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„The use of backchannels in spoken English – with a
special focus on gender“

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**To my parents
For all their love, generosity and patience
...and money**

**What they did for me, I will never be able to pay them back
...yet I will never stop trying**

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1 Introduction – how do we listen?

One of the greatest achievements to bring order to the chaos of everyday human life is communication – not only via signs or gestures but mostly by making use of fully-fledged words. The primary goal is to get rid of any misunderstandings and at some point arrive at a mutual agreement. This importance of communication in everyday life is also stressed by researchers such as McCarthy (2003: 34), who even regards this “commonplace as the cornerstone of [linguistic] analysis”. Said commonplace is taken into consideration as well by Clark (1996), who elaborates on the particularities of spoken interaction. Additionally, Warren (2006) distinguishes between different types of conversations, among which he considers everyday conversations as most important. The first chapter of this thesis is thus dedicated to the most crucial premises that are illustrated by these authors. By doing this, the question is pursued how such a basic means of human communication can be laid out in a coherent and comprehensible manner.

To stay within the terminology however, there is not only one cornerstone but, quite the contrary, multiple aspects shape human conversation. The *possibilities of cooperation* between the various participants of a conversation are almost infinite – however, so is also the *degree of cooperation*. Speaking rights and time are not always equally distributed and the roles that interlocutors adopt are therefore not the same either. The relationship between speakers and listeners plays a special role in that respect as it is prone to a variety of misconceptions – especially in regard to their performance. From Goffman (1981) over Bavelas et al. (2000) to Haugh (2013), their claim is that being a listener in a conversation does not mean that one is automatically without any duties.

Even though listeners have less speaking time at their disposal than turn-holding interlocutors, their utterances are still valuable as even short items can serve as feedback and thus contribute to the overall structure of face-to-face interactions. For that purpose, the aim of the second part of the theoretical approach is to provide inside into the different forms and functions of backchannels. This is easier said than done however as the attribution of forms and functions depends on the respective research perspective. Generally, backchannels are analysed in two different ways: either they are pooled in order to form bigger groups or they are looked at in isolation (Xudong 2009). Both parts of this dichotomy provide valuable insights into the topic and thus find their way into the empirical research.

As already outlined, the production of listener feedback is multi-faceted and so is even the choice of terms to name the phenomenon at hand. While the label *backchannel*

can be traced back to the work of Yngve (1970), many different studies appeared over the years. Some use a different terminology and some even criticize the use of the term *backchannel* as inadequate. It is indispensable therefore to give a clear account of the development of the research perspective, ranging from Fries' (1952) analysis of sentence type over Schegloff's (1982) focus on short backchannel items up to Andersen's (2001) open critique of the term backchannel.

As already argued, human face-to-face interaction is influenced by an almost infinite variety of factors. One of those potential factors and as a result also the special focus of the thesis at hand is the question whether or not there are any differences in backchannelling behaviour with regard to gender. The theoretical elaboration is therefore complemented by a quantitative as well as qualitative corpus analysis, drawing from the findings of the main research perspectives. Using the ICE-GB as its data source, the analysis tries to account for the theoretical implications regarding the use of backchannel items by interlocutors. Basically, the thesis pursues a range of general research questions and their respective sub-questions, namely:

RQ 1: How do we use backchannels?

- Which lexical items function primarily as backchannels?
- How often do these backchannels occur in different text types (specialized vs. face-to-face conversations)?
- Can these lexical items adopt other meanings as well?
- Where do interlocutors tend to utter backchannels?

RQ 2: Do men and women differ in their use of backchannels?

- Do women use more, less or the same amount of backchannels compared to men?
- Do men and women use different backchannels?
- Is there a difference in backchannelling behaviour with regard to inter- and intra-gender conversations?

2 The center of attention – defining *spoken interaction*

Trying to define a concept in any linguistic field is a matter of two basic aspects: knowledge of where to draw the lines and more importantly where to begin. In the case of backchannels, drawing definitive lines proves to be particularly difficult as there are innumerable controversies regarding the concept but even more so the terminology. The reason is simple: complexity of the source material. What serves as the basis for the empirical research is encountered by each individual on a daily basis as it is our primary tool to give meaning to the world that we are surrounded by: *spoken interaction* (Clark 1996: 23). It can occur in a variety of different forms, the most versatile of which is *everyday conversation*.

Talking is mostly not a solitary endeavour but a joint venture. Therefore, writing about everyday conversation implies taking a closer look at the distribution of speaking rights between the individual interlocutors. Warren (2006: 6ff.) approaches conversations by claiming that all speakers, regardless of how many there are, share the responsibility for keeping the conversation intact. In an ideal speaking situation, speaking rights should not be taken away from one speaker and imposed upon another, but each speaker has the possibility to contribute to the ongoing conversation. Developing this line of inquiry are also Speer and Stokoe (2011: 9), who argue that living in a society demands from each member to keep making sense of their world by (verbally) negotiating meanings with others.

However, as there are not only everyday conversations – which can vary as well with regard to how interlocutors are treated – but many different types, the distribution of speaking rights differs as well. Warren (2006: 6ff.) considers such a division as problematic as he identifies a general disagreement over where to draw the line between individual conversation types. The most important aspects that help differentiating between everyday conversation and any other category of conversation are summed up in the following quote, as conversations are:

A speech event outside of an institutionalised setting involving at least two participants who share responsibility for the progress and outcome of an impromptu and unmarked verbal encounter consisting of more than a ritualized exchange. (Warren 2006: 11)

Some of the terms need further elaboration though. First of all, the claim that conversations take place outside of institutionalized settings raises the question what kind of settings there even are – institutionalized or not. Clark (1996: 4f.) attempts to answer that question

by discerning seven *scenes*: personal, non-personal, institutional, prescriptive, fictional, mediated and private. Taking into consideration as well whether the language is spoken, written or signed, he arrives at what he calls *the distribution of language settings* (see table 1). For the objectives of this thesis, the first three settings, namely personal, non-personal and institutional are most interesting. Clark (1996: 4f.) further splits up the personal setting into *face-to-face* and *telephone conversations*. The latter however are quite unique as they, in comparison to the other categories, lack the face-to-face component that conversations generally have.

Table 1: The different settings of language use

scene	medium
personal	A converses face to face with B
non-personal	professor A lectures to students in class B
institutional	lawyer A interrogates witness B
prescriptive	groom A makes ritual promise to bride B in front of witnesses
fictional	A performs a play for audience B
mediated	C simultaneously translates for B what A says to B
private	A talks to self about plans

(Clark 1996: 8)

As already mentioned, conversation in the sense of the definition above is also concerned with the equality of the two speakers regarding their speaking rights. Instead of being carved in stone however, Warren (2006: 11) sees them as *perceived speaker rights*. For the duration of a personal conversation, all participants relinquish their status (e.g. employer/employee, doctor/patient) for the more important purpose of keeping it intact and smooth. Yet at the same time, equality of status does not mean that each interlocutor also receives an equal share of the total speaking time. It rather means that each interlocutor is granted an equal share of responsibility to uphold the conversational flow. The speaking time of the individual participants is therefore only secondary (Warren 2006: 11).

Parallels can be drawn to the model of language use in conversations by Clark (1996: 23), which stands on six propositions. First of all, he argues that a language is not used without proper context and purpose. Simple ritualization such as greetings has no social

purpose and is therefore only considered as part of a conversation, but not conversation by itself. This view is also emphasized by Goffman (1971: 17), for whom a certain degree of information and the involvement of cognition are the prerequisites for a functional conversation. The same accounts for Warren (2006: 11) when he talks about conversations as “more than a ritualized exchange”. The second proposition is that language use always has to be a joint effort between interlocutors (Clark 1996: 23). This automatically leads to the third proposition, namely that not only an effort towards speaking has to be made but listening is equally important (Haugh 2013: 41). Proposition four simply highlights that conversations are one of the most basic means of human interaction (Clark 1996: 26)

The fifth proposition is rather ambivalent as it applies to conversation but even more so to specialized discourse. Clark (1996: 23) claims that language often consists of a variety of different layers of actions, depending on the context of speaking. News anchors for example go through different layers of action, as do story tellers in a real-life setting in contrast to a fictional setting. When talking then, those speakers produce their content by drawing from a variety of different yet familiar contexts, thus multi-layering the conversation. And last but not least, in order to be able to study the use of language appropriately, Clark (1996: 24) emphasized that it has to be observed from a cognitive as well as a social standpoint.

In terms of the social component, face-to-face communication also benefits the building of relationships between interlocutors. As Planken (2005: 382) argues, communication is dysfunctional when only reduced to transporting information from interlocutor A to interlocutor B. What communication is mostly used for namely by interlocutors is to achieve individual and interpersonal goals. As these goals are sometimes more driven by emotion than information, they highly contribute to the development of the relationship between the individual participants – in a positive as well as a negative way.

Rather than making a distinction between everyday conversation and specialized discourse, the model developed by Clark and Brennan (1991: 141) and further refined by Clark (1996: 9f.) provides further insight into the features of face-to-face interaction in general:

Table 2: Features of face-to-face conversations

co-presence	The participants do not only hear each other but they are also physically present	immediacy
visibility	Interlocutors see each other	

audibility	Interlocutors hear each other while talking	medium
instantaneity	The conversation is held on an immediate basis – there is hardly any delay between sending and receiving a message	
evanescence	The medium is only temporarily available	
recordlessness	If not explicitly recorded, conversational content leaves no trace	
simultaneity	Production and reception of utterances may be carried out simultaneously	control
extemporaneity	Preparation is not a necessity as both interlocutors practically improvise	
self-determination	It is only up to the individual interlocutors when to take which action during the conversation	
self-expression	Participants normally do not play a role and thus express their own beliefs and opinions	

(Clark/Brennan 1991: 141; Clark 1996: 9f.)

From the large variety of aspects that table 2 represents, *control* needs further observation. Interlocutors are not only in control of what they themselves produce, but they are also in control of how the conversation progresses – yet not without taking each other into consideration. Clark (1996: 13f.) points out that negotiation processes between interlocutors are indispensable. He further points out that such processes can be significantly facilitated by an appropriate level of *grounding* (Clark 1996: 13f.). Grounding implies that the level of common cultural or linguistic knowledge between interlocutors determines how big their common ground is and thus how easily their communication can be coordinated.

Wrede et al. (2010: 2370f.) extend on the concept of grounding by arguing that it not only implies the non-verbal existence of common cultural background knowledge, but that it can also be procedural. They claim that communication should help to clearly and

actively elaborate on the meanings as well as the intentions of utterances. Hence by communicating, interlocutors can depict their convictions, ideas and beliefs on an ongoing basis. In the end then, properly grounded utterances fulfil three different functions: they show perception, they can be an indicator of understanding and last but not least they show agreement. The kind of items that are used to show perception, understanding and agreement are the main concern of this thesis.

To sum up, there are many factors that shape conversations. However, those factors become important mostly not because they are consciously learned, but because they are subconsciously used. (2006: 13f.) uses the term *naturalness* when referring to this. In his view, everyday conversation comprises of a total of nine different features:

- **The multitude of sources** - conversation works because a number of participants are at work at the same time who are normally all of equal status regarding their individual speaking rights.
- **Determining the discourse coherence of a conversation** – this is an on-the-go process as the logical organization of a conversation does not exist per default but is constructed by the contributions of each individual participant.
- **Language as a hands-on operation** – conversations are grounded in reality, they happen in the real world and they are heavily influenced by the relationships of the participants.
- **The principle of cooperation** – the opportunities that everyday conversations offer are both a blessing and a threat to all the participants. Due to the equality of the participants, the responsibility of arriving at a decent outcome is shared. Shared responsibility however means that aspects of the conversation partner have to be taken into consideration as well.
- Conversations are **unfolding over time**, which means that even though each conversation is unique, it is not arbitrary. In terms of its structure, there are certain building blocks which make it describable. It can also be predicted – at least for a short time. Examples of such a predictable unfolding are the occurrence of adjacency pairs, the general dependence of utterances on one another or also intonation restricting possible follow-up utterances.
- The **open-endedness** of conversation – while in terms of their structure, conversations are predictable (yet by far not as predictable as specialized conversation), the same does not account for their content. Participants of everyday

conversations have certain goals in mind, but they do not have to stick to them and can change them as they see fit as long as they are negotiated properly.

- The appearance of **artefacts** – everyday conversations, similar to specialized discourse, have their boundaries and participants therefore denote a beginning and an end. However, these boundaries are extremely difficult to identify as they often defy the well-structured notion that specialized discourse displays.
- **Inexplicitness** – everyday conversations are highly context-dependent in a sense that not every piece of information is verbalized to create meaning and mutual understanding. Yet this lack of explicitness is not necessary as from the speech situation itself (verbal content plus physical environment), each participant can draw enough cues as to keep a conversation flowing.
- **Sharing of responsibilities** – overlaps may occur during a conversation. Yet this is not a bad sign as interlocutors are equally responsible for the progress of a conversation. The sharing of responsibilities does not mean that there is a fierce competition for turn-taking, but rather a smooth negotiation between the individual participants where overlaps may happen.

3 The reciprocity of communication

The sharing of responsibilities has already been described as one of the most important aspects regarding human interaction. It illustrates that working together is inextricably tied to successfully communicating. Still, it does not say much about *how* interlocutors communicate with each other and which tools are at their disposal. At one point in his career, Paul Watzlawick (1969: 51), a former professor of communication studies, tried to illustrate that communication is not only a string of words that are always easily identifiable, but it is much more in a sense that it surrounds people on a constant basis:

One cannot *not* communicate, because every communication (not only with words) is behaviour and in the same way like one cannot not behave, one cannot not communicate.¹ (Watzlawick 1969: 51)

What this quotation tries to illustrate is that communication does not necessarily demand exhaustive stretches of talk. Quite differently, meaning is also transported by even the shortest utterances – and sometimes no words at all. In turn, this also shows that it is impossible to include every available aspect of communication as only small parts can be

¹ Translated from: „Man kann nicht nicht kommunizieren, denn jede Kommunikation (nicht nur mit Worten) und genauso wie man sich nicht nicht verhalten kann, kann man nicht nicht kommunizieren.“

analysed. The same accounts for the object of investigation in this thesis as there exists no common definition of backchannels but different studies use different models according to the context at hand. The first stage in finding a coherent definition of backchannels however must take one small step back and look closely at what Warren (2006: 13) defines as the “discourse coherence in conversations”.

3.1 Feedback processes

Discourse coherence is not maintained by a single interlocutor but quite contrarily it is a mutual achievement. According to Warren (2006: 13), the most important tool in the negotiation processes is *feedback*. However, it is only a starting point as feedback is only an umbrella term for a variety of forms that appear either verbally or non-verbally. Developing this line of inquiry, Allen and Guy (1974: 26) divide feedback into various subsets, of which two deserve special attention. One level is called *complete feedback*. Complete feedback is speaker-centred and an illustration of the self-monitoring abilities of the turn-holding interlocutors. In case interlocutors mispronounce a word or falsely recall pieces of information, they are capable of simultaneously correcting such errors by replacing them with the correct information. The most important level of feedback for this paper however puts its focus on the listener as it concerns the feedback items that are uttered by listeners in order to be supportive of the speakers’ statements. While it is debatable whether listeners always want to support by uttering such items, the first question that has to be answered is what is understood as *feedback items*.

Regarding the behaviour of listeners, Allwood et al. (1993: 1) claim that feedback can be defined as “linguistic mechanisms which enable the participants in a communication to unobtrusively exchange information about four basic communicative functions: **contact, perception, understanding and attitudinal reactions** [emphasis of the author]“. These four communicative functions of feedback however are not on the same level in terms of their hierarchical relationship. Wrede et al. (2010: 2370f.) consider attitudinal reactions as the most complex level of feedback, as they not only presume an understanding of an utterance but also an adequate reaction to it. In order to be able give such attitudinal feedback then, the three lower levels have to be met as well. The authors argue further however that due to the spontaneous nature of face-to-face communication, there is no need to go through all four levels every time. Feedback can set in at the lower levels as well (*see table 3* – the individual levels are ranked from the lowest (contact) to the highest) and the primary goal of maintaining discourse coherence is still accomplished.

Table 3: Levels of feedback

Function of feedback	Definition
Contact	Willingness and ability to continue interaction
Perception	Willingness and ability to perceive expression and message
Understanding	Willingness and ability to understand expression and message
Attitudinal reaction	Willingness and ability to perform other attitudinal reactions to expression, message, or interlocutor

(Wrede et al. 2010: 2370)

Instead of hierarchical levels, Bjørge (2010: 192f.) uses a different model of feedback by differentiating more generally between verbal and non-verbal feedback. Verbal feedback contains short items like *oh yes*, *okay* or *mhm* whereas non-verbal behaviour ranges from interlocutors looking each other in the eyes to facial expressions like smiling or head shakes. However, she also elaborates on a third way of giving feedback that is more situation-dependent than the previous two. For example, listeners can directly react to speakers' utterances either by reformulating them or using parts to ask a question. Such an aspect of specific situation-dependency is absent from Wrede et al. (2010).

Even though Bjørge (2010) is mainly concerned with listening skills in business negotiations in her article, parallels can be drawn to everyday conversations rather easily. As Warren (2006: 11) argues, speaking rights do not exist within a vacuum and subsequently they have to be negotiated even in the most mundane forms of talk. The main claim that Bjørge (2010: 192) therefore is trying to make is that “the skill of being able to actively listen is often neglected” and has to be taken into consideration as a crucial cornerstone of everyday conversation as well.

Feedback is not only important with regard to its form or its function, but also with regard to the content it transmits. To exemplify that, Kraut, Lewis and Swezey (1983: 720) go into further detail on what type of information feedback can provide the individual interlocutors with:

- First of all, by using feedback interlocutors transmit information about the reaction of a hypothetical *generalized audience*. Its main purpose is to maintain the flow of a conversation. No particular proficiency in the topic discussed is needed therefore – any interlocutor could utter it. The lexical items used in such situations do not bear any heavy contextual meaning and resemble what Bjørge (2010: 192f.) refers to as verbal feedback.
- Second of all, feedback may also closely reflect the reaction of a *particular listener*. This means that the items that are used do not only serve to simply

maintain a conversation, but the meaning of feedback is more context-dependent. Once again, parallels can be drawn to Bjørge (2010: 192) and what she defines as context-dependent feedback.

So far, there has been much talk about the interlocutors of a conversation – also the dichotomy of listener/speaker has been mentioned. What strikes as interesting however and what has to be done as well is to look behind certain labels and ask whether in the light of such collaborative negotiation processes, labelling the individual interlocutors with listener and speaker is even justified.

3.2 Is there a listener? Is there a speaker?

It is assumed that each interlocutor is capable of contributing to a conversation in the same way – how can there be differentiation between listeners and speakers then? To answer that question, Goffman (1981: 226) assigns a series of tasks and duties to both the listener and the speaker. Speaking includes three successive actions, namely *meaning*, *formulating* and *vocalizing*, in which each action is executed by one and the same person. Listening on the other hand is an equally complex task and again is carried out in three stages by the same person, namely *attending*, *identifying* and *responding*. The problem of this design however is that it does not account for in-between cases. It considers conversations rather as a repeated sequence of listening and speaking with the speaker being the encoder of a message and the listener then being the receiver/decoder (Clark 1996: 20f.).

To a certain extent, this shortcoming can be traced back to the fact that “listeners have at best a tenuous foothold in most theories” (Bavelas et al. 2000: 941). For Bavelas et al. (2000: 941ff.), the neglect of the listener is due to research not only focusing on spoken but also on written contexts, more precisely on literature. Authors produce texts with a fixed readership in mind and as a consequence, they are not dependent on any kind of input from other people that could alter their style of writing. Regarding spoken interaction then, listeners are seen as receiving-only extras who do not contribute anything valuable to the ongoing conversation. Similar to what has been said about Clark (1996), most studies seem to be too much concerned with the notion that a conversation is nothing more than a sequence of monologues that are uttered in alternation by the interlocutors (Bavelas et al. 2000: 941). This approach is based on the premise that only a single interlocutor can hold the floor, thus automatically forcing the remaining interlocutors to wait for their turn.

A similar approach is chosen by Haugh (2013: 45), for whom the distinction between the two labels is even more clear-cut. He argues that no matter how short an utterance in a conversation is, listeners immediately turn into speakers at the very moment of speaking, which also includes short lexical items such as *mhm* or *mm*. The question whether such items should be considered as an individual turn is an important issue of chapter 4.4. Yet what this view of perfectly timed monologues does not account for is that overlaps may also occur. McGregor and White (1990: 1) argue in the same direction as for them receiving a message that was sent by the turn-holding interlocutor does not rule out that the proclaimed listener may also behave in a speaker-like way, thus:

The notion of reciprocity is inextricably tied to the notion of response since for us reception is response, and response is reception. In other words, we are not dealing here with discrete categories but simultaneous processes that are dynamically active as a consequence of individual creativity, selectivity and/or reactivity to language use in whatever medium or variety. We focus on the role of hearers because it is they as receiver-responders, who are the actual arbiters of what becomes meaningfully determinant in an interpretive sense. (McGregor/White 1990: 1)

The listener-perspective has to be taken seriously. Yet what the quotation also shows is that the label itself can be misleading. On that account, Coupland et al. (1990: 112) argue that it has to become clear that the involvement of a listener is deeply anchored in a conversation. This connection between listening and speaking is also in line with Kraut, Lewis and Swezey (1983: 718f.), who claim that it is not important which goals the individual participants of a conversation pursue. Even though they may be completely different and self-centred, communication only works as a joint effort that is bound to fail if both interlocutors neglect each other. Without mutual understanding, even simple intentions could not be communicated. Due to convenience, the labels of speaker and listener are still used in this paper. It should become clear however that regarding both labels as independent concepts is not constructive.

With regard to the procedural perspective on grounding (Wrede et al. 2010: 2370f.), Kraut, Lewis and Swezey (1983: 719) as well declare that mutual understanding is a process and not a state. Said process is determined by a handful of factors such as the physical position of the conversational partners, the speech environment or demographics, among others. The standpoint adopted by Andersen (2001: 92f.) with respect to the collaborative building of floor is helpful as well. Much like Clark (1996: 13f.), it presumes that interlocutors share a certain degree of common experience and social relationships that cannot be ignored without running the risk of failing. Sharing the floor therefore is not the exception but the rule, or as Bavelas et al. (2000: 941) claim: “Dialogue is a duet, not two

solos“.

Clark and Schaefer (1989: 260) combine these models by arguing that the use of feedback rests on two assumptions: first of all, a certain amount of common ground already exists in the beginning as it helps to roughly pre-defining the content of a conversation. However, they further claim that common ground is not static. Collaboration (and thus feedback processes and backchannels) is helpful in terms of *accumulation* – meaning that interlocutors try their best to extend the common ground between them. According to Beňuš et al. (2011: 3002), grounding not only benefits from accumulation but also from *accommodation*. Accommodation is described as an interactive process during which interlocutors influence each other in a way that not only their knowledge but also their behaviour becomes more similar. With regard to accommodation however, Beňuš et al. (2011: 3002) relate to another important issue, an issue left out so far in the discussion: dominance. In reality, accommodation is no equal process as some interlocutors often dominate others, which subsequently can lead to an imbalance with regard to the distribution of speaking rights.

Such an imbalance can occur easily as interlocutors, no matter how well they know each other, live in slightly different worlds in terms of what they know and how they see things (Warren 2006: 57). Likewise, Brennan and Hulteen (1995: 142f.) emphasize that neither a listener nor a speaker knows everything. Access to another person's belief system or state of mind can thus only be gained via readily available pieces of information that are produced during a conversation. The more interlocutors get to know about their conversational partners, the more efficient they can produce utterances and co-create meaningful content (Kraut, Lewis and Swezey 1983: 730). As has already been mentioned, one of the features of mutual coherence-building is feedback.

Warren (2006: 58) renders feedback more precisely by defining it as one out of four possibilities to maintain discourse coherence. The other three are *alignment*, *intonation* and *language about language*, each with their own subcategories. One of the subcategories of feedback is also the object of investigation for the paper at hand: backchannels. Backchannels are already discussed by Yngve (1970: 568), who argues that:

the distinction between having the turn or not is not the same as the traditional distinction between speaker and listener, for it is possible to speak out of turn, and it is even reasonably frequent that a conversationalist speaks out of turn. In fact, both the person who has the turn and (his or her) partner are simultaneously engaged in both speaking and listening. This is because of the existence of what I call the back channel, over which the person who has the turn receives short messages such as “yes“ and “uh-huh“ without relinquishing the turn. (Yngve 1970: 568)

Even though Yngve (1970: 568) does not refer to items such as *yes* or *uh huh* as backchannels, he nevertheless admits to the existence of *a* backchannel. What this quotation also shows is that feedback is not reliant on the length of individual utterances. It is more important to analyse how, where and when such items are used and what exactly they mean. However, there seems to exist a general disagreement on what can be understood as a backchannel. This is also emphasized by Wrede et al. (2010: 2370), who focus on feedback in asymmetric interactions such as job interviews in their study. They argue that due to the complexity of listener feedback, even simple items such as *yes*, *no* or *okay* can have various meanings depending on the text type, intonation or pragmatic intentions. For that purpose, the following chapter attempts to give a clearer overview of what backchannels actually are.

4 Backchannels

Regarding the development of perspectives on backchannels, Xudong (2009: 105ff.) provides a comprehensive overview by distinguishing between two strands of research: the *lumping approach* and the *splitting approach*. Each strand takes on a particular point of view from which the topic is analysed.

4.1 Backchannels in context – the splitting and the lumping approach

The major part of the theoretical elaboration however will be concerned with the lumping approach as it is most suitable for the purpose of the empirical analysis (see chapters 5-9). Summing up, the lumping approach is the attempt to take the many different forms of backchannels that exist and group them according to their structural features and thus their general function in the task of decoding/encoding messages (Duncan/Fiske 1985). Said lumping approach then enables the researcher to approach the multitude of individual tokens of the corpus data and assign them to pre-defined groups, thus rendering analysis more comprehensible.

The splitting approach on the other hand deals with backchannels in context – and it must not be left out of the analysis either (see chapter 10). Its premise is that as so many backchannels behave differently, it is not constructive to force a common categorization upon these items. Gaines (2011: 3312) claims that while it is important to define a range of core functions of backchannels, a complete categorization could not do justice to the fact that each item fulfils a different purpose depending on the context it appears in. Similarly Aijmer (2002: 23), who uses the term *discourse particle* instead of backchannel, describes

that “the core function of a discourse particle is defined in terms of what it is doing on the textual or interpersonal level.” However, she further argues that such core meanings may be misleading in that they are too superficial. Thus, in order to be able to properly elaborate on the particles, individual tokens have to be investigated with regard to how far their meanings tend to stray from the proclaimed core meaning. The main argument of the splitting approach therefore is that a difference exists between the meaning that an utterance or an item is said to have and how that meaning finally changes in context (Clark/Fox Tree 2002: 77). In this line of inquiry, Kjellmer (2009: 83) stands firm on the argument that backchannels should be considered as a discourse phenomenon and not as a finite and coherent list.

This does not mean however that both approaches are mutually exclusive. It rather means that the lumping approach is mostly used in quantitative studies while the splitting approach isolates individual tokens and analyses them in a qualitative way (Drew/Heritage 2006: 28). Moreover, the lexical items for a quantitative analysis have to be thoroughly defined before the actual research whereas the scope of items suitable for a qualitative analysis is much broader. The splitting approach is therefore also one of the main approaches chosen by conversation analysts (Xudong 2009: 111) in order to identify and describe the local management of face-to-face interactions (Gaines 2011: 3299). In addition, Schifffrin (1987: 318) claims that “whatever meaning inheres in the marker itself has to be compatible with the meanings of the surrounding discourse.” Bavelas et al. (2000: 944) refer to such an inferential look at backchannels in their *integrated message model*. According to that model, even simple items like brief backchannels can unfold their meanings on a step-by-step basis according to the context.

The contextual meaning of backchannels however will only take a small part in this paper. The main part of the research relies on theories developed according to the *lumping approach*. Using such an approach however is a challenging task as it gives rise to a series of obstacles. For instance, it has not yet been defined what a backchannel actually is. Defining a finite number of backchannels is nearly impossible as they are “essentially not a lexico-grammatical feature but rather a discourse phenomenon” (Rühlemann 2007: 94). By that, Rühlemann also describes how difficult it is to keep both approaches separate. In addition, even narrowing down individual lexical items to their core meaning is problematic as they are uttered in a spoken context. This means that an almost infinite variety of pragmatic factors come into play that influence possible meanings. As a result, there are many theoretical implications that have to be elaborated on for the sake of

bringing order to a vast variety of different items. Up to this point the term *backchannel* has been used without any further questioning – the following chapter is thus trying to account for its use by looking at the difficulties that arise when trying to arrive at a proper terminology. As will be seen, the term *backchannel* is only one out of many.

4.2 Finding an appropriate concept

One of the first researchers to look at the construction of English sentences was Fries (1952: 49). He defines three different types of sentences in his study. While the first two are not of importance for the present paper, the third type is, as it comprises short lexical items such as *yes*, *uh huh*, *oh* or *I see*. Even though he does not label them, those items are described as a means for the listener to actively contribute to maintaining the attention level during a conversation. Similar to Yngve (1970: 568) however, listeners do not make a claim for the floor by using such items – thus they do not interrupt the main interlocutor.

Kendon (1967: 22ff.) on the other hand also includes non-verbal features such as gestures, gaze or eye contact. More importantly however, in the context of such gaze and gesture directions he takes a variety of verbal forms into consideration which he refers to as *accompaniment signals*. As the name suggests, these signals accompany the non-verbal behaviour to indicate attention or other behavioural information. Rather than contributing to the content then, accompaniment signals have a pragmatic function. Warren (2006: 77) relates this co-existence to the simplicity of these items as their non-lexical form makes it easier for gestures to tie in with them. Kendon (1967: 22ff.) further subcategorizes accompaniment signals according to the non-verbal behaviour of the utterer: *attention signals* such as *yes quite*, *surely* or *I see* imply attention and thus a general uninterrupted listenership. *Example 1* is an illustration of such an attention signal. It has to be kept in mind however that only the actual lexical items are of importance for this thesis as non-verbal behaviour cannot be properly analysed.

(1) Attention signals

<S1> But uh uh I had already spoken to Mr. Stuart I think. I don't know the date of this letter

<S2> **I see**

<S1> But why is it that there's no reference to the letter of Mr Stuart
(S1B-064; 039-041)

As the example illustrates, the item uttered by speaker 2 does not contribute anything to the conversation content-wise. It rather provides the pragmatic cue that the listener is still keeping attention, thus it fulfils each of the three prerequisites that are pointed out by Bjørge (2010: 193), namely that attention signals:

- do not cut off an interlocutor's turn
- do normally not trigger a reply (at least *positive evidence backchannels* do not – they will be defined in chapter 4.3)
- provide the floor for the interlocutor in charge of the turn

Clearly audible listener-statements – backchannels are not considered as such – are only necessary when they are demanded by the primary speaker, as it is the case with the second utterance by speaker 1 in the example above. Yet while such items are optional in the way that they do not interrupt the progression of turns, the purpose of this chapter is to show that they are important for the flow of a conversation.

The second type of accompaniment signals that Kendon (1967: 22ff.) defines is called *point granting/assenting signals*. As *example 2* shows, they are different from attention signals in that they are more context-specific. The turn-holding interlocutors benefit from point granting signals as they not only need signs of attention but much more so the continuing consent of the listener considering the most important arguments that are brought forward.

(2) Point granting/assenting signals

<S1> We could have wild parties and things

<S2> **I see**

<S1> Well I could have parties and things

(S1A-019; 346-348)

The difference is subtle, yet it is visible in the second part of the speaker's turn, which is an altered version of the first part of utterance. What this means is that the reformulation is triggered by the listener's use of the item *I see* as a point granting signal. In case *I see* had been absent, the whole utterance of the turn-holding interlocutor might have progressed in a different way and not been reformulated at all. The non-verbal behaviour of the listeners varies depending on which accompaniment signal is uttered: when attention signals are

used, eye contact is mostly maintained, which is not the case with point granting/assenting signals. (Xudong 2009: 106).

