Backchannel response in Mon conversation

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Abstract
The objective of this article is to analyse conversation in Mon language, focusing on backchannel response and its forms, functions and behavior used. The conversations used were from Mon people aged over 35 years old in the Phra Pradaeng district Samutprakarn province in Thailand.

The findings revealed that the backchannel responses of Mon conversations are similar to those of other languages but it is different in detail because of their types of conversation and culture. This study found that there are seven types of backchannel responses: short verbalization, repetition, lexical item, phrases, short question and answer, sentence, and Thai backchannel response. Although the responses used in Mon conversation are words and phrase or even Thai loan words and expressions, the most frequently used backchannel is short verbalization and the most significant backchannel is repetition of previous utterances. In addition, support and agreement function is the most frequently in backchannel responses. This study also found that the selection of the backchannel responses depends largely on the relationship of the participants.

0. Introduction

There are always speakers and listeners in every conversation. As a result, one speaker must maintain the floor while the others listen. Backchannel is a short utterance aimed at expressing the listener's attention to the conversation. Such a short utterance may or may not interrupt the current turn-taker. However, in general, it does not disturb or influence the current speaker to stop speaking. Rasikawan (2001:35-37) referring to the works of Tannen (1984), says that there was a simultaneous speech while the current speaker still continues speaking without any pause. Both the current speech and the simultaneous one were considered two different turns. This means that backchannel responses may be considered either turns or non-turns, depending on whether or not those backchannel responses interrupt the current turn. If they do, they are considered a non-turn. On the other hand, if they do not, they are considered a turn.

Mon is a language with interesting backchannel response. Backchannel responses appear almost at every adjacency pair. Thus, backchannel behavior in Mon conversation is very prominent, which makes it worth discussing their types, their functions and their behavior.

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The data were collected from natural conversations of Mon people aged over 35 years old in Phrapradaeng district, Samutprakarn province, Thailand, by recording on 60 minute audio-tapes.

1. Types of backchannel responses

Although backchannel behavior is thought to be a universal strategy used in every language, it is rather language-and culture-specific. According to Heinz (2003:1137), differences in backchannel behavior depend on the culture and the linguistic system. As her citing on Clancy et al., (1996); Ramat, (1995); and Toa and Thompson, (1991), the range of the individual variability, including age, social status, educational level, life histories, and social factors can differentiate the backchannel behaviors. The characteristics of backchannel in Mon language are also particular to its language and culture.

Heinz (2003:1117) also mentions the characteristics of backchannel. It is revealed that backchannel responses are divided into two groups: verbal and nonverbal. The verbal backchannel that Heinz collected includes short verbal utterances, assessments, sentence completion, brief requests for clarification, restatements, short questions and answer, exclamations, and attempted interruptions. In sum, most researchers focus on short verbalization such as oh or uh huh. However, backchannel never interrupts the current turn. In general, a backchannel response is a regular and systematic behavior. Nevertheless, individuals and situations may affect the production of backchannel responses.

The characteristics of the verbal expressions classified as backchannel in the Mon language are found in this study that there are seven types of backchannel response as follows:

a) Short verbalization

The backchannel responses in Mon may be the short verbalization and there are several items used in the Mon conversation, e.g. [ʔa:], [ʔɔː:], [ʔɔː], [ʔɔː:], [ʔuː:], and [ʔum]

(1) T1  A: haːm lɔp moa klɔːŋ ʔitcoʔ raʔ speak enter one way accompany FP

/лɔp moa klɔːŋ tcoʔ raʔ enter one way accompany FP
‘They told everyone to use the same entrance. Enter the same way.’

→ B: /ʔa:
RP(Th.)
‘Aha’.

The backchannel response used in this example is produced by B. It is a short verbalization [ʔa:], which overlap T1.
Short verbalization can be performed as the backchannel response in a single form or a set of the short verbalization by repetition of a single item in a turn, as the following example shows:

(2) T1 A: ?ɔː: ʔaː tɔː hia ʔitco?
    RP(Th.) go market accompany
    ‘Oh! You are going to the market, together.’

