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Backchannels Responses as Conversational Strategies in the Interaction of Indonesian Speakers in Interview Setting

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ABSTRACT

In interpersonal communication, the listeners' role is as necessary as the speaker's. Backchannel is considered a universal behavior; it often occurs in the conversation to send a signal from the listener without claiming the floor. Linguists have identified backchannel responses in many languages and cultural differences regarding the backchannel's type, frequency, and placement. This study investigates the use of backchannel in Indonesian conversation by native speakers in interview settings. This mixed-method study combines a quantitative and qualitative study that examines the function and frequency of ten dyadic Indonesian native speakers in an interview setting. The sampling subject participant is 20 Indonesian native speakers with each gender; we selected ten people whose first language is the Indonesian language Each interview session took 20 to 30 minutes, totaling 4 hours, and 20 minutes of dialogue for the whole corpus. Based on the study findings, Indonesian native speakers often use nodding (each gender has the same frequency of around 42%) as a non-verbal backchannel. The current analysis suggests that nodding and facial expressions such as smiles, and laughter consider one of the listener responses in Indonesian conversation. Indonesian speakers' verbal backchannel does occur, but nodding occurs most frequently as a sign of the backchannel. The non-verbal behavior of nodding gives listening signals without bothering the speaker's utterance. The current study adds to our understanding of the listener's role in Indonesian conversation. These results contribute to intercultural understanding in the era of globalization.

1. Introduction

Many languages have different backgrounds in their communicative behavior. In intercultural communication, it is vital to understand each other talk. Therefore, an understanding of interlocutors is essential. The listeners' act to give signals responses such as *mmhm*, *uh-huh*, and *yeah* in a conversation is called a backchannel. The term backchannel implies two-channel in conversation. The 'main channel' is when the speaker holds the floor (Yngve, 1970). Moreover, 'backchannel' is used when the listener gives useful information without claiming the floor.

Backchannel is considered a universal behavior; however, some backchannel appears specific in one language and culture. For this reason, many studies have investigated backchannels with linguistic and cultural differences regarding the frequency, type, and functions of backchannels. (e.g., White 1989; Maynard 1990; Clancy et al. 1996; Heinz, 2003; Cutrone, 2014; and Aghblagh, 2017).

Many studies study the function of the backchannel, the form of expression, the timing of occurrence, and the frequency. However, non-verbal backchannel behavior studies such as head movement, facial expression, eye gaze shift, and others are often excluded. In human interaction, mainly face-to-face, we use verbal expressions but also non-verbal. Otsuka (2016) proposed backchannel behavior as a listener response using vocal expression and non-verbal cues such as nodding. In this study, backchannel behavior is used to convey research data.

In some languages, a backchannel is not only verbalized but also nonverbal as well. Duncan (1974) initiated non-verbal response tokens such as hand gestures, gaze nods, and silence. In Japanese communication, Backchannel or *Aizuchi* is considered an indispensable element. In Japanese conversation, frequent use of *aizuchi* is high — the variety of short-expression varied (Mizutani, 1984; Horiguchi,1997). Despite many linguists growing interested in backchannels, few studies have not been done on

nonverbal communication focusing on Indonesian conversation settings and how native speakers use it.

The gender context issues in using backchannel as a listener have been extensively investigated in many languages. In some cases, women use it more frequently than men do. Kogure (2003) concludes that there are gender differences in using backchannel in Japanese conversation. Ueno (2004) gives a different perspective on the gender difference of backchannel in the point of view of backchannel using interruptions. Japanese women acknowledge backchannel as a supportive interruption and prove more than Japanese men. The results have different results from American findings. American women tend to be supportive and cooperative in interaction.

According to Feke (2003), males use more overlap backchannels than females in single-sex conversations in other languages, such as English or Spanish. However, females show a more significant difference in backchannel behavior than men. Previous studies show that gender issues would be an interesting topic as the previous studies result in gender context and its relationship with the listener role.

We proposed research questions as follows:

a) Are there any gender differences in backchannel expression with head movement in frequency?
b) How is the role of non-verbal backchannel in conversation from a gender perspective?
c) Is there any different function of the non-verbal backchannel of nodding from a gender perspective?
d) What is the difference in the usage of facial expressions (laughter and smile) between males and females?
e) Is there any different function between males and females in using facial expressions (laughter and smile) as a non-verbal behavior?
f) What is the difference between the backchannel behavior of smiles between males and females?

This study fills the gap of backchannel study in many languages in the point of view not only verbal backchannel but also combined with the use of non-verbal backchannel focusing on head nodding, smile, and laughter. A few studies are also discussed in Indonesian conversation. Wouk (2001) examined the use of discourse marker *ya* in Indonesian conversation. Moreover, the result is that both yes, *ya*, and *iya* are frequently used as a continuer in a conversation. Meanwhile, Arifin & Sofwan (2017) discussed face-to-face conversation by the Indonesian speaker and that there are four behavioral cues, two in language and two in gestures. Both studies mentioned that in Indonesian conversation, the backchannel occurred, yet both studies need to collaborate in more detail on the function and the frequency of the backchannel. Meanwhile, this study also covered gender issues. Whether as Indonesian native speakers, there is different usage in gender or not.

This study also will enrich the Indonesian language studies on communication and how the role of the listener in the conversation plays an important part. By understanding one communication strategy in one language, we also should understand their culture and could contribute more to intercultural communication.

In this study, we explore the backchannel behavior of nodding and facial expressions of laughter and smiles. The listener role of these non-verbal behaviors and their intangible relation with verbal backchannel will also be investigated from the gender context. As in many languages, the role of the backchannel in the conversation has differed.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on backchannels have often emphasized the importance of backchannels in communication. Many researchers have proposed definitions of backchannels. The terms vary, yet the meanings are the same. Regardless, these terms of listener behavior have the same concept: an active listener role in the conversation vocally or non-verbally, and non-floor-holding devices that a listener uses to respond. (Yngve, 1970; Clancy et al., 1996; Tsuchiya, 2013).

Some researchers expand the category of listener responses, including longer utterances such as repetitions. (Clancy et al., 1996; Horiguchi, 1997; Maynard, 1993) The backchannel is not only vocal expressions such as *yes* or *uh-huh*. But also a non-lexical utterance such as *aa*, *hoo*, and *nn*. (Iwasaki, 1997; Maynard, 1993) Previous studies on backchannels have often emphasized the importance of backchannels in communication.

Recently, a non-verbal listener response has also been categorized as one of the backchannel types. This kind of listener response in a conversation encourages and helps the listener participate actively and is indispensable for communication.

Regarding listener response or backchannel functions, Gardner (2001) classified seven categories: discourse markers, dispreference markers, hesitation markers, assessment tokens, acknowledgment tokens, hesitation markers, assessment tokens, continuer, and newsmakers. Meanwhile, Maynard (1997) proposed five other functions: the display of understanding of content, support toward the speaker's judgment, agreement, strong emotional response, minor addition, correction, or request for information. According to Ike (2016), Gardner's classification of functions is more descriptive and detailed regarding emotional function. Horiguchi (1997) investigated the function of Japanese and also classified five functions of the backchannel: a signal of listenership, a signal of understanding, a signal of agreement, a signal of denial, and an emotional display. In other words, these functions mainly focus on verbal backchannels.