A similar distinction is also made by Schegloff (1982: 81f.), who refers to items like *uh huh* as continuers. Like attention signals, their function is to enable the listener to actively contribute to the conversation while relinquishing the right to take over the turn. Yet Schegloff also introduces another category of short items that he calls *assessments*. Similar to the point granting signals as defined by Kendon (1967: 22ff.), assessments are even more context dependent.

In contrast to continuers, which mainly serve as the connecting piece between two utterances of the primary speaker's turn, assessments evaluate the preceding utterance that was produced by a primary speaker. Items such as *oh wow* or *good* have a direct influence on the primary speakers as they make them wait until the assessment is uttered before they continue with their turn. Yet assessments, even more so than continuers, are in a difficult position as they are particularly open to other classes, especially *interjections* (Schegloff 1982, Goodwin 1986, Andersen 2001, Clancy/Thompson 1996). The main differences between backchannels and interjections are dependent on the theoretical implications. These implications are further analysed in chapter 4.3

The term backchannel was first introduced by Victor Yngve (1970: 568). Yet as already mentioned, he does not use it to label a set of lexical items or utterances but the channel that the listeners use. In his model of communication between two participants, two channels exist. While one channel is occupied by the speaker the second one belongs to the listener: he calls them *main-* and *backchannel*. The backchannel for Xudong (2009: 104) is, due to its co-existence with the main-channel, a useful way for the interlocutor who does not hold the turn to nevertheless send short messages that provide feedback.

Andersen (2001: 99) criticizes the use of the term backchannel as not applicable to the reality of face-to-face conversations. He argues that the literal meaning of the word does not do justice to the fact that conversations are a joint endeavour. Thus if an item is referred to as a backchannel or as being used *in* the backchannel, it is considered inferior to utterances that are produced in the mainchannel. In addition, listeners as well are seen as less important to discourse than speakers. This opinion is also represented by Tannen (2007: 27), who argues in favour of the listeners by emphasizing their high personal involvement in and devotion to the flow and functionality of face-to-face conversations.

With the purpose of properly reflecting on the involvement of listeners Andersen (2001: 99) finally pleads for the term *minimal response*. Yet if the literal meaning of a term

is taken into account again, minimal response it not suitable either. *Response* implies too strongly that the item is supposed to directly relate to the utterance of the primary speaker. Minimal responses are therefore similar to point granting signals (Kendon 1967), yet they do not account for instances in which a backchannel can also be left out. Ward and Tsukahara (2000: 1183) on the other hand approve the term backchannel as they consider it the most neutral term that can be used for the concept. Oreström (1983: 23) uses the term as well by distinguishing between *speaking-turns* and *backchannel items*.

Listener behaviour is modelled by Clancy and Thompson (1996: 355ff.) via the use of the term *reactive tokens*. Regardless of using the term *reactive*, both authors still emphasize the joint nature of conversations. They argue that for a conversation to be successful, listeners must indicate two things to the primary speaker: they know that a turn is still in progress and they are able to follow that turn. The listeners, by uttering such reactive tokens, can clearly indicate their understanding and evaluation of the primary speaker's utterance. One sub-category of reactive tokens are backchannels, among which are items such as *hm*, *huh*, *oh*, *mhm* or *uh huh*. Clancy and Thompson (1996: 356f.) define them as vocalized items that are non-lexical in form. Regarding their function, they are defined as either a sign of an interlocutor's interest or a confirmation that an utterance has been understood. The authors emphasize as well that by uttering such backchannels, the claim for the floor is not taken up and passed back to the primary speaker.

This double-function is illustrated by *example 3*. Even though a claim for the floor would have been possible as the thought unit preceding the backchannel is finished, speaker 1, by using *mhm*, indicates to the other interlocutor not only a general understanding of what has been said so far, but also invites him to continue. Speaker 2 then seizes the opportunity and goes into more detail on the previous utterance.

(3) The use of *mhm* as a continuer

<S1> They've got good stuff there you know and that African stuff

<S2> Yeah I mean it's sort of yeah and Asian stuff

There is you know like that cashmere rug I've got on my wall

<S1> **Mhm**

<S2> Things like that and lots of cards

(S1A-014; 230-234)

In addition, *example 3* also illustrates one particular issue quite clearly: the problem of conceptual delimitation. Comparing *examples 1* and *3* for example shows that the difference between attention signals and continuers is only marginal to non-existent. This dilemma is not exclusively restricted to these two examples but it is frequently encountered in backchannel-literature. Rather than finding clear-cut boundaries however, the examples try to show that regardless of obvious functional similarities, many authors use different terms for one and the same discourse phenomenon.

So far, another problem of the lumping approach is clearly visible as there is no agreement with regard to which items function as backchannels. Stenström (1994) for example disagrees with Clancy and Thompson (1996: 361ff.) on whether or not the two items *yeah* and *mhm* can be used interchangeably. Clancy and Thompson argue that *yeah* and *mhm* belong to different categories not only because of their form (lexical versus non-lexical), but also because the former is more evaluative of an utterance than the latter.

Additionally, there is also the fact that backchannels are only one category of reactive tokens that Clancy and Thompson (1996: 360ff.) define in their research paper. Going into further detail on the remaining categories is important as it shows that assigning items to definitive groups often is not as straight-forward as expected. Besides backchannels, *reactive expressions* represent another category. In contrast to backchannels, reactive expressions are not regarded as *non-lexical* but as *lexical items and expressions* that nonetheless hand the floor back to the turn-holding interlocutor. Instead of a simple backchannelling function though, these expressions can do more in that they are also closely assessing an ongoing turn. Items such as *hell*, *man*, *exactly*, *okay*, *yeah*, *shit*, *alright*, *sure*, *gee* and *(oh) really* are considered as reactive expressions.

Collaborative finishes are uttered, as the name already suggests, when the non-primary speaker predicts the outcome of an utterance and thus both interlocutors finish the same utterance. The last category that Clancy and Thompson (1996: 361ff.) include in their model are so-called *resumptive openers*, which are non-lexical items (like backchannels) that are not uttered in isolation. When uttered, a resumptive opener introduces a take-over of the turn by the non-primary speaker. To make this clearer, *example 4* illustrates the position of such a resumptive opener in a conversation. *Mhm* as the first item of the second speaker's utterance does not stand alone. Even though it is, as indicated by the spacing, uttered prior to a slight time gap, it is nevertheless followed by a full take-over of the turn.

(4) Resumptive openers

<S1> Uhm, I thought I was at that time

I wish I could feel relaxed about uhm certain aspects of my life such as work and exams

<S2> **Mhm**

The impression I got was that your memory was pretty good basically and this wasn't a problem maybe

(S1A-059; 018-022)

So far, backchannels have been described either as short utterances or grammatically simple items. Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.) on the other hand choose a wider approach. Their model includes a total of six different groups that range from verbal backchannels to non-verbal backchannelling signals and gestures.

1. readily identified verbalisations among which are items like *mhm, yeah, right, I see* or *that's true*.
2. listeners attempting to complete the speakers' utterances
3. requests for clarification
4. restatements – listeners reformulate the thoughts previously uttered by the speakers
5. head nods and head shakes
6. smiles, gaze

(Duncan/Fiske 1985: 58f.)

As can be seen in the classification above, non-verbal and verbal backchannels are not inextricably tied to each other as each represent separate groups – which stands in contrast to Kendon (1967). However, this distinction is also criticized by Stenström (1994: 81). She notes that uttering only non-verbal feedback is not constructive and can also lead to a dysfunctional communicative situation. Therefore, she considers audible backchannels the minimal effort that *has* to be made to get meaning as well functional purposes across. Also, in contrast to Clancy and Thompson (1996: 361ff.), Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.) consider collaborative finishes as well as repetitions as separate backchannels repetitions instead of only regarding them as occurring *in* the backchannel.

Extending the concept of which lexical constructions can function as backchannels, Bjørge (2010: 193) defines them as working on four different levels, namely “non-lexical,

lexical, phrasal and syntactical”. Due to that broad definition, a vast variety of items can serve as backchannels, among which are *mhm*, *I see*, *good heavens*, *hmm*, *uh huh*, *yes*, *yeah*, *yes I know*, *that’s nice* or *that’s right*. McCarthy (2002: 55) further broadens the scope by also including *non-minimal response tokens*. As the name already indicates, the pool of potential items is almost infinite by including word classes like adjectives or adverbs. *Sure*, *wow*, *wonderful*, *brilliant*, *marvellous*, *good*, *gosh*, *great* or also *lovely*, to name only a few, are thereby referred to as backchannels as well.

Backchannel-length is also treated by Bavelas et al. (2000: 943f.), who call these items *listener responses*. They further divide them into two different categories: *generic* and *specific listener responses*. The former resemble continuers by not providing any narrative input as the only function of items like *mhm* is to reflect the listener’s state of mind. This simply means that they inform the speaker whether a listener can still follow what is being said or whether any corrections have to be made. Specific listener responses on the other hand, like reformulations or questions, are not regarded as widely applicable backchannels.

Rather than elaborating on the existence of a main- and a backchannel, Clark (1996: 227ff.) divides conversations into two successive stages that are repeated over and over again: the *presentation* and the *acceptance phase*. In phase one, speakers send out a signal (an utterance) for the listeners to process, who signal their understanding in phase two – by using either positive or negative *contributions*. Such contributions are considered as “systematic procedures for establishing [...] mutual belief” (Clark and Schaefer 1989: 262). However, only positive contributions lead to a fully functional conversation during which common ground is produced in a collaborative manner. Clark (1996: 227f.) divides positive evidence that is provided in the acceptance phase into four different categories:

- **Assertions of understanding:** they include short utterances and items like *uh huh*, *okay* or *I see*. Their function is similar to what Schegloff (1982: 81f.) defines as continuers. Clark (1996: 227f.) however does not take into consideration that such short items can also function as assessments.
- **Presuppositions of understanding:** they are understood as reactions to the speakers’ propositions and thus they indicate that listeners are able to either produce or finish the next turn, much like the category of utterance completion by Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.)
- **Displays of understanding:** as already stated, conversing implies the negotiation

of various meanings. By answering for example, a listener shows the speaker which of all the available meanings has been taken up and therefore is further pursued.

- **Exemplifications of understanding:** by paraphrase and repetition, among others, the listeners once again illustrate what they have made of the conversation so far.

The category of *assertions of understanding* is particularly important. Clark (1996: 229f.) further refers to them as *continuing contributions*. He argues that by uttering items like *I see*, *mhm*, *okay* or *uh huh*, listeners not only show understanding but they also give positive evidence without needing too much effort and thus staying in the background. Most importantly, such contributions do not disturb a speaker and thus do not compromise the progress of a conversation. The five different features that help doing so are (Clark 1996: 229f.):

- **Acknowledgments:** the feedback items signal understanding and are thus positive evidence
- **Scope:** it is also highly important where the positive evidence is placed in a speaker's turn. To ensure a smooth turn, listeners tend to insert the acknowledgement items close to the accepted part of an utterance.
- **No turns:** contributions are not regarded as an individual turn. Rather they are considered to complement a primary speaker's turn
- **Overlaps:** overlapping speech is considered as positive as it does not signal any intention from the listener to take over the turn.
- **Backgrounding:** continuing contributions are on a different level in juxtaposition to the main turn. The items are not only brief but they are also uttered with reduced volume.

Regarding *scope*, Clark (1996: 232) claims that one feature of everyday conversations is that speakers prefer to present information in a way that the most important parts of the content are linked. What this means however is that before presenting a new chunk of information, speakers sometimes demand confirmation of the old one. So while the listener is primarily in charge of the placement of acknowledgement tokens, regulatory power can also shift in the direction of the speaker. In case that happens, Clark (1996: 239) drops the term *continuing contributions* but he calls the items that are uttered *instalment contributions*. That distinction often makes it unclear who is in charge of the placement of

these items which is why problems with regard to the maintenance of discourse coherence may occur. So far, this chapter has shown that there is a rich number of terms that attempt to describe a similar phenomenon. What should become clear however is that even simple items are capable of fulfilling important tasks during a conversation. While some claims have already been made in this chapter with regard to the functions of simple backchannels, the next chapter goes into further detail on why they not only invite speakers to continue with their turn. Moreover, what the next chapter should also make clear is that it is not always easy to identify clear-cut lines between form and function.

4.3 Always a passive signal of attention? The difficulty in attributing functions

The number of definitions and labels that are encountered during the attempt to properly explain the discourse phenomenon at hand seems almost infinite. So far, it was emphasized that the primary function of items like *yeah*, *yes* or *mhm* is to pass on the right to talk while signalling that attention is still being kept (Schegloff 1982; Clark 1996; Bavelas et al. 2000). Stenström (1994: 93) on the other hand describes the primary meanings of such backchannels in a more far-reaching manner. What all of those meanings have in common however is that they have a positive connotation. For the most part, the use of negative backchannels is dealt with in chapter 4.6. To a certain extent however, they are also found in this chapter. Yet first of all, according to Stenström (1994: 93), backchannels are an indicator of:

- support, enthusiasm (also Ward and Tsukahara 2000: 1180), agreement, evaluation, acknowledgement, expression of understanding
- requests for clarification
- responding to new information
- encouraging the primary interlocutors in their turn production

This list shows that the spectrum of functions that backchannels can adopt is broad. However, some distinctions that Stenström (1994: 93) makes appear to be redundant or at least blurry. In that regard, the biggest problem is the lack of examples as she insufficiently goes into further detail on what she considers the difference between a supporting backchannel and one that is encouraging continuation.

It is also problematic that Stenström (1994: 93) relies too heavily on the positive functions of backchannels and leaves out asking what kind of negative effects they can

have. The same accounts for Tottie (1991: 256), who distinguishes only between a *supportive* and a *regulative function*, both of which are positive. While it is not possible to consider both functions entirely separately from each another, some core functions can still be defined. The primary aim of listeners in their role as supporters is to acknowledge the prior utterances that are produced by the turn-holding interlocutor. Regulators on the other hand try to ensure a smooth progress of the primary speaker's turn and thus minimize the risk of disturbing the flow of the speech. Therefore, while the former looks back the latter looks forward. Tottie (1991: 256) further argues that for the flow of face-to-face interactions it is however more important to properly regulate than to constantly support.

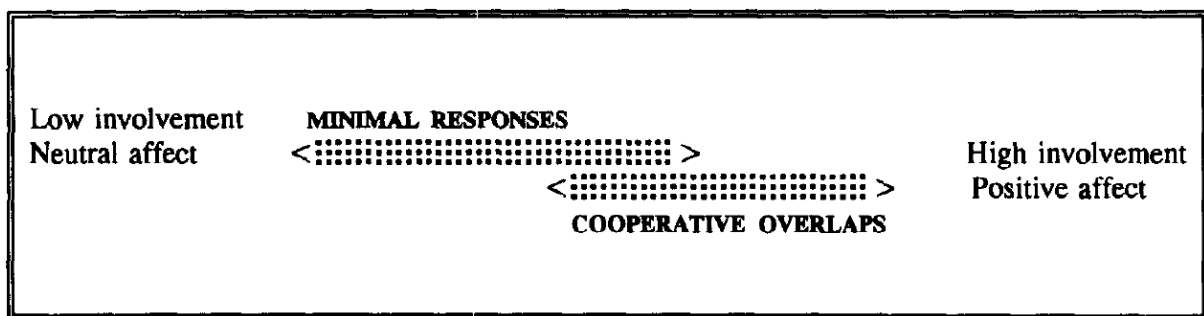
When discussing the positive and negative functions of backchannel, it is important to note that there exists no clear-cut binary distinction. Attributing the label *negative* to a backchannel does not mean that such items are used to cause conflict in a conversation. Neither does it mean that negative backchannels interrupt the flow and the structure in any way. Brennan und Hulteen (1995: 143f.) for example argue that backchannels are mostly used for positive purposes as described in the previous chapter, which they also call *positive evidence*. However, they also focus on how backchannels can serve negative purposes by focusing on the grounding process that takes place between interlocutors. Conversations in general and grounding in particular do not always work without the occurrence of communicative problems. Such problems can be traced back to discrepancies that arise from the individual states of knowledge of the individual interlocutors. As a consequence, repairing processes take place that align the knowledge levels of both interlocutors. Such *negative evidence*, even though the authors do not give any examples, is therefore only used in case a conversation runs the risk of failing because the participants do not understand each other.

Yet in order not to disturb the overall conversation and thus waste too much speaking time, said repairing processes are normally carried out by the non-primary speaker by using brief backchannels. Brennan und Hulteen (1995: 143f.) further emphasize that neither positive nor negative evidence is more important than the other, yet most of the studies discussed so far favour the positive use of backchannels. Bjørge (2010: 191) explains this by claiming that interlocutors are much more willing to give feedback and use backchannels in a positive, non-threatening and easy-going atmosphere.

The model developed by Stubbe (1998: 258f.) in her cross-cultural analysis of verbal feedback used in New Zealand English does not represent a firm classification of negative and positive backchannels. Instead, she places them on a continuum ranging from

low to high (emotional) involvement (see figure 1) and she further claims that said involvement is either neutral or positive. Even though she does not deny the existence of unsupportive feedback, the label *negative* is still absent as it is considered as an exception and not the norm during informal face-to-face conversations.

Figure 1: Verbal feedback continuum



(Stubbe 1998: 259)

Readily identified verbalizations like *yeah*, *yes* and *okay*, as defined by Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.), are located fairly in the right half of the *minimal responses line*. The table also shows that minimal responses generally depict a low to mid-level involvement. What can also be read from the table however is that these responses are not a fixed group, but they can be further subcategorized. Stubbe (1998: 259f.) defines two categories, both depending on their position on the line. The first category is called *neutral minimal responses*, which are located on the left-hand side of the continuum whereas *supportive minimal responses* orient themselves towards the right-hand side.

In contrast to neutral minimal responses like the above-mentioned *yeah*, *yes* and *okay*, supportive minimal responses reflect an increased involvement of the listener. An increased emotional involvement can also be marked by an increased pitch, a factor that is further analysed in chapter 4.5. The list of possible items an interlocutor can choose from is far more extensive compared to the first category. Utterances like *oh gosh*, as depicted in *example 5*, are comparable to the above-mentioned assessments (Stubbe 1998: 266). To further complicate matters however, they are also to a certain extent in line with the discourse phenomenon discussed in the following chapter, namely interjections.

(5) Supportive minimal responses

<S1> Were they married?

<S2> Yes

<S1> Oh gosh

<S1> Ten years twelve years or something

(S1A-058; 034-037)

Neutral minimal responses on the other hand are supportive with regard to their function in a conversation yet neutral on an emotional level with items like *mm*, *yeah* or *uh huh*. They are similar to what Schegloff (1982: 81f.) defined as continuers in that they signal close attention and the willingness to keep on listening. Feedback provided via neutral minimal responses occurs more or less automatically. In contrast, the range of emotions that is reflected by supportive minimal responses is significantly wider. Such responses can be a display of emotions similar to those mentioned by Stenström (1994: 93) like enthusiasm, encouragement or surprise.

Minimal responses primarily occur in isolation, thus in situations a speaker pauses to provide a space for the listeners to utter their backchannels. However, it can also happen that the interlocutors produce overlapping talk (Stubbe 1998: 266). For both Stubbe (1998: 258f.) and Stenström (1994: 82), overlaps are especially typical for Western societies, particularly among women, as they illustrate in-group solidarity and involvement when it comes to interaction. Furthermore, such responses are also considered as a general confirmation of the participant's shared common ground. Overlaps must therefore not be seen as bad or competitive, quite the contrary, they can be beneficial for the overall structure of face-to-face conversations.

Beňuš et al. (2011: 3003f.) go into further detail regarding the question how backchannels can be beneficial to the common ground that exists between interlocutors. They combine these two discourse concepts by modelling backchannels as a subtype of what they call *single word grounding responses*. As the name already suggests, such responses not only give feedback but they also help mutually extending the ground between interlocutors. The line between the different pragmatic functions of lexical items however is thin. Items such as *mhm*, *okay*, *yeah* or *uh huh* only serve as backchannels when they signal passive attention to the primary speaker. When used as items of acknowledgement or agreement however, such utterances do not count as backchannels, which is similar to the difference between continuers and assessments as described by Schegloff (1982: 81f.). Yet Beňuš et al. (2011: 3003f.) miss out on further elaborating on the exact differences as in the course of their empirical analysis, examples tend to overlap and generally miss clear-cut boundaries.

Last but not least Kjellmer (2009: 82), in an attempt to combine the majority of the existing theories, provides another overview of the lumping approach which is shown in *table 4*. According to his model, backchannels – even short lexical items – can fulfil five different functions:

Table 4: Functions of backchannels

“Okay so far, you can carry on...”	Regulative function
“I appreciate what you are saying...” “I understand what you are saying...” “I agree with what you are saying...” “I agree with what I assume you will be saying...”	Supportive function
“I confirm what you are saying...”	Confirmatory function
“I am listening...”	Attention-showing function
“I am on your side...”	Emphatic function

(Kjellmer 2009: 82)

Once again however, this list of individual functions is not substantiated by further examples, which makes it difficult to see the differences between them. It also illustrates the whole complexity of the discourse phenomenon and how difficult it is to strictly distinguish between particular functions. As the previous two chapters have tried to show, agreeing on a proper term as well as a definite functional range is a difficult endeavour. One important concept that has been left out so far however and which will be the main focus of the following chapter is the relationship between backchannels and a discourse phenomenon which is called *interjections*.

4.4 Drawing a line between backchannels and interjections

Despite mentions of *assessments* or references to the *emotive value of backchannels* (e.g. Schegloff 1982), the close relationship with interjections is often left out of the equation. This comes as no surprise as a closer look at the literature reveals a complex and not always clear-cut distinction regarding pragmatic aspects and the characteristics of face-to-face conversations. For the purpose of compiling a working definition of backchannels

however, analyzing interjections is indispensable as it leads to new insights regarding what backchannels actually are and they can and cannot do.

Leech et al. (1982: 53) begin their definition of interjections by arguing that they “are linguistically somewhat primitive expressions of feeling, only loosely integrated into the linguistic system.” While this is still a rather vague definition – the loose integration into the system of linguistics is also partly applicable to backchannels – the aspect of simplicity of form is also further elaborated on by Ameka (1992). In the title of his article, he calls interjections the *neglected part of speech*. He defines them as brief items “which can constitute an utterance by themselves and do not normally enter into constructions with other word classes” (Ameka 1992: 105). While the second part of this definition can also be applied to the behaviour of backchannels, the claim that interjections also function as utterances is different. It is also represented by Wharton (2003: 41), whose model places interjections in the middle of a conceptualist viewpoint and a socio-pragmatic point of view.

Ameka (1992: 106ff.) further divides interjections into three different groups, depending on what kind of functions they fulfil in an utterance and for whom: first of all, items such as *ouch* or *oh*, rather than directly relating to an interaction between two or more interlocutors, reflect the inner mental processes of the utterer. Secondly, there are interjections that directly relate to the conversational partner who in return has to respond somehow. *Hey* is an example of such an interjection. Last but not least, interjections can also be a display of social purposes that do not directly demand an answer yet closely relate to previous utterances like for example *um* as a marker of hesitation. As Ameka (1992: 114) admits however, it is especially this last type of interjections that often defies categorization and occasionally might also be similar to what this thesis defines as backchannels.

Reber (2011: 369f.), in her paper on the importance of interjections in teaching situations, bases her model on the prosodic contour of the items. By the use of prosodic versatility, interjections can adopt a variety of functions that exceed those of backchannels. In case interjections such as *oh* are uttered at a higher than normal pitch, which Reber (2011: 369f.) defines as pointed and diphthongized, they indicate a listener’s surprise regarding a primary speaker’s utterance. In contrast, if the same item is uttered by using a falling pitch and a rather soft volume, *oh* then signals disappointment to the primary speaker of the conversation. Fraser (1996: 170ff.) as well emphasizes the importance of prosody in the meaning-making process of interjections. The brief item *huh* serves as an

example to illustrate his claim. When uttered with a high-rising intonation pattern, non-primary speakers normally indicate a general want for the repetition of (at least parts) of the prior utterance to the turn-holding interlocutors. In case the same item is uttered with a steady pitch level though it changes its meaning to reflect a general disagreement or a failed attempt to process the overall message of the primary speaker. Much more than backchannels, interjections not only take the positive aspects that using such items can have into consideration, but it is also elaborated on what happens when a conversation is dysfunctional.

So far, there has only been talk about simple and short lexical items. Simplicity of form is emphasized by the majority of researchers, yet Clark and Fox Tree (2002: 76) argue that longer phrases can serve as interjections as well. The same accounts for Wilkins (1992: 124), whose definition includes categories that go beyond simple items such as *oh*, *um* or *ouch*. Yet these rather specific cases still do not tell anything about the general aspects of the concept. What they show however is that there is a thin line between interjections and backchannels.

Terms that are frequently alluded to when referring to interjections are *emotion* as well as *affection* (O'Connell/Kowal 2005: 568). In contrast to backchannels, it is argued that interjections reflect situational emotions of the listener in relation to the overall speaking situation much clearer and more immediately. Yet as a consequence, more factors have to be taken into consideration in order to decipher their pragmatic meaning. The emphatic nature of interjections for example is highly dependent on the way how an item is used. Following Fraser (1996: 170ff.), O'Connell and Kowal (2005: 568) model the functions of interjections in terms of how interlocutors shape their prosodic contour or what kind of non-verbal signals they use. In parts, this can be interpreted as a more elaborate version of the model of accompaniment signals as defined by Kendon (1967).

The importance of prosody is also emphasized by Goffman (1978: 99), who compares interjections to “response cries, namely exclamatory interjections which are not full-fledged words [of which] *[o]ops* is an example.” Norrick (2009: 867) as well argues that with regard to the role that they fulfil, interjections are often closely related to exclamatives. Close to the *cry* part in Goffman's model of response cries, such exclamatives are an indicator of the emotional attachment of an utterer to certain parts, themes and topics of a conversation.

As Wharton (2003: 39) observes, such a pragmatic and thus situation-dependent approach towards the function of interjections makes it difficult to produce a finite list of

items. Yet some attempts to provide a proper classification system exist. Norrick (2009: 867f.) distinguishes between two kinds of interjections, namely *primary* and *secondary*. Primary interjections are items that are considered not to be linguistically productive. What this means is that expressions such as the above-mentioned *oh* do not belong to a specific word class and subsequently also do not underlie the rules of inflection. What it also means is that their range of use is rather limited, thus they can be easily identified as interjections. Secondary interjections like *shit* or *fuck* on the other hand are linguistically much more complex. They are not considered as default interjections but they are derived from the way in which they are used (Wharton 2003: 41). Next to *oh*, Norrick (2009: 867) also counts *mhm*, *um*, *huh*, *hm*, *ah*, *mm*, *uh*, *wow* as well as *uh huh* as primary interjections. In the case of secondary interjections though, not all examples are as straightforward as *shit* or *fuck* as Norrick (2009: 868) also includes items such as *hey*, *well*, *okay* and *yeah*. At the same time, he refines the distinction between the two types of interjections also with regard to the degree of emotionality that they are able to transmit. In that respect, primary interjections reflect the emotions of the utterer significantly less effectively than secondary interjections. He argues that the primary function of items like *oh* is to verbalize a change in a listener's state of knowledge. Thus by uttering *oh*, listeners react to the turn of a primary speaker but do not show any emotion as they "express (...) evidentiality rather than emotional involvement" (Norrick 2009: 868). This quotation is central as it makes one thing clear, namely that said evidentiality is also a crucial factor with regard to backchannels. It also makes clear however that in terms of some items, the difference between backchannels and interjections seems almost marginal.

The model developed by Wierzbicka (1992: 165f.) does not distinguish between primary and secondary interjections as for her, secondary interjections do not exist. She argues that what is considered a secondary interjection by authors like Wharton (2003) or Norrick (2009) are simple exclamations. For her, trying to define secondary interjections is not constructive as they are all derived from different word classes and thus a natural categorization would be impossible. Only simple items that do not belong to any word class, like it is the case with primary interjections, should therefore be seen as real interjections. If items cannot be categorized that easily however, this also means that the distinction between backchannels and interjections becomes even more blurred.

The most helpful approach towards distinguishing backchannels from interjections however is again provided by Norrick (2009: 868ff.). In his study, he divides interjections into two groups with regard to where they occur in a conversation – either in freestanding

or turn-initial position. His main focus thereby is on turn-initial interjections as they are not only part of an individual turn but also have a multitude of meanings depending on the utterance they are embedded in. It is much more important though to notice that freestanding interjections – to add to the confusion, he also uses the term *pragmatic markers* – for him are similar to what was defined as backchannels in the previous chapters. In that Norrick (2009: 868ff.) follows Yngve (1970) by claiming that when uttered in isolation by the listener in the backchannel, such items fulfil everything to be referred to as backchannels.

Unfortunately, it is also the point at which Norrick's argumentation begins to stand on shaky ground as he still uses the term interjection. Taking into account how Wharton (2003: 82f.) writes about the lack of propositional content of free-standing lexical items and the pragmatic versatility which follows from that, Norrick (2009: 868ff.) is indecisive about what a free-standing item must do in order to be a backchannel. His examples therefore seem equally indecisive. Most of his examples fulfil the prerequisites that have been modelled in the previous chapters, namely in that these free-standing items do not interrupt a primary speaker's turn while at the same time they relinquish the opportunity to take the floor. Other instances are not that straightforward. *Example 6*, which is an extract from Norrick (2009: 879), is described as an instance of a freestanding item and thus a backchannel. Regarding the theoretical considerations so far however, the example is more than debatable. The utterance *oh lord* by Bud is neither a passive acknowledgement of the previous utterance nor a simple invitation to continue with the turn. By uttering *oh lord*, Bud clearly wants to provoke a reaction from the other interlocutors. So while the premise of backchannels, namely that a primary speaker's turn is not disturbed by a listener's utterance, is at least upheld to a certain extent, the continuation of the turn is still altered as *oh lord* is reacted to by Carol and further elaborated on. For that purpose, it is rather an interjection that reflects on the utterers' if not emotional then still informative state. Calling such a token a backchannel therefore seems a bit far-fetched.

(6) Supposed backchannel

- 1 Freda: was Chris married in ninety-three.
- 2 Bud: **oh lord.**
- 3 Carol: ((laugh))
- 4 ((?)): yes.
- 5 Carol: **oh lord is right.**
- 6 that was the year of all the weddings.

(Norrick 2009: 879)

The difficulty of distinguishing between interjections and backchannels is made even more apparent in another study by Norrick (2012: 566ff.), in which he finally tries to bring the two concepts together. According to this study, the main concern regarding listener items is whether their use triggers a response of the turn-holding interlocutors. For that purpose, Norrick relates the probability of a response being uttered to the lexical item that is used by the listeners, which results in three different categories. On the basis of Schegloff (1982), he refers to items like *uh huh* or *mhm* as continuers as they are hardly ever reacted to by primary speakers. Items of the second group are more likely to be reacted to. He calls them assessments and includes items such as *wow*, *gosh* or *yuck*. This second group is particularly interesting as Norrick (2012: 566ff.) claims that assessments are the same as interjections due to their affective value to the conversation. Still, this does not presume that the item must be reacted to by the primary speaker, even though the probability is higher than it is the case with continuers. Last but not least, the already above-mentioned items of information state like *oh*, *hm*, *really* or interestingly also *yeah* are most likely to trigger a response by the primary speaker directly aimed at the item itself.

