

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF RESPONSE TOKENS IN
ASANTE TWI**



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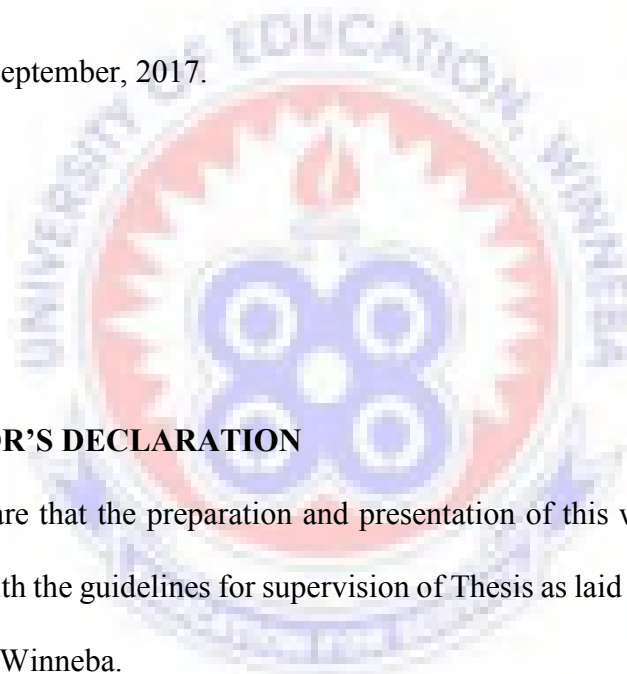
DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Mary Nyarko, declare that this Thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for any other degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE

DATE: 22nd September, 2017.



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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DATE: 22nd September, 2017.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Trinity God.



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DEFINITION OF TERMS

CF	Collaboration Finishers
CrF	Crossed feet
Extd	extend
FE	Facial Expression
FEg	Finger to Eye
HEs	Hand Gestures
HH	Hands on Head
HHS	Horizontal Head Shake
HM	Head movements
HN	Head Nod
HS	Head Shake
HSM	Hands on Stomach
IR	Information Receipt
NS	Native Speaker
NNS	Non-Native Speaker
RE	Reactive Expressions
ROs	Resumptive Openers
RTs	Response Tokens

TF Tapping foot

VHS vertical Head Shake



TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

[]	collaborative finishing (in excerpt)
‘..’	crossed feet
...L..	laughter
[...]	silence
...	unfinished (part of) sentence



ABSTRACT

Response tokens are important for people wishing to be able to function as supportive interlocutors in a conversation. There is the need for interlocutors to ensure that their interpretation of the speaker's interactional intentions matches what he wanted to say (Faerch and Kasper, 1982). This thesis investigates the pragmatic analysis of the use of response tokens in Asante Twi. Specifically, the research focuses on the categories, and importance of response tokens among the Asantes. The study based its analytical framework upon Clancy et al.'s (1996), and other relevant analytic models. Data were analyzed from interviews, recorded conversations and diary notes. The findings revealed that speakers of Asante have two main types of response tokens: verbal and nonverbal. The components of verbal response tokens are minimal, non-minimal, cluster and laughter, while the nonverbal are body gestures such as head movements, hand gestures, facial expressions, foot movement and silence. The analysis revealed that the structure of some single words was interpreted as clauses. Again, others were found to be reduplicated, religious, and negative in sense used as response tokens for emphasis. Some of the functions of both verbal and nonverbal response tokens were backchannels, agreement, disagreement, and alignment. Based on the findings, it is argued that response tokens are very relevant in the conversations of speakers of Asante Twi. This is because it contributes to sustain the flow of conversation. It is recommended that further research should investigate whether cultural or gender issues have an effect on how people use response tokens.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The chapter gives the general introduction to the pragmatic analysis of the use of response tokens in Asante Twi. It centers on a number of issues such as the background to the study, the problem that has necessitated the study and how the research intends to solve it, and the people whom the whole study will focus on, the Asantes. The chapter further presents the objectives, significance of the study and research questions designed to help the researcher address the research problem. Other issues discussed in the chapter are delimitation, limitations, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The gregarious nature of human beings make them constantly strive for achievement and maintenance of total well-being through interactions. As the saying goes ‘for ethnography, there is no richer ore than everyday conversation, (Moerman, 1988, p.18). For this reason, man would go to any reasonable extent by using various means of communication to find acceptable solutions to his grievances. Humans are the only species who have developed advanced systems of interaction with defined structures.

Pragmatics studies the way we convey meaning through interaction (Levinson, 2006). The meaning includes verbal and nonverbal elements and it varies according to the context, the relationship between interlocutors, and many other social factors. As a matter of fact, Twi is spoken in different settings and levels of intercommunication in and around Ghana. As a result, speakers should have knowledge on pragmatic elements in order to avoid inaccuracies and misunderstandings with the use of response tokens

during interaction. The usage of response tokens in Asante Twi requires a pragmatic competence which will help all those who speak Twi analyze their language efficiently. Thomas (1995), defined pragmatic competence as "... the ability to analyze language in a conscious manner." (as cited in Holmes & Brown, 2007, p 524). Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to comprehend, construct utterances which are accurate and appropriate to the social and cultural circumstances where communication occurs. Pragmatic competence should be a leading goal for those who use response tokens in interaction which the Asantes are not excluded.

The term competence however was originally set out by the father of linguistics Noam Chomsky. In his book 'Aspects of the Theory of Syntax', he defines competence as:

Linguistic theory is primarily concerned with an ideal speaker-listener. In completely homogeneous speech community who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky 1965, p.3).

Later, Chomsky put the distinction between competence (the speaker's or hearer's knowledge of languages) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations). This study discusses how listeners use this knowledge in application to response tokens on one hand and the importance of this knowledge with the use of response tokens on the other. However, Chomsky did not explain whether this knowledge includes the idea of 'ability'. It seems that Chomsky equated 'competence' with 'knowledge', but he did not present a clear distinction between 'knowledge' and 'the ability to use this knowledge' for communicative purposes.

Listenership behavior has been an object of linguistic research since the early 1970s (Adolphs, 2008; Duncan, 1974; Heritage, 1997; LoCastro, 1987; Maynard, 1990; McCarthy, 1998; O'Keeffe & Farr, 2003; Sacks, 1992; Yngve, 1970). Although, Chomsky's grammarian view was dominant in linguistics at that time, Yngve (1970, p. 142) shows his interest in functions of discourse and describes the organization of conversation, in other words, turn-taking, as "when two people are engaged in conversation, they generally take turns. First, one person holds the floor, then the other. The passing of the turn from one party to another is nearly the most obvious aspect of conversation" (Yngve, 1970, pp.567-568).

The concept of turn-taking and the floor of conversation were developed in his work. Yngve (1970) also introduces the term backchannels. Backchannels have many other names including *response tokens* (Gardner 2001, 2002; O'Keeffe *et al.* 2007). Following Gardner's, I will use the term *response tokens*, and includes a broad definition described by Duncan (1974), which discusses both verbal response tokens (right and mm) and nonverbal response tokens (hand gestures, gaze, nods and silence). Gardner (2001) defines response tokens as "class of conversational objects whose primary functions are not to make reference to the world, but to provide some information on the course the talk is taking" (p. 14). Apart from this definition, there are other definitions relevant to this study which is considered.

In O'Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter, (2007, p. 142), listenership is defined as "the active, responsive role that listeners have in conversation". According to Okeeffe *et al.*, response token is a term to refer to 'the many vocal, verbal and non-verbal non-floor-holding devices that a listener may use to respond to the floor-holding message in a conversation. The reason why it is important to focus on listenership and response tokens is articulated in the following quotation.

Without response tokens, conversations, even the most business-like and utilitarian ones, would be lacking in terms of the social relationship between speakers. That is, an interaction without response tokens may achieve its goal, but it may not achieve any level of relational bonding between interactants. (O'Keeffe *et al.* 2007, p.156).

As described in the quotation above, some of the functions of response tokens might be linked with relational and interactional aspects of conversation. McCarthy (2002) also reports a comparison between response tokens in British and American English in everyday conversation, and concludes by highlighting the importance of good listenership in conversation as social interaction. He argues that “good listenership seems to demand more than just acknowledgement and transactional efficiency, and listeners orientated towards the creation and maintenance of sociability and effective wellbeing in their responses” (McCarthy *et al.*, 2002, p.69).

Response tokens seem to play a crucial role in achieving good listenership in conversation. This concerns transactional business in conversation and is related to relational/interactional issues that the Asantes are not excluded. However, not much research has been undertaken on good listenership in relation to the use of response tokens. This study aims to address this by investigating the categories, structure, functions and importance in usage of response tokens in relation to their interactional functions in conversation. The main focus of this study is based on listenership patterns with reference to the use of response tokens among the Asantes.

1.2 The Statement of Problem

Interactional systems globally have undergone a lot of evolution over the years and that of Asantes is no exception. The intricacy here is that, there are a number of people in Asante communities today who do not know or understand the usage involved

in the various non-verbal and verbal interactional systems let alone manage to track the milestone of its categories and importance.

In addition, some response tokens the Asantes use create ambiguity in their interactions. Thus, some tokens might have three different usages in communication and listeners mistakenly decode the wrong meaning in a particular interaction. For instance, the vocalization *oow* (oh) in Asante Twi can have three different interpretations as well as functions. The first one is *òòw* which has a function of sharing sympathy. The second is *óów* which shows bordering and the final one is *òów* which shows realization. Some listeners use these tokens without considering the problems and barriers they may cause their interlocutors.

Again, Asantes take conversation as being governed by the maxim of manner, which requires an interactant to be brief, orderly, and avoid ambiguity and obscurity of expression. In fact, in any informal social interaction, anyone who holds the floor for an unusually long period of time is met with such an expression as *Ntia ntia mu* (Brevity! Brevity!); (b) unlike Grice, the Twi speakers place a high value on response tokens suffused with obscurities and semantically dense words. Anyone who skillfully uses such response tokens is said to be eloquent, wise or *akòkora ba* 'A child of an old man' (Yankah, 1991) - it is the old who are skillful users of response tokens Asante.

Undoubtedly, there has been no chronicling on the categories and importance as well as the impact of non-verbal and verbal use of response tokens as interactional systems in the region. In Asante Twi, interactions play specific roles in all their cultural components namely; administration, social, economic, religious and the belief of the people which is not given much attention. According to Hymes (1972), a speech community is described as a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation

of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety (Hymes 1972, p. 54).

This means that there is a domain referred to as a speech community, where the use of language is interpreted under certain rules shared by people inside the community. There are, however, occasions where people from different speech communities encounter each other. One of these instances occurs during language learning in a host community. By learning a second or foreign language, learners are, either consciously or unconsciously, trying to cross the border between the speech community of their first language and the target language(s). Kasper (1993, p.3) defines interlanguage pragmatics as “the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in one second language (L2)”. Good communicators know not only the grammar or vocabulary but also strategies to “convey” their intentions effectively in order to establish a good relationship with participants in conversation. For all the reasons discussed, it is expedient to carry a study on response tokens in Asante Twi.

1.3 Asante: The People and the Language

Asante is the name of an ethnic group and the language spoken by this group is Asante Twi. It is a language of Akan, the Kwa branch of the Niger Congo family situated on the Gulf of Guinea. The Asante language is spoken by over 9 million ethnic Asante people as a first language and second language by some Ghanaians. The word *Ashanti* is an English language misnomer and *Asante* is the correct Asante Twi. Asante literally means "because of wars" (Asa - wars; Nti- because [of]) (kyeremateng and Nkansa, 1996). The wealthy gold-rich made Asante people developed a large and influential empire; thus, the Ashanti Empire along the Lake Volta and Gulf of Guinea (Shillington, 1989, 1995). According to Dolphyne (1988, p. xi), three of the Akan

dialects, Akuapem, Asante, and Fante, have acquired literary status. For the purpose of this study, the Asante Twi dialect would be focused on.

1.4. The Objective of the Study

This research seeks to investigate the use of response tokens in Asante Twi. The following are the objectives it seeks to achieve:

- i. Identify the categories of response tokens in Asante Twi
- ii. Investigate the importance and usage of response tokens among the Asantes.

1.5 Research Questions

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the categories of response tokens among the Asantes?
- ii. What are the importance of the use of RTs among the Asantes?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The following are the contributions this study hopes to make:

- i. This study contributes to the knowledge of interaction among the Asantes.
- ii. This study contributes to the studies of interactions in Twi as all the functions and structures of response tokens are extensively discussed.
- iii. It serves as a document of the Asante Twi language, thereby preserving the response tokens in the language.
- iv. The report will be useful to international researchers who are interested in cultural influences on communication as the entire communication process is knitted into the culture of the Asante ethnic group.
- v. Lastly, the research will provide a wealth of knowledge and reference material for researchers in the field of communication.

1.7. Delimitation

The research is limited to one region among the ten regions of Ghana, thus, Ashanti region. The following districts in the region were considered; Kumasi, Bosomtwe, Bekwai and Asante Akim. The districts were selected because their communities are among those that are repositories of the rich culture of Asantes. Both verbal and nonverbal response tokens were studied.

1.8 Limitations

In the course of writing this thesis, the writer encountered the following problems: First is the uncooperative nature of some participants. Some of the participants absented themselves during the scheduled time of the interviews. Others, for the fear of being shown on televisions, decided not to take part in the video interviews. There were also financial constraints on the part of the researcher. Since the researcher traveled to and from Kumasi to the various research sites to solicit information, and traveled back to Winneba to see her supervisor for vetting of her work, presentations and other academic issues, money became a problem. Sometimes, printing of information, traveling to collect information from library to library, photocopies of interview guide, and some initial letters for permission requires money and time. The researcher encountered problem of time constraint due to the limited time allocated for the research. Again, scarcity of materials (books) for referencing is another problem`. The researcher lessens the challenges by assuring the participants of their privacy. In addition, the researcher did her best to find money and planned well to complete this study on time.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 discusses the review of related literature which is the appraisal of work done in the field of study. The review

sheds light on definition of response tokens, categories, functions and importance. Some examples from Asante Twi data were given to bring out to fore that response tokens were used in Asante Twi. Chapter 3 describes the methodology including research design employed in conducting this study. Qualitative research design is used in this work. Various procedures such as techniques and tools were used. Further, the chapter takes a look at approaches which include research design, population for the study, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, administration of research instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis plan and analytical framework.

Chapter 4 covers the presentations and discussion of findings. The researcher used dairy notes and interviews on both verbal and nonverbal response tokens for the discussion. They were discussed according to types, structure, functions and importance. Chapter 5 consists of summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. It discusses the findings on types of response tokens, structure, functions and importance. It is observed that negative and reduplication response tokens are found in the Asante Twi in addition to the backchannel, reactive expressions and the others. The usage of response tokens was highly relevant in conversations, and even though they may appear trivial, their contributions to the interactive nature of discourse cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Response tokens are essential to the progress and intelligibility of conversation. In this chapter, the researcher aims at examining theories and concepts which inform current approaches and strategies used in analysing response tokens in natural conversations. Asante Twi speakers as they use language in their day-to-day activities have only rarely been observed with respect to the categories, functions and importance of response tokens in their daily conversations. In view of this, the chapter offers a simple taxonomy of the most common response tokens and discusses the concept of pragmatics and the interpretation of response tokens. It examines the categories, functions and importance of response tokens in other languages. Furthermore, the chapter discusses both theoretical and empirical review in line with the following subheadings:

- i. The Pragmatics of Conversation
- ii. The concept of Response Tokens
- iii. Response Tokens - Approaches
- iv. Categories of Response Tokens
- v. Functions of Response Tokens
- vi. Importance of response tokens
- vii. Empirical Review

2.1 The Pragmatics of conversation

According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics covers both “context-dependent aspects of language structure” and “the inter-relation between language structure and principles of language usage”. Based on the definition of Eggins and Slade (1997), that

both Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics have added important insights to our understanding of how people interpret conversation, McCarthy, Matthiessen and Slade (2002) place pragmatics as one of the disciplinary approaches to discourse analysis. Pragmatics is treated as philosophy of language derived from Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), which has “shed light on how people interpret particular utterances” (McCarthy *et al.* 2002, p. 60). In pragmatics as philosophy, sentences or utterances for analysis are often invented by linguists while pragmatic studies with corpus analysis examine collections of naturally occurring conversations.

For the sake of this study, the definitions of Kasper (1993) and Crystal (1985) is considered relevant. Kasper (1993) defined pragmatics as “the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context” (p. 3). Here, she includes the words *action* and *context*, two crucial elements of speech act in language. Kasper uses the term linguistic action which defines the capacity of the speaker to produce an utterance. She also places emphasis on comprehension as well as production, a distinction that is particularly relevant for conversation and the feedback from the listener. Crystal (1985) defines pragmatics as:

The study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication. (p.240)

This definition also analyses pragmatics from the perspective of users. It takes into account the different choices that speakers are able to make when using the target language, depending on the social interaction of their communication. The notion of choice leads to another aspect of consideration useful to listeners in conversation. Thus, developing the ability to make the right choices among a variety of pragmatic elements

such as response tokens. Crystal considers pragmatics as the study of the communicative action in its sociocultural context. Thus, it can be said that individuals have some sort of pragmatic competence which allows them to use language in different and concrete situations, in varying contexts. Therefore, pragmatic competence occurs within the limits of interaction or at the interactional level where response tokens play a vital role.

Conversation is a process of speech exchange between two or more persons. The process is orderly and speakers take turns so that when more than one speaker talks at the same time, one soon ends and a single speaker holds the floor. Holding the floor is achieved by a single speaker when that speaker speaks and the other participants choose not to take turns. The other participants, however, are not silent. A turn at talk is constructed not by a single speaker alone but is co-constructed by the other participants. Although the contribution of these participants is primarily to withhold their own turns, they also contribute to the turn in progress by means of vocalizations such as ‘mm’ or ‘uhuh,’ with words such as ‘yeah,’ ‘okay,’ and ‘wow,’ and also by gestural and positional cues including gaze, head movements such as nodding, and orientation of the upper body.