The importance of nonverbal communication in human interactions has been studied previously (Duncan & Fiske, 2015; Kendon, 1990; White, 1989; Wong & Peters, 2007). Nodding or head movement is among the most common non-verbal backchannels (Ike, 2010, 2016; Kita & Ide, 2007; Maynard, 1987, 1997; Miyazaki, 2005; Hanzawa, 2012). According to Maynard (1997), head nod co-occurs as a verbal backchannel produces in Japanese conversation. These findings support the statement that Japanese *aizuchi* has a higher frequency than other languages.

In previous studies on the backchannel, head movement and nodding were considered the non-verbal types of the backchannel. Many linguists agreed on the contribution of nodding, like one of the listener's responses. However, studies have not been done thoroughly regarding non-verbal behavior, such as facial expression, gaze, and hand gestures. Kogure (2007) stated that nodding and smiling appear in 'loop sequence,' a series of Japanese backchannel expressions. He emphasizes avoiding silence in the conversation, and the listener nods and smiles. Therefore, he suggests that nodding and smiling contribute to maintaining a cooperative atmosphere in a loop sequence.

According to Glenn (2010), Laughter is a phenomenon combining a voice, facial expression (smile and others), body movement (body shake), and a combination of various kinds of modalities. Studies have investigated Laughter's contribution to Japanese interaction (Namba, 2011; Haakana, 2010). However, using Laughter and smiling as backchannel behavior has yet to be widely known in other languages. Therefore, this study investigates non-verbal backchannel behavior such as nodding and facial expressions (Laughter and smile) in Indonesian conversation.

Meanwhile, Ekman (2007) suggests that the listener's smile supports the speaker as a signal of understanding or agreement. Contrarily, the feedback of a smile is a method to express the listener's willingness to continue his/her turn. Mainly to show a positive attitude toward the speaker (Argyle, 2013; Brunner, 1979). Positive attitudes may not be sincere, but it is still essential for the listener to express a smile. However, only some studies have researched non-verbal backchannel behavior in other languages, mainly Indonesian. In Indonesian conversation, a study on the discourse marker `ya` by Fay Wouk (2001) presents that in the Indonesian language, the discourse marker `ya/iya` or `yes` in English is used as a continuer. Discourse marker `ya/iya` has high-frequency usage in the conversation. The function of the discourse marker `ya/iya` this to maintain the appearance of cooperative behavior. These studies emphasize the study's purpose that a thorough investigation of backchannel behavior has yet to be done in Indonesian conversation.

3. Method

Indonesian conversation and the function of the backchannel in the conversation as a conversational strategy is used. This study believes that backchannel is essential in Indonesian conversation to smooth the talk and is frequently used by the native speaker of Indonesia. The methods describe how this study was conducted to gain the findings. This study used a mixed method combining quantitative and qualitative approaches with conversation analysis. The quantitative approach explained the significance of the usage by gender, and the qualitative approach explained the role and function of the backchannel in the Indonesian conversation. We use BTSJ by Usami (2015) to transcribe our conversation. To see the different usage of the backchannel based on gender, we use Otsuka's (2016) theory of backchannel classification. Moreover, we use Horiguchi's (1997) theory for the function of the backchannel.

3.1 Participants

This study presents the backchannel behavior in an interview setting. The tenth dyadic conversation was elicited from speakers of native Indonesian speakers. There were twenty subjects in this study, of which ten were male, and ten were female university students. They live in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. We use random sampling for the participant. However, we have limited in some areas university students' first language is the Indonesian language. The participants formed and were set in same-gender dyads. The subjects in both groups are university-aged students between 19-25 years old. Each interview session took 20 to 30 minutes, 4 hours, and 20 minutes of dialogue for the whole corpus. We collected 915 verbal backchannels and 1056 non-verbal backchannels consisting of head nodding, smiling, and laughter. All the participants were limited to using Indonesian languages as their first language. Moreover, all subjects had never been exposed to other second languages besides English.

3.2. Design and Procedures

All dyads were set in an interview setting, and the subject was asked as an interviewer and interviewee. Each subject had never met, so it was the first meeting conversation setting. Each interaction was recorded by video and transcribed for analysis—all tenth dyads engaged in the same communication task, an interview setting. To reduce the possibility of the influence of the topic in the conversation, we controlled the form of speech, listener behavior, relation, age, and sex of the participants. As all the participant is a university student and Indonesian native speakers and we collect the conversation data from the same gender, which is all interlocutors as male to male or female to female conversation. This measures whether there is a different usage of backchannel in Indonesian conversation by gender.

Many studies have investigated backchannels in the data of natural conversation. However, the analysis of listener behavior in natural conversation is complicated. In natural conversation, the topic will quickly change, and the roles of the speaker and listener change frequently, so it is difficult to analyze the listener's behavior. This study uses an open-interview role play, which first decides the theme of the interview conversation beforehand. It is believed that if the conversation sets first, the listener's role and the speaker will easily be fixed.

This study analyzed backchannel behavior from the four viewpoints of backchannel form, frequency, timing of the occurrence, and function. This study's target also targeted non-verbal behavior such as head movement and facial expression (laughter and smile). However, we also collected verbal backchannel for different analyses. Moreover, the function of the head movement was analyzed with Horiguchi's (1997) framework. However, we used a different facial expression approach: sympathy/understanding, humorous response, mitigation, and evasion. (Namba, 2011; 2017).

3.3 Analysis Procedure

The analysis unit is transcribed into utterance sentences with Usami's (2015) Basic Transcript System. Backchannel behavior is considered an independent utterance sentence in this study because it is the subject of investigation. When it can be determined that one speaker's utterance is continuous as a sentence with the interlude, it is regarded as a continuous utterance and regarded as one utterance sentence.

To analyze the significant difference between gender issues and measure the P-value, we use a T-test to determine if there is a significant difference between male and female groups. Furthermore, use a variance analysis or ANOVA to determine if the experiment results are significant. In this study, we are testing the different gender groups between men and women.

4. Result

In this study, we analyze mainly the non-verbal backchannel behavior. The nonverbal backchannel focuses on in this research are head movement and facial expression (laughter and smile). We also examine where non-verbal and verbal backchannel is used in the utterance, frequency, and function. Due to the study's limitations, we mainly focused on the non-verbal behavior of the head movement and facial expression (laughter and smile).

We investigated the head movements of Indonesian native speakers. We also compared the use of head movements between men and women. The listener's reaction behavior not only occurs as only the singular behavior of nodding but also co-occurs with a verbal backchannel. Therefore, we clarify in what kind of situation a non-verbal backchannel related to head movement and facial expression (laughter and smile) occurred with a verbal backchannel.

4.1 The Frequency of Backchannel Expression with Head Movement

The frequency of backchannel expression with head movement was based on Otsuka's (2016) classification. Figure 1 summarizes backchannel expression with head movement in Indonesian conversation.