This explanation is plausible, yet it is flawed. The function of backchannels is the same as continuers, the problem that remains however is to decide which lexical items are actually used as they vary according to the studies that are analysed. For that purpose, it should become clear that deciding whether or not an item exclusively functions as a backchannel or an interjection is not the primary concern. Pragmatic aspects play an undeniably more important role. In this context, the item *yeah* is a good example. Even though Norrick (2012: 566ff.) regards it as an interjection in terms of its capability of evoking a response by the primary speaker, it is also frequently referred to as a backchannel (Bjørge 2010: 193). For the purpose of the empirical research then, it will be highly important to give a clear definition of how and when an occurrence of *yeah* can be counted as a backchannel.

4.5 A turn by itself?

Andersen (2001: 99) claims that the term *backchannel* is inappropriate as it contributes far more to a conversation than it seems. This debate on the richness of short items in respect of content fuels a specific controversy, namely whether a backchannel is a turn or not. Many of the studies discussed so far (Bjørge 2010; Yngve 1970) emphasize that one of the characteristics of backchannels is that they do not interfere with or interrupt another interlocutor's turn. As a consequence, Tottie (1991: 255), among others, argues that

“backchannels are the sound (and gestures) made in conversation by the current non-speaker, which grease the wheels of conversation but constitute no claim to take over the turn”. Yet there still exist opposing opinions like Clancy and Thompson (1996: 356), who refer to backchannels as non-primary speaker turns.

Developing this line of inquiry, Beňuš et al. (2011: 3001ff.) do not include relinquishing the right to a turn by the listener in their definition of what constitutes the use of backchannels either. Quite the contrary, they consider even brief items that are uttered during conversations as a legitimate albeit particularly short form of turn-taking. Gardner (1998: 206) on the other hand observes the discussion on whether or not a backchannel is a turn from a meta-perspective – a perspective which is also adopted for the paper at hand. For him, backchannels are listener contributions that are located in a state between speaking and listening. In such a state, they do not carry any topical meaning but are rather highly context-dependent and functional in the co-construction process between the individual interlocutors.

What this means is that in the end, it becomes even more difficult to tell whether or not such contributions are a turn. Yet regarding what has been discussed so far, a single and isolated token that either does not interrupt a primary speaker’s turn or stands in between two thought units of a primary speaker cannot be counted as a turn in itself as, when stripped from its surrounding context, does not bear any meaning by itself. This distinction is also made clear by Oreström (1983: 23), who distinguishes between *speaking-turns* on the one hand and *backchannel items* on the other hand.

4.6 A closer look at intonation patterns

So far, it has been made clear that using a label such as *negative backchannels* can be somewhat misleading. Negative is not always defined in a sense that backchannels are used to rival interlocutors for the turn – even though they can be. According to Brennan and Hulteen (1995: 144), negative feedback is mostly used when something is seen as either amiss or misunderstood during a conversation and therefore in need of repair.

The approach that such repair processes are mainly carried out by the listeners is particularly emphasized by Clark and Schaefer (1989: 267ff.). For them, the *acceptance phase* of a conversation is most prone to causing problems, as the listeners must react to a primary speaker’s turn-in-progress. When that happens, misunderstandings inevitably occur in all types of conversations from time to time – but not all misunderstandings are the same. Clark and Schaefer (1987: 22) thereby make a distinction between four different

levels of understanding that listeners can go through, ranging from the weakest (0) to the strongest one (3). The *u* in the examples below stands for *utterance*.

- **State 0:** Listener B does not even notice that A utters any *u* whatsoever.
- **State 1:** Listener B at least notices that A utters something (but it is still not enough to proceed to state 2).
- **State 2:** Listener B fully and correctly hears the utterance of A – at least on a lexico-grammatical level, yet it is not enough to proceed to state 3
- **State 3:** B not only hears but also clearly understands what A means by uttering something during a conversation.

The weaker the state of understanding, the more explicit the effort must be in order to achieve mutual and coherent understanding between the interlocutors. In case listeners find themselves in the first two states, uttering simple backchannels such as *mhm*, *yeah* or *mm* is not enough as they are more an indicator of understanding than of misunderstanding. Brennan and Hulstén (1995: 144), as well as Clark and Schaefer (1989: 267ff.) justify this by claiming that the meaning that they carry is rather vague, pragmatic and not directly related to any part of a prior utterance and thus only useful in case there is no or only marginal misunderstanding. They do not attribute any negative effects to these items.

Negative functions of feedback processes in general and of backchannels in particular are also analysed by Stenström (1994: 81). In spite of all the positive functions such as acknowledgement and acceptance that backchannels display, she insists that they may also be an indicator of either a general lack of interest, of displeasure, disinterest or also of impatience. What is problematic about her model however is that it misses out on going into further detail with regard to how those functions are marked either in form or prosody. Ward and Tsukahara (2000: 1178) agree by claiming that not all backchannels signal attention or agreement with a primary speaker's ongoing turn but some, also simple items, may be an indicator of either *boredom* or *scepticism*. Furthermore, Shanmuganathan (2009: 96) even argues that a backchannel may in the end also be a claim for the channel and thus the turn itself when used in an emphatic and thus negative manner.

While the above-mentioned authors say that there can be a negative use of backchannels, they miss out on elaborating how they can be marked by the listener in order to function in such a negative manner. One way in which the function of backchannels can be made clear during a conversation is via the use of intonation patterns. In his study,

Gardner (1998: 210ff.) defines the meanings of the backchannels *yeah*, *mm* and *mmhm* according to their prosodic contour. Yet first of all, the three backchannels also differ from each other in terms of their core functions. *Mmhm* is thereby defined as a continuer in its default use whereas *yeah* is regarded as an acknowledgement/agreement item with a slight display of speakership incipency. Last but not least, Gardner (1998: 210ff.) sees *mm* as a difficult case as it displays the same functional properties as *yeah*, but with a weaker force – or as he claims: “*Mm* appears to project nothing – no speakership continuation or change, no activity change, no topic change, though all of these activities *can* occur” (Gardner 1998: 210). Moreover, while *mm* is uttered at points of grammatical completion *mmhm* serves as a continuer in situations where the primary speakers have not yet finished their utterance (Gardner 1998: 214).

To tell the individual meanings apart however, not only form but also intonation is a crucial factor. Gardner (1998: 216) therefore distinguishes between a *fall-rise* and a *falling intonation pattern*. The positive core meanings, as illustrated in the previous paragraph, normally show a fall-rising (*mmhm*) as well as a falling (*yeah*, *mm*) intonation pattern. This is their default intonation, thus they are considered as unmarked. In different contexts however and depending on what interlocutors want to express, these intonation patterns can change to either falling (*mmhm*) or fall-rising (*yeah*, *mm*). Whilst in its normal intonation pattern *mmhm* is used as a continuer and thus an item of passive reciprocity (Norrick 2012: 568), a changed intonation transforms it into an acknowledgement token.

In such cases then, a primary speaker’s turn is far more progressed than when *mmhm* is used in its core meaning, becoming more similar to *mm* in its core meaning. The use of *mm* with a fall-rising intonation on the other hand is often chosen as the appropriate backchannel in case the primary speaker runs into problems when producing a turn, thus when the speaker displays hesitation, repetition or is slow at producing coherent verbalized thoughts. In contrast to Clark and Schaefer (1989: 267ff.) then, even simple items are considered to be appropriate in states of misunderstanding, as long as their intonation makes it clear what function they have. *Yeah*, with its non-basic fall-rising intonation, is finally getting rid of its claim for the speakership. Instead it takes a U-turn by handing the momentum back to the primary speaker (Gardner 1998: 211ff.).

Wells and Macfarlane (1998: 279) approach the topic of intonation patterns on a more general level. They argue that in order to be considered as a backchannel that claims the turn, two prerequisites have to be fulfilled: a high-pitched voice and an increased loudness. Those two however only represent a claim for the turn if they are uttered either before or

after transition relevance places, hence if the backchannels overlap with the primary speaker's turn. In case they are uttered at transition relevance places, high pitch and increased sound are not immediately regarded as competitive, although they might be.

In the course of their analysis on the temporal properties of the turn-taking mechanisms in a conversation, Beňuš et al. (2011: 3002) argue that the management of turn-taking between interlocutors is *based on three different components*:

- (1) participants must mutually negotiate transition relevance places (the transition relevance places will be dealt with in the next section)
- (2) interlocutors are in possession of techniques to balance the latencies between turns in order not to produce exceedingly long pauses or overlaps and
- (3) in case any breaks occur, interlocutors do not need to abandon a conversation because they can rely on certain speech-repairing mechanisms.

Prosody plays a crucial role on all three levels. Backchannels, in terms of their intonation contour, are defined by Beňuš et al. (2011: 3001f.) as single intonational items that are mostly accompanied by silence. Long latencies between a primary speaker's turn and a listener's backchannel are an indicator of a flawed understanding while shorter pauses mean that both interlocutors understand each other well. A short latency is defined as falling below 0.3 seconds while a longer one exceeds 0.5 seconds.

Ward (2006: 168ff.) partly explains the use of non-lexical items as backchannels simply by the need of a non-primary speaker to produce sounds that are as far away as possible from those of the mainchannel. By doing so, they minimize the risk of disturbing the production of an utterance by the turn-holding interlocutor. Moreover, Ward (2006: 168ff.) considers backchannels to be compositional in that each sound transports an individual meaning. As a first step, *table 5* gives an overview not of the compositional sounds but more generally of how different sounds uttered during a conversation can be interpreted.

Table 5: Meaning/prosodic feature correspondence

sound	meaning
syllabification	lack of desire to talk
duration	amount of thought
loudness	confidence, importance
pitch downslope/upslope	degree of understanding / lack thereof
pitch height	degree of interest

(Ward 2006: 167)

While he sees the above relationships between sounds and their meaning as clear and straightforward, Ward (2006: 176) also goes into further detail on the meaning of the individual sounds of backchannels, however admitting that “there are several drawbacks with the results so far (...) clearly the analysis is incomplete (...) and is suggestive rather than definitive” (Ward 2006: 176). *Table 8* below shows the results of his study. Ward however also emphasizes that the table must not be read in a way that the sounds are either present or absent. Some aspects, like for example *creakiness*, occur on a gradual scale ranging from non-audible to clearly audible, which allows for in-between cases as well.

In case of the /m/-sound, Ward (2006: 176) argues that backchannels such as *mhm* are an indicator of a non-primary speaker’s general acknowledgement of the preceding utterance – which is on par with what has been elaborated on so far. Nasalization and the use of /n/-sounds as they occur in items such as *nn-hn* on the other hand are argued to frequently occur in conversations that have gone on for some time. As a consequence, interlocutors come across topics that have already been elaborated on. What such /n/-sounds do then is they signal a general redundancy alongside an absence of new topics to talk about. Breathiness and the use of the /h/-sound (*hm*, *uh*, *huh*) are a symbol of an existing hierarchy between the interlocutors. Using such backchannels thus serves as an indicator of extra-attention that the non-primary speakers lend to what they think of as important and new. This is especially the case when the content of the conversation is either new to the listeners or so special that they lack proficiency. A creaky voice then – Ward (2006: 138ff.) uses *yeah* as an example – shows expertise of the non-primary speaker in a topic that is part of the conversation. Last but not least, a tongue click can occur when the grounding process between interlocutors does not run as trouble-free as expected. By using clicks then, listeners can show their dissatisfaction. However, such clicks only rarely occur as backchannels and more as an introduction to turn-takeovers (Ward 2006: 138ff.).

Table 6: frequently occurring parts of non-lexical verbalizations

Sound	Notes
schwa	
/o/	
/a/	
/e/	limited distribution
nasalization	
/m/	
/j/	limited distribution
/h/ and breathiness	
tongue click	limited distribution
creakiness	

(Ward 2006: 137)

4.7 The placement of backchannels – from TRPs to TCUs

Up to this point, much has been written about the form and function of the individual backchannels and how they can be grouped. Yet one aspect which has been missing so far is where exactly those items can possibly occur in conversations. The question of backchannel locations inescapably leads to the model of the so-called transition relevance places – short TRP. What is special about these transition relevance places is that they provide the space not only for backchannels but also for a change in turns between the interlocutors (Yngve 1970, Warren 2006). Stenström (1994: 6) defines these transition relevance places as “syntactic and semantic ‘completion points’ where even a takeover would have been [possible]”. Instead of a takeover however, a backchannel is produced. As a backchannel and a turn cannot exist in the same place, the opportunity to take the floor is passed on. Wells and Macfarlane (1998) further develop this line of inquiry by analysing transition relevance places not as a point but rather as a temporal space. For them a TRP is “the stretch of talk between the final major accented syllable of the current turn and a point one or two beats following the onset of the next utterance (whether or not the utterance is spoken by the same speaker or a new speaker)” (Wells/Macfarlane 1998: 280).

Backchannels, as Norrick (2012: 568) declares, are not uttered in every transition relevance place there is but turns provide listeners with a series of such places to choose from in the course of a conversation. He further argues that the size of a primary speaker’s turn basically is not fixed but consists of various parts that are assembled, the so-called *turn-constructional units* (TCU). Between two such turn-constructional units, the transition relevance places are located. An interlocutor in charge of the turn may hold the floor for an undefined amount of time and thus also potentially across a series of turn-constructional

units. At the same time, listeners let their chance to take the floor at the offered transition relevance places pass. A reason why such turn-constructual units have no fixed size is defined by Sacks et al. (1974: 702):

Unit-types for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions [...]. Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed. Unit-types lacking the feature of projectability may not be usable in the same way. (Sacks et al. 1974: 702)

As can be seen, turn-constructual units are not always of the same size – however, this does not mean that they are random. In the same way Drew and Heritage (2006: 26) emphasize the importance of syntactical transition relevance places as well, they can be made up either of entire sentences, clauses, phrases but even also of just single words. In order for a conversation to work properly then, its most important components at least have to be predictable. What this explanation does not take into consideration however is what happens when interlocutors talk simultaneously – thus when overlaps occur. In her account on the *completion points*, Stenström (1994: 6) admits that a conversation becomes increasingly unsystematic when overlapping speech occurs between interlocutors as neither syntactic completion nor continuity is achieved. Kraut, Lewis and Swezey (1983: 730) however emphasize that the production of backchannels at non-TRPs causes far less conversational interference than fully-fledged utterances or claims for the turn. Simple feedback and especially backchannels often go unnoticed or at least unanswered by the primary speakers who simply continue with their turn.

In his analysis of the location of backchannels, Kjellmer (2009: 85ff.) argues that even when not uttered at transition relevance places, the production of backchannels is not random. He differentiates between three different places of occurrence: turn-external, turn-internal and a third group that defines backchannels as answers to a question. While it is highly debatable whether or not the third category can even be considered as a proper backchannel (as was discussed in the previous chapter), the difference between turn-external and turn-internal backchannels is illustrated by *examples 7 and 8* respectively:

(7) Turn-external backchannel

<S1> It's Chinese

No it's not au vin

<S2> I didn't think it was

<S3> It's Chinese

Well I didn't think it was either
 but I thought
 <S1> Chinese
 <S2> That's why I said is this coq au vin
 <S4> **Mm**
 <S1> I don't know
 (S1A-022; 318-327)

Example 7 illustrates two aspects quite clearly. First of all, the model of backchannels by Kjellmer (2009: 85ff.) implies that the items are uttered in isolation. And second of all, the discussion that is led on whether or not some meal is Chinese or French does not only include two but a total of four interlocutors, yet the approach is the same. Speaker 4 only produces his backchannel after speaker 2 presents a completed thought unit and thus a completed turn. This is also emphasized by how the discussion progresses. Even though speaker 4 utters a turn-external backchannel, thus handing the floor back to speaker 2, it is speaker 1 who takes the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing discussion.

Example 8 on the other hand is a display of a turn-internal backchannel. The first utterance by speaker 1 could be considered as a full turn as it fulfils the prerequisites of a turn-constructive unit as defined by Sacks et al. (1974: 702). However, the second part cannot stand alone as it lacks meaning – a meaning that it only unfolded when regarding it as part of a bigger construction. At the same time, meaning versus syntax is also the biggest issue when comparing Kjellmer (2009) either to Sacks et al. (1974) or Kraut, Lewis and Swezey (1983). The former considers semantics and the completed meaning of an utterance as the crucial parts of a turn – for him syntax is important as well but only secondary. The latter however do not so much focus on semantics whereas syntax is most important. The second *mm* on the other hand is not a backchannel, as the former listener turns into the primary speaker by seizing the opportunity to take over the turn.

(8) Turn-internal backchannels

<S1> Could you take a moment to reflect on that internally
 <S2> **Mm**
 <S1> what the need was to separate yourself from the group
 and is it significant in relation to what then happened
 <S2> **Mm**

I am not quite sure what my need was
(S1A-060; 155-160)

In his study, Kjellmer (2009: 85ff.) further argues that even though making a distinction between turn-internal and turn-external is not always easy, turn-external backchannels clearly outweigh turn-internal ones. Also, while turn-external backchannels have rather clear insertion points at finished thought units, the case is different regarding turn-internal backchannels. Analysing roughly 2,000 turn-internal backchannels, he presents a total of 26 different locations they can be inserted in, which are listed below in *table 7*. What it shows is that turn-internal backchannels are most frequently inserted into clause breaks either before a conjunction or an interrogative (with a total of 503 tokens) or into locations when an unfinished utterance is followed by a clause that is not introduced by a conjunction (205 tokens). In addition, they can also sometimes be found before preposition phrases (192 tokens).

Table 7: Range of possible insertion points for turn-internal backchannels

Points of BC insertion	Possible sub-categories
At clause break	Before conjunction or interrogative
	After conjunction
	Before and after conjunction
	No conjunction at break
	Before relative
	After relative
In noun phrase	
Before apposition	
In verb phrase	Between verbs
	Between verb and object
	Between verb and predicative complement
	Before free-standing participle
	Before (whether/in order) to-infinitive
	Between to and infinitive
In prepositional phrase	Before preposition
	After preposition

In coordinated structure	Before coordinator
	After coordinator
	No coordinator
In nexus	
Adverbial	Before adverbial
	After adverbial
	In adverbial
Before repeated element	
In adjective phrase	
Unanalysed	

(Kjellmer 2009: 90f.)

The most crucial point however that is made by Kjellmer (2009: 95ff.) is that he distinguishes backchannels on three levels, depending on their potential to interfere with a primary speaker's turn. To be clear however, interference in this sense does not mean that a backchannel causes a complete abandonment or take-over of the ongoing turn. Interference rather plays a role in triggering repetitions, noises of hesitations or incomplete yet functional syntax of the primary speaker. These three levels of interference are termed *low*, *moderate* and *high* and for each level, there is a variety of items to choose from. Backchannels with a high potential for interference do not require completed units of thought before they can be inserted. *Yeah* for example is often placed in the midst of a primary speaker's noun phrase. *Uh huh* on the other hand is primarily inserted after completed turn construction units at transition relevance places. But why does interference even work without ruining the ongoing conversation? Because of what Sacks et al. (1974: 702) refer to as *projectability*.

Regarding the placement of backchannels in noun phrases, Kjellmer (2009: 95ff.) calls such a predictable development of a turn *collocational force*. *Example 9*, taken directly from Kjellmer (2009: 96) shows that the reason why the listener uses a turn-internal *mhm* is because he can predict the missing lexical items simply by the collocational force of what he has already heard.

(9) Turn-internal BC in noun phrase

<F02> [...] It used to be very very late and er then they'd start to party and have playing
loud jazz

<F01> **Mhm**

<F02> music till about four o'clock in the morning

(Kjellmer 2009: 96)

Furthermore, Kjellmer (2009: 99f.) also elaborates on what he calls *nexus constructions*. In nexus constructions, backchannels are frequently enclosed by the subject and the predicate of a primary speaker's utterance. The reason why such constructions are still functional rests on a variety of factors, among which the principle of grounding is most important (Kraut/Lewis/Swezey 1983: 730). As has already been mentioned, interlocutors are mostly familiar with each other and their background knowledge (Clark 1996: 13f.) and mutually develop common ground step by step (Wrede et al. 2010: 2370f.). Both of these grounding processes help the interlocutors to become familiar with the contents of the conversation. As a result, even if speaker turns are not predictable word by word, a sufficient level of grounding nevertheless allows listeners to insert backchannels into seemingly unfortunate positions.

Clancy and Thompson (1996: 364ff.), by conducting a cross-cultural comparative study (English/Japanese/Mandarin), also distinguish between backchannels in transition relevance places or during the turn of a primary speaker. However, the authors define the concept of the transition relevance place even further. They argue that some of these places are better suited for backchannel-insertion than others. Besides the predictability in terms of their syntactical structure however, additional factors must come into play as well. For that purpose, they expand TRPs by intonational indicators while also relabeling them as *complex transition relevance place*. What intonation does is that it also takes the primary speakers into account. By varying their intonation, especially towards the end of their turns, primary speaker are able to interact with the listeners more clearly. Complex transition relevance places do not replace normal TRPs however – both co-exist. The difference between them is that there are far less of the former than there are of the latter. TRPs are only relevant in terms of their syntactical character as outlined by Drew and Heritage (2006: 26), hence they are a far less definitive indicator of the end of a primary speaker's turn than complex transition relevance places.

The model that Clancy and Thompson (1996: 364ff.) use distinguishes four different types of intonation that occur at points of grammatical completion. Two of these intonation types are regarded as final while the other two are non-final. In terms of finality, two types of intonation are at the disposal of the utterers, namely either a falling or a high

rising pitch. The first thereby represents finished statements whereas the second intonation represents questions. In both cases however, the use of external backchannels is common as the turn itself is considered as finished. The remaining two options on the other hand are marked by their non-finality. In comparison to the final intonation patterns, interlocutors use a less extreme pitch as they have not yet finished their turn. The pitch that they use is marked either by a slight rise towards the end or a steady/slightly falling pitch. In the first case, the use of backchannels by the listeners resembles co-operative overlaps. In the second case however, listeners just interrupt an ongoing turn by the primary speaker and thus produce a non-cooperative overlap. Yet as listeners often tend to misinterpret the sounds that are used by turn-holding interlocutors, Clancy and Thompson (1996: 364ff.) come to the conclusion that English speakers prefer using classical transition relevance place to backchannel, hence syntactic completion is most important.

In the end, it is difficult to combine all the different aspects to function as an impeccable unit. There are many viewpoints that have been taken so far: terminology, functionality, tonality, placement and delimitations to other discourse phenomena. Each one of those viewpoints however has made clear that in order to analyse backchannels, a proper definition has to be distilled from all the available definitions – a task carried out in chapter 6.

5 Empirical corpus research

The theoretical implications that have been elaborated on up to this point should make one aspect particularly clear, namely that it is a rather difficult task to give a definite and clear-cut definition of what constitutes backchannelling. The problem that a researcher normally is confronted with is two-fold.

5.1 Defining items for research

First of all, relating back to the individual authors that have been taken into consideration for the theoretical discourse, backchannels adopt a variety of different shapes – such as *mhm* or *mm*. They are regarded as rather simple items which are empty lexical forms that do not have any grammatical capacities. Equally short in form but significantly more integrated into the syntactical and grammatical structures of an overall utterance are items such as *okay* alongside brief word combinations such as *I see*. There are also far more complex manifestations that can function as backchannels as well like brief reformulations, sentence completions or repetitions (Duncan/Fiske 1985). What the previous chapters have tried to illustrate then is that it is particularly difficult to nearly impossible to come up with an all-encompassing list of potential forms of the phenomenon at hand.

Second, even after selecting a fixed set of items for analysis, this does not mean that the use of these items is exclusively restricted to backchannels as they can cover a whole range of different functions, dependent on what interlocutors want to say and where they place the items (eg. Kendon 1967: 22ff.). All-inclusive and readily available predictions cannot be made – it is more important to look at each token in close detail and then decide on which particular role they fulfil. With a view to the overall research question it is important to know what proportion of the total occurrences of each item functions as a backchannel. In order to do so however, it is indispensable to conduct empirical research. To arrive at an adequate method that does justice to the topic – especially regarding gender-specific backchannelling – a binary approach was chosen. In a first step, a quantitative corpus analysis was conducted. In that way, it was possible to measure the overall occurrences of the individual items. Due to workload constraints however, certain limitations had to be put upon the material. For the quantitative part, what Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.) describe as “readily identified verbalizations” such as *yeah* or *okay* were in the center of attention.

While the quantitative part shows the statistical differences concerning how men and women use short backchannel items in the different text types, the qualitative part

follows a different path. For that purpose, a small sub-sample of the corpus was defined and further investigated with respect to differences between inter-gender as well as intra-gender conversations. As qualitative empirical work also provides the ground for a broader focus, the scope of backchannels was extended to the different manifestations that have been discussed in this paper so far, ranging from reformulations to utterance completions, among others. Admittedly, this change of scope in chapter 10 is a difficult endeavour as it raises the research to an analytically even more complex (and debatable) level. However, this attempt is still considered as a valuable contribution to the complexity of interpersonal communication. Influenced by conversation analytical thinking (Schegloff 1982), the last chapter tries to show that the act of backchannelling can manifest itself in a variety of different and especially context-dependent ways.

A quantitative corpus analysis can serve a variety of different purposes as well. The primary interest was to find out whether items like *mm* or *yeah* are actually used as backchannels and to what extent they are spread over the various text categories. Additionally, it was also an issue to find out whether or not any of the items are more frequently used as backchannels than others. Finally, these backchannels were analysed with respect to their transition relevance places and to the question whether or not they interrupt another interlocutor's ongoing turn, thus whether they are internal or external.

To get a comprehensive insight into the topic, the decision was made to choose the backchannels that were mentioned most frequently in the literature. The problem however was that while particular items are considered as backchannels by some researchers, others argue differently and put them into different categories. The primary concern for including certain items in the quantitative corpus research thus was to find an intersecting set of items that were regarded as backchannels primarily. Kjellmer (2009: 85) argues that among the most frequent backchannels are *mhm*, *mm*, *right*, *uh huh*, *yeah* as well as *yes*. Norrick (2009: 868) on the other hand considers *okay* and *I see* as important backchannels, two items which were already analysed in the early stages of research on backchannels by researchers like Kendon (1967) or Fries (1952). This resulted in a total of eight different backchannels that were used for the quantitative corpus research. As they are not always backchannels though, the following section provides a proper working definition.

5.2 Sharpening the focus

5.2.1 A working definition

Identifying the individual items in the corpus is only the first step as it does not say anything about their conversation-internal function. As a consequence, the decision was made that only those items which adhered to the contexts outlined in *working definitions 1* and *2* were counted as backchannels. As conversations do not only involve two interlocutors that share the floor (**definition 1**), a differentiation also had to be made with respect to three or more speakers (**definition 2**). Working definition 1 shows that there are two possibilities: an item can be inserted after speaker X has just concluded their utterance. This is then followed by the same speaker (X) continuing with a new utterance. The second option is that a backchannel is inserted within an ongoing utterance by speaker X, which at the same time means that said utterance is grammatically incomplete. What exactly happens at such places of incompleteness is treated in chapter 4.7.

Working definition backchannels 1: 2 interlocutors

<speaker X> turn

<speaker Y> *mhm/mm/right/uh huh/yeah/yes/okay/I see*

<speaker X> either a continuation of the turn or the start of a new one (defined by its grammatical completeness)

Yet the fact that the defined items occur in contexts similar to the one above does not immediately make them a backchannel, even though most of the time it does. These items might also serve as an answer to a previous utterance. For that purpose, the coding sheet was designed in the following way and examples for each category are given below:

- Backchannel – turn-internal □
- Backchannel – turn-external □
- Resumptive opener □
- Answer □
- Other □

(10) Turn-internal backchannel

<S1> With all the students you mean

<S2> **Mm**

<S1> Because the means related one you don't have to
(S1A-062; 175-177)

(11) Turn-external backchannel

<S1> He's not even working right now

<S2> **OK**

<S1> Oh you mean like a medical policy
(S1A-062; 133)

(12) Resumptive opener

<S1> There's tea and one or two other things

<S2> **Yeah**

but we can't walk out because after yours there's another one
(S1A-005; 097-099)

(13) Answer

<S1> Are we OK Steve
Everything OK

<S2> **Yeah**

<S1> Carry on
(S1A-004; 031-034)

(14) Other

<S1> And making tea and going out to get sandwiches

<S2> Yes that's **right**

(S1A-011:1; 035-036)

As all tokens of the individual items were analysed, additional categories had to be included in the coding sheet as well. *Resumptive openers* (Clancy and Thompson 1996) as well as *answers* (Kjellmer 2009) were explicitly added as they were discussed in chapter 4. Moreover, in terms of the quantitative analysis they were considered to be easily analysable. The remainder of the occurrences which were considered not to contribute to the overarching topic of backchannels were coded in the *other* category.

As it is in the nature of everyday conversations that often there are not only two but a variety of different interlocutors, examples covered by *working definition 2* can serve as backchannels as well.

Working definition backchannels 2: 3 or more interlocutors

<speaker X> turn

<speaker Y> *mhm/mm/right/uh huh/yeah/yes/okay/I see*

<speaker Z> start of a new turn

Basically, the conditions to be put in the category of backchannels are similar to the first working definition. The only difference is that it is slightly more difficult to decide whether a backchannel is turn-internal or -external. Turn-internal backchannels however occur rather seldom. A token was only counted as turn-internal if the initial utterance by speaker X was obviously interrupted by speaker Y and therefore left unfinished, thus providing speaker Z with enough time to continue with their own utterance.

5.2.2 Restrictions and borderline cases

Face-to-face interactions, regardless of text type, are very versatile in their nature. Despite providing a working definition in the previous section, there were still plenty of exceptions and borderline cases which had to be taken into consideration. Therefore, it is important to put further restrictions on the material and thus define more precisely when a token can be considered a backchannel. This can be best done via examples that were encountered in the course of the corpus analysis.

In many cases, it is only one word or a brief lexical item that decides to which category an item belongs. Yet sometimes even such short items give the whole utterance a spin in a certain direction and subsequently make it only seem like a backchannel. *Example 15* is an illustration of such a case. Even though *yes* and *yeah* look like a backchannel, the context provides them with a different function. Speaker 1 is inviting speaker 2 to give a more elaborate answer to her utterance, yet speaker 2 – in a motion of either surprise or lack of knowledge (“uhm”) – immediately hands the floor back to speaker 1. What can be mistaken as two backchannels then turns out to be a failed attempt at *speakership incipency*. However, as will be seen in chapter 10, the general problem is that such examples are not always clear-cut and sometimes offer multiple interpretations.

(15) Signs of hesitation

<S1> But you know I think you just take that as read as well you know and I'll hear from you when I hear from you.

<S2> Uhm

Yes

Yeah

<S1> But yeah so

(S1A-092; 054-059)

Chapter 4.4 is dedicated to the difference between backchannels and interjections – *example 16* is a good illustration of that distinction. Even though speaker 1 utters *I see* almost in isolation, thus passing on the opportunity to talk, it is introduced by the item *oh*. The result is an interjection as the item has a certain degree of implicit emphatic force, often illustrated by the fact that primary speakers directly react to the secondary speakers' short utterances (*yeah* uttered by speaker 2). In case such instances occurred in the corpus, they were not counted as backchannels but simply put in the category of *other*.

(16) Interjection

<S1> So why do you need a tape called the seducing tape just to ask him out for a drink

<S2> I'm just going to put it in a Walkman and stick it over his ears

<S1> Oh **I see**

<S2> Yeah next lesson

(S1A-091; 260-262)

Example 17 provides a closer look at the coding practices of the quantitative analysis. Speaker 2 utters three different backchannels in succession, each token however is considered as an individual occurrence of the respective backchannel. *Example 17* therefore includes three backchannels in total. In case a speaker uttered one and the same backchannel in quick succession (*mhm mhm/mm mm*) on the other hand, these were only counted as one backchannel in the total count.

