

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study consists of five chapters. This chapter explains about background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is the most important thing in doing communication with people around the world because language is the tool for a human to communicate each other. The uses of language relate to every activity of human and everyday life for carrying and get information. The use of language is the main key for the people to understand each other in a conversation. Moreover, language has many functions, getting and giving information between one people and other people around the world.

People apparently speak more frequently than write, especially to those who feel comfortable to speak than write. Geaney (1996:26) stated that, perhaps as much as 99% of English use is speech. The variety of spoken language appears to play the main role in human interaction and communication. In conversation, there are always speaker and interlocutor, they may want to change their world, state clear facts, state any ideas, express their feelings, or make someone do something via their utterances. They have their own way to make an efficient conversation and avoid misunderstanding between speaker and interlocutor. As a result, the speaker must

maintain the attention while the others listen. To avoid misunderstanding between speaker and interlocutor, sometimes the interlocutor produces short utterance (*oh, mmm, uuh, yes, ok*). The short utterance such as *oh, mmm, uuh, yes, and ok* that produced by the interlocutor is called backchannel. Produces backchannel is important in a conversation. The interlocutor produces backchannel to express attention, agreement, disagreement, understanding, and to check that the interlocutor is hearing.

Backchannel is a short utterance aim for expressing the listener's attention during conversation to the speaker (Sungkaman, 2006:67). White (1998) claims that the term 'backchannel' refers to the 'main' channel being the person who is holding the floor – the speaker – and the 'back' channel being addressed recipient of the talk – the listener – who gives information without claiming the floor. Backchannel shows that in a conversation there are two channel operating same time, the speaker and the listener. The *main channel* is the speaker or the person who holds the floor, while the *backchannel* is the interlocutor who provides useful information. The backchannel is utterance produced by the listener for grabbing speaker's attention during communication. For example (Yule, 1998):

Caller :	if you use your long distance service a lot then you'll
Marry :	uh-uh
Caller :	be interested in the discount I'm talking about because
Marry :	yeah
Caller :	it can only save you money to switch to a cheaper service
Marry :	mmm

These type of short utterance (*uh-uh, yeah, mmm*) produced by Marry provide backchannel to the current speaker indicates that the message is being received.

Furthermore, the backchannel does not only produce by the speakers in a daily conversation, but it may produces by the speaker in meetings, discussion, classroom lectures, television programs, telephone conversation, and interview. The use of backchannel in daily conversation, meetings, discussion, classroom lectures, television programs, telephone conversations, and interview have the same function. It is to express attention, agreement, disagreement, continuer, and to check understanding of the participant in a conversation.

In this study, the writer analyzes the use of backchannel in conversational texts. The writer would like to know about response that produced by the interlocutor to show the interlocutor's attentiveness and breakdown it to be introduced to other readers about backchannel in a conversation. Another reason why the writer chooses this study, because this study has never been conducted by English Study Program Students in University of Trunojoyo Madura. It makes this study becomes the first study that is conducted about backchannel, especially the types and the function of verbal backchannel.

The writer chooses conversation as a source of data, because the conversation is direct interaction, so there will be a lot of backchannels produced by the interlocutor during the conversation. The conversational text that used is a corpus. Corpus is a collection of texts of written or spoken language. A corpus is a collection of pieces of language text in electronic form, selected according to external criteria to represent, as far as possible, a language or language variety as a source of data for linguistic research (Sinclair, 2005). This study uses five conversational texts taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*. This corpus chosen by the writer

because it provides audio form. The audio is also important to support the writer to analysis the data, because the writer need to know the situation during conversation to analysis the data deeply.

The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English is based on a large body of recordings of naturally spoken interaction and communication from all over the United States (Department of Linguistics, University of California, d.n.). The Santa Barbara Corpus represents a broad variety of people of different gender, regional origins, ethnic, occupations, ages, and social backgrounds. The prominent form of language use is a face-to-face conversation, but the corpus also documents many other ways that people use language in their everyday lives, such as; food preparation, telephone conversations, classroom lectures, card games, on-the-job talk, town hall meetings, story-telling, and more. The Santa Barbara Corpus was arranged by researchers in the Linguistics Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English also forms part of the International Corpus of English (ICE), (Department of Linguistics, University of California, d.n.).

In this study, the writer uses five conversational texts as a source of data. The five conversational texts chosen randomly by the writer. Every conversational text has different situation and participants. The first conversational text entitled *Deadly Disease*; a conversation among three friends, Ken, Joanne, and Ken. Ken and Joanne are a couple, and Lenore is a friend of theirs. This conversation recorded in Los Angeles, California. The second conversational text entitled *Mickey Mouse Watch*; a conversation in Christmas morning traditions and gift-exchange among family

members, recorded in Fresno, California. The participants of the conversation are Tim, Lea, Judy and Dan. Tim and Lea are a couple in their late fifties, Judy is their daughter, and Dan is Judy's boyfriend. The third conversational text entitled *Zero Equals Zero*; a task-related talk a teenage couple recorded in Mobile, Alabama. The participants of this conversation are Kathy and Nathan. In this conversation, Kathy is helping her boyfriend Nathan for preparing a math test. The fourth conversational text entitled *Vet Morning*; a task-related interaction recorded in a veterinarian office near Madison, Wisconsin. The participants of this conversation are Marcia, Kristen, Lindsey, Trent, and Heidi. All five participants work in the veterinarian office, some as secretaries and assistants and some as veterinarians. Last conversational text entitled *What Time is it now*; a late-night face-to-face conversation recorded in Northampton, Massachusetts. Participants of this conversation are a married couple (Karen and Scott) in their early twenties. At the evening, Karen has just returned home from work. She goes to the garden and they are talking while winding down for the evening.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the statement of the problems are formulated as follow:

1. What are the types of verbal backchannel found in each conversational text taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*?

2. What are the functions of verbal backchannel used in each conversational text taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research problems above, this study has some objectives as follows:

1. To explain the types of verbal backchannel found in each conversational texts taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*.
2. To explain the function of verbal backchannel used in each conversational texts taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The significances of the study are to give contributions both theoretically and practically in pragmatics especially in the backchannel.

1. Theoretically, this study will give understanding and knowledge for the reader about backchannel applied in conversation.
2. Practically, this study will be useful and help as guidance for the reader. The study can be used and considered as reference for next another study by lecturer and student, who want to learn or analyze about backchannel. The result of the study can bring out some new ideas to the other students interested in backchannel analysis.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this research, the scope of this study is pragmatics studies. The writer focuses on analysis of verbal backchannels and their functions in the conversational text. This study is limited on verbal backchannel used in five selected conversational texts taken from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* entitled *Deadly Diseases*, *Mickey Mouse Watch*, *Zero Equals Zero*, *Vet Morning* and *What Time is it now*.