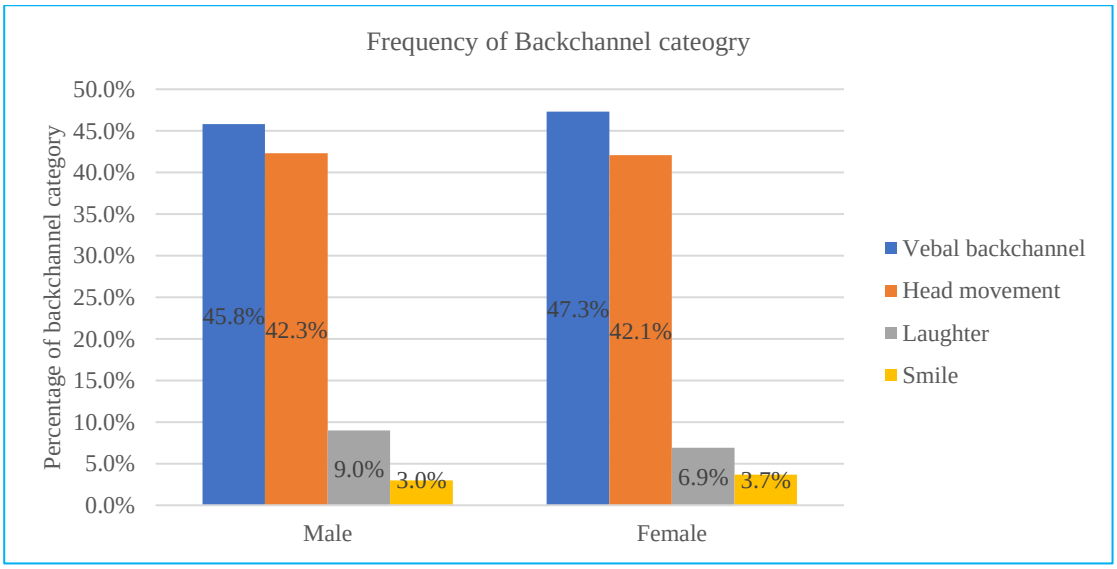

Figure 1. Frequency of Backchannel Categories in Indonesian Conversation

As seen in Figure 1, there was no significant difference in the percentage of total usage in the male and female groups (p>0.05). The total number of non-verbal backchannels (head movement, laugh, and smile) is 1056. Moreover, the verbal backchannel is 915. The other non-verbal backchannel, such as Laughter and Smiles, although relatively small, we can see that the native speakers also use as a listening signal.

We can conclude that Indonesia's native speakers frequently use head movements as much as a verbal backchannel. However, no significant difference was found between verbal backchannel and head movement (p>0.05).

According to Cutrone (2014), Japanese mainly use a non-word backchannel such as "uh huh," "yeah," "mm" etc., and a non-verbal head nod. This finding considers that Indonesian native speaker also mainly uses verbal backchannel and head movement in the conversation. The use of both verbal backchannel and head nod by the listener considers a simultaneous speech backchannel. Moreover, in this study, Indonesian speakers use verbal and nonverbal (nodding) in the interview setting.

4.2 Usage condition of verbal backchannel and non-verbal backchannel

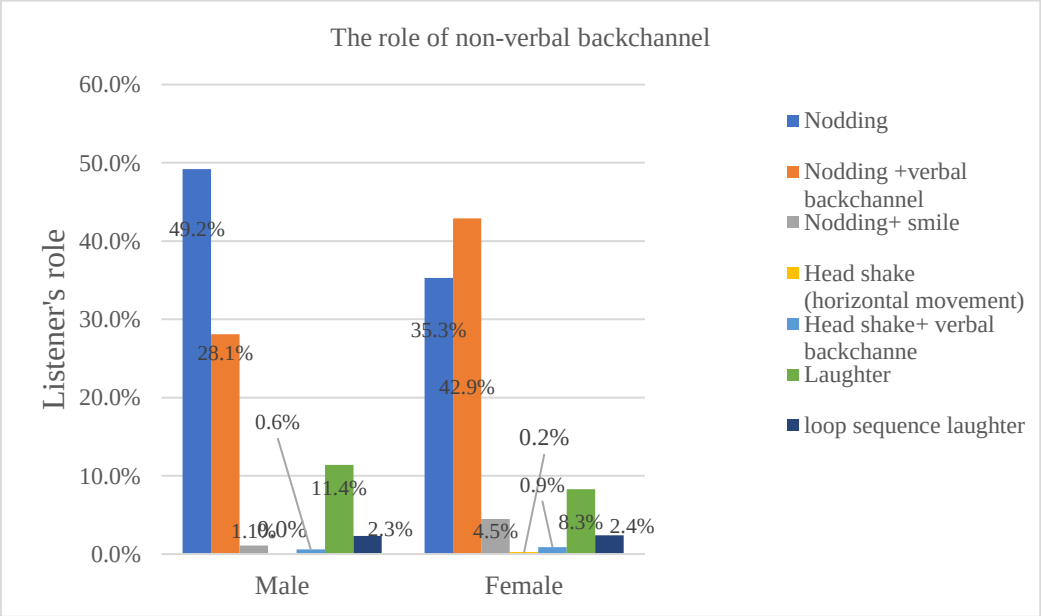

Figure 2. Usage condition of backchannel behaviour in Indonesian conversation

Figure 2 shows that Indonesian native speakers use more `verbal backchannel only` (male 44.6%, and female 46.5%). The percentage of 'verbal backchannel only' in the male and female groups is similar. Meanwhile, there is a difference in `non-verbal behavior only` in the percentage between men and women. However, no significant difference was found (p>0.05). In total, the usage condition of backchannel behavior (verbal and non-verbal) in Indonesian women (1100 times) was used more than in men (879 times). Women use an indirect respectful expression through a positive politeness strategy. We assume that one of the positive politeness strategies in the conversation is using backchannel behavior.

This finding emphasized the statement of Otsuka (2005) that backchannel or *aizuchi* in Japanese can be categorized as a sign of positive politeness because the listener shows that they understand what the speaker says.

Regarding gender differences, there is a slight difference in usage between Indonesian females and Indonesian males using backchannel. However, we conclude from Figure 2 that there is no significance different. Meanwhile, the results differ from Yazdfazeli & Motallebzadeh's (2014) study. One of their findings is that female Iranian EFL learners use backchannels more often than male participants.

4.3 Distribution of Backchannel Behavior

This study analyses the distribution of backchannel behavior in Indonesian conversation. We investigated the listener's role in conversation by analyzing the combination of verbal backchannel + non-verbal behavior and non-verbal behavior only. We analyze ten pairs of Indonesian native speakers' usage of backchannel behavior. We found that there are 1026 backchannels in the Indonesian conversation.

