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**THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ON THE PRODUCTION OF THE ENGLISH  
AUDIBLE BACKCHANNELS  
CASE STUDY: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITÉ  
CONSTANTINE 1**

**Thesis submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language for the  
fulfillment of the LMD Doctorate Degree in Linguistics and Applied Languages**

**Submitted By**

**Mr. Bachir HABLET**

**Board of Examiners**

<b>President</b>	Prof. Youcef BEGHOUL	University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1
<b>Supervisor</b>	Prof. Riad BELOUAHEM	University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1
<b>Member 1</b>	Prof. Madjda CHELLI	University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1
<b>Member 2</b>	Prof. Hacène HAMADA	University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 3
<b>Member 3</b>	Prof. Sarah MERROUCHE	University of Oum El Bouaghi
<b>Member 4</b>	Dr. Fouzia Rouag	University of Sétif 2

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## **Dedication**

To my father, **Djamal** and my tender mother, **Sabiha**;

To my sisters, **Aicha** and **Choubeila**;

To my brother, **Seif Eddine**;

To **Sajed Ayoub** and **Bijad**, my nephews;

To **Belsem**, my niece;

To my friends and my students

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BC (Backchannel)

C: Conversation

CANCODE (Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English)

CMC (Computer Mediated Communication)

F (Female)

HRT (High Rising Terminal)

M (Male)

NVC (Non-Verbal Communication)

TRP (Transition Relevance Place)

VC (Verbal Communication)

## **Abstract**

The thesis investigates the relation that exists between the listener's gender and his / her backchannels. Having a comparative nature, the thesis aims at finding the similarities and differences between males and females when it comes to backchannels. The comparison is based on two criteria: the frequency of occurrence and diversity of backchannels. To give consistency to the thesis, a sample of 60 undergraduate students (30 males and 30 females) took part in the study; each male was asked to record a face-to-face two-minute conversation with a female. After analyzing the 30 mixed- gender conversations, the results revealed that the frequency of occurrence of the females' backchannels was higher than that of the males' (the females backchannelled 178 times, while the males 100). This endorses the conclusion of earlier studies. As far as the backchannels' diversity is concerned, neither the males nor the females equally diversified their backchannels as both highly used the acknowledging utterances. These represented 57, 3% of all the females' backchannels and 61% of the males', and therefore, the other categories were marginally used by both groups, what forcefully denotes the students' unawareness of such categories. It is of necessity, then, to tackle all the different backchannels in oral expression sessions.

**Key Terms:** Gender, the Frequency of Backchannels' Occurrence, the Diversity of Backchannels, Conversation, Acknowledging Utterances

## الملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة العلاقة الموجودة بين جنس المنصت و عباراته التفاعلية و لكونها دراسة مقارنة فالأطروحة تهدف إلى إيجاد أوجه التشابه و الاختلاف بين المنصت الذكري و الأنثوي حيث تتركز المقارنة على عاملين هما تكرار و تنوع تفاعلات المنصت. و لإعطاء الأطروحة انسجاما فقد شاركت في هذه الدراسة عينة مكونة من 60 طالب انجليزية ليسانس (30 ذكور و 30 إناث) أين سجل كل طالب وطالبة محاورة وجها لوجه لمدة دقيقتين. و بعد تحليل 30 محاورة مختلطة أظهرت النتائج أن تكرار تفاعلات المنصت الأنثوي يفوق تكرار تلك التي من جانب المنصت الذكري ( 178 بالنسبة للإناث مقابل 100 للذكور) وهذا ما يدعم ما توصلت إليه العديد من الدراسات السابقة. وفيما يخص تنوع التفاعلات فلم يبد كل من الإناث و الذكور تنوعا متوازنا إذ أن كلاهما استعمل عبارات الاستلام بشكل كبير و مثلت هذه التفاعلات 573 من مجمل تفاعلات الإناث و 61 من مجمل تفاعلات الذكور و بالتالي فإن أنواعا أخرى استعملت بشكل ضئيل و هذا ما يدل بقوة على أن الطلبة ليسوا على وعي بها . لذا أصبح من الضرورة بمكان التطرق لمختلف التفاعلات في حصص التعبير الشفوي

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** الجنس ، تردد تفاعلات المنصت، تنوع تفاعلات المنصت، محاورة، عبارات الاستلام،

## Résumé

La thèse examine la relation entre les backchannels et le sexe d'auditeur. Ayant une nature comparative, la thèse essaye de trouver les similarités et les différences entre les garçons et les filles en relation avec les backchannels. La comparaison est basée sur deux critères : la fréquence d'occurrence et la diversité des backchannels. Deux hypothèses ont été développées pour vérifier leur validité : (1) par rapport aux garçons, les filles font plus en écoutent et (2) les réactions des filles sont plus variées que les réactions des garçons. Un échantillon de 60 étudiants de sous-graduation (30 garçons et 30 filles) ont fait partie de l'étude. On a demandé à chaque homme d'enregistrer une conversation face à face avec une femme qui durait jusqu'à 2 minutes. Après l'analyse, les résultats ont révélé que les filles ont utilisé les backchannels 178 fois et les garçons 100) qui veut dire que la première hypothèse est valide. Concernant la diversité, ni les garçons ni les filles ont diversifié leur backchannels également est donc la deuxième hypothèse est invalide. Tous les deux ont fortement utilisé les expressions d'approbation. Ces dernières représentent 57.3% de toutes les backchannels par filles, et 61% par les garçons. Par conséquent, les autres catégories ont été marginalement utilisées par les deux groupes. Il est nécessaire d'adresser les différents types des backchannels durant les cours d'expression orale.

**Les Mots Clés** Le Sexe, La Fréquence d'Occurrence des Backchannels, La Diversité des Backchannels, Conversation, Les Expressions d'Approbation

## **General Introduction**

### **1 The Gist of Research**

Conversation is undoubtedly a joint-effort task. It basically means that participants have to cooperate with each other in order to lubricate their conversation. In fact, the burden of conducting a conversation doesn't simply fall over one participant's shoulders. While it is the role of one interlocutor to speak, the other one is supposed to express a kind of attention and to stir the speaker up to move on. This attentiveness is achieved by virtue of what has been known as backchannels.

None can deny that these supportive feedbacks, be vocal as mm or gestural like head nodding, are absolutely decisive in achieving a successful conversation, as they play a vital role in overcoming the perilous aftermaths of silence during a conversation. Every now and then, misunderstanding happens when the listener is passive, what makes the speaker the speaker views as disrespectful and indifferent to their utterances. This in turn may put the participants' relationship on the brink of rupture. One would therefore forcefully say that successful conversations depend, to a large extent, on the frequent use of supportive backchannels. Unsurprisingly, the importance of backchannels, as an indispensable social behaviour, has gripped the attention of many sociolinguists and conversation analysts.

The opinion, prevailing among the Algerian laymen, is that women backchannel more than men do when using their mother tongue. The present study will be an attempt to endorse or rule out the idea that women are more attentive than men when it comes to a foreign language. The study will, then, throw some light on the impact of gender on the frequency and diversity of the English audible backchannels. To put it another way, the emphasis will highly be put on the nature of the English audible backchannels by male and female undergraduate students of English during their mixed-gender face to face conversation.

### **2 Statement of Research Questions**



This study aims to answer the following questions:

- a. Do females backchannel more than males?
- b. Do females diversify their backchannels more than males do?

### **3 Research Hypotheses**

In the light of the aforementioned questions, one can formulate the following hypotheses:

- a. Gender governs the frequency of the English audible backchannels' occurrence; females' backchannels outnumber males'
- b. Gender also governs the diversity of the English audible backchannels; females are more likely to diversify their backchannels.

### **4 Methodological Procedure**

To verify the research hypotheses, a sample of 60 participants was randomly chosen. The participants\_ undergraduate students of English, University Frères Mentouri\_ were equally divided on the basis of their gender. Each pair tape recorded a two- minute mixed-gender face-to-face conversation in 2016. In order to minimize inhibition and maximize spontaneity, the participants were given the green light to choose the topic and the counterpart, and most importantly to record themselves. What should be borne in mind is that the participants approximately have the same age 19-24; the same status, students and the same culture, the Algerian culture

To identify the males' and females' backchannels, the 30 conversations were scripted. While doing so, the most prominent symbols which secure the conversations 'readability were used like-, for false starts; ...for hesitation; [], for non-verbal vocalizations and == for simultaneous utterances. After being identified, the backchannels were counted, classified according to their forms and functions and quantitatively analyzed.

### **5 Research Structure**

This study is divided into five chapters:

As a starting point, chapter one is divided into two sections: the first section tackles the basics of communication, notably its definition, types, process, the functions it performs, its barriers, and the way to overcoming the barriers. The second section reviews earlier gender studies, with the focus on the main gender differences in communication.

The second chapter goes deeper to exhaustively categorize one pervasive means of communication, face-to-face conversation. It basically aims at providing a clear picture of the different aspects which have bearing on the face-to-face conversation including its characteristics, components, and many other aspects.

The third chapter sheds some light on listening, in general; and the backchanneling behavior, in particular. Therefore, it is divided into two sections: while the first section elaborates on the listening skill, the second highlights a listening-related phenomenon known as backchanneling.

The fourth chapter embraces a corpus of 30 transcribed conversations. In each transcribed conversation, the backchannels adopted by the male and female participants were highlighted, counted, and tabulated.

The fifth chapter gives an overall discussion of the participants' performances. It is an attempt to compare between the females' backchannels and the males', answering at last the research question.

CHAPTER ONE

**COMMUNICATION AND**

**THE**

**GENDER SCOPE**

**Section One: Communication ( The basics)****Section Two: The gender scope****Introduction**

The first chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a triggering, as it is prevalently devoted to some basics related to communication in general. Writing this section is motivated by the paramount centrality of communication in one's daily life. Concerning the second section, it parallels the gender-oriented nature of the thesis, as it defines some gender concepts, traces the history of gender studies, and most significantly recapitulates the most prominent findings obtained from earlier gender works.

**Communication: (the basics )****1 Definition**

Hundreds of definitions on communication have been given by scholars. Etymologically, the source of the word *communication* goes back to the Latin *communicare* which is tightly related to communion and community, Weekley (1967, p. 338) says. According to Velentzas, Mamalis, and Broni (2010, pp. 11-2), the term "communication" has been derived from the Latin "communis," that means "common". Thus, "to communicate" means "to make common" or "to make known", or "to share".

Devito (1986, p. 61) defines communication as, "the process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, through a channel and with the interference of noise." According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, communication stands for the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else.

It is, in fact, fallacious to confine communication only to speaking and listening as the term does not only include what is verbal, but what is gestural as well (Harryman, Kresheck, & Nicolosi (1996)). In this context, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) state that human beings convey information via several ways: speaking, mobiles, emails, blogs, TV, art, hand gestures, facial expressions, and body language.

Thus, communication is so significant and this is due to the fact that it is pervasively used. It starts in the early beginning of one's lives. A baby, for example, communicates their ideas via crying. As human beings grow up, they start to adopt various ways of communication expressing their feelings and needs: speaking, scowling, writing, preaching, touching, smiling, sitting, standing, and staring. (The importance of communication. Grey Owl Aviation Consultants Inc. 1 [www.greyowl.com](http://www.greyowl.com) Copyright 1997 – 2004)

## **2 Types of Communication**

In fact, there have been diverge thoughts when it comes to how many types communication includes. The most well-known division, however, is this: verbal and non-verbal communication.

### **2.1 Verbal Communication (VC)**

Verbal communication refers to the written and /or spoken words one uses to convey his message. Compared to the other type, VC is less influential. “Believe it or not, it is actually the least impactful element in face-to-face communication. The old adage is true- it's not what you say, it's how you say it that counts” (Advanced Communication Skills. (2010). MTD training & Ventus publishing APS, p. 20). In a similar vein, Coates (2009, p. 40) states:

It is a truism, but still worth remembering, that communication via words can only be successful if the sender and receiver have a language in common, and use it. The successful representation and transfer of information will be useless if that representation means nothing to the receiver.

Going back to *advanced communication skills MTD training & Ventus publishing APS*, (2010, p. 20), VC is sometimes an uphill activity, especially in the absence of NVC (non-verbal communication). Though VC would sometimes be sufficient and time-saving, as for a person sending an email, NVC is, for the most part, needed for more effective understanding (ibid).

## **2.2 Non-Verbal Communication (NVC)**

As opposed to verbal communication, non-verbal communication stands for the language sent by means of, for example, eye contact, body language, and vocal cues (Knapp & Hall, 2002). Research by Mehrabian (2007) indicates that when human beings communicate emotions and behaviors, only insignificant percentages represent the messages conveyed via words. Thus, 55% of the messages are expressed by body language (notably the eye movements which can express shock, disbelief, doubt, or disgust. In addition, 38% of the messages result from the tone of voice, and just 7% of them are conveyed by means of words. Such percentages echo that NVC is more expressive than the VC. One can say that the human body, and without words, always sends messages, thanks to the various range of muscular shapes it makes.

According to Argyle (1988), NVC performs five basic functions which are:

- Expressing emotions: this is basically conveyed via the face, body, and voice.
- Presenting oneself to another: this is expressed thanks via appearance.
- Communicating interpersonal behaviours: this establishes and maintains rapport via, for instance, tone of voice, gaze, and touch.
- Accompanying verbal communication: this happens when one, for example, nods when another is speaking.
- Ritualizing: this happens when greetings, handshakes, etc.

## **3 The Communication Functions**

According to Hébert (2011), Roman Jakobson communication has six functions, each of which is attributed to a factor:

1. *The emotive/expressive function*: This function makes use of interjections, exclamation marks and a rising intonation to communicate the addresser feelings and emotions like shock and pleasure (Sugar, 2015, p. 14). So, the factor to which the emotive function is ascribed is the addresser.
2. *The referential denotative function*: it is related to the context, which depends on the shared knowledge and the cultural background or what has been called the co-text, the surrounding words which can affect the meaning of the written message (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2005, p. 15). As for this the referential function, “it is typically expressed by statements, thus being the most obvious function of language.” (Sugar, 2015, p. 14)
3. *The metalingual function*: this verifies the mutual intelligibility between the participants. It emphasizes on the common code the addresser and addressee (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2005, p. 15). The function, as Sugar (2015, p. 14) notes, “...is very often used in the process of language learning...”
4. *The poetic function*: It shows the aesthetic side of language. One clear example is the Nursery rhyme ‘*this is the house that jack built*’, by *Mother Goose*. Other concrete examples where the focus is on the shape of the message are advertisements and newspaper headlines which rely on repetition, neologism on rhythm to embellish the message. (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2005, p. 17)
5. *The conative function*: Sugar (2015, p. 14) points out, “the conative function focuses on the addressee to affect his/her behaviour; it is typically expressed by vocatives and imperatives.”
6. *The phatic function/ the phatic communion*. It targets the contact between the addresser and addressee. For example, *it is a nice day, isn't it?* accounts for the phatic function which overcomes embarrassing silence and establishes social unity between two people on the train ( Trudgill, 2000). Hébert (2011, p. 1) summarizes the six functions of communication and the factors each one is related to, as this table shows:

Function	Source Factor	The Target Factor
1. Emotive	Message	Addresser
2. Referential	Message	Context
3. Metalingual	Message	Code
4. Poetic	Message	Message
5. Conative	Message	Addressee
6. Phatic	Message	Contact

**Table1: Functions and Factors of Communication**

#### **4 Communication Process**

Explaining why communication is a dynamic process, Anderson (1987, p. 49) points out, “The notion of process involves, at least, some time dimension which means that the characteristics, causes, and consequences of some communication act are subject to change over the life of the act.” This means that communication is always in motion and is a continuing activity.

In order to thoroughly grasp how the process takes place, one has to approach its constituents. Thus, communication is not fully accomplished unless it goes through a set of phases and elements. In this context, while highlighting their importance, Keyton (2011) assures that any problem in one of the process elements can bring about miscommunication.

- ✓ *The Source/ Sender*: it is he who launches the communication by conveying ideas, sharing interests, or showing feelings. All of these form what one might call a message. According to Lunenburg (2010, p. 02), “the sender encodes



the idea by selecting words, symbols, or gestures...”. In order to be an effective element, the sender has to clarify his messages, and he also has to know the aim behind sending them. Otherwise, the communication process can be on the brink of failure (advanced communication skills MTD training & Ventus publishing APS, 2010, p.13).

- ✓ *The message*: it is, as said before, what the sender produces and the channel between two people. Coates (2009, p. 18) gives the term output to the message sent, and input to the one received. The difference between the two is that outputs are achieved via actions. That is to say, they involve physical movements like writing, speaking, or gestural behaviors. An output message, as DeVito (1986, p. 201) points out, is a “signal or combination of signals that serves as a stimulus for a receiver”. Inputs, by a way of contrast, are achieved by means of sensory organs, notably the eyes and the ears (ibid, p. 19).
- ✓ *Encoding the message*: By encoding the message, one means transferring it in a way that can put the receiver in the picture. The sender is, therefore, required to provide a clear message and shape it to suit the receiver’s perceptual abilities. The sender also has to take the background differences between him and the other counterpart into account to seek a successful communication. So, knowing who the receiver is crucial in encoding the message effectively. Accordingly,

You need to have an understanding of what [the audience] know and what they need to know in order to send a complete message. You need to use language they will understand and a context that is familiar. One simple example of how you can do this is being sure to spell acronyms. We sometimes forget that not everyone is familiar with the acronyms that we may use on a regular basis. (Advanced Communication Skills MTD training & Ventus publishing APS, 2010, p. 14)

- ✓ *The Medium /Channel*: This basically refers to the nature of the means which carries the sender’s message. Using DeVito’s words, a channel is the “vehicle...through which signals are sent” (1986, p. 52). It can be a face-to-face conversation, an e-mail, a speech, TV programs, different body movements, and many others (Lunenborg (2010, p. 03)).

- ✓ *Decoding the Message*: This means figuring out or interpreting the message sent.
- ✓ *The Receiver*: this is simply “any person...that takes in messages.” (DeVito, 1986, p. 25)
- ✓ *The Feedback*: After the receiver takes in the sender’s message, he is supposed to assess it depending on how he understands it. Of course, feedback can be verbal or non-verbal.
- ✓ *The context*: an indispensable element in the communication process is the setting or background in which communication occurs. According to Clapitt (2005, p. 36), the “context basically functions as the background for the content, much like a canvas for a painting.” In order to show how context can affect the interpretation of the message, Clapitt gives this example: The utterance ‘*how are you?*’ can be interpreted in one way when it is said by friend to his counterpart in a street, but in a different way when it is uttered by surgeon to his patient. In the former context, an acknowledgement like ‘fine’ would be a satisfactory response. In the latter context, however, much detail is required by the patient to account for his current health state. (ibid)

## 5 Barriers to Communication

As the process of communication is going on, it can be affected by a number of stumbling blocks or barriers which, if they emerge, threaten the success of communication and break the process. A barrier or a noise is “anything that distorts the message intended by the source, anything that interferes with the receiver’s receiving the message as the source intended the message to be received.” (DeVito 1986, p. 209).

According to Eisenberg (2010) (cited in Lunenburg (2010, p. 04)), barriers are of four types: process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychosocial barriers.

In process barriers, the elements of communication can themselves become hurdles. To put it another way, process barriers comprise sender barrier, encoding barrier, medium barrier, decoding barrier, receiver barrier, and feedback barrier. Here are some situations:

- *Sender barrier*: A new administrator with an innovative idea fails to speak up at a meeting, chaired by the superintendent, for fear of criticism.
- *Encoding barrier*: A Spanish-speaking staff member cannot get an English speaking administrator to understand a grievance about working conditions.
- *Medium barrier*: A very upset staff member sends an emotionally charged letter to the leader instead of transmitting her feelings face-to-face.
- *Decoding barrier*: An older principal is not sure what a young department head means when he refers to a teacher as "spaced out."
- *Receiver barrier*: A school administrator who is preoccupied with the preparation of the annual budget asks a staff member to repeat a statement, because she was not listening attentively to the conversation.
- *Feedback barrier*: During a meeting, the failure of school administrators to ask any questions causes the superintendent to wonder if any real understanding has taken place.

As far as physical barriers are concerned, Lunenburg (2010, p. 04) defines them as

Any number of physical distractions can interfere with the effectiveness of communication, including a telephone call, drop-in visitors, distances between people, walls, and static on the radio. People often take physical barriers for granted, but sometimes they can be removed. For example, an inconveniently positioned wall can be removed. Interruptions such as telephone calls and drop-in visitors can be removed by issuing instructions to a secretary. An appropriate choice of media can overcome distance barriers between people.

The third type, semantic barriers, is ascribed to the way words are chosen and used and to which meanings they are associated with. Having a similar view, DeVito (1986, p. 209) assumes that semantic noise happens when the receiver does not succeed in fully understanding the meaning of the speaker's message because of the complexity of the language adopted.

Psychosocial barriers can be categorized into fields of experience, filtering, and psychological distance (Antos, (2011), cited in Lunenburg (2010, p. 05)). Fields of

experience embrace the interactants' background, cognition, qualities, biases, desires, and expectations. When the sender and the receiver have common fields of experience, communication gets smooth (ibid). When Filtering, "...more often than not we see and hear what we are emotionally tuned in to see and hear. Filtering is caused by our own needs and interests, which guide our listening." (ibid). Psychosocial barriers also imply psychological distance. As an example, when a school manager speaks condescendingly to a staff member, who hates the behaviour, their communication might be broken (ibid).

## **6 Enhancing the Effectiveness of Communication**

As there are barriers to communication, there are also some ways to minimize their occurrence, and since the sender and receiver are the backbone of communication, it is their responsibility to revive it and to prevent some breakdowns. As cited in Lunenburg (2010, p. 6), Cheney (2011), Keyton (2011) and Tourish (2010) numerate two important backups of effective oral communication which the sender stands:

- ✓ The real aim of communication has to be examined: The sender has to ask themselves what they wish to achieve with the message. The sender has to identify the most significant aim and adapt the code to serve the aim. The more focus the sender puts on the message, the more effective and expressive it is.
- ✓ The total setting has to be taken into account: while raising its overall impact on effective communication, Lunenburg (2010, p. 7) points out, "Be constantly aware of the total setting in which you communicate. Like all living things, communication must be capable of adapting to its environment."

Going back to the receivers' role in enhancing oral communication, Lunenburg (2010, p. 8-9) mentions that Kneen (2011) provides a number of guidelines. Among them:

- ✓ Show that you are willing and interested in listening. "listen to understand rather than to oppose", says Lunenburg (ibid, p. 9)
- ✓ Be patient and never interrupt the speaker.
- ✓ Ask questions to lubricate the wheel of communication.

## Gender Scope

### 7 Gender Aspects

#### 7.1 Sex or Gender?

Couples of decades ago, gender and sex were used interchangeably to mean the biological state of mankind. Later on, however, the separation between the two terms has been made by many sociolinguists (Bergvall (1999)). Many scholars have exaggeratedly elaborated on sex-gender distinction. One will, however, try to touch only on the main differences between the two terms.

Holmes (2001) and Wardhaugh (2006) believe that sex refers to the biological features which define human beings as males or females (though there are individuals who possess both features, as Esplen and Jolly (2006) say. Gender, by a way of contrast, marks the social, psychological and cultural differences between males and females. This means that gender signals the social relationships personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values that the two sexes perform. For that reason, Wodak (1997) confirms that gender is something performed and not possessed. Esplen and Jolly (2006) also proclaim that gender is acquired, fluid and, above all, inconstant as it changes by time and cross cultures.

Eckert and Ginnet (2002) account for the term 'gender' by saying:

Imagine a small boy proudly following his father. As he swaggers and sticks out his chest, he is doing everything he can to be like his father-to be a man.....the same is true of a small girl as she puts on her mother's high-heeled shoes, smears makeup on her face and minces around the room (p.10).

While gender is based on nurture, sex, as put by Eckert and Ginnet (2002), arises from nature since it is based on fixed anatomical, endocrinal, and chromosomal features. Thus, for example, females have two X chromosomes while males have an X and a Y (Wardhaugh, 2006). On the same page, Reeves and Baden (2000, p. 32) state, "a person's sex is biologically determined as female or male according to certain identifiable physical features which are fixed".

Sex has a crucial effect on gender and, thus, physiology explains behaviour. Eckert and Ginet (2002) argue that the higher levels of testosterone cause males to be more aggressive than females. In addition, the left-brain dominance makes men more rational while the lack of brain lateralization pushes women to be more emotional.

In fact, whether sex and gender are different or not has been the split between two beliefs: constructivism and essentialism. While the former draws a line between the two concepts, the latter uses them interchangeably (Eunson, n.d, p.7). So, it would be wrong to say one of the views is wrong

## **7.2 Gender Segregation**

When thinking of gender, gender segregation comes as a very prominent concept that one has, at least, touch on it. The term refers to the separation of men and women in the world fields.

In their book *50 key concepts in gender studies*, Pitcher and Whelehan (2004) provide a transparent case of gender segregation where the educational field in some countries intentionally segregates students on the basis of their sex. This means that not only do male and female students get educated separately in single-sex schools, but taught different subjects, too.

Sticking to Piltcher and Whelehan 2004, another field where gender segregation can clearly be observed is the paid work. In Britain, as many other European countries, the type of the job is segregated by gender; men and women tend not to occupy the same types of jobs, at the same level.

## **7.3 Gendered Items**

Piltcher and Whelehan (2004) say that something is ‘gendered’ when its character is either masculine or feminine, or when it displays ways of difference by gender. As a matter of fact, there are many aspects that are said to be gendered.

Colours are said to be gendered; as it is known, while pink is viewed as feminine, blue is seen as masculine. In practice, Eckert and Ginet (2003) state that nurseries provide pink caps for females and blue ones for males. Another case where colours can clearly be seen as gendered is the fact that before buying something for a newborn, people in US

clothe shops get asked about the baby's sex and, then, advised to choose pink clothes for the baby if it is a girl and blue ones if it is a boy. In case the baby's sex is not known, people are told then to take white, yellow or green (ibid).

Paid work is also gendered simply because men's and women's job types are not the same, Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) say. For instance, building and other demanding jobs are attributed to men whereas nursing is ascribed to women. As stated by Vallance (2004), a census took place in USA (2000) revealed that the occupational domain is tremendously gendered. More than 95 per cent of jobs occupied by men represent marathon ones and 89 per cent of women's occupations include educational and clerical ones which are less uphill than men's.

Another aspect which is highly gendered is one's behaviour. As assumed by Davies (1996) ( cited in Pilcher and Whelehan (2004)) , gender has been used not only to describe fixed things (jobs, clothes, etc), but to involve the ongoing social process as well. Eckert and McConnell Ginet (2003) assert that male and female children get separated at a certain age, and, then, both will use different toys to play with; while females adopt dolls, males have trucks. Hence, they have a different social behaviour decided by members of the society.

The Arabian world, in fact, is a clear case where gendered behaviour is governed by the society. For example, people often advise male children who play with females to disjoin them. Consequently, children will behave according to what people tell them, and to what is allowed or not allowed to be done.

## **8 Gender Studies: A Brief History**

Li (2014, p. 53) points out:

The earliest research about language and gender can be traced back to as early as ancient Greek. At that time, many dramas witnessed gender differences in language. However, it was not until the early 20th century that language and gender attracted anthropologists' and linguists' attention.

Broadbridge (2003, p. 3) mentioned that the first quarter of the twentieth century revealed that people used to believe that as opposed to male behavior which was seen as the model, women' behaviour would be atypical. Books like '*The Woman' Book: Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know*' by Jack Strauss (1911) mirrors how

women were supposed to behave (ibid). It was until the sixties and seventies did such opinions about women begun to change thanks to the vital roles women played in wars. Researchers, like Lakoff (1975), started, then, to scrutinize the gender differences and consider them as differences, rather than abnormalities. (ibid, p. 4)

Liamas et al. (2007, pp. 63-64) state that the early studies used to emphasize on mixed-gender talk. Sociolinguists would restrict their focus to pronunciation and grammar. They would analyze the data quantitatively, counting the investigated linguistic features and summarizing them in tables to show, at last, the main phonetic and grammatical differences. However, the researchers focus was shifted later toward syntactic, stylistic, and semantic sides, said Wright (2002, p.02).

One prominent work on gender and grammar was the one by Jenny Cheshire (1982) (cited in Llamas et al. (2007, p. 64)). After probing the behavior of adolescent males and females, the researcher concluded by saying the first group exhibited higher tendency to use non-standard grammatical forms. Another outstanding work (1998) on gender and language was carried out to tackle what has been termed high rising terminal (HRT) across gender. The results revealed that the females' HRTs were used three times more than the males' (ibid).

What also should be said about gender studies is that a great deal of them took place in the seventies and eighties (Zimmerman and West (1975), Fishman (1978), and West (1984)), and, to a lesser extent, the nineties (Tannen (1990)). (As assumed by Coates and Cameron (1989, p. 123), cited in Broadbridge (2003, pp. 4-5)). In the twenty-first century, sociolinguists have widened the area of their interest; Mc Quiston and Morris (2009, p. 54) ascertain:

....an increasing body of literature is showing that males and females exhibit different behaviours in a variety of areas specifically related to sales. For example, men and women consider different criteria in purchasing..., process information differently... and have different decision making styles...