    T2 B: ʔaː tɔː hia:
    go market
    ‘Go to the market.’

    T3→ A: ʔu ʔu ʔu ʔu
    RP(Th.)
    ‘Um Um Um Um.’

This example shows backchannel responses of the speaker A that are repeated in T3. A also used a low voice, as indicated by the italic letters, in uttering the backchannel response.

Moreover, short verbalization may occur with the other kinds of backchannel responses, as shown in the following examples.

(3) T1 A: ʔapaː deh ʔikoj
    father P3 who
    ‘Who is her father?’

    T2 B: ʔapaː neah roa kɔʔkret (...) kɔp kɔː
    father P3 PL N near with
    mɔː: suʔet raʔ tɔː tiat
    doctor(Th.) N FP SP
    ‘Her father is from Kohkret. Near Doctor Sued’s hometown.’

    T3→ A: ʔoː ha:
    RP(Th.) QP
    ‘Aha. Really?’

The context is a situation in which A asked B about C’s father in T1. B answered A’s question in T2. T3 is the backchannel response of A with [ʔɔː:] plus a short question that does not need an answer [haː].

(4) T1 A: moan tɔː tɛiaʔ ʔale:
    jiffy out come eat P
    ‘I will come out to eat in a few minutes.’

    T2→ B: ʔaː koh le:
    RP(Th.) that FP
    ‘Oh. Is that so?’

    T3→ A: ʔaː kʰɔh ʔaː (.)
    RP(Th.) good F
    ‘Aha. Good. Um.’
The backchannel response the speaker B used in T2 consists of a short verbalization [ʔχ:`] ‘RP’ plus a phrase [koh le:] ‘Is that so?’, which is another kind of the backchannel response. The backchannel response speaker B used in T3 consists of a short verbalization [ʔχ:`] ‘RP’ plus a word [kʰoh] ‘good’, which is another kind of the backchannel responses and a short verbalization [ʔχ:] ‘RP’

b) Repetition

Repeating previous utterances in a primary turn is a kind of backchannel behavior that is the most prominent device in Mon conversation. From observation, there are as many repetitions as short verbalizations. Consider the following examples:

(5) T1 A: ... hu? qa: la? qa ha:m
    NG go FP P1 speak
    ‘I told them I was not going.’

    T2 B: ʔtu:
    RP(Th.)
    ‘Aha.’

    T3 A: hu? pa: ra?
    NG see FP
    ‘(I) don’t see(it).’

    T4→ B: hu? pa:
    NG see
    ‘Don’t see (it).’

This example shows repetition in T4. It is partial repetition: [hu? pa:] ‘not see’. The repetition does not function to emphasize or hold the floor as a repair strategy in conversations, but to support the previous utterances of A.

(6) T1 A: ?itɔ? thiam tôh ti?
    T N be sister
    ‘Grandma Thiam is the younger sister.’

    T2→ B: toh ti?
    be sister
    ‘Younger sister.’

    T3 A: ?itɔ? qa tô bɔa
    grandma I be older-sister
    ‘My grandma is her older sister.’

The backchannel response speaker B used here is a partial repetition [toh ti?] ‘be younger sister’ which is only a phrase. This phrase is the core of the primary utterance and backchannel response is in T2.
The repetition of the previous utterance in a primary turn often comes after short verbalization. Such a repetition may be a word, as illustrated in the following example.

(7) T1 A: ʔχː sahoːt ʔiːtɛʔ /kʰɔh kɔʔ(.) nia
   RP(Th.) power P3 good able pinch
   ‘Yes. He is strong. He pinches.’

   T2→ B: /ʔχː sahoːt
   RP(Th.) power
   ‘Aha. Strong.’

The backchannel response speaker B used here consists of a short verbalization [ʔχː] ‘RP’ plus a partial repetition [sahːt] ‘power’ which is only one word. The word repeated is a content word, and is the core of the primary utterance.

Moreover, the partial repetition occurs after the short verbalization may be a phrase, such as:

(8) T1 A: tɛhː aʔ nyː(ː) sɔːŋ daːtɛ klaːŋ deh
   P FP(Th.) drink water many P3
   nɔːm ruaj
   urine often(Th.)
   ‘Well, drinking a lot of water makes you want to urinate so often.’