These tokens serve as markers of active listening and were recognized early on by Malinowski (1923) as ‘phatic communion’. This is a notion that was integrated by Jakobson (1960) into his functional model of communication between speaker and hearer, and it was within this theory of communication that Yngve (1970) developed the first extensive treatment of the most obvious aspect of conversation. Yngve recognizes the role of these tokens in maintaining an open channel of communication between speaker and hearer, and thus names them backchannels. More recent work in conversation analysis has stressed the role of backchannels as displays of active

listenership. Schegloff (2007) recognizes vocalizations such as ‘*uhhuh*’ or lexical items such as ‘yeah’ (twi: *aane*) as continuers whereby the listener exhibits the understanding that the primary speaker should continue talking by passing on opportunity to propose a full turn at talk. Other expressions such as ‘oh’ ‘wow’ and ‘gosh, really?’ (*saa, ampa?*) were also recognized by Schegloff as co-constructing discourse, but because these tokens have the added sense of expressing the listener’s reactions to the current turn, he calls them assessments.

Active participation in the turn in progress requires that a listener to choose appropriate forms of lexical items or vocalizations, and that these forms be used at an appropriate moment during the turn in progress. The listener’s choices of other forms or their use at other moments are very different actions from co-constructing the current speaker’s turn. An interruption or competition for the conversational floor may result from a very small difference in the form of a response tokens use.

2.2 The Concept of Response Token

In talk-in-interaction, it is readily observable that recipients constantly provide brief, non-topical responses during other interlocutors’ talk. These short pieces of talk produced by recipients are called *response tokens*. Response tokens have been more or less neglected in traditional linguistic research, however, they have gained increasing attention in the field of interactional linguistics and conversation analysis. So far, many attempts have been made by interactional linguists and conversation analysts to define and classify response tokens. Hence, a number of terms have been used to describe this kind of listener behaviour. These include

- a. ‘signals of continued attention’ (Fries, 1952),
- b. ‘recognition’ (Rosenfeld, 1966, 1967),
- c. ‘concurrent feedback’ (Krauss & Weinheimer, 1966),

- d. ‘accompaniment signals’ (Kendon, 1967),
- e. ‘listener responses’ (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson 2002, Dittmann & Llewellyn, 1967, 1968;),
- f. ‘assent terms’ (Schegloff, 1968; Leet-Pellegrini, 1980),
- g. ‘back channels’ (Yngve, 1970; Duncan 1972, 1973; Duncan & Niederehe, 1974; Duncan & Fiske, 1977, 1985), and
- h. ‘response tokens’ (Gardner, 2001).

Following Gardner (2001), the term ‘response token’ is used for the sake of its generality and easy comprehensibility. According to Gardner (2001), “response tokens are a class of conversational objects whose primary functions are not to make reference to the world, but to provide some information on the course the talk is taking” (p. 14). McCarthy (2003, p. 4) also describes response tokens as “high-frequency turn-initial lexical items which occur in responses in everyday spoken genres and which reveal various levels of the listener’s interactional engagement”. These lexical items include expressions such as *yeah, huh, mhm, mm, uh. uh huh, yes, no, I see, oh, and wow, really* (Fries, 1952; O’keeffe and Adolphs, 2008; Yang, 2013). Fries notes that they are used by the listener to show continued attention. It took *two more decades* before Yngve (1970) drew attention to these utterances and coined the term *backchannel*. He observes that:

When two people are engaged in conversation, they generally take turns . . . In fact, both the person who has the turn and his partner are simultaneously engaged in both speaking and listening. This is because of the existence of what I call the back channel, over which the person who has the turn receives short messages such as yes, and uh-huh without relinquishing the turn. (p. 568)

The implication here is that the speaker is using the primary or main channel while the listener uses a lesser channel, the back channel. For Yngve, backchannels include all utterances that simply show reciprocity or listenership. Oreström (1983) categorizes these listener utterances as either speaking turns or back-channel items. These backchannel items could be both lexical and nonlexical responses. Such responses have “special functions where the listener informs the speaker that his message has been received, understood, agreed to and/or has caused a certain effect” (p. 23). In what follows, I will provide a review of three most widely-used terms in the literature: ‘accompaniment signal’, ‘back channel’ and ‘response token’.

2.2.1 Terminology

As mentioned already, many studies have proposed different terms for response tokens. For example, (Kendon, 1967) refers to them as ‘accompaniment signals’. Kendon ‘has defined ‘accompaniment signal’ as “the short utterance that is produced by recipients as an accompaniment during other interlocutor’s speakership”. These signals are initially found in concurrence with speaker’s gaze. Therefore, they are viewed as accompaniments to body conduct. However, this definition is ambiguous in that it does not capture the nature of the actions that response tokens may perform (Schegloff, 1982). As these ‘signals’ are believed to have many functions other than just being an accompaniment, the term ‘accompaniment signal’ is seldom used in more recent studies.

Another important term is ‘backchannel’ proposed by Yngve (1970). The study finds that speakers receive ‘short messages’ from co-participants when speaking at length. These ‘short messages’ signal that co-participants are actively engaged in the current talk. This study describes both verbal and nonverbal backchannels. This term has exerted such a strong impact on later studies that many scholars have used this term

in their study of response tokens. Now it is common to see ‘backchannel’ defined in two ways a narrow sense and a broad sense. In the narrow sense, ‘backchannels’ are non-lexical vocalic forms that demonstrate interest or understanding (Clancy *et al.* 1996). In the broad sense, backchannels include both non-lexical and lexical items that show a certain level of engagement (Iwasaki, 1997; Lambertz, 2011). However, both definitions are mainly concerned with the form of backchannels. This tends to obscure the distinctions among many functionally varied tokens (Gardner, 2001). This assertion is confirmed in what Drummond and Hopper (1993a) point out as;

The term back channel included a broad range of utterances. This range of materials was lumped into a single coding category... The failure... to distinguish between different classes of back channels and the consequences they may have for speakership incipency has made the back channels category a hodgepodge. (Drummond & Hopper, 1993, pp. 161-162)

The third widely-used term is ‘response token’. According to Gardner (2001), “response tokens are ... one class of conversational objects whose primary functions are not to make reference to the world, but to provide some information on the course the talk is taking” (p.14). His study was more concerned with the interactional functions of response token. Similar studies have mostly adopted this term (e.g. McCarthy, 2003; Aoki, 2008; Gorish, Well, and Brown, 2010). The current research follows this definition and uses the term ‘response tokens’, as an umbrella term to refer to the activity involving vocal, verbal and non-verbal, non-floor-holding responses when a listener responds to the floor-holding message in a conversation.

2.2.2 The Role of Response Tokens Contrasted with the Speaker’s Role

In typical interactions, the listener is not only listening. S/he also sends verbal and nonverbal signals to the speaker. Thus, the listener’s role is not an entirely passive

one. At any moment during the course of the interaction, the listener can become the speaker or give some signal to show his/her involvement in the conversation. Researchers who have investigated everyday conversations sometimes marvel at how participants in conversations seem to know the intricate rules of response tokens and talk. With regard to this observation Ward and Tsukahara (2000) comment that "...there is the mystery of how 'coordination' is achieved when two people are talking together; their utterances seldom interfere with each other, despite the lack of any fixed protocol for who may speak when." (p. 1178).

Past research in linguistics has focused almost exclusively on the speaker or the text. Goodwin (1986), Gardner (2001) and other linguists argue that linguistics has traditionally relied on the spoken and written word as the source for data. As Gardner concedes, "This is understandable to the extent that what language users say or write is available and 'out there' for study, unlike listening (or reading), the processes of which are internal, invisible, and not directly accessible to an observer (p. 1). Modern linguistics has been greatly influenced by Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theories where the interpretation of intent and attitude is important. Grice (1989) also influenced the field by proposing a view of communication which focuses on intentions and speaker – meaning of response tokens.

Gumperz (1982) focuses on both speaker and hearer. He contends that Gricean pragmatics is based on analysis which is sentence-based and is "concerned with (shared) presuppositions in the interpretations of intent" (p. 17). For Gumperz, it is not necessary to try to probe the psychological intent of the speaker. Instead, he feels it is important to look at how intent is understood or interpreted by the listener. He states that "we assume such interpretation is a function of (a) listeners' linguistic knowledge, (b) contextual presuppositions informed by certain cues, and (c) background

information brought to bear on the interpretation (p. 17). He suggests that conversational cooperation is negotiated with the help of contextualization conventions which are signalling cues that help participants to interpret what is going on in the interaction.

One way in which contextualization conventions function is to serve as guide posts for monitoring the progress of conversational interaction. We use our knowledge of grammar and lexicon, along with contextualization conventions and whatever background information we have about settings and participants, to decide what discourse task is being performed and what activity is being signalled. Eventually, this provides information about likely communicative goals and outcomes. We then build on these predictions to identify “the communicative intent that underlies particular utterances” (p. 18). These contextualization conventions are acquired through experience and for the most part are unconscious to the participant.

Like Gumperz, researchers in conversation analysis (CA) also place importance on the listener (cf. Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1982; Jefferson, 1984; Goodwin, 1981; Heritage, 1984). These researchers analysed natural conversation and rather than searching for linguistic rules, sought to uncover sociological patterns revealed by the interactions. Their work has provided valuable insights into the mechanisms of response tokens and the importance of sequential order. Schegloff (1982) argues that when researchers leave out bits of talk and behaviour which are not made by the main speaker, they are losing the very essence of the interactivity between the participants. He draws attention to the importance of minimal vocalizations such as ‘uh huh’, ‘yeah’, and ‘mm hm’, and contends that discourse in conversation is an achievement of both speaker and hearer, “something ‘produced’ over time, incrementally accomplished,

rather than born naturally whole out of the speaker's forehead" (p. 73). This is a significant departure from the more traditional line of linguistic research.

2.3 Response Tokens – Approaches

Xudong (2009) identifies two major approaches in the study of response tokens. One is the lumping approach, which treats as a single category or class or a group of different forms of listener responses. The other is the splitting approach which is taken mainly by ethnomethodological conversation analysts. This approach analyses one or more discrete listener responses in their sequential context and tries to demonstrate that each response token can perform distinctive interactional functions.

2.3.1 Lumping Approach

The lumping approach to the study of response token is generally used in the fields of linguistics, language and gender, cross-cultural communication, and experimental and social psychologies (Xudong, 2008). This approach most likely began with Fries' (1952) who studied the American English sentence patterns. Though, earlier, more general allusion to response tokens could arguably have been made by Bales (1950) in one of his major groups of interaction process categories called 'Positive Reactions'. Earlier studies of listener response in the lumping approach come largely from experimental and social psychology, commencing in the 1960s (e.g., Dittmann & Llewellyn, 1967, 1968; Kendon 1967; Xudong, 2009, pp. 106-110) and continuing through the twenty-first century (e.g., Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2002). The earlier studies focused mainly on two general themes: The structural characterisation of listener response and its roles in conversation in general or more specifically in the conversational encoding and decoding process (but see Duncan & Fiske, 1985; for a different classification).

According to Xudong (2009), the studies which were concerned with the structural description of listener response in the conversation, typically dealt with it in connection with its non-verbal versions such as head nods, gaze, and smiles (e.g., Birdwhistell 1962; Kendon 1967; Dittmann & Llewellyn 1967, 1968; Brunner 1979; Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson 2002). Others have mainly been concerned with its non-turn status in conversation (e.g., Yngve 1970; Duncan 1972, 1973; Duncan & Niederehe 1974; Duncan & Fiske 1977, 1985). In addition to the structural description of response tokens, the study of their roles and functions in conversation, or in interpersonal communication more generally, is another frequent theme in the study of response tokens in the field of experimental and social psychology. This theme may have its origin in the study of the effects of feedback on human communication. However, a more general term which covers virtually all kinds of responses (visual or vocal) to a speaker ranging from head nods and smiling to interrupting and question-asking (e.g., Leavitt & Mueller 1951; Argyle, Lalljee, & Cook 1968; Rosenfeld 1966, 1967).

2.3.2 Splitting Approach

The second approach to the study of response tokens is known as the Splitting Approach. This approach, mainly taken by conversation analysts, has examined some discrete response tokens in their sequential contexts. Unlike the lumping approach, it is not concerned with the relationship between the occurrences of listener response tokens and the external variables. Rather, it is mainly concerned with their occurrences with respect to the operation of the turn-taking organisation. In the conversation analytic literature, several response tokens have received intensive systematic study. Each of them is found to be distinctive in terms of its placement and role in the sequential environment and its consequences for subsequent turns. These tokens include ‘yeah,’

‘uh huh,’ and ‘mm hm’ (Schegloff, 1982; Jefferson, 1983, 1993, & 1984; Drummond & Hopper, 1993a, 1993b & 1993c), ‘oh’ (Heritage, 1984), assessments such as ‘wow’ and ‘good’ (Goodwin 1986), ‘okay’ (Beach 1993, 1995; Pillet-Shore, 2003), and ‘mm’ (Gardner, 2001).

Schegloff (1982), for example, studied response tokens like ‘uh huh’. He advises that discourse be studied as an interactional achievement, which is partially shaped by its turn-taking organisation. He observes that vocalisations like ‘uh huh’ in their sequential context can have two main and related usages: ‘a usage as continuer and a usage to pass an opportunity to initiate repair’ (p. 88). According to Schegloff, the most common usage of vocalisations such as ‘uh huh’ is as continuer, the function of which is to encourage the previous speaker to continue talking, and by producing ‘uh huh’, the producer passes the opportunity to take a fuller turn at talk (p. 81). Response tokens like ‘uh huh’ occur frequently in an environment when an extended unit of talk by another is underway.

Jefferson (1983, 1993 & 1984) examined response tokens like ‘mm hm’ and ‘yeah,’ and she labelled ‘acknowledgment tokens’. She found that the two tokens are functionally and sequentially different from each other in that the former (i.e., ‘mm hm’) indicates more of a passive reciprocity and the latter (i.e., ‘yeah’) is more related to full speakership reciprocity. Passive reciprocity, according to Jefferson (1984), means that “its user is proposing that his co-participant is still in the midst of some course of talk, and shall go on talking” (p. 200). This is consistent with the above observation by Schegloff (1982) that response tokens like ‘uh huh’ and ‘mm hm’ serve mainly as continuers. Drummond & Hopper (1993a, 1993b) later, attempted to reassess in a quantitative mode, Jefferson’s claim about speakership reciprocity of ‘yeah’ and passive reciprocity of ‘mm hm’. Their studies received a critical response tokens from

Zimmerman (1993) who asserts that continuers control turn-taking, the negotiation of agreement, the signalling of recognition and comprehension, control of emotion attitude and effect, although their findings reaffirmed Jefferson's claim.

2.4 Categories of Response Tokens

Based on Maynard (1990), Gardner (2002) and O'Keeffe *et al.* (2007), a classification of response tokens has been made into two broad categories vocal and visual response tokens, both of which have several sub components. While the conversational analytic perspective on response tokens seek mainly to establish the uniqueness of individual tokens, the various classification systems of response tokens derive mostly from various studies that discuss the categories according to functions. Clancy *et al.* (1996) studied reactive tokens (responses tokens), which cover a wider range of expressions than backchannels, and analysed their usage in English, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese conversations. They classified reactive tokens into the following: (i) backchannels, (ii) reactive expressions, (iii) collaborative finishes, (iv) repetitions, and (v) resumptive openers. Based on their interactional functions and surface forms. Although they seemed not to provide rigid procedures for annotation, their idea was essential in developing their own scheme.

In a conversation analysis study, Gardner (2001) compiled response tokens reported in his previous studies and classified them into (i) continuers, ii) acknowledgments, (iii) change-of-state tokens, iv) assessments, and (v) non-verbal responses. He examined usage of eight English response tokens (Listener Responses), i.e. (i) mm hm/uh huh (continuers), (ii) yeah/mm (acknowledgments), (iii) oh/right (newsmarkers), and (iv) okay/alright (change-of-activity tokens) with respect to their interactional functions. Gardner (1997, 1998) defines backchannels as “the vocalisation of understandings” and locates them as existing ‘between speaking

and listening” Gardner (1997) investigated ‘minimal responses’ such as *mm-hm* (which he calls a ‘continuer’, encouraging the main speaker to go on) (see also Schegloff, 1982), *mm* (which functions as a ‘weak acknowledging’ token), and the ‘stronger, more aligning/agreeing’ *yeah* (p.23). Gardner (1998) divides typical listener behaviour into back channel items such as acknowledgements, brief agreements and continuers (e.g. yeah, mmhm), news marking items (e.g. oh, really), evaluative items (e.g. wow, how terrible), and clarification requests.

An important point of conversation analytic studies of response tokens is its emphasis on their roles in sequential organization, that is, the position in an ongoing sequence, rather than function per se.

Following these studies, Den, Koiso, Takanashi, and Yoshida (2011) proposed strict and consistent procedures for annotating Chinese Japanese response tokens. In which response tokens are identified and classified according to their forms and sequential positions. Such detailed annotation serves as a guide as it investigates the categories of Asante Twi response tokens and their correlation with the linguistic and interactional properties such as importance, function and roles in conversation.

Den et.al (2011) propose the following tables for form and position in Chinese Japanese language.