## **9 Approaches to Language and Gender**



Mohammed Abbas (2010) and Liamas et al. (2007) have tackled the different theories and approaches to gender studies:

✓ *Deficit/ Dominance Theory*: Those who adhere to this theory-Lakoff (1975), for example- interpret gender differences on the basis of men's dominance and women's inferiority (Mohammed Abbas, 2010, p. 3). Using the words of Liamas et al., "researchers using this model are concerned to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practice...Moreover, all participants in discourse, women as well as men, collude in sustaining and perpetuating male dominance and female oppression" (2007, p. 65) Mohammed Abbas (2010) adds that Lakoff noted that the inequalities between males and females lead the latter to use powerless and tentative linguistic forms, and be more polite than the former (ibid)

➤ *Difference / Dual –Cultural Theory*: This paradigm supports the view that men and women pertain to different cultures. In this context, Mohammed Abbas (2010, p. 06) says:

Essentially, theories of the difference/ dual-culture approach believe that differences appeared in childhood where boys and girls tend to play in sex-segregated groups with different sets of rules. Girls play almost exclusively in small, cooperative groups while boys play almost exclusively in larger, more hierarchically organized groups... . Therefore, dual theories argue that gender differences are created in similar ways to regional and social differences in language use through physical and social separation.

➤ *The social constructionist theory*: this is the most current and prevailing model to language and gender. It stresses the idea that gender is a social construct; it is done, rather than given (Liamas et al., 2007, p. 66). On the same wavelength, "...masculinity and femininity are not traits that we inherently have, rather they are effects that we perform by the activities we partake in." ( Muhammed Abbas (2010, p. 9))

## 10 Gender Differences in Spoken Talk

Language is imposed on people because they do not speak the way they want nor do they speak the same. Their communication style is abided by many factors such as the place one is in, status, educational background, age and, to a large extent, gender. Accordingly, men and women communicate differently. One will try to shed some light on the females' and males' spoken behavior. A great amount of works have particularly tackled gender in relation to these two: linguistic politeness and interruptions. Therefore, a review of the two aforementioned areas of interest will be given, followed by a summary of other gender differences in spoken talk.

### **10.1 Gender and Politeness**

Linguistic politeness has been one of the ways to explain gender differences. According to Holmes (1995), women are said to be more polite than men. This is due to the fact that women interrupt less and tend to be “more attentive listeners, concerned to ensure others get a chance to contribute” than men (ibid, 67). She adds women and men apply speech acts differently. Thus, apologies, for instance, are not only much more used by women, but theirs are “remedies for space and talk offences areas of interaction where women are particularly vulnerable and where they may have developed a greater sensitivity” (ibid, p. 185).

In addition, Coates, (2004, p. 110) asserts that women give and receive more compliments than men who, by a way of contrast, are said to have an obscene language and to talk more. Not only that, but women's compliments seem to primarily focus on physical appearance as opposed to men's which concentrate more on skills and possessions, Yan (2010) claims. On top, Coates, (2004, pp. 100-101) mentions that compliments given by females are not likely to be accepted while those given by males to females tend to be accepted.

The women's tendency to be more polite has been ascribed to the sensitivity of women to the other's face needs. This was confirmed by Holmes (1995, p. 2) when she states:

Most women enjoy talk and regard talking as an important means of keeping in touch, especially with friends and intimates. They use language to establish, nurture and develop personal relationships. Men tend to see language more as a tool for obtaining and conveying information.

Gender also governs the use of directives which are utterances to get participants do something. Directives can directly be used via imperatives as they can be indirect via declaratives or interrogatives. In light of previous studies, females employ less direct forms of directives and imperatives than males (Coates (2004)).

## **10.2 Gender and Interruptions**

Interruption can simply be defined as, “a situation in which the next speaker begins to speak while the current speaker is still speaking.” (Eresoy, 2008, p. 13). A great number of works on gender and interruptions- including the contribution of West and Zimmermann (1983) - have shown that males are, for the most part, interrupters (ibid). The reason might go to this:

...men usually use a competitive style, and, therefore, interruptions are associated with competitiveness, seen as aggressive, dominant, and as a way of getting the floor. Women on the other hand are concerned not to violate the man's turn, but wait until he finished (ibid).

Aries (1996), however, has opposed this, assuming that interruptions do not necessarily entail power and dominance; they can express agreements or soft ways of asking for clarity. Tannen (1994) uses the term ‘overlap’ to refer to interruptions which seek support and establish harmony, rather than attack the current speaker.

In a recent study on gender differences in interruption based on American TV series friends, Fei (2010, p. 41) came to this conclusion: men trigger more interruptions than women; men interrupt women more than vice-versa; both are more likely to interrupt women and to be interrupted by men. Another significant finding, which had not been achieved in previous works, was that interruptions are more triggered in mixed-gender interactions than in same- gender ones (ibid).

Quiston and Morris (2009, p. 56) said that earlier works by McMillian et al., 1977, West and Zimmerman 1983, Leaper and Ayers (2007) have shown that the ones who interrupt more are men. Accounting for this difference, Quiston and Morris go back to the belief that an interruption is dominance-associated. According to them:

By interrupting, the interrupter gains control of the conversation and thus gains a position of interpersonal power. Putting this in a gender-specific context, this interpretation suggests that men are expressing dominance over women, which also in turn reinforces the traditional role of subordinate women (ibid).

One conclusion in a Japanese study on gender differences, however, was not in line with the findings of the aforementioned works. While answering one of the study questions: how frequently do Japanese men and women interrupt in mixed-sex interaction? Ueno (n.d. p, 101) came to say that Japanese women are slightly more inclined to interrupt men, what totally opposes the Japanese feminine communication style which tends to be meek and courteous. However, Ueno (n.d, p.102) points out, "...many of the interruptions seen in this study were supportive rather than dominance-associated. This communication pattern is congruent with the Japanese ideal of a cooperative and harmonious communication style." Concerning how Japanese males and females react toward interruption, the results revealed that when both groups are interrupted, they are more likely to stop speaking than to continue (ibid).

What can be said in light of the stated works is that views and results about the correlation between gender and interruption can diverge, owing to the fact that such studies have never been carried out under the same circumstances. One can just go back to how the results of one of Japanese study did not parallel the findings of most of American studies, which suggested that more often than not, men are the interrupters and women the interruptees.

### **10.3 Further Gender Differences in Spoken Talk**

In addition to politeness and interruption, gender has a lot to do with other spoken axes. Eunson (n.d, pp.11-13) traced a number of gender studies which most of them were conducted among white, middle-class Americans: (Lakoff (1990); Glass (1992); Tannen (1990, 1994); Gray (1992); Dolan and Kropf (2004); Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist and Gallois (2003); DeCapua and Boxer (1999); Siegel (2002); Holmes (1995)). The following are some of the findings revealed:

- ✓ *Pronunciation and articulation*: men are inclined to using sloppier pronunciation and speak inaudibly.

- ✓ *Grammar*: women are more likely to use accurate grammar.
- ✓ *Fillers*: men tend to use more fillers, such as *er* and *um*.
- ✓ *Delivery*: while women's delivery is smoothly accompanied by audible breathing, the men's envelopes brokenness.
- ✓ *Describing colours*: while men describe colours using broad terms (*green, blue, brown*), women tend to use sophisticated, unobvious terms (*turquoise, chartreuse, bone*)
- ✓ *Euphemisms*: more often than not, women use euphemisms more than men do (*powder my nose*)
- ✓ *Aggression*: men's talk is more obscene. Men are more prone to use teasing insults in order to show either affection or threat.
- ✓ *Hedges*: women more than men make use of hedges (*'maybe', 'perhaps', 'in my opinion', 'it seems to me'*).
- ✓ *Expressive terms*: women are more likely to use adjectives expressing emotions like lovely beautiful sad
- ✓ *Quantifiers and qualifiers*: while women are inclined to use qualifiers as *a kind of, a bit*, men tend to use quantifiers like *always* and *all*.
- ✓ *Questions*: Eunson (n.d, p. 12) points out:

Males may be more likely to see questions as admissions of ignorance and therefore a one-down strategy. Females may be more likely to see questions as neutral information seeking or as rapport building. Some males may see female questioning as a sign of incompetence and uncertainty.

- ✓ *Credit claiming*: men are more prone to take credit for their achievements. In addition, they are more likely to use the pronoun *I*.
- ✓ *Feedback*: women more than men provide more feedback.
- ✓ *Tag questions*: women tend to use more tag questions to elicit agreement (it is a nice day, isn't)

- ✓ *Shift in topic*: men are more inclined to change the topic. On top, men and women adopt different ways when making a shift; while women use conjunctions like 'however', 'but', 'and')
- ✓ *Time reference*: when arguing, women tend to refer to the past while men adhere to the present.
- ✓ *Anger alleviating*: men tend to scream or swear to alleviate anger. Women, by a way of contrast, are more likely to cry.
- ✓ *Topic discussed*: while men usually discuss matters as sports, cars, and jobs, women tend to speak about people, relationships, clothes, feelings and children.

## 11 Gender Differences in Body Talk

People do not interact verbally only; their bodies do convey messages, too. Body talk plays a vital role in lubricating the wheel of communication. This is because body language often accompanies the spoken one. Thus, one can use their fingers when uttering numbers, or react toward something shocking by raising their eyebrows. One may go further and say that in some cases, body language- or non-verbal communication- expresses an idea quite well. In this context, referring to Goffman (1959) and Arnold (2003), Quiston and Morris (2009, p. 57) claim, "...nonverbal cues a person gives off may even be more important than the verbal responses that person gives."

Non-verbal communication falls into the following categories: Kinesics, the physical motion of the whole body or part of it such as facial expressions and gestures; oculusics, the eye contact when communicating; proxemics, the way an individual perceives the physical distance between themselves and another; object language, the messages one conveys through their clothes and physical appearance (Quiston and Morris (2009, pp. 58-59)).

As there have been gender studies which have focused on spoken talk, there have been others oriented toward body talk. Gender differences were the main area of interest of one of the works in kinesics, Hall's study of smiles (1998) (as stated in Quiston and Morris (2009, p. 58)). The study revealed that females tend to smile more than males do. In addition, when females smile, it does not necessarily echo that they are rejoiced;

smiling is something a female ought to do. Males, however, smile to show their happiness (ibid). Quiston and Morris (2009, ibid) state another study on kinesics by Helweg-Larsen, Cunningham, Carrico, & Pergram, (2004) to conclude that females, more than males, agree by nodding. The high tendency of females to smile and nod might reflect their trait of establishing relationships and securing sociability.

In addition to gender differences in body movements, physical distance and appearance have gripped the researchers' attention. While summarizing Hyde's study on proxemics (2004), Quiston and Morris (2009, p. 59) point out, "men prefer a greater distance between themselves and others, whereas women are more comfortable with a smaller distance between themselves and others." Women would seek, by such behaviour, cosiness and bonhomie (ibid). When it comes to object language, Eunson (n.d, 15) states

Women are more likely to groom and adorn themselves to emphasise smooth and nubile qualities (makeup, body hair reduction), while males may be more inclined to groom themselves to emphasise coarseness and toughness (facial hair, self-mutilation through piercing and tattoos).

Some other gender differences in body talk, Eunson (n.d, 14-15) outlines, include:

- ✓ *Arm gestures*: females usually maintain their arms close to their body; whereas, males keep their arms about 5-10 degrees away from the body. While males use both arms when communicating, females tend to use one arm.
- ✓ *Leg gestures*: while males are more inclined to stretch their legs, females sit with their legs crossed at the knees.
- ✓ *Posture*: females, as opposed to males, push their pelvis forward when walking. In addition, while females move their body as one entity, males tend to move their arms independently.
- ✓ *Touching*: Eunson (n.d, 14-15) writes

Men tend to touch others less than women do. Men tend to perceive touching as an instrumental behaviour leading to sexual activity or as childish behaviour indicative of dependency and lack of manliness. Females may be more likely to view touch as

an expressive behaviour which demonstrates warmth and affiliation.

- ✓ *Jaw*: when speaking, females open their jaw more pervasively than males.
- ✓ *Locomotion*: for the most part, men are more dynamic.
- ✓ *Artefacts*: males may carry things using a one-handed grip at their sides. Females, by a way of contrast, use a two- handed grip to carry objects against their chest.
- ✓ *Dressing*: females, as opposed to males, wear clothes with lighter colours.
- ✓ *Body awareness*: females more than males are aware of their shapes; they seem to do their best to look fit and less fat.

Psychologically, gender differences in spoken and body talk portray different traits. Referring to David Schneider (2005), Merchant (2012, p. 28) summarized the most common gender –associated traits in the following table:

Females' traits	Males' traits
Affectionate	Dominant
Appreciative	Achievement- oriented
Emotional	Active
Friendly	Ambitious
Sympathetic	Coarse
Mild	Forceful
Pleasant	Aggressive
Sensitive	Self-confident
Sentimental	Rational
Warm	Tough
Whiny	Unemotional

**Table 2: Gender-Associated Traits**



**Conclusion**

As it is a fundamental human activity that is pervasively engaged in, communication has taken a considerable attention in this chapter. Thus, the most important points have been reviewed. In addition, the issue of how gender affects one's communication styles has been raised and supported by the findings drawn from a number of previous works.

## CHAPTER TWO

# **UNDERSTANDING**

# **CONVERSATION**

## **Introduction**

One of the most significant shapes of communication is face-to-face conversation. The latter, therefore, is the focus of this chapter. Some light is put on the definition, characteristics, and what has bearing on conversation; its maxims, its discourse, lexical, and grammatical aspects, and its anatomy are tackled.

### **1 Definition and Characteristics**

Conversation is a social activity the human beings pervasively engage in. It refers to informal talk between two or more people. Thanks to this social activity, people do not only exchange information, but establish, modify, and maintain their social relationships. Since human beings are, by nature, gregarious, they very often come into contact with each other.

Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 1) give a wide range of situations within which a conversation can occur. A conversation, then, can be about: weather, backbiting, life problems, or small talk between children and their parents, doctors and their patients, waiters and their diners, and teachers and their students. A conversation can be started up by taxi drivers at a bus station, Fellow passengers on a flight or by listeners calling a radio show to inform about a crime. (ibid)

The importance of conversation comes from the importance of speaking. Being the principal mode of language use, face-to-face conversation is so delightful that any layman is able to engage in. Unlike oration, for example, where one has to make trying efforts, conversation is not such an uphill task. According to Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 1), “the centrality of conversation to human discourse owes to the fact that it is the primary location for the enactment of social values and relationships”. Having a similar view, Levelt (1989) describes conversational talk as the canonical setting for speech in all human societies. In fact, learning to engage in a conversation does not merely precede learning a language, but it remains the commonest form of language that community members engage in throughout their life. Accordingly, Hatch (1978) claims that language

learning is to be brought about by learning how to carry on conversational talk. Moreover, face- to- face conversation is, by all means, the universal building stone for children's acquisition of their mother tongue, Bendjelloul (2008, p. 85) says. On the same wavelength, Lier (1996) states that current studies in second language learning back up the view that succeeding in learning second language is achieved via conversation.

The importance of conversation leads one to tackle its distinctive characteristics. To put it another way, one needs to answer this question: In what aspects are conversations different from other language forms?

The first defining feature they note is that conversation is spoken, though CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) allows many conversations to be written (Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 8)). The fact that conversation is basically spoken merges with the one that it happens in real time. According to Crystal and Davy (1975, p. 87), “the main factor which distinguishes written from spoken language...is time”. This real time spontaneity paves the way for couples of features to emerge. The most prominent ones are what have been termed as ‘dysfluency’ effects which happen “when the need to keep talking...threatens to run ahead of mental planning” (Biber et al. 1999, 1048). Instances of dysfluency effects were given by Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 12). Among these, one can name:

- Hesitations : so, *erm* they go back to school tomorrow !
- Repetition of words : it was in fact heading for *the the* city
- False starts : *No I think-* I do not know many people
- Repairs : the bureau thought *er* saw the storm
- Unfinished utterances
- Ungramaticality

Unlike written language, where it is constructed sentence by sentence, the spoken one is built up clause by clause and phrase by phrase joined with *and* which entails that coordination is prior to subordination when it comes to speech. In this context, Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 13) provide this example illustrates the point:

What went wrong was that the storm developed down near Wollongong *and* we had it on the radar *and* we were tracking it and the track at that stage was showing it going out to sea and

then very suddenly it developed into what what we call a 'supercell' which is the beginning of a severe thunderstorm and these super cells have a habit of doing some rather crazy things

Another key characteristic that can be ascribed to conversation is the fact that it takes place in a shared context. This means that there are many things unsaid, but understood. The following example illustrates the point:

*A : I'm so glad the kids were not there because you know the hole is just above debbies head*

*B : yeah*

*C : oh yeah*

*B : no it is amazing more people weren't injured*

*C : mm*

*B : so erm they go back to school tomorrow ?*

*A : not tomorrow==*

*B : ==monday*

*A : it's Sunday (ibid, p. 14)*

Thanks to the immediate context of the conversation above, A can assume that B will identify the referents (*the kids, there, that hole*). The temporal and spatial context, then, cause many spoken aspects erupt including the frequent use of pronouns which enable participants to say less and communicate more, in addition to the noticeable use of deictic expressions and ellipsis where hidden utterances can be recovered. In this vein, one can safely say that the temporal and the spacial context are of a great significance in the interpretation of conversations.

Another outstanding feature of conversation is the fact that it is interactive. To elaborate, conversation is, beyond the shadow of doubt, said to be built up reciprocally. In other words, participants take turns equally and successively. For that reason, "conversation is speech, but it is not a speech" (ibid, 15). While tackling the interactive feature of conversation, it is worth to mention certain words that pervasively appear at the beginning of turns. These are referred to discourse markers (*well, all right*). Without

such signals, any conversation would not seem harmonious. Not only does a conversation make use of discourse markers, but the frequency of such markers, McCarthy (1998) says, is higher in the spoken mode than in the written one. By virtue of interactional signals, a conversation is a matter of where “not only is the audience a co-author, but the speaker is a co-listener.” (Tannen, 1989, p. 12).

## **2 The Architecture of the English Conversation**

### **2.1 Turn Taking Mechanism**

Except for 5 per cent of speech which is accomplished with gaps and overlaps, as Seedhouse (2004, p. 27) notes, most of conversations move smoothly thanks to turn taking. Sidnell (2010) admits that turn taking is an effective technique of minimizing gaps in speech. He adds that the system is partly-administered; the interlocutors identify the one to take turn.

In casual face- to -face speech, it is not always easy to detect when interlocutors have to speak and stop. Yet, there is what has been termed transition relevance place (TRP). The latter stands for the point at which the current speaker is about to end up their turn, and another turn seems to start. Liddicoat (2007) affirms that listeners have to pay attention to the current speaker’ pitch and their posture before taking their turns.

Stating some rules that govern turn taking, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson –1974- claim:

- ✖ It is the current speaker who selects the next one by different strategies such as naming, pointing, or addressing him.
- ✖ The current speaker resumes his turn if other interactants remain silent.
- ✖ No more than one speaker speaks at once, that is when one takes the floor of speaker, the other (s) has/ have to stop.
- ✖ There is a room for each speaker to show their contribution.
- ✖ The amount of language used in a turn and the order of the participants are not determined beforehand.
- ✖ If the current speaker selects the next to take the turn, only the selected speaker is allowed and obliged to speak. Therefore, turn switch occurs.

- ✱ If the current speaker does not select the next to speak, then self-selection may appear, and the one who speaks first gains the next turn.
- ✱ If neither the current speaker-selection nor self-selection occur, then the current speaker may continue.

Bendjelloul (2008, p. 100) assumes that in order to avoid others' turns, a participant usually tends not to look at them, not to address them, and not to use adjacency pairs which need negotiation. If either of these happens, the participant who wants to take the floor can select themselves as the next speaker by some syntactic strategies like *I wonder if I might say something* (McCarthy 2000).

The above norms do account for the fact that in any conversation not all the participants have the right to speak at once nor should all of them be silent. That is, there must be one speaker and one or more hearers. Then, one of the hearers becomes the speaker, and the previous speaker becomes the hearer.

While manipulating a very outstanding phenomenon in turn taking, which is turn monopoly, where speakers want to permanently hold the floor, Yule (2006, p. 146) notes:

One strategy, which may be overused by "long-winded" speakers or those who are used to "holding the floor," is designed to avoid having normal completion points occur. We all use this strategy to some extent, usually in situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it. If the normal expectation is that completion points are marked by the end of a sentence and a pause, then one way to "keep the turn" is to avoid having those two markers occur together. That is, don't pause at the end of sentences; make your sentences run on by using connectors like and, and then, so, but; place your pauses at points where the message is clearly incomplete; and preferably "fill" the pause with a hesitation marker such as er, em, uh, ah.

With speakers monopolizing talk, other participants can forcefully get their turn via some conventional interrupting phrases among which McCarthy (2000, p. 29) mentions *Can I interrupt for a moment? I've got something to tell you, Sorry to butt in, but ...* Instead of waiting for slim chances to talk and overcome shyness (Yule 2006, p. 146), the aforementioned utterances can be used to seek a turn. McCarthy (2000) also provides some phrases the current speaker uses and which he does not assume turn

monopoly. These comprise phrases like *I'll try to be brief, but there are a number of things, one last point, and one more second and I'll finish.*

## 2.2 Adjacency pairs vs. Three-Part Exchange

There is no doubt that conversation is well- organized by virtue of turn-taking. Thus, everyday talk is based upon turn –by- turn pattern where “one speaker speaks at a time and speaker change recurs” (Coates, 2004, pp. 111-112). What is glued to turn-taking system, discussed earlier, are paired utterances known as adjacency pairs, and the question that poses itself is what the term means.

It was Schegloff and Sacks (1973) who first introduced the term adjacency pair. They suggest that the pair consists of two utterances which are adjacent, not produced by the same interlocutor, (though Coulthard (1977) says that the two utterances can be produced by the same speaker by asking and answering themselves), and ordered in a first and a second part where the first part brings about the second one.

Sticking to the words of Bendjelloul (2008, p. 91)

Adjacency pairs are turns at talk which co-occur and are more closely related than others. They are mutually dependent sequences of utterances produced by two successive speakers, where the second pair-part is conditionally relevant given a first one. The first part of a pair predicts the occurrence of the second.

Levinson (1983, p. 303) mentions some adjacency pairs which are weaved together

- ✓ *greeting-greeting* :                    A :*Hi* B :*Hi*
- ✓ *question-answer* :                    A :*where are you from* B : *from X*
- ✓ *Offer-acceptance*:                    A: *would you please accept this present?* B: *with pleasure.*
- ✓ *Compliment-response* :            A :*you look nice* B : *that is nice of you*
- ✓ *Challenge- rejection*:                A: *can you really get it?* B: *wait and see.*

Having a glance at the examples, it can forcefully be said that the pairings are really intertwined. Thus, *greeting* goes hand in hand with another *greeting*. In the same manner, *acceptance* is glued to *an offer*, and so forth.



What is also worth mentioning is that the second parts of adjacency pairs, as Yule (1996, p. 79) notes, can be preferred/ expected or dispreferred /unexpected acts. Therefore, one can observe that *acceptance* is a reciprocal expected act to an *offer*, while *refusal*, the unexpected one, can be dispreferred.

Yule (1996, p. 77) ascertains that many conversational actions are performed by means of adjacency pairs. He assumes that the golden rule working on adjacency pairs is that the production of the first part by the current speaker requires him to stop, and imposes the next speaker to produce the second part of the pair. This means that silence is not welcome, and procrastination can be a sign of reluctance.

In some circumstances, the production of the second part does not necessarily immediately follow the first one. The following extract from a conversation illustrates this point where A 1, the answer to Q 1, does not occur immediately after it.

A: *can I have a bottle of Mich?*    Q1

B: *are you over twenty one?*    Q2

A: *no*    A2

B: *no*    A1

(Levinson, 1983, p. 304)

It is more than necessary to provide the pair's second part. If a person, being talked to, neglects or puts off the second part, others may draw conclusions about that person, what results in perilous aftermaths such as anger, disappointment, and conversation disrupt. For that reason, Seedhouse (2004, p. 19) says, "the longer the second part remains absent, the more accountable and sanctionable it becomes".

In some cases, and because of delaying, the second part is produced only when the first one is repeated. This applies, to a large extent, to question- answer pairs as the following exchange reveals:

Child: *have to cut these, Mummy.*

Child: *won't we Mummy?*

Child: *won't we?*

*Mother: yes*

*(Atkinson and Drew 1979, p. 52)*

As noticed, mother's second part (answer) has become conditionally relevant after her child's question. However, the answer appears lately. This is accounted for the repetition and the re-repetition of the question. The exchange above, indeed, implies that adjacency pairs, particularly questions-answers, are effective for children in order to develop their communication abilities.

Although Renkema (2004, p. 166), like many others, openly acknowledges that "the adjacency pair is an important building block of conversation", one cannot give absolute importance to adjacency pairs in establishing exchanges. Often, it seems that a considerable number of exchanges are made up of more than merely two utterances. Accordingly, divergence has erupted upon whether the adjacency pair is the only corner stone of conversation. The following exchange, for example, is made up of three parts:

*A: Would hand me that book, please? (The first part: request)*

*B: For sure. (The second part: compliance)*

*A: Thanks (the third part: thankfulness)*

This reveals that such coherent three-part exchanges can replace the adjacency pair. Tsui (1989) goes further when she claims that compared to the adjacency pair, the three-part exchange is a more adequate, fundamental unit of conversation analysis due to the huge number of conversations that make use of the three-part sequences.

Shedding some light on the third part, which she names the follow-up move, Berry (1981) confirms that this is obligatory in some situations, but optional in some others. She also stresses the criterion which decides the obligatoriness and the optionality of the follow-up move. This criterion involves who the primary knower is. The two exchanges below clarify the obligatory and the optional moves in relation to the aforesaid:

### **Exchange(1)**

speakerA:        *What        is        the        capital        of        France?*

*SpeakerB:PARIS.*

*Speaker A: Yes.*

**Exchange (2)**

*speaker A: What is the capital of France?*

*Speaker B: Paris.*

*Speaker A: Oh.*

The follow-up move in exchange (1) is obligatory because speaker A is the primary knower, and assessing the response provided is a requisite. The one in exchange (2), by a way of contrast, is optional because speaker A is the secondary knower, and he is not supposed to assess the response of speaker B who is the primary knower.

**2.3 Preference Organization**

Preference organization divides second parts of adjacency pairs into preferred and dispreferred actions which refer to expected and discretionary moves, discussed before. According to Seedhouse (2004, p. 23), preference organization “involves issues of affiliation and disaffiliation, of seeing, noticeability, accountability, and sanctionability in relation to social actions.” One needs to know the difference between the preferred and the dispreferred actions bearing the main points of Seedhouse’s quote in mind.

Preferred actions are performed without reluctance or postponement and, therefore, require less time, less language and ‘less face-threatening’ (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, p. 116). Here is an example:

*A: would you help me? (Request)*

*B: of course (grant: preferred)*

Dispreferred actions, however, often go along with hesitation and procrastination and, hence, with much time and language. This can be seen via the overuse discourse markers, *well*; apologizing, *I am sorry*; giving account, *no time left*, giving positive comments towards the first speaker, *you are very kind*.

*A: Have a cup of tea!*

*B: em...well that is nice of you but...er... I have to hurry.*

Another important difference between a preferred and dispreferred actions is that the former action is affiliative as it conducts to social togetherness and closeness, while the second is disaffiliative, (Heritage, 1984, p. 269). However, what sometimes seems dispreferred is, in fact, preferred. For example, agreement is not the preferred action of

*oh I am stupid*, and so it is dissaffiliative. The preferred action is rather disagreement (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 24)

The preferred action, unlike the dispreferred one, complies with the norms as it is the usual behaviour. This means that it is the one which is decisively performed in everyday exchanges, and the one which the first speaker expects. This makes the preferred action, as Boyle (2000, p. 590) describes, seen but unnoticed. To exemplify, the speaker who offers a present sees acceptance as the preferred action which he directly expects, and does not notice. Dissimilarly, refusal of an offer is dispreferred as the speaker does not usually expect it and, therefore, notices it.

Despite the fact that the response which reveals harmony between the speakers is the expected one, Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 119) ascertain:

Ironically, discretionary moves occur more frequently in casual conversation than do expected responses. This is because of the social role of conversation, which is not only to affirm likenesses and similarity but also to explore differences. Many conversations between close friends involve as much probing of difference as they do confirming of similarities.

### **3 The Conversational Maxims**

Grice (1975) argues that conversational exchanges are controlled by what he names cooperative principle to which participants are supposed to adhere. Grice (1975, p. 45) instructs, “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”

The cooperative principle embraces four sub-principles known as the Gricean Maxims; namely, the Quantity Maxim, the Quality Maxim, the Relation Maxim, and the Manner Maxim (ibid). These maxims enable interlocutors understand each other and, therefore, communicate effectively.