   T2 B: ʔaː(_:.) nɔːm ruaj(...)
   RP urine often(Th.)
   ‘Aha urinate so often.’

The backchannel response of the speaker B used here consists of a short verbalization [ʔaː:] ‘RP’ plus a partial repetition [nɔːm ruaj] ‘often urinate’ which is only a phrase. This phrase is the core of the primary utterance.

In addition, the partial repetition occurs after the short verbalization may be a sentence, such as:

(9) T1 A: ʔɔː neah ʔikoh hŋj moa moa klaŋ
   RP(Th.) P3 that CL one one way
   ‘They are cousins.’

   T2→ B: ʔuː hŋj moa moa klaŋ
   RP(Th.) CL one one way
   ‘Yes. they are cousins.’

   T3 A: ʔɔː moa (...)
   RP(Th.) one
   ‘Yes, one’
The backchannel response of the speaker B in T2 consists of a short verbalization [ʔutː] ‘RP’ plus a partial repetition [hnŋ moa moa kloŋ] ‘they are cousins’. This repetition is a sentence, and is a part of the previous utterance in T1. This backchannel response is uttered in a low voice, as indicated by the italic letters. The backchannel response is used to signal the attention of the listener to the conversation. Thus the backchannel is uttered in a low voice because the listener does not want to interrupt the current turn.

The repetition after the short verbalization may be a word, a phrase or a sentence, but the repeated part contains the major meaning of the previous utterance.

c) Lexical item

The backchannel responses in Mon may be performed at the lexical level. They include [joʔ] ‘yes’, [kwɛh] ‘true’, [tem] ‘know’ and [kʰoŋ] ‘good’. They may express agreement or support idea or awareness which tell the speaker that the listener is hearing. They are illustrated in the following example.

(10) T1 A: naːhjiakh noʔ(.) pih tət məŋ ?yːːːː
    morning this P2 sleep be VOC(Th.)

    kʰitloː(ː) kʰitloː pʰən na
    think think N FP(Th.)

    ‘This morning, while I was in bed, I thought that…
    thought that it’s Phorn.’

    T2 → B: joʔ
    SP
    ‘Yes.’

[joʔ] ‘yes’ that B uttered in T2, is a word functioning as a backchannel response. Although the word [joʔ] means ‘yes’, it is not an answer because A’s utterance is not a question, so it is categorized as a backchannel.

The next example is also the backchannel response which is a reduplication, not an isolated word.

(11) T1 A: ?anəŋ koŋ le hu? təp /ʔateʔ
    here cool P NG same there
    ‘Here the weather is cool, not like over there.’

    → B: /kwɛhkwɛh
    true
    ‘That’s true.’

The backchannel response used here is the word [kwɛh] ‘true’. The repetition of it indicates the reduplication [kwɛh kwɛh].
Phrases comprise another type of backchannel response used in Mon conversation. Frequently used phrases include [kweh hale:] ‘It’s true’, [k^h^e h kweh] ‘very good’ and [koh le:] ‘That’s it’. They may express agreement or support ideas. The following examples illustrate backchannel responses at the phrase level.

(12) T1 A: ʔuuː səŋ ʔaləː rəʔ ʔalɔːŋ /tɛʔ RP(Th.) build FP destroy house there
klɔŋ səŋ come build
‘Aha. Build it. (We) destroyed the building over there and took the (usable) items to build it.’

T2  B: ʔuuː RP
‘Yes.’

T1  A: tɔʔ ʔapɔːt(ʔ) tɔi həːm kɔʔ kʰɔn keep thing then speak able carry(Th.)
tuːtɔː:
cupboard(Th.)
‘The storage… then we can talk about carrying the cupboards.’

T2→ B: kweh hale:
true FP
‘(It’s) true.’

This example contains a backchannel response, The phrase [kweh hale:] ‘(It’s) true’, as indicated by an arrow in the second T2.

