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The Influence from L2 to L1 on the Use of Backchannel Cues.

Margit Krause-Ono

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Abstract

Backchannel cues seem to exist in all languages, however backchannel behaviour differs according to language and culture. This study argues that in the research on the use of backchannel cues in L1 and L2, transfer from L2 to L1 has to be considered reciprocally; e.g. transfer of L2 Japanese backchanneling into L1 German, as well as the transfer of L2 German backchanneling into L1 Japanese.

Several cross-linguistic studies have been conducted with controversial results. Some find no transfer from L2 to L1 and others do. However, none of these studies investigated reciprocally. The result of this study shows that both findings hold true.

Data collected from videotaped dyads between monolingual Japanese and monolingual Germans first established the difference in the usage of backchannel cues in the two languages, with German as low and Japanese as high in the frequency of backchannel cues. Next, one long-term Japanese resident of Germany and one long-term German resident of Japan were each videotaped conversing with a monolingual speaker of their L2 and then again with a speaker of their L1. Their usage of backchannel cues in each conversation was analyzed. Participants were given a questionnaire to ascertain their awareness of differences in conversational styles. The results showed transfer from L2 Japanese on L1 German but none from L2 German on L1 Japanese. Various reasons for transfer or non-transfer of backchannel cues are presented, as well as possible measures which could incite Japanese to change backchanneling behaviour, to avoid disasters in political and economic negotiations.

keywords: transfer, backchanneling, backchannel cues, frequency, L2-L1

1. Introduction and Background

The role of two adults in everyday conversation consists of speaker and listener taking turns. The listener usually provides feedback to the speaker to convey understanding, agreement,

disagreement, surprise, astonishment, hesitation, negation or, most often of all, to give a sign that no repair of the former utterance is necessary and that the speaker can continue (Schegloff, 1982:87). The listener's feedback guides the speaker (Ehlich, 1986:54) and is usually called 'backchannel behaviour' or 'backchannel cues', the latter term introduced by Yngve (1970). Backchannel cues are universal to all languages, but in each language and culture they have different realizations. All verbal interaction is undertaken according to the rules of politeness prevalent in each particular language and culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987:59) and so is listener's feedback. In most cultures this feedback is usually not the focus of attention during conversation, but only becomes noticeable when it is either absent or too ubiquitous.

Definition of Backchannel Cues

Linguists have used varying definitions of backchannel cues over the last thirty years. In everyday conversation, usually small lexical or non-lexical utterances are used, e.g. "uh-huh", "hm", "yeah", "I see", "really", etc. Presently, most researchers agree to concentrate only on these small utterances, plus occasionally including short comments (Agawa 2002; Heinz 2003; Clancy et al. 1996; Maynard 1986, 1990; Gardner 1998 etc.).

The term "non-primary turns" used by Schegloff (1982) to describe backchannel cues indicates a problematic point. Researchers are split on whether to consider backchannel responses to be turns or non-primary turns. Turns would mean that backchannels are treated as speech; the listener becomes a speaker. The term 'non-primary turns' acknowledges that there is a primary speaker with a listener, who gives short answers, comments or other feed-back. Fortunately, consensus exists that the notion of primary speakership is essential to the description of backchannel responses (Schegloff, 1982; Maynard, 1986; Tao & Thompson, 1991; Clancy et al., 1996; Ohira, 1998; Agawa, 2002; Heinz, 2003).

Researchers also distinguish between verbal and non-verbal responses. Dulkan and Fiske (1977) note the high frequency of smiles and eye gazes in conversation, while McClave (2000) stresses the importance of head movements as backchannel cues having a wide range of different functions. Maynard's (1986) research found that in Japanese, head movements as non-verbal backchannel cues occurred alone, unaccompanied by verbal backchannel cues (VBCs) in more than 20% of all cases. Ohira (1998) points out, and Agawa (2002) confirms, the importance of laughter as a non-verbal backchannel cue. Both of them stress that laughter and smiles have to be checked at each line of the conversation to ensure they are mere backchannel cues and do not elicit a direct reaction - by which they would become a turn.

In the following study, verbal and non-verbal feedback given by a listener will be called 'backchannel cues' if the feedback does not incite a direct reaction by the speaker. Reaction eliciting feedback becomes a 'turn' and ceases to be a backchannel cue. Verbal backchannel cues are non-lexical and lexical utterances or short comments given by the listener which are without reaction by the speaker. Questions for clarification, as they almost invariably incite an answer,

will not be counted as backchannel cues, as Yngve (1970) and Duncan and Fiske (1977) do. The same standard will apply to non-verbal backchannel cues investigated in this study: gazes, head nods, blinks, smiles and laughter.

Background

The question now becomes: ‘How are backchannel cues used in various languages and cultures?’ Several cross-cultural studies have been carried out to compare the different realization of backchannel cues in regard to frequency, type and function. For example, Stubbe (1998) compares the verbal feedback behaviour of Pakeha and Māori in New Zealand. Her finding shows that not only is there a big difference in frequency and function of backchannel cues between the two groups, but there is also a difference between genders within each group. Māori have a much lower frequency of backchannel cues than Pakeha for both genders. Maynard (1986) compares Japanese and English backchannel behaviour, finding that Japanese give twice as many verbal backchannel cues than Americans.

A study by Clancy et al. (1996) compares Japanese, English and Chinese for frequency, type and positioning of verbal backchannel cues. The results show that Chinese provides the fewest backchannel cues and positions them at the end of grammatical or intonational units, whereas Japanese (closely followed by English) provides the most cues, often positioning the verbal backchannel cues in mid-stream speech. Other studies also indicate far fewer backchannel cues for Athapaskan Indians (Scollon & Scollon, 1981) or for Navajos (Saville-Troike, 1985) (both cited in Stubbe, 1998) compared to monolingual English speakers. For European languages, studies by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) point to the possibility that fewer backchannel cues are provided in German than in English. All in all, findings show that the use of backchannel cues in different languages is very diverse.

The next question raised is: ‘How are these cues realized in a second language (L2)?’ Comparative studies of Japanese and English have been conducted by a number of researchers: Maynard (1986, 1990), Mizutani (1982), White (1989), Ohira (1998), and Agawa (2002). Most research focuses on the usage of backchannel cues by Japanese in their L2 English. In these studies Japanese subjects continue to use backchannel cues appropriate in their L1 Japanese in their L2 English; using the Japanese language’s higher frequency of verbal backchannel cues (Maynard 1986, 1990) and non-verbal backchannel cues such as head movements and smiles (Agawa, 2002) while speaking English. The above researchers see these results as evidence of the necessity of teaching the pragmatic usage of backchannel cues in foreign language classrooms. They view (directly or indirectly stated) this behaviour as pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2, resulting in sociopragmatic failure. “Sociopragmatic failure stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour.” (Thomas, 1983:99).

Pragmatic transfer means that learners transfer ‘rules of speaking’ from their L1 to their L2, i.e.

in the manner they participate in communicative events, in the way they realize specific types of speech acts, in the way they nominate and develop topics, etc., (Ellis, 1994:182). Of course, a certain linguistic proficiency is necessary before transfer becomes possible. As Kasper and Dahl (1991:225) point out, transfer needs to be viewed as a complex process constrained by other factors, i.e. the learner's stage of development.

Unreflected transfer of backchannel cues can become the cause of disastrous situations. LoCastro (1987) introduces the case of the 'unfortunate' Japanese businessmen (employees of Mitsubishi and Hitachi) who were arrested and indicted for allegedly trying to steal IBM trade secrets. One of the defendants claimed that he used "uh-huh" or "yeah" only to show that he was listening. However, FBI undercover agents argued the defendant knew that the information was stolen because he said "uh-huh" or "yeah" in agreement during conversation stating the information to be stolen. (LoCastro, 1987:102-103; The Japan Times, January 23, 1983:2)¹. Yamada (1997) and Mizutani (1983) also provide anecdotes of such mishaps in business negotiations and television discussions.

Transfer has usually been considered a one-way-street from L1 to L2 while the other direction, from L2 to L1, has not been considered as transfer, but something like borrowing or code-switching (Ellis, 1994:28-9). Evidence for a 'transfer' of the usage of backchannel cues from L2 to L1 is first given by Tao and Thompson (1991) in a pilot study where they investigate the influence of L2 English on L1 Chinese and then by Heinz (2003), who studies the influence of L2 English on L1 German. In both cases, English has a higher frequency of backchannel cues than Chinese or German.

Tao and Thompson (1991) investigate the use of backchannel cues of two L1 Chinese. The subjects had lived in the United States in a completely English environment for about 18 years since their late teens. The use of backchannel cues in Chinese is much less frequent than in English and the positioning is also more restricted. Nevertheless, in conversations with L1 Chinese living in China and Taiwan the two subjects produced the same number of backchannel cues as in their English. There is a transfer of the usage of backchannel cues from an L2 with a high frequency in backchannel cues to an L1 with a low frequency in them.