#### **3.1 The Quantity Maxim**

This has to do with the bulk of language participants use. Complying with this maxim, “we should make our contribution as informative as is required for the particular purpose and not make it more informative than is required”, Paltridge (2006, p. 62) asserts. The

amount of information needed is governed by the shared knowledge. Thus, the more participants know each other, the less amount of language they provide. Participants use some expressions to avoid the risk of not absolutely adhering to the maxim of quantity. The, Yule (1996, p. 38) gives the following instance:

- ❖ *As you probably know* in *as you probably know, I am terrified of bugs.*
- ❖ *To cut a long story short* in *to cut a long story short we grabbed our stuff and ran.*
- ❖ *I won't bother you with all the details* in *I won't bother you with all the details, but it was an exciting trip.*

### 3.2 The Quality Maxim

As far as the maxim of quality is concerned, Cruse (2000) says that it involves the credibility of the information given. Renkema (2004, p. 19) says that Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

- Try to make your contribution one that is true.
- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The maxim of quality suggests that participants should give true statements and supported ones. Otherwise, they had better remain silent. In order not to put themselves at the risk of not fully following this maxim, participants can use some expressions like: *as far as I know, for the best of my knowledge, I may be mistaken, I'm not sure if this is true (right), and I guess.* (Yule, 1996)

### 3.3 The Relation Maxim

Concerning the maxim of relation, Yule (2006) summarizes it when he states that participants should be relevant to what is being said. Adhering to the two previous maxims is not complete without adhering to the maxim of relation. It is meaningless to say true and informative statements having no bearing on the gist of conversation.

Indicating their worry of not obeying the maxim of relation, participants can use some markers including: *I don't know if this is important, but ...this may sound like a*

*dumb question, but..., not to change the subject, but*, and some markers that used to change the topic such as *any way, by the way*. (Yule, 1996, p. 39)

### 3.4 The Manner Maxim

As for the maxim of manner, one can say that it is a matter of clarity during speaking. As Cutting (2002, p. 35) states, participants are required to avoid “obscurity” and “ambiguity” and to seek brevity and orderliness. This can be achieved by avoiding unnecessary tedious utterances as Renkema (2004) argues, and being guided by the chronological order when narrating.

Like the quantity, quality, and the relation maxims, the maxim of manner can be signaled by some expressions such as: *I may be a bit confused, I’m not sure if this makes sense, I don’t know if this is clear at all* (Yule, 1996) and *to clarify one point* (Cutting 2002, p. 35).

### 3.5 Flouting the Maxims

In theory, the Gricean maxims have been set so that conversers comply with them. When put into force, however, these maxims are often flouted. This allows many conversational implicatures to come into sight.

Yule (2006) gives this example of flouting the quantity maxim: while discussing the taste of hamburger, one girl said to her friend ‘hamburger is hamburger’. Here, the friend is supposed to generate what is implied in the utterance. The possible implicature is either: the girl has nothing to say about the taste since all hamburgers are delicious, or the girl has no opinion.

The maxim of quality can also be flouted. Participants try to make their utterances seem untrue by using some figures of speech. The speaker, who utters this personification ‘her heart is crying’ to describe the psychological state of women, seems to say something untrue because the heart does not cry. The hearer, however, would interpret the speaker as cooperative and generate this implicature, “the woman is very sad”.

Cutting (2002) suggests banter as a way of flouting the maxim of quality, where the speaker states a negative statement, but intends a positive one like: *you're nasty, mean and stingy*, and irony, the opposite of banter, as *you are so beautiful!*

When it comes to flouting the maxim of relation, the speaker literally utters something irrelevant, and pushes the hearer to make it relevant by generating what is implied (ibid). Here, participants flout the maxim of manner when they talk obscurely. The reason behind this obscurity is to make another participant unable to interpret the ambiguous utterances other participants produce. For example, in order to intentionally hinder a third participant from identifying the referent, the two other participants vaguely use personal pronouns without naming to whom those pronouns refer.

Conversational cooperation, then, is guaranteed by Gricean Maxims which regulate the amount, truthfulness, relevance, and clarity of the speaker's language. The flouting of the aforementioned maxims by speakers would make cooperation seem unapparent. The hearer's task, then, is to look up the implicature which embraces that cooperation.

## **4 The Discourse Aspects of Conversation**

### **4.1 Topic**

A very paramount essence when talking about conversation is topic. After all, no conversation is weaved without having a topic to discuss. Renkema (2004, p. 90) defines a topic as, "...what a discourse, a discourse fragment ... is about. It is the shortest summary of a discourse.... The term *topic* is usually defined as the 'aboutness' of a unit of discourse." McCarthy (2000, p. 131) adds that the topic can be viewed as an extended talk stuck by some lexical markers such as *by the way* and *to change the subject*, and phonological ones like changes in the pitch.

On top, what is tightly adhered to conversational topic is the fact that it is not decided beforehand. This contributes to the spontaneity of conversation. In addition, topic is not static; participants can introduce something to discuss, and then move to another. They can even go back to the first. This is acknowledged by Thornbury and Slade ((2006, p. 127) when they say:

The way speakers introduce, develop, and change topics is an important dimension of conversational structure. If, for example, a topic starts to flag, the participants may either change topic or reintroduce (or recycle) a topic from earlier in the conversation. If a new topic is introduced, then some link is usually made with the previous topic, the link being indicated by such initiating moves as *this reminds me of*, or *that is what happened to me*.

Accordingly, sometimes, one cannot talk about one topic but topics. Benjelloul (2008), while speaking about the conversation topic, assumes that because a large number of conversations are purely phatic, no topic seems to come into sight. More appropriately, there are some topics, but these are not the essence since phatic communion aims more at junking silence and strengthening personal contact than at focusing on a single topic.

## 4.2 Cohesion

Whoever says that conversation is not well-jointed is wrong. The utterances are in harmony by virtue of what have been termed cohesive devices. One has first to fathom out the concept of cohesion. It is generally believed that cohesion has to do form. Hoey (1996, p. 3) defines it as, “the way certain words or grammatical features of a sentence can connect that sentence to its predecessors and successors in a text.” Yule (2006, p.) provides the following example to illustrate the point:

My father once bought a Lincoln convertible. He did it by saving every penny he could. That car would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he sold it to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.

The extract above is greatly cohesive by means of different ways. Some pronouns point people and things like *father – he – he – he; my – my – I; Lincoln- Lincoln convertible – that car – the convertible*. Expressions entailing the same thing also achieve cohesion as money (*bought – saving – penny – worth a fortune – sold – pay*) and time (*once – nowadays – sometime*). There is also the connector *however* that signals the relationship of what follows to what said earlier. Even the past tense (*bought did sold*) contributes to discourse cohesion by creating a link between events.



Halliday and Hasan (1976) have also been concerned with the types of cohesive devices, namely, grammatical and lexical cohesive devices.

As far as the grammatical cohesive devices are concerned, they comprise:

#### 4.2.1 Reference

This is achieved by the extensive use of demonstratives to point referents (*a car-that car*) and pronouns (*a lady-she*). However, the referent cannot be always a thing or a person, as Thornbury and Slade claim (2006, p. 109). *That* in *Oh my God I'd not thought about that* refers to all the aforementioned utterance (ibid). It is of interest to mention that the reference can be cataphoric or anaphoric. The former is a forward reference while the latter is a backward one. For instance, *this* in *the problem is this: we do not have enough money*, refers to what is next. Whereas, *it* in *we bought a car. It was beautiful*, refers to what is previously said.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) also tackle what they label endophoric and exophoric reference. The first is said to be internal because its interpretation depends on the co-text like in *I wrote a letter then I posted it*. The second, by contrast, is external that is only interpreted by the context of the situation including the speaker's shared knowledge. For example, only context of the situation helps to identify the referent in *give me that pen*. Since conversation has a large room for the context of the situation, it is safe to say that the exophoric reference dominates the endophoric one.

#### 4.2.2 Substitution

As the term suggests, substitution, which most often takes place in spoken discourse, is a replacement of something by another. Substitution falls into different types (Osisanwo, 2005, p. 38). In nominal substitution, an item replaces a noun such as: *my pen is invalid; I have to buy one*. An item can also replace a verb in which substitution is said to be verbal like: *do you study? Yes I do*. Another type of substitution where an item substitutes a clause is named clausal substitution such as: *do you think her level will be enhanced? No, I do not think so*.

#### 4.2.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis is an essential element of spoken language. Thanks to shared knowledge in conversations, many elements can be omitted. Thornbury and Slades (2006, p. 110) define ellipsis as “a form of substitution whereby a previously mentioned element is replaced by zero”. Like substitution, ellipsis is of different types. Akindele (2011, p. 102) provide an example for each:

- *Sade bought some oranges and Seun some Guavas* (Verbal ellipsis, because the verb *bought* is omitted).
- *Three members of staff went there and yet another three* (Nominal ellipsis since *members* are hidden)
- *I left my meal in the kitchen and someone came in and ate it up without saying a word to me. I wish I could find out who* (Clausal ellipsis as *came in and ate it up without saying a word to me* is deleted)

#### 4.2.4 The Use of Conjunctions

Conjunctions are grammatical cohesive devices which indicate the logical relation between elements. They are of different types. Coordinating conjunctions like *but*, and subordinating conjunctions such as *because* are widely pervasive in daily conversations, Osisanwo (2005) claims.

#### 4.2.5 Reiteration and Collocation

Lexical cohesive devices, Osisanwo (2005) says, can be expressed through reiteration and collocation. There are different ways of reiterating. The first one is lexical repetition where the same item occurs again as in *we ate an apple. The apple was nice*. Lexical cohesion can also be sought by means of hyponymy where the hyponym reiterates the superordinate as in *we saw many animals : giraffe, lions, and zebras* or any other lexical relation (synonymy, meronymy, antonymy). Lexical cohesion also has bearing on the use of collocation since words, which regularly co-occur, relate each other.

#### 4.3 Coherence

According to Yule (2006, p. 144), coherence is “not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people”. The interpretation of casual conversation

does not only depend on cohesion, but coherence. Sometimes, no cohesive devices can be used, yet participants can understand each other. Therefore, it is the participants who create meaning out of the unsaid.

#### 4.4 Pause Fillers

Fillers are frequently inserted in speaking. As the term itself indicates, fillers can be defined as those linguistic strategies used to erase the pause caused by the real-time nature of speaking. Expressions, like *er* or *erm* which are sometimes called hesitators (showing hesitation during speaking), allow the speaker to momentarily fill that sort of silence.

Stenstrom (1994) identifies *well*, *I mean*, *well*, *erm*, and *you know* which he gives the name verbal fillers. While using them, the speaker buys time at the opening of the conversation's turn so that they allow themselves what to say later. The example below accounts for fillers:

*I don't, I'm not sure, **I mean**, I do not and == **um** I have to...* (Thornbury and Slade, 2006, p. 56))

Having a look at the turn above, there are two fillers. The former can perform two functions: in the precedent example, *I mean* is inserted to, as it has been said, buy time. The expression, however, can be used to reflect the intention of the speaker rather than to simply fill the pause. If it does so, then it is not a filler any more, but a discourse marker, as Stenstrom (1994) supposes.

#### 4.5 Discourse Markers

Talk is arranged and organized into coherent macro-structures. Topics are initiated, discussed, developed, and changed by interactants. This is achieved through the frequent use of what are known discourse markers.

According to Schiffrin (1987), discourse markers are inserted to create a link between what the interlocutors are saying, and what they have already said within or across turns. To fulfill this connection, speakers make use of either some conjunctions (as said earlier, *and*, *but*) to weld neighbouring utterances together, or expressions to mark the opening or closing of the conversation such as: *first of all*, *finally*; those introducing or resuming the topic like: *any way*.

Discourse markers are not only different in terms of functions, but in terms of structures, too. Thus, some consist of one word like *so*, *and* and *because* while others of more than a word such as *I mean* and *you know*. As for longer discourse markers, Biber et al. (1999) give the term *overtuse* especially those which serve to trigger utterances. Here are some examples:

*I would have thought*

*As I said*

*The problem is that*

*Going back to....*

Other inserts which can be put under the rubric of discourse markers are those marking greetings and farewells (*hello*, *see you*); those reflecting the speaker's stance (*I think*) or disappointment (*damn it!*). Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 61) provide the functions of the most frequent conversation inserts as the table below shows:

The Insert	The Function
<i>Cause</i>	it marks causal connection
<i>I mean</i>	it provides elaboration
<i>But</i>	it indicates contrast
<i>No</i>	it signals an agreement to a negative statement
<i>I just thought</i>	it expresses the speaker's attitude
<i>And</i>	it provides a thematic connection
<i>So that</i>	it states purpose
<i>You know</i>	it checks the hearer's knowledge
<i>Isn't it?</i>	it solicits the hearer's agreement
<i>Any way</i>	it marks a return to a given topic
<i>Well</i>	it expresses a shift or a contrast

**Table 3: The Different Functions of the Most Frequent Inserts**

## 5 The Lexical Aspects of Conversation

While tackling the lexicon of conversation, many leading questions are to be asked: What is the nature of the vocabulary the speaker uses? What sets the lexicon of conversation apart from the one of other communication modes? What is the amount of vocabulary needed to involve in conversation.

Nation (1990, p. 85) states, “...it seems that about half the words needed to understand written English are needed to understand spoken English”. Moreover, an individual can enormously partake in a daily conversation with an amount of vocabulary estimated 2000 words, says Schmitt (2000, p. 74). However, one can frankly say that the ‘how many’ is not as important as ‘how’. Hence, Nation (1990, p. 93) notes that “to speak English it is not necessary to have a large vocabulary. In developing learners’ spoken English vocabulary, it is best to give learners practice in being able to say a lot using a small number of words”. To be economical, Channell (1994) suggests the use of vague language including expressions as *stuff, things like that, whatever and a kind of*.

### 5.1 Lexical Density and Lexical Variety

Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 43), while speaking about the density and variety, say that there is always repetition accompanied with a high frequency of words, and this entails a low lexical density and variety. To work out the lexical density is to measure the ratio of lexical words to grammatical ones; therefore, the more the content words in relation to the function ones are, the more the lexical density is (ibid). Logically, conversation, being spoken, has low lexical density as it is less loaded with content words. This, of course, is due to the unplanned nature of spoken language as opposed to the written one.

Conversation is not merely characterized by low lexical density, but a low lexical variety as well. What lexical variety basically means is diversity in non-repeated words in conversation. While counting the running words in a conversation about the storm, Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 45) got 205 words. Among these, however, only 111 are different words (types). The lexical variety in a conversation is obtained by counting the type – running ratio. In Thornbury and Slade’s example, if 111 is divided by 205, the quotient is roughly 0.54. The extract from newspapers about the same subject

(storm) has 142 running words, and 98 types; the lexical variety is (0.7). It can be deduced that the lexical variety of the spoken language is usually lower than the lexical variety of the written one.

## 5.2 Lexical Frequency

In 1991, McCarthy examines 2000 most frequent lexical words. Ultimately, he divides them into 9 classes:

- ✓ Expressions of certainty /doubt and necessity: *seems, certain and maybe*.
- ✓ Delexical verbs, that is, basic verbs +nouns : *take a break, make a mistake, take a seat ; basic verbs +particles : get back*
- ✓ Interactive expressions: expressions highlighting speakers' stance such as: *amazing, actually, really?*
- ✓ Discourse markers lubricating the wheel of conversation including: *by the way, any way, ok?*
- ✓ Words which speakers repeatedly use in their everyday life like: *people, problems, car, schools, seasons, months* and the use of basic activities and events such as: *watching and eating*.
- ✓ Temporal deictics, *now and then*; spatial ones, *here and there*.
- ✓ Associative adjectives like: *nice, good, bad, horrible*.
- ✓ Adverbs of time and frequency, *today and generally*; of degree, *totally*; of manner, *fast*.
- ✓ Action verbs: *give, leave and stop*.

## 5.3 Lexical repetition

Repetition is an undeniable feature of conversation and, again, it is the spontaneity of speech which brings about the feature. As a matter of fact, repetition which covers different levels: lexicon, grammar and discourse can guarantee the coherence and the

cohesion of the conversation. Obviously, the repeated words are the key ones which constitute the gist of conversation.

Repetition can be direct, where the same word occurs more than one time (*a pen, the pen*); derived, where only the stem is to be preserved (*happy, happiness*); achieved via hyponymy, where the super-ordinate replaces the hyponym (*the animal* replaces *the cow*) or synonymy (*nice, beautiful*).

Repetition, therefore, is of outstanding prominence in preserving the harmony needed in the conversation. Tannen (1989, pp. 51-52) acknowledges this when she says, “Repetition not only ties parts of discourse to other parts, but it bonds participants to the discourse and to each other, linking individual speakers to a conversation and in relationships.” In a similar vein, Carter and McCarthy (1997, p. 35) note, “...interpersonal bonds are simultaneously created and reinforced by the sharing of words”

#### **5.4 Vague Vocabulary**

Vagueness is another principal feature of speech that is usually fallaciously related to unclear thinking. Vagueness, however, has, like repetition, an interpersonal role. Being a vital example of a vague language, hedging plays a significant role in avoiding committing to oneself.

Vagueness is also achieved via the use of indefinite pronouns (*somebody, something, and someone*), deictic expressions like *this* and *that*. These are highly constructive in that they can refer to the thing the speaker does not actually say because he forgets it, or does not want to say it. Vague language does not only cover names, but facts and figures. Thus, some quantifiers are repeatedly used side by side with, for instance, some statistics percentages in conversation including *a few, around, about, some*, and others.

Vague expressions, be vague invite foreign language learners to use them because, as Yule (1996, p. 18) points out, enable the speaker “to refer to an entity or a person without knowing exactly which ‘name’ would be the best word to use.”

#### **5.5 Involvement and Appraisal**

Being a joint effort activity, conversation requires the listener to include themselves. In other words, they have to impose their contributions in the conversation by revealing their position and giving judgments.

Appraisal, as Martin (2000, p. 144) suggests, stands for “resource used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations”. Appraisal can be achieved through the extensive use of certain adjectives qualified by some adverbs like *highly amazing*, *dead easy*, and *irrationally expensive* or verbs as *hate*, *like*, *dislike* and *disgust*. Appraisal is of a great importance in keeping the flow of talk because when the speaker says something, he usually solicits an evaluation from the hearer.

As for involvement, it refers, as Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 67) write, to

The language resources used for indexing group membership, and include the use of names and other address terms (such a mate, darling, sir), ..., jargon, foreign expressions, catchphrases, and anything else that is likely to be recognized as ‘in-group’ language by the other members of the group.

The examples of involvement lexical items given above, therefore, serve to maintain mateness and solidarity. Despite the fact that some are offensive, they are considered “a hallmark of group membership, and with people new to the group, (they are ways) of establishing shared ways of seeing the world, and shared perceptions.” (ibid)

## 6 The Grammatical Aspects of Conversation

It is mistakenly assumed that the spoken grammar is merely an oral representation of the written one, and that compared to its written counterpart, it is less sophisticated and, therefore, of a no paramount importance to be scrutinized. Chomsky (1965, p. 4), for example, claims, “a record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on” and these “cannot build the core of linguistics”

Having a different view, Biber et al. (1999, p. 1038) argue for the supremacy of spoken grammar when they say that “conversation is the most common place, every day variety of language, from which, if anything, the written variety, acquired through



painstaking and largely institutional processes of education, is to be regarded as a departure.’’

What follows are some grammatical aspects that account for the supremacy of the English conversation.

### **6.1 Complex Grammar**

Halliday says, “...the structure of speech is highly complex, reaching degrees of complexity that are rarely attained in writing’’ (1985, p. 24). He also assumes that spoken language is as complex as the written (ibid). The only difference between the two is that while the complexity of writing erupts from the fact that it is a static language loaded with words, the one of speaking is mobile, owing to the instability of the context of spoken language (ibid).

The complexity of conversation is, however, not totally absolute in the sense that the real time constraint in many cases drives the interlocutors to use simpler, less variant, and less grammatical forms. Whoever has a glance at the huge amounts of informal spoken data can transparently observe the absence of grammatically well- formed sentences, McCarthy (1998, pp, 79-80) confirms. What is highly found, instead, are just incomplete sentences and subordinate clauses that are weaned from the main ones.

### **6.2 Heads and Tails**

The idea which occurs in one’s mind when hearing head and tails is that the former entails forward, while the latter backward. Technically, the two concepts mean the same. According to Culen and Kuo (2007), heads are all what the speaker says to introduce the listener to the subject before giving them the details. To put it another way, they play the role of identifying the core of message beforehand and establishing a kind of anaphoric reference, a reference of what follows (as already stated). Hilliard (2014, p. 2) illustrates the concept by providing this example:

*The soccer game last night, it was really exciting. (With head)*

*The soccer game last night was really exciting. (No head)*

Another paramount thing to be said about heads is that they are of prospective function which, according to Cullen and Kuo (2007), gives both the sender and the receiver further processing time in real-time conversation. Heads also bring about double-subject sentences to emerge and, therefore, opposing the grammar of writing which only permits a single subject. Here are other examples of heads which exhibit two subjects.

Unlike heads, tails serve to largely perform a retrospective function in the sense that they make a link to what is antecedently said, as Hilliard (2014, pp. 2-3) mentions. She provides the following examples:

*My teacher is really nice, the one from America. (With a tail)*

*My teacher is really nice (no tail)*

It has to be stressed that a tail is not necessarily a phrase, as in *the one from America* above; it can be a single word as in *that* in “it’s a serious problem, *that*” (Timmis 2010, p. 33). According to Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 82), typical tail expressions can be achieved through:

- ✓ *Question tags*: They did the work **didn’t they?**
- ✓ *Interrogation*: You are free. **No?**
- ✓ *Reinforcement tags*: He has a luxurious car, **he has.**
- ✓ *Evaluative adjectives*: You did well excellent.
- ✓ *Comment clauses*: It is you who is responsible for this mess, **I guess.**

### 6.3 Interrogation

Everybody agrees that conversation without interrogative utterances would almost be impossible. As a matter of fact, Interrogation is commonly integrated by interactants in their everyday conversation, which means that the latter cannot take place without asking questions. Confirming this ubiquity, Aorts & McMahon (2006, p. 693) say, “[an]...interrogative... [clause] [is] relatively common in conversation but rare in most other registers.” After all, because the world is changing, there is always a great need for asking about current news. Managing a conversation, for example, with merely declarative utterances is unconceivable. More importantly, a highly proportion of

exchanges are, in fact, question- answer pairs, and this is very helpful for those seeking to prolong their conversations.

Foregrounding the pervasiveness of questions, Biber et al. (1999, p. 211) say, “There is on average one question per every 40 words in conversation”. Of course, the aims behind posing questions differ. On this basis, Tsui (1992) divided questions into three classes: the first seeking to elicit information; the second to get confirmation, while the third to call for agreement about what the speaker reckons. *What was the movie about? You did not admire it?* and *it was a sensational goal, wasn't it?* pertain to the three above categories respectively.

The aforementioned examples lead to the syntactic skeleton of questions. While the first and the third examples are of an interrogative form (with subject- verb inversion), the second is of a declarative one (without subject-verb inversion). Questions of the last form are perceived by virtue of intonation. Putting a declarative question, therefore, into writing would never ever be allowed.

Questions, be declarative or interrogative, are widely spread in conversations. Compared to other registers, conversation seems to hold roughly ten per cent of all question forms, Biber et al. (1999) confirm. Among all questions, the ones aim at seeking agreement of the addressee, and, therefore, keeping him on the same wavelength with the addresser are said to be the most common ones (ibid). This leads to say that the questions which elicit information rarely appear in conversation. Biber and all (1999, p. 212) to say that “questions in conversation are used less to seek information than to maintain and reinforce the common ground among participants”

#### 6.4 Deictic Expressions

Thanks to time and place, interactants can communicate without saying many things. This is achieved through the use of deictic expressions. These, as McCarthy (1999, p. 15) states, are said to be relative:

Deictic items relate the speaker to the world in relative terms of time and space. The most obvious examples of deixis are words such as the demonstratives, where *this box* for the speaker may be *that box* for a remotely placed listener, or the

speaker's *here* might be *here* or *there* for the listener, depending on where each participant is relative to each other

Based on a 3-million-word sample of the 5-million-word CANCODE spoken corpus, Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English, there are other frequently occurring items: *now*, *then*, *ago*, *away*, *front*, *side*, and some basic verbs with relative meanings like: *go* and *come*, and *take* and *bring*. (ibid, pp. 15-16)

### 6.5 Modality/ Tense/ Voice

Biber et al. (1999) acknowledge the fact that modal verbs are much more pervasive in conversations than in other registers, and this, again, really backs up the idea suggests that conversation and mood are greatly intertwined. More importantly, modal verbs are used to alleviate tension which sometimes occurs during conversation. To explain, modals like *would* and *may* are extremely politeness-oriented and, therefore, defuse any expected threat to face. The following are some findings as far as modals are concerned:

- The modals *can*, *will*, and *would* are highly found in spoken data, Biber et al. (1999).
- The modals *may*, *shall*, and *must* are less frequent compared to the previous ones, and *must* is used to express necessity more than obligation. (ibid)

Another grammatical gist is tense. According to Biber et al. (1999), the present is the commonest tense in conversation. This can be explained by the fact that in their conversation, interactants most often emphasize on the status quo, and even when narrating, speakers tend to use what has been termed historic present to revive past events. It should also be noted that the progressive form is much more common than the simple one. Biber et al. 1999 adds that the frequency of occurrence of the progressive present exceeds the one of progressive past. Concerning the perfect form, it is less common than the simple form and again the present perfect is more frequent than the past perfect (ibid).

As far as voice is concerned, it can openly be said that the passive voice is very rare because the conversational data reveal that among the finite verbs, merely two percent of them are passive (Biber et al. (1999)). This really endorses the fact that

conversation accentuates the interpersonal side and has “a human-centered concern with people’s actions, thoughts and stances” (ibid)

### 6.6 Grammatical Categories and Clauses

Adhering to Aarts & McMahon (2006, pp. 693-694), the most common word classes in conversation are verbs, adverbs, and pronouns:

- ✓ As for verbs, mental verbs (e.g., *know*, *think*, *see*, *want*, *mean*) are pervasively found in conversation.
- ✓ Simple adverbs are more common in conversation than in most other registers, especially when they express stance meanings.
- ✓ Pronouns are also widespread in conversation, especially first and second person pronouns. Also, the demonstrative pronoun *that* is very frequent in conversation, but rare in most of other registers; the demonstrative pronoun *this* is common in the written registers.

As far as clauses are concerned, the following table encapsulates some of the most prominent findings of the previous studies on the grammar of conversation:

The Reference	Type of Study	The Finding
Bäcklund, I. (1986). Beat until stiff: conjunction-headed abbreviated clauses in spoken and written English.	Empirical  Corpora:  LLC (London-Lund Corpus (spoken) ) and  LOB (Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen	<p>➤ Clauses introduced by conditional <i>if</i> are considerably frequent in Conversation.</p> <p>➤ Verbless clause is the most frequent type in conversation <i>if necessary; as soon as possible; if so)</i></p>

	Corpus (written))	
Greenbaum, S. and Nelson, G. (1995). Clause relationships in spoken and written English.	Empirical Corpora: subsets of spoken and written texts from the British component of ICE	<p>➤ 50.4% of clauses in conversation: <i>paratactic clauses</i> , <i>fragments</i> (NPs or Prep phrases that serve as responses to a previous clause), and <i>Incomplete clauses</i>.</p> <p>➤ 63.2% of clauses are simple</p> <p>➤ 60.9% of clauses are clusters without subordination</p>

**Table 4: The Nature of Clauses in Conversation (Adapted from Aarts & McMahon (2006, p. 697))**

### Conclusion

Conversation is a very common type of communication. Being spoken, it is not a degenerate form of communication as it was previously claimed. As seen, conversation is not only well-structured but also rich in vocabulary, lexicon, and discourse. For that reason, conversation deserves scrutiny and analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE

# **LISTENING AND BACKCHANNELLING BEHAVIOUR**

**Section One: The Listening Skill****Section Two: Backchannelling Behaviour****Introduction**

When it comes to interaction, one of the most important skills is listening. It is said, however, that interlocutors pay little attention to this skill because they place greater focus on speaking. This chapter is an attempt to set listening- the lost skill as has been described- next to speaking in terms of significance. The chapter gives an account of the listening skill in general and then goes to tackle some matters that are related to indispensable strategies a listener adopts when conversing, backchannels.

**The Listening Skill****1 The Nature of Listening**

Listening is one of the communication skills that human beings pervasively do in their daily life. While assuring its importance, Lawson (2007, p. 3) states, “Studies show that we spend 80% of our waking hours communicating, and according to research, at least 45 % of that time is spent listening.” What also indicates the significance of listening is the fact that it is the skill that an individual adopts in their early childhood to communicate with their parents (Jenn&Goddu, n.d, p. 3)

The difference is usually made between hearing and listening. The latter, as opposed to



the former, is intentional and requiring greater efforts. Thus, “listening is hard work. It is characterized by faster heart action, quicker circulation of the blood, a small rise in bodily temperature.” (Nichols (1957, p. 9) cited in Jenn&Goddu, n.d, p. 4). In addition, Stephen and Lucas (1998) ascertain that hearing is physiological as it “... involves the vibration of sound wave on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain...” (p. 56). On the other hand, listening is “...a combination of hearing what another person says and psychological involvement with the person who is talking.” (Tyagi, 2013, p. 1)

Tyagi’s quote basically entails that hearing is integrated into listening and one stepping stone to the what has been referred to as listening process. The latter, Tyagi (2013) adds, comprises- in addition to hearing, the first phase- the following:

- ✓ *Understanding*: This step occurs when one individual deciphers what they have received;
- ✓ *Remembering*: After having been received and understood, the message is automatically stored in one’s mind;
- ✓ *Evaluating*: “At this point the active listener weighs evidence, sorts fact from opinion, and determines the presence or absence of bias or prejudice in a message...” (Tyagi, 2013, p. 2);
- ✓ *Responding*: the listening process ends with the verbal and/or the nonverbal reaction of the receiver towards the sender’s message. This phase is “...the only overt means by which the sender may determine the degree of success in transmitting the message.” (ibid, p. 3)

One has to fathom that some stages are present in some situations, but absent in some others. For example, in a conversation, the listener is required to respond. However, while listening to music (appreciative listening), responding is not verbal. It means that the elements of the listening process can be affected by the different aims the listener seeks. This leads to the next point, types of listening.