Table 1: Form tags

Category	Tag	Example
Responsive interjections	B	hai, un, aa, ee, etc.
Expressive interjections	E	a, e, hee, huun, etc.
Lexical reactive expressions	L	soo(-desu-ne), naruhodo, tasika-ni, etc.
Evaluative expressions	A	sugoi, omosiroi-na, kowa, etc.
(Partial) repetitions	R	Repetitions of (a part of) other's speech
(Collaborative) completions	C	One speaker's finishing a prior speaker Utterance

Table 2: Position tags

Category	Tag	Example
First pair parts	1	Request for confirmation or repair of information
Second pair parts	2	Response to a question or request
Sequence-closing thirds	3	Appendix to an adjacency pair
Other responding turns	0	Acknowledgments, assessments, etc.
Unclassifiable positions	9	Signal of self-remembering or self-understanding, marking of topic/activity shift, filling in a break after a topical-talk, etc.
(No position tag Attention to, understanding of, or evaluation of an on-going turn)		

The annotation scheme, however, is still insufficient to deeply study the contexts in which response tokens are used. This is because, the position of response token is classified according to its position in a series of turns, e.g., the first or second pair part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), but its position within the speaker's turn is not distinguished. The following sections, I will first describe the form and the position tags used in two-stage annotation scheme proposed in Den *et al.* (2011) and then provide examples that have similar usage by the Asante Twi speaker.

2.4.1 Two-stage Annotation of Response Tokens

The section briefly describes two-stage annotation scheme of Den *et al*, 2011 as proposed by the Japanese response tokens scheme. They are first identified and classified according to their forms, and then sub-classified according to their sequential positions in the discourse. Two examples are considered under the form tags.

2.4.1.2 Form tags

The following six (6) forms are distinguished (Table 1):

1. Responsive interjections (B), these express acceptance at various levels of author's utterance, examples., hai, un, aa and eei (Twi: *yoo, mmh, aane ne mate*) and their successive occurrences.
2. Expressive interjections (E), these are used when the listener express notice of surprise, disappointment and admiration elicited by an author's utterance or situation, e.g., a, e, hee, and huun (Twi: *aah, ei, saa?*).
3. Lexical reactive expressions (L), which are short expressions indicating understanding of or agreement with an other's assertion or opinion, e.g., soo (-desune) (I think so), naruhodo (really), and tasika-ni (surely). (Twi: *nokwere, eye, ampa, saa peperepe*).
4. Evaluative expressions (A), which assess the talk of the prior speaker, usually realized by short adjectives or adjective verbs such as sugoi (great), omosiroi-na (funny), and kowa (terrible). (Twi: *emu eye ya ooo, awerhosem*).
5. (Partial) repetitions of other's speech (R), which is sometimes used to express an understanding of or agreement with the information conveyed by another speaker. For Example in Twi: *ena ose deen? abeba akyenena, etc.*

6. (Collaborative) completions (C), where one speaker finishes a prior speaker's utterance, predicting what would follow the part of the utterance produced so far.

2.4.1.3 Position tags

The position tag captures substantial functions that response tokens may serve beyond simply signaling listener's attention and involvement. These functions include an affirmative answer to a question, an acceptance of a request, a repair initiation when affiliated with an interrogative intonation, and so on. The following five (5) positions are distinguished (Table 2):

1. First pair parts of adjacency pairs (1), where RTs are used, typically accompanied by an interrogative intonation, to elicit an addressee's response such as confirmation or repair of information.
2. Second pair parts of adjacency pairs (2), where RTs are used to respond to another's elicitation such as a question or a request.
3. Sequence-closing thirds (3), these are sometimes appended to an adjacency pair, designed to move for sequence closing (Schegloff, 2007), typically realized by a brief item like *aa* or *un* as well as an assessment.
4. Other responding turns (0), which are other positions than the above three and in which response tokens occupy a full turn, or a preface to it, not just inserted as a recipient's reaction but committed to some degree of speakership incipiency; typical examples are acknowledgments and assessments.
5. Unclassifiable positions (9), which are other cases where tokens in the form of an RT appear to occupy a full turn; they are used to signal self-remembering or self-understanding, mark topic/activity shift, fill in a break after a topical-talk, and so on.

The first two positions are based on the concept of adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) and the third one on its extension (Schegloff, 2007). The fourth position, 0, however, is different from the second one, 2, in that while position 2 is prospectively occasioned, its absence being noticed as such, while position 0 is connected to the previous utterance retrospectively. Response tokens that do not appear at the 5 positions are left without being assigned a position tag. They occur at “within turn” position and typically indicate attention to, understanding of, or evaluation of an on-going turn.

Iwasaki (1997) proposes three types of backchannel based on their form. They are non-lexical backchannels (which have ‘little or no referential meaning’) phrasal backchannels, (which are stereotypical expressions with ‘substantive meaning’) and substantive backchannels, (which have ‘referential content’) Studies have also proposed subcategories of response tokens based on their interactional functions such as ‘continuers’ (Schegloff, 1982), ‘acknowledgement tokens’ (Jefferson, 1984a), ‘newsmakers’ (Heritage, 1984) and ‘change-of-state token’ (Heritage, 1984). Clancy *et al.* (1996) distinguish five types of reactive tokens: back channels (non-lexical vocalic form that display interest), reactive expressions (non-floor-taking lexical phrase or word), and collaborative finishes (the action that non-primary speaker finishes a previous utterance), repetition and resumptive openers (back channels followed by full turns). As these sub-types are initially proposed for cross-linguistic studies, there are few studies that adopt this classification for the study of a single language. This present study expatiates their classification considering their types, structure and functions in English and similar ones from Asante Twi.

2.4.2 Speaker change

Clancy *et al* (1996) posits that a speaker change is used to judge the occurrence where a speaker takes recognizable turn, whether a full turn or response tokens turn.

2.4.2.1 Reactive Tokens (Response Tokens)

In their study, they distinguished among several types of response tokens which have been mentioned already in this study, but their detail descriptions are discussed in this research with their Twi examples.

a. Backchannels

If the Reactive Token is a non-lexical vocalic form, and serves as a "continuer" (Schegloff, 1982; Strive, 2004, 2008), display of interest, or claim of understanding, they considered it as Backchannel. Only their English backchannel found in their data is considered in this study with similar Twi expressions. The table below illustrates typical backchannel in English and Twi.

Table 3: Typical Backchannels in English and Asante Twi

English	Twi	Trigger of responses
Hm	Ooh	Sharing pains
Huh	ah / aah / oh	Surprise
Oh	Ohuo/ebɛɛi	It's too much
Mhm	Mmhmm	It's now clear
Uh huh	huo/ɛbɛɛi	Surprise of quantity of items
	mmbɔi	Surprise of a character
	Buei / eei	Expressing of fear

b. Reactive Expressions

If the "non-primary" speaker utters a short non-floor-taking lexical phrase or word, Clancy et al coded that as a Reactive Expression. Typical Reactive Expressions, including assessments (Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987, 1992a, b), in the Twi and English.

Table 4: Typical Reactive Expressions in English and Twi

English	Twi	Trigger of response
oh really/really	Ampa	for confirmation
Yeah	Aanne	shows acceptance
O=kay	Yoo	Acceptance
Sure	nokore	Seconding the first speaker
Exactly	Saa ara/ saa pɛpɛɛɛ	For confirmation
All right	ɛɛ	For confirmation
Man	aberanteɛ/ ɔbaa	brings one's attention
Shit	nkwaseasem	Blushes one's off
Hell	nsem hunu	Insult

c. Collaborative Finishes

When the non-primary speaker finishes a previous speaker's utterance, they coded t as a Collaborative Finish (Lerner, 1987, 1989 & 1991). The present study considers only their examples in English data with similar ones in Twi.

Example English

A: . when you say it happens for a reason,
 .. it's like,
 ... it happened to get you off..

B: off my ass. (Clancy *et al*, 1996, p. 355)

Excerpt 2. 4.2.1. Chirapatre

A: ... baako no, yefre no sen?	The one, what do you call it?
... yefre no...	call
.... aseèè	something like ...
... ase yefre no	It seems it is called
...Chirapatre Basic School	Chirapatre Basic School
.... Saa sukuu no	That school
B: ... m'akae, agye din	I have remembered, it has gained popularity
C: ... agye din paa	it is very popular
ALL: paa, agye din	truly very popular

From the conversation, B&C helped A to recollect what he had forgotten and all the interlocutors came to collaborative at the end by saying *paa agye din*.

d. Repetitions

If the non-primary speaker reacts by repeating a portion of the speech of the primary speaker, they coded it as a Repetition:

Example in English

A: I got everything taken care of. I got insurance on it too.

B: ... [how much <X it X>] –

A: .. [under my] name. ... eleven hundred a year.

B: **eleven hundred.**

A: ... three hundred [dollars down],

B: [that's cheap] man (Clancy *et al*, 1996)

Excerpt 2.4.2.2 Daddy

1 A: εennora na Kwaku frε	A:	Was it yesterday that Kwaku called
2 ... sε ɔβεba dada ayie no bi no?		that he would be at Dady's funeral?
3 B: Anne, εennora annwumerεε.		Yes, it was yesterday in the evening
4 A: annwumere		Evening

From the conversation in example 4, A enquires from B the date their brother called to attend their dad's funeral and B replied in line 3. Speaker A repeated in line 4, and B in line 5, gives a repetition token *annwumerε*.

e. Resumptive Openers

Resumptive openers refer to a type of non-lexical element which is used at turn-initial points. These forms were coded as Backchannels if they weren't followed by full turns. Although in Clancy et al's coding, they were treated as a subcategory of Reactive Token, they could be distinguished from both prototypical Reactive Tokens and prototypical contentful turns. No functional claims are intended by the term "resumptive" in this label. The characteristics of Resumptive Openers include the following:

1. They are realized in short (typically monosyllabic), non-lexical, vocalic forms.
2. They tend to appear as separate intonation units.
3. Normally only short pauses occur after a resumptive opener,
4. They appear at the beginning of a new turn

Example

English

- A: ... How are you doing with the house.
B: ... Oh, got it all uh... primed,
.. just about,
... except two sides [of it].
A: [Oh you shoot a] primer stuff. (FARMTALK; Clancy *et al*,
1996)

Example Twi

1 A; Kejetia akronfoɔ deɛ	as for thieves at Kejetia
2 ...sɛ woama w'ani ada ho a	if you are not vigilant
3 B; aaaah na sɛdeɛ wɔde	aah as he attacked
4 ...n'asɛm abɛforo me yi deɛ	me with his issues
5 ... ntɔkwa denden sei deɛ	such a violence attack
6 A: mmhm saa na wɔteɛ.	Mmhm that is how they

Resumptive openers are hybrid in nature: they themselves do not constitute a new turn, but they are response tokens that occur at the beginning of a turn. Thus, they differ from the other response tokens in that their function is to acknowledge the prior turn and commence a new turn, without passing a turn-taking opportunity. This is what other Response Tokens may be doing. Resumptive Openers are thus parallel to the "acknowledgement tokens" signaling "speakership incipiency" discussed by Jefferson (1984), Drummond and Hopper (1993a, b), and Zimmerman (1993).

2.4.3 Nonverbal Response Tokens

A review of literature on conversational gestures will be described in this section since hand gestures, feet movement, face expression, silence and head

movements are a further focus of the current study. In terms of hand gestures, Goldin-Meadow (1999) highlights the following characteristics: Gesture provides speakers with another representational format in addition to speech, one that can reduce cognitive effort and serve as a tool for thinking. Gesture also provides listeners with a second representational format, one that allows access to the unspoken thoughts of the speaker and thus enriches communication. (Goldin-Meadow, 1999, p. 428)

Goldin-Meadow (1999) categorizes hand gestures according to their functions. There are four types: iconic gestures (which describe a picture that the speaker has in mind such as pouring water into a glass) metaphoric gestures (which are more abstract than iconic gesture and describe speakers' thoughts or idea) beat gestures (which can be used to emphasize what the speaker is saying "along with the rhythmical pulsation of speech), and deictic gestures, in other words, pointing gestures. Although the categorization was based mainly on speakers' "hand gestures", listeners hand gestures can also be considered as conversational gestures.

Schegloff (1984) raised awareness of the importance of gestures in conversation by analyzing the functions of hand gestures in conversation. Although gestures are normally used by speakers in conversation to support their verbal description of an idea, Schegloff (1984, p. 271) reported three types of hand gestures used by non-speakers: (1) to show intention to be a next speaker, (2) "in lieu of talk" which is used by the listener to communicate without interrupting the current speaker, and (3) to interrupt the current speaker. The issue he raises is significantly related to turn-taking organization. According to Schegloff, gestures can be used for initiating turns by listeners and taking back a turn from an interrupter, which can be interpreted as gestures functioning as floor seeker. Moreover, gestures can be a kind of response token since

they can be used in conversation to communicate the listener's intention, although it is nonverbal.

2.5. The Functions of Listener Response

The primary function response token is to “make a claim to another participant about how that talk has been received by his or her listener” (Gardner, 1998, p.209). Response tokens are multifunctional and “quintessentially metacommunicative” (Hess & Johnston, 1988, p.332). Their function includes in the conversational work of turn-management, monitoring, repair, and politeness. In addition, they are situated within the larger context of conversation and participant orientation. Together with assessments, response tokens provide information to other participants in the talk not only about how some prior talk has been received, but also provides some information on how the response listener projecting further activities in the talk. For example, whether they approve of, agree with, disagree with, will remain silent on, or have something to say about the prior talk. (Gardner, 2001)

Interpretations of specific response tokens are surprisingly consistent across the literature. Schegloff (1982) argues that *uh-huh* exhibits “an understanding that an extended unit of talk is underway by another and that it is not yet complete” (p. 81). Jefferson (1984) followed this with the interpretation of *mmhmm (uh-huh)* as “passive reciprocity,” in contrast to *yeah*. This hints that the hearer views the speaker's turn as nearing conclusion or as complete. Drummond and Hopper (1993) assert that there is another sense in which *uh-huh* and *yeah* differ: That is, how soon after its utterance the off-floor speaker will attempt to take the floor or succeed in doing so. They found that *yeah* initiates ‘turn bids’ almost half the time it is uttered, whereas this is true for *uh-huh* only 4-5% of the time. *Yea* supports the formal distinction made between continuers (e.g. *uh-huh*, *mmhmm*) and reactive expressions.

Regarding politeness, response tokens attend to three primary wants: hesitancy (allowing options); equality (making interlocutors “feel good”); and formality (creating distance so as not to impose) (Farr, 2003). According to Heinz (2003), response tokens fulfil the intent of Grice’s Cooperative Principle. He intimates that:

Providing appropriate backchannel responses can therefore be thought of as a required contribution when the Cooperative Principle is enacted, when one interlocutor is telling a story or holds the floor and the other wants this alignment to continue for the time being (Heinz, p.1114).

Failing to use response tokens or using inappropriate ones is the end to conversation, “likely to make communication less efficient and to leave conversational participants dissatisfied” (Heinz, 2003, p. 1125). Interestingly, the use of a variety of response tokens across an interaction appears crucial; repeated use of the same response in sequence may signal “incipient disinterest” (Schegloff, 1982, p.85). In Farr’s words, “interactional and pragmatic faux-pas (emanating from the incorrect use of listenership devices) may not be well tolerated” (2003, p.72).

Thonus (2002, 2004) investigated the form and function of listener responses in one-on-one academic writing tutorials. In interaction with writing tutors as well as native speaking (NS) and non-native speaking (NNS) students referencing 24 separate interactions, she found that all participants agreed that backchannels signaled conversational involvement of both parties. From this, she/he concluded that “backchannels are welcomed if they serve affiliative purposes” (Thonus, 2002, p. 127). The continuer *uh-huh* seemed to respond to the fact of the speaker’s utterance, while reactive expressions *ok.*, *yeah*, *(all) right*, and *oh* responded to the content of the utterance. For instance,

Example 8

- uh-huh I heard what you said
mate dee wo kae no
- ok I heard and am considering what you said
mate na meredwene ho
- yeah I agree with what you said
mefoa dee wokae no so
- (all) right I agree with what you said
Megye to mu
- oh That's new information to me
eye me asem foforɔ koraa

According to Den *et al.* (2011) the functions of response tokens often appear at different places in relation to the talk. For instance, continuers, which do not claim speakership incipency but merely signal a 'go-ahead' sign to the speaker, are typically located at boundaries of utterances (Schegloff, 1982). With this listener may produce an assessment on a particular object or proposition within an ongoing conversation (Goodwin, 1986). These findings suggest that in order to understand the function of response tokens, one has to identify not only their positions in the conversational sequence but also their positions within the speaker's utterances. For this purpose, Den *et al* propose a new scheme to annotate triggering expressions. With that the following suggestions were made. The response tokens were classified according to whether or not there is a particular object or proposition in the speaker's utterance for which the listener shows a positive or aligned stance. Either of the following categories is assigned.

- I. Object or proposition
- II. No-trigger
- III. Triggering expressions

The triggering expressions include (i) surprising facts and other newsworthy things, (ii) opinions and assessments, (iii) focus of a response to a question or repair initiation, (iv) keywords in narratives, and (v) embedded propositions quoted from other's statement or thought, which are to be agreed upon, assessed, or noticed. For simplicity, Den et al annotated only the rightmost words of triggering expressions, that is, head nouns for objects and verbal components for propositions. In Japanese, these are both placed on the right-edge of a phrase or clause.

Also, the function of backchannel has been discussed by several researchers. For example, in her study of Japanese backchannel behavior, Maynard (1989, 1997) discusses six functions (1) continuer (2) display of understanding of content (3) support toward the speaker's judgment (4) agreement (5) strong emotional response and (6) minor addition, correction, or request for information. It is necessary to point out that the list of forms corresponding to a specific function is not meant to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive. Unquestionably, these language functions could be achieved by uttering expressions which are full turns at talk. These are found in such resource books as Blundell, Higgens & Middlemiss (1982) and Dörnyei and Thurrell (1992).

