for its low frequency of occurrance in English. Moreover, the greeting utterance is structured differently in the two languages. In Vietnamese, greeting utterances are often constructed with five main parts: polite particle (dạ), subject (chủ thể chào), verb *chào* (greet), object (đối tượng chào), polite particle (ạ). A Vietnamese greeting utterance can be built by combining several or all these five parts depending on the level of intimacy and the difference of social status between interlocutors. In contrast, English greeting utterances are rather simple with the use of "Hi/ Hello" or "Good morning/ afternoon/ evening" in combination with "first name" or "title" of the interlocutors. Significantly, English greeting has one function – just to greet whereas Vietnamese greeting has dual functions – to greet and to express politeness or respect towards the partner. Lastly, compared with English phatic sequence, Vietnamese one occurs in higher frequency with more phatic inquiries and responses produced. This indicates that unlike English conversational openings, Vietnamese ones are much more elaborated and lengthier. In addition, the content of the phatic sequence is mainly work-oriented with inquiries and responses on previous tasks in English but rapport-oriented with regards of the other interlocutor's feelings, health, clothes, travelling, life at home in Vietnamese. Functionally, English conversational opening is primarily to increase work efficiency while Vietnamese one is both to increase work efficiency and to create rapport between interlocutors.

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CHUỖI MỞ THOẠI TRONG HỘI THOẠI
ANH VIỆT Ở VĂN PHÒNG

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu nhằm tìm ra và miêu tả chuỗi mở thoại tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt. Phương pháp phân tích nội dung và phân tích hội thoại được dùng để mã hóa và miêu tả chuỗi mở thoại của 120 đoạn mở thoại trên phim. Kết quả cho thấy mở thoại Anh và Việt bao gồm ba chuỗi: *gây chú ý, chào hỏi* và *đưa đẩy*. Trong khi *gây chú ý* và *đưa đẩy* được sử dụng khá đều trong hai ngôn ngữ, chuỗi *chào hỏi* xuất hiện nhiều hơn trong hội thoại Việt. Tuy nhiên, về chi tiết, cấu trúc và nội dung của từng chuỗi trong hai ngôn ngữ rất khác biệt. Những sự khác biệt cho thấy mở thoại Anh chỉ hướng tới công việc trong khi mở thoại Việt vừa hướng tới công việc vừa giúp duy trì mối quan hệ xã hội của đối tượng giao tiếp.

Keywords: chuỗi mở thoại, mở thoại trong tiếng Anh, mở thoại trong tiếng Việt, phân tích hội thoại, phân tích nội dung