## **2 Types of Listening**

Listening can be broken into the following types:

- ✓ *Informative listening*: this type is where the listener's primary concern is to solicit information (Tyagi, 2013, p. 4). Using another alternative for information listening, Stephen and Lucas (1998, p. 56) point out, "Comprehensive listening is devoted for understanding the message of a speaker, as when we attend a classroom lecture."
- ✓ *Relationship listening*: the listener's main interest here is to attend, support, and empathize with the speaker. Relationship listening is adopted when listening to friends in conversations, for instance (Kline, 1996). Accordingly, one can say that this thesis sets relationship listening as the most important one.
- ✓ *Appreciative listening*: This takes place when, for example, listening to music or a speaker whose accent grips the listener (Kline, 1996). In a language of one syllable, appreciative listening is "listening for pleasure or enjoyment...", as Stephen, Lucas (1998, p. 57) put it.
- ✓ *Critical listening*: According to Tyagi (2013, p. 04), this type takes place when the listener "evaluate[s], criticize[s] or otherwise pass [es] judg[e]ment on what someone else says."
- ✓ *Discriminative listening*: here, one listens for something specific- usually sounds - to discriminate them among others; for example, "a person who pays attention to sound structure would recognize that a rapidly spoken 'Idrankitfirst' could mean either 'I drunk it first' or 'I'd rank it first'." (Kline, 1996)

### 3 The Importance of Listening

The difference between poor listening, the silent killer- as Bell and Mejer (2011) (cited in Jenn & Goddu, p. 3) and effective listening is a "... difference between profit and loss, between success and failure, between a long carrier and a short one"(Ferrari, 2012, p. 2 cited in (ibid)). This means that listening, apart from its types, has fruitful results if done effectively. Thus, by effective listening:

... you'll discover what motivates... your client to buy your product or service...you'll discover what's really bothering your spouse or your children... you'll discover a lot of very interesting people in the world around you. Listening is the catalyst that fosters mutual understanding and provides us with insight into people's needs and desires so that we can connect with them. (Lawson, 2007, p. 3)

On the same wavelength, Collins (2015, p. 1) notes,

Effective listening is a skill that enhances relationships and is particularly important in the role of helping others. This ability allows us to effectively respond to people when they need guidance, comfort, advice, or to discuss repentance, confession, relationship issues, etc.

Jenn & Goddu value effective listening at different levels: academic, professional, and personal (n.d, 3). At the academic level, it has been shown that there is a harmony between active listening and success. Unsurprisingly, when students listen effectively, they pay attention to every instruction, and use them for their own profits. Effective listening has also advantages at the professional level. Thus, it can improve productivity, and makes doing things easier. It also creates a positive impression on employers and helps to, "...better understand and make connections between ideas and information; change perspectives and challenge assumptions; emphasize and show respect and appreciation, which can enhance our relationships; and build self-esteem" (ibid). At the personal level, when listening is effectively done, communication loop in turn is successfully achieved and therefore the speaker and the listener feel intertwined. (ibid).

#### **4 Barriers to Effective Listening**

Listening can be ineffective because of the interference of a number of nuisance barriers. While some barriers are internal i.e. caused by the listener, some others are due to external attributes, including physiological, physical, and cultural factors. (Active Listening: Communication Skills, 2013, p 21)

Being characterized by some poor habits, the listener can be a barrier himself. In this vein, Williams (2008, p. 34) states that ignoring what is being said and exhibiting

interest in something other than the conversation would annoy the speaker. Similarly, rushing the speaker through excessive and repetitive interruptions would make the listener rude and diminish the success of conversation. (ibid). Other barriers that can be caused by the listener include their inappropriate reactions such as leaning away from the speaker, not keeping eye contact, and crossing arms; “Your posture and gestures must always reflect that you are paying complete attention to the person speaking to you” (Active listening: communication skills, p. 21). Long-windedness can also be a barrier that the listener creates; long windedness happens when the listener provides very long or complex responses. (ibid, p. 23)

In addition to the barriers caused by the listener, there are external distractions which might interfere with the listener’s ability to transparently see the speaker. Tyagi (2013, pp, 6-7) provides instances of external barriers. Thus, the listener can have critical physiological problems in hearing or retaining the messages the speaker sends. If not, the listener can be disturbed not only by some noises in the environment like the sound of air conditioner or phone ringing, but by other physical barriers like cigarette smoke or overheated room. (ibid, p. 7). Regional accents can also be an external cultural barrier to effective listening simply because:

...they interfere with the ability to understand the meaning of words that are pronounced differently. The problem of different accents arises not only between cultures, but also within a culture. For example, in a country like India where there is enormous cultural diversity, accents may differ even between regions... (ibid, p. 7)

What one has to say is that the barriers stated above are, but only some, obstacles which can block the listening process. Hence, listening can be said to be not as easy as some would think. In order to secure more effective listening, the listener is required to overcome the internal barriers and minimize the external ones.

## **5 Enhancing Effective Listening**

Interested in the listening skill, researchers have provided a number of tips and strategies to its barriers. There has been an agreement that as the listener can be the source

of some barriers, they can also be the source of overcoming them. Therefore, the effectiveness of listening has a lot to do with how dynamic the listener is.

A successful listener is required to approach the speaker and the conversation positively. This can only be achieved when the listener places all their attention on the speaker, and frees themselves of their personal problems or anything that may hinder the train of conversation like looking at a cell phone or computer screen. The listener is also supposed to be empathetic and respectful; an active listener understands the speaker's feelings and does not excessively judge what is being said. (Active Listening: Communication Skills, 2013, p. 7)

An effective listener does not act as a tape recorder. That is, they do react toward the messages conveyed by the speaker. This is done by means of paraphrasing, repeating, or questioning the speaker. Such techniques are a clear indication of the listener's concern and an effective eraser of opaqueness. "By using reflection, the speaker can see that you are paying attention to them and making a conscious effort to understand what they mean." (ibid, p. 13)

The following table underlines some barriers to listening and the required strategies to overcome them (Radhakrishna (2014)).

The Barriers	The Strategies
Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respect the other person for his or her knowledge and skills, irrespective of the person's background.</li> <li>▪ Make conscious efforts to take charge of your thoughts.</li> <li>▪ Consciously avoid taking an "I know what he or she is going to say" attitude while the other person is speaking.</li> </ul>
Interrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you seek to clarify something, use appropriate body language such as raising your hand or ask politely for more details (like "I am sorry to interrupt you...")</li> </ul>
Faking attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make it a habit to listen attentively. It is advisable to assume that the other person knows something that you may not know.</li> <li>▪ Avoid thinking about how to reply when the other person is speaking.</li> </ul>

Psychological Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is better to avoid conversations when you are angry or excessively sad.</li> <li>▪ When fear, keep calm by taking a deep breath.</li> </ul>
Physical Noises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Try to avoid conversations in noisy surroundings.</li> <li>▪ Eliminate the source of noise whenever possible (Turn off cell phones, radios and television sets)</li> </ul>

**Table 5: Barriers and Strategies for Effective Listening**

As a matter of fact, there are a great number of strategies to listening barriers and the strategies may vary depending on the type of listening engaged in. During casual daily conversations, the listener, more often than not, gets engaged in the relationship type. The effectiveness of the latter is enormously dependent on the use of what have been termed backchannels.

### Understanding Backchannels

## 6 Definition

Sharifi & Azadmanesh (n.d, p. 110) wrote that one of the pioneering works on backchannels is attributed to Fries who in 1952 analyzed a corpus of telephone conversations to identify the listener responses; however, it was Yngve (1970) who first used the term backchannel. The term was coined to refer to the background channel through which the listener passes their feedback to the speaker (Aare, Włodarczak, Heldner, 2014, p. 47)

Although researchers have given different terms to backchannels (response tokens (Gardner, 2001), minimal responses (Felleggy, 1995), reactive tokens (Young & Lee, 2004), semantically, they are the same, as they descend from one source; almost all the definitions given about backchannels have stressed the role the listener of producing them. In this context, Shelly and Gonzalez write, “Backchannelling...is the part a listener plays in a conversation.” (2013, p. 98)

The following are a number of definitions about backchannels:

- ✓ “The use words (*yeah, really?*) or sounds (*hmm, oh*) by listeners while someone else is speaking”. (Yule, 2010, p. 277)
- ✓ “Backchannels...are short, typically mono-or disyllabic...listener responses in dialogues or conversation.” (Aare, et al., 2014, p. 47)
- ✓ “By ‘back-channel feedback’ we mean, approximately, the short utterances produced by one participant in a conversation while the other is talking.” (Ward & Tsukahara, n.d, p. 2)
- ✓ “...brief vocal responses ('uh-huh', 'yes', 'I see', etc.) by the nominal listener...” (Frances R. Bilous (1988, p. 186) cited in Feke (2003, p. 96))
- ✓ Reid (2005:8) (cited in He (2009, p. 8)) argues:

Fishman (1978:402) cites minimal responses as ‘yeah’, ‘umm’, ‘huh’. Woods (1988:143) adds ‘yes’ and ‘right’ to this list. ...Tao & Thompson (1991:210) define backchannels as ‘short, non-lexical utterances produced by an interlocutor who is playing primarily a listener’s role during the other interlocutor’s speakership’.

The authors, who have provided the definitions above, seem to limit backchannels to the listener’s audible reactions; backchannels can also be silent, especially the reactions by the listener in a face- to-face conversation. Among the silent backchannels, researchers have identified head nods (White, 1989), gaze (Young, 2004), smiles (Brunner, 1979), and raising eyebrows (Ekman, 1979).

## 7 The Importance of Backchannelling Behaviour

One important characteristic backchannels descends from their pervasiveness in conversations. Using the words of Sharifi and Azadmanesh, “Back channel responses (BC) are pervasive phenomena in the human communicative behavior, because participants in a conversation continuously give or elicit back channels...” (n.d, p. 110). In quantifiable terms, an analysis of 1155 American English conversations revealed that out of 205000 utterances, 37096 of them were backchannels (( Jurafsky et al., 1997) cited

in Ward & Tsukahara (n.d, p. 1)). While insisting on the importance the presence of backchannelling behavior takes in, Pipek points out, “If the speaker would not be given such a feedback and only silence would be present, he would start to think that no attention to what he utters is paid and the flow of conversation would be disrupted.” (pp. 11-12, 2007).

Backchannels are also important, in the sense that they are, par excellence, phatic reactions. Despite the fact that they do not give any new content-based information (Lamberz 2011, p. 12), backchannels are rich in phaticity as they seek to endorse the social relationship. In this vein, while tackling the phatic importance of backchannels, Young and Lee (2004, p. 381) states, “These tokens of active listening were recognized early on by Malinowski (1923) as ‘phatic communion,’ a notion that was integrated by Jakobson (1960) into his functional model of communication between speaker and hearer...”.

The use of backchannels reflects the listener’s courteousness. Zimmermann (1991) asserts that backchannels are politeness-oriented reactions as the listener uses them to signal their interest and support to what the speaker is saying. On the same wavelength, Lamberz (2011, p.11) acknowledges that “backchannelling skills are important for people wishing to be able to function as supportive and engaged listeners in a conversation.” The fact that backchannels courteously back up the message conveyed makes the difference between them and interruptions (Pipek, 2007). That is, unlike interruptions, where the aim is to gain the floor, backchannels provide a push for the current speaker.

The success of conversation does not only depend on how important the speaker is. Keller and Warner (1988, p. 61) state that “we expect other people to respond to us. How they respond tells us how to develop what we say. This means that successful conversations depend partly on how we respond to what other people say.” In a similar vein, Lamberz 2011, p. 11) maintains, “...the importance of the listener cannot be forgotten... as the listener is both a recipient and a co-constructer of interactive talk.” The following is situation that illustrates how the use of backchannels involves smooth flow of conversation, and creates harmony between the speaker and listener:

One person is explaining something or telling a story, the other person is paying attention and understanding, and produces a



typical word or sound to indicate this, and also to indicate that he wishes the story-teller to continue. The story teller, without showing any awareness of this response, continues with his story, perhaps slightly encouraged to know that his listener is still interested. (Ward & Tsukahara (n.d, p. 2)

## 8 The Variability of Backchannels

One proverb hilariously says, ‘there are many ways to skin a cat’. This is absolutely true when it comes to backchannels. That is, one can show their contribution in a conversation via many different reactions, and whatever reaction the listener adopts leads to supporting the current speaker. In fact, there is a wide range of showing engaged listenership what leads some researchers give different classifications to backchannels.

Pipek’s classification of backchannels was based on the complexity of the constituting items (2007, p. 47). Thus, this division can be made: simple, double, and complex. To elaborate, Pipek says that in the simple category, backchannels are made up of a single item such as *mhm*; in double backchannels, the item is repeated as in *yeah yeah*; the third division consists of different lexical items like *yes I know*.

Another broader categorization of backchannels is lexical and non-lexical feedback (Ward & Tsukahara n.d, p. 3). It has been noted that not only are backchannels shown via phrases, words, and interjections, but by means of non- lexical vocalizations; “There are even cases of laughter, coughs, and sniffs which seem to function in the same way of other cases of back-channel feedback. Thus, it does not seem wise to define back-channel feedback as a set of lexical items” (ibid, pp. 3-4)

Ward and Tsukahara (ibid, p. 4) go further when they break lexical backchannels on the basis of their functions. Thus, lexical backchannels can have a backward-looking function or a forward- looking function. To put it another way, *yeah* belongs to the first category as it acknowledges a previous utterance by the speaker. Similarly, *great* has a backward function since it assesses something previously uttered. One clear example of a backchannel that has a forward-looking function would be *mhmm*, which is oriented to upcoming utterances (ibid).

All the backchannels, categorized above, get within the circle of audible backchannels, which the thesis targets. What is of interest to mention about audible

backchannels is that, in addition to the fact that they are innumerable, they comprise overlapping types. For that reason, the thesis makes use of a simplified classification; it amalgamates the most prevailing types which have gripped the attention of some authors (Pipek (2007, pp. 47-50) and Gardner (1994) (cited in Thornbury &Slade (2006, p. 132)) in particular). Being outside the circle of the thesis focus, silent backchannels-also known as gestural and visual- are ruled out. What follows is a brief account of the classification to be adopted later in the practical part:

- ✓ *Continuers*: as the term suggests, these backchannels “...maintain the flow of conversation ...They do not express any particular listener’s attitude to what is said and only endorse the current speaker to continue his turn.” (Pipek, 2007, p. 48). Some examples of continuers include *mmhm*, *uh-huh*, etc. (Thornbury &Slade, 2006, p. 132))
- ✓ *Assessments*: “these are appreciative in some way of what has just been said e.g. *how awful...wonderful*.”(ibid)
- ✓ *Acknowledgements*: these, which sometimes called “information confirmation tokens” (Pipek 2007, p. 50), “... claim agreement or understanding of the previous turn e.g. *mm*, *yeah*” (Thornbury &Slade, 2006, p. 132)). Concerning *yeah*, it should not always be viewed as a backchannel; Pipek points out, “I have decided to classify an item as a turn, thus not being the backchannel, if it responds to a question...” (2007, p. 50).
- ✓ *Reflective questions*: questions like *really?* and *is it?* , which Thornbury and Slade call “news markers” (2006, p. 132), reflect back what the speaker has uttered ([www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com) 2013, p. 19)
- ✓ *Repetition*: Thornbury and Slade state that this category takes place when the listener collaboratively repeats an utterance by the speaker (2006, p. 132). Using the term “consonance token” to mean collaborative repetition, Pipek (2007, p. 49) ascertains that it denotes the listener’s convergence with the speaker’s utterance, and strengthens the participants’ relationship. Repetition, however, does not always back the speaker up; it can start a new turn, and, therefore, is not a backchannel.

- ✓ *Completion*: it simply refers to the listener finishing the counterpart's utterance (Thornbury & Slade 2006, p. 132)
- ✓ *Non-verbal vocalizations*: these have to do with sounds, rather than utterances like *laughter* and *sighs* (ibid)

## 9 Variable Affecting the Use of Backchannels

As seen, backchannels are, therefore, variable as they differ in terms of their components and functions. Research has shown that backchannels may even differ across variables including language, formality of context, age, and gender.

### 9.1 Culture

Although backchannels are a universal phenomenon, there might be some differences across cultures (Sharifi& Azadmanesh (2011), Heinz (2003)). Earlier works have outlined differences in terms of the type, structure, and frequency of backchannels, coming to assert that culture, by all means, governs the backchannelling behaviour.

Shelly and Gonzalez (2013) studied backchannels in relation to culture. In this study, five women coming from different countries (Japan, Taiwan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United States) conducted an English fifteen-minute conversation (all of them spent some time in the United States). After recording the conversation video, the results revealed noticeable differences in terms of the frequency of backchannels; for example, of 64 backchannels produced by the women, 22 were uttered by the Saudi, but only 5 by the Taiwanese, who limited backchannels to acknowledgements (ibid). In addition, the news markers were used by the American women, only (ibid). This means that other cultures do not usually adopt such backchannel category.

While comparing between the American from the one hand and some Asian cultures from the other hand, Young and Lee (2004, p. 387) state some differences at the level of backchannelling:

Many studies of Japanese conversations have reported that Japanese listeners use reactive tokens in Japanese more often than Americans do in English conversations. One study of Chinese ..., however, found that

English speakers make much more frequent use of reactive tokens than do Chinese speakers.

They add,

Korean and English provide different resources for conversationalists to create social meaning through talk. We have noticed that because of the open syllabic structure of Korean words, Korean allows stretches of word-final vowels and sonorants much more easily than English, and thus reactive tokens in Korean tend to be longer than in English (ibid, p. 402).

## 9.2 Formality Scale

In addition to culture, the formality scale can affect the use of backchannels. In this vein, one of the prominent works would Sharifi & Azadmanesh's (2011), which studies the Persian backchannelling behaviour in relation to context. In their article, *Persian Back Channel Responses in Formal versus Informal*, Sharifi & Azadmanesh (2011) stated some differences.

The frequency of some backchannel forms, for instance, differs across the scale of formality. For instance, the frequency of *Bale (yeah)* was decidedly higher in formal contexts than in informal ones (52% compared to 0.5%). On the contrary, the frequency of *Hâ* (non-lexical BC) was higher in informal contexts than in formal ones (16% compared to 0.5%) (ibid, p. 114).

When it comes to backchannel functions, there were also a number of differences in their frequency as the following tables show:

Functions of BCs	Frequency
Agreement	45%
Understanding	41%
Continuer	13%
Surprise	0.5%
Emotional response	0.5%

**Table The Frequency of Back channel Functions in Formal Setting (ibid, p.115)**

Functions of BCs	Frequency
Understanding	54%
Agreement	16%
Continuer	12%
Surprise	12%
Emotional response	03%

**Table : 6 The Frequency of Back channel Functions in Informal Setting (adapted from the table 5 (ibid, p. 115))**

### 9.3 The Speaker's Status

One of the languages where the speaker's status affects the production of backchannels is Mon language as, "the selection of the backchannel responses depends largely on the relationship of the participant." (Sungkaman, n.d, p. 80). In Mon language, there are three cases which involve different backchannels: talking to monks, to older people, and to younger ones (ibid, p. 81).

When speaking to a monk, Mon people are well-mannered. The most polite backchannel form is *tcja:t* which means *yes* or *monk*. *tcja:t* is also used when courteously addressing an older person, but it is not as common as *jə?*, which means *yes*. Different backchannels, however, are adopted when conversing with people of equal or lower status. For example, when a Mon person talks to a friend or a younger counterpart, they use *?w:* which means *yes* or *?v:*, a Thai response. (ibid, pp. 81-82)

### 9.4 Gender

As seen in the chapter one, gender governs the use of linguistic and paralinguistic forms in conversation. This does apply to the production of backchannels;

a number of studies have shown that there are gender differences when it comes to such reactions.

After analyzing Japanese mixed-gender conversations, Ueno (n.d, p. 100) came to say that women backchannel more than men do. Numerically, the former backchannelled 186 times, exceeding the latter who produced 141 backchannels (ibid). In addition to the frequency of occurrence, the manner in which some backchannels are exhibited differs across gender. “For example, women often cover their mouths when they laugh because showing the teeth is not considered aesthetically pleasing.” (ibid, p. 95)

Another work on gender and backchannels is Fishman (1983) (cited in Yazdfazeli and Motallebzadeh (2014, p. 920)). Fishman found that when females speak, males used backchannels at the end of the utterance, but when the males were the speaker, females produced backchannels not only at the end, but in the middle of the utterance (ibid). Yazdfazeli and Motallebzadeh add:

Fishman (1983) argued that the frequent use of back channels by women were indications of their attention to the speaker, participation in the conversation, and interest in the interaction and the speaker. These back channels were inserted to support the speaker. On the other hand, she believes that use of back channels at the end of an utterance by men displayed a lack of interest. Thus, contrasting to women's use of back channels, these were inserted to discourage interaction (ibid).

## Conclusion

Listening is neither static nor is it straightforward, as it might be assumed. On the contrary, as it has been stated so far, listening is a complex process. It can affect, as it can be affected. In addition, it involves many types, depending on the context. Thus, when conversing, interlocutors are expected to make use of relationship listening. This is achieved via the use of backchannels which can be expressed through a wide range of reactions, and which can be affected by a number of factors. One thing to remember about backchannels is that they, in away or in another, support the speaker to achieve a well- structured conversation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# ***THE IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS' BACKCHANNELS***

## **Introduction**

The chapter embraces the scripts of the face-to-face conversations recorded by the undergraduate students. In each script, the highlighted males' and the females' backchannels are counted, classified, and quantifiably commented on. In addition, a brief comparison between the males' and the females' backchannels is given after each script. The symbols used in the transcriptions are:

- ❖ The full stop (.) to signal completion.
- ❖ The comma (,) to separate phrases and make them more readable.
- ❖ The question mark (?) to signal questions.
- ❖ The exclamation mark (!) to express strong emotions.
- ❖ The empty parentheses ( ) to indicate that a segment is non- transcribable.
- ❖ The square brackets [ ] to include non-verbal vocalizations.
- ❖ The three dots (...) to indicate hesitation. The latter can also be marked via *er* or *erm* (hesitation sounds).
- ❖ The dash ( \_ ) to express a false start.
- ❖ The double equal sign (= =): to show that both participants speak at the same time.

These are, but only, some of the symbols that characterize the conversations in Thornbury and Slade (2006)

### **1 Transcription of Conversation 1**

F: Good morning, Nassim.

M: Good morning Hadjer. How are you doing?

F: I am fine thanks and you?

M: I feel good.



F: Good 1. So, how was your exams?

M: It was... good. I get most of modules and the... rest of them... it's \_ I did not get bad marks on them but it's gonna be= = acceptable.

F: = = Good 2. That's good. Well, about me I did not do well. The only module that I... get it's oral expression= = and the rest of them are disaster.

M: Oral expression= = and I think. I think the third year in English... I think that's easy.

F: Yeah 1. It's only your problem not... the modules or something.

M: Ah that's not good at all.

F: Yeah 2. So, how is going those days?

M: Well. I saw an accident yesterday= = it was so... it was so trag... tragedical.

F: == mmm this is so bad. Do you... do you know the man?

M: I do not know the man, but I have seen the accident for real.

F: Ah this is so so so bad.

M: The man was on... his motorcycle. He was going to get make some fuel and a big truck interrupt his way and... he get... under the wheels of that truck.

F: Ah this is so bad. it is like a movie !

M: Yeah1.

F: Anyway. So, are you listening to the noise?

M: Yeah. I'm listening to the noise. That's ... I dont know.

F: I guess that some students are making manifestation= = erm= = next to the= =

M: = = Yeah2= = next to the tower

F: Yeah3

M: But... they only... but they only are= =

F: = = wasting their time1

M: They are losing= =

F: = = wasting their time2.

M: They are losing their time because this is the system... this is the system in Algeria

F: Exactly

M: If you keep screaming and you will find yourself in a scary movie.

F: [laughter]. Anyway, so... I have... class right now and I have to go.

M: Yeah3.

F: So, I meet you later.

M: Me too. Good bye.

F: Good bye.

M: Have a nice time.

Out of conversation one, the following two tables can be made:

The Form of Backchannels	The Function of Backchannels
<u>Good 1</u>	assessing utterance
<u>Good 2</u>	collaborative completive utterance
<u>That's good</u>	assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 1</u>	acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	acknowledgement
<u>Mmm that is so bad</u>	assessing utterance
<u>Ah this is so so so bad</u>	assessing utterance (with great emphasis)
<u>Ah this is so bad</u>	assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 3</u>	acknowledgement

<u>wasting their time 1</u>	collaborative completive utterance
<u>wasting their time 2</u>	collaborative completive utterance
<u>Exactly</u>	acknowledgement
<u>[laughter]</u>	non-verbal vocalization
TOTAL: 13	

**Table 7: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 1**

The Form of Backchannels	The Function of Backchannels
<u>oral expression</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>ah that's not good at all</u>	assessing utterance
<u>yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>next to the tower</u>	collaborative completive utterance
<u>yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 6	

**Table 8 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 1**

Observing the two tables, one can safely say that the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence in Table 8 (13 backchannels) is higher than the one in Table 9 (6 backchannels). This entails that the female showed greater engaged listenership compared to the male.

Having a glance at the table 8, one can also observe, in addition to the enormous use of backchannels, diversity in them. This reflects that the female was cooperative and attentive to what the male was saying. In spite of missing some types of backchannels such as continuers, news markers, the female managed to use other backchannels

including agreeing and assessing expressions as the most prominent ones (30,76% and 38,46% respectively). The female used:

4 acknowledging utterances (30.76 %):

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I think it is easy."
- **Yeah2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, " oh that's not good at all"
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, " next to the tower"
- **Exactly** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "this is the system in Algeria"

5 assessing utterances (38,46%)

- **Good I** which assesses the male's utterance, " I feel good"
- **that's good** which assesses the male's utterance, " it's gonna be acceptable"
- **mmm this is so bad** which assesses the male's utterance, " it was so trag...tragedical"
- **Oh this is so so bad** which assesses the male's utterance " I have seen the accident for real"
- **Oh this is so bad** which assesses the male's utterance " he get... under the wheels of that truck"

3 collaborative complete utterances (23,07%)

- **Good 2** which completes the male's utterance, " it's gonna be"
- **wasting their time 1** which completes the male's utterance, " they only are"
- **wasting their time 2** which completes the male's utterance, " they are losing"

1 non- verbal vocalization (07,6%)

- **[laughter]** which endorses the male's utterance " you will find yourself in a scary movie"

Referring to Table 2, what can be noticed is that the male used fewer, but different backchannels (6 backchannels). However, the male, as the female did, missed some types of backchannels such as non- verbal vocalization and continuers. The backchannels used were:

3 acknowledging utterances (50%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "it is like a movie!"
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "some students are making manifestation"
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I have... class right now and I have to go"

1 assessing utterance (16 %)

- **Ah that's not good at all** which assesses the female's utterance, "it is only your problem not...the module or something"

2 Collaborative complete / repetitive utterances (33%)

- **Oral expression** which reiterates the female's utterance, "... oral expression"
- **Next to the tower** which completes the female's utterance, "next to the"

## **2 Transcription of Conversation 2**

M: Hi, Meissa. How are you today?

F: I am fine. How are you?

M: I am good. Actually, I am feeling bored these days you know with the studies and all the routines we are living in you know.

F: **Yeah1** I know. Tell me about it. But, what do you like to do for fun?

M: You know different things. I play football with my friends and most of the time I spend it with watching movies American movies. Do you like them?

F: Oh Yeah! I love them. I can't live without them.

M: **Yeah 1** you know **yeah2**. It's...it's- It has many benefits with watching movies you know it is entertainers and educational also because we are English students and we need movies.

F: **Yeah2, of course 1**. I actually stated once that I learned Eng- started learning English by watching movies.

M: Yeah3 you're right1 you're right2 yeah4. It also makes us good at English makes us fluent. Do you think so?

F: = = Yeah3, of course 2. But, what about the genre that you like, the type of movies that you like?

M: er... you know I like all kinds of movies except Indian movies you know = = except Indian movies except Indian movies.

F: = = Indian

M: How about you?

F: er... [Laughs] Indian? I do not know we used to watch them when we were little.

M: Yeah5

F: But I watch mostly American movies and I like all genres actually... I don't know.

M: What do you prefer most?

F: ... Real life drama [laughter]

M : Oh good... good choice [laughter] I prefer action movies... action you know boys like watching some killings, some gun shootings and explosions [laughs] all kinds of top.

F: [laughter] Yeah4, so typical view! What about comedy?

M: Comedy... Yeah I like watching comedy movies but not often not often

F: Yeah5

M: Because I prefer you know and horror also...horror movies yeah to keep the blood running in our vessels you know [laughs] something like that.

F: Yeah6. I like to watch them too for fun thrillers are entertaining.