2.5.1 Continuers

The main functions of this type of responses are for the non-primary speaker to signal to the primary speaker that they are indeed listening attentively, and to allow the primary speaker to continue speaking. According to Schegloff (1982), this is premised on the turn-taking system on which the non-primary speaker forsakes the opportunity to take a primary speaking turn. This can be seen in the following example in which A's backchannel of *mmhm* signals that A is listening and B should continue speaking:

Example 9

English

A: I'll pick it up from his place

B: Mm hm

A: at around 7 o'clock

Excerpt 2.5.1 Example 10 Twi

A: mɛfa afiri ne hɔ	I'll pick it from his place
B: mɪm	hm
A: bɛyɛ nnɔnson mu hɔ	around seven o'clock

2.5.1.1 Specific forms

According to Gardner (1998), items such as *mmhm* and *uh huh* with a fall-rise intonation contour are prototypical continuers. The continuer *yeah* and the minimally aligning form *mm* have been called *acknowledgment token*. They also seem to serve a continuative function when they carry a rising contour. Uematsu's (2000) list of continuers includes *umm(m)*, *hm(mmm)*, *un huh*, *un huh un huh*, *un(n)*, *huh huh*, *ummm un un*, *oh(h)*, *ooo*, *ahaa*. However, his data related to English was limited to one intercultural dyadic conversation between a Canadian and a Japanese participant. As a result, it is not clear precisely how he arrived at the conclusion that they are items as continuers.

Ward's (2004) description, involving syllabification, offers us a new and interesting dimension in examining the functions of the non-lexical items. It claims that syllable non-lexical items such as *uh*, *um*, and *yeah* are overwhelmingly fillers and disfluency markers. On the other hand, he identified two-syllable items such as *uh huh*,

um-hm, and yeah yeah as backchannels. In his opinion, they often signal to the primary speaker that they should continue speaking. With this, Ward (2004) acknowledges that variations exist in response tokens. For instance, when Yeah yeah is uttered in a creaky voice, and with a sharp downstep in pitch, it is often construed as a brusque way of telling the interlocutor to stop repeating themselves and get to the point. Again, Ito (2007) describes how repeated monosyllabic backchannels in Japanese have a stronger role in showing understanding, agreement and encouraging the primary speaker to continue speaking.

2.5.2 Display of understanding of content

This is when the non-primary speaker feels it necessary to show that he/she understands the primary speaker's utterance as in example 12

Example 12

- A: You have to go two blocks
B: Mm hm
A: then turn left at the video store
B: Uh huh
A: its a few stores down on the right side
B: I see
A: You can't miss it

Excerpt 2. 5. 2. license

A: m'adasidie krataa a mede ka	my driving licenses I use for
... lɔɔle no megyaa no	driving car, did I leave it
... wo kaa no mu?	in your car?
B: mhmm	mhmm
A: hwɛ no yie ma me oo,	keep it well for me oo
B: mate	I've heard it.

In English example, B sends two continuer type backchannels in *Mm hm* and *Uh huh* to signal to A that he/she should continue giving directions, and once B seems to understand where the place is, B signals understanding of content to A with the response tokens I see. The Twi speaker used *mhmm* and *mate* to signal understanding.

2.5.2.1 Specific forms

Yeah is thought to serve several functions. Gardner (1998) asserts that one of these functions is to show understanding of content. Further, Ito (2007) has included the lexical items I see, and Uematsu (2000) posited instances in which the Canadian in his analysis used discourse markers such as Oooo, Un huh, Ununun, Uh hum (mm), Ah ah, and Oh yeah as backchannel forms in this category.

2.5.3. Agreement

This is when the non-primary speaker reacts to a question or question like utterance made by the primary speaker. This can be seen below.

Example 13

A: You mean you heard the news already.

B: (Head Nod)

C. I was going to tell you.

Excerpt 2.5.3

A: wo se w'ate papa wuo no	You said you've heard papa's death
B: (wabo ne tiri nko)	(Head Nod)
A: anka merebeka akyeree wo	I was going to tell you

This example shows that participant B is reacting with a head nod in agreement to A's question like statement. In examples like 2.5.3 it would be difficult to distinguish between the agreement and understanding categories (Kobayashi, 1995).

Tao and Thompson (1991) provide a distinction by pointing out that a non-primary speaker gives a claim of understanding when the primary speaker provides some new and previously unknown information to them. However, an acknowledgement of agreement does not involve unknown information. As an example of understanding, in the second example 13, the non-primary speaker knows what the interlocutor was talking about hence he used positive response token. Thus, the non-primary speaker received the information and replied with a head nod that shows he/she understands the content of the message. In the same way, excerpt 2.6.3, the non-primary speaker did not receive new information as they had already heard the news that their interlocutor was referring to hence, the non-primary speaker responded with an agreement type of response token.

2.5.3.1 Specific forms

Ito (2007) includes statements such as *that's exactly true* and *I think so too* to show agreement, Uematsu (2000) presents non-lexical items such as hm hm hm, um(m), umum, and unhum, and Blundell *et al.* (1982) have offered a multitude of phrases to use in this category such as you're (so) right, how true, too true, I agree, right, and yeah all these studies contribute to agreement.

2.5.4. Support and empathy toward the speaker's judgment

This occurs when the non-primary speaker responds with a show of support or empathy to an evaluative statement made by the primary speaker.

For example, 14

- A: He quits his job again
B: It's going to be hard to find a new one
A: Yeah
B: He'll have to apply...

Excerpt 2.5.4. Example Twi

A: Sukuu panin no se,	the headmistress said
...kwaku nkɔ pɛ sukuu foforɔ	kwaku to look for new school
B; ɛbɛyɛ den se	it's going to be hard
...ɔbenya sukuu foforɔ seisei	to get a new school now
A: ampa oo	truly oo
B: ɔnkɔ nkɔ kyini mu nhwɛ	he should go and try

In example 14, participant B is showing empathy toward what A is telling him so he said 'it going to hard for him to find one. This could be interpreted as B feeling empathy and supporting participant A's judgement. In excerpt 2.6.4 participant B shows empathy and support to A's statement. It's going to be hard to find a new one, *ɛbɛyɛ den sɛ ɔbenya sukuu foforɔ seisei*.

2.5.4.1 Specific forms

Maynard (1986) identifies yeah as a backchannel form that can be used to express support and empathy towards the primary speaker's judgment in her analysis. Furthermore, Uematsu (2000) includes laughter, and Ito (2007) includes "that's good" all to support the agreement response tokens.

2.5.5 Strong emotional response

This is when the non-primary speaker responds emphatically to a statement made by the primary speaker. This indicates more than simple continuer, understanding, or support. Such response tokens are found in the forms of laughter and exclamatory statements the following. The following gives illustration

Example 15

A. I got an A+ on my Chemistry test.

B. Fantastic!

A. I hope I can keep it up in all semesters.

Excerpt 2.5.5 Example Twi

1A: m̄ətu afiri chirap̄tre	I've moved from chirapatre
2...ak̄ɔtena Aputuogya me fie h̄o	to stay at Aputuogya my house
3 B: Waawo!	Waaa!
4 A: m'afiri atetee mu	I'm out of troubles

From the excerpt 2.6.4.1 '*waawo!*' is an exclamation showing strong emotional response. Speaker B expresses happiness in the form of exclamation as a response token to support the flow of the conversation.

2.5.5.1 Specific forms

Goodwin (1986) has suggested that assessments such as *wow* or *great* serve as strong emotive responses, Maynard (1997) has proposed laughs, and Uematsu (2000) has included the nonlexical item Hehehe. Gardner (1997, 1998) and Selting (1994) have identified that Yeah and Mm with rise-falling contours also take on some of the characteristics of assessments, indicating some evaluation and heightened involvement in the primary speaker's talk.

2.5.6 Minor addition or request for information

This occurs in such instances as when the non-primary speaker corrects something the primary speaker has just uttered, when the non-primary speaker needs clarification or when the non-primary speaker attempts to add a word in completing the utterance the primary speaker has just made.

Example 16

A: John will likely be back in April.

B: Really.

A: Yeah, the government is reducing troops in the gulf

Excerpt 2.5.6. Example Twi

A: Akwasi befiri USA aba	Akwasi will come back from USA
...ahinimi bosome yi ara mu	this month (October).
B: ampa!	Really
A: Anne, ne papa ayie no nti	yes, it's because of his father's funeral

In example 20, it is clear to see that B was surprised at A's first utterance, and B's response token of 'Really' signaled B's request for confirmation

2.5.6.1 Specific forms

Maynard (1997) and Cutrone (2005) have pointed out that Really is a common backchannel form to request confirmation. Another strategy that might be helpful to this end is for the non-primary speaker to repeat the last word or two of the primary speaker's utterance with a rising contour.

2.6 The Importance of Response Tokens in Conversations

There are numerous benefits of response tokens in the Literature. For instance, interlocutors use 'verbal and non-verbal' 'behavioral tokens' and 'minimal

verbalizations' (e.g. 'uh huh', 'okay', 'mm hmm', 'yeah' and so forth) during interactions which helps to manage the interaction in an economic way (Schegloff, 1982, p.77). In fact, to maintain an interactive listening behavior, the participants need to use brief responses instead of lengthy, elaborate tokens. In doing so, the co-participant helps the speaker achieve a fluent continuation of the talk and ensures 'communicative economy' of the talk (McCarthy, 2003). Indeed, listenership is an important part of interaction and response tokens play a significant role to maintain the interactional architecture of talk.

Besides, the tokens (e.g. "yeah", "yes", "yea" or so), which are mostly related with "topic shifts", "agreement" and "listenership" (Gardner, 2001; Jefferson, 1983) are used for "acknowledgement". Other than the usage of "yeah" as an "adjacency pair" to "yes/no" questions (Schegloff, 1988) or displaying simple "affirmative" agreements (Drummond & Hopper, 1993b; Gardner, 1997), the token is widely used for acknowledging or claiming the understanding of the previous turn. Jefferson (1983, 1993) claims that "strong" acknowledgement tokens such as "yeah" bring an imminent "shift" from "passive reciprocity" to "incipient speakership". Again, Jefferson (1987) claims that it is most likely that token "yeah invites an imminent topics shift" (p.12). However, "mmhmm" may only invite a topic shift once out of ten chances to an ongoing talk. Guthrie's works on the usage of 'okay' and 'mmhmm' in teacher counselling sessions of young children and also projects similar findings suggesting 'okay' as a similar item such as 'yeah' or any other 'affirmative response to a yes/no question' (Jefferson, 1997, p. 398). Usually invites the participants to extend the turns in ongoing talk if compared to other continuers such as 'mm hmm' (Gardner, 1998, p.210). As it is most likely that a 'recipient in an ongoing talk will at some point shift topic, but will

produce an acknowledgement token and follow that with a shift in topic' (Jefferson, 1983, p.4).

Drummond and Hopper (1993a, 1993b), posited that an acknowledgement token like 'yeah' would be followed by 'further talk'. There is, also, a relation between 'upward intonated yeah' and further talk (Jefferson, 1987, p.30). It is more likely that an upward intonated 'yeah' will invite more talk. Stubbe (1998) claims that listener responses help to set up a general "sharing of a frame of reference" between the speaker and the listener. These brief responses can show many different kinds of meanings regarding what has been said and even the listener's attitude towards the speaker. Stubbe suggests a continuum for listener responses with one end indicating low involvement and neutral affect (e.g. relative indifference or simple affirmation) and the other end being high involvement and positive affect (e.g. enthusiastic interest and agreement).

Zimmerman (1991) claims that the Quality of a conversation depends largely on what takes place in the person to whom words are directed. In order to act as an active, supportive and polite listener, one should in general signal an interest in what the speaker is saying (Zimmerman, 1991; West and Zimmerman, 1983). This notion of politeness in hearer- oriented speech act has been addressed by some politeness theorist (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Svennevig (1999) claims that speakers and listeners are being polite by showing attentiveness in orientation to each other, using self-oriented comments to show alignment. Finally, acknowledgement tokens are mostly aligned with 'topic shifts' and are used by participants for acknowledging, agreeing or claiming an understanding of the previous turn.

2.7. Empirical Literature on Responses Tokens

2.7.0 Introduction

Much research on response tokens have been discussed on how listeners retain their status as listeners without taking over the role of “main speaker,”. This is the notion of the response tokens has become general.

2.7.1 Early works

To begin with Fries (1952), he looks at listener responses in telephone calls. Fries’ list of items included “yes,” vocalizations such as “unh” and “hunh,” and lexical items such as “I see” and “good” (Fries, 1952, p. 49). Yngve’s (1970) well-known article on “getting a word in edgewise” introduced the notion of “back channel,” which has informed many subsequent studies. Yngve investigated responses such as “uh-huh,” “yes,” “okay,” and brief comments (e.g., “Oh, I can believe it”). Yngve called this “behavior in the back channel” (p. 574), but what has been included within back-channel behavior (as opposed to turns that assume the speaker role) in subsequent research varies considerably from study to study.

Duncan (1974) expanded the scope of back-channel responses from vocalizations and “yeah” to embrace items such as “right” and “I see,” sentence completions, requests for clarification, brief restatements, and nodding or shaking the head. Duncan’s list of items shows the broad spectrum of behavior that may be considered relevant to the study of listenership and response and, again, the difficulty in delineating the boundary between back-channel behavior and floor grabbing (e.g., whether a brief clarification request is to be interpreted as the listener assuming the floor, even if only very briefly).

Schegloff (1982) also observed the multifunctioning of response tokens such as “yeah”: They not only mark acknowledgment and confirm understanding but may also

express agreement, and in this way, social action is coordinated and fine-tuned on several levels simultaneously, one of the main arguments of this article. He also suggested that repetitive use of a response token by the same listener over an extended stretch of talk could run the risk of being interpreted as a sign of boredom or inattention; to guard against this, listeners typically vary their responses. However, as is shown later, repeated tokens in close sequence may also be plausibly interpreted as signaling an enthusiastic or encouraging response, and it is only in the local context that the affective consequences can be resolved. Other possible affective functions may also be performed by response tokens (e.g., sarcasm, surprise, and disgust), any of which may be interpreted in particular contexts where repetitive use occurs. However, the data drawn on in this article support the view that listeners have a range of items available for response and that they do generally vary their use of such tokens. The data also suggest, in line with general descriptions of phatic and relational communication, that speakers prefer convergence and agreement.

Öreström (1983), using a 50,000-word sample of the London–Lund spoken corpus, noted paralinguistic features of back-channel behavior such as degree of overlap with the main speaker’s turn and loudness. He too extended the scope of items beyond vocalizations such as “*aha*” and “*mmm*” to include lexical response tokens such as “quite” and “good,” which are discussed in this article.

Stubbe (1998) referred to “supportive verbal feedback” in her title and compared listener behavior in English conversation of two groups of indigenous New Zealanders. She considered clusters of minimal responses and distinguished between neutral response tokens (e.g., “mm” and “uhuh”) and supportive tokens (e.g., “oh, gosh”). Stubbe’s goal is cross-cultural understanding, and the rejection of negative evaluations and stereotyping that can arise from differences in types of listener feedback across

different cultural communities. Holmes and Stubbe (1997) further introduced a gender dimension to the study of variation in listener behavior, but such concerns remain beyond the scope of this article.

2.7.2 Current works

The few early works on response token considered in this work begins with Rizwan-ul and Alia (2015) who made a study on ‘When The Tokens Talk: IRF and The Position of Acknowledgement Tokens in Teacher-Student Talk-In-Interaction’ The aim of this paper was to study how the ‘acknowledgement tokens’ are placed within the framework of teacher-nominated IRF sequences and to explore the recognizable pattern of ‘okay’ responses within an IRF framework. The findings suggest an interesting distribution of these tokens, especially with the classifications of ‘strong acknowledgement tokens’ (such as: yeah or okay) and ‘passive reciprocity tokens’ (such as: uhm, uhhm, or hmm). Moreover, the findings suggest that the usage of ‘ok’ responses invites further talk as well as an imminent closure. The findings of this study could be used to create a learner-friendly and inclusive classroom.

Yang (2013) did investigation into the response token dui dui dui (right right right) in Mandarin conversation from a multimodal perspective. Two types of dui dui dui were found in the data. The first type serves to display recipient’s affiliation with the speaker’s immediate previous assertion. The second type serves as a confirmation to the recipient’s collaborative completion of the speaker’s turn. The study aims to show how dui dui dui are produced and interpreted by participants as two different actions in different sequential environments. In addition, it describes the prosodic form of each type of dui dui dui and body movements accompanying the production of dui dui dui. These findings suggest that each type of dui dui dui is produced with specific prosodic and visual features and has different interactional functions. This study contributes to

our understanding of the multimodal nature of the production of the response tokens in Mandarin conversation.

Lambertz (2011) investigates the uses of *yea* and *mm* as backchannel utterances to show engaged listenership. The research focused on the different backchannelling functions that can be identified and locations at which they occur. Data was analyzed from Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English (GCSAusE) and some data some data collected by the researcher. The key findings suggest that *yea* and *mm* can function as continuers, alignment, and agreement tokens but *mm* seems to be weaker in respect to conversational engagement. Also, the function of *yea* and *mm* can be ambiguous.

Cutrone (2010), investigated into the dimensions of backchannel behavior which are described include the following: frequency, variability, discourse contexts favoring backchannels, and form and function. Some of the potential issues that Japanese L2 English learners may experience in acquiring these skills are explored. This general description of native English speakers' backchannel behavior appears to be only one of the pieces in an emerging framework for analyzing the efficacy of backchannel behavior across cultures. It is suggested that future efficacy models should also involve measuring other interrelated aspects of backchannel behavior such as learners' intercultural communicative competence, willingness to communicate, and development of conversational micro-skills and repair strategies.