The study was a pilot study and very restricted in participants (2), both male who conversed with female facilitating participants of a different age. Neither the gender nor the age variable was controlled and of the two samples, one is a normal conversation on daily topics while the other is an interview, which by its genre is susceptible to a very unequal distribution of backchannels cues by the two participants. Further, the time-span of the sequences analyzed from the two samples is not clearly indicated. The conversations were taped on audio cassette-tapes only, so nothing can be learned about non-verbal backchannel cues. Despite all these shortcomings, the

¹ This anecdote was taken from Ohira (1998:37).

results of the study are nevertheless interesting and worth noting. Unfortunately, Tao and Thompson did not consider investigating the opposite possibility; namely the use of backchannel cues by L1 English speaking long-term residents of Taiwan in their English. As a possible reason for the increase of backchannel cues in L1, Tao and Thompson (1991:222) premise that the participants were unaware of their use of backchannel cues appropriate to their L2. They, therefore, cite the study done by Hess and Johnston (1988) which found backchannel cues are the last to be acquired, as late as adolescence, and perhaps the first to be lost.

Another study showing influence from L2 to L1 is that by Heinz (2003). She investigates the use of backchannel cues by German long-term residents of the United States in telephone conversations with their monolingual friends and relatives in Germany. In a baseline study, she first establishes evidence that English has a higher frequency of backchannel cues, as well as in overlap placement of the same, than German. She then proceeds to analyze five telephone calls, each of five minutes length, between German residents in America with their friends and relatives in Germany. She indicates neither the length of residency of these Germans nor their age nor gender. Further, she fails to note if the phone conversations totaled only five minutes in length or whether she took segments out of originally longer conversations. Obviously this procedure shows nothing concerning any non-verbal backchannel cues. Heinz also fails to mention if one participant in these phone conversations dominated; having a longer speaking part than the other. Heinz's results do show that German long-term residents of the United States use more backchannel cues in their phone conversations with friends and relatives in Germany than monolingual Germans, but not as many as L1 English speakers. The positioning of backchannel cues also shows more overlap with the speaker, which she notes sometimes seems to irritate the German monolingual speakers. Verification can not be given, because no interview or questionnaire was applied. As possible reasons for the increase in frequency, as well as overlap, Heinz (2003) proposes Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory by Giles & Johnson (1981) and/or the development of a multicompetence in bi- or multilingual speakers which is different from the linguistic competence of monolingual speakers. This is especially advocated by Kecskes and Papp (2000) and Cook (1999). However, Heinz too, did not investigate the opposite situation, namely the usage of backchannel cues by American long-term residents of Germany in phone conversations with their relatives and friends in the United States. Once again, only the influence from L2 to L1 in the usage of backchannel cues where the L2 has a higher frequency in the usage of backchannel cues than the L1 has been studied.

But there are also studies which show that there is no influence in the usage of backchannel cues from L2 to L1. While working toward her PhD, Ohira (1998) analyzed one hour of each of five dinner conversations among Americans and Japanese in the United States. Participants were monolingual female American students and bilingual female Japanese students who had been in America for about three to five years. Japanese subjects with a longer period of stay might have

been more suitable and might have provided different results. The study shows the Japanese subjects did not change in their usage of backchannel cues, neither in their English when speaking with the American students nor in their Japanese when speaking with the other Japanese students. Ohira (1998) does not give an exact reason for this behaviour but focuses more on the misunderstandings and false impressions such an inappropriate behaviour could cause. She ends her study by noting the Japanese, although being aware of the problem, were not able to change. The study shows no influence from L2 to L1 in the usage of backchannel cues when the L2 has a lower frequency and less overlap in backchannel cues than the L1.

Backchannel Cues in Japanese and German

Perhaps Japanese hardly change their usage of backchannel cues when speaking other languages because they are very conscious of them. To my knowledge there are few languages which have a common name for backchannel cues, a term unknown in everyday English. Everyday Japanese however, uses the word *aizuchi* to refer to backchannel cues. Very often people will comment on them, eg. someone's *aizuchi* are not appropriate or someone gives *aizuchi* very nicely. Visitors to Japan are surprised when witnessing Japanese during phone conversations smiling, bowing, and head nodding, besides giving an abundance of verbal *aizuchi*. *Aizuchi* are part of conversational routines for Japanese, as backchanneling fulfills the cultural expectations of politeness. The usage of *aizuchi* even influences the perception of a foreigner's fluency in the language, as Hata's (1982) study, cited in LoCastro (1987), of an Australian female shows. Her Japanese language ability was still rudimentary, but she had the right 'feeling' of where to put her *aizuchi*, so native Japanese perceived her as quite proficient in the language. Although *aizuchi* are omnipresent in conversation and in the conscious mind of every Japanese, they have only recently been academically researched.

Mizutani (1982, 1983), Maynard (1986, 1990.) and Horiguchi (1997) investigated types, positioning, function and meaning of backchannel cues in Japanese. Meaning is especially difficult to distinguish, e.g. whether an *aizuchi* means attention, understanding or agreement. Differences in interpretation can lead to significant problems, as in the court case mentioned by LoCastro (1987) above. The researchers stress that backchannel behavior depends on various factors: age, gender, relationship among participants, topics of conversation, and purpose of conversation. In any conversation however, *aizuchi* cannot be omitted and are used abundantly, as speaker and listener jointly strive to achieve harmony. This is in accord with the original meaning of the word *aizuchi*: two blacksmiths, master and apprentice, hammer away on a piece of iron, and the hammering must be done in a harmonious rhythm to produce fine work.

In German, few backchannel cues are given and there exists no term for them in everyday language. Partly for conveying their function, backchannel cues are called "reception signals" (Zifonun, 1997, Schwitalla, 2002). A better developed phonology and discourse analysis enabled Ehlich (1986) to give a more profound and thorough grammatical definition for German

backchannels. He includes tonality in his definition, as well as form and function analysis. Ehlich puts German backchannel cues in a kind of “guidance field”, for which the main function is signaling the addressee the conditions of interaction. Research shows that in German, the expression "hm" has an abundance of meanings which are conveyed by different intonations, length and frequency of the utterance, thereby closely resembling a tonal language (Zifonun, 1997). Furthermore, backchannel cues are most often given after responsive signals by the speaker (Schwitalla, 2002) and are seldom in overlap with the speech of the primary speaker (Heinz, 2003). But neither a complete grip on interjections and their meanings, nor cross-cultural or linguistic comparisons are available.

Intent

The aim of the following study is to give evidence that the results of Tao and Thompson’s (1991), and Heinz’s (2003) studies and those of Ohira (1998) are not contradictory, but that both might be valid, depending on the comparative frequency of backchannel cues in the L1 and L2. Comparisons will be made between German and Japanese, the former with a low and the latter with a high, frequency of backchannel cues.

Probable causes for transfer of backchannel usage from L2 to L1 will be given, as well as the possibility that other reasons than mere frequency play an important role (Berry 1994; Wieland, 1991).

Hypotheses

Although the previously mentioned studies indirectly indicate a difference in the usage of backchannel cues in German and Japanese, it is necessary to give clear evidence for this. Therefore, my first hypothesis is:

1. The number of verbal and non-verbal backchannel cues is lower in German than in Japanese.

After establishing evidence for this, the next two hypotheses are as follows:

2. For L1 German (a language low in backchannel cues) there will be transfer from L2 to L1.

3. For L1 Japanese (a language high in backchannel cues) there will be no transfer from L2 to L1.

1.1 Methodology

Participants

The participants were recruited among friends and friends-of-friends of the researcher. Altogether 9 females (5 Japanese and 4 German) and one male (German) between the age of 30-45 participated. They are all parents and/or teachers with approximately the same social status. As there are few Germans outside the Tokyo area and no possibility to do the research in Germany, it was difficult to recruit participants to establish baseline German backchanneling behaviour. Two 30 year old German females, friends from the same region in Germany, were found who had been in Japan for only four months, teaching at Japanese national universities. Neither participant knew Japanese and used only German in their daily life in Japan. A

conversation between two monolingual Japanese female participants, friends aged 44 and 30, was used to establish a baseline for the general usage of Japanese backchannel cues. Both women were born and raised in the same Japanese city and are singers and music-teachers.

In order to find out about the influence of L2 on L1, and vice versa, one long-term German female resident in Japan talked with a German female, age 38, who was visiting Japan. The long-term resident, a missionary and teacher, was 45 years old and had been living in Japan for 11 years. For this dyad a warming up period together with the researcher was necessary as the participants did not know one another. As both were of similar age, used to interacting with various people in their work (missionary/teacher and physiotherapist), and interested in many topics, it was easy to create a relaxed atmosphere. The women readily agreed between themselves to use the German friendly *du* in their conversation. The German resident of Japan had talked ten days earlier with a Japanese female acquaintance in this research's dyad to establish her usage of backchannel cues when speaking Japanese.