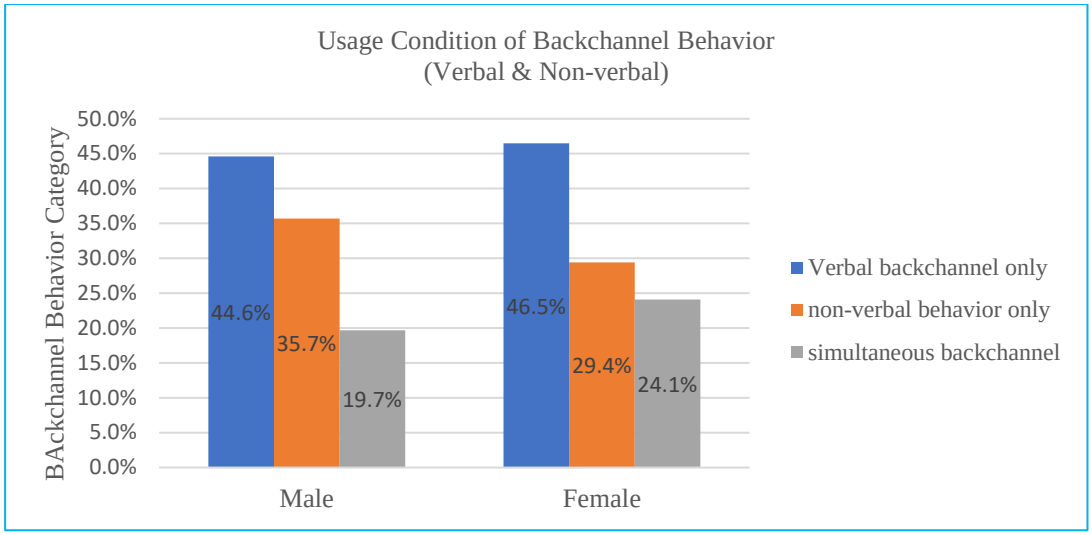

Figure 3. The role of non-verbal behavior in Indonesian conversation (including simultaneous backchannel)

In Figure 3, Indonesian speakers frequently use `nod only` rather than a simultaneous backchannel (nodding + backchannel). Moreover, different usage differed according to gender difference (men, 49.2%; women, 35.3%). However, no significant difference ($p>0.05$) in the percentage of “nodding only” and the “simultaneous backchannel.”

Furthermore, the frequency of simultaneous backchannel (nodding + backchannel) in women is higher than in men. This result is related to Hanzawa's (2012) study that mentioned Japanese women use backchannel more. As a result, there was a significant difference between gender usage ($p<0.05$); we conclude that Indonesian speakers use more "nodding only" than simultaneous backchannel (nodding + backchannel).

4.4 The Function of Head Movement in Indonesian Conversation

We examine the role of head movement as a backchannel behavior and position in the conversation. We analyze and consider `head movement` as a listener's behavior. Therefore, we classify the function of head movement as the same as a verbal backchannel. There are also some circumstances where head movement uses a verbal backchannel simultaneously.

There are five categories of the function, which are: "listening signal," "display understanding," "agreement," "negative signal," and "Strong emotional response.

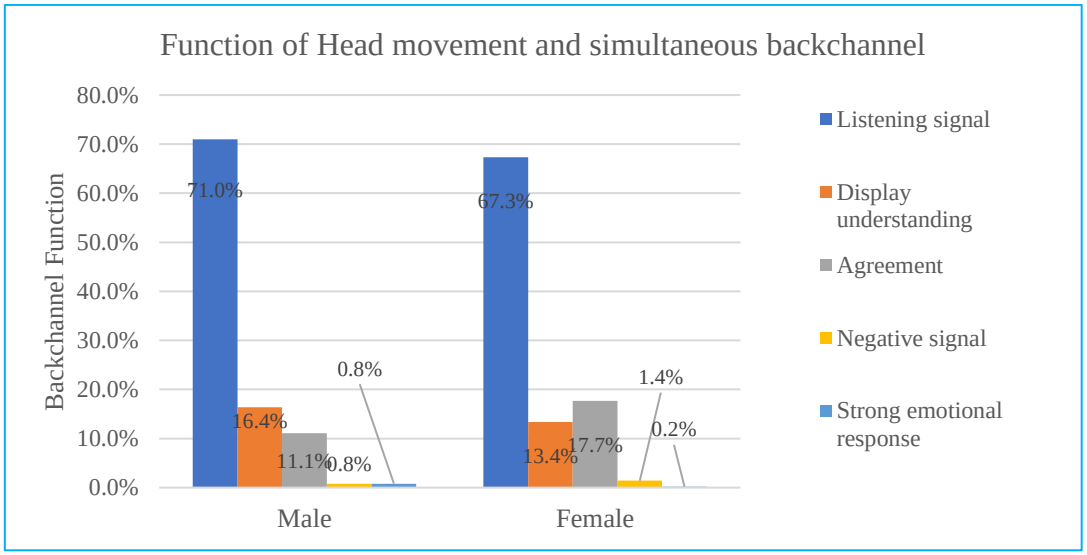

Figure 4. Function of head movement and simultaneous backchannel

Figure 4 shows that the head movement function of the `listening signal` is significant. The most frequent head movement function is the "listening signal." In Indonesian conversation, "head movement" is mainly used to send a listening signal.

Moreover, the head movement is also used as an "agreement" sign. The listener listens and understands the speaker`s speech, and then he/she signals that he/she agrees with the content. Other backchannel function also occurs, like "negative signal" and "strong emotional response." However, this percentage is deficient.

Furthermore, we explain the use of head movement in Indonesian conversation. Here, we use H-H, and H-H-H indicates a head node twice and thrice. Moreover, for the Head Shake, we described it as HS. The next is the example where head movement occurs in the conversation.

	itu menjadi beban ga sih untuk tania sendiri
IF9:	So, do you think it is as a burden
	nggak sih
IF10:	**No, not really**
	kek harus berangkat lebih pagi atau gimana
IF9:	It`s like you have to go early or something
	ngga sih ^ HS）, aku punya kendaraan (tersenyum)
IF10:	**Not really (HS), I have motor cycle (smile)**
	ohh iya ada ya
IF9:	Ohh, yes, you do, have you
	aku punya motor
IF10:	I have a motorcycle
	naik motor
IF9:	you drive motorcycle right
	jadi kaya ya udah jadi nyantai…
IF10:	so, I don't have to rush…

Excerpt 1 (conversation female group)
F 9: Interviewer; IF10: Interviewee

As shown in conversation 1, we can see the function of the "negative signal." First, the underlined 125 of IF10 used "nggak sih, or I do not think so" as a negative form. However, in line 127 of IF10, the utterance co-occurs between the "negative signal" of head shake and the verbal expression "Ngga sih or not really." In conversation 1, the Indonesian native speaker uses a negative expression with a non-verbal head shake. A negative expression of "ngga sih" and "head shake" is also seen in the Indonesian conversation.