2.8 Conclusion

It is clear from the review that the term response token has been dealt with by many researchers with an exception of linguists in Ghana. The session has shown how a close examination of one interactional device response token, can shed light on cross-linguistic differences in communicative strategies. The review further sheds light on definition of response tokens, categories, functions and importance. Some examples

from Asante Twi data were given to bring out to fore that, responses token were used by the Asante's too. From the review one would realize that listener behaviors are multifunctional and adaptable. In the context of feedback in conversations, the response tokens *hm hm*, *saa*, *ah*, *aha* and the answer particle *yoo* have not only general functions, but also specific functions, depending on different interaction concepts.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter generally deals with the methodology adopted in conducting a qualitative research work. As it is normal with every qualitative research work, various procedures, techniques and tools were used. It takes a look at approaches which include research design, population for the study, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, administration of research instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis plan and analytical framework.

3.1 Research Design

Kusi (2012) posits that “the credibility of findings and conclusions extensively depends on the quality of research design (p.43). The section is to justify the means by which the study was obtained and will help in giving it purpose and strength as it will be fruitful and analytical. The researcher considered four techniques of research in Conversation Analysis (CA) defined by Heritage (1984b) as:

1. the use of interviewing techniques in which the verbal formulations of subjects are treated as an appropriate substitute for the observation of actual behavior;
2. the use of observational methods in which data are recorded through field notes or with pre-coded schedules;
3. the use of native intuitions as a means of inventing examples of interactional behavior;
4. the use of experimental methodologies involving the direction or manipulation of behavior. (Heritage, 1984b, p.236)

Since the researcher used qualitative research method to develop the study and analyzing conversations in this work, the first two techniques classified by Heritage

will be relevant in the present study. The qualitative method was developed in the social sciences to enable researchers study social and cultural phenomena. Reflecting on qualitative research, Cheek (2008, p.761) initially describes 'research design' as 'the way in which a research idea is transformed into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in practice by a researcher or research team'. This motivated the researcher to use qualitative in the sense that, if there is one thing which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is the ability to talk or converse. Qualitative research is an inquiry approach in which the inquirer explores a central phenomenon, asks participants broad, general questions and collects detailed views of participants in the form of words or images.

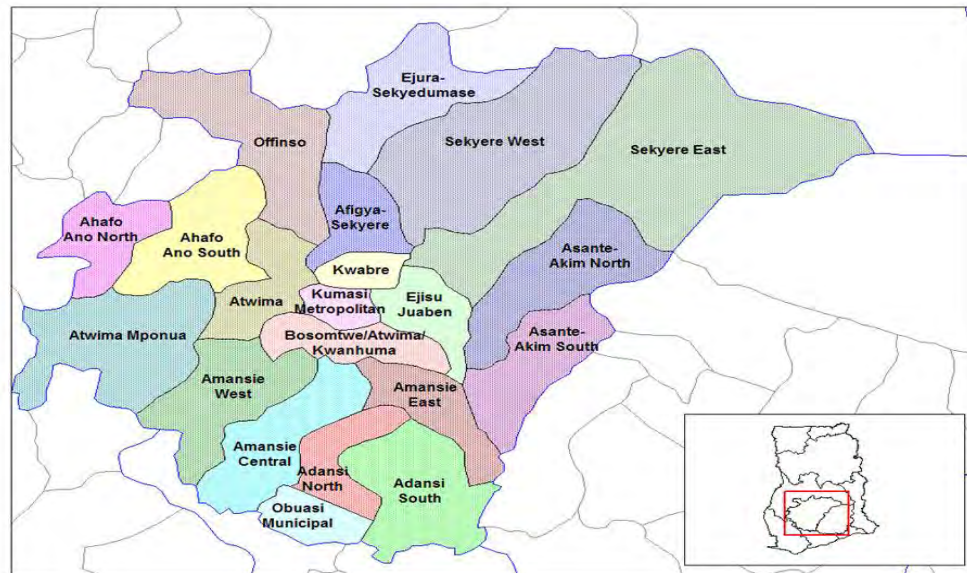
To be able to gather the necessary data, the strategies adapted by the researcher were recording of conversations, interviews soliciting of category, functions and importance people derived from the usage of various response tokens, observations of funerals and other social programmes where people involve in conversations were done. Further, the researcher analyses and codes the data for description and themes, interprets the meaning of the information and drawing on personal reflections and past research and writes the final report that includes personal biases and a flexible structure. (Creswell, 2002, p. 58) All these helped in processing the data and the formulation of conclusions.

3.2 Research Site

The researcher chooses Ashanti region since most of the data for her work will be the Asante Twi language. Ashanti is an administrative region in Ghana centrally located in the middle belt of Ghana. It lies between longitudes 0.15W and 2.25W, and latitudes 5.50N and 7.46N. The region shares boundaries with four of the ten political regions, Brong-Ahafo in the north, Eastern region in the east, Central region in the south

and Western region in the South west. Most of the region's inhabitants are Ashanti people, thus, one of Ghana's major ethnic groups. The diagram Figure 1 shows where the Ashanti kingdom is situated in Ghana.

3.2 Demonstration of Geographical locations of the typical Asante towns



(Figure 1: Adapted from Ghana Web.)

The districts considered are Amansie East, Bosomtwe, Kumasi and Asante Akim. The Amansie East district has towns like Kokofu, Bekwai, Asuminya and others, Bosomtwe district, has Kontanase, Asuoho, Feyiase, Aputuogya, Kumasi has Atonsu, Chirapatre, Suame and others. Finally, Asante Akim has Konongo, Kyekyebiase, Bompata, Asankare and others.

3.3 Population for the Study

Best and Kahn (2003) posit that “any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher”. Leedy (2005) also defines population as a group of people that a researcher made inferences to during the study. The targeted population for this research consisted of people who can speak the Asante Twi language based in Ashanti region. Both speakers and non-native speakers of the language were considered for recordings because of the nature of the topic “A

Pragmatic Analysis of the use of response tokens in Asante Twi”. Meanwhile, a sample of the respondents was used for the interview. Sarantakos (1998) observed that, ‘the technique of normalization is particularly valuable when population characteristics are substantially different, as, male and female or children and adults’. With this background, thirty (30) participants (native/non-native speakers of the respective dialect- Asante Twi) were used for the interview. They included fifteen (15) males and fifteen (15) females of ages ranging from six (6) years and above. I conducted the interviews at different areas considered in this research work. As already stated in this research that conversation is part of humanity, the researcher interviewed people who could involve in meaningful conversations. The total of thirty (30) conversations were recorded for the study. All subjects contributed effectively towards the success of this thesis.

3.4 Sample Technique

Sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, one may fairly generalize the result back to the population from which they were chosen (Trochim, 2006). According to Patton (1990) the quality of the sample affects the quality of the research generalization. This sampling technique is where researcher purposely chooses subjects who in her opinion, are thought to be relevant to the research topic.

Considering the entire size of the population and the time available for the study, convenience and purposeful sampling are considered. That is a sampling plan describing the sampling parameters (participants, settings, events, processes), and this plan should line up with the purposes of the study and should be convenience to the researcher’s target population selected for the purpose of the study. Further, the researcher used this technique because, they meet certain practical criteria that will be

beneficial to her, such as staying in Ashanti region, available at a certain time, easy accessibility, or willingness of respondent to volunteer (Dorneyi, 2007, p. 96).

3.5 Data Collection Procedure and Instrument

The study is based specifically on primary and secondary data collection procedures. The instruments used for the primary data were interviews and observations, while the secondary data the researcher used was diary note taken at social gatherings. The researcher conducted interviews with different categories of people as well as age groups. Those who were in institutions like a school setting; permission was sought from the administration to involve the members of the institution.

Richards (2005) concludes, the researcher in a qualitative project often starts out by treating everything around a topic as potential data. Hence, the researcher prepared notes in a diary on observed funerals and other social activities as well as recorded conversations and radio interviews on how people use various tokens as responses in the language.

3.6 Administration of Research Instrument

The aim, purpose, and scope of the research were explained to the interviewees and some other members involved in the research work. Though some subjects were not informed because, they were not ready to share their private issues to the public. Others when informed, they leave their natural way of conversing and the tokens the researcher needed were not given as wanted. The researcher having these in mind, used interviews, observation and diary notes. The instruments used were chosen because they would help the researcher to unravel the usage of response token in conversation of the Asante Twi language.

3.6.1 Interview

The researcher through interview solicited the knowledge and opinion of respondents on their reasons for giving and using a particular response token. Interviewing is a frequent part of the social life surrounding most of us: We can hear interviews on the radio, watch people being interviewed on television, and we ourselves often participate in interviews of various types either as interviewers or interviewees.

As Miller and Crabtree (1999) point out, the interview genre with its turn-taking conventions and expectations for participant roles, etiquettes, and even linguistic phrases is usually shared cultural knowledge. Response tokens as well deal with the culture of the Asantes' which is how they behave with the use of language in conversation.

Bell (2008, p. 186) argues that “selecting a large number of interviewees for a qualitative research will result in a superficial perspective”. Hence, the researcher used thirty (30) respondents in doing the interview. The interview was conducted in the following places; Bosomtwe - Aputuogya, Amansie East – Bekwai and Kumasi at Central Market and Chirapatre.

The rationale for interviewing the respondents was to find out the reasons why respondents use response tokens in a particular way. Time allocation for each interviewee was inbetween six to ten minutes, within six months.

The researcher decided to use semi-structured interview guide because O’Leary (2005, cited in Kusi, 2012, p. 187) and Seidu (2006) argue that semi-structured interviews are flexible and start with some defined questions, which pursue more conversational style that enables interviewees to answer questions naturally in order of a conversation. The researcher also started with a few defined questions but came back to pursue any interesting tangents that developed (pg164).

3.6.1.2 Video-recorded data

Due to the innovations of information technology, researchers can deal with both audio and visual data for conversations that response tokens is part. Heath (1997) noted the importance of video-recorded in CA as follows:

The possibility of capturing aspects of the audible and visible elements of “in situation” human conduct as it arises within its natural habitats provides researchers with unprecedented access to social actions and activities. With ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, the technology opens up the possibility of developing a sociology which takes the visual, material as well as vocal aspects of human interaction seriously, as a topic for investigation and analysis. (Heath, 1997, pp. 278-280)

The researcher videoed some of the interviewees and recorded some conversations in the processes. This method helped the researcher to unearth the problems with the use of response tokens of Asante Twi speakers.

3.6.2 Observation

Observations were done at social programmes such as marriage ceremonies, funeral and church services. On occasions of these kinds, the researcher wrote some of the response tokens used in her dairy. Recordings of such programmes gave the researcher large document on recording for one hour - thirty minutes which their transcribing were difficult and boring. Hence, the researcher resulted to dairy entries or notes.

3.6.3 Dairy Entries

In view of the above reason, the researcher used signal-contingent designs under dairy entries. This data collection tool relies on some signaling device such as a pager, a programmed wristwatch or a phone call (Dornyei, 2007, p. 354) to prompt participants

to provide diary reports. In this research, the researcher relied on funeral posters, radio announcement and invitation cards to attend the programmes. This research design is often used when one is studying momentary experiences of people. It requires participants to provide a self-report each time a specific event occurs. Response tokens of this kind were recorded at different programmes the researcher had opportunity to attend. Some examples are provided in table 5.

Table 5: Occasional Response tokens

Occasion	Response Tokens	English Gloss
Church Service	enyɛ hɔ ɔɔɔɔɔɔɔ	Amenɔɔɔɔɔ
	sɔfo woabene	you're powerful, Pastor
	sɔfo hyɛ nkɔm	Pastor prophesy
	bɔ hɔ bio	Say it again
	sɔfo ka ne nyinaa	Pastor say them all
Funeral	Awurade na abue so	God has revealed it.
	w'ano tene /w'ano awo	you're eloquent
	saa pɛpɛɛpɛ	that's how it is
	mo ne yɔ	well done
	w'ani so wɔ adeɛ	you're good in selection
Marriage	ɛyɛ fɛ	it's splendid happy marriage
	aware sɔ ɔɔ	you're highly interested
	ɛyɛ wo dɛ yei	this is the best
	papa no no	

3.7. Data transcription

The first step in data analysis is to transform the recordings into a textual form. After organising the data, the researcher transcribed the recorded conversations, videos and field notes written during observations into a textual form. Creswell (2008) notes that “transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data” (p.246).

This is a time-consuming process particularly when the text also needs to be translated from Twi to English language like the situation in the present study. In the process, 'tape analysis' and partial transcriptions were adopted due to time factor. However, some aspects of the recordings were not captured. The most obvious area of loss is the nonverbal aspects of the original conversational situation such as the body language of the respondents (for example, facial expressions, gestures, or eye-movement)-given that 'actions speak louder than words', written transcriptions are seriously impoverished in this respect (Dornyei, 2007, p247). The researcher took photographs that portray some of the visual conversational tokens and the rest were narrated in descriptive sense.

3.7.1 Coding Strategy and Annotation

There are three types of coding strategies to add information to the text of a corpus: mark-up, annotation and metadata (Adolphs 2006, McEnery et al. 2006). The present study adopted Annotation in addition to Clancy et al's abbreviations used in the literature. Annotation is analytical information, which is added to a text (Adolphs 2006) including POS (Part of Speech) tags and parsing. POS tags are mainly used for analyzing grammatical analysis as shown in the example from CANCODE below:

And [Cand] the [Dthe] security [Nsg] guard [Nsg] was [VFpastBe]
walking [VPpres] about [T] checking [VPpres] everything [Pind] was
[VFpastBe] okay [Jbas] and [Cand] and [Canc] then...

Key: [Jbas] adjective, base; [Nsg] noun, singular; [Cand] conjunction, coordinating;
[Dthe] definite article; [VFpastBe] verb, finite, past; [VPpres] verb, particle, present;
[Pind] pronoun, indefinite. (Adolphs, 2006, p.24).

The first annotation in the example above [Cand], for instance, expresses the “conjunction and”, and the second annotation [Dthe] identifies the “definite article the”.

Each word is grammatically annotated in the sample above or Clancy et al's abbreviation in order to extract words by grammatical forms from the conversations in the data. Few additions and subtractions would be done in this study.

3.8 Analytic framework

The present study will base its analytic framework upon Clancy *et al.*'s (1996) and M. McCarthy (2003) analytic models but change their quantitative comparison of listener response used in Australian and Chinese conversations and also Talking Back: "Small" Interactional Response Tokens in Everyday Conversation of the British and American corpora to qualitative in Pragmatic analysis of response tokens in Asante Twi. Their models set out a well-defined classification of response tokens and an operationalization of Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson's (1974) concept of 'transition-relevance places'. The former is useful to determine the frequency of response tokens usage and the preference of some type(s) of response tokens over the other(s); and the latter helps specify in a more systematic and empirically viable way the location in which response tokens tend to be placed and negative RT. Finally, Gardner's (2002) analysis on vocalisation is compared with that of Asante Twi.

But a number of modifications and elaborations will be made in line with the theoretical stance of this present study. In addition, the data were then analysed according to a number of grammatical and interactional coding categories. Here I outlined those relevant to the issues I wish to discuss in this thesis.

3.8.1 Data Analysis

The researcher employed focus-by-question approach to analyze the data. The strategy required the researcher to organize the data across all respondents or interviewees and look for inconsistencies and differences. The interest of the researcher is on how individual research participants or groups responded to each of the questions

within the schedule (Kusi, 2012). Later in the analysis, the researcher explored the links and relations between responses. According to Owu-Ewie, (2011, p. 76) data could be presented in “narrative logic”. The researcher narrated the responses of the interviewees and transcribed the recordings on conversations taken at different districts. The similarities or differences among the recordings as well as interviewees responses prompted a close examination of the criteria each one of them used to base her judgment on.

The findings and conclusions of this research are based on the data collected from the spontaneous conversations, to allow the study of diverse dialogues and rich interactions, and to have a broader view of the time and place of response tokens. Various factors such as the participant’s gender, dialect, age, relative or non-relative relationship, educational level, also topics of conversations and setting were not considered and controlled in this work. Though, the researcher was aware of the possible effects of those factors on response tokens. The goal in this study was to find significant patterns (categories, functions and benefits) revealed by the interactants rather than searching for linguistics rules or socio-cultural factors. So, the prime focus of the research is the internal organization and linguistics cues in inviting response tokens, a very little attention is paid to paralinguistic factors.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents detailed analysis and interpretation of data collated through interviews, observations, and general interactions between the researcher and participants. The analysis suggests that response tokens in the data can be grouped into three categories. These are types, structure, and functions. With regard to types, there are verbal and non-verbal response tokens. In terms of structure, response tokens are words, phrases and clauses. With respect to functions, the analysis showed that speakers can use them as backchannels, reactive expressions, agreement, and alignment. The analysis also showed that response tokens are significant in that they grease conversations and make interlocutors feel good. In addition, the study extends our understanding of devices listeners can deploy to resist, sidestep, or curtail the constraints imposed by primary speakers, thereby providing an insight into how communicative goals are discerned, responded to, and negotiated in social interaction. Based on the analysis, it is concluded that failing to use response tokens or using inappropriate ones will end the conversation.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the types of response tokens. Here, there are two; verbal and non-verbal. Verbal response tokens include minimal, non-minimal, cluster and laughter. The non-verbal response tokens are head movements, hand gestures, feet movement, facial expression and silence. The second section presents a discussion of the structure of response tokens. This part discusses the constituents of the response tokens. Thus, single words, phrases and clauses. Further, the third section discusses the functions of the various response tokens

while the fourth and final section discusses the importance of response tokens to the Asantes.