(17) Succession of different backchannels

<S1> the French guy in the studio says that he's been going on about having to go to London to cut a record tomorrow so it sounds OK

just that he hasn't been in all day
<S2> **Mmm**
Yeah
Right
<S1> Uhm besides that I've been phoning round the press
(S1A-100:3; 083-088)

A more complicated way of backchannelling is illustrated by *example 18*. The last two words uttered by speaker 1 (“the theatre”) are repeated by speaker 2 and then complemented by the item *right*. Such a combination of repetition + token, were it to occur in isolation and not followed by a same-speaker turn, would be a backchannel – yet not in the quantitative analysis. For the quantitative analysis, it was decided to only include examples that strictly adhered to the two working definitions above. Such instances however will become highly important in the course of the qualitative analysis.

(18) Repetition of (parts of) previous utterance

<S1> uhm
no
I don't know much about the theatre
<S2> the theatre
right
Well I'm writing a play for them
So I've kind of been doing that
(S1A-096; 035-042)

Multi-speaker backchannelling has to be taken into consideration as well, which is illustrated by *example 19*. Both instances of *right* occur in isolation and thus are (turn-external) backchannels – yet the second token is slightly different compared to the first one. By only uttering *right* with no additional content, speaker 2 attempts to hand the turn back to speaker 1, who however has nothing more to add to the ongoing conversation. As a consequence, he produces a backchannel as well. Speaker 1 finally takes over the floor without any further hesitation.

(19) Handing back the floor by repeated backchannels

<S1> Well I'll speak to you later

<S2> **Right**

<S1> **Right**

<S2> Is anybody doing any leafleting tonight?

(S1A-100:3; 230-233)

5.3 The corpus

Regarding the corpus research, there was a variety of potential candidates in the beginning, with the most crucial prerequisite being that it offered a wide range of different spoken contexts as well as sufficient material on direct conversations. Thus in order to be able to properly investigate naturally occurring stretches of spoken interaction, the ICE-GB corpus provided the most suitable tool for the needs of the paper at hand.

The corpus covers 300 texts and 446 subtexts in the domain of *spoken texts* with a total of 637,682 words. The domain of spoken texts is then further sub-categorized, namely into **direct conversations**, **telephone calls**, **public dialogue**, **mixed** as well as **scripted and unscripted monologue**. Some exceptions had to be made however in order to fit to the needs of the study: first of all, the category of transcribed **monologues** was not taken into consideration as the main focus of this study is the use of backchannels in face-to-face conversations. For the same reason the **mixed** category was left out as well as it consists of dialogues and monologues. For the quantitative review of backchannels then, the following categories were taken into consideration:

- **direct conversations**
 - 185,208 words/90 texts/120 subtexts/338 speakers/171 male/167 female
- **telephone calls**
 - 20,419 words/10 texts/18 subtexts/36 speakers/16 male/20 female
- **broadcast discussions**
 - 43,920 words/20 texts/21 subtexts/101 speakers/85 male/16 female
- **broadcast interviews**
 - 22,147 words/10 texts/13 subtexts/26 speakers/17 male/9 female
- **business transactions**
 - 20,546 words/10 texts/13 subtexts/53 speakers/35 male/18 female
- **classroom lessons**

- 42,210 words/20 texts/22 subtexts/118 speakers/76 male/42 female
- **legal cross-examinations**
 - 21,179 words/10 texts/12 subtexts/35 speakers/32 male/3 female
- **parliamentary debates**
 - 21,060 words/10 texts/11 subtexts/113 speakers/101 male/12 female

This resulted in a total of 376,689 words to analyse. The sample-size however was highly dependent on the individual items as there were significant differences with respect to their frequency. For that reason, it was decided to take each token into consideration – with the exception of two instances (*see* section 5.4). In order for the figures to be representative however, the tables below show how often these backchannels occurred within a hundred thousand words.

5.4 Corpus limitations

Quantitative corpus research can provide new insights into the topic at hand, yet there is still a variety of obstacles that have to be taken into consideration. First of all, while the ICE-GB is a comparably small corpus, it was not possible to analyse each individual token. In the text category of *direct conversations*, the two items *yeah* (1,747 tokens) and *yes* (1,460 tokens) occurred too many times for a proper analysis. As a result, simple random sampling was applied to the data in order to arrive at 500 tokens for each item.

Second of all, regarding the gender-specific use of backchannels, some technical problems occurred as the search engine does not make a difference between the sexes when showing results. To properly distinguish between male and female speakers in the course of the statistical analysis then, a codebook was written by the researcher. Gender balance was also a problem, as with the exception of *direct conversations* and *telephone calls*, there is a general lack of a female perspective across the different text types.

Third of all, spelling is another crucial aspect when it comes to conducting an analysis. While the majority of the results showed a clear spelling pattern in the corpus, some adaptations had to be made in the course of the process to the initial *mm* and *okay*. As ICE-GB uses various spelling patterns regarding those two items, each was complemented by an additional spelling: *mmm* was added to *mm* and *OK* to *okay*. In the final count however, those different types of spelling were not considered separately as the meaning carried by each item was the same. Thus, the tokens were added up and inserted into the individual tables.

Last but not least, statistical analysis must generate figures that are comparable, which is difficult when the total numbers of each item in the various text categories differ. This is due to the fact that with the exception of *yeah* and *yes* mentioned above, every single token of the eight items was analysed for all text types. To be able to compare the individual item frequencies among each other however, various precautions had to be taken. First of all, as depicted in chapter 6.1, it was calculated for each text type how often the individual backchannels occur in a total of one-hundred thousand words. Furthermore, the bar charts in chapter 7.2 give a comparative overview of the ratio of the different functions for each individual item regardless of the overall numbers.

6 Results – Quantitative analysis

The following chapters go into further detail on the individual facets of the quantitative corpus analysis. Chapter 6 thereby puts its focus on illustrating how the eight different items are distributed among the individual text categories. *Table 10* grants a closer look at the raw frequencies of the individual items, closely depicting the distribution between internal as well as external backchannels. In order to make those numbers comparable then, *table 11* gives an overview of how often these items occur within one hundred-thousand words of each individual text category. Chapter 7 on the other hand takes each item individually and describes which functions they tend to take across the various text categories. Chapter 8 lays out the statistical differences regarding how backchannels are used by men and women. The last chapter of the quantitative analysis finally looks at the distribution of turn-internal backchannels.

6.1 General distribution of backchannels – internal and external

Judging from the raw figures as they are depicted in *table 8*, the text type of *direct conversations* shows the highest number of backchannels with 437. This comes as no surprise as the overall word count of the text category is significantly higher than any of the other seven types. Looking at the normalized figures though (*table 9*) shows that *direct conversations* are only third behind *telephone conversations* and *business transactions*. Yet even with such comparably high numbers, there is no occurrence of the item *uh huh* used as a backchannel. As can be seen, the same also accounts for all the other text types. This is a rather surprising result which is in contrast the authors like Bjørge (2010: 193) and especially Clark (1996: 227ff.), who consider *uh huh* as a legitimate and important backchannel. In the context of all the functions that were taken into consideration for the analysis, this tendency does not shift as *uh huh* only occurred two times overall (for a more detailed analysis, see chapter 7). Kjellmer (2009: 88), in contrast to the above two authors, comes to a similar result in that *uh huh* shows by far the lowest frequency among all the investigated items. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that in terms of overall numbers, *uh huh* represents a mere 0.5 per cent of all the tokens in the corpus.

I see as well is no frequent backchannel among speakers as it was only found in three out of all eight text types. With a total of eight tokens, this makes for a marginal 1.1 per cent of the 732 backchannels that were found in the corpus. On the other end, *table 8* shows that *mhm/mm/mmm* as well as *yeah/yes* are the most favoured backchannels. Compared to the overall occurrences, they provide 38 per cent (278) and 41.4 per cent

(303) of the tokens respectively. However, there exist some digressions from that tendency. *Telephone calls* for example paint a slightly different picture. The items *yeah* and *yes* are clearly favoured, yet *mhm/mmm/mm* seem to only play a minor role when talking on the phone. The additional preference for *okay/OK* as well as *right* could therefore be interpreted as a tendency to choose clearly audible and therefore distinguishable sounds that can also be heard over a telephone. In the light of Ward's (2006: 137) elaboration on the sound system of short verbalizations as depicted in chapter 4.6, it can be seen that participants in telephone conversations clearly refuse to make use of nasal sounds when backchannelling.

Broadcast discussions and *broadcast interviews* are particularly in respect to their backchannel distribution. More precisely, backchannels are hardly used at all. This is also emphasized by a look at *table 9*, which shows how often the individual lexical items occur within a hundred-thousand words in the respective text types. As can be seen, with a range between 4.52 backchannels/one-hundred thousand words and 18.06, short lexical items are not the preferred choice to indicate backchannelling. While this lack of backchannels can to a certain extent be explained via the general nature of interviews, it is difficult to see why the same accounts for *broadcast discussions* – especially the total absence of internal backchannels. This goes against the notion of what normally is expected in the course of a discussion, where instances of interruption, overlapping talk and a continuous claim for the floor in order to bring arguments forward are prominent. The lack of backchannels in *broadcast interviews* on the other hand might be explained by the nature of the text type itself. While a feature of conversations is that all participants share the floor and contribute towards the common ground, interviews are different. The interviewer is a more passive interlocutor whose task is to ask questions while the interviewee must answer said questions appropriately – not exceedingly long and also not too short either.

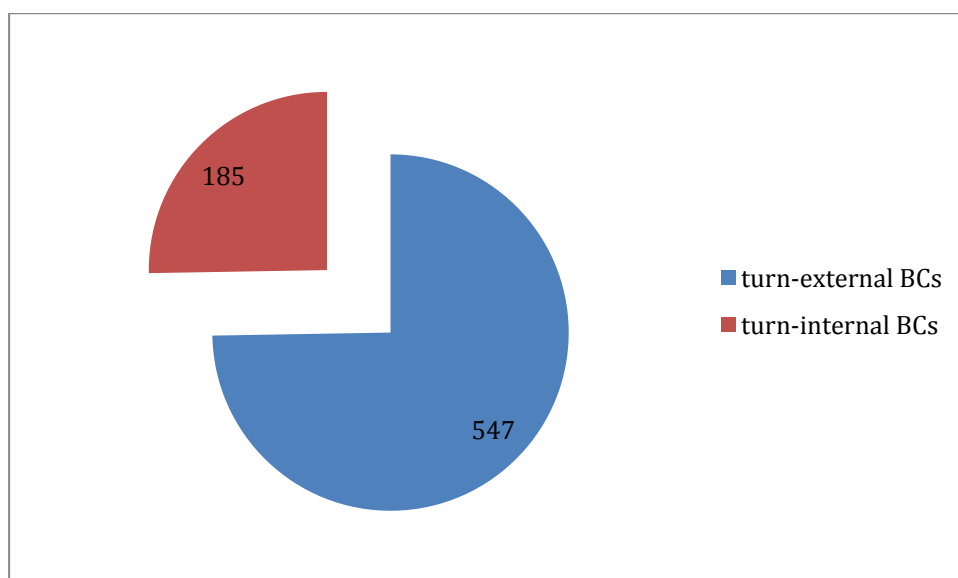
Table 8: Distribution of backchannels across text types

		mhm/mm/mmm	right	uh huh	yeah/yes	OK/okay	I see	Total
direct conversations	ext./int.	174/51	47/9	0	99/29	16/3	3/1	437
	% int.	22.7	16.1	0	22.7	15.8	25	
	N	225	56	0	128	19	4	
telephone calls	ext./int.	0/3	10/5	0	44/23	8/3	0/1	
	% int.	100	33.3	0	34.3	27.3	100	

	N	3	15	0	67	11	1	97
broadcast discussions	ext./int.	5/0	0	0	5/0	0	0	
	% int.	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	N	5	0	0	5	0	0	10
broadcast interviews	ext./int.	0	0/1	0	3/1	0	0	
	% int.	0	100	0	25	0	0	
	N	0	1	0	4	0	0	5
business transactions	ext./int.	6/4	7/4	0	38/15	9/2	0	
	% int.	40	36.4%	0	28.3	18.2	0	
	N	10	11	0	53	11	0	85
classroom lessons	ext./int.	25/8	6/2	0	19/9	1/3	0	
	% int.	24.2	25	0	32.1	75	0	
	N	33	8	0	28	4	0	73
legal cross-examinations	ext./int.	1/1	1/0	0	10/8	1/0	2/1	
	% int.	50	0	0	44.4	0	33.3	
	N	2	1	0	18	1	3	25

Going one step further, it is also crucial to look at the different ratios with regard to external and internal backchannels. Overall, there is a clear preference among interlocutors for using the eight lexical items as external rather than internal backchannels. The pie chart illustrated in *figure 2* makes this clear by showing that internal backchannels roughly provide one quarter (25.3 per cent) of all the backchannels in the quantitative analysis.

Figure 2: Total distribution of backchannels – external/internal



Regarding the individual text types and lexical items, there are still a couple of differences worth elaborating on. First of all, *table 8* shows that each item is uttered in both ways, internally as well as externally. However, despite the overall dominance of external backchannels, some items are primarily used as internal backchannels by interlocutors. In the text category of *telephone calls* for example, speakers tend to use internal backchannels at a rate that is different from the overall distribution. Even though the raw figures are rather low compared to the other items, *I see* and *mhm/mm/mmm* even occur exclusively as internal backchannels. Yet also with regard to *yeah/yes* and *right*, internal backchannels represent a third of all tokens.

This tendency to make increased use of internal backchannels is also particularly visible in *legal cross-examinations*, despite the fact that the overall frequency of backchannels is rather poor (*see table 9*). However, this text category is also interesting for another reason. Taking a closer look at the two items *right* and *OK/okay*, it can be seen that these are the only two instances in which an item is used as an external backchannel only. Despite the clear dominance of external backchannels, it was not expected to see an exclusive use of internal backchannels being more prominent than the external counterpart.

Table 9: Occurrence of individual items per hundred-thousand words

	mhm/mm/mmm	right	uh huh	yeah/yes	OK/okay	I see	Total
direct conversations	121.49	30.24	0	69.11	10.26	2.16	235.95
telephone calls	14.7	73.46	0	328.13	53.87	4.9	475.05
broadcast discussions	11.38	0	0	11.38	0	0	22.77
broadcast interviews	0	4.52	0	18.06	0	0	22.58
business transactions	48.67	53.54	0	257.96	53.54	0	413.71
classroom lessons	78.18	18.95	0	66.33	9.48	0	172.94
legal cross-examinations	9.44	4.72	0	84.99	4.72	14.16	118.04

Leaving aside raw figures for a moment, it is also crucial to take a closer look at the frequencies of the individual items within a hundred-thousand words as they are depicted in *table 9*. As already discussed above, *broadcast discussions* and *broadcast interviews* show that backchannels are hardly made use of. *Yeah/yes* are used most frequently yet still only occur 18.06 times within a hundred-thousand words. Such numbers are diminishingly small by comparison. The text type of *business transactions* namely illustrates quite a frequent use of backchannels by the speakers. Even the least used items (*mhm/mm/mmm*) have a significantly higher frequency than any of the items in the *broadcast* categories.

Mhm/mm/mmm and *yeah/yes* were depicted above as the most frequent backchannels in terms of their raw numbers. While this finding still stands, a closer look at *table 11* paints a slightly different picture in terms of the backchannel-spread across the individual text types – especially regarding their total word count. The bulk of the occurrences of *mhm/mm/mmm* is provided by *direct conversations*, thus resulting in 121.49 occurrences within a hundred-thousand words. In return, this means that only a small fraction of the remaining occurrences is spread across the seven other text types. With 78.18 occurrences per hundred-thousand words then, *classroom lessons* come in second place. What *table 11* shows then is that there is a clear clustering of the /m/-sound backchannels around *direct conversations*.

While this does not mean that *yeah* and *yes* are not frequently used – the case is quite different with 69.11 occurrences per hundred-thousand words – the spread of the backchannel is more balanced. Especially in the two text types *telephone calls* and *business transactions*, the *yeah/yes* cluster clearly dominates the backchannelling patterns of the interlocutors with 328.13 and 257.96 occurrences per hundred thousand words respectively. Additionally, with the exception of *classroom lessons* (and as already said *direct conversations*), *yeah/yes* exceeds *mhm/mm/mmm* in each of the remaining categories by a wide margin. Only in the category of *broadcast discussion* are the numbers equal with 11.38 occurrences per hundred-thousand words, which translate into a marginal five backchannels per text type.

So far, there has been no talk about the one text type that is missing from the tables and figures of this chapter, namely *parliamentary debates*. While this category plays only a small role in the context of the analysed text types, it is still worth taking a closer look at it as not a single backchannel could be identified. An explanation for this might be that the principles of dialogic interaction are, unlike the other text types, not really applicable to

this category. Rather, they can be considered as speech-like monologues that are non-dialogic and hardly interactive. Therefore, it could also be discussed whether or not labelling such debate transcriptions as *dialogue* in ICE-GB is even justified. The eight lexical items take on other functions however – a closer description of which is carried out in the following chapter.

6.2 Conclusion

Regarding the overall distribution of the backchannels, the dominance of *mhm/mm/mmm* on the one hand and *yeah/yes* on the other hand comes as a surprise. At the other end of the scale, the total non-existence of the backchannel *uh huh* is equally surprising. Moreover, looking at the distribution of the individual items in the respective text types gives rise to the notion that those categories which mostly suggest a non-hierarchical relationship between interlocutors are also the ones with the highest number of backchannels. Tracing this back to spoken interaction in general would be too vague however. A lot of different factors play an influential role: hierarchy/relationship between the speakers, the speaking situation (interview/interrogation, among others) they find themselves in or the number of interlocutors that are present.

The dominance of the above-mentioned backchannels also reflects the general tendency to use very short and simple items that can be uttered without much effort by the secondary speaker. Comparably complex items like *I see* or *okay/OK* are nevertheless also used frequently –not as a backchannel however, as chapter 7 will show. Last but not least, besides its overall dominance the use patterns of *mhm/mm/mmm* ran against initial expectations as there is a huge gap between *direct conversations* and the rest. It is difficult to find an explanation for such a discrepancy. One factor however might be that in terms of emphatic strength, items containing an /m/-sound, are not as clear an indicator of passing the floor back to the other interlocutor as are the other lexical items (Ward 2006: 137). As already argued, it is also particularly important to look at the individual items beyond their use as a backchannel. For that purpose, the next chapter goes into more detail on that aspect – thus the functional distribution is put into focus.

7 A look beyond backchannels – functional distribution

The previous chapter not only made an attempt at showing how often backchannels are used in the individual text categories, but more importantly, it tried to show that there are clear preferences for certain lexical items. Yet what is still missing is a wider perspective, as the items selected for the analysis are not exclusively used as backchannels. Quite the contrary, they can take on a vast variety of different functions – some of which are included in the coding sheet. The question that chapter 7 pursues is how these individual functions are distributed, thus what proportion they contribute to the total numbers of the lexical items. For that purpose, it was decided to create a bar chart that compares the percentages of the different functions of each individual item in the various text categories. In order to go into more detail, the decision was made to split the two groups of *mhm/mm/mmm* and *yeah/yes* into four separate groups. For a better comparability though, they are dealt with in a single section.

7.1 Mhm and mm/mmm

With regard to *mhm*, *figure 3* shows that the item only occurs in half of the analysed categories. Furthermore, as already argued in the previous chapter, there is a significant gap between *direct conversations* and the other text types in terms of total occurrences. This is not only reflected by backchannels, but by the other functions as well. Considering *direct conversations*, the interlocutors' use of *mhm* covers the whole range of the previously defined functions, with *resumptive openers* being favoured by the speakers. This is not the case in the remaining three categories, as especially *business transactions* and *broadcast discussions* show a very limited range. This comes as no surprise though as those two text types were already identified as hardly making use of these lexical items.

Figure 3 is also an indicator of a tendency that is reflected by the other items as well, namely that in a larger context, backchannels like the one illustrated in *example 20* only play a minor role. 732 backchannels were identified in the ICE-GB corpus during the quantitative analysis. Keeping in mind however that a total of 5,856 tokens was analysed, backchannels only account for 12.5 per cent of all occurrences. In comparison, *resumptive openers* were uttered roughly twice as often with a total of 1,641 occurrences, thus providing 28 per cent of the total population.

(20) Turn-external *mhm*

<S1> Yeah although I do some paintings and I don't enjoy doing them but generally I continue painting if I'm enjoying it

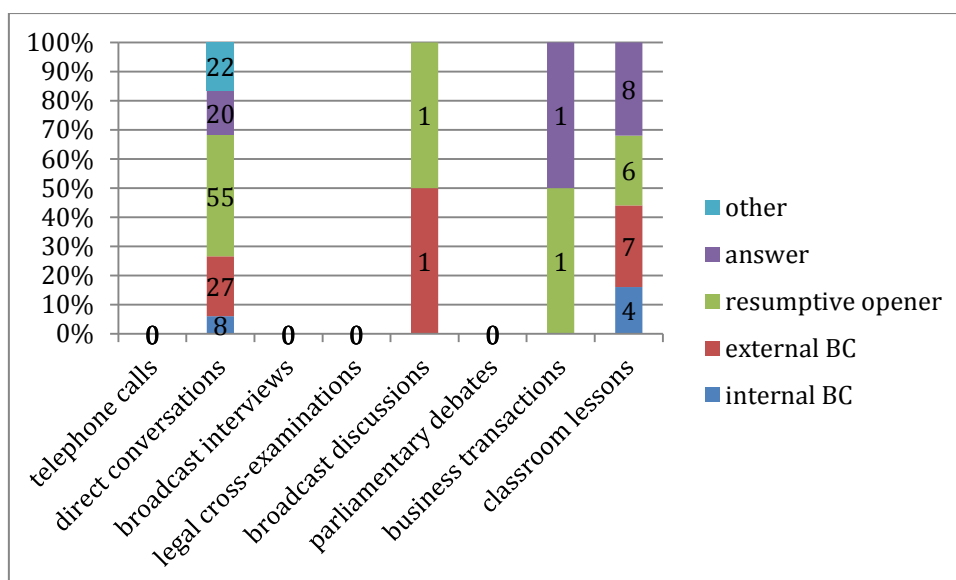
<S2> **Mhm**

<S3> It depends because you like to paint

Do you paint because you like painting

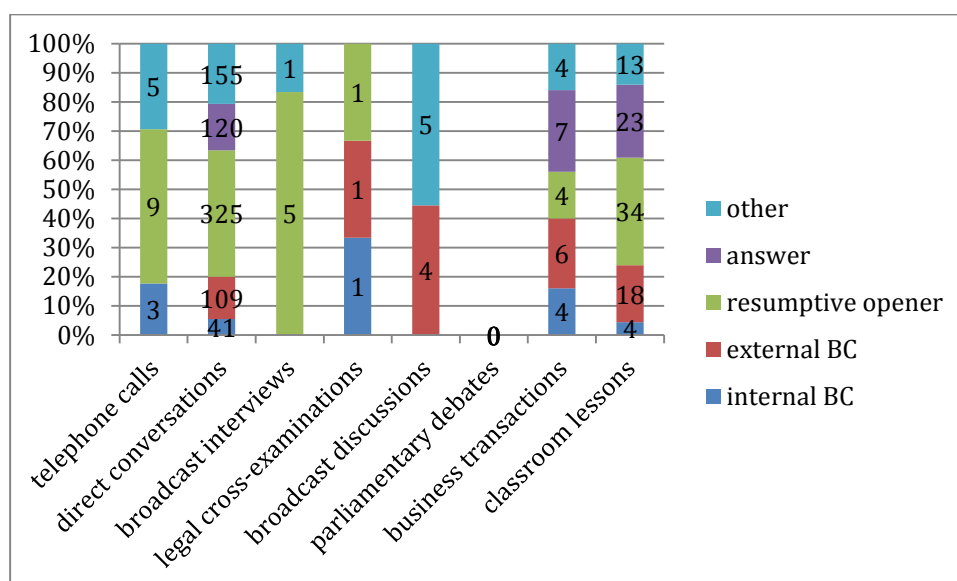
(S1B-008; 145-148)

Figure 3: Functional properties of *mhm*



Compared to *mhm*, *mm/mmm* is used by speakers in every text type except *parliamentary debates*. Moreover, *figure 4* shows that there is a rather equal distribution of the items in most categories in terms of their functions – especially *direct conversations*, *classroom lessons* as well as *business transactions*. *Broadcast interviews* and *broadcast discussions* once again represent the exception. With respect to the individual functions, *mm/mmm* is preferably used as a *resumptive opener* by speakers. This means is that the item itself then is not used in isolation but rather used in the beginning of longer utterances whose primary purpose is not to grant but rather to take or hold the floor (Clancy/Thompson 1996: 361f.).

Figure 4: Functional properties of *mm/mmm*



7.2 Right

Among all the items that were taken into consideration for the analysis, *right* shows its complex and versatile nature most clearly. It cannot only be used as an *answer* to a question, a *resumptive opener* or a *backchannel* (illustrated by *example 21*), but it is overwhelmingly used as part of larger sentence constructions. *Figure 5* illustrates this quite clearly as most tokens that were found fall under the *other* category. The tag *other* was chosen specifically for items like *right* as it encompasses such a huge variety of functions which otherwise would have been impossible to properly analyse. *Examples 22* and *23* further illustrate that claim. The first example shows that *right* sometimes can be used as a noun while the second example illustrates that it can also be an adjective. The reason why noun and adjective do not exist as a separate category in the coding sheet is that even though they are an indicator of the item's complexity, said complexity is mostly missing from the other items. The fact that *right* is particularly complex and only occasionally used as a backchannel is also obvious when taking a closer look at *parliamentary debates*, where a total of 91 occurrences fell into the category of *other*.

(21) Turn-internal *right*

<S1> I think they are equally possible

They're both

<S2> Right

<S1> And it's hard to see how you can

(S1B-002; 229-232)

(22) *Right* as a noun

<S1> So I knew we'd be out of pocket over it but I was blown if we were going to have just that

And it went down really well

<S2> Uhm

Philip has no **right** not to agree

Do you have anything left?

(S1A-005; 236-240)

(23) *Right* as an adjective

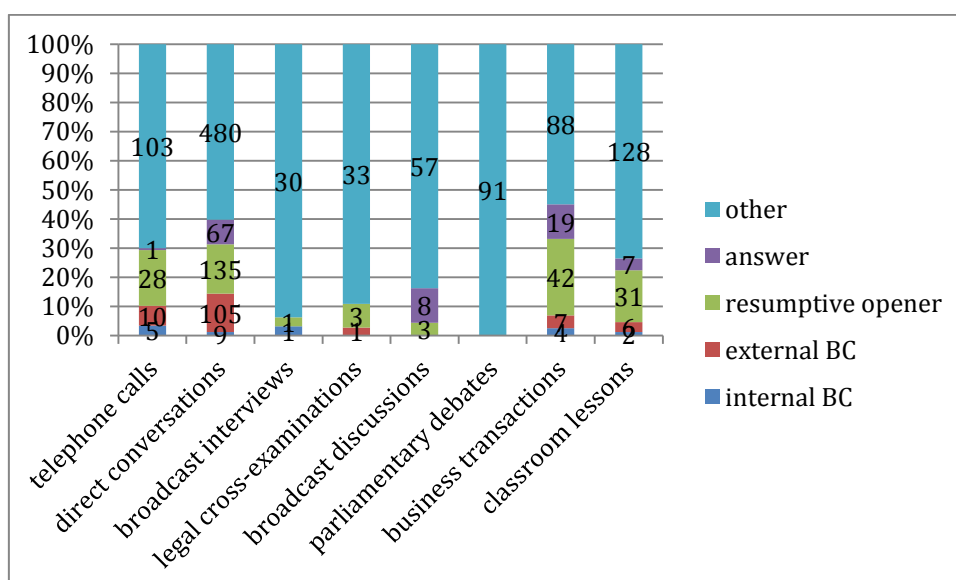
<S1> And I brought these books for Sarah you know thinking she's going to really

and I read them to her uh uh at home you know at bedtime

and uhm I realize how heavy going they were and it wasn't the **right** thing to be reading at all to her

(S1A-013; 246-248)

Figure 5: Functional properties of *right*



7.3 Yeah and yes

Despite the general absence of *yeah* in *parliamentary debates*, figure 6 indicates that this item takes on a variety of different functions across the different text categories, except for *broadcast interviews*, where the category of *other* clearly dominates. In the remaining text types, *yeah* is preferably used as a *resumptive opener* as well as an answer as both functions account for more than 50 per cent of the occurrences. The subordinate role of

backchannels similar to *example 24* is clearly shown once again as they are only found on the lower levels of the hierarchy of the individual functions.

(24) Turn-external *yeah* and *yes*

<S1> And I can make them

It's purely and simply the cost

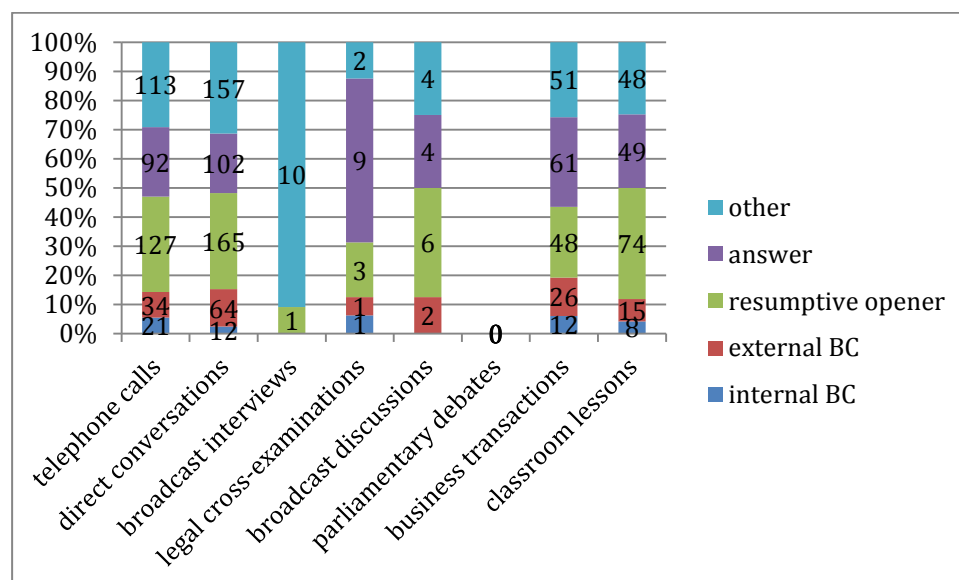
<S2> **Yeah yeah**

<S3> **Yes**

<S1> I mean I've got a client at the moment

(S1B-073; 057-061)

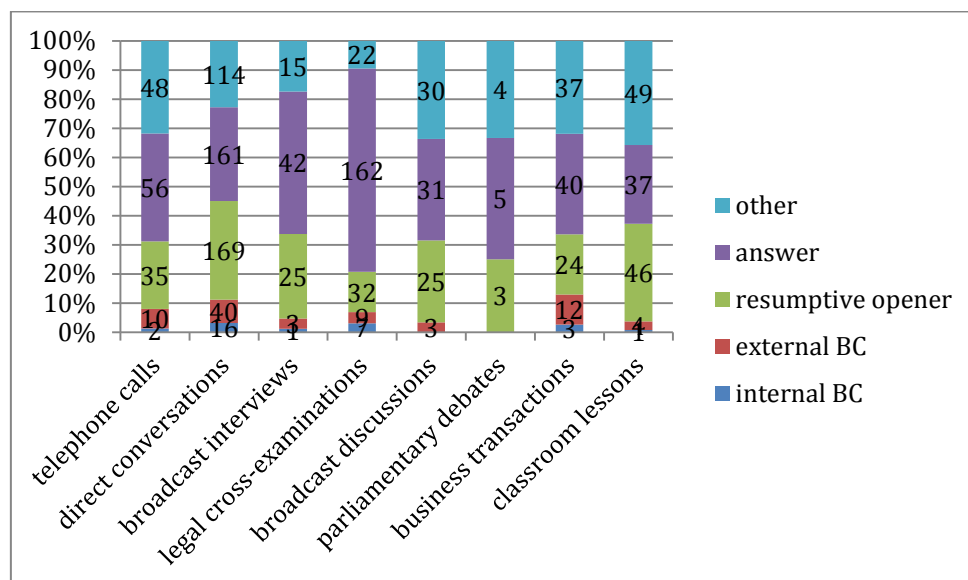
Figure 6: Functional properties of *yeah*



One aspect that becomes particularly obvious from *figure 7* is that compared with *yeah*, the way interlocutors tend to use *yes* shows certain similarities in that *resumptive openers* as well as *answers* are again the preferred functions. The main difference however is that while *yeah* is most frequently used as a *resumptive opener*, *yes* is preferred as an *answer* in every text type except one (*classroom lessons*). The text type of *legal cross-examinations* makes this preference for *yes* as an answer particularly clear – which can be explained by the nature of that text category. As the name already suggests, cross-examinations are highly different from more interactive and dialogue-oriented text types like *direct conversations*. Instead, the presence of hierarchical structures is particularly visible as the individual roles are clearly distributed between the participants, such as judge, attorney or

the defendant. Inequality in terms of hierarchy consequently also leads to an unequal distribution of speaking rights among the speakers. Rather than having a dialogue-based structure, the transcribed cross-examinations in ICE-GB consist mostly of long sequences of questions and answers, which is also an explanation for why so few backchannels occur.