The backchannels highlighted are categorized in the two tables below:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Of course 1</u>	Acknowledgement

<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Of course 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Indian</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non- verbal vocalization
<u>Yeah 4</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>So typical view</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 5</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 6</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 11	

**Table 9: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 2**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>You are right1</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>You are right1</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 4</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 5</u>	acknowledgement
<u>Good...good choice</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>[laughter ]</u>	Non- verbal vocalization
TOTAL : 9	

**Table 10: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 2**

From the two tables above, it can be said that the results of the second conversation were, to a large extent, similar to the first one. The female backchannelled more than the male did though the difference was not too big). The female backchannelled 11 times while the male 9. Once again, the female gender proved to be more observant.

The two tables also reveal that acknowledgement represents the most used category. The female and the female acknowledged 8 and 5 times respectively. The reason of that may go to the fact that acknowledging utterances are usually straightforward for foreign learners.

In addition, it is of great significance to state that apart from the acknowledging utterances, the participants used other categories, including assessment and non-verbal vocalization. Some other categories, however, did not come into sight as continuers and the news marker *really*?

Noticing Table 10, the female used:

8 agreeing utterances (72, 72 %)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Actually, I am feeling bored these days you know with the studies and all the routines we are living in you know"
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It has many benefits with watching movies you know it is entertainers and educational also because we are English students and we need movies."
- **Of course 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It has many benefits with watching movies you know it is entertainers and educational also because we are English students and we need movies."
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It also makes us good at English makes us fluent."
- **Of course 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It also makes us good at English makes us fluent."
- **Yeah 4** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "you know boys like watching some killings, some gun shootings and explosions [laughs] all kinds of top."



- **Yeah 5** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I like watching comedy movies but not often not often"
- **Yeah 6** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "because I prefer you know and horror also...horror movies yeah to keep the blood running in our vessels you know [laughs] something like that."

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (09, 09%)

- **Indian** which collaboratively reiterates "Indian" in "except Indian movies", uttered by the male.

1 non- verbal vocalization (09,09%)

- **[laughter]** backs up the male's [ laughter]

1 assessing utterance (09, 09 %)

- **So typical view** which assesses the male's utterance, "I prefer action movies... action you know boys like watching some killings, some gun shootings and explosions [laughs] all kinds of top."

Regarding the male's utterances, table 11 suggests:

5 acknowledging utterances (55, 55%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I love them. I can't live without them."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I love them. I can't live without them."
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I actually stated once that I learned Eng- started learning English by watching movies."
- **Yeah 4** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I actually stated once that I learned Eng- started learning English by watching movies."
- **Yeah 5** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I do not know we used to watch them when we were little."

3 assessing utterances (33, 33%)

- **You're right 1**, which assesses the female's utterance, "I actually stated once that I learned Eng- started learning English by watching movies."
- **You're right 2**, which assesses the female's utterance, "I actually stated once that I learned Eng- started learning English by watching movies."

1 non-verbal vocalization (11, 11%)

- **[Laughter]** which backs up the female's laughter.

### 3 Transcription of Conversation 3

F: Hi Midou! How are you?

M: Hi Simsima! How are you?

F: I am fine what about you?

M: I'm good.

F: It has been a long time.

M: **Yeah1**

F: Where were you?

M: You know we have a preparation for the exams and a lot of things to do since I have to work and think, you know.

F: How could... can you manage that?

M: It's difficult but sometimes you need to improvise when you need... when you need things to take care of.

F: **Okay** I understand. Midou, I have an exam right now.

M: Written?

F: In oral expression module.

M: It's easy, I guess.

F: **Yeah 1** I do not know... she said she will- we will face a real situation or I do not know what she said

M: i.e she gives a situation and you try to develop it as = =

F: = = develop it as a real situation. Like here videos or I do not know ... maybe reading you know

M: Concentrate a lot think before you're listening... do not get scared it's too easy. Try to control yourself.

F: Yeah2. I do not care actually because... it's ...she will- it will be a real situation so, I will read something or I will hear something. It's easy I... it's easy, I think.

M: Yeah2. What about the program of the exam. Do you like it?

F: No, I didn't...I didn't like it at all but ... but you know we don't have nothing to do with it so we just==

M: = = need to pass the exam. But I am trying to learn how to cheat this time.

F: You are going to cheat!?! [Laughter]

M: Yeah

F: How?

M: That's the problem.

F: and why?

M: Because the program is so charged.

F:

It's too long yeah3

The two tables below reveal the following results

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	acknowledgement
<u>develop it as a real situation</u>	Collaborative completive utterance
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:5	

Table 11: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 3

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Need to pass the examination</u></b>	Collaborative completive utterance
TOTAL:3	

**Table 12 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 3**

The one, who glances at the two tables drawn from the third conversation (table 12 and 13), can clearly notice, in addition to the fact that the female's backchannels (5) exceed the male's (3) that both the female and the male highly stuck to the acknowledging expressions.

Out of the total number of the backchannels the female used, 80% of them were, therefore, acknowledging utterances. Adhering to the acknowledging expressions too, 66, 66 % of the backchannels the male used agreed with the female's utterances. The rest of backchannels both genders used were collaborative completing utterances. This means that both genders missed many types of showing engaged listenership like continuers, non verbal vocalization and assessing utterances.

Going back to table 12, the female's backchannels were distributed as follows:

4 acknowledging utterances (80%):

- **Okay** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's difficult but sometimes you need to improvise when you need... when you need things to take care of."
- **yeah1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's easy, I guess"
- **yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Try to control yourself."
- **yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Because the program is so charged."

1collaborative completive utterance (20%)

- **Develop it as a real situation** which collaboratively completes the male's utterance, "you try to develop it"

Concerning table 13, the backchannels used by the male were:

2 acknowledging utterances (66.66%)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "It has been a long time."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "It's easy I... it's easy, I think"

1 collaborative completive utterance (33.33%)

- **Need to pass the exam** which collaboratively completes the female's utterance, "so we just"

#### 4 Transcription of Conversation 4

M: Good morning

F: Good morning, how are you?

M: I am good what about you?

F: Just fine.

M: **Right**. You don't seem okay. What's wrong?

F: I haven't finished the research paper yet.

M: Don't worry you still have time what about the exams? Did you pref... prepare for it?

F: I prepared almost all the lessons but still two lessons I didn't prepared yet.

M: Me too I did not prepare everything.

F: Whatever. Hey! You told me last time that you are sear... searching for job. Did you find one?

M: em no. Not yet.

F: My brother is searching for an assisstant to help him in his job which is delivering medical products.

M: and what is exactly my job?

F: Well you will help him with delivering products in some different places.

M: But I don't have so much time for it because I have studies as you know.

F: You will ha... you will have only a part time job.

M: And do you know exactly the days I will working?

F: I think you will work three days a ... a week at Saturday Sunday and Thursday.

M: Saturday and Sunday are ok for me, but Tuesday I will have studies.

F: I think it is not a problem. You will discuss everything with him whenever you meet you too.

M: **Okay 1**, **that's great**. So how can I meet your brother?

F: I will speak with him when I go back home and tell him to have a meeting with you as soon as possible.

M: Ooh thank you so much. I really appreciate your help.

F: You're welcome so I have to go now. See you soon.

M: **Okay 2**. Bye. Take care.

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL:00	

**Table 13: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 4**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Right</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Okay 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>That's great</u></b>	Assessing utterance
<b><u>Okay 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:04	

**Table 14 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 4**

The fourth conversation differs from the previous ones in two things:

- 1- The male backchannelled more than the female did (the former backchannelled twice while the second did not backchannel at all).
- 2- The number of backchannels is incomparably smaller.

Table 14 suggests that the female was undeniably uncooperative as she used no backchannel form. The reason for that may be ascribed to the female's unawareness of the different ways of exhibiting engaged listenership. Incredibly did the female ignore all the seven backchannels' shapes comprising continuers, acknowledging utterances, news markers, assessing expressions, collaborative completing/ repeating utterances, and non-verbal vocalization.

As far as table 15 is concerned, what is observed is that the male, as the previous participants, unusually adhered to acknowledgement to perform his role as a listener. The other category adopted was assessment. Therefore, the male's backchannels were distributed as this:

3 acknowledging utterances (75%)

- **Right** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "Just fine"
- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the female's utterances, "you will discuss everything with him whenever you meet you too."
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the female's utterances, "See you soon"

1 assessing utterance (25%)

- **That's great** which assesses the female's utterance, "you will discuss everything with him whenever you meet you too."

## **5    Transcription of the Conversation 5**

M: Hello Rayan! What are you doing here by yourself?

F: Hi! Not much. I am just listening to music.

M: It's a good thing to do when you are alone.

F: **Yeah1** I like listening to music whenever I'm alone.

M: **Yeah1** me too. I love sitting next a cup of tea enjoying my head phones.

F: **Yeah2**, we are on the same page.

M: So what are you listening to?

F: I'm listening to one direction.

M: Is that group of five English boys?

F: Yeah, you know I live them.

M: I know that they're Pop band. What's your favorite song of them?

F: I love to listen to mid...midnight memories because it has a good lyrics, loud music and it makes me crazy happy you know dance.

M: So, you like high music. How about heavy metal?

F: No, I don't like it because it is a loud music and it makes my headache. Nawfal, how are... how about you? What do you like to listen to?

M: Actually, I love listening to every kind. Just give me a heartbeat and a good voice and I'm abroad.

F: So, what's your favorite song?

M: My favorite song is super human by Chris brown.

F: **Really?** I don't know this song but I love so much the artist.



M: Yeah2. He's the best in the field.

F: So, is this song a good one?

M: Yeah, one of the best he ever sang.

F: Because I love the way he dances and he is a handsome man.

M: Yeah3, one of the- He was inspired by the king of Bob, Micheal Jackson. Chris considers him as his role model and I also love to listen to Jason Derulo.

F: Who's that? I ne... I don't know him.

M: Jason is an RNB singer. He's also an Afro- American.

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Really?</u>	News marker
TOTAL:03	

**Table 15 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 5**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:03	

**Table 16 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 5**

What tables 16 and 17 drawn from the fifth conversation suggest is that both the male and the female used backchannels in an equal manner (each backchannelled thrice).

What can also be said is that both genders did not vary the ways of engaged listenership. Thus, the form enormously stuck to was *yeah* which acknowledges the speaker's utterance. Of all the backchannels used, *yeah* represents 66.66% for the female, and 100% for the male.

Again, this absolute clinging to one form leads to the ignorance of others, notably assessment, repetition, completion, and continuers. Not being exposed to such categories, the participants can be said to have a limited knowledge about the different ways of exhibiting engaged listenership.

Regarding the female's backchannels (table 16), they are categorized as follows:

2 acknowledging utterances (66, 66%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's a good thing to do when you are alone."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I love sitting next a cup of tea enjoying my head phones."

1 news marker (33, 33%)

- **Really?** which reacts to the male's utterance, "My favorite song is super human by Chris brown"

Going to table 17, the male uttered the following backchannels:

3 acknowledging utterances (100%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I like listening to music whenever I'm alone."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I love so much the artist."
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "because I love the way he dances and he is a handsome man."

## **6 Transcription of Conversation 6**

F: Hello! How do you do?

M: Hello! How do you do? I was wondering if you could help me.

F: Yeah, sure. What do you need?

M: I'm working on a project lately, civilization. I would love to ask you some questions if you don't mind. It's like an experiment.

F: Yeah, ok. Please ask.

M: Yeah. To begin with, I would like to ask you some questions about the status of our society. Where would you classify our society on the road of civilization?

F: er...Yeah our society. It's neither in the beginning nor in the middle. Surely, it's not in the end. Actually, there is a term for this situation, a stagnant status.

M: I'm sorry **a stagnant status?**

F: Yeah. You see many sociologists have studied our society and found out that the reasons are created on the human level. Algerians have been hidden under the excuse that a change is chance not a choice. They are wrong. This idea is rooted in their brain so deeply that they become psychologically unaware about this. They have built tremendous walls around them to prevent the winds from holding.

M: **Yeah 1 yeah 2** we know this. But what made them build those walls as you named them?

F: It's the illusion that civilization- all the change comes from the authority or the government. In other words, they believe that there has to be a political change in order to improve the social one. They are absolutely mistaking because those politicians come from our society and their honesty competence and education are measured by this very society.

M: **Such accurate observation from your meticulous mind.** What I feel they are theoretical. The question is: How is the process of civilization merged?

F: Well. As I like to say, simple beginnings lead to amazing results. We should change ourselves for the better. Of course, which is the major start that would push us forward fixing the mental, social psychological and political state of thinking?

M: I'm sure that they will be put under consideration, would you like to add something? Other solutions maybe?

F: Yeah.

The following tables house the backchannels used in Conversation 6:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL:00	

**Table 17 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 6**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Stagnant status?</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Such accurate observation from your meticulous mind.</u>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL:04	

**Table18 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 6**

The tables 18 and 19 indicate that the male's backchannels exceeded the females' (the former backchannelled 4 times, while the latter did not backchannel at all. The reason for this considerable difference may due to the fact that the female only paid attention to her role as a speaker.

Regarding diversity, the male's backchannels, as table 19 indicates, pertained to 3 different categories which are assessment, collaborative repetition, and acknowledgement. The male was, therefore, an attentive. Going back to the supportive utterances, the male used:

2 acknowledging utterances (50%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "they have built tremendous walls around them to prevent the winds from holding."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "they have built tremendous walls around them to prevent the winds from holding."

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (25%)

- **Stagnant status?** Which collaboratively echoes the one in the female's utterance, "actually, there is a term for this situation, a stagnant status."

1 assessing utterance (25%)

- **Such accurate observation from your meticulous mind** which assesses the female's utterance "they are absolutely mistaking because those politicians come from our society and their honesty competence and education are measured by this very society."

## 7 Transcription of Conversation 7

F: I always say to my friend that a language that you can't use is a language that you can't ...learn

M: **Yeah1.**

F: but nowadays in our new youth the youth such us we use English more and more so I have hope that one day we will use English like in foreign countries more than French.

M: But if ...if you study a language, you should use it with the other people.

F: **Yeah1 of course.** I use it all the time = = with my friends.

M: = = **Yeah 2**

F: who speak- I have my... also...all my friends speak English too.

M: **Yeah 3**

F: So, we always speak English together and I always like... talk to my friends to go and learn English.

M: But I have never had a student here in this department who is talking English.

F: Gosh! There is, they're few they are not a lot.

M: You are the first one here.

F: Gosh! No, there is there is. I have a lot of friends who speak really a good English. Actually, I'm just retaking my baccalaureate exam this year.

M: I can help you in mathematics yeah.

F: Gosh! Thank you.

M: Believe me. I'm good at mathematics.

F: You will help me.

M: Believe me. I promise you because you did a good favour for me.

F: Thank you thank you very much.

M: So, you are passing your baccalaureate this year?

F: Yeah yeah I'm retaking my baccalaureate exam this year for the second time.

M: How old are you?

F: I'm 21 years old.

M: You have never passed...

F: I passed it before. I got it.

M: **Yeah 4.**

F: And I will take another one this year.

M: Why?

F: Because I want to take a high average.

M: What do you want to do with it?

F: Because I want to study English but not here in another country.

M: Where for example?

F: I guess er... Canada. If it does not work, Lebanon at the ...American college.

M: I think England is better than other countries.

F: England is...is very hard to get a scholarship in English.

M: **Yeah 5.** I know.

F: It's really hard.

M: But you can borrow some money.

F: I don't have money, I'm broken actually.

The female's and the male's backchannels were shown in the the following tables:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u><b>Yeah 1</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Of course</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah 2</b></u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:3	

**Table 19 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 7**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u><b>Yeah 1</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah 2</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah 3</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah 4</b></u>	Acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah 5</b></u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:5	

**Table 20 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 7**

The tables 20 and 21 exhibit an explicit difference between the female and the male in terms of the number of the backchannels used (1 and 5 respectively).

What is common, however, between the two genders is that both, definitely, adhered to the acknowledgement category, notably *yeah*. This reveals, once again, great lack of awareness towards other reinforcing categories. Neither the female nor the male varied the use of their backchannels

Glancing at table 20, one would say that the female was not as cooperative as it is required as she backchannelled just once. The category used by her is:

1acknowledging expression (100%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "But if ...if you study a language, you should use it with the ...other people."

Elaborating table 14, it can safely be said that the male was more assistant than the female. However, all the backchannels he used pertain to one form, **YEAH**. The latter occurs five times:

5 acknowledging expressions (100%)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, " I always say to my friend that a language that you can't use ..... is a language that you can't learn"
- **Yeah2** which acknowledges the female's utterance "I use it all the time"
- **Yeah3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, " I have my... also...all my friends speak English too"
- **Yeah4** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I passed it before. I got it"
- **Yeah5** which acknowledges the female's utterance "England is...is very hard to get a scholarship in English."

## **8 Transcription of Conversation 8**

M: Kamila! It's such pleasure to see you again. I have not seen you for ages. Where have you been?



F: Ok, I have been there and here. You know, it's a period of exams. So, I'm everywhere.

M: Stop talking about exams. Do you know what I want to talk about today? Books. =  
= So Kamila....

F: = = I know you love books.

M: **Of course**, you do. You are my friend. So, tell me about your favorite books == I would like to know.

F: = = for me, I like to read novels. Have you read the turn of the screw?

M: Turn of the crew by Henry James?

F: Yes, I like it so much, especially the end with boy dies yeah I like it.

M: It was not really fictitious

F: No, I like it

M: **You like it**

F: whether it's fff....or whatever == I just like it.

M: = = It was... it was not really a novel written by Steven King and I know you like Steven King. Do you not?

F: .... A little bit.

M: **A little bit?**

F: Yes, not like George Eliot. I love George Eliot more.

M: Emotional, she is very very sensitive.

F: Come on! Have you read the meal on the floss?

M: The meal on floss.

F: It's fantastic.

M: It's a thick book.

F: No, = = it's very nice.

M: = = it takes a long time [laughs] reading that book.

F: I read it twice.

M: Twice.

F: is not... I believe it's not.

M: Alright. Other books? Tell me tell me tell me.

F: Other books ...Oh, no just novels and short stories.

M: What have you read recently?

F: er.... Sacadaria

M: Sacadaria! The North American girl Oh yeah

F: You know her?

M: I do consider her a great woman.

F: Okay

M: Because she is the one who showed...I suppose.

F: Yeah, her new born child on her back and she was like- she was so stronger

M: It's...it's very impressive.

F: Uh huh1

M: it's very impressive. I share with you some of the recent books I have read recently. Actually, most of them ...are Brown's books.

F: Uh huh2.

M: I should name them if I wish actually. Of course, I wish.

F: Can you saynd... can you send them on facebook?

M: No, I can't. Actually, it's very easy. You can just download them Kamila [laughter]

F: [Laughter]. No, not tell me the books. Just tell me the title of the books.

M: I should tell you about Inferno, the Lost Symbol.

F : Uh huh3

Conversation 8 suggests the backchannels shown in the following tables:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Uh huh 1</u>	Continuer
<u>Uh huh 2</u>	Continuer
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Uh huh 3</u>	Continuer
TOTAL: 6	

**Table 21: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 8**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Of course</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>You like it</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>A little bit</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Twice</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Alright</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Sacadaria</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
TOTAL: 6	

**Table 22 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 8**

What is noticeable from tables 22 and 23 is that the female was, in some manner, more attentive as she backchannelled five times, while the male four. What is more important, however, is that both genders excessively used one form and ignored many others.

Precisely, table 22 reveals the female's absolute adherence to continuers, new forms which arose. She, therefore, used:

2 acknowledging utterances (33, 33%)

- **Okay** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I do consider her a great woman"
- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Because she is the one who showed ...I suppose"

3 continuers (50%)

- **Uh huh1** which seeks the continuity of the male's utterance, "It's...it's very impressive"
- **Uh huh2** which seeks the continuity of the male's utterance, "I share with you some of the recent books I have read recently. Actually, most of them ...are Brown's books."
- **Uh huh3** which seeks the continuity of the male's utterance, "I should tell you about Inferno, the Lost Symbol"

1 non-verbal vocalization (13, 33%)

- **[laughter]** which reacts towards the male's [laughter]

Concerning the 6 male's backchannels, they were used as follows:

2 acknowledging utterances (33, 33%)

- **Of course** it acknowledges the female's utterance, "I know you love books"
- **Alright** it acknowledges the female's utterance, "I believe it is not"

4 collaborative completive utterances (66,66%)

- **You like it** it echoes the female's utterance, "I like it"
- **A little bit** it echoes the female's utterance, "a little bit"
- **Twice** it echoes the female's utterance, "twice"
- **Sacadaria** it echoes the female's utterance, "Sacadaria"

## 9    The Transcription of Conversation 9

F: I will try to answer you.

M: **Good**. Lady, you're... you reply...your answer.

F: **Yeah1**

M: For me, it meant that you have questions for me also.

F: No, you are mistaking.

M: I will try to start first.

F: **Okay**

M: And see where this will lead us. So, er.... You have already passed three years in this university. So...What was special about them?

F: Special?

M: Yes

F: It's personal I'm sorry

M: I m not asking you about your ...

F: **[laughter]**

M: Any way, let's see... I mean who are per...people that affected your life during this... during...

F: **During these years?**

M: Exactly I mean are there many or just one or two maybe?

F: Some teachers and colleagues of mine you know like Mr. Nemouchi, like you, like... not much but there are.

M: **Okay1**. Let's see what else? Erm how about er an event that you always wanted to- that you always will be remembering. An event that you will be remembering for... I don't know something happened to you during this period?

F: Happened to me I fell in love.

M: Okay 2

F: It was bad [laughter]

M: [laughter] why?

F: I don't know I'm sensitive and er... it's personal.

M: It's personal okay 3 enough questions I know I'm bugging you right now

F: Yeah 2

M: So, we will end here

These are the backchannels uttered in Conversation9:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>During these years</u>	Collaborative completive utterance
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:05	

**Table 23 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 9**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of backchannels
<u>Good</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Okay 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>It's personal</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Okay 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:06	

**Table 24 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 9**

The tables 24 and 25 above demonstrate that the male showed higher engaged listenership and greater diversity in the use of backchannels. What is also observable from the two tables is the prominence of the acknowledging utterances and the absence of the continuers.

Going to table 24, the female used:

3 acknowledging utterances (60%)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Lady, you're... you reply...your answer."
- **Okay** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I will try to start first"
- **Yeah2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "questions I know I'm bugging you right now"

1 non-verbal vocalization (20%)

- **[laughter]** which reacts to the male's utterance, "I m not asking you about your ..."

1 collaborative completive utterance (20%)

- **During these years** which collaboratively completes the male's utterance, "I mean who are per...people that affected your life during this... during..."

Referring to table 25, the male used 6 backchannels:

1 assessing utterance (16,16%) :

- **Good** it assesses the female's utterance, "I will try to answer."

3 acknowledging utterances (50%):

- **Okay 1**it acknowledges the female's utterance, "some teachers and colleagues of mine you know like Mr. Nemouchi, like you, like... not much but there are"
- **Okay 2** it acknowledges the female's utterance, "I fell in love"
- **Okay 3** it acknowledges the female's utterance, "it's personal"

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (16, 16%)

- It's personal, which reiterates the female's utterance, "it's personal"

1 non-verbal vocalization (16, 16%)

- [laughter] which mirrors the female's laughter.

## 10 Transcription of Conversation 10

M: Good morning

F: Good morning

M: How are you?

F: Fine, thank you. How are you?

M: I am doing great with the exams from good to brilliant. What about you?

F: Somehow. I am not ok. I mean my marks was not fine as I want.

M: what exactly? What are the modules that ...?

F: The module of LST I was supposing a good mark but it was only 11.

M: It is not that important because it is just... it's coefficient is only one and it is just a kick side as it is said. It is not...

F: I guess the coefficient of LST is two not one.

M: So is it two. It's not much. Nothing important as oral or written or translation. What about these modules?

F: Oral expression and written expression are good, I guess. I guess 14.5 in oral expression and 12.5 in written expression.

M: I got 16. You know I am aiming high; I wanna go complete my studies abroad. The problem is that I do not have enough money [laughter]

F: [Laughter]1 what's the problem with money?

M: I do not know I .....keep bringing it from everything. I mean, you can't do anything without money.



F: We all know that is brilliant for some but there are something more important than money

M:likewhat?()

F:[laughter]2

M : I mean... that 's the reason I am here to get a job so I can get enough money and once I get a job this will grant me money.

F:      Anyway,      I      will-      I      wish      you      can      get      money.

M: = = Thank you

F: = = The more you can

M: Good bye

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>[Laughs] 1</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>[Laughs] 2</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
TOTAL: 02	

**Table 25 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 10**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL: 00	

**Table 26 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 10**

The tables 26 and 27, drawn from conversation 10, resemble many previous tables where the females were more observant than the males. The female, in the tenth conversation, backchannelled twice, while the male uttered no backchannel. This means that neither paid less attention to listening.

The tables 19 and 20 are also similar to many tables in which one participant stuck to one backchannelling form and ignored many. This applies to the female in conversation 10 as she totally adhered to laughter to exhibit listening. Among the assumptions to this absolute adherence might be the participant's restricted knowledge about the different types of backchannels.

Table 26 reveals that the female used:

2 non-verbal vocalizations (100%)

- [Laughter] which reacts to the male's [laughter]
- [Laughter] which reacts to the male's utterance, ( )

## **11 Transcription of Conversation 11**

M: Hi, miss.

F: Hi, sir.

M: How are you doing?

F: I am okay. Thank you, what about you?

M: Fine. Thank you

F: How can I help you?

M: If I need an empty room, can you, please, provide me with one in your hotel?

F: of course, no problem. May I have your name please?

M: Are you joking? I am a client here. Everybody knows me here. I am very famous, you can check the computer. You will find my name.

F: Oh really? Are you a client here? Erm I am so sorry. I am new here.

M: No problem. It happens. My name is Robert Brownny, but many people call me Bob. So, you can call me just Bob.

F: My name is Nichel.

M: Oh! A nice name

F: Thank you

M: Nice to meet you Nichel

F: Nice to meet you, too. Could you tell me when you need a room?

M: In fact, I need it right now. My friend has been waiting for me. I am too late.

F: **Okay 1**, perhaps you did not know that we have a new room rate, do you find that it is acceptable, sir

M: No problem. I have much money. I can even pay with my credit card.

F: **Of course**, you can.

M: How much is the room?

F: The price per night is 15 dollars.

M: That's not too much. I can afford it.

F: **Fantastic!** Would you like a smoking or a non smoking room?

M: In fact, I need a non-smoking room even I am smoker person because I have allergic in my nose, so I cannot, for example, stay in a smoking room.

F: **Okay2** you said you are a smoker...you know smoking is not good for your health.

M: **Yeah,** I know I tried to stop smoking for a long time, but I could not maybe be in the future thank you very much.

F: **Okay3** that will be non-smoking. Now, do you prefer a single bed?

M: Yes, **that's fine**. I'm the only one who is going to sleep in the room. It will be okay.

F: I am so happy to hear that. Your reservation is all set except for your phone number.

M: No problem. You are so beautiful. I can give you even my facebook account, but because you need just my phone number, my number is 6265551739.

F: **6265551739**. Thank you for doing business with us, Mr. Robert.

The two following tables account for the female's and the male's backchannels in their conversation:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Really ?</u>	News marker
<u>Okay 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Of course</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Fantastic</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>6265551739</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
TOTAL : 07	

**Table 27 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 11**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>A nice name</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's fine</u>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 03	

**Table 28 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 11**

Having a look at table 28 and 29, it can be shown that there is a difference in the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence. Thus, the female backchanneled 5 times, while the male 3. Returning to the backchannels' diversity, both the female and the male did not vary their backchannels. That is to say, they clung to one backchannel form at the expense of many others. More precisely, the female, highly but not totally, adhered to the acknowledging utterance "okay", while the male totally stuck to the assessing utterances.

Table 28 elaborately classifies the female's backchannels:

4 acknowledging expressions (57,14%) :

- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "My friend has been waiting for me.I am too late"
- **Of course** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I can even pay with my credit card"
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "In fact, I need a non-smoking room even I am smoker person because I have allergic in my nose, so I cannot, for example, stay in a smoking room."
- **Okay 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I know I tried to stop smoking for a long time, but I could not maybe in the future thank you very much."

1 news marker (14,28%)

- **Really?** which reacts to the male's utterance, "I am a client here"

1 assessing utterance (14,28%)

- **Fantastic** which assesses the male's utterance, "I can afford it"

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (14,28%)

- **6265551739** which collaboratively repeats the number uttered by the male, "6265551739"

Returning to table 29, what can be observed is the absence of some types of backchannels that so frequently appeared in the previous conversations including the acknowledging expressions. All the three backchannels the male used pertain to the assessing category (100%).

2 assessing utterances (66,66%)

- **A nice name** which assesses the female's utterance, "My name is Nichel"
- **That's fine** which assesses the female's utterance, "Now, do you prefer a single bed?"

1 acknowledgement (33,33%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "you know smoking is not good for your health."

## 12 Transcription of Conversation 12

F: Good afternoon, sir.

M: Good afternoon.

F: Thank you for giving me your time.

M: = = you are very welcome.

F: = = to answer these questions.

M: **Mmhm**

F: To begin with, I would like to know what is your favourite kinds of movies that you like to watch.

M: My favourite kinds of movies... I take anything but Romantic. However, if I have to choose one type and say science fiction.

F: **Science fiction** and why sec...science fiction ex...especially?

M: Why science fiction? I mean- I don't know it is just- the only argument I can think of now is that it gives- Well, most of the time it gives a bright view of the future.