The token of "ngga sih" followed by a head shake showed some negative attitude to the speaker from the listener. This is similar to the statement from Hanzawa's (2012) study that using an adverse reaction for backchannel means the listener shows polite denial towards the speaker's statement.

	naskahnya judulnya sobrat, aku jadi sobratnya
IM4:	The script called sobrat, and I played as sobrat.
	oh iya iya ^(H)
IM3:	**Ooh..yes yes (H)**
	itu sempet main.
IM4:	Oh yeah, I have played that
	*itu sekali, terus yang kemarin…dua kali, aku baru main 2 kali di sini kok jadi aktor (IM3:**H-H, weiss** jadi sering ya)*
	Just once, and then, yesterday…so, it`stwice. I only play twice here as an actor. （IM3:
IM4:	(H)weiss, you`ve done a lot）
	tapi kalo garap jadi sutradara sering (IM3:H-H-H) gitu
IM4:	But, mostly I`ve done as a director（IM3:H-H-H）

Excerpt 2 (conversation male group)
IM 3: Interviewer; IM 4: Interviewee

As shown in conversation 2, the first underlined utterance of 60-1 of IM3 is a “responsive backchannel” of “oh iya iya” used and combined with non-verbal nodding. Also, in an underlined utterance of 60-2 of IM3, the verbal backchannel of `Weiss` functions as a “strong emotional response” while using nonverbal nodding. In this line, IM3 uses a surprised expression of `Weiss` and nods at the situation. This expression used and expressed his/her surprise toward the speaker`s utterance. As a result, as conversations one and two show, non-verbal head movement occurs in a single pattern. Also, it co-occurs with other listener responses as a verbal backchannel.

4.5. Facial Expression in Indonesian Conversation (Non-verbal Behavior of Laughter)

In this section, we examine the type and function of Laughter. Laughter is sometimes displayed by arranging non-verbal and verbal behavior, although Laughter also occurs together with various kinds of vocal expressions, such as discourse markers or backchannel. This study summarises the Indonesian speaker`s Laughter function as follows:

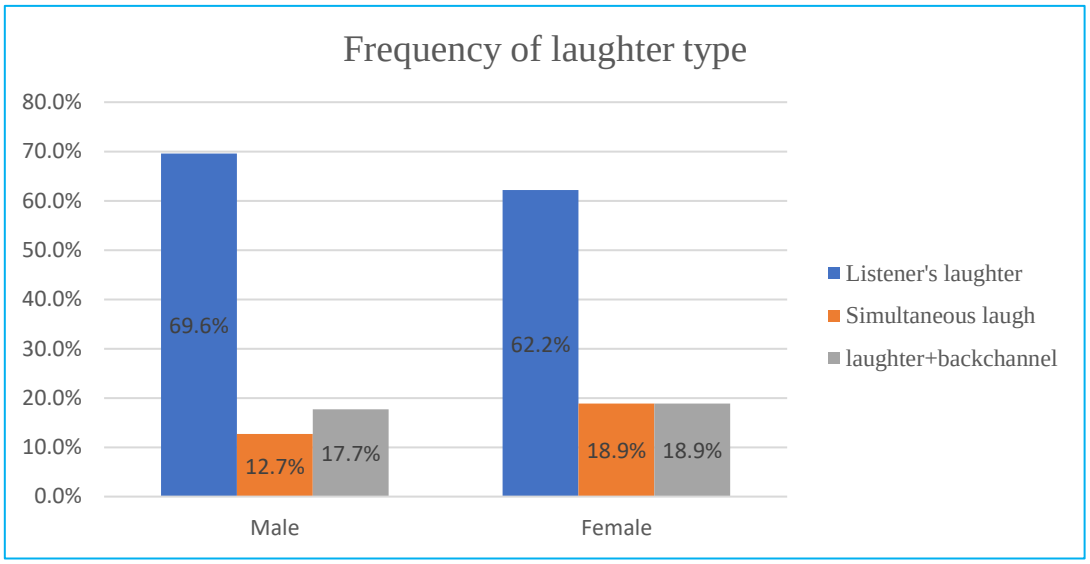

Figure 5. Frequency of laughter type in Indonesian conversation

The total frequency of laughter in Indonesian conversation is 153 times. The result is that the most used type is "listener's laugh" (66%). Moreover, the percentage use of each type if we test variance analysis with ANOVA resulted in no significant difference in the type of laughter between men and women ($p>0.05$). However, there was a significant difference in the frequency of each type of laughter ($p<0.05$).

Below, we can see the usage of the laughter type in Indonesia's conversation.

IF2:	*dan aku bakal ikut SBMPTN (**IF1: ehehehehe**) IPS sama yang IPA mana nih unpad sama UNS ya udah akhirnya milih unpad dan ngeliat prospek kerjanya dan segala macem dan denger dari senior juga dan dosen wali, (IF11:H)* And I will take a national university entrance exam **(IF1: ehehehehe)** I choose both social and science, then my target university is UNS and UNPAD. But, in the end, I choose UNPAD because I see the prospect, and else. I heard this from teachers and high school senior.
IF2:	*kalau misalnya emang unpad tuh ee psikologi unpad tuh go internasional lah,* then I hear psychology UNPAD has gone international.
IF1:	ooohhhh, (S, H) Oooo…. (S, H)
IF2:	*istilahnya kayak gitu, trus udah terkenal di internasional terus eeee apa yaa, seneng aja di unpad. (**IF1 &: IF2: hehehehhehe**)* I just only heard it, it`s an international campus, eee besides, I also enjoy a study in UNPAD (IF1 &: IF2: hehehehhehe)
IF1:	*ohhh jadi sebetulnya pemilihan pertama itu psikologinya dulu* Ohhh, so that is why you chose psychology in the first place…
IF2:	*iyaa, (H) dari psikologinya dulu…* Yes（H）, at first I am interested in psychology

	lalu R liat mana nih psikologi yang emang IPA juga
IF1:	So then, why are you choose that major of psychology? Because it`s in the science field?
	heem, (H-H)
IF2:	yeahh（H-H）

Excerpt 3 (conversation female group)
IF 1: Interviewer; IF 2: Interviewee

In the example of conversation 3, the scene described a conversation between IF1 and IF2. The speaker explained the reason why she chose the major. IF2 explained that she chose it because she was interested in the major, and in response to her answer, in underlined 55 of IM1, the listener gives laughter as a reaction. At the same time, in underlined 56 of IM2, the speaker feels that her answers are impressive, and she laughs with the interlocutor. This type of laughter occurs when the listener understands the talk and then he/she accepts it by giving the nonverbal sign with laughter. Here, we can understand that all the participants actively engage through simultaneous laughter in the conversation.

	heeh, (H)
IF5:	heeh（H）
	Sekali ada order semuanya masuk, (S)
IF6:	Once the order comes in, everyone also orders.（S）
	ehehe、ohya, *dance cover itu cover?*
IF5:	**Ehehe, ohh really**, it`s cover dance also cover?
	ya, yang ngecoverin aja
IF6:	Yes, I`m only covering the dance.
	ngecoverin dance aja, biasa anime (IF5: ooohh) yang misal love life yang sekarang (H-H-H)
IF6:	I usually cover dance in the anime (IF5: Ooohhh) for example the famous love life now (H-H-H)
	iya iya heeh、(H)
IF5:	so so so, yeah（H）
	temenku juga yang di makasar tuh suka banget love life (IF6: ehehe! banyak yang suka)
IF5:	My friend in Makasar also loves `love life) (IF6: ehehe! Everyone also likes `love life`)
	tapi aku lupa….
IF5:	But I forgot

Excerpt 4 (Conversation female group)
IF 5: Interviewer; IF 6: Interviewee

We observed laughter and backchanneled, “oh ya” as a listener response in conversation four above, where speaker IF6 talks about an order made by people to make a costume cosplayer. The listener IF5 inline 49 responded with laughter and continued with “ohya.” The laughter is considered a listener response, and the function of laughter is understanding the speaker’s talk. The following Figure 6 summarizes the function of laughter in Indonesian conversation.