Figure 7: Functional properties of yes



7.4 Okay/OK

In contrast to *yeah* and *yes* as described above, *figure 8* clearly shows that the lexical items *OK/okay* are hardly used as an answer to questions by other speakers. First of all, *answers* were only identified in half of the text types. And second of all, even in those text categories where *OK/okay* is used as an answer, it only plays a minor role. This is particularly made clear with regard to *classroom lessons* and *business transactions* with only one and two occurrences respectively. However, not only *answers* play a subordinate role when it comes to the different functions of *OK/okay*. As it was already stated, backchannels like *example 25* as well contribute only a small fraction to the overall numbers in every single text type. The high presence of the *other* category on the other hand parallels the functional properties of *right* to a certain extent. Not as versatile as *right* in terms of word classes, *okay/OK* can still be inserted into larger sentence constructions rather easily. *Example 26* hereby depicts quite a frequent use of the item, namely as an adjective.

(25) Turn-external *Okay/OK*

<S1> There's the prescription

<S2> OK

<S1> There's a chemist in Store Street just as you go out straight across the road towards
Tottenham Court Road

(S1A-087; 295-297)

(26) *Okay/OK* as an adjective

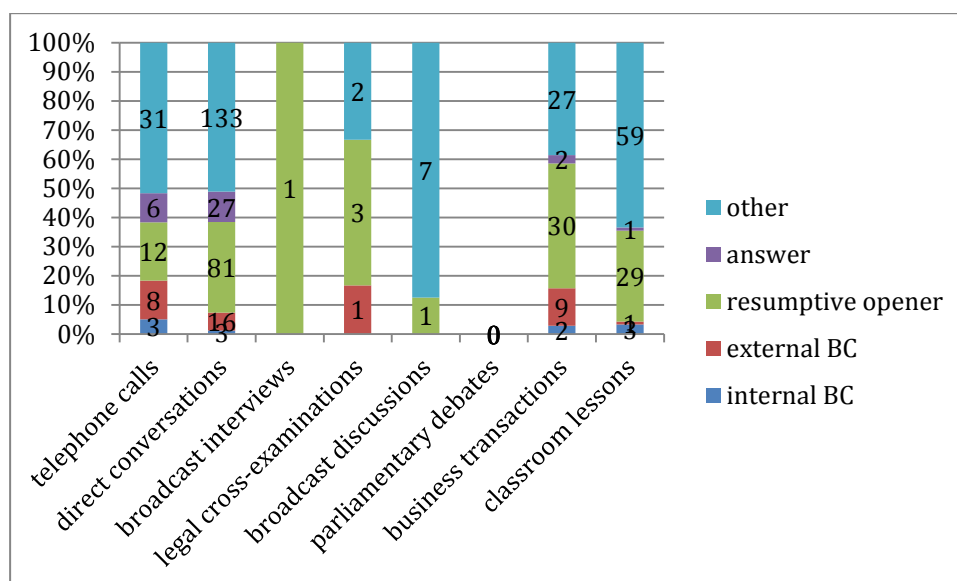
<S1> Yeah I went to Milton Keynes

<S2> Was that good

<S1> It was **OK**

(S1A-029; 225-227)

Figure 8: Functional properties of *okay/OK*



7.5 I see

Figure 9 below finally describes the distribution of the different functions of *I see* across the various text categories. What it mainly shows is that in terms of total numbers, there are not only few backchannels (*example 27* is one out of only a few backchannels) but speakers in general are reluctant to use that item. It also comes as a surprise that despite including the highest number of speakers and having the highest word count, even the category of *direct conversation* has a very low overall frequency of *I see*. As the structurally most complex of all the items that were taken into account for the quantitative

research – and the only item consisting of two words – *I see* was mostly analysed as belonging to the *other* category. This is similar to *OK/okay* and *right*, however, in terms of its versatility, it is more restricted than those two items. As *example 28* shows, *I see* functions as subject and predicate in longer utterances.

(27) Turn-external *I see*

<S1> And uhm and at the College of Speech Sciences I'm putting things in alphabetical order for them

<S2> I see

<S1> I'm their temporary administrator

(S1A-011; 008-010)

(28) *I see* functioning as subject and predicate

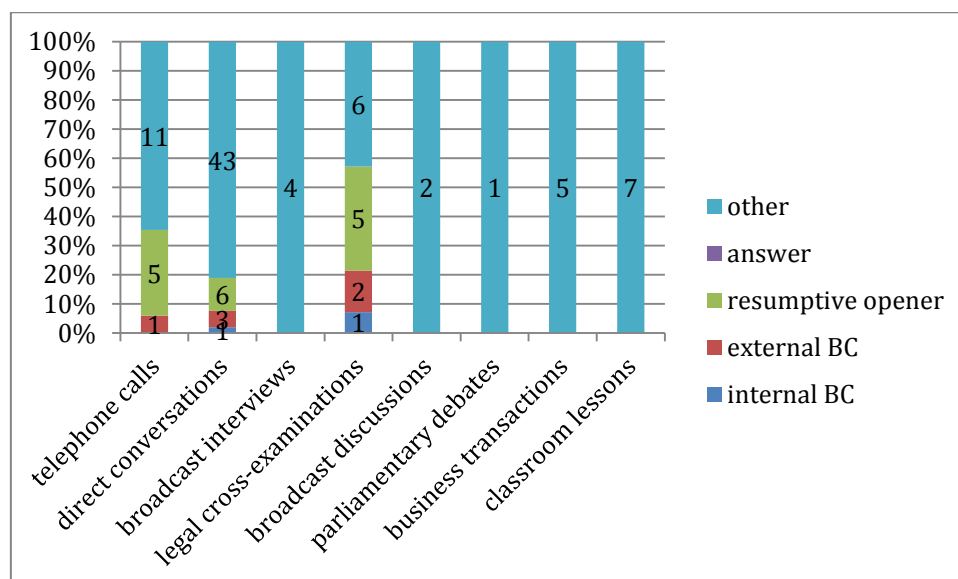
<S1> Well I would suggest that you sort of write or speak with Grandma uhm

<S2> Before **I see** Grandma

<S1> Before you see Grandma

(S1A-095:4; 299-301)

Figure 9: Functional properties of *I see*



7.6 Conclusion

Comparing the different lexical items with regard to their functional distribution, some general tendencies become apparent. First of all, the role that backchannels play next to all the functions that were included in the analysis is not as prominent as initially expected – with a mere 12.5 per cent of all the occurrences being backchannels. The distribution of said backchannels however is different depending on which item is taken into consideration. Especially *mhmm* and *mm/mmm* have the highest proportion of backchannels as figures 3 and 4 illustrate. Items like *OK/okay*, *I see* or *right* on the other hand only contain a comparably small proportion of backchannels.

Second of all, this means that said items fulfil other roles more efficiently and also more frequently. While *mhmm* and *mm/mmm* show a rather diverse use regarding the different functional categories, the remaining items show clearer tendencies towards one or two functions. Most of all, what the bar charts in this chapter clearly display is that the more complex an item is, as it is the case with *OK/okay*, *I see* and *right*, the bigger the proportion of the *other* category is. What does it mean however when it is said that an item is complex? As the examples in this chapter tried to show, an item is considered as complex when it can adopt a variety of different word classes and subsequently can be fitted into different places in a conversation, especially longer utterances. *Yeah* and *yes* on the other hand, similar to *mhmm* and *mm/mmm*, are more restricted in their use as they are not as complex. This is as well reflected by the data, which shows that the preferred functions of *yeah* and *yes* are *answer* and *resumptive opener* respectively.

To sum up, the fact that backchannels are not as frequent as expected when compared to the other categories does not mean that all lexical items behave equally, quite the contrary. While it may be too strong a statement to place each item on a continuum in terms of its complexity (Stubbe 1998: 259), the results still show that some items are more suited for specific functional purposes than others. So far, the backchannels that were found in the ICE-GB corpus only have been superficially analysed in terms of whether they occur turn-externally or internally. Chapter 8 therefore sheds light on the question where exactly these internal backchannels occur.

8 The positioning of internal backchannels

As was illustrated by *figure 2*, out of 732 backchannels that were identified in ICE-GB, 547 are turn-external. The large majority of these backchannels thus behave according to Stenström (1994: 6), namely in that they occur at points of thought or sentence completion, the so-called transition relevance places. The remaining quarter of backchannels then is uttered at places that depart from traditional transition relevance places and therefore are turn-internal. In contrast to researchers like Kjellmer (2009: 88), the number of internal backchannels found in ICE-GB is comparably low. In his study, interlocutors prefer using turn-external backchannels as well, yet still 42 per cent of the analysed items were identified as turn-internal.

Building on Kjellmer's (2009: 90) line of inquiry though, it should become clear that uttering backchannels outside of TRPs does not imply that they are arbitrarily distributed. Quite the contrary, even when using turn-internal backchannels, interlocutors systematically choose appropriate locations. The task that remains then is to identify and classify those locations. Thus before presenting the results, the following chapter gives an account of the approach that was chosen to analyse the backchannels.

8.1 Rules for codification

As already described, the most crucial part was to find a proper way to analyse the individual backchannels with regard to their locations. However, spoken interaction is considered to be far too complex as to define categories already *before* evaluating the source material. Instead, an approach similar to the one by Kjellmer (2009: 90f.) was picked.

By going through each internal backchannel step by step and then compare them with respect to their location, categories were defined that made it possible to integrate groups of backchannels into a more general system. The result of this process is summarized in *table 10*. Each category is also further explained by examples from the corpus.

Table 14: Internal backchannels - categories

- **C1:** Insertion of the backchannel before/after explicit coordinator like *and*, *but*, *or* etc.
- **C2:** Insertion of backchannel prior to adverbial construction
- **C3:** Unlike C1, continued coordination of parts of utterances in instances where the continuation of the primary speaker's utterance can only be made sense of with

taking the first one into consideration as well

- **C4:** Insertion of backchannel interrupts overall utterance by primary speaker which however then is not continued
- **C5:** Insertion of the backchannel before/after explicit subordinator like *so, because* etc.
- **C6:** Insertion of backchannel leads the primary speaker to repeat or reformulate previous parts of the utterance
- **C7:** Insertion of backchannel before relative clause
- **C8:** Insertion of backchannel before/after preposition

The first category C1 is among the least complicated and can be defined rather easily. As *example 29* shows, *right* is uttered between two clauses that are connected by the coordinator *or*, which follows after the backchannel has been uttered. Sometimes however internal backchannels are also inserted after a coordinator which is why C1 accounts for both possibilities.

(29) C1 – Before/after explicit coordinator

<S1> However I will speak to you shortly

<S2> **Right**

<S1> Or perhaps you will speak to me shortly when you are either opening a bottle of champagne or a bottle of hemlock

(S1A-095:2; 159-161)

In *example 30*, the utterance of speaker 1 that is leading up to the backchannel makes perfect sense and does not seem to be interrupted – still it is an internal backchannel. When taking the continuation of the utterance into consideration namely, the syntactic structure of the previous turn is completed. The second part of the utterance cannot stand alone as it functions as an adverbial construction. All tokens similar to *example 30* were therefore identified as belonging to category C2.

(30) C2 – Before adverbial construction

<S1> Oh I know

I know

I know but that's once you're in the game

But uh it would've been nice if I had known I think

<S2> **Mm**

Yes

<S1> Purely for the sake that it wouldn't come as such a shock afterwards

(S1A-017; 082-088)

C3 is a complicated category. *Example 31* seems random at first as the backchannel is neither followed nor introduced by any particular keyword such as a coordinator. However, as can be seen from taking both parts of the utterance into close consideration, there is still coordination between them. While it is not marked by the use of a particular lexical item, there is still a semantic continuation between the two utterances which makes them a single turn. C3 was therefore defined as a particularly flexible category as it does not hang on to any key words but rather is a matter of thorough interpretation and analysis. This lack of a key word however not only renders it open for interpretation, but to a certain degree it also makes it susceptible to criticizing it as arbitrary. Nevertheless, the data retrieved from the ICE-GB corpus shows that *example 31* is not an isolated case but occurs more frequently than expected.

(31) C3 – Continuation without signal word

<S1> The ball went straight through his defences

<S2> **Yeah**

<S1> clobbered the side of his face

(S1A-095:1; 065-067)

Turn-internal backchannelling can also lead primary speakers to abandon their thought units in mid-turn. Instead, other speakers take over and start with entirely new utterances. *Example 32* is an illustration of C4: speaker 1 is interrupted by a backchannel after having uttered the coordinator *but*. He refrains from continuing with his turn however and in that way provides the remaining interlocutors with the opportunity to take over the turn.

(32) C4 – Interruption

<S1> You see she lives in her mother's house at the moment

so she would have it then

but

<S2> **Mm**

<S3> Yeah

<S4> Don't know

(S1A-019; 321-326)

Similar to C1, C5 is marked by the presence of a range of keywords. Other than being inserted before or after coordinators however, backchannels are considered as belonging to C5 when they are uttered in the proximity of *subordinators* like *so* or *because*.

(33) C5 – before/after explicit subordinator

<S1> Before you see Grandma

<S2> **Right**

<S1> Because she's still wondering why you haven't acknowledged whatever it was she
last sent you

(S1A-095:4; 301-303)

C6 shows that internal backchannels can also severely influence the further progression of a turn – as illustrated by *example 34*. Being confronted with a backchannel in an unusual location, the primary speaker understands this as a request to paraphrase parts of the ongoing utterance. Such paraphrases are produced for two different reasons: first of all, to further emphasize the main claim of the utterance. Second of all, internal backchannels can also be an indication that an interlocutor has not fully understood an utterance and thus is in need of a paraphrase. In addition to reformulations, such backchannels can also trigger repetitions of parts of utterances.

(34) C6 – repetition/reformulation

<S1> Yeah I'm fine

I'm a bit tired actually

<S2> **Yeah**

<S1> Bit fazed yeah

(S1A-099:2; 252-255)

Example 35 grants a closer look at category C7. Even though the second part of the utterance is not marked by the relative pronoun *which* or *that*, the example shows that the

internal backchannel separates the main from the relative clause. Both types of relative clauses, with and without the use of a relative pronoun or adverb, are therefore included in C7.

(35) C7 – before relative clause

<S1> and there were these weird organisms that are well preserved

<S2> Mm mm mm

<S1> Got sort of five legs and eyes coming out of their [...]

(S1B-006; 262-266)

Last but not least, backchannels can also be uttered either before or after a preposition.

Example 36 is an illustration of the latter.

(36) C8 – before/after preposition

<S1> Could you be a bit more specific than that

could you home in on

<S2> **Mm yeah**

<S1> Polishing stage and broth extractions

(S1B-020; 089-093)

Having defined each of the eight categories in detail, the following section offers a closer account of the distribution of the internal backchannels. The tables not only show the variability of the individual items in terms of their places of insertion, but they also depict how often the individual items were chosen by the interlocutors and thus whether or not some lexical items are preferred for internal backchannelling.

8.2 Results

First of all, *table 10* shows that the distribution in the individual categories is far from equal. In 88 out of 185 cases, which makes for an overwhelming percentage of 47.6, speakers utter internal backchannels in places of overt coordination, thus between utterances that are connected with coordinators such as *and/or/but* (C1). Even when not marked by a coordinator in close proximity, interlocutors continuously backchannel in locations that at least show semantic continuation. 25 Tokens, which add up to 13.5 per cent of the total number of internal backchannels, were analysed as belonging to category

C3. Following closely behind are backchannels that are inserted before or after subordinators like *but* or *because* (C5). In total, 23 instances of such internal backchannels were identified in ICE-GB, which are 12.4 per cent. In spite of subordination and coordination, numbers show that to a significant extent, backchannelling can also have a negative or at least an altering effect on conversations. With a total of 16 occurrences, backchannels that lead to the interruption of speaker turns (C4) stand at 8.6 per cent.

82.1 per cent of all the occurrences of backchannels are represented by only half of the categories that were defined for the analysis. This means that the remaining four locations of backchannel-insertion occur significantly less frequently. In only 10 cases does the insertion of an internal backchannel lead the primary speakers to either reformulate their utterances or repeat parts of their turns (C6) – a mere 5.4 per cent. With one occurrence less and therefore arriving at only 4.9 per cent, backchannels that are uttered before or after prepositions (C8) do not occur very often either. Category C7 however is almost completely unemployed. Only 2.2 per cent of the analysed internal backchannels were inserted before relative clauses and conditionals.

From these results, some conclusions can be drawn with regard to the syntactic *slots* that seem to lend themselves to backchannel insertion. First of all, as can be seen with categories C1 and C5, uttering a backchannel turn-internally for the most part is accompanied by a variety of keywords such as coordinators and subordinators. In relation to what Norrick (2012: 568) as well as Sacks et al. (1974: 702) claim about the construction units of turns, this seems plausible. Even in case backchannels are not uttered in transition relevance places, they are still primarily uttered between syntactically functional clauses. Kjellmer (2009: 91) arrives at similar results. In his analysis of the insertion places of internal backchannels, clause breaks account for 45.4 per cent of all the possible locations. By doing so, listeners therefore minimize the risk of interrupting primary speakers in their turns – quite in contrast to categories like C4 or C6. In some instances however, the potential to interrupt to a certain degree seems speaker- as well as situation-dependent. This accounts for the occasional overlaps between categories C1 and C4, of which *example 32* is a clear illustration.

Table 10: distribution of internal backchannels – total numbers (in percentage)

	nhm/mm/mmm	right	yeah/yes	okay/OK	I see	total
C1	34 (51.5)	9 (40.9)	39 (46.4)	5 (45.4)	1 (50)	88 (47.6)
C2	5 (7.6)	2 (9.1)	3 (3.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (5.4)

C3	10 (15.2)	0 (0)	15 (17.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	25 (13.5)
C4	6 (9.1)	3 (13.6)	5 (6)	2 (18.2)	0 (0)	16 (8.6)
C5	4 (6.1)	7 (31.8)	10 (11.9)	2 (18.2)	0 (0)	23 (12.4)
C6	3 (4.5)	0 (0)	6 (7.1)	0 (0)	1 (50)	10 (5.4)
C7	4 (6.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2.2)
C8	0 (0)	1 (4.6)	6 (7.1)	2 (18.2)	0 (0)	9 (4.9)
total	66 (100)	22 (100)	84 (100)	11 (100)	2 (100)	185 (100)
	35.7	11.9	45.4	5.9	1.1	100

It is not only crucial to see what type of location interlocutors choose to insert internal backchannels, as at the same time it is also of interest which items are chosen to do so. As *table 10* shows, *I see* was analysed only twice as an internal backchannel– resulting in a mere 1.1 per cent of all 185 tokens. Even though numbers are not as low, *okay/OK* are not preferred as internal backchannels either. Overall, 11 occurrences of the item were found, thus contributing only 5.9 per cent to the overall numbers.

Right is uttered turn-internally roughly one out of ten times (11.9 per cent), yet the lion's share of internal backchannels is split between *mhm/mm/mmm* and *yeah/yes*. While the former accounts for 35.7 per cent of all occurrences the latter even contributes 45.4 per cent. The difference between the two clusters is clearly visible – however, it is not overly extensive. Kjellmer (2009: 88) on the other hand not only arrives at a different but also a far more clear-cut result. In his analysis, *mm* as well as *mhm* occur twice as often as *yeah* and *yes*.

8.3 Conclusion

What this chapter has tried to show was that even when backchannels are uttered turn-internally, it does not happen in an arbitrary manner as there is still a variety of slots for interlocutors to choose from. The results show that in terms of structural distribution, interlocutors prefer uttering internal backchannels in places of clearly marked sub- or coordination. Yet even if no such markers are present, especially for the purpose of coordinating clauses, this does not prevent interlocutors from inserting backchannels in the 'right' locations. This was already explained by the presence of two important factors of conversation: the projectability of syntactic units (Sacks et al. 1974: 702) as well as the grounding process between interlocutors (Kraut/Lewis/Swezey 1983: 730). Not only are turns to some extent predictable in terms of how they progress syntactically, but

interlocutors also get to know each other during a conversation, thus adding an interpersonal component. This means that at a certain point, listeners learn when to expect certain types of syntactical structures from the primary speaker, even if they are not announced by a particular keyword. This is also an explanation for why the remaining categories occurred significantly less.

The second conclusion regards the items that are chosen to signal internal backchannelling. As the results show, two items particularly dominate the interlocutor's choices, namely *yeah/yes* as well as *mhm/mm/mmm*. What this shows is in line with Clark (1996: 229f.), namely that even though the items are uttered turn-internally, they mostly do not represent a claim for the turn itself. As a result, items are chosen that demand the least effort from the interlocutors. This is generally in line with the behaviour that was identified in the course of the overall research, thus also taking external backchannels into consideration. Items that are challenging in terms of their articulatory force are therefore selected at a much lower rate than their simpler counterparts.

The special focus of this thesis is the potential difference in backchannelling behaviour between male and female interlocutors. Thus the following chapter pursues the question whether or not there is a difference in terms of how men and women make use of backchannels in different text types and if so, what those differences are.

9 Gender-specific backchannelling

One of the research questions of the paper focuses on whether the source material reflects tendencies in terms of how men and women use backchannels. Even though it is dangerous to make all-inclusive claims regarding the conversational behaviour of man and women, some conclusions can nevertheless be drawn by analyzing the obtained data. Allan et al. (2010: 96) for example claim that “there is some evidence that women make more use of backchannels than men do, (...) [as] men are more likely than women to interrupt.” While it is debatable whether backchannels even are one of the main means of interruption (Yngve 1970: 568), the claim that women use more backchannels than men deserves further attention. Xudong (2009: 119) as well argues that women use more listener responses than men.

One of the issues that had to be dealt with during the analysis was representativeness. For the analysis, all the interlocutors that uttered a backchannel were either coded as male or female. The results however show that only *direct conversations* (171 male speakers and 167 female speaker) and to a certain extent also *telephone calls* (16 male speakers and 20 female speakers) contain an almost equal number of male and female speakers. Particularly in specialized text types such as *legal cross-examinations* (32 male speakers and only three female speakers) and *parliamentary debates* (101 male speakers and 12 female speakers), the ratio is severely uneven. The number of speakers that are present in the text categories yet does not say anything about how many words are uttered by either men or women. To be properly able to calculate those numbers, *table 11* illustrates the word distribution for each text category with regard to gender. As there are no backchannels in *parliamentary debates*, that text type was excluded from this analysis.

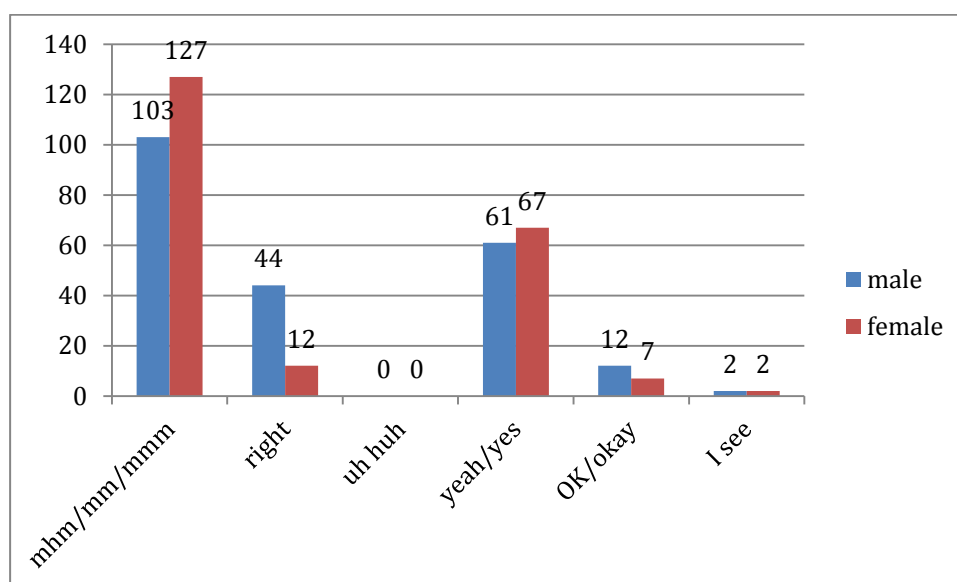
Table 11: Differences in total word count between men and women

text category	male/female word-count ratio
direct conversations	89,254/95,954
telephone calls	8,633/11,786
broadcast discussions	37,817/6,103
broadcast interviews	14,189/7,958
business transactions	13,476/7,079
classroom lessons	33,691/8,519
legal cross-examinations	19,460/1,719

9.1 Direct conversations

Despite the general absence of *uh huh*, figure 10 shows that men and women make use of a wide range of backchannels in *direct conversations*. As can be seen, both sexes make frequent use of the backchannel cluster *mhm/mm/mmm*. While it accounts for 59 per cent of all the backchannels that women utter in *direct conversations*, men arrive at a percentage of 46.4. A similar pattern can be identified with regard to *yeah/yes*. Male interlocutors use these items in 27.4 per cent of the cases whereas women use them slightly more frequently with 31.2 per cent. The most obvious difference between the two genders however concerns the frequency of *right*, which is clearly favoured by male interlocutors, who use it almost four times as much as women.

Figure 10: Gender-distribution of backchannels – *direct conversations*

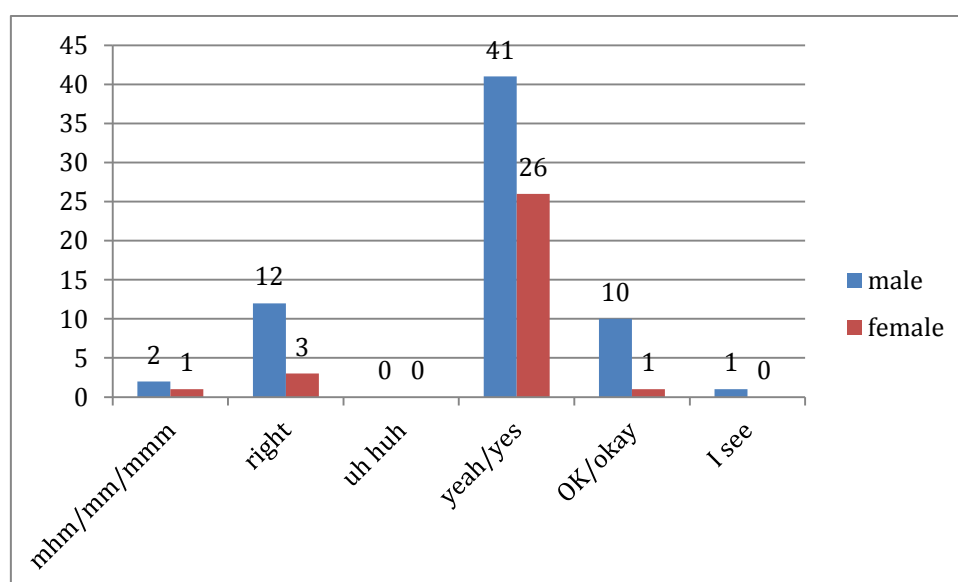


The question that remains open however is at which rate men as well as women actually use backchannels in the individual text types. To answer that question, it was calculated how often both sexes backchannel within a hundred thousand words – the word-count distribution is therefore illustrated in close detail in *table 12*. In sum, 437 backchannels were identified, whereby 222 were uttered by males and 215 by female speakers. This means that men use 248.73 backchannels per hundred thousand words whereas women backchannel less with 224.07.

9.2 Telephone calls

Even though not as diversified as *direct conversations*, *figure 11* nevertheless shows that speakers tend to make use of a wide variety of backchannels in the course of *telephone calls* – the only difference being that one occurrence of *I see* was analysed for male speakers however non was found for female interlocutors. In contrast to the first text category, both sexes clearly prefer the use of *yeah/yes* during such non-face-to-face conversations. As regards male interlocutors, *yeah/yes* provides 62.1 per cent of all backchannels in the text type. In comparison to women however, that percentage is still small as female speakers use these items in 83.9 per cent of the cases – which leaves hardly any room for other backchannels. What this means is that female backchannelling is far more one-sided, especially when taking *OK/okay* and *right* into account.

Figure 11: Gender-distribution of backchannels – *telephone calls*

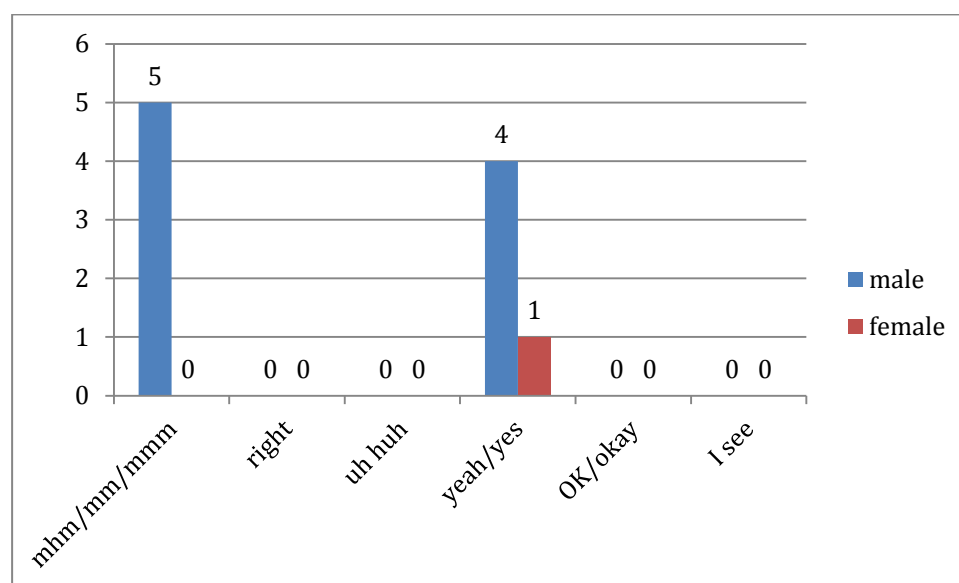


Last but not least, taking a closer look at which gender backchannels more, the picture is surprisingly clear. With a total of 66 backchannels uttered by male speakers, this means that within a hundred-thousand words, they use 764.51 backchannels. Women on the other hand only produce slightly more than a third of that frequency. 31 backchannels were analysed as being uttered by female speakers, resulting in 263.02 backchannels per hundred-thousand words.