(13) T1  A: …tʰaː ʔanəːm ʔiːnum ʔadua nɔʔ ʔɔːj if(Th.) stair have inner this INJ(Th.)
kʰɛːp ʔaləː narrow(Th.) FP
‘If the stair is inside, ough! So narrow.’

T2→ B: kwehkweh hale:
true FP
‘(It’s) so true.’

The backchannel response the speaker B used here is the phrase [kweh kweh hale:] ‘(It’s) so true’.
e) Short questions and answers

Short questions and answers may also be used as backchannel responses in Mon conversation to express clarification or exclamation or awareness signaling to the speaker that the listener is listening. E.g. [ha:] ‘QP’, ([hakoh] ‘that’) (plus word(s)) plus [ha:] ‘QP’, [hakoh] ‘that’ plus a high-rising intonation, as shown in the following examples.

(14) T1 A: ŋeah ti? haʔka:w ?atʰeː mōŋ koh P3 brother brother T N that rao(...) tiŋ mōŋ pəŋ kloŋ koh FP that(Th.) live mouth canal that ‘He is either a younger or an older brother of grandpa Mong, who lives at Pakkhlong.

T2 → B: hakoh1 RP ‘Really?’

T3 A: ?yː RP(Th.) ‘Yes.’

The backchannel response of speaker B in T2 is a short question [hakoh] ‘really’ plus the high rising intonation, used to indicate her attention to the conversation. However, A responded to B with a short verbalization [ʔyːː].

f) Sentence

Backchannel responses in the Mon can be performed at the sentence level. The sentence [kɔː deh ?aleː] ‘yes’, which supports the idea and indicates an agreement is illustrated in the following example.

(15) T1 A: ?anèŋ kɔː pəŋ huʔ? ?anèŋ haː tɕeaʔ Take give rice NG take or eat ket ?anŋ? take here ‘Do you bring food from home?’

T2 B: tɕeaʔ? ?anŋ? kam(,) ?anèŋ kam(,) tɕeaʔ eat here some take some eat huʔ? tɕiʔ? NG down ‘Sometimes I buy it here, sometimes I bring it from home because we can not eat here.’

T3 → A: kɔː deh ?aleː h h h ( ) P yes FP laugh ‘Yes. (laugh)’
The backchannel response of A in the T3 is a sentence. The sentence
[kɔː deh ?aleː] ‘yes’ is projectability.

g) Thai backchannel response

In addition, backchannel responses in Thai may be used in Mon
conversation. Most of them are short questions and answers e.g. [Iː]- ‘QP’,
[noʔ] ‘QP’ and [tɕʰ’ai] ‘yes’. They may express agreement or support an idea or
an awareness which tells the speaker that the listener is paying attention to
what he is saying. The Thai backchannel responses are illustrated in the
following examples.

(16) T1 A: ?tuː klɔm naː pih weːlaː kɔh nia
RP(Th.) good P P2 time(Th.) that FP
‘Oh! She’s good now.’

T2→ B: lɤː h h h
RP(Th.) (laugh)
‘Really?’

T3 A: ?oŋ haːm klɔm husiaŋ (...) INJ(Th.) speak good QP
‘Oh! Talkative.’

The backchannel response of B is [Iː]- ‘really’ is borrowed from Thai
language. It is a question particle, but an answer is not actually required.

The backchannel response in Thai may occur after a short
verbalization as shown in example (17).

(17) T1 A: moa t kʰɔh /ʔatoː mjit teŋ koh raʔ
eye that good ear NG good that FP
‘The eyes are still good but the ears are not so
good.’

T2 B: /ʔɤː ?ɤː tɔp ?aleʔ ipʔ kamtɔŋ
RP(Th.) RP(Th.) same FP this same
la moa t kʰɔh /ʔatoː koh huʔ kʰɔh
F eye that good ear that NG good
‘Yes, yes, it’s the same. It’s the same. The eyes are
still good but the ears are not so good.’

T3→ A: ?ɤː tɕʰ’ai
RP(Th.) yes(Th.)
‘Oh! Yes.’

The backchannel response of A is [tɕʰ’ai] ‘yes’ which is a backchannel
response borrowed from the Thai language. It is a short answer occurring after
a short verbalization.
From the data, we can see the diversity of backchannel responses in the Mon conversations. The next section will discuss their functions.