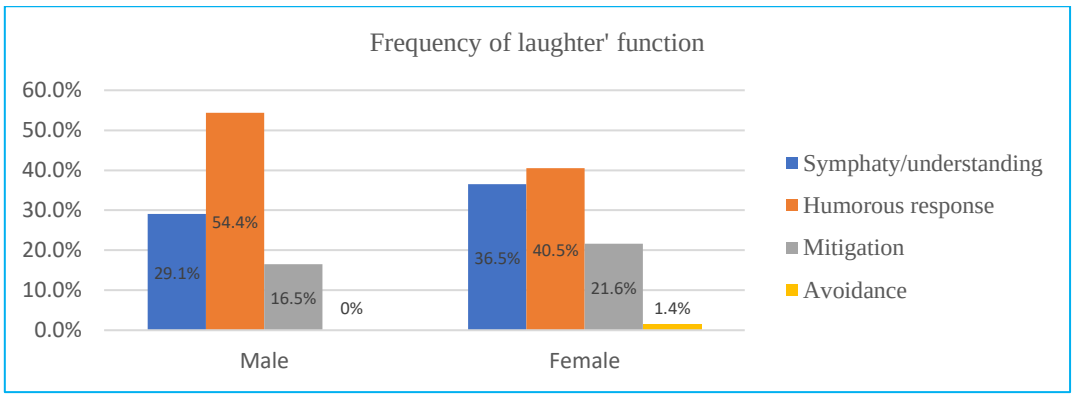

Figure 6. Frequency of laughter`s function in Indonesian conversation

As shown in Figure 6, the frequency of the laughter function is 153 times. The most used laughter function in the conversation is "humorous response" (male 54.4% and female 40.5%). Indonesian men and women use the function of "avoidance" for 0.7% of the conversation. There were no significant differences in the frequency between men and women ($p>0.05$). We conclude that both men and women use the same function of laughter in conversation. Moreover, the two functions of `relaxation` and `avoidance` are usually used to manage the conversation's trouble. In this study, we set the conversation in an interview setting, so we rarely found laughter in management trouble.

Sometimes in the conversation, the interaction between interlocutors could be smoother and occasionally occurs trouble. One of the laughter's functions is "mitigation" and "avoidance." The troubling scene in collected interview data is rarely found. Therefore, the function of `mitigation` and `avoidance` is not seen. In the collected data, we found that laughter's role is mainly to show sympathy or understanding. We are moreover used as a reaction to humorous behavior. In Indonesian conversation, the function of 'empathy and understanding' between interlocutors occurred. This phenomenon occurred in the simultaneous listener's laughter and was observed using laughter with another verbal backchannel.

According to Namba (2011), a conversation's laughter supports bonding and mutual understanding between interlocutors. Moreover, it plays an important role in negotiating, creating, and maintaining mutual interaction between participants.

In this study, the frequency of laughter was low; however, we confirmed that laughter could be used as a listener reaction. Also, through laughter, the speaker and listener could exchange talk. Laughter is also considered one of the strategies of positive politeness.

4.6 Non-verbal behavior of Smile

The listener commonly smiles or laughs when the speaker gives jokes or humor in the turn-taking situation. However, the use of smiles differs in every language, depending on the culture, usage, and conversation content. For example, in the case of Japanese, in a first-time conversation situation, in order to ease the tension, Japanese people do not use jokes. However, sometimes they smile during the conversation and merely laugh because of shyness. A smile is shaped like laughter; the process is pulling up the mouth corner without making a sound. A smile was initially being told as one of the laughter types in facial expression.

In this study, we investigate the nonverbal behavior of smiles as listenership. First, we explain the role of the smile in the conversation, and how it is exchanged, and through the example of the conversation, we will analyze the scene within the smile.

From the data, we classify the three types of smiles and position backchannel behavior by showing active responses in the conversation.

a) Listener`s smile
b) The listener and the speaker “simultaneous smile.”
c) The co-occurrence between a smile and other gestures (in this study, we do not analyze gestures but other verbal backchannel and nonverbal behavior of nodding or laughter).

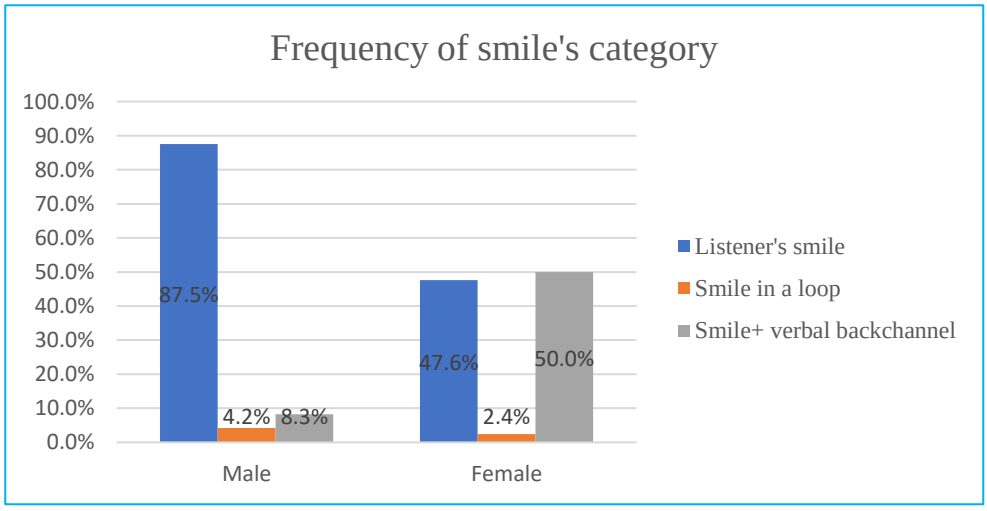

Figure 7. Frequency of smile category in Indonesian conversation

As shown in Figure 7, the most frequently used smile category is the "listener's smile." The number of smiles in Indonesian conversation in total is 66 times. We can see that the male group (87.5%) and female group (47.6%) use the "listener's smile." However, the frequency of non-behavior smiles in Indonesian conversation is minor. There was a significant difference in the proportion of the use of each category of a smile ($p<0.05$). The result was calculated using a variance analysis (ANOVA) test. There was also a significant difference ($p<0.05$) in each type's frequency proportion.