9.3 Broadcast discussions/Broadcast interviews

As was already debated in the previous chapters, the speakers in *broadcast discussions* as well as *broadcast interviews* generally do not make much use of backchannels. In addition, figures 12 and 13 clearly illustrate that there is hardly variation as only two different backchannels are used in each text category. However, that only accounts for male speakers. With respect to female interlocutors, it can be seen that the range of backchannels that are used is even more limited to only a single item-cluster, which in both text types is *yeah/yes*. In containing so few backchannels, it comes as no surprise then that both text categories offer a backchannels-per-hundred-thousand-words rate that is significantly lower than the one found in the previous categories. In *broadcast discussions*, male interlocutors only use 23.8 backchannels per hundred thousand words. Women on the other hand arrive at an even lower rate with 16.38 words. Even though both sexes switch places in the second text type, *broadcast interviews* behave in a similar way in terms of how low the numbers are. Men use a mere 21.14 backchannels per hundred thousand words whereas women utter 25.13 backchannels.

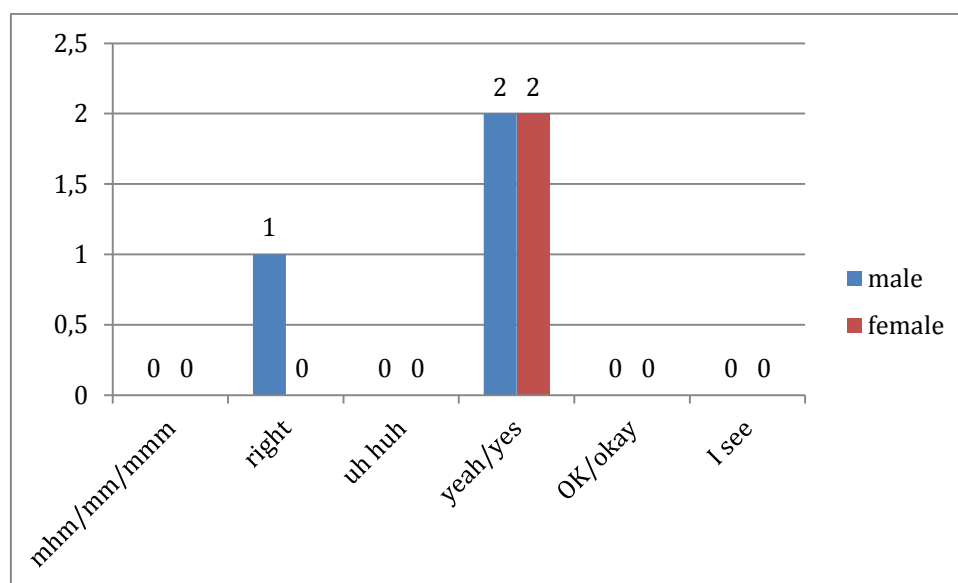
Figure 12: Gender-distribution of backchannels – *broadcast discussions*



It is important to note however that as the two text categories offer so few occurrences of backchannels, it is nearly impossible to draw any rational conclusions. In spite of claiming that interlocutors never backchannel, a broader perspective should be adopted – especially with regard to how small the overall word count of both text types is. The reluctance to utter short lexical items that function as backchannels therefore might be replaced by more complex strategies like the ones proposed by Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.). Said

strategies however are not part of the quantitative analysis. Instead, chapter 10 takes a closer look at those strategies. Choosing a different perspective, such a lack of backchannels however might also be traced back to the general nature of *broadcast discussions* as well as *interviews*. Therefore, it could be argued that these text-types rather resemble mini-dialogues than actual face-to-face interactions. For a format such as radio, an excessive use backchannels may in the end be too disturbing.

Figure 13: Gender-distribution of backchannels – broadcast interviews



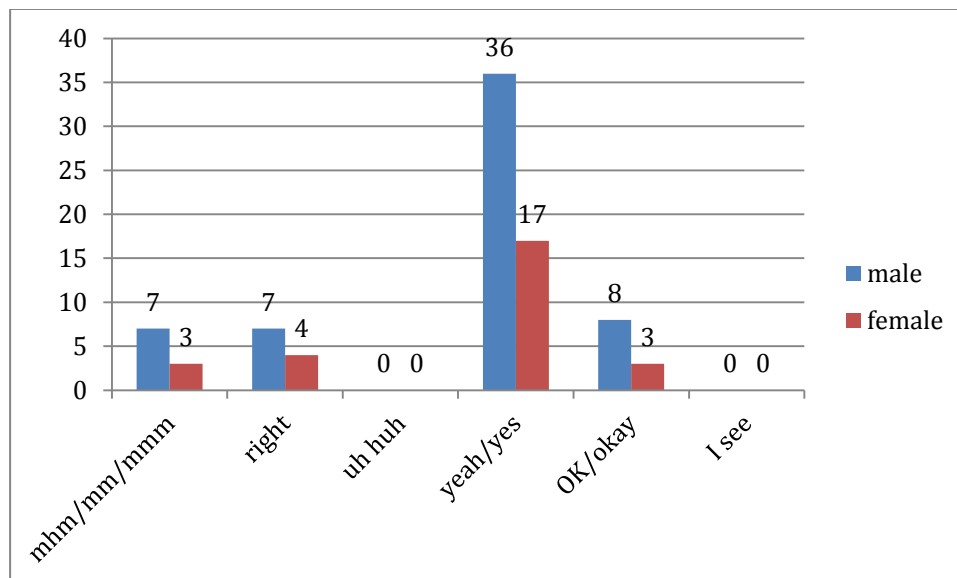
9.4 Business transactions

Business transactions once again show that many items can serve as backchannels for both either male or female interlocutors. *Figure 14* however shows that with reference to backchannel preferences, both sexes extensively utter *yeah/yes*. This preference is also clearly visible when calculating what proportion of the overall numbers *yeah/yes* provide. Interestingly, the percentage regarding men as well as women is almost equal with *yeah/yes* constituting 62 per cent of all backchannels for the former and 62.9 per cent for the latter.

Again it is also important to ask the question which gender backchannels more frequently and to compare the results. 58 backchannels were found in the text type of *business transactions* for male speakers which results in a rate of 430.39 backchannels per hundred-thousand words. The 27 backchannels that were identified as being uttered by female speakers on the other hand add up to 381.41 per hundred-thousand words. Therefore, not only in terms of the range of backchannels uttered, but also regarding how

often speakers of each gender use backchannels, men and women are fairly on a par. Yet once again men can be identified to use more of such short lexical items as backchannels.

Figure 14: Gender-distribution of backchannels – *business transactions*

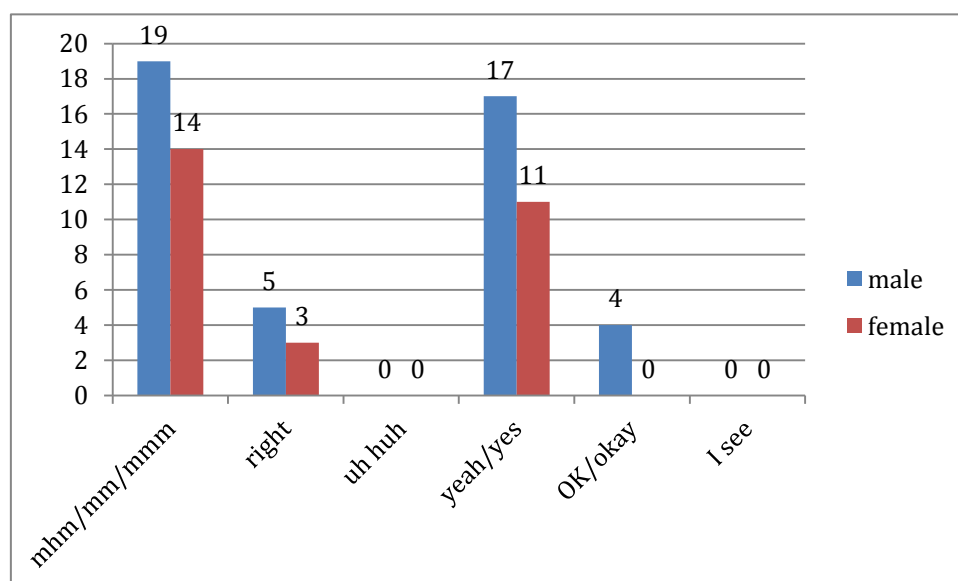


9.5 Classroom lessons

The text type of *classroom lessons* also reflects that speakers use a wide range of different items in order to signal backchannelling – men however use more than women. Besides that, *figure 15* gives insight into another interesting fact, namely that there is a clear preference for two of these items, namely *mhm/mm/mmm* and *yeah/yes*. The dominance of these two backchannel clusters is also emphasized by the proportion that they contribute to the overall occurrences. If combined, they provide 80 per cent of all backchannels used by men whereas women utter these items in 89.3 per cent of the cases. In comparison, the remaining backchannels only play a subordinate role.

In the text types that have been analysed so far, men mostly use more backchannels than women. Yet regarding *classroom lessons*, calculations show that the rates at which backchannels are used by the different sexes vastly differ. While men utter approximately 133.57 backchannel per hundred thousand words, women use more than twice as much with a total of 328.68.

Figure 15: Gender-distribution of backchannels – classroom lessons

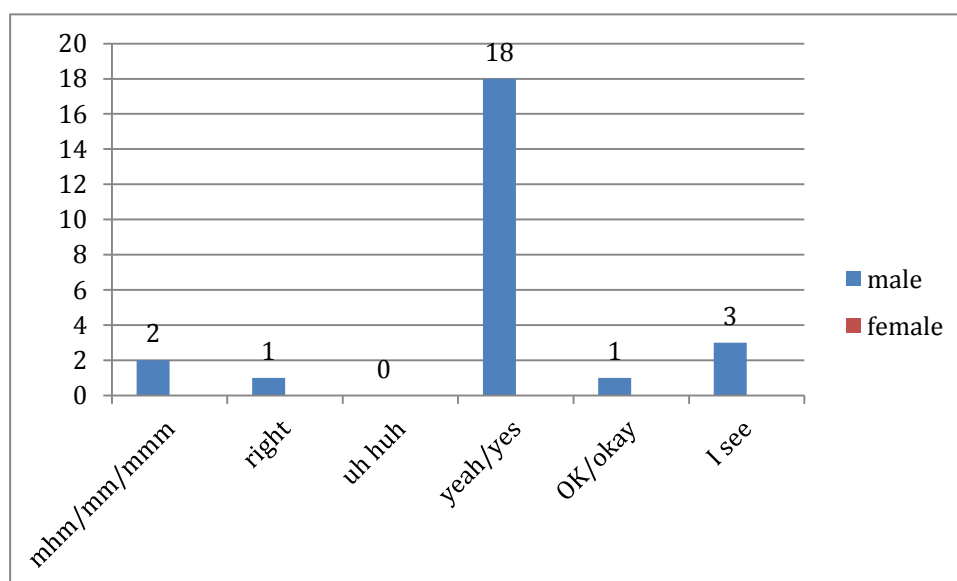


9.6 Legal cross-examinations

Last but not least, it can be seen from *figure 16* that the biggest difference in terms of gender-specific backchannelling is that there is no backchannelling at all by female interlocutors. To a certain extent, this lack of backchannels can be properly explained by the analysed sample of texts. While there are 32 male speakers that occur in the text category of *legal cross-examinations*, only three female speakers are present.

Figure 15 shows that there is a large variety of items that male speakers choose from to backchannel. Yet what the bar chart also shows is that there is once again a clear preference for a particular item cluster, namely *yeah/yes*, which in return leaves only a small space for the remaining five backchannels. Out of 25 backchannels that were identified as being used by male speakers, 18 were either *yeah* or *yes*, marking 72 per cent of all the identified cases. The remaining backchannels therefore only arrive at a combined percentage of 28, with *right* and *OK/okay* even occurring only once. Regarding the frequency of backchannels in the course of one hundred-thousand words, male interlocutors arrive at a rate of 128.47.

Figure 16: Gender-distribution of backchannels – *legal cross-examinations*



9.7 Conclusion

Having taken a closer look at the way men and women use backchannels in the eight different text types, a few tendencies become apparent. First of all, with *broadcast interviews* and *discussions* as the exception, the figures above show that interlocutors make use of a wide range of items in order to signal backchannelling. However, this does not mean that all of these items are also frequently used. Quite the contrary, what the bar charts clearly reflect is that interlocutors prefer to use only one or two lexical items. Especially *mhm/mm/mmm* as well as *yeah/yes* are their preferred backchannels. Second of all, even though female speakers are less versatile in the sense that they do not use as many different backchannels as male interlocutors, the preferences of both sexes are very similar. Thus if women make use of backchannels, for the most part they choose either *mhm/mm/mmm* and/or *yeah/yes*.

This result is different from the findings of Kjellmer (2009: 89). He argues that men and women, quite contrarily, have different preferences in terms of which backchannels they use. His analysis shows that women frequently use *uh huh*, *mm* and *mhm* while men select *yeah*, *yes* as well as *right*. The explanation that Kjellmer offers is that women tend to use items that are far more discrete whereas men want to show their involvement. In this regard, parallels can be drawn to the *verbal feedback continuum* by Stubbe (1998: 259), as he distinguishes between neutral minimal responses and supportive minimal responses. However, with respect to the results from ICE-GB, neither gender can be considered as more or less supportive than the other.

While men and women behave in a similar way with regard to which backchannels are used, the answer to how often both genders backchannel is quite surprising. For that purpose, *table 12* briefly summarizes the occurrences per hundred thousand words for each individual text type. As can be seen, the claim made in the beginning of the chapter that women use more backchannels than men cannot be upheld. Yet the table also shows that there are two different patterns. On the one hand, the difference in backchannel-frequencies between male and female interlocutors is only marginal. This is reflected by *direct conversations*, *broadcast interviews/discussions* and to a certain extent also *business transactions*. Nevertheless, in three out of those four text categories, men use more backchannels than women. On the other hand, *table 12* shows that there are also significant discrepancies. The text type of *telephone conversations* is the most obvious example as men almost use three times as many backchannels as women. The reverse situation is encountered when taking a closer look at *classroom lessons* however. Yet what leads to such discrepancies cannot be answered easily as many situational variables come into play regarding the individual text types. *Classroom lessons* for example include a multitude of interlocutors communicating with each other whereas *telephone calls* normally only have two interlocutors. Aspects like these then make a coherent comparison particularly difficult.

Table 12: Occurrences of backchannels per hundred-thousand words

	direct conv.	telephone calls	broadcast discussions	broadcast interviews	business transactions	classroom lessons	legal cross-ex.
m	248.73	764.51	23.8	21.14	430.39	133.57	128.47
f	224.07	263.02	16.38	25.13	381.41	328.68	0

The last aspect which must be taken into consideration is the difference between internal and external backchannels. Out of 304 backchannels that were analysed as being uttered by female speakers, 224 were used turn-externally and 80 turn-internally. Expressed as a percentage, this means that 73.7 per cent of all backchannels used by females are external while the remaining 26.3 per cent are internal. Regarding male interlocutors, the distribution between external and internal backchannels is almost the same. The total of 428 backchannels is thus comprised of 75.5 per cent external ones (323) and 24.5 per cent (105) internal ones.

To sum up, it comes as quite a surprise that men and women resemble each other so strongly in terms of their choice of lexical items. However, it is even more surprising to see that on a general level, men use more of these items than women. So far however, assumptions have been made only on the basis of the quantitative analysis of the source material. However, feedback in general and backchannels in particular are also, as described in section 4.1, of importance in the domain of conversation analysis. Moreover, an elaboration on the different backchannelling styles between men and women is also in need of a qualitative approach. The following chapter therefore takes a few steps away from a quantitative perspective – even though quantitative aspects still have to be taken into consideration – and instead applies a qualitative method to the material.

10 A difference in gender? A qualitative comparison

The last chapter of this paper tries to approach a question that cannot be answered in a definitive way: do men and women behave differently with respect to how they utter backchannels in conversations? Even though chapter 9 provided a few insights, important questions are still left for discussion. So far namely, nothing has been written about the particularities of inter- and intra-gender conversations – in other words how do the sexes behave in mixed and separate groups? Chapter 9 further showed that not only is there a general unwillingness to exhaustively use simple backchannels, but in addition, men also use more backchannels than women. This does not say much however about the actual range of feedback processes that are going on between interlocutors in a conversation.

10.1 The approach

To analyse said range of feedback processes, research has to go beyond a mere quantitative analysis and take a qualitative approach. For the topic at hand, a conversation analytic viewpoint seems most appropriate as its objective

is to take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims (...) that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine. (Sacks 1984: 411)

The fact that gender-specific behaviour is a rather problematic topic area is also taken into consideration by conversation analysts. Schegloff (1999: 563) even argues that such categorization processes are not useful at all as “asymmetries are the products of local determination”. This means that gender only becomes an issue in case it is explicitly mentioned by any of the interlocutors as there are far too many extra-linguistic factors at work at the same time. Developing this line of inquiry, Speer and Stokoe (2011: 11f.) also claim that attributing the use of feedback to social categories such as gender is nothing more than a matter of speculation.

Billig (1999: 547ff.) on the other hand criticizes such an approach in that social factors can indeed have an influence on a conversation and thus must also be taken into consideration. The same accounts for Gumperz (1995: 153), who argues that in order to analyse conversation transcripts, techniques from other strands of research such as discourse analysis must be employed. He therefore sees a connection between extralinguistic variables such as gender and the grammar of conversation.

Reid (1995: 509f.) accounts for the difference between male and female interlocutors by looking at inter- and intra-gender conversations as well. She argues that in the course of same-sex communication, women tend to use more backchannels than men.

However, she also claims that the differences are much more visible within same-sex groups than in conversations between men and women. During female-only conversations, women increasingly utter backchannels to show solidarity whereas they use fewer backchannels in conversations with men. Men on the other hand use more backchannels when they are talking to women.

As going into close detail on each text sample would exceed the scope of the thesis, the following three sections focus on three different constellations: men-only, female-only and mixed. Among all the available text types, *direct conversations* provide the most natural context for interlocutors to interact with one another (Warren 2006: 13f.). The primary interest of the present chapter however runs slightly against what has been analysed in the thesis so far – especially in terms of the items that are included. Yet rather than seeing it as an inconsistency it must be considered as embracing the possibilities of a qualitative approach. In addition, the complexity of gender-specific behaviour should be done justice to by adopting a multitude of perspectives. Most of all, as chapter 9 ran against expectations with regard to the frequency of backchannel use by women compared to men, chapter 10 attempts to analyse whether feedback processes manifest themselves differently. The need for an extended perspective is inextricably tied to Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.). Besides accounting for backchannels as short lexical items, they broaden their scope by defining six different categories of backchannels, of which only the verbal backchannels find their way into the analysis:

1. readily identified verbalisations among which are tokens like *mhm, yeah, right, I see* or *that's true*.
2. listeners attempting to complete the speakers' utterances
3. requests for clarification
4. restatements – the listeners reformulate the thoughts previously uttered by the speaker

In addition, Fishman (1980: 245ff.) also claims that women use more questions in inter-gender conversations than men. For that purpose, the three text samples were also analysed in terms of how the individual speakers use questions in order to signal feedback. As can be seen, this chapter is a combination of quantitative categories and a qualitative, in-depth analysis. It is also important to note that it is only a tentative analysis as a difference in behaviour cannot be exclusively attributed to the gender of the interlocutors. Contextual

aspects play a crucial part as well, thus it must also be taken into consideration in how far the content contributes towards the development of a conversation.

Not only the form of the backchannels is of interest, but their function is equally important. In this respect, Holmes (2006: 6) distinguishes different goals of feedback use between men and women. In contrast to Bjørge (2010: 192) however, who emphasizes the notion of context-dependent feedback, the model by Holmes (2006: 6) is particularly black and white. She assigns three different communicative functions to each gender: first of all, feminine talk is considered as alleviative in that it takes the burden of sole responsibility for the talk off the primary speaker. Second of all, backchannels that are produced by women in whatever form are seen as supportive to the grounding process. Last but not least, backchannels that are uttered by females calm main speakers down in case the conversation runs the risk of failing.

Male backchannels on the other hand are considered to cause the complete opposite as men want to position themselves as the dominant interlocutor. They regard conversations as a contest that should be dominated in a strong and offensive manner. At the same time, Holmes (2006: 6) further claims that male interlocutors seek selfish benefit by inserting backchannels outside of the appropriate transition relevance places.

10.2 Category 1: female-female conversation

As already stated, it is quite difficult to choose from the vast variety of text samples that ICE-GB offers. Regarding the categorization of backchannels above, one aspect becomes decisive: applicability. What this means is that in the end, any text sample can be chosen due to the fact that backchannels are used in almost every conversation. The primary concern therefore was not which text was selected as any *direct conversation* can serve the purpose of elaborating on backchannels. To arrive at an adequate overview, it was considered as far more important to properly describe the context in which all the backchannels occur (for the full transcription of the texts see Appendix).

The example that was selected for this section (S1A-005) tries to give an account of the particularities of inter-gender talk between two women. In terms of background information, ICE-GB unfortunately only provides insufficient support. Both interlocutors are female and between the ages 18 to 25. The discussion between the interlocutors revolves around a variety of very specific university issues: speaker 1 is finishing a university term paper and talking to speaker 2 about it. Judging from the context, both interlocutors can be identified as students, thus no hierarchical relationship should shift the

distribution of speaking rights in a certain direction.

It becomes apparent that the first few utterances already set the tone for the further progress of the conversation. Speaker 1 starts off as the primary speaker by giving an extensive exposition of the topic of her paper, thus influencing as well as limiting the reaction phase of speaker two. In regard to the gender-specific behaviour as outlined above, the distribution of speaker-roles is rather bipolar. While speaker 2 fulfils the role of a supportive interlocutor, speaker 1 presents a behaviour that is more similar to the alleged competitiveness of men. *Example 37* further exemplifies this. An extract from the very beginning of the conversation, it can be seen that the exposition phase of speaker 1 is rather long – in its uncut form, it spans over nine text units.

(37)

<S1> So basically I mean I said to him I want to keep feature geometry in I said not because
you know I'm pandering to people who support it
I mean I actually think element theory handles it better
and I think when you look at Bruce Hays's analysis which John didn't take very seriously

<S2> **Mhm**

uhm

what does he

<S1> What Bruce was saying

Well I mean he is a bit weird to combine particle theory with a you know feature theory

I mean he's a bit odd

(S1A-005; 007-015)

The speakers, even though both female, behave differently at the beginning of the conversation, thus making use of different functions of the male-female continuum. Speaker 2 clearly attempts to fulfil her role as a supportive non-primary speaker by first and foremost acknowledging the ongoing turn of the primary speaker. She does so not only by using short items but additionally also by using questions as a way of clarifying possible misconceptions of the content. However, as *example 37* shows, it is debatable whether or not the role of a supportive listener is even required for the main interlocutor to

coherently produce her turn. Even though namely speaker 2 utters her backchannel (request for clarification by asking a question) in a TRP, she is still cut off in the middle of her question and forced into a minor speaker role.

Thus instead of waiting for speaker 2 to finish her rather short contribution, speaker 1 immediately prolongs her own turn. It is difficult to tell what triggers such a kind of behaviour. One explanation is that in the beginning of the conversation speaker 2, instead of uttering clear backchannels, she constantly uses *uhm* as a sign of hesitation. The primary speaker therefore interprets them as a signal to continue talking regardless of the length of the contributions by the listener.

Example 38 further proves this point. Speaker 1 dedicates very little to no time to actually wait for speaker 2 to finish uttering her contributions as she sees the hesitation marker *uhm* as an opportunity to continue.

(38)

<S1> And I said well you know I mean a lot of people wouldn't necessarily be interested in
uh element theory but if they thought that it could be handled in feature geometry
then they would probably read the element bit as well as they might ultimately
become interested in it

<S2> **uhm**

<S1> And he said oh yes I agree with you

(S1A-005; 023-025)

This initial dominating behaviour also has an immediate effect on how speaker 2 behaves in the first half of the conversation. As there are no places for a potential turn transition offered, she reduces her own activities to a series of utterances that are either questions or reformulations that are directly related to the content of the main turn. *Examples 39* and *40* further illustrate these findings.

(39)

<S1> and then he worried me about next week

<S2> **Yeah**

uhm

uhm

don't let him worry you

<S1> no no no no

not in a bad way really

(S1A-005; 033-039)

(40)

<S1> And every single person without a computer background failed

<S2> **Failed**

uhm

<S1> and I mean that's ridiculous

(S1A-005; 168-171)

Furthermore, it can be seen that in terms of conversational content, speaker 2 leaves the entire meaning-making process to speaker 1. Yet as has been said already, this kind of feedback is only in parts facilitative. To a large extent namely, it also stems from an imbalance with regard to the speaking rights distribution. As there are two females leading the conversation however, a simple look at gender is not enough. Much more than by gender, the progress of the conversation seems dictated by the overall dynamic of the topic itself. Speaker 1 desperately wants to convey all the information with regard to a topic that is well-known to her. On the other hand, this means that she does not require any contributions from speaker 2 other than short backchannels. If she uses more elaborate backchannels however, she is interrupted – which in the end can be interpreted as rude and according to Holmes (2006: 6) as “male behaviour”.

The overall course of the conversation, at least in this case, is dependent on the topic discussed and also on how the speakers position themselves in the beginning – gender only seems secondary. As the conversation progresses, the topic of the beginning also shifts (speaker 1 finishes talking about her paper) - yet the initial behaviour is never entirely abandoned. Even though speaker 1 reduces her effort to take the floor, the relationship between the two interlocutors is only altered for a short period of time. When a new topic is introduced eventually, there is a reversal in the behaviour of the two interlocutors – however it is only upheld for a few utterances. *Example 41* illustrates this partial transition: speaker 2 attempts to reclaim the main turn by introducing a topic herself. Speaker 1 therefore is reduced to the role of passive and supporting listener – exemplified by uttering feedback such as questions or reformulations.

(41)

<S1> He doesn't think he'll even be at the talk

<S2> Oh right

Oh right

<S1> So

<S2> I just met Xepe and Marcella and had a large ice cream

<S1> Oh Xepe turned up did he

<S2> He's in most days

(S1A-005; 133-140)

Yet the roles that that speaker 1 claims for herself at the very beginning and the role that speaker two is subsequently forced into are never entirely reversed. *Example 40* actually occurs after *example 41*, indicating that speaker 2 is forced back into the role of passive and supportive listener rather quickly in the course of only a few text units. Speaker 1 seems not to be willing to relinquish the role that she claimed at the beginning. Only towards the end of the conversation, when the answers of speaker 2 get more extensive and hardly leave any room for interruption, speaker 1 fully acknowledges the role of passive listener. This change in speaking rights at the same time is paralleled by a change in topic. Instead of the serious topics that are being discussed for the most part, the interlocutors talk gossip in the last quarter of the conversation.

This analysis does not give so much insight into gender-relations as it shows how interlocutors try to position themselves from the very beginning. Features of “female style” of conversation are only displayed by speaker 2 in reacting to the dominance of speaker 1. Regarding the different types of backchannels as defined by Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.), the conversation showed that the bigger the lack of proficiency in a certain topic, the shorter the items that the listeners use are. This pattern is only shortly altered by the introduction of a new topic. However, as the initial roles are not entirely relinquished, both interlocutors struggle to adapt themselves to their new roles. Towards the end, both interlocutors finally see eye to eye, however only because the seriousness of the topic itself is diminished.

What can be regarded as so-called female behaviour however is the following: if both interlocutors rivalled each other for the floor right from the beginning, the conversation would run the risk of failing. Therefore, even though one interlocutor clearly claims the floor, the other one refrains from competing for it as well. In case there is a

change in topic however or in case the former passive speaker feels comfortable enough to contribute towards the conversation, a change in roles might occur. However, the longer it takes the harder it is to significantly alter the pre-fixed roles and patterns. Judging from only one text however is difficult, for why it is indispensable to also look at the second possibility of inter-gender communication, namely male-male.

10.3 Category 2: male-male conversation

The second example is intra-gender as well, yet instead of women the two interlocutors in the text sample *S1A-061* are male. Regardless of gender however, certain parallels can be drawn to the example analysed in the prior section. Again, the conversation illustrates the way that knowledge of a topic can influence in how far interlocutors are capable of contributing towards a turn. Unfortunately, in contrast to the prior section ICE-GB gives even fewer indicators with regard to the context of the conversation. As can be inferred from the discussion however, both interlocutors are in a public place (restaurant) and they start off by talking about free time from work. In contrast to the prior section however, both interlocutors do not discuss a topic that demands special knowledge – rather they begin their talk by exchanging personal experiences.

This is also reflected by the way in which the conversation develops. *Example 42* shows the first few text units of the conversation. It can be seen that instead of a single extended turn, both interlocutors take turns in producing utterances. Even though speaker 1 introduces the first topic, both interlocutors make an attempt at cooperatively contributing towards the overall conversation. More importantly however, both interlocutors are also given the space to do so – mostly by asking questions that directly relate to the other interlocutor. This style of backchannelling causes both participants to mutually contribute towards the building of context. This is also reflected by the use of the hesitation marker *uhm*. Even though not a backchannel per definition, it still contributes to the conversation. In contrast to the female-female discussion namely, *uhm* triggers a different reaction from the turn-holding interlocutor. When speaker 2 utters *uhm*, the turn-holding interlocutor does not see this as an opportunity to continue with his turn. Instead, he utters a question in order to further include speaker 1 in the conversation.

(42)

<S1> I'm going to try and have Wednesday off

<S2> Yeah

This week

<S1> **Uhm**

Yes

<S2> Uhm

<S1> **You're back this weekend aren't you**

<S2> Yes but I'm off Thursday and Friday

<S1> Oh right

I'm probably off Friday again

study leave

but uh oh sorry Wednesday uh I'm meeting with a friend

<S2> Mhm mhm

<S1> I understand

I've been let down once before but there you go

(S1A-061; 001-016)

The tone of the conversation however then shifts entirely and abruptly when the overall topic changes to an issue which directly affects one of the interlocutors – the stroke of a family member. The affected interlocutor thus takes over most of the talking by elaborating on the disease in closer detail, which is seen in *example 43*. The big difference to the first text however is that there are no signs of competitive verbal behaviour from any of the interlocutors. Quite contrarily, speaker 1 supports the turn-holding interlocutor by frequently reformulating prior utterances. The rather close and supportive relationship between the two interlocutors is further emphasized by the insertion of a joke by speaker 1 (“So you’re an old man”). Moreover, speaker 2 also occasionally refers directly to speaker 1.

(43)

<S2> Quite a severe one apparently

<S1> He's not very old is he

He's forty odd I would have thought

<S2> Uhm not from where I stand but uhm

<S1> So you're an old man

I think we all know that

<S2> Thank you

Uhm no uhm but you see people have strokes not necessarily when they're old
strokes are quite often uhm the fate of youngish people ihm
particularly fairly intense and uh highly strung people appear to be
Uhm my father had a stroke

(S1A-061; 051-062)

The change in tone however also inevitably effects a change in the progression of the conversation – visible by the changed use of feedback-behaviour. Both interlocutors lose their willingness to thoroughly contribute further to the ongoing conversation as their backchannels shift from directly relating to prior utterances to making frequent use of hesitation markers and repetitions. This break in the structure of the conversation is furthermore also marked by the insertion of harsh and clear-cut topic shifts that try to avoid overly serious topics. *Examples 44 and 45* show that after discussing the stroke of a family member, transitions from one topic to another become relatively rough.

(44)

<S1> **Uhm** it enables people to come through

Uhm

Yah

<S2> **Mhm**

Improve appearance more

Uhm

<S1> Now then

Uhm

By the way Liz is OK for going to the **uhm** Verdi in Oxford and dropping into La Manoir

(S1A-061; 090-098)

(45)

<S1> Oops

By the way did I mention my dustbin's been blown over my back garden again

I've given up now

<S1> **uhm**

All right

uhm

yes you did

you did yes

(S1A-061; 143-150)

These examples underline two things: first of all, after tackling a serious issue, the backchannelling behaviour of both male speakers is severely altered. Yet as already argued in the first section, it is difficult to attribute that change to the gender of the interlocutors. And second of all, the speakers seemingly lose their willingness to contribute further to such a pessimistic topic but instead discuss a series of superficial topics.