F: **Yeah1. That's really a good reason**

M: Thank you

F: So... your habits, your...your favourite sports, your...

M: My hobbies or fav...favorite sports like the Algerians here and the only sport you can practise freely is football.

F: **Football**. Your favourite team?

M: Barcelona! Have you...

F: No...yes ...but here in Algeria?

M: I don't watch Algeria [LAUGHS]

F: [Laughter] 1

M: They play so-let's say a low level type of football

F: Mmhm 1

M: So it is not my type.

F: Okay. Your hobbies?

M: My hobbies... as an English student, I had to make reading one of my hobbies

F: Mmhm 2

M: I do not like to brag but I cannot become like that.

f: Mmhm 3. What...what can you advise me for books of English?

M: books books. All my favourite is the series of Harry Potter. It's like the best I've ever read

F: Yeah2

M: It is just simple, nice, entertaining, and beautiful.

F: Your aim in life? What is it?

M: My aim in life not to die young

F: [laughter] 2

M: I am just joking I just want to become a university teacher.

F: Uh huh

M: I do not know why some people may think that teaching at university or just teaching in Algeria has some bad reputation.

F: Yeah 3

The following two tables summarize the backchannels of the female and the male in their conversation:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Science fiction</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's really a good reason</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Football</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>[laughter] 1</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Mmhm 1</u>	A continuer
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Mmhm2</u>	A continuer
<u>Mmhm3</u>	A continuer
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[Laughter] 2</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Uh huh</u>	A continuer
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:13	

**Table 29 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 12**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Mmhm</u>	Continuer
TOTAL:01	

**Table 30 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 12**



When noticing the two tables above, the first thing to say is that there is a huge difference between the female and the male in terms of the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence.

While the female backchanneled 13 times, the male backchannelled only once. This may due to the nature of the conversation (Conversation 12) where the male took the floor more than the female did. In other words, the female was the one to ask questions more and, therefore, she was, most of the time, the listener to produce the required backchannels. On the other hand, the male was the speaker very often which led him not to backchannel too much.

Another important thing to say is that the female diversified the backchannels she uttered and did not just adhere to one specific type. One can really say that the female was highly attentive to the male's utterances. One can also notice that the male repeated many utterances of the female as "favourite kinds of movies", "why science fiction" and "aim in life" to start his turn. Accordingly, those repetitions are not to be considered as backchannels.

In light of table 30, the female's backchannels can be classified as the following:

4 acknowledging utterances (30.76%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance "Well, most of the time it gives a bright view of the future.
- **Okay** is an acknowledgement for the male's utterance "So it is not my type"
- **Yeah2** it agrees with the male's utterance "It's like the best I've ever read"
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance "I do not know why some people may my think that teaching at university or just teaching in Algeria has some bad reputation"

4 continuers (30.77%)

- **Mmhm 1** which encourages the male to continue his utterance " they play so-let's say a low level type of football"
- **Mmhm 2** which encourages the male to continue his utterance " as an English student, I had to make reading one of my hobbies"

- **Mmhm 3** which encourages the male to continue his utterance “I do not like to brag but I cannot become like that”
- **Uh-huh** which drives the male to continue his utterance “I am just joking I just want to become a university teacher”

2 non-verbal vocalizing acts (15.38%)

- **[Laughter] 1** which harmonizes the male’s utterance, “I don’t watch Algeria [Laughter]”
- **[Laughter] 2** which harmonizes the male’s utterance, “My aim in life not to die young”

2 collaborative repetitive utterances (15.38%)

- **Science fiction** which reiterates science fiction in the male’s utterance “However, if I have to choose one type and say science fiction.”
- **Football** which reiterates football in the male’s utterance “My hobbies or fav...favorite sports like the Algerians here and the only sport you can practise freely is football.

1 assessing utterance (07.69%)

- **That’s really a good reason** which assesses the male’s utterance, “Well, most of the time it gives a bright view of the future”

As far as the male is concerned, the only backchannelling form he used was:

a continuer (100%)

- **Mmhm** which seeks continuity for the female’s utterance, “to answer these questions”

### 13 Transcription of Conversation 13

F: Good morning.

M: Good morning.

F: You can introduce yourself.

M: Well, I am Mohamed Wasim. I am a student of Applied Linguistics. What do you want to know?

F: First, why did you choose English?

M: Well, I did not choose English because it was the only choice who was interested according to the other choices like French, Arabic. I did not want to choose them at all. So I chose Fra...English.

F: **Okay1. That's interesting.** And how is it so far for you?

M: Well. At the beginning, it was like- I liked it at the beginning at the first year but then I was fed up. It is like... I am not learning any more. It is like I am wasting my time. My English is not good at all for me now.

F: Is it maybe because of the level here in Algeria or something else?

M: Well, the level has a role playing in this because I thought that the level was very high at the beginning but then it's like teachers like students. They are both of low level.

F: **Okay2, that's fun! [Laughter]**

M: Except for some teachers. Of course, we have some very good teachers, but the others

F: **Of course1, of course 2. That's right.** What do you think the hardest module would be?

M: Well. I do not think that it is the hardest module but it is like

F: **Punch**

M: I think that it is phonetics.

F: **Phonetics**

M: Like, for example, English is accord...comparing to French is a very complicated language because we have some sounds if you combine them, you have to pronounce them differently. So here I am still studying phonetics this year and it is like the first year but I have forgotten everything. It is still the difficult.

F: **Okay3**

M: Not difficult, but complicated

F: Complicated. Okay 4. What would you like to be next in the future?

M: Well, I do not want to be a teacher. That's for sure. But if I have no chance, I will be a teacher unfortunately. But I would like to work in a society or like something which has nothing to do with my studies.

F: Okay 5. And if you have not studied English what would you do?

M: I have not studied English, I would have chosen medicine.

The highlighted backchannels can be tabulated as the following:

The Form of Backchannels	The Function of Backchannels
<u>Okay1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's interesting</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's fun</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non- verbal vocalization
<u>Of course1,</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>of course 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's right</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Punch</u>	Collaborative completive utterance
<u>Phonetics</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Okay 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Complicated</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Okay 4</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 5</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL:14	

Table 31 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 13

The Form of Backchannels	The Function of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL: 00	

**Table 32 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 13**

The two tables show a great difference in the frequency and diversity of backchannels. While the female backchannelled 14 times, the male did not backchannel at all. What is more important, however, is that the female's backchannels are diverse in the sense that she did not stick to a particular backchannel. She acknowledged, assessed, laughed, completed, and repeated the male's utterances. It is, therefore, worth to say that the female was highly attentive and tactful.

Going back to table (32), the 14 backchannels the female used can be distributed as follows:

7 acknowledging utterances (50%, representing the most frequent backchannels)

- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Well, I did not choose English because it was the only choice who was interested according to the other choices like French, Arabic. I did not want to choose them at all. So, I chose Fra...English"
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Well, the level has a role playing in this because I thought that the level was very high at the beginning but then it's like teachers like students. They are both of low level"
- **Of course 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Of course, we have some very good teachers, but the others"
- **Of course 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Of course, we have some very good teachers, but the others "
- **Okay 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance "So here I am still studying phonetics this year and it is like the first year but I have Forgotten everything. It is still the difficult"
- **Okay 4** which acknowledges the male's utterance " not difficult but complicated"

- **Okay 5** which acknowledges the male's utterance "Well, I do not want to be a teacher. That's for sure. But if I have no chance, I will be a teacher unfortunately. But I would like to work in a society or like something which has nothing to do with my studies"

3 assessing utterances (21,42%)

- **That's interesting** which assesses the male's utterance, "Well, I did not choose English because it was the only choice who was interested according to the other choices like French, Arabic. I did not want to choose them at all. So I chose Fra...English."
- **That's fun** which assesses the male's utterance, "I thought that the level was very high at the beginning but then it's like teachers like students. They are both of low level"
- **That's right** which assesses the male's utterance "Except for some teachers. Of course, we have some very good teachers, but the others"

1 Non-verbal vocalization (7,14%)

- **[laughter]** which reinforces the male's utterance "they are both of low level"

1 collaborative completive utterance (7,14%)

- **Punch** which completes the male's utterance "I do not think that it is the hardest module but it is like"

2 collaborative repetitive utterances (14,28%)

- **Phonetics** which restates "phonetics", uttered by the male.
- **Complicated** which restates "complicated", uttered by the male.

As for the male, no backchannel was uttered (00, 00%). This may due to the role the male performed most in the conversation, namely speaking.

## 14 Transcription of Conversation 14

M: Hello, Zohra. Is that you? It has been a long time since I have seen you.

F: **Yeah1, indeed, a long time.** So how are you? What have you been up to?

M: I am doing great actually. I have just graduated from university and I am looking for a job. What about you?

F: Well. You know, I am not a big fun of studying. I quit university 2 years ago.

M: **Really ?** You quit studying!? What are you doing right now?

F: I am enjoying my life, my friend.

M: **Enioying life!?** What do you mean?

F: Well. Right now, I am travelling around the world trying to discover new palces, new things, new food. You know things that my eyes desire to see.

M: Well. **Good for you**. I wish that I have time to do what you are doing. I also dream about visiting different places and see the world.

F: So what is preventing you?

M: Look, in order for me to achieve my dreams, I need to work for them, and besides I am not rich as you. Anyway, are you active in social media you know like Facebook, Skype or Instagram?

F: Oh, no. I am not a big fan of those things. Besides, it is just a waste of time.

M: That's a kind of rage, you know. This is the first time that I met a person who does not use any of that.

F: It's not...it not weird. It is just unusual, and you are not the first one to tell me this. I used to be so active in social media but one day, I just stopped like this.

M: But how can you reach your family or your fans when you are far away from them?

F: Well, that's why Grahem Bel invented the phone my friend. I am just joking. Let me tell you something: When I used to be so active in social media, it was holding me back from a lot of things. So now I am free.

M: **Of course**. When you are overusing it, it will be a waste of time and it w...it will affect you negatively. However, sometimes it can be very useful.

F: **Yeah2**, it can.

Conversation (14) suggests the backchannels highlighted. Tables (27) and (28) restate the form of backchannels by the female and the male respectively, and provide the functions of those utterances as always:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>indeed</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>a long time</u></b>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL: 04	

**Table 33 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 14**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Really ?</u></b>	News marker
<b><u>Enjoying life !?</u></b>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<b><u>Good for you</u></b>	Assessing utterance
<b><u>Of course.</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL: 04	

**Table 34 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 14**

The two tables above reveal that:

- Both the female and the male had the same number of backchannels, 4, showing equal degree of attentiveness ;
- As opposed to the male, the female did not vary their backchannels as she greatly stuck to the acknowledging utterances

Numerically speaking, the backchannels the female used (table 34) were distributed as follows:



3 acknowledging utterances (75%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It has been a long time since I have seen you."
- **Indeed** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It has been a long time since I have seen you."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "When you are overusing it, it will be a waste of time and it w...it will affect you negatively. However, sometimes it can be very useful."

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (25%)

- **a long time** which repeats a long time in the male's utterance, "It has been a long time since I have seen you"

The 4 backchannels used by the male (table 35) were:

1 news marker (25%)

- **Really?** which reacts towards the female's utterance, "I quit university 2 years ago."

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (25%)

- **Enjoying life!?** which repeats the female's utterance "enjoying life"

1 assessing utterance (25%)

- **Good for you** which assesses the female's utterance, "Right now, I am travelling around the world trying to discover new palces, new things, new food. You know, things that my eyes desire to see"

1 acknowledging utterance (25%)

- **Of course** which acknowledges the female's utterance "Let me tell you something : When I used to be so active in social media, it was holding me back from a lot of things."

## **15 Transcription of Conversation 15**

F: What do you think about this university?

M: ...I have been studying here for four years. I am enjoying in this department er...all is good: the teachers, the places...the students er...I hope that I will succeed for my last year. .... I hope also because our - I think that our department needs more organization

F: **Yeah**, in what way do you mean oraganization?

M: ... for... for... for... more organization, for...the planning and... for...

F: **The students' discipline**, you mean?

M: Yeah, for example. Yeah, for example.

F: That's all?

M: Yeah, that's all, that's all.

F: Because it's as - my first impression of this university was good. But as I kept studying here for almost...this is my first year. So, the second second semester I found that [laughter]

M:

**[laughter]**

F: That it's not...it's not lacking the organization for us. It's...the students that give a bad impression of it.

M: **Yeah 1**

F: It's not the department in itself. It's the students that give a bad impression because they... they don't g...they don't enter classes, they keep running down the hall and screaming.

M: **Yeah 2**

F: I don't know someone is smoking.

M: **Yeah 3**

F: Someone...someone with his girl friend

M: **Yeah 4**

F: They don't ...they do not treat this university as university.

M: **Yeah 5**

F: They treat it as if it is a street.

M: **Yeah 6**

This conversation sets the backchannels shown in the following tables:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of the Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>The students discipline</u></b>	Collaborative completive utterance
TOTAL : 02	

**Table 35 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 15**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of the Backchannels
<b><u>[laughter]</u></b>	Non- verbal vocalization
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 3</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 4</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 5</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 6</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 07	

**Table 36 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 15**

He who observes Tables (36) and (37) can say that they are different in terms of the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence. While the female backchannelled only twice, the male backchannelled 7 times.

The tables, however, hide great similarity in terms of backchannels' diversity. To clarify, there are two different backchannels in table (29), notably an acknowledging utterance, and a collaborative completive one. In a similar vein, table (30) embraces a non-verbal vocalization and the acknowledging utterance, *yeah*.

This means that many ways of engaged listenership were absent in both tables including assessing utterances and continuers in particular. This, in turn, leads to say that both the male and the female do not have thorough knowledge about backchannels.

Referring to table (36), the female used:

1 acknowledging utterance (50%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, “ I think that our department needs more organization”

1 collaborative completive utterance (50%)

- **The students' discipline** which completes the male's utterance “... for... for... for... more organization, for...the planning and... for...”

As for the table (37), besides the non-verbal vocalization, the male almost totally adhered to *yeah*, the acknowledging utterance. Thus, he uttered :

6 acknowledging utterances (85,71%)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, “It's...the students that give a bad impression of it.”
- **Yeah2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, “It's the students that give a bad impression because they... they don't g...they don't enter classes, they keep running down the hall and screaming.”
- **Yeah3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, “I don't know someone is smoking”
- **Yeah4** which acknowledges the female's utterance, “ Someone...someone with his girl friend”
- **Yeah5** which acknowledges the female's utterance, “ They don't ...they do not treat this university as university”

- **Yeah**<sup>6</sup> which acknowledges the female's utterance, "they treat it as if it is a street."

1 non-verbal vocalization (14,29%)

- **[laughter]** which mirrors the female's [laughter]

## 16 Transcription of Conversation 16

M: Good morning, Madam!

F: Good morning, sir! Who are you?

M: Oh, Madam! Do not you remember me?

F: Please, I beg your pardon. I am old now and I do not have a strong memory.

M: I was your student in secondary school. My name is Ali.

F: Oh, What a nice coincidence! I do remember you now. How excellent you were and now a very handsome man! Tell me: What are you doing now? Studying or working or nothing, what?

M: Actually, I am studying at university?

F: What have you chosen to study?

M: I have chosen English and I am a third year student now.

F: **I am really happy to hear that !** Tell me Ali: Why did you choose English?

M: You know, Madam, I love this language.

F: **Mm.**

M: Besides, I am excellent at it and it helps me to realize my dream.

F: **Yeah. You are totally right.** How did you find university? Are teachers there so harsh or not at all?

M: University is something that has built my personality first, something that has given me the strength and how to cooperate with others, how to cope, how to express myself without selfishness, how to spend a long day without eating.

F: [Laughs]. Really?

M: Yeah. Teachers are good a little bit. There are some nice teachers who are helping us, but also there are those who are just giving us bad marks.

F: You should cope with the situation positively.

M: What about you, Madam? What are you doing right now?

F: I'm still in the field of teaching

M: Really? Do not you think that you are too old for this?

F: You know, we, as teachers, we never give up until we die. And for you, I am sure that you will achieve what you want to be one day. I still remember your bad handwriting, your silly mistakes. But be sure that you were the most excellent boy I have ever taught.

Out of conversation 16, the female's and the male's backchannels were categorized in tables (38) and (39) respectively:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u><b>I am really happy to hear that!</b></u>	Assessing utterance
<u><b>Mm.</b></u>	acknowledgement
<u><b>Yeah</b></u>	acknowledgement
<u><b>You are totally right.</b></u>	Assessing utterance
<u><b>[Laughs]</b></u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u><b>Really ?</b></u>	News marker
TOTAL : 06	

**Table 37 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 16**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Really ?</u></b>	News marker
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 38 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 16**

As one can notice, there is a considerable difference between table 38 and 39. There are 6 backchannels used by the female, while only one by the male. Accordingly, it is worth to say that the female, as opposed to the male, was more observant to the counterpart's utterances.

Despite the fact that the female missed some significant types backchannels as continuers and collaborative completeive and repetitive utterances, she made use of some others. As for the male, a great number of backchannels were absent including: acknowledgement, assessing, continuers, and others. It is, therefore, safe to say that both participants are not well acquainted with the use of the missing backchannels.

The backchannels the female uttered (table38) were:

2 acknowledging utterances (33,33%)

- **Mm** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "you know, Madam, I love this language."
- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Besides, I am excellent at it, and it helps me to realize my dream."

2 assessing utterances (33,33%)

- **I am really happy to hear that!** Which assesses and supports the male's utterance: "I have chosen English and I am a third year student now."
- **You are totally right**. Which supports the male's utterances: "Besides, I am excellent at it and, it helps me to realize my dream."

1 non-verbal vocalization (16,66%)

- **[Laughs]** which endorses the male's utterance: "how to spend a long day without eating."

1 news marker (16,66%)

- **Really?** Which reflects the the female's surprise towards the male's utterance, "how to spend a long day without eating."

As far as the male is concerned, the only supportive utterance he used, as table 32 indicates, was:

- **Really?**, the news marker, which mirrors his reaction towards the female's utterance: "I'm still in the field of teaching."

Apart from this, the male did not respond to most of the female's utterances.

## **17   Transcription of Conversation 17**

F: Hello, good morning!

M: Good morning.

F: How are you?

M: I am good, and you?

F: I am fine. What is your name?

M: My name is Housseem, and yours?

F: My name is Hannene. Where are you from, Housseem?

M: I am from Constantine, and you?

F: I am from Constantine, too. Are you studying here in this university?

M: Yeah, Yeah. I study English. What about you?

F: I study English.

M: **Okay1.   Good.**

F: What do you think about this university?

M: er... Actually, I have been studying here for four years, and I think everything is good, except the conditions of studying: I do not like it. I do not like it much, but we have to



study. We have no chance, we have no other solutions. You should... you should prepare yourself.

F: **Yeah1.**

M: So, what do you like...about your studies...what do you like?

F: Actually, I have a dream.

M: **Mmhm.**

F: I want to study abroad.

M: **Yeah.**

F: In UK.

M: **Okay 2.**

F: Can you advise me about studying there?

M: er... Advising you. I have two advices...two pieces of advice for you. So, first of all, you have to put your goal in front of your eyes because you are going to UK, you know. You have a lot of places to visit, you will know a lot of people, friends, okay? So, where we will consider a distruction for you. So, you have to focus on your goal and just go forward. Second of all, you have to be very sociable with people because you have to know new people, new friends and they will help you a lot to get...to adapt in that university you are studying in, and to gain more from them. So, this is two main pieces of advice I should give you.

F: You like to travel?

M: Yeah, yeah, and yeah. I like travelling a lot, but... we have the same dream of you...yours.

F: **Yeah 2**

M: I have the same dream. I want to go to study abroad in UK, but mainly mainly I want to go to just two reasons. I don't like to study.

F: Where did you travel before ?

M: I travelled to Tunisia, Morocco

F: Morroco. Can you tell me something about Morocco?

M: Yeah....something about Morocco: Everyone wants to gain money [laughs]

F: Really? [Laughter]

M: But it's a very beautiful country, very very beautiful country.

F: Yeah 3.

Considering Conversation 17, tables (40) and (41) below envelop the backchannels uttered by the female and the male respectively:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Morroco</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterancce
<u>Really ?</u>	News marker
<u>[laughs]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Yeah 3.</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL: 06	

**Table 39 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 17**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Good</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Mmhm</u>	Continuer
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL: 05	

**Table 40 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 17**

What two tables above suggest is that both pictured a great similarity. That is to say, the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence in table (40) is not very different from the one in table (41). As it is noticed, the female backchanneled 6 times, while the male 5 times.

Another common aspect is the prominence of the acknowledging utterances which appeared 3 times in each table. This, once again, sets such backchannelling utterances as the most uttered ones, compared to many others. This, in turn, opens the door for the unequal distribution of the different types of backchannels.

Going back to table (44), the backchannels the female uttered can be distributed as follows:

3 acknowledging utterances (50%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance: "we have no chance, we have no other solutions. So, this is your first year: You should... you should prepare yourself."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I like travelling a lot, but... we have the same dream of you...yours."
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "But it's a very beautiful country, very very beautiful country."

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (16,66%)

- **Morocco** which reitrates the male's *Morocco*

1 news marker (16,66%)

- **Really?** which shows how the female reacted towards the male's utterance, "Everyone wants to gain money."

1 non-verbal vocalization (16,66%)

- **[laughter]** which mirrors the male's [laughter]

The male's 5 backchannels, as table (34) exhibits, were the following:

3 acknowledging utterances (60%)

- **Okay1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "this is my first year here."

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I want to study abroad."
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "In UK."

1 assessing utterance (20%)

- **Good** which assesses the female's utterance : "This is my first year here"

1 continuer (20%)

- **Mmhm** which seeks continuity to the female's idea, "Actually, I have a dream."

## **18 Transcription of Conversation 18**

M: Hello! How did the oral presentation go for you?

F: Okay, my oral presentation it was so good, but in fact I was ...so afraid to do it.

M: Why did you panic      = = or you were stressed?

F:                              = = I do kn... I was so stressed. In fact I was pr...I p... I was p...  
preparing it well and I had many informations about the topic I have chosen, but you  
know facing people it is not an easy task.

M: Is it? So I want to ask you: Why do you get stressed when facing people? Do you  
think that is psychological?

F: You know? You know what? When you stand here and... in the place and facing the  
people, you feel that each person is looking to your eyes and just waiting where and when  
you did a small mistake. That's why.

M: I do not think- I think that in order to avoid this problem in the future, you need to...to  
practise, you need to record your presentation in order to not fall in the same mistakes  
and to...to be comfortable when facing people.

F: **Yeah**

M: and performing an oral pr... an oral presentation.

F: Believe me, I asked my sister and I said to her try to give me some...some steps to  
follow to avoid this stress and she told me... I must look to their eyes. In fact, I tried to

make yourself elsewhere but not...but not directly on their eyes. So, I can control my stress and... do it easily.

M: **This is a good piece of advice !**

The backchannels, arising from Conversation 18, are embraced in the tables (35) (36) below:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 41 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 18**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>This is a good piece of advice!</u></b>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 42 : The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 18**

What has to be said about table (42) and (43) is that both reveal a low frequency of backchannels'occurrence in the sense that both participants reacted merely once. This, in turn, leads to say that neither the female nor the male paid great attention to their role as listeners.

Apart from the two categories used (the acknowledging utterance by the female and assessing one by the male), the rest, including continuers, collaborative utterances and others, were absent. This can be ascribed to the participants' unfamiliarity with such categories.

Concerning the supportive utterance the female adopted table (42) houses:

One acknowledging utterance (100%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I think that in order to avoid this problem in the future, you need to...to practice, you need to record your presentation in order to not fall in the same mistakes and to...to be comfortable when facing people."

As far as the male is concerned, table (36) suggests that he was attentive through the use of:

1 assessing utterance (100%)

- **This is a good piece of advice!** Which is a backup for the female's utterance, "believe me, I asked my sister and I said to her try to give me some...some steps to follow to avoid this stress and she told me... I must look to their eyes. In fact, I tried to make yourself elsewhere but not...but not directly on their eyes. So, I can control my stress and... do it easily."

## 19 Transcription of Conversation 19

M: Hello, Jannah! How are you?

F: I am fine, thanks. What about you

M: I am fine, too. Hey Jannah what's up?

F: I am going to my best friend's wedding this weekend. Er... I would like to take some pictures for his...for his website. Would you mind if I borrowed your new digital camera?

M: Er... no. That's okay. I guess- I do not think I will need it this weekend.

F: Thanks a million.

M: Sure. Have...have you used a digital camera before? It's sort of complicated.

F: **Sure**. A couple of time. Would it be okay if I picks up of fray...Friday night?

M: Yeah. I guess so.

F: By the way, are you busy?

M: Not really.

F: Can you help me with my homework?

M: Which kind of home work is that?

F: Physics of course.

M: What should I do for you?

F: Please help me to solve this exercise about how to find the speed and the way of the falling ball.

M: You have to do it yourself.

F: Oh it's very difficult for me, but you surely can do it. It takes me a long time just to find how to start it.

M: Well, you just need to go on.

F: Please, it is a little complicated for me.

M: Not if you really try.

F: Will you or won't you help me?

M: I will help you, but not to er... to solve it for you.

F: Erm... you do not seem to like me having a good grade?

M: Of course, I do.

F: So why do you refuse to do it?

M: Oooh, little lady! You should ask me when you have a problem.

F: **Alright**. I will come back when I need you.

M: **Okay**. Anytime.

F: Good bye!

M: Good bye!

The highlighted backchannels from Conversation 19 are classified in the tables below:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Sure</u></b>	Acknowledgement

<u>Alright</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 02	

**Table 43 : The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 19**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 44: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 19**

In light of what the two tables above imply, one can safely say that once again the participants were not highly attentive listeners. What can endorse this is what the table (44) and (45) reveal:

- 1- The frequency of the backchannels's occurrence is not that high (only 2 backchannels in table (44) and 1 in table (45)) ;
- 2- Neither the female nor the male diversified their backchannels; those which the participants used pertain to the same category, acknowledgement.

The fact that the participants did not provide much feedback on the speaker's utterances can be explained by the little concern the participants give to their role as listeners and their limited knowledge about the different reactions towards the speaker.

Going back to table (44), the two backchannels the female uttered were:

2 acknowledging utterances (100%)

- Sure which acknowledges the male's utterance, "it's sort of complicated."
- Alright which acknowledges the male's utterance, "you should ask me when you have a problem."

Concerning table (45), the male used:

1 acknowledging utterance (100%)



- Okay which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I will come back when I need you."

## 20 Transcription of Conversation 20

F: Are you a student here?

M: Yeah. I am a student actually, and I am studying Applied Linguistics. I have been here for four years actually.

F: Okay 1, this is good! What do you think about this university because you study here for a long time?

M: Yeah I do not know what to say...examining this question is somehow too general as for... I do not know...for the staff, it's...it's okay. It's much better than other universities that English is the first one in Algeria or the second. Well in English, I am 100% sure that it's the first.

F: Mmhm1

M: As for other fields, I do not know.

F: Mhmm 2, Okay 2

M: Erm... about the teachers, I would say that like 80% are fine alright! and I hope that the 20% of them are not going to listen to this recording [laughter]

F: [Laughter] Yeah 1. This is okay for me.

M: Yeah ....what else? About students?

F: Yeah.

M: I will go like 90% are careless.

F: Yeah 2 yeah3 yeah 4.

M: Discounting myself obviously.

F: Yeah5 yeah6 okay 3

M: About preparations, and the...I do not know how to c...do we call that. The tools or the equipments yeah

F: Yeah 7

M: That is like terrible [laughs]

F: Yeah 8 yeah 9 [laughter] 2 = we can see that.

M: = = to go frank.

F: We can see that. This is

M: Mmhm

F: Horrible. What do you think? I am a first year English here so any advice for me?

M: Erm... any advices, any advices. Just study hard and try to

F: Concentrate maybe to...

M: It's not about you have to concentrate. It's about: Do not work hard; work smart!

F: Yeah 10. This is a good one! I like it a lot.

M: Thank you.

The backchannels arising from Conversation 20 are grouped as the following:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>This is good !</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Mmhm 1</u>	Continuer
<u>Mmhm 2</u>	Continuer
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[laughs 1]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 4</u>	Acknowledgement

<u>Yeah 5</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 6</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 7</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 8</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 9</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[Laughs 2]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Concentrate maybe to</u>	Collaborative completive utterance
<u>Yeah 10</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>This is a good one !</u>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 20	

Table 45: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 20

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Mmhm</u>	Continuer
TOTAL : 02	

Table 46: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 20

What can be said about the tables (46) and (47) is that the female participant was overwhelmingly more attentive than the male participants. The female backchanneled 20 times, while the male only 2. Therefore, the frequency of the female's backchannels' occurrence is higher than the one of the male's. On top, despite the fact that the female adopted different categories of backchannels, she highly stuck to the acknowledging

utterances. This, another time, reflects the participants' failure to equally distribute the categories. As for the male, his failure lies in the fact that he rarely backchannelled.