In conversation five, the example situation of the smile occurred as a listener's response.

	itu ada ga sih?
IF9:	It`s someone there?
	ada sih temen kostan (S)（**IF9:S**）
IF10:	There`s my roommate (S)（IF9:S）
	nah biasanya kegiatan dengan temen-temen di luar kampus itu ngapain aja?
IF9:	Then, what is your activity with your friend outside the campus?
	ya kita biasanya makan bareng, trus atau gak kita main, nonton film, kaya gitu gitu sih (IF9: H-H)
IF10:	Well, we usually eat together, or we hang out, watch the movies, something like that. (IF9: H-H)
	di kostan ya?
IF9:	In your dormitory?
	*heem **(IF9:S) S***
IF10:	Yeah (IF9:S) S

Excerpt 5 (Conversation female group)
IF 9: Interviewer; IF10: Interviewee

In conversation 5, the scene is where the speaker IF20 talks about activity outside the campus. When the speaker agrees with the listener's IF9 utterance, he answers with a responsive "heem." Moreover, listeners give back a smile as a reaction. The act is called a "smile in a loop" - as the listener and the speakers give a smile as a listener's reaction. The response only occurred once a time in all conversation data. However, another nonverbal behavior of laughter also occurs. Both interlocutors give each other listener responses. Moreover, the Smile in conversation 5 means the listener understands and accepts the story with a smile.

In this study, we also analyze the function of smiles. We classify Smile's function into four categories: sympathy/understanding, humorous response, mitigation, and avoidance.

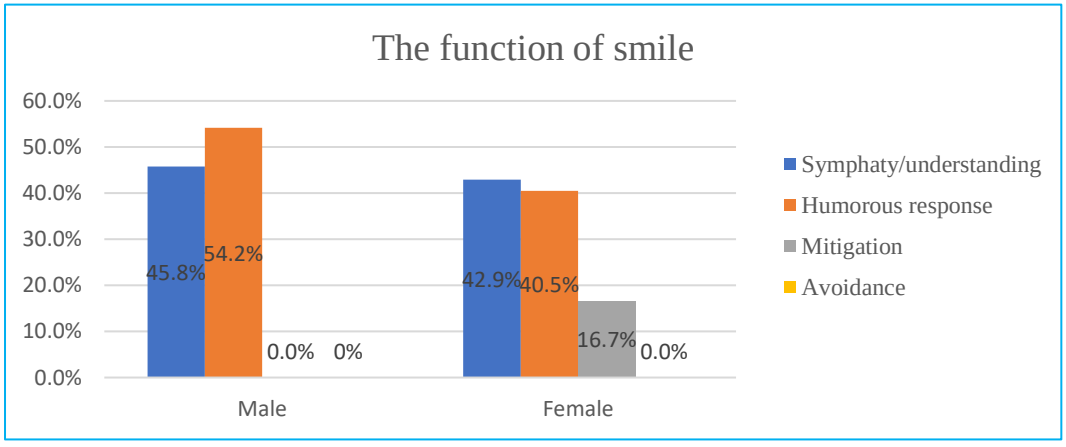

Figure 8. The Function of smile in Indonesian Conversation

As shown in Figure 8, the smile function's most frequent use is `humorous response` (male= 45.8%, female 42.9%). However, in all the conversation data, we did not find the function of "avoidance" in the interview set setting — no significant difference between the male and female groups. We found the function of "mitigation" in the female group but not in the male. As a result, the function of "mitigation" and "avoidance" is rarely seen in Indonesian conversation. Generally, the smile shows "sympathy/understanding" and "humorous responses." Therefore, in this set of interview settings, the non-verbal smile is mainly used as a listener response to make the conversation smooth rather than trouble management.

Meanwhile, since the smile is a non-verbal listener reaction similar to laughter, we also analyze and classify them with the same type and function. Laughter and smiling have various kinds of functions as interactions. They are associated with various stances (e.g., subtle stories and amusement). The role of the smile as a reaction also has the same function as laughter. After a humorous story, smiles were given as a light admission to the laughable story. A smile can work as laughter and can act as a reaction to laughing.

5. Discussion

This study proposes six research questions. It examines the nonverbal and verbal backchannel in Indonesian conversation by gender. This section explores the results of using verbal and non-verbal backchannels. There are six major findings of this study. According to the findings regarding the frequency of the backchannel in Indonesian conversation, the native speakers actively use verbal and non-verbal backchannel. Regarding frequency by gender, both females and males are equally active in using verbal backchannel and nodding. Some studies on backchannel mentioned that Japan has the most frequent usage regarding the use of backchannel as a listener signal. Comparatively, some studies show that the Japanese actively use backchannel when they talk. (Maynard, 1990; Cutrone, 2005; Maynard, 1997; Ike, 2016) In these studies, it is shown that Japanese speakers use backchannel more frequently than English speakers. Therefore, backchannel has been a unique characterization for the Japanese language because the frequency of using backchannel in their conversation is usually higher compared to other languages. A backchannel is categorized as a listener behavior, sometimes not always formed as a short lexical, but also a non-lexical signal or nonverbal cue (Ike, 2016).

The use and frequency of backchannel can be seen in Indonesian conversation. However, in accordance with Nurjaleka (2019), the comparison of backchannel in Indonesian and Japanese languages has been studied. She emphasized that the frequency and the type of backchannel in the Japanese language are still higher than in the Indonesian language. However, Indonesians tend to use more nonverbal, such as nodding, to continue talking when they want to talk.

Regarding the use of nodding, which is frequently used in Indonesian conversation. The results of this study show that the use of nodding and verbal backchannel is different between males and females. Indonesian males frequently use only nodding. On the other hand, Indonesian females use verbal and nodding to send signals to their interlocutors. Nodding is a cultural way of indicating attentiveness. (Mokoginta, 2009). Meanwhile, nodding was used less frequently in American English than in Japanese (Aoki, 2011). In intercultural interaction, backchannel responses and listener signals can cause miscommunication. In this study, we can assume that the Indonesian language frequently uses the non-verbal back channel of nodding in the interview conversation. In some cases, it may lead to a misunderstanding of meaning. For example, when the listener nodded to show that he is paying attention. Meanwhile, the speaker misinterpreted the nodding that it could be that "I understand what you are saying". (Li, 2006). Hanzawa (2012) also mentioned that one of the head nods as a backchannel is a supportive agreement to show the speaker that the listener agreed explicitly. This sign of agreement differs from overt understanding, which does not express the listener's support towards the speaker's statement.

Regarding the research question of whether there is a gender difference in the use of backchannel and different function by male and female Indonesian speakers, we wanted to highlight our findings that, in conclusion, Indonesian does not have gender difference preference for the frequent use of verbal backchannel and non-verbal backchannel. Our findings on the data are that the difference is not significant. Some studies argued that the frequency of the Japanese backchannels between males and females depends on the context. Moreover, tend to occur more of gender differences in single-sex conversations (Kogure, 2003). However, some studies found that Japanese women actively use backchannel or *aizuchi* in a conversation and use the function differently. Japanese women tend to use *aizuchi* to show empathy and understanding. Meanwhile, Japanese males use a backchannel to accept the speaker's feelings and express their feelings. (Tsujimoto, 2007).