The research in Germany was carried out using a female long-term Japanese resident (more than 20 years) in Germany for which I depended on a (male) friend and his Japanese wife, 40 and 38 years old, who usually live in Japan. Each of them talked with their common friend while on a visit to Germany. The video was taken and the questionnaire administered by my German friend, to whom I had given detailed instructions on the procedures to be taken. As he knew the purpose of this study, he was able to control his production of backchannel cues to a certain extent.

In the analysis of the dyads, as well as in the tables, all the participants are given fictitious first names for easier recognition. Also in the table for each dyad, exact data about the participants can be found.

Materials and Setting

A Sony Digital Video Camera was used to take sound and picture. The settings were living rooms and a veranda of private houses in large regional cities of Japan and Germany. The camera was set in a fixed position to take the upper body and face of the participants and then left unattended for about 20-25 minutes, during which the participants conversed. The participants sat diagonally opposite each other, their upper body and head half facing the camera, half facing each other. In this position, gaze and smile can be relatively well observed and distinguished.

Procedure

In the beginning, the participants were only told that the research concerned communication strategies in general. They all signed a consent form written in their first language. Later, while also giving them a questionnaire, they were told about the real purpose of the research. This questionnaire was given in German and only verbally translated to the monolingual Japanese, who helped establish a baseline for the usage of Japanese backchannel cues. All the participants had the option to withdraw from the study; none did. The questionnaire was adapted from Ohira

(1998) and Agawa (2002)² to find out about the level of consciousness regarding the usage of backchannel cues in the participants' L1 and L2. The video sessions were always conducted in the home of one of the participants in order to foster a relaxed atmosphere. The participants, being friends, were asked to converse as they usually did, only this time on a set topic. The researcher left the room and/or the apartment for about 20 to 25 minutes.

As all the participants are parents and/or teachers they were told to talk about education. This topic was chosen in an attempt to find a common subject of interest and to reduce their suspicion as to the research's real aim. The long-term German resident talked with two people in different dyads with a time-span of more than a week between sessions.

Altogether six dyads were recorded on video. From each video the first three minutes were omitted in order to avoid any bias caused by the video camera. The participants knew they were brought together for the specific purpose of being recorded for a study on communication strategies. Despite the relaxed time they spent together with the researcher before being filmed on video, it was necessary to give them time to relax and to forget about the camera and the overall purpose of the conversation.

From each of the six samples a five minute sequence was chosen in which both participants spoke for approximately same amount of time. Both participants, therefore, had an equal chance to provide backchannel cues. These five minute samples (German as well as Japanese) were then transcribed by the researcher using approximately the same transcription method as DuBois (1993). The researcher is proficient in both languages, having passed the Japanese proficiency test, mark A, in 1983 and has been living in Japan for more than 23 years. Nevertheless, parts in which the hearing was unclear were checked by a neutral native speaker.

The initial intention was to get samples of two long-term residents in each country, but several problems were encountered. One sample the researcher had already taken of a long-term German resident was unusable due to the sound not being picked up during the recording process. Other samples of two Japanese who had just returned to Japan after spending three years studying in Germany could not be used either. In both cases the conversation rapidly developed into an interview, in which the person questioned was usually not given a chance to employ backchannel cues -- at least, far less than in a natural conversation. As a consequence, it was not possible to get more examples demonstrating the influence of L2 on L1 and vice-versa.

Tabulation of Results

After transcribing the five minute segments, the two participants were marked with two different colors. Next, each line of each sample was checked to ascertain a true backchannel cue, rather than a question/answer which would become a turn and cease to be a backchannel cue. Then the verbal and non-verbal backchannel cues were counted for each participant, using colors. Verbal

² Who both cite Wieland (1991) as the original producer of it.

backchannel cues were checked for overlap with speech of the speaker and these overlaps were counted. Different combinations of backchannel cues were checked for and counted, e.g. verbal backchannel cues plus gaze, or gaze plus head nod. Finally, the researcher also looked for overlap of speech with speech. The results of this counting can all be found in the tables for each sample.

2. Analyses of Dyads

Analysis of the German-German Dyad.

This analysis was necessary to get a baseline of usual German backchanneling behaviour in a conversation among friends. Britta and Clara, fictitious names, are German women, age 30 and newly arrived teachers of German in Japan, Their conversation concentrated on their students and their teaching. For space reasons in the transcription their names are abbreviated B and C. It is also important to mention that Britta is a relatively fast speaker and Clara quite slow. My personal guess is that they both diverge from the overall German average in opposite directions, but they both come from the same region in Germany and are friends.

The analysis revealed that Clara used more than twice as many verbal backchannels as Britta (24-11). On the other hand Britta used many more head nods (122) than Clara (79). This could be a compensation for the scarcity of verbalized backchannel cues. It seems to confirm McClave's (2000) study, which found that head nods are not only accompanying verbal backchannel cues but have functions of their own. However, more than 60% of the head nods were very slight, within a range of 0.2-0.5cm of up-down head movement (77 out of 122 and 50 out of 79, respectively). Laughter was rare; only one time for Britta and twice for Clara. Smiles were given 13 and 10 times, respectively.

Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs), gaze, head nod, smile (S) and laughter (@) mostly appeared in different combinations. The combination gaze + head nod was the most common for Britta (17 times with 64 head nods), but appeared less often for Clara (7 times with 17 head nods). For Clara the combination VBCs + gaze + head nod was the most prominent (15 times with 37 head nods), but appeared far less with Britta (5 times with 15 head nods). It should be added that blinks too were sometimes found to function as backchannel cues, usually as additional ones. For Clara they were counted 6 times, all in combination with VBCs, and for Britta they were found 4 times, but only once in combination with VBCs.

The verbal backchannel cues consisted almost entirely of "hm" or "hmhm" with the pronunciation ʘ (sign for descending intonation) or ʘ/; the first being a continuer and the second an acknowledgment or agreement (Zifonun, 1997). Nearly all the VBCs and/or head nods were accompanied by gaze. For Clara only one occasion of 'no gaze' could be found, which happened in combination with a negative backchannel cue. For Britta two 'no gaze' were found, where the 'no gaze' itself was a negative backchannel.

Apart from “hm” there was one “ja” (yes), one “noe= glaub ich nich” (no, I don’t think so) from Clara; one “na klar” (of course) and one “na das geht hier nicht” (that’s not possible here) from Britta. Britta also produced two negative verbal backchannels: “hm” with gaze, head raise and 1 slow blink in line 117 and “na das geht hier nicht” (that’s not possible here) with slight head lowering, 2 head shakes and strong gaze in line 119. She also gave one negative non-verbal backchannel: after Clara spoke in line 100: “war... unENDlich schwer” (was incredibly difficult) Britta gave a somewhat doubtful gaze and two slight head shakes. A leveled “hm” in German means doubt and/or disagreement (Schwitalla, 2002). Britta’s second verbal cue “na das geht hier nicht” was a clear negative and could be counted as a turn in its form as comment, but Clara did not respond to it nor did Britta take over the floor. All of Britta’s negative backchannel cues were given in one sequence when Clara had the floor. It is a strategy to avoid open confrontation, but Clara surely noticed the disagreement.

116 C: [und ich] bin halt eher der typ...der halt UNGErn auffordert.
[and I] am rather a person_ ... who does not like to ask students to speak

117 B: _hm (gaze, head raise, 1slow blink)

118 C: sondern lieber die stuDENTen sprechen laesst
but prefers the students to take the initiative

119 B: na das geht hier NIchT (1 head lowering, 2 head shakes, 1 st gaze)
that’s not possible here

120 C: und das... is-.. JA- (1.2) slight @@
and this... is-.. yes-
(B gives gaze, S, 4shn)

121 C: is ABer schwer fuer’n LEHRer auch ne/..wenn du so’n TYP bist...
but it is also difficult for the teacher, right/. when you are a person...
(B gives 1slow deep + 1shn, no gaze to C)

122 C: der halt auch...da halt... eher fuer sich sagt...
who too...there...rather takes the stand
(B gives gaze, 2shn)

123 C: ich LASS sprechen wenn sie sprechen MOECHten. (2.2)
I let (have) them speak when they want to speak

(B gives gaze, 4shn, tilts head to side, another 2shn, slight doubting S)

124 C: und dann KOMMT nix.
and then nothing comes out.

125 B: <Hx> (opens mouth, gaze towards ceiling, disagreeing S)

126 C: dann entstehen LANge PAUsen..die muss man manchmal AUSsitzen ne?
then long pauses develop, which have to be endured, right?

This sequence was very interesting as it is rare to have several negative backchannels in such a short time. Although Clara, the speaker, did not give any direct reactions to these backchannel cues, it was clear that she too avoided direct confrontation and tried to give more explanations for her position. Both women knew they had different opinions on the matter (classroom procedure to encourage students to talk), but Britta did not take the floor to argue back although she had ample opportunity (several small and one longer pause) to do so.