4.1 Types of Response Tokens in Asante

The types of response tokens in Asante Twi are simplified in Table 6. This presents the two broad types and further, put them in their sub-divisions with examples. The details of the breakdown are discussed in sections 4.1.1 - 4.1.3.

Table 6: Types of Response Tokens

Type	Sub-type	Example
Verbal	Minimal	vocalization Single words
	Non-minimal	Phrases Clauses
	Cluster	Words or non- words plus phrases or clauses
	Laughter	Audible sounds
Nonverbal	Head movements	Nods, and Other head shakes
	Hand Gestures	All hand gestures
	Feet movement	All feet movements
	Facial expression	Any facial expression
	Silence	Any break before response

4.1.1 Verbal Response tokens

Verbal response tokens found in the data include minimal, non-minimal, cluster and laughter. The minimal comprises vocalizations (those without lexical meanings) such as “*oow howw, ahah, hmm, buei*’ and single words like *Koraa* [nothing] and *onua* [brother]”. The excerpt 4.1.1.1 presents the minimal response tokens in conversation.

4.1.1.1 Minimal response tokens

Excerpt 4.1.1.1 describes the use of minimal response tokens found in the data.

Excerpt 4.1.1.1 Divorce

1	w: ɔye sɔfo ba wɔ asɔre no mu.	He is the minister's son in the church
2	p: mhm	mhm
3	P: Deen na sɔfo kaeɛ?	What did the minister say?
4	w: sɔfo kaa sɛ.	The minister said that
5	...barima yi deɛ me pɛ sɛ wo ne no war	he wanted me to marry him.
6	p; ei	ei
7	w: ... Na ɔse ɔbarima yi repɛ ɔbaa aware na	He wanted a woman to marry but
8	... me mma no nware baabiara gyi sɛ Adwira.	I would not allow him to marry
9	p: yoo	okay

Excerpt 4.1.1.1 is a conversation that occurred on radio between a woman and a presenter. It talks about a lady whose husband intends to divorce her. The woman starts the conversation by telling the presenter about the beginning of their relationship. The presenter listens and uses response tokens in lines 2, *mhm*, 6 *ei*, and line 9 *yoo*, all of which are minimal response tokens. The first 2 are vocalizations and the last one is a single word.

4.1.1.2 Non- Minimal Response tokens

The non-minimal response tokens in the data include phrases, like *ahisem* [folly issues]’ *bɔdamfoɔ* [mad man] and clauses like ‘*yerekukuru mpo ni*’ ‘as we are lifting and seeing this’ and ‘*mo ne yɔ*’ [well-done] which is an elliptical sentence because one can also say that (*mo ne deɛ wo ayɔ*). The excerpt 4.1.1.2 describes the minimal response tokens in a conversation.

Excerpt 4.1.1.2 funeral information to extended family member

1 A: eno, kafra, Agya kafra,	mother have my sympathy/ father have my sympathy
2 B: yɛdaase	We thank you.
3 A: Yiee, Abena Asaa abre,	Yiee, Abena Asaa has suffered
4 ...moahwe mo papa, moayaadeɛ.	well done for the care you gave to your father.
5 ... onyankopɔn no ama no awu bɔkɔɔ.	God has made him had to die a peaceful death
6 B: maame ɛɛ Awurade adom	mother it is by the grace of God
7 A: Asaa kunu yi sɛ na wɔte sɛn, mennim oo	Asaa's husband's condition, I didn't know
8 B: aduowɔtwe oo	eighty years oo

The conversation occurred at Kyekyebiase Asante Akyem north, it was on funeral announcement. The non-minimal response tokens in the conversation are, 'yɛdaase' [we thank you] in line 2, 'maame ɛɛ Awurade adom', [mother, it is by the grace of God] in line 6. And 'aduowɔtwe oo' [eighty oo]. The response tokens in lines 2 and 6 are clauses, and in line 8 is a phrase.

4.1.1.3 Cluster Response Tokens

The cluster is a combination of non-word and a single word with a phrase or a clause. An example found in excerpt 4.1.1.3.

Excerpt 4.1.1.3 Kumasi theft issue.

1 B: me nua, gyae ho asem ka,	My sister, let's stop this issue
2 ... aa ɛɛ ahometesɛm	aah, this is disheartening
3 A: wɔde wɔn nsa wurawura a n'ase nyinaa	they fingered her private parts
4 ... wɔse wakɔ wia Ghana sika sidi apem.	They said she has
5 ... ɔworɔɔ ne ho ntaadeɛ nyinaa maa no	stolen thousand Ghana cedis
... kaa ne bɔdis nkoaa.	everything of hers was removed
6 B; mmhm, ɛkaa ne deɛn, ne bɔdis nkoaa?	Mmhm, it was left with what, brazier

The conversation occurred at central market. It is about a lady who stole thousand Ghana cedis at Adum Kumasi and was beaten. The cluster response tokens found in the conversation are *aah εε ahometesem* (line 2) and *mmhm, ekaa ne deen, ne bodies nkoa* (line 6)? The two lines are both combinations of vocalization and a clause.

4.1.1.4 Laughter

Laughter is found to be a response token in the data. Existing literature on laughter show that laughter can have a function as backchannel (Maynard, 1986; Tottie, 1991; Gardner, 2001). Different kinds of laughter also convey information in an ongoing conversation. The following conversation illustrates laughter as a response token.

Excerpt 4.1.1.4 laughter

1 A: Adwoa asane aware	Adwoa is married again
2 B: ..L.. na ayeforɔ na wo kɔεε no?	(laughs) is her wedding the on you attended?
3 A: Kwasiada no	last Sunday
4 ... na εnyε agorɔ	it wasn't a joke
5 B: ..L.. yɛda awurade ase oo	(laughs) we thank God

This conversation occurred at central market between two ladies. The first lady is informing her friend of a widow who has married again. Speaker B in lines 3 and 5 used laughter as response tokens before adding non-minimal response tokens *yɛda awurade ase oo* to it.

4.1.2 Nonverbal Response Tokens

Conversational gestures are nonverbal response tokens (Knight et al. 2006). Listeners use them as tokens to support the conversational flow. From Table 4.1, the non-verbal response tokens found in the data were head movements, hand gestures, feet movement, facial expression and silence.

4.1.2.1 Head Movements

Any action of the head to facilitate the flow of talk is termed head movement. Head movement has three divisional types: the first one is head nod (*ɔbo ne tiri nko*). Thus, when the conversation is ongoing the listener will nod as a sign of listening to what the primary speaker is saying. The second one is vertical headshake (*ɔbo ne tiri nko ntemntem so*). This type of response token is used when the listener indicates that s/he agrees with what the partner is saying. The final one is the horizontal headshake (*ɔnyam ne tiri*). This type is used when the listener does not agree at all to what the primary speaker is saying or when the listener feels the topic for conversation is a pathetic one. Figure 2 and Extract 4.1.2.1 are illustrations of some of the head movements.

4.1.2.1 Demonstration of Head Movement

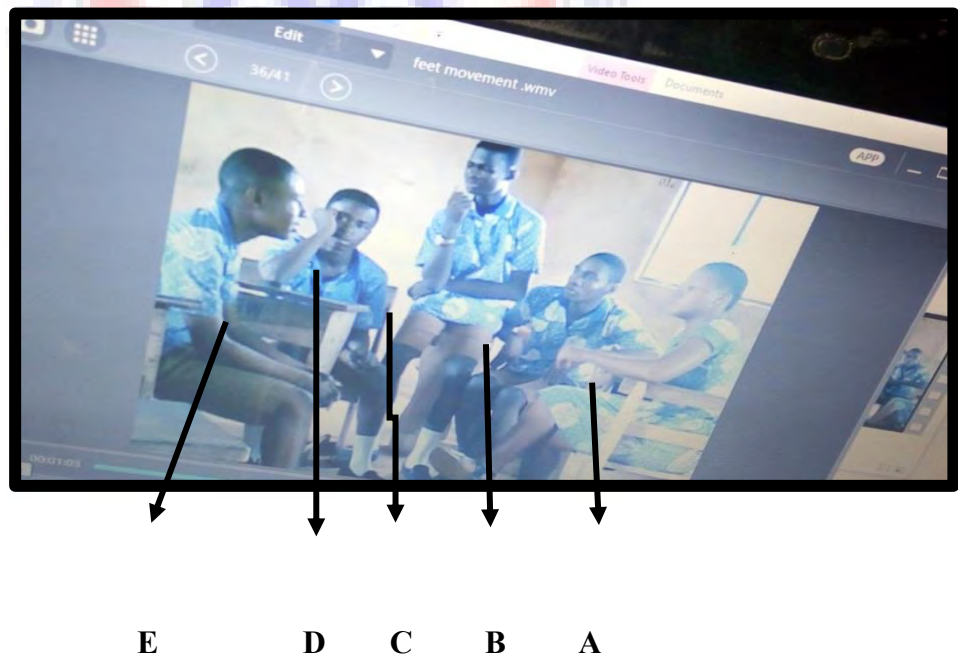


Figure 2: Students discussing a football match Main speaker 2nd from right (B)

Figure 2 demonstrates some types of head movements in the data. Participant B is the primary speaker and the interlocutors are listening to the conversation using both

horizontal and vertical head shakes and a nod as response tokens to facilitate the flow of the conversation.

4.1.2.2 Hand Gestures

Another important non-verbal token is the hand gesture. Listeners used different types of hand gestures. Among them are holding their waist when listening (*ɔsɔ wɔn sisi*) and scratching their hands (*ɔtiti wɔn nsem*) as a sign of responding to their speakers. Others wave their hands or place their hands on their heads. All these types were found in the data.

4.1.2.2 Demonstration of Hand Gesture



Figure 3: Students demonstrating different kind of hands gestures in conversation

Figure 3 demonstrates students showing different kinds of hand gestures upon hearing the death of one of their friends. Speaker D places her hand on her stomach, E on his head, B and C on their mouth and A is the primary speaker. The conversation in excerpt 4.1.2.2.1 illustrates an example.

Extract 4.1.2.2.1 Women at Church Site

A: maame no kaa nso wonntie	the woman has been saying it but he doesn't mind her
B; aden, na ne kunu no nom nsa anaa?	Why, was her husband a drunkard
A: onom mpo a onnidi	when he drinks, he doesn't even eat
B; aa se wahunu FEg)	aa, have you seen (places finger under the eye: FEg)

Excerpt 4.1.2.2.1 occurred at the church premises, when it was reported of the death of a woman's husband. The interlocutors were discussing the situation under which the man died. Participant A is the primary speaker and a friend to the widow. In line 1, the widow tried persuading her husband to stop his behavior of not eating at home, but it was on deaf ears. This prompted participant B in line 2 to ask '*aden, na ne kunu no nom nsa anaa?*' [Why, was her husband a drunkard?] then A in line 3 confirmed by adding that he does not even eat after drinking. In the final line B pointed her finger under her eye by saying '*aa se wahunu (FEg)*' [aa, have you seen].

4.1.2.3 Feet Movement

In addition, feet movement (*ɔde ne nan twitwiri fam anaa bobɔ fam*) is also used as response tokens. This type is in three forms; 1. scratch the foot on the ground while listening. 2. tapping the feet as the conversation is going on and 3. strongly hitting the ground with the feet upon hearing something displeasing. Figure 4, illustrates an example

4.1.2.3 Demonstration of Feet Movement



Figure 4: Presents students listening to conversation with different kinds of feet movements

Figure 4 presents students in conversation using different foot movements as response tokens to help the conversation to flow. D is tapping his foot on the ground, B is shaking the foot and A has put the right foot on the left as a response tokens to facilitate the ongoing talk.

4.1.2.4 Facial expressions

Facial expressions found in data are frowns, straight face and smiles (*wanyinyan wɔn anim ne wɔnwenwen*). The respondents frown, wear straight face or smile as a response token showing their interest or indifference of the matter in conversation. They either frown their face to show disapproval or smile to show interest.

4.1.2.4 Demonstration of Facial Expression

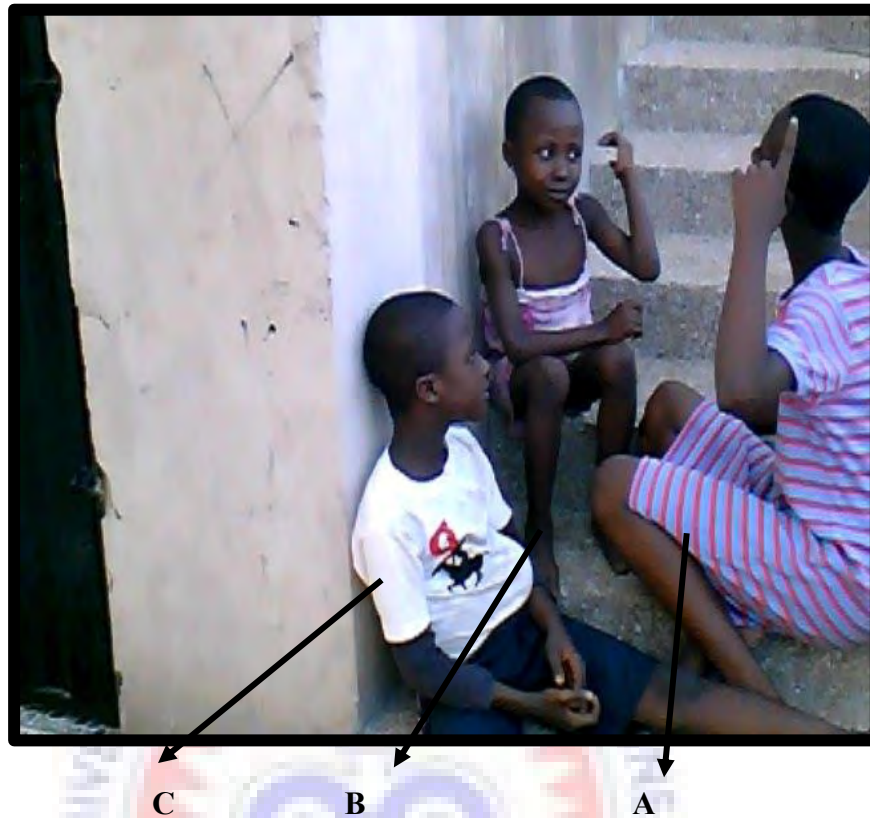


Figure 5: Shows children's facial expressions (FE) in responding to conversations
From Figure 5, B's facial expression shows she has remembered something interesting and therefore wearing a smiley face while C has a straight face.

4.1.2.5 Silence : Demonstration



(Figure 6: Students use Silence as response token)

Silence (*koomye*) is another type of nonverbal response token found in the data. In Figure 6, A, C and D demonstrate silence as they were listening to the football report. In this response token, respondents were very quiet listening to what E was saying. Silence can have so many interpretations. It could be that the interlocutor is fully touched by the conversation focusing all his attention on it or he does not want to give comment due to disapproval.

4.1.3 Summary

This section focused on the discussion of the types of response tokens found in the data. The discussion revealed that the types consist of verbal and nonverbal response tokens. It was also revealed that the verbal tokens have three divisions; minimal, non-minimal and cluster while the nonverbal has five divisions, head movements, hand gestures, foot movements, facial expressions and silence. According to Knight *et al.* (2006), O'Keeffe and Adolphs (2008) and O'Keeffe *et al.* (2007), response tokens are analyzed in three types as 1) Minimal response tokens: Short utterances or non-word vocalizations (*aane, mm*), 2) Non-minimal response tokens: Adverbs and adjectives or short phrases/minimal clauses (*eye, ampa, saa na etee?*) and 3) Clustering of response tokens: Both minimal and non-minimal response tokens can occur in “pairs or clusters” (*eye mm, nokware, koom*) (O'Keeffe *et al.*, 2007, pp.143-144). In addition, interlocutors' bodily conducts such as hand movements facial expressions, feet movements and other nonverbal response tokens are also types of response tokens used to demonstrate their understanding of the ongoing conversations.

4.2 Structure of response tokens

This section discusses the structure of response tokens in Twi. The structures identified in the data are single items such as [bio - again, *aane - yoo, koraa* - nothing, *daabi- no*], phrases such as [*ka bi* – give your contribution, *atwatia*] and clauses like

[‘eye wo de yie’, saa na otee, saa, atwatia]. Table 7 gives the summary of the raw data and their total percentages.

Table 7: Structure of Twi Response Tokens

Structure of Tokens	Frequency	Percentage of Data
Single words: reduplication, Religious, and negative	20	2%
Phrases	350	35%
Clauses	630	63%
Total	1000	100%

Table 7 presents the response tokens found in the data. From the table, single word represents 2%, phrases make up 35% and clauses constitute 63%. Few single words were identified in the data due to the structure of Asante Twi single words. The next discussion will analyze the structures that are found in the data.

4.2.1 Single Words

This section deals with only the single word used as response tokens. In the language, some single words are reduplicated and have negative sense. Both structures would be considered. The single items that have single meaning is presented in excerpt 4.1.2 while the others are presented in 4.1.2.1 and 4.1.2.2 respectively.

Excerpt 4.2.1 Househelp Problem

1 A: na Isaac se enye onoa, na oreye n'aduane na	Isaac said he wasn't at fault, he was cooking
2 ...Yaa koo se orekoo no mu,	Yaa went to give him a help
3 ... na onkaa hwee nkyere no.	there hasn't been any proposal.
4 N: asem oo	Problem oo
5...na Isaac no onwaree	Is Isaac not married?
6 A: daabi ho,	No, ho
7 N: daabi? aden?	No? Why?
8 A: na m'aka aka aka yi, nti wontee anaa?	Haven't you heard of what I have been saying severally?
9 N; ampa?	Truly?

The conversation in excerpt 4.2.1 is between two people who were discussing a problem of a househelp who was disturbing them. From the conversation, the response tokens used are in line 4, *asem oo* [issue] but in this context it means (problem oo). In line 7, *daabi* and *aden?* [no and why?], in line 9, we have *ampa?* truly? All these response tokens are single words with single ideas.