Meanwhile, in the English language, it is still arguable that there are gender differences; although some study occurred that female produces more of the type of backchannel, it is not warranted. (Marche & Peterson, 1993; Dixon & Foster, 1998). Further, Dixon and Foster (1998) sampled English-speaking South Africans to investigate whether there is a gender difference in backchanneling (verbal and nonverbal nodding). The results indicated no significant differences in the use of English for South Africans. This support that backchannel usage is contextual depending on the situation, formal or non-formal, and it also depends on the context. It is still arguably between language and culture whether there is significant backchannel usage by gender. Although in some cases, such as in Japan, women tend to use a frequent verbal backchannel, or they both use simultaneously with a nonverbal backchannel, which is called simultaneous backchannel.

One of our major findings is that Indonesian females have a higher frequency than males in using the simultaneous backchannel. Although, compared to the frequency of the single nonverbal backchannel, backchannel usage by gender is still high rather than simultaneous. Still, women use backchannel simultaneously in between verbal and non-verbal is seen.

This finding aligns with other studies on the backchannel. According to some studies on Japanese backchannel or aizuchi, head nods or vertical head movement often occur simultaneously with verbal backchannel. (Horiguchi, 1997; Maynard, 1997; Ikeda & Ikeda, 1996). And according to Ike (2016), in Japan, simultaneous nonverbal backchannel, such as nodding, is a way to establish rapport between the interlocutors in conversation. Verbal and nonverbal backchannel in Japanese can occur simultaneously or independently in conversation.

Furthermore, nonverbal backchannel, such as nodding, is sometimes accompanied by multiple head nods, smiles, or laughter. Therefore, Japanese *aizuchi* use a single backchannel and two or more nonverbal backchannels. (Cutrone, 2014) The issues of the simultaneous backchannel are still limited to the Japanese language. Therefore, our findings on the occurrence of simultaneous backchannel in Indonesian conversation support other findings that this phenomenon does not just occur in the Japanese language. However, further detailed analysis needs to be done, such as comparing the simultaneous backchannel process in Japanese or Indonesian. Also, we can compare both languages to have a cross-cultural analysis.

This study supports previous research findings on the function of the verbal and nonverbal backchannel. Regarding the nonverbal backchannel function, Hanzawa (2012) mentioned that one function of a head nod as a backchannel is a supportive agreement to show the speaker that the listener agreed explicitly. This sign of agreement differs from overt understanding, which does not express the listener's support towards the speaker's statement. This study used head movement or nodding in Indonesian conversation, and over 60% as a listening signal. And other functions also occur, such as agreement and display of understanding from the listener to the speaker.

Regarding another nonverbal backchannel that this study highlights, facial expression does occur in Indonesian conversation. However, the frequency of usage is low. In this study, we limited only for using laughter and smiles as multimodal expressions in communication. Meanwhile, nonverbal laughter and smiles also use as a simultaneous backchannel with the verbal backchannel. And it is used as a listener's response to the speaker's say. We have yet to have a specific conclusion on whether a female use backchannel more frequently verbally or not. However, it is found a significant difference in the use of nonverbal smiles and verbal backchannel by the Indonesian female, almost 88%. Meanwhile, males use only one single nonverbal smile in the conversation.

Nonverbal communication is also a vital component of human interaction. This study focuses on the context of Indonesian conversation to explore the multifaceted of nodding, laughter and smiles in conveying understanding, agreement and active participation in an Indonesian conversation. Many linguists also discussed the non-verbal backchannel that expresses agreement, interests, and others. Laughter and smiles are also seen used as a backchannel. This finding is expected with the result of other studies. (Brunner, 1979; Krause-Ono, 2004; Mehu, 2011).

Kogure (2007) and Hanzawa (2012) studied on nonverbal backchannel of head nod and smile in Japanese conversation. Sometimes nod occurred independently or sometimes used simultaneously with verbal backchannels. The use of head nod and smiles in Japanese conversation is to avoid creating silence, and the speaker could maintain the conversation progress and create a certain rhythm. However, this does not conclude that in Indonesian conversation, females use it more frequently than males in same-sex conversations. Yamada (2007) justifies using smiles as the listener's role to show commiseration and empathy among participants.

This study supports Yamada's finding on how smiles use as a backchannel signal to give sympathy or an understanding to the speaker. Sometimes smiles are also used by the listener to give a polite response and show a humorous response toward the speaker's utterance. This is the positive politeness the listener gives to encourage the speaker and give him/her support.

The implications of our findings in terms of nonverbal backchannel are described. The evidence of nonverbal behavior occurring in the Indonesian conversation that supports verbal backchannel confirms that backchannel as a linguistic phenomenon supports a conversation strategy to smoothen the talk. And the multimodal such as nodding, laughter, and smiles, could develop a harmonious conversation. This effect may have important implications for intercultural communication and second language learning. The importance to know each language linguistic characteristic and its culture. According to Mizutani (2001), backchannel produced is triggered by the following features: falling intonation, weak sound, pause, and head nodding. This finding proved that pauses give a space for the listener to produce the backchannel.

Based on the discussion of the findings, this study shares new highlights on using the non-verbal backchannel in Indonesian conversations. We have confirmed that Indonesian native speakers actively use a backchannel, mostly nodding, and we consider these acts as a positive politeness strategy in the conversation. Furthermore, this study also revealed that there is no gender difference. This is assumed that the Indonesian language has no gender preferences in language.

This study was limited to nonverbal backchannel of nodding, laughter, and smiles but could be extended to other nonverbal behavior that supports listener response. This study also has yet to focus on the

occurrence of the simultaneous backchannel. Our findings are in accord with the limited available and specific data context. Future studies should examine the use of multimodal listener response and use as a conversational strategy broadly. This study hopes to contribute to the direction of intercultural communication and second language learning. It is when people with two different languages and cultural backgrounds interact and communicate.

6. Conclusions

This study revealed that in Indonesian conversation, the role of non-verbal communication as a continuer is essential. Six findings were uncovered. There is no significant difference in the use of verbal and non-verbal backchannel by males and females. Indonesian native speakers use nonverbal as frequently as verbal backchannel in an interview setting conversation, and they are mostly using head nod as nonverbal backchannel (around 42%). Backchannel in Indonesian conversation is used as one of the positive politeness strategies by being supportive and giving interest to the interlocutor's talk. Regarding the function of the nonverbal backchannel in the conversation, Indonesian native speakers tend to use it as a listening signal, and a few of them show agreement and display understanding (below 20%). Other nonverbal communication used as a listening signal observed in this study is head movement, Laughter, and smile. Although most native speaker of Indonesia uses head nods.

However, Laughter and smile are also actively used in Indonesian conversation to show interest. Both the usage of Laughter and smile has no significance different between gender. Smile considering has the same function and role in conversation as Laughter, which is to show sympathy or understanding to the speaker. This study investigates the role of backchannel behavior in the Indonesian language. In the future, this result can contribute to intercultural communication studies. Indonesian language study, listener behaviour such as backchannel was found in the conversation. Due to the study's limitations, we only analyze the non-verbal behaviour of nodding, laughter and smiling. However, other nonverbal such as gestures and gazes, have a role in the conversational listener response. This area still needs further investigation as the next task.

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