Clara produced only one negative backchannel (“noe= glaub ich nich” in line 018 without any gaze or head nod or shake) which also overlapped Britta’s speech. Her negative backchannel,

however, was not addressed toward Britta directly, but was a comment about what Britta thought others might be thinking. This is the part:

- 015 B: und...ja aber... is keener der--..
and... yes but... there is nobody who--..
016 <vielleicht denken sie sich ihren teil>
maybe they think it without saying it
017 aber..[s war bis jetzt] keiner der gesagt haette
but.. [until now was] nobody who said
018 C: [noe= glaub ich nicht] (no gaze, no head nod)
[no= I don't think so]
019 B: das is bekloppt oder ich hab kein anstand oder so¥
that's crazy or I don't have any manners or such

It is clear that Clara, a slow speaker, somewhat missed the timing and her negative backchannel-comment overlapped with the line (017) following the one (016) she actually wanted to negate.

VBCs in German are nearly always placed at the end of a grammatical or an intonational unit. Overlaps are rare and usually happen after the 'point of recognition' (Schwitalla, 2002), when the listener can already anticipate what the speaker is going to say. For Britta as listener, no real overlapping could be found. Once Britta gave a VBC after Clara finished a sentence, while at the same time Clara continued with a new sentence. In this case the overlap was caused by the speaker rather than by the listener. This happened once for Clara too. Clear overlap on the part of Clara as listener, could be found 6 times: 3 times the VBCs overlapped with the last word of the intonational unit of the speaker and the intonation was already descending, twice with missed timing for the VBCs, and once at a point of recognition:

- 049 C: was sie alle konnten aber_..
which they all were able to do_..
050 B: ja in dem moment nicht er[wartet]..
yeah in that moment not ex[pected]
051 C: [¥hm] (gaze, head raise, 3shn)
052 B: haben¥
had. (literal translation)
053 C: ¥hm (gaze, 3lhn)

The VBC in line 051 occurred at neither a grammatical nor an intonational unit. It is clearly at a point of recognition, demonstrating Schwitalla's (2002) point.

Altogether the results show that not many VBCs are employed in German. Heinz (2003) found only an average of 22 VBCs per person in a 5-minute phone conversation in her study on German baseline backchanneling behaviour. Clara came close to this, but Britta produced only half as many. It would be interesting to test Heinz' (2003) assumption that in a phone conversation more VBCs are produced than in a face-to-face conversation as there are no non-verbal backchannel cues to rely on. Unfortunately, only one dyad was not enough to judge results. Head nods dominated as non-verbal backchannel cues, especially very slight, hardly noticeable ones, of which Britta produced 77 and Clara 50. Overlapping of verbal backchannel

cues was rare, although various non-verbal backchannel cues were given during the speech of speaker. An accurate positioning of non-verbal cues (in overlap with ongoing speech) was impractical in this study. However, this might be an interesting subject for following research. The frequency of smiles and blinks cannot yet be judged either high or low until compared with the other dyads. Overall the listening style of this dyad is not encroaching, avoids overlapping, and generally waits until the speaker has finished. The VBCs themselves are short and minimal, most of them being single “hm”s. Body language too is rather subtle, with no great gestures or mimics, and no overlap of speech and speech can be found.

Analysis of Japanese-Japanese Dyad

Before introducing the participants and analyzing their usage of backchannel cues, some idiosyncracies of Japanese backchannel cues have to be mentioned. It is not always easy to distinguish a true backchannel cue, because Japanese contains many expressions of the kind “is that so” or “isn’t it”, which are always faithfully ‘answered’ with a “hm”, “ee”, ‘so’ or “so desu”. Some of these expressions are very rhetorical and sometimes backchannels themselves, and the received answer does not always have an influence on what the main speaker says next. Even well known Japanese researchers are often split over how to categorize these utterances, and not a few count them as backchannels (Horiguchi, 1997). But in order to have a better basis of comparison, only those utterances included as backchannel cues in the German sample were admitted in the count for the Japanese dyad. Nevertheless, other utterances will be mentioned as Q-A-type VBCs in the tables and the decision of categorization left to the reader.

The two participants, named Tama and Sumi for this study and abbreviated T and S in the transcription, are Japanese monolingual females. They are friends, aged 30 and 44 and both are singers and music teachers. In the conversation Tama mentioned the planned change of the college from which both graduated, from a two-year women’s college into a four year co-ed university. This was surprising news to Sumi who often reacted with amazed, perplexed and astonished gazes, especially when talking about the foreseeable problematic points of this change. Sumi is a fast speaker, faster than the Japanese average, and Tama is about average.

Looking at the different backchannel cues, Tama produced 34 VBCs and Sumi 25. If consecutively repeated backchannels are counted, the number increases to 36 and 37, respectively. Except for one time each, gazes were always given together with VBCs and/or head nods. The one time they did not give gaze it was used for thinking or collecting their thoughts, but it was not meant as a negation or doubt. For Tama 49 gazes were counted and for Sumi 34. The number of head nods seems low at first: 86 for Tama and 61 for Sumi, but a look at the number of slight head nods (an up-down movement of the head of less than 0.5 cm) shows only a very small number, 9 for Tama and 4 for Sumi. This means that there were 77 and 57 highly visible head nods. Both smiled or laughed when they were speakers, but as listeners they did not produce many smiles or much laughter. Tama smiled only 5 times and Sumi not at all, while

Tama laughed 3 times and Sumi once.

Both participants gave most head nods in combination with VBCs and gaze. Tama gave this combination 27 times, in which she produced 53 head nods and Sumi gave the combination 21 times with 47 head nods. For both participants more than two thirds of their head nods were given in this combination. This is definitely much more than the 20% mentioned by Maynard (1986). It should be mentioned that in Japanese, head nods do not only appear in backchanneling but the main speaker also uses numerous head nods to emphasize her point and/or to draw attention. However, these head nods are not included in this study focusing on backchannel cues. A future study could investigate the influence of speaker head nods on listener head nods.

Quite a prominent feature of this dyad is the overlapping of VBCs with the main speaker. This happened 11 times for Tama and 4 times for Sumi. These overlaps were not only seen at the end of grammatical or intonational units but also in mid-stream. Another 7 times, the main speaker overlapped with the listener's VBCs still in progress. This is a total of 22 overlaps. In addition, 7 more overlaps were counted, in which speech overlapped with speech.

The backchannel cue given most often was “hm” or maybe better “un”. In the case of Tama “hm” accounted for more than 70% of her backchannel cues and for Sumi “hm” was close to 60%. Its pronunciation is often a slow fall “ ¥hm ” or it is drawn at level and dropped at the end “ _¥hm ”. At times it starts with a high intonation or pitch, then is drawn at level and dropped at the end or not “ _¥hm ” or “ _hm ”. Sumi produced a total of 5 “hm”s which could be considered to express clear hesitation/disagreement or surprise, all accompanied by surprised or perplexed gaze. Apart from these uses of “hm”, it can be very difficult to label these backchannel cues in Japanese. They can be used as continuers, acknowledgment, agreement or, most often, simply signaling the interlocutor is listening or present.

It is unfortunate that no negative backchannels could be found in this dyad, probably because no controversial topic came up. One possibility of disagreement could have been the sequence about the planned opening of their alma mater to male students. But both participants agreed that they were against it as in their region the job prospects for future male graduates would be poor as opposed to the Tokyo area where companies are used to male graduates of music colleges.

One feature noticed quite often in Japanese conversations, a kind of ‘backchannel singing’, did not appear very often in this dyad, in fact only once or twice. The term means that a backchannel is not followed by a primary turn, but by another backchannel, as in the following example:

043 S: aso ka NInen shika ikeNAI [hito] no tame

(I see, for people who can't afford more than two years)

044 T: ¥hm ¥hm (gaze, 2blinks, 2hn)

045 S: (1.3) ah soo desu [ka] (drawn out, no gaze)

(I see, right)

046 T: [de-] OToko no ko.....

Line 045 could just as well be labeled as a filler, as there was already a preceding pause of 1.3

seconds, but this too is a function of Japanese backchannels and then, as can be seen, Tama took over the floor. A second more convincing example is the following:

053 S: [mo] NAI kara to iu no mo ariMASu yo ne
(It could also be that there are none of them left)

054 T: SO desu yo ne (gaze, 2hn)
(right)

055 S: _¥hm (gaze, 1hn)

056 T: doko no-

Here clearly, a backchannel is ‘answered’ with a backchannel, an occurrence which often happens in all kinds of Japanese conversations.