2. The functions of backchannel responses

According to the definition of backchannel responses, their main function is to provide feedback to the primary speaker and to signal the hearer’s attention to the conversation. Heinz (2003: 1117), identifies other functions associated with backchannel responses, such as signalling attention, showing involvement, acknowledging the ongoing telling, indicating agreement, etc.

For Mon conversation, the functions associated with backchannel responses are subdivided into seven categories as follows:

a) Supporting the idea and indicating agreement

The backchannel response may be used to support ideas and indicate agreements with the speaker. From the data, this kind of backchannel response is mostly found in the Mon conversation. As mention earlier, Mon people prefer to lead a simple life and do not like to compete with others. They are illustrated in the following examples.

(18) T1 A: ná(,) mā: deh kʰśh lamtəp
      FP doctor(Th.) P3 good same
   ‘The doctor is good.’

   T2 B: jaʔ /h h h
      SP laugh
   ‘Yes.’

A mentioned the good behavior of her doctor and B response with [jaʔ] ‘yes’ in agreement with A’s utterance.

(19) T1 A: pʰɔt ʔamot taːw
      Fear fire burn
   ‘Afraid of being on fire.’

   T2 B: kwɛh hale:
      True FP
   ‘It’s true.’

A was concerned about the wind in case of fire and B responded with [kwɛh hale:] ‘true’ in agreement with A’s opinion.
(20) T1 A: te⁵h ʔa: klaŋ mɔː: te⁶hə: saʔ must go find doctor(Th.) see CONJ
     huʔ kwəʔ ʔa:
     NG able go
     ‘Have to go see the doctor but (I) still can’t.’

T2 B: jaːkloː leː carry FP
     ‘Carry him.’

T3→ A: jaːk leː carry FP
     ‘Carry him.’

Speaker B expressed an opinion about A’s painful conditions. A also agreed with B by partially repeating B’s utterance.

b) Awareness

Some backchannel responses may also indicate an awareness of the listener, meaning that the hearer is still paying attention to the conversation. The following example shows the awareness function of backchannel response.

(21) T1 A: te⁶hə ʔoa huʔ fəʔ ʔaː loː nὰ
     F P3 NG able go where FP
     ‘I can’t go anywhere.’

T2 B: jaʔ SP
     ‘Yes.’

T3 A: ʔət nɔːm kɔː ʔaŋقو?
     stool urinate P here
     ‘I pooh and pee here (on the bed).’

A talked about being admitted to hospital and B acknowledged the A’s utterance with [jaʔ] ‘yes’.

c) Clarification

This function may be used to ask questions or request clarification.

(22) T1 A: …moatɕiʔ kloʔ hʊʔ teːm tɕap ɲiːm
     how much hundred NG know to thousand
     kɔ la hʊʔ teːm ɲɑntɕaːt
     P F NG know money(Th.)
     ‘I don’t know how much. Is it a thousand? I don’t know.’
T2→ B: ʨiaːt
SP
‘Yes.’

T3 A: ?oː kʰit tɔi tɔːm mɔŋ dαːŋ
INJ(Th.) think (Th.) already think be expensive
nuː dɛŋ seːm plɔːn leː haːw koh…
than city Thai again FP rice FP
‘Oh! I think rice is more expensive than in
Thailand.’

The backchannel response used here is [ʨiaːt] ‘status particle’. B used this kind of backchannel to ask A for clarification. Then A explained more clearly in the next turn.

d) Exclamatory question

The backchannel response may function as an exclamatory question, as shown in the following example.

(23) T1 A: nuː num nuːm(,) ?iŋɔʔ pʰɔŋ kɔʔ teːm
have have this ASP get know
tɔːʔaraw kamtap
after same
‘Yes...yes...I’ve just heard about it.’

T2→ B: hakoh(...) ?oa mɔŋ deh haːm deh leː
QP P1 hear P3 speak P3 FP
kloːn luam kɔː klau ʔi dam koh raʔ
do with give husband T N that FP
‘Is that so? I heard that he works with Ms.Dam’s husband.’