In addition, a single word gives different meanings due to prosodic features. In the data, one single word was used in different responses. Excerpt 4.1.2.1 illustrates.

Excerpt 4.2.1.1 Court Case

1 A: obaa no (Abena) ode ne ho abo sewaa	Abenaa is now Anty,s friend
2 B: saá	is that so?
3 A: makoto won se woredi ho nkommoo	I've heard them discussing the issue
4 B: yoo	realization
5 A: ose obetu mo afiri fie ho	he said he wil eject you from the house
6 B; ampá	is it true?

The conversation is about a court case. After the death of B's husband, the man's family wants to eject the widow (B) from the man's house. The niece of the dead man sent the case to court and the one B trusted her most has joined a member of the opposing family. In line 2, B used *sàà* [is that so?] low tone of doubt. Indicating she does not believe the lady will join her ante's group. Further, line 4, B again used *yòò* which is a low tone which show she had then believed what the lady said. Finally, *àmpá* in 6 is with both low and high tone to signal that the husbands family cannot eject her from the house. The next discussion is on negative-single words.

4.2.1.2 Negative Response Tokens

In the data some of the response tokens had either negative meaning or positive meanings. The excerpt 4.2.1.2 presents some of the single words used as negative response tokens.

Excerpt 4.2.1.2 lawyer

B: <i>ɔpanin asem wɔyi deɛ me ne no beko</i>	father, as for this issue I will fight him.
A: <i>daabi, daabi, daabi, enhia</i>	no, no, no, it is not necessary
A: <i>adɛn na wommɔ wo maame amanɛɛ</i>	why not you tell your mother
B: <i>daabi, gyai</i>	no, stop it

The conversation occurred at high court six (6) in Kumasi, where the successor of the interlocutor testified against the defendant. Participant B in line 1 proposed to go and fight with the successor. But the lawyer disagreed by saying *daabi, daabi, daabi, enhia* [no, no, no, it is not necessary] in line 2. No is a negative response tokens, and it has been repeated for emphasis. Then in line 3, A further advised the main speaker to inform her mother. In line 4, B insisted and confirmed her stand by using *daabi gyai*.

The words *gyia* and *daabi* have been used in negative sense as response tokens. Another interesting one found in the data is reduplicated response tokens discussed in 4.1.2.3.

4.2.1.3 Reduplicated Response Tokens

Some single words in the data were either repeated in whole or part of it repeated for emphasis and used as response tokens. Those response tokens were termed as reduplicated response tokens. Excerpt 4.1.2.3 illustrates an example of negative response tokens.

Excerpt 4.2.1.3 Market

1 Y: maakaa nso ɔse ɔrentua	I've said it over, but she says she wouldn't pay
2 L: amparaampara, deɛ ɛwɔ he	Truly truly, which one of them
3 Y: kɔkɔ no	the fair one
4 L: kɔkɔkɔ no,	the very fair one,
5 ...nti kapre korakora?	even a penny hasn't she pay?

The conversation occurred at the central market between two ladies, Y and L. Speaker Y is telling L of her problem with one of her debtors. In line 1, participant Y is complaining that the debtor does not want to pay the money upon the number of times she has asked for it. In line 2, L used *amparapara* which is a reduplication to find out if participant Y really mean what she is saying. In line 3, Y told her of the person and for emphasis sake, L used another reduplicated word by saying *kɔkɔkɔ no* just for emphasis and also asked if even a penny has not been paid by using another reduplicated word *korakora* literally meaning nothing.

4.2.1.4 Religious response tokens

Religious response tokens are words referring to a deity that the Asantes use as response tokens. Many of such tokens were found in the data as single words, phrases and clauses. This section only captures the single words; the others would be discussed under their respective sub – headings. Excerpt 4.2.1.4 illustrates an example.

Excerpt 4.2.1.4 Stolen Money

1 A: makaa ɔse ɛnye nokwere	I've said it over but she denies
2 B: Awurade Nyankopɔn	Lord God Almighty
3 A: menhunu deɛ menyɛ	I don't know what to do
4 B: akonnodi, ayanta, atoa	akonnodi, ayanta, atoa

The conversation is between two ladies, A and B. A has misplaced her money and those she suspected denied that they have not taken it. In line 2, B uses *Awurade Nyankopɔn* which is the name of the lord. A in line 3 said she doesn't know what to do, B in line 4 proposed other gods to consult by using *akonnodi, ayanta and atoa* that all were fetish priest she could consult.

4.2.2 Phrases

In addition to the single words, phrases can also be used as response tokens.

Excerpt 4.2.2 illustrates this structure.

Excerpt 4.2.2 Househelp Problem 2

1 N: akwadaa ketewa	small girl
2 A: ɔnsua, wawie JHS	she is not small, she has completed JHS
3 N: saa akwadaa korokorawa yi	this cute girl
4 A: mete asem ho o.	I have a problem o
5 N: nɔnnan kɔsi nɔnnson anwumere	four up to seven in the evening
6 A: aaane o, na ɔbaɛ no	yes o, when she came
7 ...na mese yaa wokɔɔ ɛhene?	I asked, Yaa where did you go?
8 ...Na ɔse gaai no hɔ na mekɔɔɛɛ	she replied, 'I went to the guy'.

Excerpt 4.2.2 is a continuation of the house help issues in Excerpt 4.2.1. The interlocutor was surprised of the features of the house help, so she responded by way

of description. The phrases occurred in lines 1, 3, and 5. In line 1, the phrase is *akwadaa ketewa*. *Akwadaa* [child] *ketewa* [little]. Hence, the phrase head is *akwadaa* [child] and *ketewa* [little] modifiers the child.

4.2.2.1 Religious response tokens

Some phrases were found as religious response token in the data. Excerpt 4.2.2.1 illustrates an example.

Excerpt 4.2.2.1 Beating

1 A: wabɔ na aso mu ama no apae	he gave him an injured slap
2 B: Awurade, oow	lord, oh
3 A; akyengyee na εbae o	it was misunderstanding that occurred o
4 B: awurade, mmarima yi	lord these men

From the Excerpt 4.2.2.1 the interlocutors were witnessing a fight between two gentlemen. One slapped the other for him to get injured with blood oozing from the cut. In line 1, A is telling B of the slap. B in line 2 used religious response tokens *Awurade, oow* is not a complete thought hence it is a phrase and with the presence of *Awurade* [Lord] it is classified as religious response token. Again, in line 4, B repeated the same thing with *mmarima yi*, as in *Awurade, mmarima yi*, this is also a phrase. All the *Awurade* used are modifying the phrase heads *oow* and *mmarima*.

4.2.2.2 Negative Response Tokens

Some phrases in the data were negative response tokens. Excerpt 4.2.2.3 illustrates an example.

Excerpt 4.2.2.2 Family Problems

1 A: ɔde no tenaa ase	he sat her down
2 ... na ɔse ɔnya kunu a ɔnware	and told her that she can marry another man
3 B: nsem hunu	folly issues

In Excerpt 4.2.2.2, participant A is reporting of a friend's family problem to B. In line 3, when B heard the issue she used *nsem hunu* which is a phrase and a negative response tokens.

4.2.3 Clauses

This section discusses clauses as response tokens. Excerpt 4.2.3 demonstrates the clause structure. The researcher put the clause response tokens in their constituent

Excerpt 4.2.3 House Help Problem 3

1 A: ɔde kyensene no besii ho,	she brought the bowl,
2 ... afei me kɔɔ aboutene ho no na ɔkɔ	when I went outside she had left
3 ... m'ahunu baabi a afinaa no faee.	I didn't see where this lady passed
4 N; Enti ɔkɔɔ ehene fa?	So, where did she go?
5 A: menim? Afei mese,	do I know? Then I said,
6 ... Awurade Nyankopɔn edeeben asem ni?	Lord God what is the matter?
7 N: hmm, eyɛ asem oo	hmm, this is a problem oo.
8 A: na metenaa ha twen akwaadaa yi twenee no,	I sat here waited and waited
8 ... maa no bɔɔ seven o'clock,	till seven o'clock (7.pm)

The excerpt is a continuation of the house help problem in 4.2.1. In this present excerpt (problem 3), the response tokens appeared in only number 4 and 7. In number 4, the respondent used a clause which is an interrogative [*nti ɔkɔɔ ehene fa?*] this

structure contains [ɔ] subject - she *ehene* - adjunct [where], *kɔɔ* [went] verb – *enti* [so] – adverb intensifier. Also in seven (7), she starts with a vocalization *hmm* and then the clause *eye* [it is] *asem* [case] in this context a problem, *oo* this just shows how she is touched with the issue at stake. In addition, some single words could be clause for instance *saa* meaning [is that so?] and *sen* [how much is it?].

4.2.3.1 Negative Response Tokens

Again, some clauses found in the data were negative in sense and as such they were termed as negative response tokens. Excerpt 4.1.2.2.2 illustrates this.

Excerpt 4.2.3.1 Clause as Negative Response Tokens

1 <i>menni obiara a ɔreboa me</i>	I don't have anybody to help me.
2 B: <i>kai, nti na wote suban tantan sei ho?</i>	Is that the reason of staying with this bad behavior?
3 A: <i>dee eha me koraa,</i>	What worries me is
4 ... <i>m'afisem nyinaa gu abɔntene</i>	my personal issues being broadcasted.
B: <i>nsem hunu ara kwa</i>	All these are folly issues.
C: <i>daabi, daabi daabi me nua ntena ho.</i>	No, no, no my sister do not stay with his
B; <i>enye anika nti fa no ko</i>	it is not interesting, so send her

The conversation is about a problem of house help. The house help was already in fornication before coming to stay with the woman. The woman is telling a friend of her problems and sufferings she is passing through at home. From the conversation, participant A in line 1, presented her case by using negative response tokens: *menni obiara a ɔreboa me* [I don't have anybody to help me]. These sayings helped the interlocutors to give their response applying the other negative tokens (McCarthy,

2000). Participant B in line 2 gave the response tokens ‘*kai, nti na wote suban tantan sei ho?*’ *kai* is a negative single word response token. In the same line 2, B used *suban tantan* which is a phrase. Again, B in line 5, used ‘*nsem hunu ara kwa*’ [All these are folly issues.]. In line 6, C used ‘*daabi, daabi, daabi me nua ntena ho*’. [No, no, no, is repeated] (Strives, 2004). In line 7, B finally used, ‘*enye anika nti fa no ko*’ which is also a clause.

4.2.3.2 Religious response tokens

The next discussion is on clauses used as religious tokens in excerpt 4.2.3.2 among the Asantes.

Excerpt 4.2.3.2 Sympathizing with a friend

1 A: <i>osomaa se ommefre me, mekoe na oboo</i>	He sent for me, when I went he informed
2 ... <i>me amanee se ne kunu no afiri mu.</i>	me that her husband is dead.
3 B: <i>Awurade nngye no</i>	lord should save her
4 A: <i>ose oda nyanee a okoo</i>	she said when she woke up
5 ... <i>ne kunu dan mu no, na wawu.</i>	She went to his husband room and found him dead
6 B: <i>oowu, Awurade nhunu ne mmoboo.</i>	Oh, lord should have mercy

The extract 4.2.3.2 presents a conversation between two women who were talking about their friend who has lost her husband. In line 1, speaker A is the direct relation of the widow. She presented the case to B. Participant B in line 3 used ‘*Awurade nngye no*’ which is a clause. B further said *oowu* which adds emphasis to the sympathy expressed in line 6. Again, in line 6, B used ‘*Awurade nhunu ne mmoboo*’ which is a clause.

4.2.4 Summary

The section discussed the structure of response tokens. The analysis revealed that some response tokens in Asante Twi are single words having a composition of compounding or prefixes and suffixes. Again, there were phrases with heads and their modifiers. Finally, there were clauses which are elliptical while some consisted of subject- verb – object or subject – verb – adjunct. Fellego (1995), in a study in the context of American English minimal responses, concludes that 94.6% occur at phrase boundaries and that they function both grammatically and socially. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) state that “unit-types of response tokens for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions...in talk” (Sacks *et al.*, pg.702). The units are response tokens, as Sacks (1995) describes are “grammatical but not sententially grammatical, that is, they are grammatical non-sentences, e.g., phrases and clauses”. Some of these words and expressions are the clause *eye asem oo*, or the phrase *fitafita no*.

4.3 Functions of Response Tokens

Functions of verbal response tokens were investigated based on Clancy *et al* (1996) and O’Keeffe & Adolphs (2008) in relation to the data from speakers of Asante Twi. The various response tokens were grouped according to the functions they performed in the data. This following section presents the functions in conversations. Vivid description of each function is discussed in line with the data.

4.3.1. Backchannels

A backchannel is defined by Clancy *et al.* (1996) as “a non-lexical vocalic form, which serves as a ‘continuer’ display of interest, or claim of understanding” (O’Keeffe & Adolphs 2008, p. 84). The present study considers non-lexical vocalic form and

single words as backchannels. Consider Excerpt 4.3.1, a conversation that occurred at a wedding.

Excerpt 4.3.1 At a Wedding

1 A: to wo bo ase na ye no yie	Take your time and do it well
2 B: eye wo de yie	It interests you so much.
3 A: waa0	waa0
4 B: mmhmm	mmhmm

The two speakers in extract 4.3.1 (A and B) who were giving their tokens to facilitate the wedding's progress. Lines 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all response tokens but those which can be considered under this discussion are lines 3&4. They are both vocalizations which function as agreement or showing of satisfaction for the bridegroom's job done and a sign of encouragement to motivate the bridegroom for the job he has done. Also, it is used as an overlapping utterance in order to show interlocutor's interest in the topic and to signal the speaker to keep going (Felleg, 1995). Besides, head nods and vertical head shakes also function as backchannels as well as agreement tokens (Kendon, 2004). Other functions of the head movements are attentive signal and signal confirmation. Figure 7 demonstrates some head movements.

4.3.1 Demonstration of Head Nod

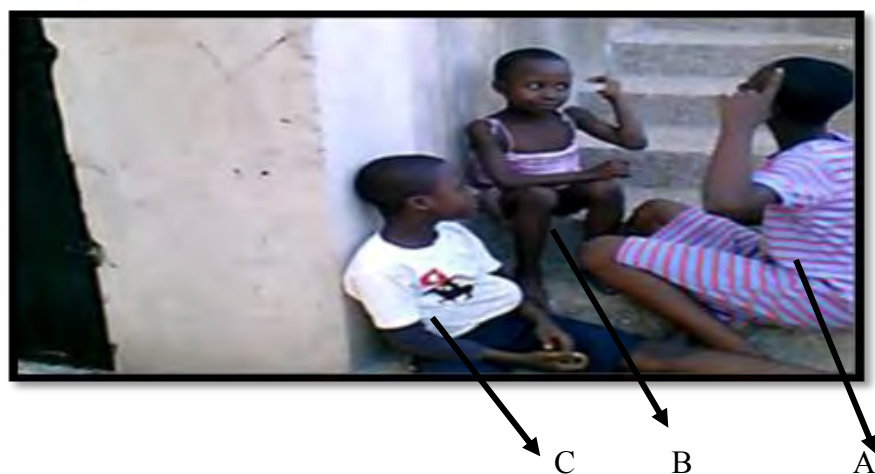


Figure 7 head-nodding of children in conversation: A, B, & C

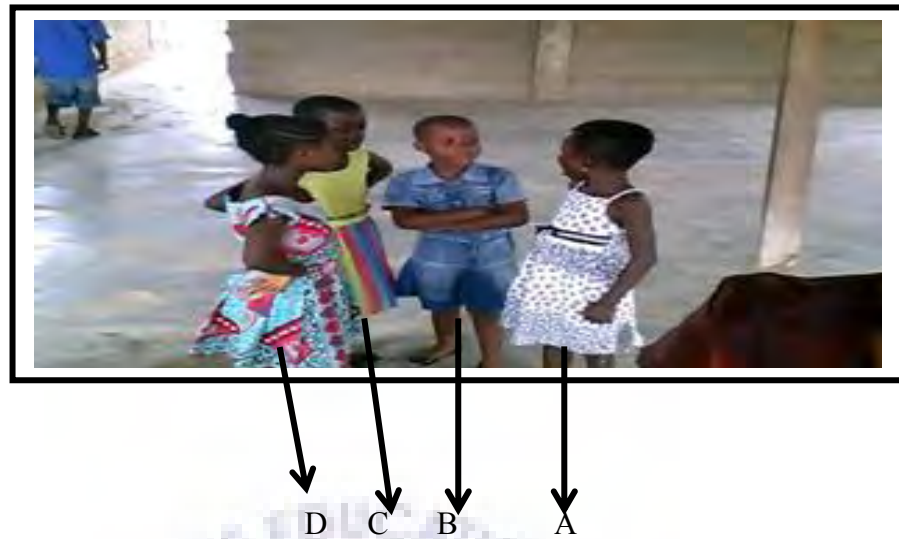
The conversation in Figure 7 is the conversation the children were engaged in. It shows some functions of head movements.