This conversation was very smooth and well ‘interwoven’. All features which are typical for Japanese conversations were present: high frequency of backchannel cues, many head nods, overlap of VBCs with speech, as well as overlap of speech with speech. The number of gazes was substantial and their length was not short. In fact, Sumi even mentioned in the questionnaire that she gets irritated by other Japanese people who frequently move their eyes around, showing deference to the surrounding (people), as she termed it in Japanese. The speaker has the impression her talk is not taken seriously. This was not the case at all in this conversation. One reason, however, which might have restrained Sumi, is the fact that, although the participants are close friends, 14 years difference in age influences their way of speaking to one another. This is especially true in Japan, where age still determines rank and hierarchy and therefore the choice of words and manner of speaking. Tama and Sumi are both single and their common ground is their similar background and profession. This is different than having children of the same age which is usually a hierarchy reducing factor. For further research it might be important to look for participants of nearly the same age, in order to avoid the slightest difference in way of speaking.

Comparison of German-German Dyad and Japanese-Japanese Dyad

To confirm my first hypothesis: ‘L1 German has far fewer backchannel cues than Japanese’ it is necessary to compare the findings of the two dyads, one genuinely Japanese and one genuinely German.

Just by looking at the frequency of verbal backchannel cues, it is clear that Japanese produced more VBCs than Germans. In addition, consecutively repeated cues appeared far more frequently within the Japanese dyad. Tama and Sumi totaled up to 60 (73 VBCs) whereas Britta’s and Clara’s amounted only to 35 (36). Concerning gazes, if only frequency is considered, more individual than cultural differences seem to exist. Certainly the commonly held belief that Japanese avoid looking at their interlocutor was not evident. However, it seems to the researcher, that there was a difference in the length of gaze (longer for Germans, although not measured) and possibly in the target of the gaze, although this is only an assumption. In Japanese the gaze might not always be directed towards the eyes of the speaker but more towards the face in general or towards the nose or around the mouth.

Head nods reveal another difference. At first sight German head nods seemed even more numerous than Japanese ones, but the quality was totally different. The two German participants produced many very slight head nods, which did not exceed a range of 0.5cm of the up-down movement of the head, in fact many did not surpass 0.2cm. They accounted for 60-70% of all the German head nods and were probably not visible from a distance. In Japanese, however, slight head nods accounted for less than 12%. Therefore, when counting only the easily discernible head nods, there was a clear difference between Japanese and German. Tama and Sumi produced 77 and 57 head nods, whereas Britta and Clara showed only 45 and 29 head nods. For Britta there seemed to be a personal preference of head nods over verbal backchannel cues, because she produced only 11 of the latter.

A surprising difference also appears in the number of smiles. The Japanese did not produce many of them, in fact Sumi none at all and Tama only 5. The two German participants, however, produced 13 and 10 smiles. The commonly held image of Japanese as smiling conversationalists seems to apply more to speakers than to listeners. Speakers usually try to make his/her speech more palatable by showing a smiling face, especially between women. The Japanese listener generally gives other cues of support and signs of harmony rather than smiles. As the speaker was not the target of this research but only the listener, I do not have figures about the first. There might also be more an individual than a cultural difference in smiling. To ascertain this, far more samples would be needed than was possible in this pilot study. It would certainly be worth further investigation. In the German dyad there were many instances where the two teachers talked about their experiences in class, provoking several smiles on the part of the listener. Britta also smiled three times in disagreement, as if to soften the difference. This disagreeing smile was not seen on Tama in the J-J dyad, although it would be a probable option in a Japanese conversation.

The biggest difference between the two monolingual dyads can be seen in the number of overlaps in connection with backchannels. The German dyad showed 9 overlaps of VBCs on speech and the Japanese dyad 22. Overlap of speech with speech was non-existent in the G-G dyad, but appeared 7 times in the J-J dyad. The total number of overlaps is therefore three times higher in the Japanese dyad than in the German one. Another point is the position of the overlapping backchannel. In German it is mostly at the end of a grammatical or intonational unit or after the point of recognition as Schwitalla (2002) terms it. The Japanese backchannels in overlap, however, appear also in mid-stream, which was already mentioned by Clancy et al. (1996). Mid-stream means that neither an end of anything, nor a point of recognition, can be perceived. In this J-J dyad overlaps of VBCs appeared 4 times in mid-stream position. Also the overlaps caused by the speaker on an ongoing backchannel were three times as high in Japanese as in German.

The differences in the usage of backchannel cues in German and in Japanese are clearly

discernible. The further dyads will show if there is a transfer from L2 to L1.

Analysis of Long-term Japanese Resident of Germany with Japanese Facilitating Participant

The two Japanese female participants in this dyad, Fusa and Yuko, are friends. Fusa, 45, has been living in Germany for 20 years, is married to a German and has a teenage son. The video was taken on Yuko's visit to Germany in summer 2003. The participants were given the topic of education, but did not stick to it for the entire time.

Usual verbal backchannel cues were given by Yuko (facilitating participant) 44 times (54 times if consecutively repeated ones are counted) and 59 times by Fusa (long-term resident), who gave no repeated cues. In this conversation many question-answer type backchanneling appeared. Here these sequences were even more controversial than the ones in the Tama-Sumi dyad, where they could still be interpreted as real questions and answers. In order to keep a clear borderline, question-answer type cues were interpreted as non-backchannels. Their usual function is to convey the presence of the listener, to transmit harmony, to establish a shared feeling. Here is one example:

067 F: suGOku hiroiku mae- hiroi mansion ne_
very big apa- big apartment wasn't it

068 Y: _¥ne (gaze, S, 1hn)
right

069 F: _¥ne [yokatta no ne] (gaze, S)
it was, wasn't it good

070 Y: [soso] yokatta asoko (gaze, S, 2lhn)
right, it was good there

071 F: _¥ne (gaze, S)
yeah

In this case, the lines 068 and 071 were counted as pure VBCs and the pair 069/070 as verifying question and confirming answer, although other researchers might have counted them as VBCs too. This type of VBCs happened 9 times, of which 4 were overlapped by each other as in the example given above. Gaze was given 51 times by Yuko and 60 times by Fusa, and head nods 100 and 58 times, respectively. Here too slight head nods (within a range of 0.5 cm up-down movement of the head) were looked for and 10 out of Yuko's 100 head nods were slight ones, for Fusa 12 out of 58.

Another species of backchannel cues came up which happened only 4 times in the J-J dyad and not at all in the G-G dyad: head raises or lifts. It is not that the head is raised in a sudden and large gesture as might happen in strong astonishment in English or German (and which was the case in the three times Sumi raised her head), but rather as a normal acknowledgment type of backchannel cue. The head is often held for a moment or two in the lifted position and sometimes after a pause, one or several head nods may be given. This type was seen 5 times with Yuko and 12 times with Fusa. In all of the cases they accompanied VBCs. Blinks were not given by Yuko, but 21 times by Fusa and smiles appeared 6 times with Yuko and 12 times with Fusa.

For Yuko and Fusa the most common combination of backchannel cues was VBCs + gaze + head nod, which happened with Yuko 35 times in which 76 head nods and 5 additional head raises were given; and 36 times with Fusa, who gave 50 head nods, 7 head raises and 14 blinks. Most important are the many overlapping backchannels, which happened 26 times, plus 4 times in the question-answer type backchannels which are listed separately. Yuko overlapped 16 times with the speaker and Fusa 6 times. Four times backchannel cues were overlapped by the following speaker. Speech and speech overlapped 12 times, for which both participants were responsible in equal numbers.

This dyad proved more Japanese than the purely Japanese dyad as it showed many more verbal backchannel cues and also more overlaps. However, the tendencies and the preferred combinations are the same. Overlaps happen at about the same positions, and difference in the frequency is only due to degree of adherence to the topic. The long-term Japanese resident in Germany has received no influence from her L2 German on her L1 Japanese whatsoever, and she is genuinely Japanese in her Japanese conversation despite her many years in Germany. This confirms Ohira's (1998) finding that Japanese do not change in the backchanneling behaviour in their L1 despite several years of living in another country.

Analysis of Long-term Japanese Resident of Germany with German Facilitating Participant

The participants of this conversation are Fusa, 45, long-term female Japanese resident of Germany, who is fluent in German and Oliver, 40, German male usually living in Japan but on a visit to Germany. The two are friends.

The frequency of Fusa's VBCs (42 times) was completely within the range of the J-J dyad, although a bit less than in her conversation with Yuko (59 times). On the other hand, Oliver's frequency of VBCs (27 times) is close to the German range, although he produced several consecutively repeated "hm"s for a total of 35. In the G-G dyad there were no clusters, although this does not mean that they do not appear in German as can be verified in Schwitalla 2002. For Fusa, as well as for Oliver the most preferred combination was VBCs + gaze + head nod followed by gaze + head nod, which was the same as in the J-J dyad.