Going to table (46), the categories of the 20 backchannels uttered by the female were distributed as follows:

13 acknowledging utterances (representing 65% of all the backchannels) which are:

- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I am a master one student actually, and I am studying Applied Linguistics. I have been here for four years actually."
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "As for other fields, I do not know"
- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Erm... about the teachers, I would say that like 80% are fine alright !and I hope that the 20% of them are not going to listen to this recording"
- **Yeah2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I will go like 90% are careless"
- **Yeah3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I will go like 90% are careless"
- **Yeah4** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I will go like 90% are careless"
- **Yeah5** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Discounting myself obviously"
- **Yeah6** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Discounting myself obviously"
- **Okay 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Discounting myself obviously"
- **Yeah7** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "about preparations, and the...I do not know how to c...do we call that. the tools or the equipments yeah"
- **Yeah8** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "That is like terrible"

- **Yeah9** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "That is like terrible"
- **Yeah10** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "it's not about you have to concentrate. It's about : Do not work hard ; work smart !"

2 continuers (10%)

- **Mmhm 1** which urges continuity of the male's utterance, "Well in English, I am 100% sure that it's the first."
- **Mmhm 2** which also invites the male to continue, "As for other fields, I do not know"

2 assessing utterances (10%)

- **This is good!** which assesses the male's utterance, "I have been here for four years actually."
- **This is a good one!** which assesses the male's utterance, "It's about: Do not work hard ; work smart !"

2 non –verbal vocalizations (10%)

- **[Laughter 1]** which is a reaction towards the male's laughter.
- **[Laughter 2]** which is a reaction towards the male's laughter.

1 collaborative completive utterance (5%)

- **Concentrate maybe to** which completes the male's utterance, " Just study hard and try to"

As far as table (47) is concerned, the male participant used the two following backchannel categories:

1 acknowledgement (50%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "This is okay for me"

1 continuer (50%)

- **mmhm** which invites continuity for, "We can see that. This is", uttered by the female.

## 21   Transcription of Conversation 21

M: Do you like these years...study?

F: Not really? Actually, I feel like the modules are a bit

M: **Boring**

F: More than boring actually.

M: **Yeah1** and there...and there is a lot of blanks in the schedule.

F: **Exactly1**, **Exactly2** and you feel like... you see no relationship between what we are studying and what we are going to be in the future you see.

M: **Yeah2**

F: For example, studying I do not know.

M: **Phonetics?**

F: yeah phonetics, for example, I know English is the foreign language. I know we have to... I do not know.

M: **To learn it** but...

F: **Exactly3**, but it is still- since we are not native speakers, I think we cannot and we will never manage to = = prod

M: = = we will never be as good as they...as they are.

F: **That's true**, **Exactly4**

M: Yeah

F: For some reason, I do not know I feel like they are just- they do not...they do not care about what we are studying.

M: **Yeah 3**

F: And that's it. There is no...erm there is no importance yeah you see.

M: **I think that too**. But in the speciality the teachers I...I hate them all

F: **[laughter] 1**

M: Starting from all= = it's not

F: = = Are you, are you sure of recording this?

M: Yeah

F: Are you sure?

M: All the teachers I hate them.

F: [laughter] 2 hey you can go to jail. Hey hey you can go to jail.

M: Okay. It does not matter. It does not matter.

F: It does not? So you are ready to go to jail.

M: I have a good lawyer. Do not worry about that.

F: A good liar or a good= = lawyer?

M:                                = = lawyer I said a good lawyer.

F: You know they say : a good l...lawyer is a good liar.

M: Yeah 4

F: Do you know this?

M: I know this

F: So basically you have a good liar?

M: Yeah

F: Yeah that's right uhuh. So, you hate them all?

M: Yeah.

F: What about their methods of teaching?

M: Exactly I hate about them their methods. For example, last year we studied translation better than this year.

F: Yeah, it is true.

The classification of the backchannels uttered in Conversation 21 is provided by the tables below:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Exactly 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Exactly 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>That's true</u></b>	Assessing utterance
<b><u>Exactly 3</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Exactly 4</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>[laughter] 1</u></b>	Non-verbal vocalization
<b><u>[laughter] 2</u></b>	Non-verbal vocalization
<b><u>Yeah</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>It's true</u></b>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 09	

**Table 47: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 21**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Boring</u></b>	Collaborative completive utterance
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Phonetics</u></b>	Collaborative completive utterance
<b><u>To learn it</u></b>	Collaborative completive utterance
<b><u>Yeah 3</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>I think that too</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Okay</u></b>	Acknowledgement



<b><u>Yeah 4</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 09	

**Table 48: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 21**

The observer to the two tables above fiercely notices that they are alike, in the sense that the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence in both is the same. Both the female and the male participants backchannelled 9 times.

As far as diversity, both participants did not, to a great extent, vary their backchannels. It is quite clear that the participants immensely confined their utterances to the acknowledging category. The latter represents 55, 55% of all the female's backchannels, while 66, 66% of the male's.

This, once again, echoes the fact that neither of the participants is acquainted with the different ways of showing engaged listenership. This is ensured by the low frequency of some categories (assessing utterances, and non- verbal vocalizations in table 41; collaborative completive utterances in table 42), and the absence of some others (continuers, for example, in both tables)

As for how the female's backchannels (table 48), they were used as follows:

5 acknowledging utterances (55,55%)

- **Exactly 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "there is a lot of blanks in the schedule"
- **Exactly 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "there is a lot of blanks in the schedule"
- **Exactly 3** which acknowledges the male's completive utterance "to learn it"
- **Exactly 4** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "we will never be as good as they...as they are."
- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance "last year we studied translation better than this year"

2 assessing utterances (22,22%)

- **That's true** which assesses the male's utterance, "we will never be as good as they...as they are."
- **It's true** which assesses the male's utterance, "last year we studied translation better than this year."

2 non-verbal vocalizations (22,22%)

- **[laughter] 1** which responses to the male's utterance, "But in the speciality the teachers I...I hate them all"
- **[Laughter] 2** which responses to the male's utterance, "All the teachers I hate them."

Going back to table (49), the backchannels uttered by the male participant were used as follows:

6 acknowledging utterances (66,66%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "more than boring actually"
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "you feel like...you see no relationship between what we are studying and what we are going to be in the future"
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "they do not...they do not care about what we are studying. What matters to them most is like we are M1"
- **I think that too** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "There is no...erm there is no importance yeah you see"
- **Yeah 4** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "you know they say: a good l...lawyer is a good liar."
- **Okay** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "Hey hey you can go to jail"

3 collaborative completive utterances (33,33%)

- **Boring** which collaboratively completes the female's utterance, "I feel like the modules are a bit"
- **Phonetics** which collaboratively completes the female's utterance, "For example, studying I do not know"

- **To learn it** which collaboratively completes the female's utterance, "I know we have to... I do not know"

## 22 Transcription of Conversation 22

F: Hello, Fayçal! How are you?

M: Good, thanks. And you?

F: Fine. Fayçal, your english is so good. How did you learn it?

M: Well, in my country everyone has to take English. Starting in the first grade, I have been taking English courses for twelve years now.

F: Waw, **that's interesting!** I remember when we took that trip last year, and visit your family. It seemed like the ra... there are not so many people who could speak with...with me in English.

M: That's because they do not speak English that much.

F: But they spea...they speak it in school, right? Maybe they just did not like me so the...they did not want to talk to me.

M: No. Actually they liked you a lot. They told me they thought you were very nice. They are just shy. They are not used to talking with foreigners. I remember when I first came to US, I was very nervous about speaking with people.

F: I seemed- I thought... I thought there were a l...a lot of Americans teaching in your country.

M: **Yeah, that's true!** There are probably twice as many now as they were five years ago, but they are mostly in the cities. My family lives in the country.

F: I wonder why. Personally, I prefer the country to the city. It's so quiet and peaceful. If I were to teach, I would want to teach in the country.

M: Do you think you would want to t... to teach some day? I know the schools around my town are looking for teachers. So if you want I can call them and get more information.

F: No, I do not think so. I would need to stay there for a year, and I do not think that I can take that much time of work.

M: Well, if you change your mind, let me know. I think you would be a really...really good teacher.

F: Thank you.

M: You are welcome.

The following two tables restate the forms of the backchannels uttered and clarify their functions:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>that's interesting !</u></b>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 49: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 22**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>that's true !</u></b>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 02	

**Table 50: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 22**

As tables (50) and (51) reveal, little did the participants backchannel. Numerically, the female uttered one backchannel form, while the male two. The frequency of the backchannels' occurrence is not that high, and so is, automatically, diversity. This might entail that the two participants preferred to be almost silent while listening.

Neither the female nor the male made use of collaborative repetitive or completive utterances, continuers, non-verbal vocalizations, and the news marker *really*? Except for the assessing utterances (used by both participants), and the acknowledgement *yeah* (uttered by the male), the aforementioned four categories were absent.

This leads to assume that the participants are not well- acquainted and exposed to most of backchannels, which may due to the fact that students do pay more attention to speaking than to listening. This makes them think that listening almost involves silence, and that uttering some expressions may disturb the speaker.

Concerning the backchannels the female uttered, table (50) suggests that she was welded to a single backchannel category:

1 assessing utterance (100%)

- **That's interesting!** which assesses the male's utterance, "starting in the first grade, I have been taking English courses for twelve years now."

As for the backchannels used by the male (Table 51), they fell into two categories:

1 acknowledgement (50%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "I thought there were a l...a lot of Americans teaching in your country."

1 assessing utterance (50%)

- **That's true!** which assesses the female's utterance, "I thought there were a l...a lot of Americans teaching in your country."

## **23 Transcription of Conversation 23**

M: Honesty is saying the truth or stating ...or stating a fact, and I think we should be honest about everything in our lives.

F: But I ...I disagree with you because honesty...should not be in all cases. For example, we have some cases we cannot tell the truth...the ...the whole truth to that person.

M : er...I disagree with you also in this last point because I think that no matter what you should say this truth, no matter what ... no matter what the situation, whenever, wherever. I think the truth is...is something good because you may hurt somebody, but at least you are saying the truth.

F: But, for example, when...in case of when patient...patient-Do you agree... I mean do you agree with telling the patient the whole truth or not?

M: Yeah = =I agree.

F: = = as an example. But if this killed him, and make him feel... uncomfortable and...so on.

M : So, you mean you can...you can say that to the patient that everything will be okay, and you will be okay and == no problem

F:                      = = no, it's not telling the patient, but hiding some truth or telling him or te...telling him in a good way, not for example tell him.

M: **Yeah 1, of course.**

F: You're ill. For example, you have cancer.

M: But you can say you have cancer, but in a good way...in a good way, and in an honest way

F: Give...give me an example.

M: I do not know, I do not mean that you...you go to the patient, and tell him, "Hey, man! You got cancer you will die in six days". No, not like that.

F: But this is the total honesty. This is honesty.

M: No, it's not like that. This is the rude honesty. I mean the honesty ...this type of honesty I mean that you go to the patient, and you tell him, "to be honest with you, sir, you have cancer, but it's okay. Just have hope and... try to"

F: But this is...but it is still honesty.

M: **Yeah 2,** it's honesty.

After transcribing the conversation, the backchannels were identified in the following tables :

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL : 00	

**Table 51: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 23**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Of course</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 03	

**Table 52: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 23**

Having a glance at the tables above can lead to safely stating the following:

- In terms of frequency, the female was less attentive than the male in the sense that the former did not backchannel, where the latter backchannelled thrice.
- In terms of diversity, however, the male was as unaware as the female (after all, the female used no backchannel). All the three backchannels the male uttered totally pertain to the acknowledging category. Assessing utterances, continuers, collaborative backchannels, non-verbal vocalizations, and the news marker *really?* were, once again, ignored by the participants.

Apart from table (52) which houses no backchannel by the female, table (53) comprises:

3 acknowledging backchannels used by the male (100%)

- **Yeah1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "it's not telling the patient, but hiding some truth or telling him or te...telling him in a good way, not for example tell him."
- **Of course** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "it's not telling the patient, but hiding some truth or telling him or te...telling him in a good way, not for example tell him."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "But this is...but it is still honesty"

## 24 Transcription of Conversation 24

M: Hi, Oumeima! How are you?

F: Actually, I am not good.

M: Why?

F: Because of my parents. They are getting divorced and the studies.

M: Wow! I am sorry for you, Oumeima. You know that you are my precious friend, and I love you a lot, Sister.

F: Oh thank you, Nisso. You are so kind, and I am loving you too, but what about you?

M: Oh, nothing special. But, I see you holding papers.

F: Oh, yeah.

M: Those papers are for what?

F: The papers are about the basic definition of poetry.

M: **Okay 1, it's interesting**. I adore poems.

F: **Really?** Do you adore poems? But which ones?

M: The romantic ones. The s...especially the Shakespearian's.

F: **Okay 1, It's a good choice**. Which one do you prefer?

M: *The Fairy Song*.

F: So do I!

M: **Okay 2**. So, are you free tomorrow?

F: Tomorrow... I guess no, but let me check my program. Tomorrow... okay I am free.

M: So, we can go to drink coffee, and talk about poems and read another one.

F: **Okay 2**, especially the new ones... a friend of mine told me that there is...there are romantic poems... I will check...I will tell...tell her

M: = = Tell him to

F: = = okay I tell her about that to bring it tomorrow.

M: **Okay 3**, it's...**it's a good choice**.



F: Okay 3. So we can say deal?

M: yeah

The following tables (52) and (53) set the following categorization of the backchannels uttered in Conversation 24:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Really ?</u>	News marker
<u>Okay 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>it's a good choice</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 3.</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 06	

**Table 53: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 24**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Okay 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>it's interesting</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Okay 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Okay 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>it's a good choice</u>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 05	

**Table 54: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 24**

Tables (54) and (55) show great similarity between the female and the male participants. In terms of the number of the backchannels used, the female did not highly exceed the male. The former uttered 6 backchannels, while the latter 5.

What is more important, however, is that the acknowledging utterances stood out in both tables (4 out of 6 in table 54; 3 out of 5 in table 55). As for this conversation, on top of many others, the acknowledging category is, by all means, the basic skill for exhibiting listenership.

Another common thing between the female and the male is that both assessed each other. There was one assessing utterance (table 54) with the basic assessing adjective, *good*, and two with *good and interesting* in table (55). Many other categories were discarded by both participants.

Concerning how the six female's backchannels were distributed, they were used as follows:

4 acknowledging utterances (the highest proportion 66, 66%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "But I see you holding papers"
- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "the romantic ones. The s...especially the Shakespearian's".
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "So, we can go to drink coffee, and talk about poems and read another one"
- **Okay 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "it's...it's a good choice."

1 news marker (16,66%)

- **Really?** which expresses surprise toward the male's utterance, "I adore poems"

1 assessing utterance

- **it's a good choice** which assesses the male's utterance, "The s...especially the Shakespearian's"

As far as the male's backchannels are concerned (table 48), they were distributed as follows:

3 acknowledging utterances (60%)

- **Okay 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "The papers are about the basic definition of poetry"
- **Okay 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "so do I!"
- **Okay 3** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "tell her about that to bring it tomorrow."

2 assessing utterances (40%)

- **it's interesting** which assesses the female's utterance, "The papers are about the basic definition of poetry."
- **it's a good choice** which assesses the female's utterance, "I tell her about that to bring it tomorrow."

## 25 Transcription of Conversation 25

F: Hello, Saad. How are you?

M: I am not well. I have been suffering from cough. But what about you?

F: I am fine, but you are not well as we...as you have become a chain- smoker nowadays. Smoking can be one of the main causes of your sickness.

M: The doctor also s...said so. He also said that smoking might cause cancer, heart attack, and high blood pressure.

F: The doctor said roughly one puff of cigarette smoker contains 15 billion of particles of matter which are fatal...fatal to health.

M: Beside tobacco, that air forms brown sticky mass in the lungs, and it hinders the easy flow of blood.

F: Then, why you are not giving up smoking? Is there anything good in smoking?

M: No, nothing. Nobody could put any argument in favour of smoking.

F: **Absolutely**. Remember that smoking affects not only the smoker, but also the people that maybe around them.

M: **You are right**. It's also cause a great deal of financial and economic loss.

F: Knowing so much, why do...you do not give up smoking? If you thought seriously about it effect, you should not smoke anymore.

M: I tried to give up, but I could not...can...I cannot even concentrate on my study without smoking.

F: It's a lean excuse. If you want to...if you want, you can give up somking, In this case your will power is enough. It is ... a suicidal habit.

M: **Yeah**, I know it is... a s ...suicidal habit that kills a person slowly. However, within the shortest possible time, I will give up smoking totally.

F: Thank you for your wise decision. You should not smoke anymore. Remember that the sooner you give up, the sooner if... it will be for you.

The backchannels the female and the male uttered in Conversation 25 are classified in the two tables below:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Absolutely</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 01	

**Table 55: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 25**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>You are right</u></b>	Assessing utterance
<b><u>Yeah</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 02	

**Table 56: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 25**

Table (56) and (57) are among those which mirror indifference to listening. The humble number of the backchannels uttered implies that the participants were passive listeners. In addition to the low frequency of the backchannels' occurrence (1 and 2 in table 56 and 57 respectively), there was no noticeable diversity in the utterances.

It can immensely be observed that the only supportive utterance used by the female (table 56) is attributed to the category the previous participants adhered to, notably acknowledgement. In a similar vein, the male participant made use of the acknowledging category in addition to the assessing one.

As always, the acknowledging category stands as the basis upon which the participants rely to mirror their contributions in a conversation as listeners. The gap, however, lies in the fact that listeners ignored many other ways of engaged listenership as: continuers, completive, and repetitive utterances. Once more, sticking to one category and ignoring others leads to say that the participants are not well-knowledgeable when it comes to attentive listening.

To see what the female's backchannel modifies, table (56) suggests:

1 acknowledgement (100%)

- **Absolutely** which modifies the male's utterance, "Nobody could put any argument in favour of smoking."

Going back to table 57, the male's two backchannels were:

1 assessing utterance (50%)

- **You are right**, which assesses the female's utterance, "Remember that smoking affects not only the smoker, but also the people that maybe around them."

1 acknowledgement (50%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "It is ... a suicidal habit."

## **26 Transcription of Conversation 26**

M: Hi! How are you doing, Jane? Jane, are not you hearing me?

F: Sorry are you addressing me?

M: Of course, I am addressing Jane.

F: Can you look at me, please?

M: I am so sorry, I was reading the newspaper. I did not pay attention to you. I am so sorry.

F: **Yeah 1.** There is no problem, it happens. You look like a busy guy.

M: **Yeah 1.** I am tired. I am so busy that's why I cannot organize any person now. Where is Jane?

F: She went to her honeymoon with her husband.

M: **With her husband !?** So she got married?

F: Yeah. Last week.

M: She didn...she did not invite me.

F: Maybe your phone was turned off.

M: No. My phone was... turned on all the time. Maybe I was out of range because I was in expedition.

F: Maybe because all her friends were there in the party.

M: How was it?

F: It was a wonderful party. We had a lot of fun e...especially food was delicious.

M: Poor me! I like a lot food.

F: **Really?** Your body does not tell me so.

M: **Yeah 2,** because I am practicing sport a lot. Though I smoke, but I am pre...I am practice a lot s...sport.

F: **Okay, that's good!**

M: So I wanna book a room. S... I hope you are going to help me.

F: No there is no plo... problem. Can you give me your personal... personal...information?

M: You can take a look...on the computer.

F: ...The computer is not working so... sorry can you give me == your identi...ty card ?

M: == no problem, I am going to give you my identity card.

F: **Yeah 2**

M: So, you can write all the information.

F: Yeah 3. Do you want a room with one bed or two beds?

M: I prefer is...just with one bed because I am...am going to spend my night alone. I am not going to invite any person.

F: Yeah 4

M: I am so tired. I need to sleep because I am going to go to America... = = tomorrow.

F: = = Yeah 5. So you need some rest to com... complete your work.

M: No problem. Do you need more information?

F: Can you give me your... phone number?

M: No problem. I can give you everything even fa...my facebook account because you look so pretty.

F: [laughter] thank you

M: So my phone number is: 0790.53.23.687

The backchannels obtained from Conversation 26 were elucidated as follows:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Really ?</u>	News marker
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>That's good !</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 4</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 5</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[ Laughter]</u>	Non- verbal vocalization
TOTAL : 09	

**Table 57: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 26**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<b><u>Yeah 1</u></b>	Acknowledgement
<b><u>With her husband !?</u></b>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<b><u>Yeah 2</u></b>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 03	

**Table 58: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 26**

Numerically speaking, it can be seen from the two tables above that the female's backchannels outnumbered the male's. While the female backchannelled 9 times, the male backchannelled only 3. In terms of the frequency of the backchannels' occurrence, the female was a highly active listener.

When it comes to diversity, however, what one can clearly notice is that both participants, to an overwhelming degree, were glued to the acknowledging category. To illustrate, as table 58 suggests, of all the 9 backchannels the female uttered, 6 did acknowledge the male (the rest belong to different categories. Similarly, table 59 shows that 2 out of the 3 backchannels uttered by the male pertain to the acknowledging category (the third was a repetitive utterance).

Another important thing to say is that Conversation 26, as many others, does not embrace a number of other categories including continuers, in particular. Accordingly, it is worthwhile to say that acknowledging utterances, as opposed to other categories, are enormously put into practice as a matter of habit.

Going back to table (58), the female's backchannels are categorized as follows:

6 acknowledging utterances (66,66%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I am so sorry"
- **Okay** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "though I smoke, but I am pre...I am practise a lot s...sport."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I am going to give you my identity card."



- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "so, you can write all the information."
- **Yeah 4** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I prefer is...just with one bed because I am...am going to spend my night alone. I am not going to invite any person."
- **Yeah 5** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I need to sleep because I am going to go to America... = tomorrow"

1 news marker (11,11%)

- **Really?** which expresses surprise towards the male's utterance, "I like a lot food."

1 assessing utterance (11,11%)

- **That's good** which assesses the male's utterance, "though I smoke, but I am pre...I am practise a lot s...sport."

1 non- verbal vocalization (11,11%)

- **[Laughter]** which is a reaction towards the male's utterance, "I can give you everything even fa...my facebook account because you look so pretty."

Concerning table (59), the male's backchannels were distributed as follows:

2 acknowledging utterances (66,66%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "you look like a busy guy."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the female's utterance, "your body does not tell me so."

1 Collaborative repetitive utterance (33,33%)

- **With her husband !?** which reiterates "with her husband", uttered by the female.

## 27 Transcription of Conversation 27

M: Hello, Ikram!

F: Hi, Oussama! How are you?

M: I am good and what about you?

F: I am just fine [laughter]

M: [laughter]. Okay.

F: What do you think about the ...the situation of Algerian youth?

M: So the situation of the Algerian youth. I think that...really it's a horrible situation. =  
= You know

F: = = and a big problem

M: Yeah. It's ...It is a horrible situation. You know the first problem of...of the Algerian situation is jobless. The majority of them they don't have a work. They do not have anything to do. Even if they are finished their studies and they have too much skills, they cannot find a work. So...life is difficult here in our country.

F: Yeah 1.

M: And you? What you think about this?

F: Well, jobless is not good especially for men because you must work and for responsibility for the future life.

M: Responsibility is- In our time, responsibility is for...for both of us...of us [laughter]  
= = not just for men.

F: = = but I think... for the men is more.

M: Here in Algeria [laughter]

F: [Laughter] and why do you want to work?

M: Why I want to work. So you know the first thing: Working is one of the basic needs in our life. We need to work.

F: Mmhm

M: First we need to work to... the first thing is to have...to have money and to have something to do every day and....to have money ... and having money can help you to realize your plans yeah.

F: Yeah 2. Do you have any plans for the future?

M: So, now I am a student. So my first plan I will make it with the plans. My first plan is ...just to have a work now and to getting rich and...

F: = = What about?

M: = = to go out of this country

F: Yeah3

What follows expounds the supportive utterances highlighted above and labels them:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Mmhm</u>	Continuer
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 05	

**Table 59: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 27**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Okay</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 03	

**Table 60: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 27**

In light of the two tables drawn from the conversation 27, it can be noticed that the female slightly surpassed the male as far as the frequency of backchannels' occurrence is concerned. While the female uttered 5 backchannels (table 60), the male uttered only 3 (table 61).

In terms of diversity, the female also turned to use 3 different backchannels (an acknowledgement, a non-verbal vocalization and a continuer), exceeding the male who used 2 categories; namely, acknowledgement and a non-verbal vocalization. It means that both participants acknowledged and laughed toward each other's utterances, which entails mutual interest from one hand, but ignorance of some backchannels as the assessing ones and from the other hand.

Being prominent, acknowledgement represents the category to occur most in both tables. The category appeared thrice in table (60) and twice in table (61), representing 60% and 66, 66%. It is another way of saying that the participants, to a considerable extent, relied on acknowledgement, *yeah* in particular, to perform their role as listeners.

As far as the female's backchannels are concerned, there are, as table 60 suggests, 5 which can be distributed as follows:

3 acknowledging utterances (60%)

- **Yeah 1**, which acknowledges the male's utterance, "so...life is difficult here in our country.
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, " First we need to work to... the first thing is to have...to have money and to have something to do every day and....to have money ... and having money can help you to realize your plans"
- **Yeah 3** which acknowledges the male's utterance," to go out of this country

1 non-verbal vocalization (20%)

- **[laughter]** which reinforces the male's laughter

1 continuer (20%)

- **Mmhm** which asks for the male's utterance continuity, "We need to work"

As for the male's backchannels (table 61), they were categorized as this:

1 non-verbal vocalization (33,33%)

- [laughter] which reinforces the female's laughter

2 acknowledging utteraances (66,66%)

- Okay which acknowledges the female's utterance, “ I am just fine”
- yeah which acknowledges the female's utterance, “ a big problem”

## 28 Transcription of Conversation 28

M: I have never thought about being a...a student of English.

F: Yeah 1

M: But in a moment when I found myself in...a student of English,

F: Yeah 2

M: I...I could discover many things, and I thought it's the suitable place to me right from the beginning.

F: Yeah 3, good.

M: Yeah and... to say that I was a good student of English since I was in a scientific steam, I was always getting the high marks.

F: Uh huh 1.

M: And always a head of the pack so miss, I am not really...I do not know I will never regret being a student of English.

F: Yeah 4. This is good. I wish I have the same feeling.

M: Thank you. I wish you can adapt with the new situation.

F: Yeah 5 I wish that too. So what do you think of university first?

M: University. So that's really really hard, and your question really stuns me because when I was in...in high school,

F: Uh huh 2

M: I thought that university is something else. Something in new world = = totally different,

F: = = the same thinking.

M: and when I heard my friend always saying university university, I was wishing to... always to sitting back.

F: I think it happen, yeah 6 [laughter]

M: Yeah, of course. But when I get to the university, it's really an anticlimax for me. It's really different,

F: Yeah7

M: and

F: was a shock

M: I was ...I was disappointed.

F: Yeah 8

M: I was sitting back

F: Uh huh

M: Because university [sigh] it's chaos.

F: Yeah 9, it is.

M: It's totally chaos

F: Yeah 10, it is. Yeah 11, indeed. I think that so. So... what do you think of the LMD system?

M: The LMD system. It's what... it's what adds insult to injury. I mean it's just like adding fuel to to fire of course.

F: Yeah 12

M: Because the LMD system is I...I do not know it's not applicable here in Algeria because many students find it...it lacks many advantages of course,

F: Many advantages. Yeah 13

M: and it's not that...that suitable system to adopt.

F: Uh huh 3

Below is the classification of the backchannels from Conversation 28:

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah 1</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 3</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Good</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Uh huh 1.</u>	Continuer
<u>Yeah 4</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>This is good</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 5</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Uh huh 2</u>	Continuer
<u>Yeah 6</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>[laughter]</u>	Non-verbal vocalization
<u>Yeah 7</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 8</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 9</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 10</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 11</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Indeed</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 12</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Many advantages</u>	Collaborative repetitive utterance
<u>Yeah 13</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Uh huh 3</u>	Continuer
TOTAL : 21	

Table 61: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 28

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>Yeah</u>	Acknowledgement
<u>Of course</u>	Acknowledgement
TOTAL : 02	

**Table 62: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 28**

The two tables show a great difference. In terms of the frequency of occurrence, it can be seen that the female backchannelled more than the male did. The former, uttered 21 backchannels while the latter only 2, as table (62) and (63) reveal. It can, therefore, be said that female was overwhelmingly observant of the male's utterances.

As far as backchannels' diversity is concerned, what is worth mentioning is that both participants made use of the acknowledging category. The female, immensely, got glued to the category via uttering *yeah* which led to an unequal distribution of her backchannels. In a similar vein, the male totally stuck to acknowledgement. The difference between the participants appeared when the female, as opposed to the male, managed to use other different categories including continuers, assessment, repetition, and non-verbal vocalization.

Referring to table (62), the female's backchannels were used as follows:

14 acknowledging utterances (66,66%)

- Yeah 1 which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I have never thought about being a...a student of English."
- Yeah 2 which acknowledges the male's utterance, "But in a moment when I found myself in...a student of English"
- Yeah 3 which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I...I could discover many things, and I thought it's the suitable place to me right from the beginning."
- Yeah 4 which acknowledges the male's utterance, "And always a head of the pack so , miss I am not really...I do not know I will never regret being a student of English."