The question that remains is whether any kind of conclusions can be drawn in relation to the model of Holmes (2006: 6). What can be said for the conversation discussed in this section is that both interlocutors display a sort of hybrid behaviour, thus drawing from both perspectives of Holmes' claims on gender behaviour. Both interlocutors start their conversation in a cooperative way and therefore contribute equally to the progression of the turn. This behaviour is also upheld throughout discussing the severe illness of one of the interlocutors' father. However, after reaching that emotional peak, both interlocutors seem incapable of maintaining that level for further turns and thus fall back into a more stereotypical male behaviour. As a result, the dynamic of the conversation changes as the smooth transition of utterances is replaced by an uncomfortable atmosphere of rapid topic changes. Moreover, whereas initially both interlocutors utter constructive and extensive feedback, it is substituted by unfinished backchannels and hesitation markers towards the end.

10.4 Category 3: inter-gender conversation

The final insight into conversational dynamics is gained by stepping away from the intra-gender viewpoint of the previous two sections. Instead, it is also important to analyse how the feedback processes change when both genders are involved. It was already discussed though that conversations are more than the sum of their parts. Many factors come into play when regarding the complexities of backchannels that go beyond simple items. In respect of Schegloff (1999: 563) and his view on conversation analysis, gender was not made explicit by any of the interlocutors.

Moreover, what has been seen so far is that when two interlocutors of the same sex talk to each other, gender is not as important as the willingness to keep a conversation

intact. The behaviour of both interlocutors is not static and can evolve in case it is needed. Two constellations have been found so far: *dominant/supportive* on the one hand and *supportive/supportive* on the other hand. For a conversation to work properly therefore, interlocutors either have to share certain responsibilities, take the initiative or relinquish their right to talk to a clearly more dominant speaker. The only constellation that seems more unlikely is when two interlocutors fight for the turn.

The last question left to ask therefore is whether gender-related behaviour is distributed more clearly when men as well as women are actually present in a conversation. The example chosen for further analysis (S1A-063) includes a total of four speakers, two of them male (speakers 1 and 3) and the rest (speakers 2 and 4) female. Again, no specifics are given in terms of their social attributes other than the fact that the interlocutors are between 26 and 45 years old.

Similar to the all-male example, the conversation starts as casual small-talk – the interlocutors discuss past holiday experiences. In terms of the distribution of speaking rights, the first few turns of the conversation are shared between speakers 1 and 2, who reflect on their preferences in relation to foreign cuisine. Even though speaker 1 starts the conversation, female speaker 2 quickly takes over the initiative by using simple lexical items. The way in which these items are used however deserves further attention. As *example 46* shows, the items are per definition not backchannels but resumptive openers (Clancy and Thompson 1996: 361ff.). Yet by uttering many of these resumptive openers, speaker 2 indicates that she wants to take over the turn. Much like Ward's (2000: 1178) elaboration on the negative effects of brief feedback items, these resumptive openers reflect the interlocutor's general impatience. Interestingly, the gender-roles are thereby reversed.

(46)

<S1> And they've got fantastic yoghurts there of course and yoghurt drinks as well and it's all wasted on me totally wasted

<S2> **Mm**

Mmm

Mmm

Yes

It's a

<S1> But I really loved it

<S2> **Yes**

Yes

Yes

Greek yoghurt is fantastic

(S1A-063; 003-013)

The other two speakers only join the conversation a little later. When they do, also the overall topic of the conversation changes immediately – though not by much. Instead of talking about particular dishes of a country, the interlocutors start discussing the countries themselves. In terms of how the interlocutors enter the conversation, they choose a transition relevance place and utter an audible yet brief backchannel as illustrated by *example 47*. While it is the female speaker 4 who finally tries to enter the conversation, it is the male speaker 1 who, by directly addressing a question to the others, provides a point of entry. Interestingly, speaker 3 shies away from making any claim for the floor but instead waits until being directly addressed.

(47)

<S2> Absolutely delicious mm

<S1> I mean it's virtually the same I suppose

<S2> Mm

<S4> **Mm**

<S2> Mm

<S1> **You didn't come to Turkey with us did you?**

<S3> What no

<S1> **You went to Greece though didn't you**

<S3> Yes

(S1A-063; 023-033)

After this transition to a more general topic the speaking rights are re-distributed as well. While speaker 2 clearly dominates the very beginning of the conversation, she stops her efforts when two additional interlocutors enter the discussion. This unwillingness to surrender the turn is illustrated by the lack of feedback from speaker 2. As the conversation then progresses further, speaker 2 makes no efforts to re-join. Despite short sequences of backchannelling, she does not contribute anything to the overall content of the

conversation. While this may be, as shown in the previous two examples, an indicator of a lack of knowledge with regard to the discussed topic, a different explanation seems more plausible. While she quickly claims the turn in the beginning, speaker 2 is forced into a minor role after a few turns. Yet instead of further contributing to the progression of the discussion, she chooses a more defensive strategy by refraining from anything but uttering short backchannels. The other three interlocutors however effortlessly take turns so that each can contribute.

A similar pattern can be identified in the third sequence of the talk, as the discussed content once again changes rather quickly. In contrast to the first topic shift however, where a rather specific topic was turned into a more general one to include all interlocutors, the last sequence chooses the opposite direction. Yet once again, speaker 1 stands out as the most dominant interlocutor who is also in control of the floor.

(48)

<S1> I mean everybody knows about these stories don't you

People going uh skiing deciding they want to have a wee uh slipping down their ski things on

a slope and then as they're crouching the skis start to move and they actually stumble backwards into the middle of the snow again bare bottom the lot you know

<S2> **Mm**

<S1> That's the vanishing hitchhiker really though isn't it

If you know what I mean

<S2> **Vanishing hitchhiker**

<S1> Yes

It's urban myths

(S1A-063; 130-138)

Once again, by directly asking a question, speaker 1 re-establishes the speaking rights and thus reclaims the charge for the floor. The above example however also illustrates that the question only serves the purpose of establishing a topic that speaker 1 has the most knowledge of. As has been already elaborated on, lack of such knowledge forces other interlocutors, regardless whether they are male or female, to backchannel while one speaker holds the floor.

Drawing conclusions with regard to the dynamics of inter-gender talk however is still difficult. While speaker 1 behaves similarly to what Holmes (2006: 6) regards as male behaviour, speaker 3 contradicts this attitude by showing signs of female talk like support or reluctance to come across as being too competitive. It becomes apparent however that when a conversation includes more than two interlocutors, it is in need of a main interlocutor who not only distributes speaking rights but also changes topics at the right time.

To sum up, the picture that such an extended look at the backchannelling behaviour of men and women paints is difficult to analyse. As the examples in this chapter have shown, the template provided by Holmes (2006: 6) regarding which conversational style is emphasized by the sexes is not far reaching enough. Backchannelling behaviour cannot solely be predicted by the gender of the individual interlocutors, but a vast variety of other factors has to be taken into account as well. These factors can range from the relationship between the participants of a conversation over the knowledge of the discussed topic up to the topic itself, to name only a few. Therefore, even though it seems tempting to divide the dynamics of conversational behaviour into black and white or female and male respectively, the complexity of face-to-face interaction goes far beyond that.

11 Conclusion

Backchannels are the sound (and gestures) made in conversation by the current non-speaker, which grease the wheels of conversation but constitute no claim to take over the turn. Tottie (1991: 255)

The thesis began by asking what the role of listeners in a conversation was. More importantly however, it also wanted to know which tools are at their disposal to join in the co-construction of meaning. In retrospect, the quotation by Tottie (1991: 255) sums up quite clearly how backchannels work, but at the same time it also shows that they are everything but straightforward. Especially the term *sound* raises the question whether or not backchannels can even be considered fully-fledged words. What the thesis has tried to show however is that even though backchannels can take the form of non-lexical sounds (Clancy and Thompson 1996: 356f.), they do not need to. As continuously exemplified by authors like Duncan and Fiske (1985: 58f.), the variety of lexical items suitable to function as backchannels is huge.

One of the most important achievements of this thesis therefore is that it has shown that what is considered a backchannel is highly dependent on the definition – in form and function. What it also has shown however is that even with the brief lexical items that were analysed in the empirical part, drawing a line between the various functions they can fulfil is not always easy. Questions like ‘do these items interrupt a primary speaker’s turn’ or ‘are they a sign of passive acknowledgement’ Clark (1996) are not only highly context dependent but to a certain degree also subjective. In addition, items like *yeah*, *yes* or *right* can adopt other functions as well such as *resumptive openers* or *answers*. The quantitative analysis therefore tried to do justice to the multi-faceted nature of even such brief items by dividing them into five different categories. The results were surprising. They showed that while these brief items are indeed used as backchannel, they are by far not as frequently used as illustrated in different studies (eg. Kjellmer 2009). Moreover, with regard to items such as *OK/okay*, *I see* or *right*, backchannels only play a minor functional role. The majority of backchannel use thus is restricted to simple items like *mhmm/mmm/mm* or *yeah/yes*.

The analysis gave insight not only with regard to which items interlocutors make use of in order to signal backchannelling but also in terms of where these items are inserted. Nearly three quarters of all the backchannels that were identified were uttered turn-externally, thus not interrupting the turn of the primary speaker. As the analysis of the turn-internal backchannels with respect to their individual locations has shown though, listeners still systematically place these items. However, while it is already difficult to

properly classify external backchannels, the situation is even more complex as regards internal ones. To a certain extent due to the limited information that corpus data provides, it is at times difficult to find clear-cut definitions and categories. The categorization that was laid out in chapter 8 is an example of this. Even though a thorough explanation is provided with each of the individual categories, such a type of data is always prone to discussion and controversy.

The same accounts for the last sections of the thesis: analysing the data with regard to potential gender-differences. To a certain extent, this analysis ran against initial expectations as the claim that women use more backchannels than men (eg. Allan et al. 2010: 96) was only partly verified – depending on the text type. As regards *direct conversations*, the difference illustrated by the ICE-GB corpus is only marginal, yet still men use more backchannels than women. However, when it comes to specialized discourse, much larger discrepancies were identified with both men (*telephone calls*) and women (*classroom lessons*) using more backchannels.

This lack of easily discernible trends is particularly reflected by the qualitative analysis. For that purpose, rather than signalling a break with regard to the consistency of the analysed items, it must be seen as a contribution to the argument that conversations are always more than the sum of their parts. Backchannels might “grease the wheels of conversation” (Tottie 1991: 255), but even brief lexical items cannot be reduced to a simple ‘cause and effect’ relationship. Listeners therefore have a mighty tool at their disposal and thus by not saying much, they often mean much more than is initially expected.

12 Bibliography

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13 Appendix

13.1 Transcription of text S1A-005 direct conversations from ICE-GB

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #001:1:A>
<unclear-words> So it was OK in fact <unclear-word>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #002:1:A>

And it went all right

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #003:1:A>

so I 've decided that uhm I 'm
as far as that bit of the paper
goes <,> I 'm just going to modify
a little bit the bit that goes on
about element theory <,> rather than not element
theory sorry feature geometry rather than develop it
there <,>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #004:1:A>

Because me and John said

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #005:1:A>

well he said they they they could definitely
handle it <,> but it because they 'd
get round it by underspecifying this that and
the other and having tricks as to where
the underspecified bits got put in <,>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #006:1:A>

but there 's so many different forms of
it that they 'd easily manage it <,>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #007:1:A>

So basically I mean I said to him
<,> well the rea I want to keep
element th uh feature geometry in <,> I
said because not <,> because <,> you know
I 'm pandering to people who support it

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #008:1:A>

I mean I actually think element theory handles
it better

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #009:1:A>

and I think when you look at Bruce
Hayes 's analysis <,> which John didn't take
very seriously

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #010:1:B>

Mhm

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #011:1:B>

uhm

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #012:1:B>

What his what does he

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #013:1:A>

What Bruce Hayes was saying

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #014:1:A>

Well I mean he he is a bit
weird to have a to combine <,> particl
par particle <,> theory with a you know
feature theory

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #015:1:A>

I mean he 's a bit odd

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #016:1:B>

Uhm <,>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #017:1:A>

But uh <,>

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #018:1:A>

What was I saying

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #019:1:A>
 God I 've lost my thread <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #020:1:A>
 I wanted
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #021:1:B>
 About you wanted to keep the fea uh
 feature geometry stuff
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #022:1:A>
 Oh yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #023:1:A>
 And I said well you know I mean
 a lot of people wouldn't be necessarily be
 interested in uh <,,> element theory but if
 they if they thought that it c it
 could be handled in feature geometry <,,> then
 they would probably read the element bit as
 well and they might ultimately become interested in
 it <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #024:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #025:1:A>
 And he said oh yes I agree with
 you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #026:1:A>
 I mean I think that 's fine but
 you either have to develop it quite a
 lot or take it out
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #027:1:A>
 So what I 'm going to do is
 say classical feature theory handles it <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #028:1:A>
 But of course you see I mean if
 you say classical feature theory handles it then
 of course then you 're back to all
 the old problems because I mean actually that
 's bad for th that in <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #029:1:A>
 Well it 's bad for feature geometry
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #030:1:A>
 Feature geometry ultimately can't handle it <,,> because
 I mean obviously feature geometry took over from
 all that anyway <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #031:1:A>
 But this I mean they they can they
 can do
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #032:1:A>
 It 's just uh it 's just it
 's so convoluted and <,,> all the rest
 of it that it can't possibly be right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #033:1:A>
 And then he worried me about what about
 about next week
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #034:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #035:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #036:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #037:1:B>
 Don't let him worry you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #038:1:A>

No no no no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #039:1:A>
 In not in a bad way really
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #040:1:A>
 Just you know be careful what you say
 which is fair I mean you know fair
 comment <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #041:1:A>
 And then I rai I rushed over to
 the library to get a couple of the
 <,> uhm books that Robins had recommended <,>
 uh to just have a look at just
 so that <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #042:1:A>
 Because I mean I 'm going to say
 what I 've said before basically
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #043:1:A>
 but I 'm not <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #044:1:B>
 Are you going to go to all uhm
 the day on of the phonology lectures
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #045:1:A>
 I think I ought to do that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #046:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #047:1:B>
 I think you had
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #048:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #049:1:A>
 I mean I don't know how much I
 'll take in
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #050:1:B>
 I think I 'll go to most of
 them <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #051:1:B>
 But I won't go to all of pragmatics
 the day before
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #052:1:A>
 I 'd go to the Robins one because
 I mean that like kicks it off
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #053:1:B>
 Do you think so
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #054:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #055:1:A>
 I would <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #056:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #057:1:A>
 I would because to me <,> it seems
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #058:1:A>
 I mean I 'd go to that and
 I 'd go to the Palmer one if
 I was you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #059:1:A>
 I know they 're early <,> but the
 thing is they 're like sort of quite
 <,> they 're almost like the introductory lectures
 so I think they 're quite important for
 scene-setting

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #060:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #061:1:B>
 They 'll <,> pick the thread up won't
 they
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #062:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #063:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #064:1:A>
 Uhm <,> that one actually worries me a
 little bit
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #065:1:B>
 I suppose so
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #066:1:B>
 Are you going to go to that <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #067:1:A>
 Which
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #068:1:B>
 The first two
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #069:1:B>
 Palmer and Firth
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #070:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #071:1:A>
 Oh definitely
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #072:1:A>
 I don't know what else I 'll go
 to though <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #073:1:B>
 No <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #074:1:A>
 Because the thing is I 'm going to
 be absolutely knackered
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #075:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #076:1:B>
 You are
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #077:1:B>
 Yeah <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #078:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #079:1:A>
 By the time and by the time it
 gets to my paper I mean I shall
 fall asleep
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #080:1:A>
 I don't know how I 'll cope with
 anybody else 's
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #081:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #082:1:B>
 I know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #083:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #084:1:B>
 Do you want to go and see the
 film that evening or <,> just have the
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #085:1:A>
 No

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #086:1:A>
 I think uh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #087:1:B>
 We could have dinner that evening or something
 or just collapse
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #088:1:A>
 I think we should I think we should
 have a
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #089:1:A>
 Well I mean don't f
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #090:1:A>
 Kaye doesn't even finish till late but I
 don't think I 'll still be in the
 <,> land of the living when Kaye 's
 stopped talking to be honest with you <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #091:1:B>
 Oh yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #092:1:B>
 That 's true
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #093:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #094:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #095:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #096:1:A>
 I mean I 'll see s let 's
 see how we go because we got we
 there 's about three talks after me <,>
 I think isn't there or more
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #097:1:A>
 There 's tea and one or two other
 things
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #098:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #099:1:B>
 But we can't walk out because it 's
 after yours there 's another one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #100:1:A>
 Someone else
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #101:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #102:1:B>
 Then tea which we could clear off at
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #103:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #104:1:B>
 But uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #105:1:A>
 I 'll be completely uh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #106:1:B>
 I mean I 'm going to go to
 Kaye 's to see w if he 's
 got anything new to say <,> after thirty-five
 years of the Turkish data <,> <laugh> <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #107:1:B>
 But uh there 's a there 's a
 relevance theory workshop the following week since Sperber
 is over <,> which I shall go to
 <,> anyway
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #108:1:A>

Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #109:1:A>
 I don't think I 'll join you <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #110:1:A>
 I might go
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #111:1:A>
 When when exactly is it on
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #112:1:B>
 It 's the twenty-seventh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #113:1:B>
 I think two o'clock in the afternoon <,>
 I think
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #114:1:A>
 Just that just that <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #115:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #116:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #117:1:B>
 It 's just a question and answer session
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #118:1:B>
 And I just really want to go
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #119:1:B>
 I you know I want to s hear
 it from from his point of view as
 well
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #120:1:A>
 I might pop along then
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #121:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #122:1:B>
 Uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #123:1:A>
 I don't know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #124:1:A>
 it depends whether my brain 's got back
 engaged by then
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #125:1:B>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #126:1:B>
 It 'll be six days so <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #127:1:A>
 I 've got to see John <,> on
 the Wednesday
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #128:1:A>
 and remember
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #129:1:A>
 he 's going to start setting me deadlines
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #130:1:B>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #131:1:B>
 Don't let him upset you before the talk
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #132:1:A>
 He 's away all next week
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #133:1:A>
 He doesn't think he 'll even be at
 the talk
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #134:1:B>
 Oh right <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #135:1:B>

Oh right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #136:1:B>
 Oh well
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #137:1:A>
 So <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #138:1:B>
 I just met Xepe and Marcella and had
 a large ice cream
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #139:1:A>
 Oh Xepe turned up did he
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #140:1:B>
 He 's in most days <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #141:1:B>
 What they 're doing is they 're working
 on the <,> Pascal thing which they 'll
 have to <,> uhm do at Cambridge because
 <,> from Agnieszka 's point of view it
 was so difficult despite the fact that she
 's <,> really good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #142:1:A>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #143:1:A>
 So she 's advised them to to get
 a good grounding before they go
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #144:1:B>
 I don't know that she 's advised them
 but she 's put it in their minds
 that it 's going to be really tough
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #145:1:A>
 So who 's who 's they
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #146:1:B>
 Xepe and Andrew
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #147:1:B>
 And they basically getting this under their belt
 before they go
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #148:1:A>
 I think that 's very sensible
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #149:1:B>
 So do I
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #150:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #151:1:B>
 Uhm they didn't give themselves a break though
 after the deadline
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #152:1:B>
 They went straight into it the next day
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #153:1:A>
 Well but they 'll they 'll probably you
 know they 'll probably hit a point where
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #154:1:A>
 Actually it 's not necessarily such a bad
 thing because the chances are that if they
 leave it they 'll never do it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #155:1:B>
 Well it was totally different
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #156:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #157:1:B>
 I 'm very surprised at their commitment and
 pleased

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #158:1:B>
 I mean it 's nice
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #159:1:A>
 uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #160:1:A>
 It 's very sensible actually
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #161:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #162:1:A>
 Cos I was just thinking about Pete at
 Edinburgh the A I thing <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #163:1:A>
 I mean one of the problems there was
 he was spending most of the day just
 trying to catch up <,> because he said
 that the A I thing that he went
 on to was gea was supposedly geared towards
 people <,> who didn't have a computer background
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #164:1:B>
 And it wasn't
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #165:1:A>
 And it wasn't at all
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #166:1:B>
 No way
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #167:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #168:1:A>
 And every single person without a computer background
 failed
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #169:1:B>
 Failed <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #170:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #171:1:A>
 And I mean that 's ridiculous
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #172:1:A>
 And th and I mean if you have
 a course like that then you 've got
 to start looking at your course <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #173:1:A>
 You 've got to you 've got to
 <,> uh do something about that because that
 's you that isn't P
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #174:1:A>
 I mean Pete was Pete was clever
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #175:1:B>
 Well I
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #176:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #177:1:B>
 Well I think the thing is that with
 computers
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #178:1:B>
 and I feel this from a from a
 a layperson 's point of view <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #179:1:B>
 a person who specialises in computers one way
 or another or even just uses one every
 day <,> more than I do I mean
 you know <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #180:1:B>

I don't do anything with it really
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #181:1:B>
 I just sort of word process really <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #182:1:B>
 But someone who 's who 's computing <,>
 they forget <,> how <,> difficult it is
 for you to understand anything
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #183:1:B>
 And you know if you don't know the
 sin sin simple command how to get out
 of something <,> you 're sunk
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #184:1:B>
 But I mean to do a course in
 it I mean I
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #185:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #186:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #187:1:A>
 I think
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #188:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #189:1:A>
 But I mean it 's it yeah it
 's even at a higher level than that
 though because I mean Pete could do basic
 things on a computer but it wasn't enough
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #190:1:A>
 And he was very intelligent and it still
 wasn't enough
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #191:1:A>
 So I think it 's probably as well
 that they 've gone straight into it because
 I think if they 'd had a break
 <,> they would never have got back into
 it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #192:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #193:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #194:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #195:1:B>
 Philip 's not actually doing that course you
 know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #196:1:B>
 I thought he was here
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #197:1:A>
 What 's he doing
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #198:1:B>
 He 's doing computer science course <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #199:1:A>
 Ah <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #200:1:B>
 M S C
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #201:1:A>
 Well that 'll still be fairly tough
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #202:1:B>
 He went for a job yesterday as an
 uhm London Tourist Board information giver

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #203:1:A>
 I thought he 'd got a job with
 someone
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #204:1:B>
 Well he had but he 's he keeps
 going
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #205:1:A>
 Super high-flying
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #206:1:B>
 Well he told me it 's this super
 high-flying uhm uh updating computer software stuff
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #207:1:B>
 I 'm sure it 's the old job
 he used to have cleaning them <laughter> <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #208:1:A>
 But it went off OK last night then
 did it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #209:1:A>
 Did you have a good turnout
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #210:1:B>
 It was really pleasant
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #211:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #212:1:B>
 We had a very good turnout
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #213:1:B>
 Uh we charged a quid in the end
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #214:1:A>
 Oh you did
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #215:1:B>
 Because we otherwise we would 've been overdrawn
 and then I would 've been out of
 pocket
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #216:1:A>
 Oh well
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #217:1:A>
 Right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #218:1:A>
 Well right that 's fair enough then
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #219:1:B>
 Well the thing was that the whole point
 was that we were going to have strawberries
 and cream
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #220:1:B>
 I mean it 'd been left to me
 to organise it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #221:1:B>
 so I said right does everyone fancy strawberries
 and cream
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #222:1:A>
 Well I think it 's a good idea
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #223:1:A>
 It 's a summer theme
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #224:1:B>
 Yeah <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #225:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #226:1:B>
 And uh Xepe and Sandra were <,> yeah
 <laugh> Xepe and Sandra were going to go
 and get it

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #227:1:B>
 Bob was going to go and get the
 Pimms <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #228:1:B>
 And I was <,> just going to be
 telling people what to do which was fine
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #229:1:B>
 And then what does Philip do
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #230:1:B>
 He he arrives in the morning with six
 bag nine even baguettes <,> uh a whole
 brie two lots of paté and <,> a
 tub of marge
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #231:1:A>
 Pre-Wimbledon
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #232:1:A>
 So you didn't get the strawberries and all
 the rest of it or you did
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #233:1:B>
 Well uhm he 'd already given Xepe to
 the money to get the strawbs and Pimms
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #234:1:B>
 So I I said <,> get it anyway
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #235:1:B>
 and Philip agreed <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #236:1:B>
 So of c I knew we 'd be
 out of pocket over it but I was
 blowed if we were going to have just
 that <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #237:1:B>
 And it went down really well
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #238:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #239:1:A>
 Philip has no right not to agree
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #240:1:A>
 D' you have anything left <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #241:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #242:1:B>
 Well yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #243:1:B>
 I 've got a lemon at home <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #244:1:B>
 And we 'd you know we put cucumber
 and lemon and orange in the Pimms
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #245:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #246:1:B>
 Lots of people turned up
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #247:1:B>
 It was really good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #248:1:B>
 I had letters from people who didn't who
 couldn't <,> uhm Neil and Dick <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #249:1:A>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-005 #250:1:A>
 Neil didn't go

<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #251:1:B>
No
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #252:1:B>
Uh apparently he had a lecture
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #253:1:B>
I don't know whether he was giving it
or or taking it
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #254:1:A>
Oh
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #255:1:A>
He 'd be giving it <unclear-word> I would
imagine
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #256:1:B>
Or whatever
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #257:1:B>
Yeah <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-005 #258:1:B>
Uhm <,> and then we just went to
the bar

13.2 Transcription of text S1A-061 direct conversations from ICE-GB

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #001:1:A>
I 'm going to try and have Wednesday
off
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #002:1:B>
Yeah <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #003:1:B>
This week
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #004:1:A>
uhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #005:1:A>
Yes <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #006:1:B>
Uhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #007:1:A>
You 're back this week aren't you
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #008:1:B>
Yes but I 'm off Thursday and Friday
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #009:1:A>
Oh right
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #010:1:A>
I 'm probably off Friday again
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #011:1:A>
study leave <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #012:1:A>
But uh Thursday 's oh sorry Wednesday uh
<,> I 'm meeting up with a friend
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #013:1:B>
Mhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #014:1:B>
Mhm <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #015:1:A>
I understand <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #016:1:A>
I 've been let down once before but
there you go
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #017:1:B>
uhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #018:1:B>
Anybody I know <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #019:1:A>
Oh let 's see uhm <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #020:1:A>
Yes you know her
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #021:1:A>
The one that phoned up yesterday
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #022:1:B>
Do I
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #023:1:B>
Oh her
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #024:1:A>
Her
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #025:1:A>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #026:1:B>
Well <,> that should be eventful
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #027:1:A>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #028:1:B>
Make sure you 've got your flak jacket

with you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #029:1:A>
 They don't seem to materialise though do they
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #030:1:A>
 So we shall see
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #031:1:B>
 Uh now <,> I 've got to work
 this out
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #032:1:B>
 Try not to oh I know what I
 haven't done
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #033:1:B>
 I haven't uh plugged that in
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #034:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #035:1:A>
 Well I 'll plug it but I need
 a gadget to go in you need a
 phone to go into it <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #036:1:A>
 OK <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #037:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #038:1:B>
 Need some bread <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #039:1:A>
 Nice bread
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #040:1:A>
 I like it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #041:1:B>
 Yeah I know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #042:1:B>
 It 's I think that 's the best
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #043:1:A>
 Raymond Blanc 's got actual French ovens hasn't
 he <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #044:1:A>
 I mean
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #045:1:B>
 He has French French everything almost
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #046:1:A>
 French everything
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #047:1:A>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #048:1:A>
 We shall see <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #049:1:A>
 So he had a stroke
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #050:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #051:1:B>
 Quite a severe one <,> apparently
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #052:1:A>
 He 's not very old is he <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #053:1:A>
 He 's forty odd I would have thought
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #054:1:B>
 Uhm not from not from not from where
 I stand but uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #055:1:A>
 OK

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #056:1:A>
 So you 're an old man
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #057:1:A>
 I think we all know that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #058:1:B>
 Thank you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #059:1:B>
 Uhm no he 's uhm but you see
 people have strokes not necessarily when they 're
 old
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #060:1:B>
 Strokes are quite often uhm the fate of
 k youngish people uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #061:1:B>
 Particularly fairly intense and uh highly strung people
 appear to be <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #062:1:B>
 Uhm my father had a stroke
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #063:1:B>
 He had a stroke when he was thirty-three
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #064:1:B>
 Blanc I think is about forty <,> oh
 well forty something anyway
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #065:1:A>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #066:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #067:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #068:1:A>
 Your father 's stroke 's very uh delibitat
 <,> delibitating
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #069:1:B>
 Uhm I I 'd spell it a different
 way if I were you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #070:1:B>
 But I know exactly what you mean
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #071:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #072:1:B>
 It was
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #073:1:A>
 Delibitating
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #074:1:A>
 Whoops
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #075:1:B>
 Debilitating
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #076:1:B>
 Try that one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #077:1:B>
 It did a lot of damage certainly
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #078:1:B>
 Yeah uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #079:1:B>
 Left him in a bit of a state
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #080:1:A>
 Debilitating right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #081:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #082:1:A>
 uhm

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #083:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #084:1:A>
 Raymond <,> still seems to be able to
 uh work the ovens anyway
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #085:1:B>
 Well the the the reason I think is
 that uhm modern medicine <,> now enables people
 to cope
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #086:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #087:1:A>
 You 're getting cheese on your <,> jumper
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #088:1:B>
 It 'll improve the flavour
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #089:1:B>
 It 'll improve the flavour <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #090:1:B>
 Uhm it enables people to come through
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #091:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #092:1:B>
 Yah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #093:1:A>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #094:1:A>
 Improve <unclear-words> appearance more
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #095:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #096:1:B>
 Now then
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #097:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #098:1:A>
 By the way Liz is OK for going
 to the uhm <,> Verdi in Oxford <,>
 and dropping into Le Manoir <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #099:1:A>
 That 's why because the base which is
 basically a prerequisite of going to uh <,>
 to do that as she hadn't been there
 for a while yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #100:1:B>
 Oh good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #101:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #102:1:B>
 Oh good good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #103:1:B>
 Best start s best start saving
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #104:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #105:1:B>
 Did she look at the other operas
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #106:1:B>
 and uh sort of uh say that she
 'd
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #107:1:A>
 uh no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #108:1:A>
 I 'll tell you now

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #109:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #110:1:B>
 She didn't
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #111:1:B>
 I mean was she not <,> was she
 not allowed to or
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #112:1:A>
 She didn't
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #113:1:A>
 No no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #114:1:A>
 Cos you only asked me to look at
 that specific one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #115:1:A>
 so I did
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #116:1:B>
 Well I did but perhaps she might <,>
 if she wanted to
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #117:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #118:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #119:1:A>
 Sh sh she well not Well
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #120:1:A>
 no no she isn't into a lot of
 opera
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #121:1:A>
 and if you start giving her a series
 of events to go to it 'll make
 her shy away
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #122:1:B>
 I see
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #123:1:A>
 She hadn't She hadn't been <,> on the
 uh the restaurant run for a while and
 uh <,> she hasn't been to <,> Great
 Milton <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #124:1:A>
 So for some time <,> she 'd quite
 like to go because she hasn't seen it
 his his new conservatory has she
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #125:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #126:1:B>
 Don't know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #127:1:B>
 I mean it do doesn't have to be
 uhm Le Manoir
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #128:1:B>
 We could always go to Shinfield and see
 uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #129:1:A>
 I don't think so
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #130:1:A>
 Burton-Race
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #131:1:B>
 Well if he 's handy and his delightful
 wife
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #132:1:B>

Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #133:1:B>
 uh which is on on the way almost
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #134:1:B>
 But I mean I d do so enjoy
 <,> the atmosphere at Le Manoir
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #135:1:A>
 Christine
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #136:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #137:1:A>
 Well <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #138:1:A>
 Liz is quite keen to go there <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #139:1:A>
 so why not do it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #140:1:A>
 Now she doesn't want <,> to do this
 sort of thing a lot if you see
 what I mean <,> and uh <,> she
 does like well I think she actually likes
 it but <,> has a sense of proportion
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #141:1:A>
 Hold on
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #142:1:A>
 Here 's a napkin
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #143:1:A>
 Oops <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #144:1:A>
 By the way did I mention my dustbin
 's been blown over in my back garden
 again
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #145:1:A>
 I 've given up now
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #146:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #147:1:B>
 All right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #148:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #149:1:B>
 Yes you did
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #150:1:B>
 You did yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #151:1:A>
 I 've put newspapers in and I don't
 know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #152:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #153:1:B>
 Well mine 's been prised open by that
 large ginger cat
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #154:1:A>
 Can't get mine off
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #155:1:A>
 You see al <,> although although your one
 is heavier than mine mine is light <,>
 vacuum-formed plastic
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #156:1:A>
 uh it <,> it it actually sort of
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #157:1:A>

more or less uhm where yours just drops
 on it you have to push it on
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #158:1:B>
 Well mine 's got quite a large <,>
 lip and in fact it 's not easy
 to get it off
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #159:1:B>
 It must be a highly ingenious cat uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #160:1:A>
 It 's probably that the pussycat who 's
 who 's making the mess down by my
 uhm <,> shed
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #161:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #162:1:B>
 It It eats the contents of my dustbin
 and then deposited it in your garden
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #163:1:A>
 Oh yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #164:1:A>
 Very funny
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #165:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #166:1:B>
 Hah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #167:1:A>
 So when was the sell-by date of this
 soup
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #168:1:B>
 I wouldn't dare look
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #169:1:B>
 I mean some time last year wasn't it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #170:1:A>
 Some time last year
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #171:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #172:1:A>
 Fish soup
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #173:1:A>
 Some time last year
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #174:1:A>
 My God
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #175:1:A>
 My mother would be horrified if she knew
 this
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #176:1:B>
 Cor
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #177:1:B>
 It tastes good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #178:1:A>
 So 's this
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #179:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #180:1:A>
 Smells OK <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #181:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #182:1:B>
 Have to rely upon you for that because
 the cold effect is still annoying my taste
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #183:1:A>

Uhm <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #184:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #185:1:A>
 He 's a funny chap that uh solicitor
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #186:1:B>
 Oh I know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #187:1:B>
 Oh yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #188:1:B>
 Oh God yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #189:1:A>
 Surprised he 's a solicitor
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #190:1:A>
 He uh <,,> he 's a diffident fellow
 <,,> uh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #191:1:B>
 Why do you say that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #192:1:B>
 He does appear to be uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #193:1:B>
 Well I don't know about diffident
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #194:1:B>
 I think servile would be a desc m
 more accurate description
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #195:1:B>
 Servile and and and spotty with it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #196:1:A>
 What type of practice does he work at
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #197:1:A>
 He 's very ha Well he 's got
 skin problems
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #198:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #199:1:A>
 But he can't help that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #200:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #201:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #202:1:B>
 But it goes with the general presentation
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #203:1:A>
 Does it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #204:1:B>
 Well I think so
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #205:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #206:1:B>
 His servility and the s spots go well
 together
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #207:1:A>
 Uhm God
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #208:1:A>
 You 're a hard person
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #209:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #210:1:B>
 Well what I 've I I find uh
 irritating about him is that it 's virtually

impossible to get rid of him without telling
him to go as you as as you
probably noticed
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #211:1:A>
As I no noticed
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #212:1:A>
Yeah
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #213:1:A>
I was wondering when you were going to
do that
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #214:1:B>
I could see you were wondering when I
was going to do it
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #215:1:B>
but I just just waited for a suitable
uhm <,> long long breath on his part
because he he has the technique of uhm
punctuating quite rapid conversation with very staccato breathing
thereby not leaving a sufficient gap to get
in without actually overriding what he 's saying
<,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #216:1:A>
Moment
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #217:1:A>
<laugh> Is he uh Is he single
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #218:1:B>
I don't know
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #219:1:B>
Uhm <,> he had a girlfriend staying
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #220:1:B>
well I think it was a girlfriend staying
at his place <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #221:1:B>
Uhm but the the lodger last time I
visited was uh of a different kind and
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #222:1:A>
Mhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #223:1:A>
Oh I see
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #224:1:B>
So I don't know what he 's up
to
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #225:1:B>
Uhm
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #226:1:A>
What do you mean of a different kind
<,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #227:1:B>
No longer female
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #228:1:A>
Oh dear
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #229:1:A>
Yes well that conjures <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #230:1:A>
it wasn't what I was thinking
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #231:1:B>
But uhm I I don't think that I
don't think it was that kind of a
relationship <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #232:1:B>
He he d he

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #233:1:A>
 Oh but what type of property has he
 got
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #234:1:A>
 It 's a flat isn't it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #235:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #236:1:B>
 It 's a three bedroomed <,> house with
 a <,> with an integral conservatory <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #237:1:A>
 Three bedroomed house
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #238:1:A>
 Oh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #239:1:A>
 Like yours <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #240:1:A>
 Here
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #241:1:B>
 Uhm well not exactly no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #242:1:B>
 His his his his His is a modern
 <,> uh development where the conservatory 's been
 built <,> as part of the house
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #243:1:B>
 It 's part of the back wall
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #244:1:A>
 What do you mean by three bedroomed
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #245:1:A>
 Oh you 're right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #246:1:A>
 In other words it 's a bit like
 the back back wall 's been taken away
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #247:1:A>
 Where you normally have a back wall you
 've got the conservatory downstairs and it 's
 all glass doors
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #248:1:A>
 Yes uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #249:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #250:1:B>
 It 's a way of way of a
 way of extending the living room to make
 it appear bigger <,> by having a conservatory
 leading off it <,> via sliding doors
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #251:1:A>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #252:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #253:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #254:1:B>
 It 's actually quite attractive
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #255:1:A>
 Good <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #256:1:B>
 He deals <,> I understand with matrimonial cases
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #257:1:A>
 Ah <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #258:1:A>

What costing divorce then <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #259:1:B>
 Well <,> I suppose so
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #260:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #261:1:A>
 Didn't John used to deal with uhm <,>
 divorce in his earlier days
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #262:1:B>
 Did he
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #263:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #264:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #265:1:A>
 Found it quite depressing
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #266:1:B>
 I imagine it probably is uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #267:1:A>
 All the toing and froing and
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #268:1:B>
 I mean I I should think you 'd
 get over the uhm <,> the voyeuristic aspects
 in the early stages and uhm you 're
 really dealing with people 's lives pretty wrecked
 <,> and that can be very bitter in
 some cases <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #269:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #270:1:B>
 This crème fraîumflex;che fraîche certainly adds to the
 soup doesn't it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #271:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #272:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #273:1:A>
 Nice soup
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #274:1:A>
 I like the bread
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #275:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #276:1:A>
 Nice and seedy
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #277:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #278:1:B>
 It 's it It 's not the three
 seeded one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #279:1:B>
 It 's what they call the <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #280:1:B>
 Yeah that 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #281:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #282:1:B>
 Their seed seeded batch loaf
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #283:1:B>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #284:1:A>
 Batch loaf

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #285:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #286:1:A>
 Really
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #287:1:A>
 Ah seeded batch loaf
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #288:1:A>
 uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #289:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #290:1:B>
 I think it 's got a nice texture
 <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #291:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #292:1:B>
 And sauteed in good quality virgin oil and
 then rubbed with garlic
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #293:1:B>
 It uhm <,> adds another dimension to the
 soup
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #294:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #295:1:A>
 Italian
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #296:1:A>
 Italian
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #297:1:B>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #298:1:B>
 Bottled in Provence
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #299:1:B>
 Well it could be Italian but it s
 it says bottled in Provence on the label
 which means nothing at all
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #300:1:A>
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #301:1:A>
 <unclear-words> <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #302:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #303:1:B>
 Though I don't suppose Monsieur Delors would admit
 to bottling Italian oil in Provence <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #304:1:B>
 There 's an enormous racket going on with
 Edam cheese
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #305:1:B>
 Have you heard about that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #306:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #307:1:A>
 What 's that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #308:1:B>
 Well <,> Edam cheese has been exported
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #309:1:A>
 What 're all those
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #310:1:B>
 Pardon
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #311:1:A>
 All those things sticking up over there

<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #312:1:B>
 What things sticking up
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #313:1:A>
 All those shoots sticking up
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #314:1:A>
 See on the
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #315:1:B>
 Haemocaelis
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #316:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #317:1:A>
 Uh uh a whole load of them between
 the crab apple and the
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #318:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #319:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #320:1:B>
 Haemocaelis
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #321:1:B>
 Oh right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #322:1:B>
 You 've got lots of them haven't you
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #323:1:B>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #324:1:B>
 Ah yes they ten uh tend to be
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #325:1:B>
 Apparently uhm the the Dutch have been exporting
 Edam cheese in large quantities <,> to Germany
 <,> but via such exotic routes as Andorra
 in the Pyrenees and Tanzania in whichever country
 that lies
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #326:1:B>
 Uhm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #327:1:B>
 Tanzania
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #328:1:A>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #329:1:A>
 Which coun what
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #330:1:A>
 But Tanzania 's a country
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #331:1:B>
 I know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #332:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #333:1:B>
 I was being sarcastic
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #334:1:A>
 Oh right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #335:1:A>
 OK good
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #336:1:B>
 Uhm <,> the reason being that uhm direct
 exports between <,> E E C countries uhm
 <,> does not attract any subsidy
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #337:1:B>
 but because the E E C is collectively
 concerned to increase its revenue with other trading

blocs <,> a subsidy 's paid for exports
 sent to countries outside the bloc
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #338:1:B>
 Therefore if you if you whiz your Ed
 your boring Edam presumably down through France nip
 it into Andorra you 've gone outside the
 E E C I think because Andorra is
 not officially part of the E E C
 <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #339:1:B>
 And you then send it to Germany
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #340:1:B>
 and somewhere along the lines someone collects an
 enormous amount of money which we are contributing
 to <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #341:1:B>
 But it 's because it 's all been
 blown because uhm <,> because of the computer
 presumably which just threw up a sort of
 uh five thousand per cent annual increase in
 the export of uh Edam cheese to uh
 Tanzania and Andorra which yeah <,> which wouldn't
 actually be accounted for by normal sort of
 preferences
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #342:1:A>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #343:1:A>
 Thank you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #344:1:A>
 Oh right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #345:1:A>
 Probably don't eat
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #346:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #347:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #348:1:B>
 I mean if they were going to increase
 their cheese consumption then un unless it was
 the presentation of the product they wouldn't go
 for Edam would they <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #349:1:A>
 Well it 's a matter of taste isn't
 it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #350:1:B>
 Or not <,> in the case of Edam
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #351:1:A>
 In the case of Edam
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #352:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #353:1:A>
 You obviously don't think much of Edam
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #354:1:B>
 Well it 's a very boring sort of
 cheese isn't it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #355:1:B>
 I mean it 's all right thinly sliced
 with a with an apple I suppose
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #356:1:A>
 uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-061 #357:1:A>

Like Gruyère;
<ICE-GB:S1A-061 #358:1:B>
Well that 's entirely a different thing

13.3 Transcription of text S1A-063 direct conversations from ICE-GB

<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #001:1:A>
You know one one holiday we actually went
to Turkey <,,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #002:1:A>
Uhm <,> well this is about twelve fifteen
twenty years ago now <,> I suppose
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #003:1:A>
And they 've got fantastic yoghurts there of
course <,,> and yoghurt drinks as well <,>
and it 's all wasted on me totally
wasted
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #004:1:B>
Mm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #005:1:B>
Mmm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #006:1:B>
Mmm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #007:1:B>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #008:1:B>
It 's a <unclear-word> <unclear-word>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #009:1:A>
But <unclear-word> really loved it
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #010:1:B>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #011:1:B>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #012:1:B>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #013:1:B>
Greek yoghurt is fantastic
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #014:1:A>
Yes it 's the same isn't it
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #015:1:A>
Yeah <unclear-syllable>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #016:1:B>
You know yoghurt I 'm sorry
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #017:1:B>
Yes Greek
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #018:1:B>
I was thinking of Turkish yoghurt
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #019:1:B>
<unclear-syllable> there was There was some something we
ate in Turkey it was which was <,>
fried aubergines and yoghurt I think
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #020:1:A>
Oh lovely
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #021:1:A>
Yeah <,,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #022:1:A>
Yes <,,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #023:1:A>
Well it 's a sort cos moussaka 's
got uh aubergines in it hasn't it <,>
and and cream
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #024:1:B>
Absolutely delicious
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #025:1:B>
Mm

<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #026:1:A>
 I mean it 's virtually the same I
 suppose
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #027:1:B>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #028:1:D>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #029:1:B>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #030:1:A>
 You didn't come to Turkey with us did
 you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #031:1:C>
 What no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #032:1:A>
 You went to Greece though didn't you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #033:1:C>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #034:1:C>
 Uh we went we went to uh Hagios
 Lindos
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #035:1:A>
 Lindos
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #036:1:C>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #037:1:C>
 Villa Rainbird
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #038:1:D>
 That 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #039:1:D>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #040:1:C>
 Very good that I 'm sure
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #041:1:D>
 It was great
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #042:1:A>
 It was good actually
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #043:1:A>
 It was a fantastic villa
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #044:1:C>
 <unclear-words> are you going back there
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #045:1:A>
 Uh no
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #046:1:B>
 Are you going back are you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #047:1:D>
 Ah <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #048:1:A>
 Never return they say
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #049:1:B>
 Mm <laugh>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #050:1:C>
 Was it the second time I 've <,>
 ever <,> ever been there
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #051:1:C>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #052:1:C>
 It was the third time I 've been
 to Lindos because we <,> we went to
 Lindos originally
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #053:1:A>

I went <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #054:1:A>
 Did you come with me
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #055:1:C>
 I went to Lindos once and slept on
 a beach there <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #056:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #057:1:A>
 No
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #058:1:A>
 I went with Richard and <,,> David <unclear-word>
 and <,,> and David Brook <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #059:1:A>
 And we had about six weeks driving round
 <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #060:1:C>
 Right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #061:1:C>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #062:1:C>
 Right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #063:1:C>
 It was a similar sort of thing
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #064:1:A>
 And uh <,,> we went to Lindos and
 stayed in a <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #065:1:A>
 Well two two of them
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #066:1:A>
 Oh that 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #067:1:A>
 David and The two Davids wanted to <,,>
 stay under shelter <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #068:1:A>
 And I think uhm <,,> we went and
 slept on the beach or something
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #069:1:B>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #070:1:C>
 Anyway the beach turned into a hotel when
 we were there
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #071:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #072:1:A>
 That 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #073:1:A>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #074:1:A>
 I mean it 's awful
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #075:1:C>
 Well we had
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #076:1:C>
 When did we go back
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #077:1:C>
 so we went back <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #078:1:C>
 Trish and I went back with the kids
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #079:1:D>
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #080:1:A>

Really
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #081:1:C>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #082:1:A>
 You didn't tell us about it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #083:1:C>
 Yes we did actually
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #084:1:D>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #085:1:D>
 They ha
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #086:1:D>
 I <unclear-words> something was mentioned
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #087:1:B>
 Mhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #088:1:C>
 Uhm <,,> and I can't remember what
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #089:1:D>
 We couldn't afford it any more
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #090:1:D>
 It was quite an expensive holiday
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #091:1:C>
 Was it <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #092:1:D>
 For us <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #093:1:D>
 Because then you 'll be going out for
 a meal and that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #094:1:C>
 Probably <unclear-words> probably <unclear-words> the weekend
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #095:1:B>
 You know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #096:1:A>
 Uhm I mean mean I obviously couldn't
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #097:1:D>
 It was difficult
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #098:1:D>
 That was all
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #099:1:A>
 Things improve in the memory but I I
 it was very splendid wasn't it <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #100:1:A>
 I mean the lovely beds and lovely uh
 terrace overlooking the harbour
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #101:1:A>
 and we can see Spiros
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #102:1:C>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #103:1:C>
 <unclear-word>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #104:1:C>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #105:1:D>
 You could see the gutters
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #106:1:D>
 Jill was there taking her temperature
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #107:1:A>
 That 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #108:1:A>
 And we flew kites <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #109:1:D>

And Alastair wasn't very old
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #110:1:D>
 How old Alastair how old was he
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #111:1:D>
 two or something
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #112:1:A>
 Two and a half uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #113:1:A>
 Two
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #114:1:A>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #115:1:A>
 Two
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #116:1:D>
 And Tricia said he knew his right hand
 from his left hand now and I was
 really impressed <,,> because I may have told
 you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #117:1:A>
 <unclear-word>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #118:1:B>
 Well you 've got a fifty per cent
 chance of being right <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #119:1:C>
 Right <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #120:1:B>
 Of course with the stress of Pat and
 Tony standing over him it must be no
 wonder he <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #121:1:C>
 <unclear-word> then telling us his children are supposed
 to be continent at one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #122:1:C>
 That 's a conditioned reflex isn't it
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #123:1:C>
 You sit them on a cold lavatory and
 they evacuate their bowels
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #124:1:A>
 Well wouldn't you under those circumstances
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #125:1:A>
 It 's a <,,> stress-related phenomenon <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #126:1:A>
 If we both sat on a cold lavatory
 seat we 'd evacuate the bowels <,,> <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #127:1:A>
 D' you You don't go skiing do you
 <,,> <laugh>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #128:1:A>
 <unclear-word> <unclear-word> on the ski slope thank goodness
 <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #129:1:A>
 There is uh There 're remarkable stories aren't
 there about these people women <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #130:1:A>
 I mean everybody knows about these stories don't
 you
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #131:1:A>
 People going uh skiing deciding they want to
 have a wee <,,> uh slipping down their
 ski things on a slope and then <,,>
 as they 're s crouching the skis start

to move and they actually <,,> stumble backwards
into the middle of the snow again <laughter>
bare bottom the lot you know
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #132:1:B>
Mm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #133:1:A>
Mm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #134:1:A>
That 's the vanishing hitchhiker really though isn't
it <,,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #135:1:A>
If you know what I mean
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #136:1:B>
Vanishing hitchhiker
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #137:1:A>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #138:1:A>
It 's ur urban myths <,>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #139:1:A>
There 's been a book several books published
on the concept
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #140:1:A>
And it it 's actually really very interesting
uhm <,> because you have these myths which
in fact when you <,> follow them right
down to the root source don't exist at
all <,> which we all know about and
which I 've read lots of times in
newspapers
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #141:1:A>
I mean the classical one 's the person
who microwaves their poodle to dry it
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #142:1:D>
Urban myths
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #143:1:B>
Mm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #144:1:C>
Mm
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #145:1:B>
Yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #146:1:B>
Yes that 's right
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #147:1:C>
That 's right
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #148:1:A>
The person who has bees in their hair
uh what
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #149:1:D>
When we had bouffant hairstyles
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #150:1:C>
Uh <unclear-word>
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #151:1:B>
Oh yes
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #152:1:B>
That 's right
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #153:1:D>
There are cockroaches crawling around inside even if
you have grates
<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #154:1:A>
Uhm uh uhm crocodiles in the lavatories in
the toilets you must have come across that

<,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #155:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #156:1:B>
 Yes yes yes true <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #157:1:B>
 People who are particularly lonely
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #158:1:A>
 Uhm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #159:1:D>
 And it they nearly always
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #160:1:D>
 And it happened to my uncle <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #161:1:D>
 Very close relative
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #162:1:B>
 Yes yes yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #163:1:C>
 Friend of a friend
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #164:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #165:1:D>
 Oh I know who it was exactly
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #166:1:B>
 Mm <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #167:1:A>
 And if you keep your eyes open you
 actually you 'll see them in the papers
 as as as facts <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #168:1:A>
 And of course none of them really exist
 at all
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #169:1:C>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #170:1:D>
 So who invents them
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #171:1:A>
 And they <,> quickly become stories which become
 part of the folklore I mean I I
 guess that 's never happened
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #172:1:A>
 Someone said wouldn't it be funny if someone
 squatted down on the ski slope in bare
 skin
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #173:1:A>
 And it then <,> becomes part of a
 of a series of jokes or raconteurs '
 tales you know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #174:1:A>
 and then it becomes part
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #175:1:A>
 and you say
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #176:1:A>
 oh I know someone who said that
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #177:1:A>
 and then it becomes real
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #178:1:A>
 I can't think of one at the moment
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #179:1:A>
 There have been one or two which <,>
 you you pick up quite frequently <,>

<,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #180:1:A>
 Uhm <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #181:1:A>
 Oh yes there 's the famous one I
 read in there were two famous ones which
 I read in the newspapers
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #182:1:A>
 One was the uh adulterer one <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #183:1:A>
 Uhm <, > chap works uh with this uh
 called Readymix Cement right <, >
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #184:1:A>
 And he thinks his wife is having it
 off with someone else <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #185:1:A>
 He 's stand He comes back home
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #186:1:A>
 He sees this Mini parked outside <,,> and
 the light on in the bedroom and these
 two people going hammer and tongs
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #187:1:A>
 And he thinks right I 'll get the
 bastard
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #188:1:A>
 So he gets hold of his <, > ready
 mixed cement <, > fills up the whole of
 the Mini with cement right rings the doorbell
 and says and shouts you know <, > hello
 I 'm home you know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #189:1:A>
 Screams and crashing you know <, >
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #190:1:A>
 So he just runs up the stairs out
 the back door shoots onto the bicycle next
 door <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #191:1:A>
 Bicycles off <,,> <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #192:1:A>
 I read that in the paper <, > so
 it must be true <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #193:1:B>
 Mm mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #194:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #195:1:B>
 Right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #196:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #197:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #198:1:B>
 Right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #199:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #200:1:B>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #201:1:B>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #202:1:B>
 Mm

<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #203:1:C>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #204:1:C>
 Cement
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #205:1:B>
 Hello <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #206:1:A>
 Uhm uhm what was the other one that
 uh <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #207:1:B>
 There 's the vicar under the car
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #208:1:D>
 The vicar
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #209:1:A>
 Oh oh the vicar one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #210:1:A>
 There 's the vicar one
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #211:1:A>
 Again a marvellous story
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #212:1:A>
 Uhm this <,> wife <,> comes back to
 see her husband underneath the car uhm <,>
 repairing the car <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #213:1:A>
 So so she thinks I 'll give him
 a surprise
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #214:1:A>
 So she uh undoes his fly buttons grabs
 hold of his penis you see
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #215:1:A>
 and the chap underneath the car goes <unclear-word>
 hits sits sits up hits his head underneath
 the car knocks himself unconscious
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #216:1:A>
 She goes rushing into the house to call
 an ambulance
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #217:1:A>
 There 's her husband <,,> <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #218:1:A>
 Who was that under the car
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #219:1:A>
 Oh he says it 's the vicar who
 is coming to help me to mend the
 car <,,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #220:1:C>
 Really it 's got a sort of music
 hall ring about it in fact
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #221:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #222:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #223:1:B>
 Definitely
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #224:1:C>
 <unclear-word>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #225:1:C>
 People seem to come out with those stories
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #226:1:C>
 I heard of someone who was repairing a
 car and he
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #227:1:B>

Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #228:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #229:1:B>
 That 's right
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #230:1:B>
 Yes <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #231:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #232:1:D>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #233:1:B>
 <laugh> Yeah <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #234:1:B>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #235:1:A>
 And in fact I 've got this book
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #236:1:A>
 I think it 's called The Vanishing Hitchhiker
 because it 's about uh uh
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #237:1:A>
 It 's probably written in America originally because
 uh we don't come across this myth in
 this country about this hitchhiker chap this cold
 winter day
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #238:1:A>
 and he takes some hitchhiker who either disappears
 during the journey at a point where someone
 was killed
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #239:1:A>
 or there 's the hook isn't it where
 there 's some hook involved where a person
 's been hung up by the hook or
 something really weird
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #240:1:A>
 And anyway this book is called The Vanishing
 Hitchhiker
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #241:1:A>
 and he 's analysing this because he thinks
 this is a new form of folklore
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #242:1:A>
 and where did the folklore st where do
 stories come from originally
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #243:1:A>
 Uhm is there a grain of ss truth
 in some of the stories
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #244:1:A>
 You know Hansel and Gretel
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #245:1:A>
 I mean if you read uhm what was
 the the uh the the uh the writer
 who wrote that book on nursery rhymes <,,>
 <,> the Opies where they look at the
 uh realities behind some of this sort of
 myth
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #246:1:A>
 I mean it 's very similar to <,>
 these nursery rhymes if you looked at its
 causes sample-wise
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #247:1:B>
 Yes

<ICE-GB:S1A-063 #248:1:B>
 Yes yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #249:1:B>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #250:1:B>
 Mm <,> Mm <,> Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #251:1:C>
 Mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #252:1:D>
 Opay
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #253:1:D>
 Opie
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #254:1:B>
 Mm mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #255:1:B>
 Mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #256:1:B>
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #257:1:D>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #258:1:D>
 I know if something happens to my father
 he does recount it once and if you
 're there you know about it and that
 sounds great
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #259:1:D>
 Then the next week you 're still there
 but you you you hear him say it
 again and it 's totally different
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #260:1:D>
 It 's grown into a nice big story
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #261:1:D>
 Oh absolutely
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #262:1:D>
 And the viewpoint 's changed
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #263:1:D>
 and all sorts of things
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #264:1:C>
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #265:1:B>
 The viewpoint
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #266:1:C>
 Well perhaps you have <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #267:1:A>
 <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #268:1:D>
 Well well I tend to repeat almost exactly
 the same stories to my friends
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #269:1:D>
 If something funny 's happened I 'll <,>
 try it out more or less in the
 same way on everybody else
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #270:1:D>
 and my children stand there going <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #271:1:B>
 Yes yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #272:1:B>
 <unclear-words> <laughter>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #273:1:A>
 I mean there there are really good storytellers
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #274:1:A>

And I mean I I I 'm not
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #275:1:A>
 But I mean not only can they put
 accents and change positions which is always very
 interesting
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #276:1:A>
 but they the actual stories sound terribly simple
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #277:1:A>
 and they embellish them in such a way
 that they become incredibly funny
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #278:1:A>
 You know one thing follows on to another
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #279:1:A>
 There are people who are terribly good at
 doing that <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #280:1:A>
 Uhm <,> I can never remember jokes easily
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #281:1:A>
 I mean we have friends who come and
 they 're always cracking jokes one after another
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #282:1:C>
 Mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #283:1:B>
 Mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #284:1:B>
 Mm mm
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #285:1:B>
 I know
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #286:1:D>
 And they put on the right accents <unclear-words>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #287:1:A>
 Ah it 's marvellous
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #288:1:D>
 Yeah
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #289:1:D>
 Timing 's good <laugh>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #290:1:B>
 Timing is so difficult though
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #291:1:D>
 Yes
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #292:1:B>
 Mm <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #293:1:B>
 Well I was fascinated when uh uhm <,>
 my children were small and they went to
 school and they learnt this thing about eeny
 meeny miney mo
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #294:1:B>
 Uh I used to say
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #295:1:B>
 catch a nigger by the toe <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #296:1:B>
 and they learnt <,>
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #297:1:B>
 get a tiger off your toe
 <ICE-GB:S1A-063 #298:1:D>
 Oh yes that 's right

14 Abstract

The present thesis pursues the question how so-called *backchannels* are utilized in interpersonal conversations. The main focus is two-fold: first of all, the literature review goes into further detail with regard to what the term *backchannel* actually means and which forms and functions it can actually adopt. In addition, it is explained how conversational partners – most of all listeners – can benefit from using backchannels and what that means for conversations in general.

The foundation for the empirical part of the thesis is an analysis of transcribed conversations from the ICE-GB corpus, consisting of a quantitative as well as a qualitative part. The primary goal of the quantitative data analysis is to be able to make claims about the distribution of individual backchannels such as *yeah* or *mmm* across the various text types – among which are *direct conversations*, *telephone calls* or *legal cross-examinations*. Additionally, also the question is pursued whether these items have any other functions besides serving as backchannels.

The present thesis also makes an attempt at elaborating on the different facets of backchannelling behaviour with regard to men and women. The quantitative analysis tests the data for differences between the sexes as regards the frequency of backchannel use in the various text types – with surprisingly binary results. The qualitative analysis on the other hand not only extends the scope of the research in terms of backchannel items, but it also focuses on individual conversations in close detail. In total, three types of conversation (male-male, female-female and inter-gender) are investigated with regard to potential differences concerning feedback- and backchannelling-behaviour.

15 Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

Die hier vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie sogenannte ‘backchannels’ als sprachliches Mittel in zwischenmenschlicher Kommunikation eingesetzt werden. Das Hauptaugenmerk ist dabei zweigeteilt: zunächst einmal wird anhand einer Literaturanalyse festgestellt, was unter dem Terminus ‘backchannels’ zu verstehen ist und welche Formen diese annehmen können. Darüberhinaus wird auch auf die Frage eingegangen, inwiefern Gesprächspartner von deren Verwendung profitieren und was ‘backchannels’ im Allgemeinen für Gespräche bedeuten.

Als Grundlage des empirischen Teils der Arbeit dient die Analyse der transkribierten Konversationen des ICE-GB Korpus, welche aus einem quantitativen und einem qualitativen Teil besteht. Das primäre Ziel der quantitativen Datenanalyse ist Aussagen zu treffen über die Verteilung einzelner ‘backchannels’ wie *yeah* oder *mmm* in den verschiedenen Texttypen (u.a. Telefonkonversationen, Gerichtsverhandlungen und direkte Konversationen). Darüberhinaus wird auch der Frage nachgegangen, welche anderen Funktionen solche kurzen Formulierungen noch übernehmen können.

Zusätzlich unternimmt die vorliegende Arbeit den Versuch Unterschiede zwischen Männern und Frauen in deren Verwendung von ‘backchannels’ aufzuzeigen. Die quantitative Analyse überprüft die Daten dabei vor allem auf statistische Unterschiede zwischen den Geschlechtern mittels Frequenzunterscheidungen in den einzelnen Texttypen – mit überraschend zweischneidigem Ergebnis. Die qualitative Untersuchung hingegen erweitert nicht nur den Rahmen der in die Untersuchung einfließenden ‘backchannels’, sondern reduziert auch das Analysematerial systematisch. Drei Konstellationen an Gesprächssituationen (männlich-männlich, weiblich-weiblich, männlich-weiblich) werden dabei auf potentielle Unterschiede im Feedback- und ‘backchannel’-Verhalten überprüft.

16 Curriculum Vitae

Name: Lukas Christian Schwaighofer, Bakk.phil. BA.

Date of birth: 13 December 1988

Place of birth: Linz

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EDUCATION

2012 to date	University of Vienna MA Journalism and Communication Studies MA English Language and Linguistics
2008-2012	University of Vienna BA Journalism and Communication Studies BA English and American Studies
1999-2007	Europagymnasium vom Guten Hirten Baumgartenberg, Upper Austria A Levels English A Spanish A Mathematics A German A Psychology and Philosophy A
1996-1999	Primary school Perg, Upper Austria

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Computing	ECDL qualifications in MS Word, Access, PowerPoint and Excel
Languages	German: native speaker English: fluent French: basic Spanish: basic

INTERESTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Study	I am interested in further study and planning on doing a bachelor's degree in economics by distance learning after having finished my two MA studies.
Sport	The only fulfilling way to stay focused and calm in today's hectic society is a healthy body. I go to the gym on a regular basis (four times a week), which not only requires a high level of motivation but also steadfastness.
Movies	Movies are one of the true passions in my life. With a view to genre, I have no particular preference, because I think it is important to have an open mind. Movies also inspire me to write myself, preferably screenplays.