Fusa gave more gazes than Oliver (50 and 29 times, respectively). This was quite a difference and one might have expected a Westerner to look more at his/her partner than an Asian. In this case it was the other way around. And although the following cannot give proof toward a theory, it might indicate a certain tendency. The number of gazes of all the Japanese participants in the study's dyads were counted and divided by six, the total number of dyads. The same was done with the gazes of the German participants and produced rather interesting results. The Japanese gave an average 46.3 gazes per dyad and the Germans only 35.6. These figures do not, however, say anything about the length of gaze or where the gazes were directed; i.e. directly towards the eyes or more in the direction of the mouth or ears or nose. This was not accurately detectable

with only one camera recording the conversation. Even the use of two cameras would not solve this problem as Agawa (2002) points out. A more important factor would be how these gazes were perceived by the speaker. Unfortunately this goes beyond the scope of this research which concentrates more on verbal backchannel cues alone or in combination with non-verbal ones. The unexpected difference in the frequency of gazes might, however, be an interesting topic for further research. It should also be noted that Fusa might have the impression that fewer gazes are required in German because she reduced their frequency by about 17% compared to her conversation with Yuko (50 gazes with Oliver and 60 with Yuko).

In comparison to the G-G dyad, here Oliver produced about the same number of easily visible head nods, but his slight head nods are very few (39 definite to 9 slight). Fusa is a surprise because in this dyad her head nods nearly doubled compared to her conversation with Yuko. This supports findings by Maynard (1986), and Agawa (2002) who found that head nods increase when Japanese talk in a second language (English), probably because they want to show that they understand, follow and are with the conversation. In Fusa's case it would seem that subconscious forces were also at work, because she understood German well and was a relatively good speaker. She was well aware that there are less VBCs in German, and indeed she produced about 28% less VBCs than in her conversation with Yuko. Fusa, however, somehow appeared uncomfortable in the German situation and gave more non-verbal signals (head nods) instead of verbal ones which involve a certain consciousness. In her conversation with Oliver, Fusa gave 85 nods plus 8 slight ones, compared to 46 nods plus 12 slight ones with Yuko.

In contrast, Fusa reduced her blinks in her conversation with Oliver (only once with Oliver and 21 times with Yuko). Unfortunately, there is no apparent explanation for the results. Very little research has been reported on this topic. It is possible Fusa might have considered blinks inappropriate as there are few given in German. Blinks are also, like gazes, much more noticeable than other signals, as the speaker usually looks at the eyes for reference. However, blinks might be more appropriate in Japanese as the researcher found 15 blinks by Tama and 8 by Sumi in the J-J dyad.

Overlaps are quite a big issue. Fusa produced more overlaps (11) than in her conversation with Yuko. There Fusa was responsible for 6 and Yuko for 16 overlaps as a listener. Maynard (1986) and Horiguchi (1997) state Japanese overlaps have the function to say: I am with you, I am listening, we achieve this conversation together, we are in harmony. Fusa seemed to feel this strongly and might have worked harder to achieve a comfortable level of harmony with Oliver than was necessary with Yuko. Fusa's overlaps, however, were not only at the end of an intonation or grammatical unit, or after the point of recognition, but also appeared in mid-stream, just as in Japanese (Clancy et al., 1996). Here is an example with the translation word by word, so that the mid-stream position is fully understandable:

010 O: oder ich [versteh auch] jaPANisch ne...

or I understand also Japanese don't I ...
011 F: [ja genau das]
yes exactly that

The positioning makes it hard to opt for the point of recognition. This was clearly a backchannel given in mid-stream which is typical in Japanese but not in German. Fusa showed the typical, and traditionally researched, influence or transfer of L1 (Japanese) on L2 (German). Her backchannel cues, both verbal and nonverbal (gaze, head nod, overlaps), have a frequency, positioning (overlaps), and quality (head raises) more Japanese than German. Fusa therefore not only gives evidence for my hypothesis that there is no influence for Japanese from L2 on L1, but she also confirms Ohira's (1998) finding that Japanese do not change their backchannels in their L2, even when they are aware of the 'problem'. That Fusa was aware can even be verified with one of her answers to the questionnaire, in which she stated that she does not change her speaking behaviour in German.

Analysis of Long-term German Resident of Japan with German Facilitating Participant

The two German female participants, Karina and Sylvia, did not know each other. Sylvia, 38, a sister of one of the researcher's German friends, came on a visit to Japan. Being of a friendly and outgoing character, she agreed to talk to Karina, 45, a long-term German resident of Japan. A warming-up period together with the researcher was provided and a friendly relationship was established quickly. Their conversation did not directly stick to the topic of education but focused more on Japanese behaviour patterns and facial expressions observed by Sylvia during her visit, and on how Karina deals with those in her profession as missionary and teacher.

Sylvia produced only 26 verbal backchannel cues, slightly more than the participants in the G-G dyad but much less than Karina. On the other hand, Karina produced fewer VBCs (37 cues, or 46 when consecutively repeated ones are counted) than in her conversation with Hana, but many more than the participants in the G-G dyad and even more than the ones in the J-J dyad. Her prosody was German, a short rise-fall “/ʔhm”, except for two VBCs in which her prosody was a very Japanese singing. These appeared when Karina was very astonished and did not hear what she expected to hear:

056 S: dann zieh LIEber ne schwarze BRILle auf und nen WALKman,
then you better put sunglasses on and a walkman

und schotte [dich AB]

and insulate [yourself from others]

057 K: [ʔhmm/mm!] (sounds v. Jap., gaze)

058 S: daMIT du keine aggressiviTAET..-

as not to any aggressiveness

059 K: ‘_HAAaanʔ (gaze, Jap. singing)

Sylvia talked about her stay in New York where her host-mother warned her to avoid looking at other people when riding the subway because it might cause an aggressive reaction. Karina was really surprised by what she heard and reacted with typical Japanese backchannel prosody, appropriate for such a situation in Japanese. The VBC given in line 057 was also in overlap with

the speaker, where the position was neither the end of an intonational unit nor that of a grammatical one. It could be labeled mid-stream, or, according to Schwitalla (2002), after the point of recognition. Personally, I would opt for the latter as Karina could anticipate after the word ‘schotte’ what would come next.

As for gazes, Karina gave 40 of them, fewer than in the conversation with Hana. Her head nods were also less numerous (96 + 1 slight one), but still many more than the ones given in the G-G dyad. Sylvia, however, was low in both gazes (24) and head nods (18 + 1 slight one), far fewer than in the G-G dyad. Again, the number of gazes says nothing about length or intensity of the same. Karina gave many smiles (16), which were more numerous than the smiles given in the G-G dyad, in which Britta (13) and Clara (10) participated. Here again, Sylvia’s count was much lower, with only 4 smiles. With Sylvia an idiosyncratic feature was found: she gave a lot of blinks as backchannel cues, altogether 51, although she appeared calm without any trace of nervousness. The influence these had on Karina cannot be determined.

Overlapping appeared very often by Karina. Her VBCs overlapped 20 times with Sylvia’s speech, and of these at least 5 could be counted as occurring in mid-stream position. Other than support, her VBCs often signaled awareness and agreement, even when given in mid-stream, a position in which Karina did not know what was coming next. In one sequence, when she realized that she did not agree with what was said next, she stopped immediately to nod her head. Here is the situation which illustrates this well (translation is given literally):

075 S: oder sie verSTECKen sich hinter ZEITschriften und [BUECH]ern,
or they hide behind magazines or [book]s

076 K: (3hn, gaze) [/?hm]

077 S: weil ich [glaub] NICHT dass die LEsen¥ (1.3)
because I believe NOT that they read

078 K: [/?hm] (1hn, gaze, head nodding stops abruptly, opens mouth)

In line 078 it was clear that Karina gave her VBC in mid-stream; she could have no idea what was coming next. Her abrupt stop of head nodding once she heard the word ‘nicht’, clearly indicated that her VBC was not only intended as support in conversation, but surely meant agreement.

Karina’s sudden stop of head nods did not fail to signal her disagreement, as Sylvia’s reaction showed. She immediately tried to repair, draw back and change the subject:

079 S: also [manche] teils [[teils]]

080 K: [so ne] (no ga.)[[/?hm]] (1hn, gaze)

081 S: also was [ich] so be[[OB]]Achtet hatte¥ [[[aber]]]¥--

082 K: [/?hm] [[/?hm]] (3hn, gaze)[[/?hm]]

083 S: und DAnn/ was LUstig is/ ahm.. dass die ja ueberall SCLAfen koennen
(on quite a light note and smiling)

But it was not only Sylvia who was trying to repair agreement. Karina supported her repair work and agreed with her maneuver to backtrack. In line 080 Karina gave a completely Japanese backchannel “so ne”(I should say so). This was the only lexical one she produced, other than the

two prosodically Japanese ones mentioned above.

Karina's preferred combination was VBCs + gaze + head nod, which she gave 18 times with 41 head nods, followed by VBCs + gaze + head nod + S which she gave 6 times including 22 head nods. Sylvia's preferred combination was VBCs + gaze, given 10 times, and in her case this also included 26 blinks. Sylvia's second most numerous combination was VBCs + gaze + head nod, which she gave 8 times with 10 head nods and 19 blinks. Karina gave VBCs 6 times without gaze, during which she also gave no head nods. However, these cues were not used to signal disagreement, but rather to collect her thoughts, to digest the information heard or to prepare the next speech.

