
Speaker turns and listener feedbacks: exploring lexical, phonetic, and social variation of backchannels and fluencemes in conversation

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Speakers' turn-taking items (fluencemes, FLs) and listeners' feedback expressions (backchannels, BCs) are both produced to ensure a smooth exchange of turns in spontaneous conversations. Despite their functional difference (FLs are used for turn initiation or continuation [1]; BCs signal active listenership [2]), both share a short constituent size and lexical candidates in German (e.g., *mh*, *ja*, *genau* [3, 4]).

This study explores the relationship between the two types of turn-management devices looking at their frequency, lexical and prosodic form in 6 German dyadic conversations, from [5], with respect to familiarity and gender of the interlocutors.

The results in this study illustrate the predominant use of short lexical items of both forms of feedback, as well as functional specific pitch movements in German: non-lexical items are mostly rising as BCs and mostly falling as FLs [cf. 6].

The analyzed data also contributes to a better understanding of interlocutor dynamics: both male and female subjects produce more BCs when in conversation with a female interlocutor and produce more FLs with an interlocutor of the same gender. Additionally, FLs and BCs appear to be more frequent in dyads sharing no previous familiarity. This may be related to social conventions of signaling active listenership in these contexts [cf. 7].

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