This example shows the backchannel response of B in T2, which functions as a question. B responded to the unexpected message she heard with the question particle [hakoh] ‘really’.

e) Reference

Some backchannel responses request the reference of the speech that the speaker has previously uttered.
(24) T1 A: ?a: ɢneah ha:m no?(. ) deh kə(. )
def P3 speak this P3 able

live next life NG starve rice
‘Ah. They talk like this. They won’t starve in their
next life.’

T2 B: kwə? tʃea? pəŋ kə: bə:(. ) /tʃea?
able eat rice with salt eat

hu? tʃea?
NG eat
‘Eat the rice with salt.’

T3→ A: /ʔ yan ɢneah ha:m tʰakoh
RP(Th.) P3 speak that
‘Yes, they talk like that.’

This example illustrates the backchannel response in T3, which is
indicated by an arrow. It consists of a short verbalization plus a sentence. It
shows the reference to B’s utterance in T1.

f) Attempted interruption

Backchannel response can sometimes function as an interruption,
when another party tries to interrupt the current speaker. This is illustrated
below:

(25) T1 A: deh ha:m(. ) ?a:-
P3 speak F
‘He told that... Er.’

T2→ B: husiaŋ
NG
‘No.’

time that time work QP
‘He was working, wasn’t he?’

T4 B: ?â?
RP(Th.)
‘Yes.’

This example illustrates a backchannel response in T2, which is
performed by the negative particle [husiaŋ] ‘not’. It is the attempt of B trying
to interrupt A’s talking. Consequently, A stopped talking at the time when B
interrupted for a minute and then she continued speaking and finished her talking
when she came to the end of the sentence.
g) Waiting for the complete utterance

The backchannel response may also show that the listener is waiting for the current speaker to complete his/her speaking, as in the following example.

RP(Th.) if(Th.) do shirt NG able
  bep ha:lə: rao
  F how FP
  ‘Well, if [you] can’t make a shirt, well, how is it?’

T2→ B: ?tu:
RP(Th.)
  ‘Um.’

T3 A: bɔ?hni julian (.) tɕi?- deh tɕùktɕìk
adult NG F P3 fussy(Th.)
  tɕi klo:n hu? kwə?
  then do NG able
  ‘For adults, it is complicated. Then (I) cannot do it.
  (I’ve to look after the elderly)’

The backchannel response of this example shows that B was waiting for A to continue her speaking with a short verbalization [ʔtu:]. B knew that A had not finished her utterance from the sentence [bep ha:lə: rao] in T1, which shows that A wanted to go on but could not recollect what she was saying. For this reason, B waited for her to continue speaking and complete her utterance in T3.

From the data, there are seven functions of the backchannel responses in Mon conversation. Their uses are as important as their types, which are specific to the Mon language. Therefore, the next topic will discuss backchannel behavior in Mon conversation, which is as important as the two previous issues.

3. Backchannel behavior

As mentioned earlier, backchannel responses are specific to language and culture (Heinz 2003:1137). Likewise, their behaviors in Mon conversation are also specific. At almost every turn in the Mon conversation, participating parties perform backchannel responses. Those responses have several characteristics and functions. The selection of the backchannel responses depends largely on the relationship of the participants. Politeness is the most important feature associated with the use of backchannel responses.
This study found that there are three levels of politeness in backchannel response. The first level is the response used with monks who are in the highest rank in the Mon society. The second one is the response used with adults or relatives who are older than the speaker. The last one is the response used with a party who is younger than the speaker or the speaker’s friends.

a) Backchannel responses used with monks

When Mon people speak with monks, they are always very polite. The backchannel response they use this show politeness. The most polite backchannel is [tɕiaːt] ‘status particle’. This word also means ‘monk’.

(27) T1 A: saʔ deh nuːm huʔ kłaŋ mua ná
CONJ P3 have NG many P FP(Th.)
‘But they do not have a lot.’

T2 B: tɕiaːt
SP
‘Yes.’