Looking at all of Karina's backchannel cues, their frequency as well as how and where they were produced; offers quite an ambivalent picture. When only frequency is considered, her VBCs, head nods and overlaps seem very Japanese. But there is more to it. The prosody of most of her VBCs was very German and although she produced 20 of them in overlap with the speaker, or even at mid-stream positions, they were not so much meant as a striving for harmony, but rather as a real agreement. This could be well detected in line 078 where all her smooth backchanneling suddenly stopped as she realized that she did not agree at all with what was being said. A Japanese person in that same position would not have reacted that abruptly. Therefore evidence was found for my third hypothesis: influence of L2 on L1 for German can be affirmed as to form, but a restriction remains as to function. Karina seemed more to confirm findings by Kecskés and Papp (2000) and Cook (1999) who argue that bilingual or multilingual speakers create in their L1, as well as in their other languages, a language pattern of their own. The individual language pattern is neither identical with their L1 nor their L2, but something unique, reflecting the different values and patterns they have absorbed and 'mixed' into an identity of their own.

Analysis of Long-term German Resident of Japan with Japanese Participant

The two female participants of this dyad are Karina, 45, a German who has been in Japan for 11 years and is fluent in Japanese, and Hana, 45, a monolingual Japanese house-wife. Karina is a missionary/teacher and nearly all of her Japanese acquaintances are connected to her church. After being informed about the necessary informality of the conversation, she chose Hana, as someone who might see her more as a neighbor and equal than as a teacher. The two talked about Hana's daughter and her education to become a kindergarten teacher as well as about Karina's teaching experience at a private university.

In this conversation Karina produced 51 verbal backchannel cues, (73 if consecutively repeated ones are counted). For Hana only 33 can be found, with no repetition at all. Hana did produce a lot of Japanese singing: the drawing out of "hun" on the same tone level and sometimes raising the tone in the last third or half. On the other hand Karina's "hm", although much more numerous, were very (South-West) German in their pronunciation, a rise-fall-type /ʔ/ without any kind of singing or drawing-out.

The frequency of Karina's gazes was also higher than Hana's (48 to 34), although as mentioned before, frequency alone says nothing about length, intensity or exact target of the gazes. Hana's head nods were not very numerous (51 definite + 10 slight head nods), but she produced 7 of the typical Japanese head raises. Karina's head nods in this dyad were the most numerous of any the participants. She produced 134 nods + 7 slight ones, but no isolated head raises at all.

For smiles and laughter the situation was reversed. Hana not only smiled as listener twice as often as Karina (8 and 4 times, respectively), she also laughed much more often (5 and 1 times, respectively). Karina smiled and laughed a lot as speaker (no quantification has been made, but it was obvious when transcribing the conversation), but not much as listener. This behaviour was quite a contrast to the G-G dyad. However, it must be noted smiles and laughter depend greatly on the subject and might be idiosyncratic of the individual participants. Hana's behaviour also was in contrast to the J-J dyad, in which the participants displayed few smiles or laughter as listeners. A possible reason might be the distance Hana still felt towards Karina, necessitating the display of more smiles, a behaviour the researcher has often observed among Japanese. For Karina the same might be true for the opposite reason: more smiles towards people she feels close to and less towards those more distant. This would accord with both the J-J as well as the G-G dyad, in which the participants were close friends.

There were many overlaps regarding verbal backchannels, but here it is Karina who produced more overlaps than Hana, twice as many (12 and 6). In a sense Karina is more Japanese than her Japanese partner, because there were also 12 overlaps caused by the speaker who intruded on still ongoing VBCs. Karina was responsible for 8 of those and Hana for only 4. The length of Hana's backchannel cues (long drawn-out singing) was in part responsible for Karina's intruding on them as a speaker. It is clear that Karina positioned nearly all of her overlaps at the end of an intonational or grammatical unit or at the point of recognition where she could anticipate what the other person was going to say. Hana, however, also positioned them mid-stream or where she detected a slight pause. She probably placed them in order to give support or encouragement and was working to create harmony. Following is one example, where the translation is given literally for better understanding of the overlap position:

044 K: SOshite...[YAP]pari sono KOOkoo DE no [[KA]]tsudo GA
and...[of cour]se that highschool at the [[acti]]vity will
045 H: [_¥mm] (gaze, 1hn) [[_¥mm]] (gaze, 3hn)

The first overlap was clearly a mid-stream one and the second could be labeled as a point of recognition or also a mid-stream one. These types hardly occurred with Karina.

For both participants the most preferred combination was VBCs + gaze + head nod and the second most often combination was VBCs/head nod + no gaze. For Karina and Hana this could be found 6 and 7 times, respectively. A VBC or head nod with 'no gaze' often occurred at a point when one of the women wanted to collect her ideas or to think. Sometimes there was a pause or it was used as a signal to forego the opportunity to take the floor. At times several VBCs

occurred in the same line, one with a gaze and the next without. The participants had only short periods of mutual eye contact, but rather alternated looking at each other far more often. For both Hana and Karina there might be some personal reasons for this behaviour or it might simply demonstrate their relative distance. In the monolingual J-J dyad and in the monolingual G-G dyad, VBCs without gaze happened only once for each participant. Therefore, I do not think this can be attributed either to a typically Japanese or to a typically German pattern. Both participants highly respected the other's boundaries and surprisingly there was no overlapping speech at all. It might be due to Hana's character, as she was more a waiting type of listener and gave abundant room to the speaker. Again, she might just be expressing her feelings of respect; i.e. not enough closeness to Karina.

Although the target of this research is not the investigation of transfer from L1 to L2 it can be shown that Karina transferred the prosody of her verbal backchannels (short rise-fall intonation of 'hm' without drawing it out). She neither produced any backchannels in mid-stream nor any overlapping speech. She did, however, produce many VBCs and head nods (more than the Japanese) and also gave many VBCs in overlap with the speaker, which makes her appear very 'Japanized' at first or superficial sight.

Remark: When Karina was asked to choose a friend as partner in the conversation she questioned how to avoid bias because all the people she knows are through her church, therefore seeing her as a teacher or a person in a respected position. Nevertheless, Karina thought that Hana would be the most appropriate person. However, later in her questionnaire she wrote numerous backchannel cues in Japanese bother her, especially those which are given while she is talking (mid-stream positioning) as they give the impression of constant interruption. The person she especially referred to was a female colleague of hers, meaning this person would see Karina as an equal and perhaps even as a friend. This colleague might have been a more appropriate participant for this conversation.

Result of the Dyads

In the following tables, verbal, non-verbal, as well as different combinations of backchannel cues and their frequency are listed for each participant, whose name for this research is listed at the top of each column.

Verbal backchannel cues: Its abbreviation is given in brackets. The first number indicates in how many places verbal backchannel cues were given and the following number in brackets indicates the total number of cues given, e.g. "hm"s were uttered altogether (repetitions).

Q-A-type VBC: This means question-answer-type verbal backchannel cues. As previously mentioned, questions or answers are usually turns, however, sometimes the borderline becomes blurred or a distinction becomes difficult, especially in Japanese. In these cases the question-answer pairs were counted, but attributed to neither of the participants, nor were they analyzed. Therefore their frequency appears in between the participant's columns.

Head nods: The first number indicates how many clearly visible up-down movements of the head were given and the following number in brackets indicates the total of all head nods, including also very slight ones, with an up-down movement of less than 0.5 cm.

VBC overlapping with speaker: VBC of the listener overlapping with speech was attributed to the participant responsible. However, sometimes the speaker overlapped with still ongoing VBCs of the listener. In this case the overlap was attributed to neither of the participants, but counted and listed in between the two columns. In these tables verbal and non-verbal, as well as different combinations of backchannel cues and their amount, are listed for each participant, whose names for this research are listed on top of each column.