- **Yeah 5** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I wish you can adapt with the new situation."
- **Yeah 6** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "when I heard my friend always saying university university, I was wishing to... always to sitting back."
- **Yeah 7** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "But when I get to the university, it's really an anticlimax for me. It's really different,"
- **Yeah 8** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I was ...I was disappointed."
- **Yeah 9** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "Because university [sigh] it's chaos."
- **Yeah 10** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's totally chaos"
- **Yeah 11** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's totally chaos"
- **Indeed** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's totally chaos"
- **Yeah 12** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "It's what... it's what adds insult to injury. I mean it's just like adding fuel to to fire of course."
- **Yeah 13** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "it lacks many advantages of course"

2 assessing utterances (9,52%)

- **Good** which assesses the male's utterance, "I could discover many things, and I thought it's the suitable place to me right from the beginning."
- **This is good** which assesses the male's utterance, "and always a head of the pack so miss I am not really...I do not know I will never regret being a student of English."

3 continuers (14,28%)

- **Uh huh 1** which invites the male to continue his utterance, "to say that I was a good student of English since I was in a scientific steam, I was always getting the high marks"
- **Uh huh 2** which invites the male to continue his utterance, "I was sitting back"

- **Uh huh 3** which invites the male to continue his utterance, “‘and it’s not that...that suitable system to adopt”

1 non-verbal vocalization (4,76%)

- **[Laughter]** which emphatically reacts to the male’s utterance, “‘when I heard my friend always saying university university, I was wishing to... always to sitting back.’”

1 collaborative repetitive utterance (4,76%)

- **many advantages** which collaboratively repeats many advantages in the male’s utterance, “‘it lacks many advantages of course”

Going to table 63, the two backchannels uttered by the male were :

2 acknowledging utterances (100%)

- **Yeah** which acknowledges the female’s utterance, “‘I think it happen”
- **Of course** which acknowledges the female’s utterance, “‘I think it happen”

## 29 Transcription of Conversation 29

M: Good morning, Miss. How are you doing?

F: Good morning. I am doing good. What about you?

M: I am doing good too. Thanks. Do you study here?

F: Yeah, I am a third year student of English. What about you? Do you study here?

M: Yeah. How do you find studying here?

F: ... Actually it’s easy for those who work hard. But the place in here is so boring, and the teachers are careless, and they do not have much experience. What about you? How do you find it?

M: At first I thought it be interesting, but unf...unfortunately I got disappointed. It turned out to be so boring, but I still like studying here after all because I met new interesting friends.

F: **Oh that’s nice!**

M: Since you have already studied he...three years here, I was wondering if you can give me some advice.

F: Yeah 1, of course. The first advice I would like to give you is that : do not you ever rely on people even teachers they are just... they are to guide you, and you need to study at all by yourself. You need to love what you are studying. Otherwise, you get bored and you will give up.

M: Thank you. What do you want to do after graduation?

F: Obviously I will look for a....a decent job like a translator or a teacher. I do not know. What about you? What do you want to do?

M: I would like to be a teacher or a translator as well it not like we have a choice.

F: Yeah 2, that's right

M: Anyway, thanks for your time and good luck.

F : Welcome.bye

M : bye

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
<u>That's nice</u>	Assessing utterance
<u>Yeah 1</u>	acknowledgement
<u>Of course</u>	acknowledgement
<u>Yeah 2</u>	acknowledgement
<u>That's right</u>	Assessing utterance
TOTAL : 05	

**Table 63: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 29**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL: 00	

**Table 64: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 29**

The difference between tables (64) and (65) is unquestionably considerable. While the female backchanneled 5 times, the male did not backchannel. One can, therefore, say that the female was more willing to react towards the male's utterances.

In terms of the diversity of her backchannels, the female made use of 2 different categories, namely, acknowledgement and assessment, as table (64) indicates. Once again, acknowledgement represents the most prominent skill adopted by the female. The other category the female used was assessment.

What can be observed, however, is that a number of other categories as continuers, repetition, completion, were absent. Perhaps, this is owing to the fact that the female is not in the habit of putting such categories into practice.

To go back to the categories used by the female, table 64 displays:

3 acknowledging utterances (60%)

- **Yeah 1** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I was wondering if you can give me some advice."
- **Of course** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I was wondering if you can give me some advice."
- **Yeah 2** which acknowledges the male's utterance, "I would like to be a teacher or a translator as well it not like we have a choice"

2 assessing utterances (40%)

- **That's nice** which assesses the male's utterance, "I still like studying here after all because I met new interesting friends"
- **That's right** which assesses the male's utterance, "I would like to be a teacher or a translator as well it not like we have a choice"

### **30   Transcription of Conversation 30**

M: Hello, Miss! Good afternoon!

F: Good afternoon, gentleman!

M: May I take some of your time?

F: Yeah, of course. No problem.

M: First of all, what is your name?

F: My name is Safia. How are you?

M: Fine, thanks. I am Ziad. I would like to ask you about a subject most of girls are not interested in.

F: Go ahead!

M: As we all know, Algerian people, Mahrez has won the England Premier League Best Player Trophy, and his team Leicester City won the premier league title. What do you think about this?

F: I think that Mahrez is a very good young player...he played a wonderful season. He really deserve it.

M: Do you think that this will give a positive addition to our national team?

F: Yeah, of course. I hope he help them to win the next African Cup.

M: In your opinion, do you agree that he join Barca or another big team next season?

F: ...No. I do not think that it is good to him he still young, and he has not that experience that allow him to play to a big team.

M: Do you think that our national team Algeria will win the next African cup ?

F: I think so because we have a lot of good players, and we get a good coach.

M : By the way, what's your favourite team ?

F: ...I do not know. Maybe Real Madrid because my braother love them.

M: Real madrid is a very good team they have 10 champions league cups. I am a Barca fan as you know. So this is it. Thank you for your time, lady. I really appreciate this. Thank you

F: Thank you, gentleman.

M: Good bye.

F: Good bye.

Conversation 30, as shown below, is devoid of backchannels

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL : 00	

**Table 65: The Female's Backchannels from Conversation 30**

The Forms of Backchannels	The Functions of Backchannels
No form	No function
TOTAL : 00	

**Table 66: The Male's Backchannels from Conversation 30**

Here, neither of the two participants was attentive. No backchannel was uttered throughout the whole conversation. This, in no uncertain terms, reveals that both participants were totally unaware of using the utterances which support the listener. Surprisingly, the acknowledging category which occurred in most of the previous conversations did not appear in this conversation.

This can be ascribed to the fact that the participants were merely interested in speaking. That is to say, the participants may have assumed that conducting conversation successfully has to do only with how one should speak rather than how they should listen. Their awareness was, therefore, restricted to a single factor.

It is also worthwhile to mention that the participants are not well- informed and exposed to attentive listening, in general and backchannel feedback, in particular during the process of learning a foreign language.

### **Conclusion**

So far, the two minute face-to- face mixed-gender conversations were transcribed and, then, analyzed separately. The conversations were different from each in some aspects. In some conversations, it was the female to backchannel more and in some others, it was the opposite. The following chapter is an attempt to bring back all the results in the 30 conversations for all-encompassing analysis.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# ***THE COMPARISON OF THE PARTICIPANTS' BACKCHANNELS ACROSS GENDER***



## Introduction

In this chapter, one traces back, compares, and interprets the females' and the males' backchannelling behaviours all through the 30 conversations. The comparison is based on two factors: the frequency of the backchannels' occurrences and their diversity. The chapter also answers the two major questions the thesis poses: do females backchannel more than males do? and do females diversify their backchannels more than males?

### 1 The Overall Examination of Gender Similarities and Differences

Since this study is a comparative one, the following table compares the females' and the males' backchannels' frequency of occurrence apart from their types:

<b>Gender</b> <b>Number</b> <b>of</b> <b>Backchannels</b>	<b>THE FEMALES</b>	<b>THE MALES</b>
<b>278</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>100%</b>	<b>64,02%</b>	<b>35,97%</b>

**Table 67: The Total Number of the Participants' Backchannels in the 30 Conversations**

The females fiercely backchannelled more than males do, table 61 denotes. Of all the 278 backchannels, the females uttered 178 (64, 02%) while the male 100 (35, 97%). This finding truly backs up those stated by a number of conversation analysts including

Tannen (1994) who claimed that compared to men, women have the tendency to provide greater number of positive feedback. The female students, by backchannelling 178 times, also reinforced their trait as being cooperative.

In fact, the six categories of backchannels, Gardner (1994) identifies, were uttered by the participants. However, they were not used in the same manner. The following table shows the distribution of the different types of backchannels. It does not take the participants' gender into account in order to extract the key similarity when it comes to the use of the English backchannels.

The Types of Backchannels	<i>Acknowledging Utterances</i>	<i>Assessing Utterances</i>	<i>Continuers</i>	<i>The news marker Really ?</i>	<i>Collaborative Repetitive/Completive Utterances</i>	<i>Non-Verbal Vocalization</i>
The Total Number	163	39	16	07	31	22
Percentage	58,63%	14.02%	05,75%	02,51 %	11,15%	07,91%

**Table 68: The Distribution of the Types of Backchannels Uttered by the Female and Male Participants**

From table 62, it is clear that the different backchannels uttered in the 30 conversations were not equally distributed. The results revealed that gender does not govern backchannels's diversity. That is to say, both the females and the males did not balance their ways of portraying listenership. Numerically, the acknowledgement was found the most outstanding backchannelling category the participants used. Of all the 278 backchannels, 163 were to acknowledge the speaker. One can, then, deduce that students of English most often highly acknowledge each other. However, rarely do they use assessing utterances, continuers, *really ?*, collaborative utterances, and non-verbal vocalization

The following two tables go back to those categories and how the participants reacted to each other when performing the listening role. The distribution of the different ways of showing engaged listenership is also shown.

The Conversations	Acknowledging Utterances	Assessing Utterances	Continuers	The News Marker Really ?	Collaborative Completive/Repetitive Utterances	Non-Verbal Vocalizations
C1	04	05	00	00	03	01
C2	08	01	00	00	01	01
C3	04	00	00	00	01	00
C4	00	00	00	00	00	00
C5	02	00	00	01	00	00
C6	00	00	00	00	00	00
C7	03	00	00	00	00	00
C8	02	00	03	00	00	01
C9	03	00	00	00	01	01
C10	00	00	00	00	00	02
C11	04	00	00	01	01	00
C12	04	01	04	00	02	02
C13	07	03	00	00	03	01
C14	03	00	00	00	01	00
C15	01	00	00	00	01	00
C16	02	02	00	00	00	01
C17	03	00	00	01	01	01
C18	01	00	00	00	00	00
C19	02	00	00	00	00	00
C20	13	02	02	00	01	02
C21	05	02	00	00	00	02
C22	00	01	00	00	00	00
C23	00	00	00	00	00	00
C24	04	01	00	01	00	00

C25	01	00	00	00	00	00
C26	06	01	00	01	00	01
C27	03	00	01	00	00	01
C28	14	02	03	00	01	01
C29	03	02	00	00	00	00
C30	00	00	00	00	00	00
TOTAL	102	23	13	05	17	18
PERCENTAGE	<b>57,30%</b>	<b>12,92%</b>	<b>07,30%</b>	<b>02,80%</b>	<b>09,55%</b>	<b>10,11%</b>

**Table 69: The Frequency of the Females' Backchannels' Occurrence in 30 Conversations**

The Conversations	Acknowledging Utterances	Assessing Utterances	Continuers	The News Marker Really ?	Collaborative Completive/Repetitive Utterances	Non-Verbal Vocalizations
C1	03	01	00	00	02	00
C2	05	03	00	00	00	01
C3	02	00	00	00	01	00
C4	03	01	00	00	00	00
C5	03	00	00	00	00	00
C6	02	01	00	00	01	00
C7	05	00	00	00	00	00
C8	02	00	00	00	04	00
C9	03	01	00	00	01	01
C10	00	00	00	00	00	00
C11	01	02	00	00	00	00
C12	00	00	01	00	00	00
C13	00	00	00	00	00	00
C14	01	01	00	01	01	00
C15	06	00	00	00	00	01
C16	00	00	00	01	00	00
C17	03	01	01	00	00	00

C18	00	01	00	00	00	00
C19	01	00	00	00	00	00
C20	01	00	01	00	00	00
C21	06	00	00	00	03	00
C22	01	01	00	00	00	00
C23	03	00	00	00	00	00
C24	03	02	00	00	00	00
C25	01	01	00	00	00	00
C26	02	00	00	00	01	00
C27	02	00	00	00	00	01
C28	02	00	00	00	00	00
C29	00	00	00	00	00	00
C30	00	00	00	00	00	00
TOTAL	61	16	03	02	14	04
PERCENTAGE	<b>61%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>03%</b>	<b>02%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>04%</b>

**Table 70: The Frequency of Occurrence of the Different Backchannels Uttered by the Males in 30 Conversations**

Returning to the first two tables, the six types of backchannels the females uttered also outnumber those uttered by the males: acknowledging utterances (61 < 102); assessing utterances (16 < 23); continuers (03 < 13); the news marker *really?* (02 < 05); completive/repetitive utterances (14 < 18); non- verbal vocalization (04 < 18).

This may drive one to say that females backchannel more than males do when using a foreign language. If noticing table (1), except for C4, C6, C23, and C30 where backchannels did not appear, the remaining conversations brought those supportive utterances into sight. It is another way to say that whenever males took the floor, females were not passive listeners. In a similar vein, when females were the speakers, males proved to be active listeners in all conversations apart from 4 conversations (C10, C13, C29, and C30).

As a matter of fact, the occurrences of the different types of backchannels are unequally distributed what forcefully indicates the students' ignorance of some

categories. This is highly exhibited by the insignificant percentages in tables 62 and 63. This might be explained by the students' unawareness of the various shapes of expressing active listenership.

What tables (63) and (64) also reveal is that the acknowledging utterances signal the commonest way of exhibiting engaged listenership. Both females and males enormously clung to those utterances to agree, acknowledge, and certify the receipt of each other's messages. Table (1) shows that the acknowledging utterances occurred 102 times uttered by the females representing 56, 98% of all their supportive utterances, and averaging 3,4 utterances per conversation. Similarly, those utterances, as table 2 suggests, appeared 61 times uttered by the males, marking 61% of all types and averaging 2.03 utterances per conversation.

The acknowledging utterances which were used by the female and the male participants are illustrated below:

Cs	<i>Yeah</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Of course</i>	<i>Indeed</i>	<i>Exactly</i>	<i>Absolutely</i>	<i>Alright</i>	<i>Sure</i>	<i>Mm</i>
C1	03	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00
C2	06	00	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
C3	03	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C5	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C7	02	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00
C8	01	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C9	02	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C 11	00	03	01	00	00	00	00	00	00
C12	03	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C13	00	05	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
C14	02	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	00
C15	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C16	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01
C17	03	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00

C18	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C19	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	01	00
C20	10	03	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C21	01	00	00	00	04	00	00	00	00
C24	01	03	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C25	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	00
C26	05	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C27	03	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C28	13	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	00
C29	02	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00
Total	65	19	07	02	05	01	01	01	01
Percentage	63,72%	18,62%	06,86%	01,96%	04,90%	0,98%	0,98%	0,98%	0,98

**Table 71: the Frequency of Occurrence of the Different Acknowledging Utterances  
by the Female Participants**

Cs	<i>Yeah</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>I think that too</i>	<i>Alright</i>	<i>Of Course</i>
C1	03	00	00	00	00	00
C2	05	00	00	00	00	00
C3	02	00	00	00	00	00
C4	00	02	01	00	00	00
C5	03	00	00	00	00	00
C6	02	00	00	00	00	00
C7	05	00	00	00	00	00
C8	00	00	00	00	01	01
C9	00	03	00	00	00	00
C11	01	00	00	00	00	00

C14	00	00	00	00	00	01
C15	06	00	00	00	00	00
C17	01	02	00	00	00	00
C19	00	01	00	00	00	00
C20	01	00	00	00	00	00
C21	04	01	00	01	00	00
C22	01	00	00	00	00	00
C23	02	00	00	00	00	01
C24	00	03	00	00	00	00
C25	01	00	00	00	00	00
C26	02	00	00	00	00	00
C27	01	01	00	00	00	00
C28	01	00	00	00	00	01
TOTAL	41	13	01	01	01	04
PERCENTAGE	67,21%	21,31%	01,63%	01,63%	01,63%	06,55%

**Table 72: The Frequency of Occurrence of the Different Acknowledging Utterances by the Male Participants**

The two tables above present a number of differences, but similarities as well. Females were found to acknowledge more than males do. To elucidate, the females used 102 acknowledging utterances, while the males 61. More importantly, the female used 9 different acknowledging utterances (*yeah, okay, of course, indeed, exactly, absolutely, alright, sure, and mm*), while males used 6 ones (*yeah, okay, right, I think that too, alright, and of course*), appearing 61 times. Therefore, females's backchchannels were not only greater in frequency but, diversity as well.

The most common side, however, is that *yeah* presents the leading acknowledging utterance. As for the females, *yeah* was uttered 65 times in 20 conversations (C1, C2, C3, C5, C7,C8, C9, C12, C14, C15, C16,C17,C18, C20, C21, C24, C26, C27, C28, C29), while males uttered it 41 times in 17 conversations



(C1,C2,C3,C5,C6,C7,C11,C15,C17,C20,C21,C22,C23,C25,C26,C27, and C28). The other alternatives were almost discarded. The reason might be due to the fact that *yeah* is one of the words that foreign learners are overwhelmingly exposed to during the early learning stages.

As far as the assessing utterances are concerned, they constitute another significant shape of engaged listenership, ranking second behind the acknowledging utterances. Going back to Table (62) and (63), it can clearly be noticed that the participants did assess the speaker as they stand in a listener position. When it comes to their frequency of occurrence, assessments were uttered 23 times by the females and 16 times by the males. The most important thing, however, is that the assessing utterances were remarkably absent in the majority of conversations (18 conversations in both tables 62 and 63).

This implicitly means that neither the females nor the males paid great attention to the utterances which assess the speaker. As certified by Gardner (1994), cited in Thornbury and Slade (2006: 132), assessing utterances are another indispensable for successful engaged listenership. The use of adjectives like *that's right*, *wonderful* and *amazing* by the current listener entails, in no uncertain terms, their participation, and hand the speaker enough support.

The adjectives the female participants used in order to assess the males were *good*, *bad*, *right*, *true*, *interesting*, *nice*, *fun*, *typical*, and *happy*. These 9 adjectives, uttered in 12 conversations, are distributed as the following:

Cs	<i>Good</i>	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Interesting</i>	<i>Nice</i>	<i>Fun</i>	<i>Typical</i>	<i>Happy</i>
C1	02	03	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C2	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00
C12	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C13	00	00	01	00	01	00	01	00	00
C16	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	01
C20	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C21	00	00	00	02	00	00	00	00	00

C22	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00
C24	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C26	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C28	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C29	00	00	01	00	00	01	00	00	00
TOTAL	09	03	03	02	02	01	01	01	01
PERCENTAGE	39,13	13,04	13,04	08,69	08,69	04,34	04,34	04,34	04,34

**Table 73: The Frequency of Occurrence of the Assessing Adjectives Uttered by the Female Participants**

*Good*, as observed, is the most prominent adjective used by the females to assess the males. Representing the highest percentage of occurrence, *good* was uttered 9 times in 6 conversations (C1, C12, C20, C24, C26, and C28), representing 39, 13% of all the assessing adjectives). The rest of assessing adjectives were not noticeably outstanding, as the table 66 suggests. The great attachment to one adjective, notably *good*, may explain, once again, the participants's unconcern toward some assessing adjectives and discard of some others including *wonderful*, *amazing*, and *great* which native speakers generally use to replace *good*.

As for males, the assessing adjectives uttered were *good*, *right*, *great*, *accurate*, *nice*, *interesting*, *fine* and *true*. The way these 8 adjectives occurred is shown in the following table:

Cs	<i>Good</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Great</i>	<i>Accurate</i>	<i>Nice</i>	<i>interesting</i>	<i>Fine</i>	<i>True</i>
C1	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C2	01	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
C4	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	00
C 6	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00

C 9	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C11	00	00	00	00	01	00	01	00
C 14	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C 17	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C18	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
C 22	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01
C24	01	00	00	00	00	01	00	00
C25	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00
TOTAL	07	03	01	01	01	01	01	01
PERCENTAGE	43,75 %	18,75 %	06,25 %	06,25%	06,25 %	06,25%	06,25 %	06,25 %

**Table 74: The Frequency of Occurrence of the Assessing Adjectives Uttered by the Male Participants**

Males were inconceivably glued to the same adjective females adhered to, *good*. Compared to the assessing adjectives, *good* stood out appearing 7 times in 7 conversations (C1, C2, C9, C14, C17, C18, and C24), and representing a fierce percentage of occurrence, 43,75%. Again, this irrational stubbornness for one adjective over many others, including the ones in the table above, leads to say that males attach little importance to many assessing options to assess females. What can, therefore, be said is that *good* is the most pervasive assessing adjective, and students of English, be males or females, do not usually adopt other alternative adjectives. This, as table 67 exhibits, might account for the insignificant frequencies of occurrences of *right*, *great*, *accurate*, *nice*, *interesting*, *fine*, and *true*

The most important thing to say about continuers, another basic strategy for effective listenership, is that they were almost ruled out by the participants. The continuers, uttered by the females, occurred just 13 times in 5 conversations (C8, C12, C20, C27, and C28). In a similar manner, those uttered by the males appeared 3 times in 3 conversations (C12, C17, and C20). The hidden fact to reveal, then, is rarely did the listeners invite continuity

of the speakers' utterances via *uh- huh* and *mmhm*. What might explain the negligence of continuers is that students are not well- acquainted with such paralinguistic utterances, and not enabled to use them especially by their teachers of oral expression. It is also a fact that students of English have negative stereotypes towards continuers.

Another key category to show involved listenership is the news marker *really?* which the listener utters to show surprise, to ask for further details, and, above all, to display much concern towards the speakers' utterances. The following table traces back the use of *really?* by the participants:

The News Marker	<i>Really ?</i>	
Cs	Uttered by Females	Uttered by Males
C5	01	00
C11	01	00
C14	00	01
C16	00	01
C17	01	00
C24	01	00
C26	01	00
The Total Number (Percentage)	05 (02,79%)	02 (02%)

**Table 75: The Frequency of Occurrence of Really? Uttered by the Female and the Male Participants**

To come to the frequency of occurrence of *Really ?*, the news marker as the following table denotes, was too infrequently put into force, in the sense that females uttered it 5 times in 5 conversations (C5, C11, C17, C24, and C26), representing 2.79 % of all the backchannels the females uttered. As for males, *really?* was uttered only twice in 2 conversations (C14 and C16) representing 2% of all the males' backchannels. The two inconsiderable percentages undoubtedly reflect that students have no tendency for

soliciting elaboration from the speaker which, once more, raises this point: Do students of English have exhaustive knowledge about effectual listenership?

Engaged listenership can also be expressed when the listener collaboratively completes or repeats the speaker's utterance. Repetitive and completive utterances are so important in erasing unwanted hesitation which generally erupts during foreign learners' conversations.

The following table draws a clear cut between the females' and the males' collaborative utterances :

Gender	F		M	
The Collaborative Utterances	Repetitive Utterances	Completive Utterances	Repetitive Utterances	Completive Utterances
C1	00	03	01	01
C2	01	00	00	00
C3	00	01	00	01
C6	00	00	01	00
C8	00	00	04	00
C9	00	01	01	00
C11	01	00	00	00
C12	02	00	00	00
C13	02	01	00	00
C14	01	00	01	00
C15	00	01	00	00
C 17	01	00	00	00
C20	00	01	00	00
C21	00	00	00	03

C26	00	00	01	00
C28	01	00	00	00
Total	09	08	09	05

**Table 76: The Frequency of Occurrence of the Repetitive and Completive Utterances by the Female and Male Participants**

The obtained results revealed that females, compared to males, showed greater tendency to either complete or repeat the speaker's utterances. With regard to this, completive and repetitive utterances, produced by the female participants, occurred 17 times in 12 conversations (C1, C2, C3, C9, C11, C12, C13, C14, C15, C17, C20, and C28). Males, however, used those utterances 14 times in 8 conversations (C1, C3, C6, C8, C9, C14, C21, and C26).

As far as collaborative repetitive utterances are concerned, females produced 9 utterances in 7 conversations (C2, C11, C12, C13, C14, C17, and C28). With very slight difference, males repeated the females' utterances 9 times in 6 conversations (C1, C6, C8, C9, C14, and C26).

The difference appears with the completive utterances where females showed higher tendency females completed the speakers' utterances 8 times in 6 conversations (C1, C3, C9, C13, C15, C20), while males did so 5 times in 3 conversations (C1, C3, and C21). In view of the fact that the majority of conversations were devoid of them, it is worth to add collaborative repetitive and completive utterances to the ones students of English are unconscious of. This might explain the embarrassing silence in many of the students' conversations.

Another stepping stone to effective listenership is what has been termed non-verbal vocalizations as *laughter* and *sigh*. Such acts, when performed by the listener, can express harmony with the speaker's utterances.

For both females and males, *Laughter* was found the only mirroring act to occur. As for females, *laughter* was vocalized 18 times in 14 conversations (C, C2, C8, C9, C10, C12, C13, C16, C17, C20, C21, C26, C27, and C28). Males, however, laughed 4 times in 4 conversations (C2, C9, C15, and C27). This forcefully confirms that females laugh more

than males when it comes to listening. Perhaps, it also backs up that phatic trait females are characterized by, rapport.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has traced and compared the females' and the males' backchannels. All in all, there are a number of similarities and differences as well.

As far as the frequency of occurrence is concerned, there was a decided difference between the males' and females' backchannels. The females were found to use more backchannels than the males. This finding answers the question, do females backchannel more than males do? positively and validates the first hypothesis of the thesis.

The similarities lie in the fact that both females and males did not diversify their backchannels in an equal manner. Hence, it is safe to say that the answer to the question, do females diversify their backchannels more than males do? is negative and therefore the second hypothesis, gender governs the diversity of the English audible backchannels, is invalid.

## General Conclusion

This research has examined the impact of gender on a sociolinguistic phenomenon known as backchannels. As it falls into sociolinguistics and notably conversation analysis (CA), the research started with a theoretical overview of communication and gender studies. Then, it shifted to highlighting the English conversation, to ultimately tackle the listening skill, in general and backchannels, in particular. Having a comparative aim, the research has posed two major questions: while the first question was whether females backchannel more than males, the second one was whether the former diversifies their backchannels more than the latter. To answer the two questions, 60 undergraduate students of English at University Frères Mentouri, Constantine conducted 30 mixed-gender face –to- face two minute conversations.

The analysis of the participants' conversations revealed that the females' backchannels outnumber the males' what parallels the conclusions of earlier studies (Tannen (1990)), for example). Therefore, one can safely say that gender, by all means, governs the backchannelling behaviour. The fact that the females' backchannels exceed the males can be attributed to the language of support women are characterized by. Another important finding was that neither the females nor the males equally diversified the backchannels they adopted; both groups were found to highly stick to one type of backchannels (acknowledgement with yes) and automatically not to put many other types into force (continuers, for example). The research has not only shown that gender does not really govern the diversity of backchannels but has also ended with the gap that both males and females are not thoroughly knowledgeable about backchannels.

Based on the aforementioned deduction, it can be said that teachers of oral expression should raise their students' awareness about backchannels. They are required to exhaustively expose their students to various types of backchannels and this is not achieved by exposing students to presentations and discussions. In such activities, the listener's contribution would not be as remarkable as the speaker's. In order to make students of English dynamic listen and produce backchannels, teachers have to shed some light on the backchannelling phenomenon in their lessons and let their students practice it via face-to-face conversations. This is because teaching via conversation gives the



speaking and the listening skills the same importance. In order to be an effective communicator, one has to be not only a competent speaker but a competent listener as well.

An important point to mention about this piece of research is that it is quantitatively simplified as it held a small range of conversations where only two participants were involved in each. Future studies can be carried out taking a large number of conversations and participants. Moreover, this research is limited, in the sense that it has only approached audible backchannels in relation to gender. Therefore, further research needs to be done on how other factors as age, social status, the participant's personality, dialect, the context formality or informality, and the degree of intimacy govern not only the audible backchannels but also the silent ones like *eye contact*, *head nodding*, and *smile*.

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**Bachir Habalet**

**The Effects of Gender on the Production of the English Audible Backchannels**

**Case Study: Undergraduate Students at Université Constantine 1**

**Thesis submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language**

**in fulfillment of the requirements for the LMD Doctorate Degree in Linguistics and Applied  
Languages**

### **Abstract**

The thesis investigates the relation that exists between the listener's gender and his / her backchannels. Having a comparative nature, the thesis aims at finding the similarities and differences between males and females when it comes to backchannels. The comparison is based on two criteria: the frequency of occurrence and diversity of backchannels. To give consistency to the thesis, a sample of 60 undergraduate students (30 males and 30 females) took part in the study; each male was asked to record a face-to-face two-minute conversation with a female. After analyzing the 30 mixed- gender conversations, the results revealed that the frequency of occurrence of the females' backchannels was higher than that of the males' (the females backchannelled 178 times, while the males 100). This endorses the conclusion of earlier studies. As far as the backchannels' diversity is concerned, neither the males nor the females equally diversified their backchannels as both highly used the acknowledging utterances. These represented 57, 3% of all the females' backchannels and 61% of the males', and therefore, the other categories were marginally used by both groups, what forcefully denotes the students' unawareness of such categories. It is of necessity, then, to tackle all the different backchannels in oral expression sessions.

**Key Terms:** Gender, the Frequency of Backchannels' Occurrence, the Diversity of Backchannels, Conversation, Acknowledging Utterances

**Thesis Supervisor:** Prof. Riad BELOUAHEM - University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1

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