A is a monk and B is a lay person. Therefore, B selected /tɕiaːt/ ‘status particle’ as the backchannel response in speaking.

b) Backchannel responses used with the elderly

Age is also an important factor in the Mon society. Therefore, the speakers are always polite to adults or the parties who are older than they are. The backchannel responses which they employ, are [tɕiaːt] ‘status particle’ and [jəʔ] ‘status particle’. Most of them usually perform [jəʔ], as in the following example.

(28) T1 A: tɕaŋ hoiʔ ku sǐː koh raʔ
side house T N that FP
‘She is beside Sri’s house.’

T2 B: hakoʔ(...) ?i tɕuaː tɕaːŋ roŋ(,) /ʔarop
that T N side house near
‘Really? Cua lives near the house, near.’

→ A: /jəʔ
SP
‘Yes.’

T3 B: ?i sǐː ?ikoh leː
T N that FP
‘Sri.’

A was younger than B, therefore she selected [jəʔ] as her backchannel response in the conversation.
c) Backchannel responses used with the young

For younger parties as well as among friends, the speaker always uses short verbalizations and other types of backchannel responses in conversation that show intimacy or endearment. This can be illustrated by following example:

(29) T1 A: klɔʔ haʔut ?amu jua
   fat INS what sick
   ‘So fat... you don’t look like a patient.’

   T2→ B: ?uu: ha:m huʔ nateh toh hŋijua na
   RP(Th.) speak NG believe be patient FP
   ‘Yes, you can say that again. She doesn’t look like a
   patient.’

   T3→ A: ?γʔ: huʔ nateh toh hŋijua(,)
   RP(Th.) NG believe be patient
   ‘It’s unbelievable she doesn’t look like a patient.’

A and B were friends. In their conversation, they selected the short verbalizations [ʔuː] and [ʔγʔ:] as the backchannel responses.

Although status and age of the participants are important factors for selecting backchannel responses, individuals and situational characteristics may affect the production of backchannel responses.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, backchannel responses in Mon conversation are very prominent because there are many of them in conversation. Their types can be classified into seven groups: short verbalization, repetition, lexical item, phrase, short question and answer, sentence, and Thai backchannel response. However, it is found that the most frequently used one is short verbalization and the most significant backchannel is repetition of previous utterances. This kind of backchannel reflects the culture aspect of Mon people that they usually agree with other people. The main function of backchannel responses is that the listener uses it to signal his attention. In addition, their functions can be subdivided into seven categories. Most backchannel responses function as a support to agreement, ideas or awareness. Their behaviors in Mon conversation are also specific. There are three levels of backchannel responses. First, those used with individuals with the highest social status, namely monks. Second, those used with adults or older people, and last, those used with peers or younger people.
5. List of abbreviations and conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Filler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Final Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTR</td>
<td>Future Marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>INJ</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
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<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>First Personal Pronoun</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Second Personal Pronoun</td>
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<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Third Personal Pronoun</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
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<tr>
<td>QP</td>
<td>Question Particle</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>State Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tn</td>
<td>Number of turns, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1 = turn 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2 = turn 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Th.)</td>
<td>Thai word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td>Vocative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CA transcription symbols used in the conversation are:

// point at which the current utterance is overlapped by that transcribed below

(...)

long pauses or gaps in what is very approximately tenths of seconds

(.)

micropause –potentially significant but very short pause, comparable perhaps to an average syllable duration or somewhere below 0.2 seconds’ duration

**Bold**

relatively high amplitude, or shouted utterances

*Italicics*

syllables stressed by amplitude, pitch and duration

::

lengthened syllables

-:

glottal-stop self-editing marker

==

‘latched’ utterances, with no gap

↑

a rising intonation contour

↓

used to indicate falling intonation contour

((( ))

used to specify “some phenomenon that the transcriber does not want to wrestle with” or some non-vocal action, etc.
uncertain passages of transcript
draws attention to location of phenomenon of direct interest to discussion
hh indicates an audible out-breath, .hh an in-breath
h h h indicates the laugh
(Adapted from Levinson 1983:369)

REFERENCES


Wei, Li. 2002. “‘What do you want me to say?’ On the conversation analysis approach to bilingual interaction”. Language in Society 31:159-180.


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