Table I

German-German Dyad

Britta: German female, 30 years old, German teacher, quasi-monolingual

Clara: German female, 30 years old, German teacher, quasi-monolingual

	Britta		Clara
Verbal backchannel cues (VBC)	11[12]		24
Q-A-type VBC			
Gaze	37		36
Head nods (hn)	45[122]		29[79]
Head raise			
Smile (S)	13		10
Laughter (@)	1		2
Blinks	4		6
Vbc overlapping with speaker	1	2	6
Vbc + gaze	1		3
Vbc + gaze + hn	5+15hn		15+37hn
Vbc + gaze + hn + S/@	4+15hn		5+13hn
Vbc or hn but no gaze	1		1
Vbc or gaze but no hn	0		2
Gaze + hn	17+64hn		7+17hn
Gaze + S/@ + hn	6+25hn		4+12hn
Overlapping speech	0		0

Table II

Japanese-Japanese Dyad

Tama: Japanese female, 45 years old, singer and music teacher, monolingual

Sumi: Japanese female, 30 years old, singer and music teacher, monolingual

	Tama		Sumi
Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs)	34[36]		26[37]
Q-A-type VBCs		6	
Gaze	49		34
Head nods (hn)	77[86]		57[61]
Head raise	1		3
Smile (S)	5		0
Laughter (@)	3		1
Blinks	15		8
Vbc overlapping with speaker	11	7	4
Vbc + gaze	3		5
Vbc + gaze + hn	27+53hn,7b		21+47hn

Vbc + gaze +hn + S/@	0	0
Vbc or hn but no gaze	1	1
Vbc or gaze but no hn	1	1
Gaze + hn	15+24hn,6b	6+14hn,7b
Gaze + S/@ + hn	4+9hn,2b	0
Overlapping speech	3	4

Table III

Dyad between Long-term Japanese Resident of Germany with Japanese Facilitating Participant

Fusa: Japanese female, 45 years old, housewife, 20 years of residence in Germany

Yuko: Japanese female, 38 years old, housewife, facilitating participant

	Fusa		Yuko
Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs)	59		44[54]
Q-A-type VBCs		9(4 are overlapping)	
Gaze	60		51
Head nods (hn)	46[58]		90[100]
Head raise	12		5
Smile (S)	12		6
Laughter (@)	5		4
Blinks	21		0
Vbc overlapping with speaker	6	4	16
Vbc + gaze	5+5b,5hr,3S		2
Vbc + gaze + hn	28+42hn,7hr,14b		30+66hn,5hr
Vbc + gaze +hn + S/@	9+10hn		6+10hn,3hr
Vbc or hn but no gaze	2		5+8hn
Vbc or gaze but no hn	0		1
Gaze + hn	2+2hn,1b		9+13hn
Gaze + S/@ + hn	2+3hn		2+2hn
Overlapping speech	6		6

Table IV

Dyad between Long-term Japanese Resident of Germany with German Facilitating Participant

Fusa: Japanese female, 45 years old, housewife, 20 years of residence in Germany

Oliver: German male, 40 years old, professor, facilitating participant

	Fusa		Oliver
Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs)	42[45]		27[35]
Q-A-type VBCs		1	
Gaze	50		29
Head nods (hn)	85[93]		39[48]
Head raise	3		0
Smile (S)	3		1
Laughter (@)	3		0
Blinks	1		0
Vbc overlapping with speaker	11	3	4
Vbc + gaze	2		6
Vbc + gaze + hn	35+72hn,3hr,1b		17+36hn
Vbc + gaze +hn + S/@	3+4hn		0
Vbc or hn but no gaze	1		1
Vbc or gaze but no hn	2+1S		4+1S
Gaze + hn	9+15hn		5+12hn
Gaze + S/@ + hn	0		0
Overlapping speech	5		3

Table V

Dyad between Long-term German Resident of Japan with German Facilitating Participant

Karina: German female, 45 years old, missionary/teacher, 11 years of residence in Japan

Sylvia: German female, 38 years old, physiotherapist, facilitating participant

	Karina		Sylvia
Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs)	37[46]		26
Q-A-type VBCs		5	
Gaze	40		24
Head nods (hn)	96[97]		18[19]
Head raise (hr)	0		0
Smile (S)	16		4
Laughter (@)	1		0
Blinks (b)	4		51
Vbc overlapping with speaker	20	3	1
Vbc + gaze	6+4S		10+1S, 26b
Vbc + gaze +hn	18+41hn, 3b		8+10hn, 19b
Vbc + gaze +hn + S/@	6+22hn		3+6hn, 3b
Vbc or hn but no gaze	6+10hn		1+2hn
Vbc or gaze but no hn	6		1+3b
Gaze or hn	1+5hn		0
Gaze + S/@ + hn	4+18hn		0
Overlapping speech	1		0

Table VI

Dyad between Long-term German Resident of Japan with Japanese Facilitating Participant

Karina: German female, 45 years old, missionary/teacher, 11 years of residence in Japan

Hana: Japanese female, 45 years old, housewife, facilitating participant

	Karina		Hana
Verbal backchannel cues (VBCs)	51[73]		33
Q-A-type VBCs		1	
Gaze	48		34
Head nods (hn)	134[141]		51[61]
Head raise	0		7
Smile (S)	4		8
Laughter (@)	1		5
Blinks	4		1
Vbc overlapping with speaker	12	12	6
Vbc + gaze	3		4
Vbc + gaze +hn	36+104hn		20+43hn
Vbc + gaze +hn + S/@	3+11hn		3+4hn
Vbc or hn but no gaze	6+15hn		7+9hn
Vbc or gaze but no hn	0		3
Gaze + hn	5+11hn		2+3hn
Gaze + S/@ + hn	0		1+1hn
Overlapping speech	0		0

Summary

The results seem to confirm my assumption that transfer depends largely on the frequency of backchannel cues in the original L1. There is transfer from an L2 high in backchannel cues to an L1 low in backchannels, but not the other way around. Several reasons or explanations can be offered, although none seem to hold the only true answer. In the case of the long-term German resident, Hess and Johnson's (1988) finding might hold true that backchannel cues are the latest

to be acquired (around adolescence) and the first to be lost. However, a look at how the German subject handled her backchannel cues in German also seems to give evidence to Kecskés and Papp's (2000) as well as Cook's (1999) findings of a multicompetence of bi- or multilingual speakers which is different from the competence of monolingual speakers. Languages do not exist in different boxes but are always present together in the mind of the individual speaking or learning them. Therefore, the possibility of an influence on the L1 is undeniable. Still, these findings are not very helpful in the case of the Japanese subject, who showed no influence of her L2 on her L1. Neither did she show any change in her backchanneling behaviour in her L2 German, but actually doubled the number of her head nods. As Japanese are very aware of their *aizuchi* and as backchanneling is one of the core points of Japanese polite behaviour, it might be that Japanese cannot easily behave in a seemingly impolite way; ergo they cannot give up their backchanneling beyond a certain extent.

Does this mean that speakers of languages with a low frequency of backchannels always adopt the backchannel cues of a high-frequency L2 into their L1? Not always. Wieland (1991) investigated French, and Berry (1994) Spanish conversational styles and the influence the styles had on American English speakers. French and Spanish both have a higher frequency of backchannel cues than English. Given the above findings, the Americans should have adopted the Spanish and the French styles. They did not. Especially Wieland's pilot study, which also mentions backchannel cues, shows that the long-term American resident of France (26 years) did not adopt the French conversational style even in French. Ergo there will be no influence in the L1 either. Why not? French and Spanish are not only high in backchannel cues, but their backchannel cues consist mostly of lexical and longer utterances, which also often overlap speech and for a longer stretch of time. When they appear in mid-stream position, they give quite an intrusive impression to the speaker. This is in high contrast to the Japanese mid-stream backchanneling, which simply accompanies the main speech. Therefore, the French and Spanish cues are in strong opposition to what is considered polite conversational style in L1 English. When investigating transfer of backchannel cues between languages, not only a simple difference in high and low frequency must be considered, but also the manner in which backchannels are given, whether in an active or more passive way.

The unchanging backchanneling style of Japanese and their often indiscernible meaning to the non-Japanese has led to disasters in legal affairs (LoCastro 1987) as well as in numerous unsuccessful business negotiations (Yamada 1997). However, there are signs which indicate that Japanese backchanneling behaviour can be changed. Through personal observation of the backchanneling behaviour of Japanese diplomats I noticed that even in Japanese their VBCs were curtailed! Training is the only conclusion possible. Such training would also be very helpful for business people, reducing the economic damage caused by breakdowns in business negotiations attributable to lack of awareness of socio-linguistic and cultural norms and values

(Yamada, 1997). An integration of backchannel behaviour into language teaching (LoCastro, 1987) and/or intercultural courses in high-school, as well as at university level, could greatly increase students' awareness of such differences and their importance, reaching them at an age where they are still receptive to cultural differences.

Conclusion

All three hypotheses have been largely confirmed, adding evidence to Heinz's (2003) and also Ohira's (1998) theses. When investigating two languages with low and high frequency of backchannel cues, they both have to be investigated in the position of L1 as well as L2. Transfer from L2 to L1 must be considered, not only transfer from L1 to L2.

Limitation of study and proposal for further research

The number of samples in this small study is by no means enough, and the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. The monolingual Japanese subjects were friends, but not close enough in age. This allowed for bias in their way of conversing. Also for this study, the researcher had to rely on a friend to get sample dyads of a long-term Japanese resident of Germany, which allowed for bias as the friend, being fluent in Japanese, was not a monolingual German. Last but not least, it was not possible to find participants with the same speed in speaking.

In further research it would be necessary not only to expand the number of subjects, but also to investigate a wider range of languages with different frequencies and manner of usage of backchannel cues. It would also be interesting to see how intensive awareness training might change the usage of backchannel cues in everyday conversations of ordinary people.

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