Extract 4.3.1.1 Head Movements

1 A: yɛn sir se, se wo pɛ sɛ wodi 1st a,	our teacher said that if you want to be first
2 ... agye se woba classes	in class, you need to attend extra classes
3 B: ɔbo ne tiri nko	head nod (HN)
4 A: nti yɛn nyinaa kɔ classes no bi	So all of us are part of the classes
5 C: ɔyam ne ti	head shake (horizontal)
6 C: yɛn dee yɛn tikya kaeɛ no, ebinom ankɔ	when our teacher said it, some did not attend
7 A: aa nti na ɛda no na ɔreboro mo no?	is that the reason he canned some of you?
8 C: ɔbo ne ti nko ntemntem so	head shake (vertical)(VHS)
9 B: ne tikya amo wɔn oo	His teacher did not beat them oo

In excerpt 4.3.1.1 and Figure 7, it is observed that three different types of head movements from the participants in conversation are identified. The primary speaker is A and the two other listeners are B the little girl and C the boy. The extract below gives some part of their conversation. All the children involved in nonverbal response tokens to offer the primary speaker the opportunity to flow. In line 3, when the primary speaker told her friends of her teacher's motive of the person who could be first in class, B *bo ne tiri nko* nods her head as a sign of affiliation (Yang 2013). In the Asantes' culture head nod expresses positive valence. Its occurrence alone provides the speaker with an opportunity to flow while the secondary speaker produces affiliation (Streeck, 1993). The other head movement in lines in line 8, *ɔbo ne ti nko ntemntem so* is also positive for the flow of the conversation. But line 5 would be discussed later. Likewise, the hand position of the hand gesture can also serve as a backchannel in conversation. The picture in Figure 8 shows a conversation among some children at church.

4.3.1.1. Hand Gesture of Children in Conversation



(Figure 8 hand gesture of children's service pupils)

In the picture, figure 8, the three ladies (A, B, C) are listening to the girl in dotted white dress D. A&B have positioned their hands at their waist level indicating surprise of what is being said. C has folded her hands on her chest showing amazement. All the three are showing a function of continuer or alignment. There are other functions the hand gesture can play which would be demonstrated later in the work.

4.3.1.2 Collaborative Finishes (CF)

A Collaborative finish is defined as an utterance produced by the non-primary speaker to finish a previous speaker's utterance (Clancy *et al.*, 1996, p. 360). Collaborative sentence construction in conversation has been extensively researched by Lerner (1989, 1991 & 1996). O'keeffe and Adolph (2008) call it convergence. It was observed in the data that apart from helping in shifts, this response token often occurs in closings because they allow conversations to come to a collaborative end. Besides, they are produced to show "understanding of common knowledge or known information" (O'Keeffe, 2006, p. 118). Listeners produce these tokens to show agreement or alignment, or simply to converge opinions or topics relating to the

conversation. These response tokens also help to facilitate the negotiation of the topic collaboratively, so that it can either be shifted or changed. Collaborative Finishes are also known as acknowledgement tokens (Gardner, 2001), and are typically characterized by a falling intonation contour (Gardner, 2001). Extract 4.3.1.2 shows some of the functions of Collaborative Finishers in Asante.

Extract 4.3.1.2 Awaresɛm

1 A: asem yi ka ayɛ ka na,	This issue is very difficult to mention
2 ...papa yi yere agya ne hɔ	the man's wife left him
...[akɔtena Tɛtɛrɛm.]	to stay at Teterem.
3 B: wagya ne hɔ akɔtena Tɛtɛrɛm?	left him to stay at Teterem.
4 A: na [n'adidie mu mpo ayɛ den.]	His feeding has become difficult.
5 B: adidie mu mpo eyɛ den	his feeding was difficult to come by
6 ... m̀m̀	m̀m̀

The conversation in Excerpt 4.3.1.2 is based on two ladies who were gossiping on a trauma a man passed through before his death. In Excerpt 4.3.1.2, the bold-marked areas are collaborative finishers. In lines 2 and 4, B's responses show a kind of understanding of common knowledge or known information to what A is saying. In addition, she completed A's first and second statements '*agya ne hɔ abɛtena Tɛtɛrɛm*' and '*adidie mu mpo eyɛ den*' signal alignment (Galoto and Fagyal, 2006). Again, it is also used to show that the listener is actively listening and contributing to the conversation. Furthermore, when interlocutors use collaborative finishes with speakers, they show an interactional bonding or closeness between themselves, thereby helping them to maintain good relations. Finally, Lerner and Takagi (1999, p.56) note that a speaker takes the "co-produced utterance" as the actual completion of the utterance.

4.3.1.3 Reactive Expression (RE)

A reactive expression is defined by Clancy *et al.* (1996) as “a short non-floor-taking lexical phrase or word” that a non-primary speaker produces in response to the primary speaker’s talk (p. 359). The present study discusses reactive expressions as 1 non-lexical forms which were used as assessment and 2 lexical phrases which begin a full turn. They are those response tokens which are used by listeners to show their level of affective involvement in the content of the message. Listeners use these responses to show their expression of genuine emotions, surprise, shock, horror, sympathy, and empathy at what the speaker is saying without taking the floor from his/her primary speaker.

Extract 4.3.1.3

1 D1: hei krakye krakye	Hei young man
2 ...ma me nhye woanim ha bi.	allow me to go before you
3 D2: <i>enna me se firihɔ</i> ,	I said leave your follies
4 <i>wobeyɛ den ahyɛ ha?</i>	how would you be here?
5 B: <i>ei</i> (ɔsere)	Ei [laughs]
6 D1: <i>ɔse ennee fa kwan no nyinaa</i>	Then take the whole road
7 B: <i>oowu, aden na ne bo afu anaa?</i>	Oowu, why was he annoyed?

From Excerpt 4.3.1.3, the interviewee narrated one of his driving experiences to the interviewer. The responses given by D2 in lines 3&4: *enna me se firi hɔ*, [I said leave your follies] ‘*wobeyɛ den ahyɛ ha?* [how would you be here?]

 show that he was not interested in what had transpired between them, hence, he reacted emotionally by insulting him. In line 6, D1 responded by telling D2 to take the whole road even if he dies. As B was listening to the narration, he gives the tokens in line 5 *ei*, and laughs

[sere], and in 7 [oowu, aden na ne bo afu anaa?] this shows that both reacted emotionally to what was going on and B gave those tokens including interrogatives and laughter to indicate that he has realized their emotional effect in the conversation.

In the same way, some hand gestures could be used as reactive expressions. In the Asante culture, hand placed on the stomach tapping it means the listener has heard bad news of death, accident, or painful issue. These kind of gestures are solely for sad information. The listener uses the following token as a sign of affiliation and reactive expressions which indicate that the listener is supporting the speaker emotionally. In Figure 9, the students in conversation reacted as a result of an accident of one them had.

4.3.1.3 Hand Gesture as Reactive Expression

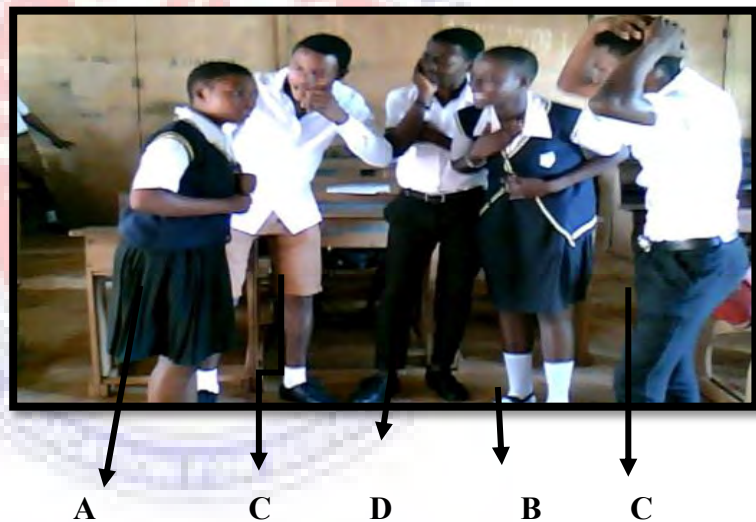


Figure 9: the picture demonstrates some of the hand gestures of students in conversation

The picture in Figure 9 was taken from the video data where students were discussing an accident one of their friends had on his way to the sports stadium. From the picture student C has responded to the conversation by putting his hand on his head (Enfield, 2009). This shows how painful he feels by hearing the accident. The following functions were identified; display of understanding the content, support toward the

speaker's judgment, agreement, and showing strong emotional response (Ishida, 2006; Tsuchiya, 2010).

4.3.1.4 Resumptive openers

According to Clancy *et al* (1996), a resumptive opener shares the same form with a backchannel; however, it signals the speaker to develop his conversation. Thus, it is followed by a full response whereas a backchannel is free standing. In the data, resumptive openers were used to help the speaker to know the listener's emotional stance. These include showing his /her surprise or amazement. It also occurs with a statement in response to new information. Also, it suggests disaffiliation or topic curtailment and acts as a marker of transition to a new topic. In addition, it introduces a question to probe for more information as well as used before dispreferred responses to discourage continuation. The conversation in Extract 4.3.1.4 shows some of these functions.

Extract 4.3.1.4 Radio Conversation

1 P2: edii nna sen ansa na worepene?	How long did it take before you accepted?
2 R: ebeye bosomi baako	It was about one month
3 P1: ahaa yoo bosomi.	Ahaa, okay a month
4 P2: na mofaa nkyerɛkyerɛ mu?	did you pass through teachings (marriage)?
5 R: ɔde yen faa nkyerɛkyerɛ mu	we had marriage teaching for us.
6 P2: yoo, na wo haw ne sen?	okay, what is your problem?
7 R1: me kunu se ɔregyae me.	My husband says he is divorcing me.
9 P1: oowu, aden woaye no den.	Ooh, what have you done to him?

The conversation is about a lady whose husband intended to divorce her. She decided to send the issue to a radio station for public views. In the conversation P2 enquired

from R1 the number of years it took before she accepted the proposal of her husband, P1 gave a token in line 3 *ahaa, yoo bosomi*. [Ahaa, okay a month] the token used is a resumptive opener. Speaker P2 further asked if they passed through marriage counseling in line 4. The question led speaker R to give new information that was not part of what she had wanted to give. So this suggests disaffiliation or topic curtailment and acts as a marker of transition to a new topic. Speaker P2 thus takes her back to the topic by asking her the actual problem for bringing her to the studio in line 6. Her responses in line 7 gave P1 the chance to produce the response token in line 8 '*oow, aden woaye no den?*' meaning [oh, what have you done to him.]. Speaker P1 was touched upon hearing what R said and that was the reason of using the vocalization *oow*, which is an resumptive with a probing question. From the conversation, simple intensification is one way by which listeners can apparently boost the interactional effect of their responses without necessarily making a challenge for the floor.

4.3.1.5 Information Receipt (IR)

This token helps mark points in the interaction where adequate information has been received. Further, it can impose a boundary in the conversation and can signal a point of topic transition or closure, and they can be indicative of harmony in the chat. They have more organizational functions because they are backchannels. In the examples found in the data, they seemed to serve a global discourse marking function (Lenk, 1998) within the orientation stage of a narrative. These response tokens are used as “self-imposed” pragmatic markers at which the storyteller marks a boundary where the narrative can begin. That is when the contingent details are clear for the participants.

In excerpt 4.3.1.5, it is clear that when the storyteller uses an information receipt token to continue with the story, the listener signals that she is not ready and still needs more details (or at least confirmation of an assumed piece information).

Excerpt 4.3.1.5 Deception in Marriage

1 A: ɔse ɔne ɔbaa bi awo nan	he said he has four children with another woman
2 B: ah ɔbaa foforo?	ah, different woman?
3 A: me nua masui paa	I wept bitterly
4 B: woressu ama no ayɛ no dɛ	you're weeping for him to be happy.
5 A `m̀m, nkwaɗaa nan oo	`m̀m, four children oo
5 B: m̀mh, fa ma Awurade	`m̀mh give it to the Lord

In excerpt 4.3.1.5, the primary speaker was talking about her husband who had an issue with another woman without her knowledge. In line 1 the storyteller (A) informs her interlocutor about the number of children her husband has with another woman. In the prior talk, participant A used information receipt token at the point where she puts all the contingent details in place to continue with the story, hence, the information she provided. The listener (B) signals that she is not ready and still needs more details hence, she asked a question in line 2, *ah ɔbaa foforo?* [ah, different woman?]. It further leads to a topic change in line 3: *me nua masui paa* [I wept bitterly]. In line 4, A applied the self-imposed pragmatic marker *mm* marked by a low tone. Finally, there is a harmonic closure when in line 6, B makes a remark *m̀mh, fa ma Awurade* [*mmh, give it to the Lord*].

Drummond and Hopper (1993) suggest uh huh and mm hm may signal that the listener is about to shift from the recipient role and may in fact be projecting forward to a speaking turn. Again, *mm* is generally seen as a weaker response token and shows

less involvement in an ongoing talk. According to Gardner (2001) “*mm...* is weak and minimal, arguably the most minimal of all vocalizations in conversation. *Mm* can be seen as a non-intrusive, reserved response to a delicate topic” (p. 32).

4.3.1.6 Disagreement

In the data, the researcher found some tokens functioning as disagreement. All the negative response tokens for both verbal and non-verbal performed this function. They show disapproval of the ongoing conversation. Sometimes, it marks junctures in the talk where the listener does not agree to the ongoing talk but can come to a collaborative end. In addition, it provides an economical way of reinforcing affective convergence without extended syntactic implications but at the same time clearly contributing a great deal to the conversation. Some facial expressions also show disagreement. For instance, a frown face is done by the listener to show displeasure or sometimes concentration by winking the brow (Eggins & Slade, 1997). The last one is the straight face – this kind of expression is used in a conversation such that the secondary speaker manages not to laugh or smile in an amusing situation. Moreover, it can show that the listener is in doubt of some issues raised in the conversation. Thus, prompting the speaker that something is not sincere, trustworthy, or that something is not true, likely, or genuine in the ongoing conversation. Figure 10 demonstrates some facial expressions of children in conversation.

4.3.1.6 Demonstration of Children in Conversation

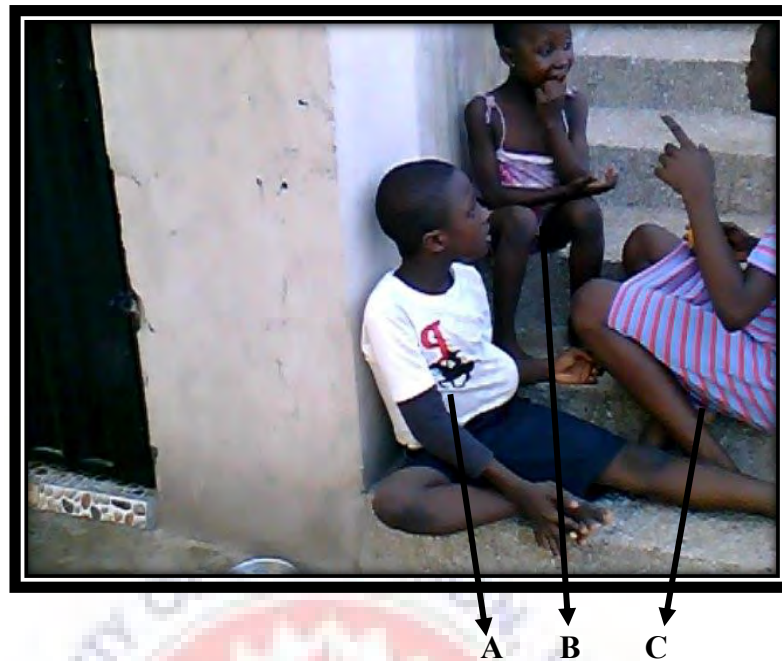


Figure 10 children in conversation showing different kinds of facial expression

In Figure.10, A's straight face shows that he is surprised of what is going on in the conversation, he did not interrupt the primary speaker but used his face to show backchanneling. The same applies to B who frowns her face to show displeasure of the issues raised in the conversation. However, C is still going on with whatever she has to tell them

Excerpt 4.3.1.6 Women at Church Site

1 A: maame no akaa nso wonntie	the woman has been saying it but he doesn't mind her
2 B; aden, na ne kunu no nom nsa anaa?	Why, was her husband a drunkard?
3 A: onom mpo a onnidi	when he drinks, he doesn't even eat
4 B; aa se wahunu (FE)	aa, have you seen (places finger under the eye: FE)

This conversation occurred at the church premises, when a report of the death of a woman's husband was announced. The interlocutors were discussing the situation under which the man died. Speaker A, the primary speaker, was very close to the widow. According to line 1, the widow had tried persuading her husband to change his eating behavior. This prompted B in line 2 to ask, '*aden, na ne kunu no nom nsa anaa?*' Then A in line 3 confirmed by adding that he does not even eat after drinking. In the final line B pointed her finger under her eye by saying '*aa se wahunu (FE)*' [aa, have you see] in line 5. This is a sign of recognition and alignment on the part of B who predicted the cause of the death.

4.3.1.7 Discontinuity

The analysis revealed that some response tokens that were used to curtail the conversation. This function is realized when the primary speaker does not fully second the ideas raised by his interlocutor. The interlocutor would use response tokens such as *gyai, daabi, eye tane* and the like to indicate discontinuity. Excerpt 4.3.1.7 illustrates this function.

Excerpt 4.3.1.7 Family Problems

1 A; me dan no deε,	as for my room there is no
2 ... ɔrenkɔ mu	there is no space for her
3 B; gyae deε worekeka no	stop what you are saying
4 A: masem nokware na mereka no	I'm telling the truth
5 B: εye abufu	it is annoying

The conversation occurred at Kumasi between two ladies where one does not want to stay in the same house with her mother. The interlocutor gave the following tokens to stop listening to the conversation. In line 3, '*gyae deε worekeka no*' as a sign

of disagreement which leads to curtailment. In line 5, the interlocutor used the response tokens '*eye abufu*' which is a strong signal to show disapproval. On the side, it has been used to accomplish a recognition on the part of the speaker that the unit of talk to which the interlocutor is responding has been understood but s/he disagrees.

In like manner, some interlocutors used foot movement as disagreement. Listeners have two ways of using the foot as disagreement: scratching the foot on the floor, and strong tap on the floor with the foot to signal disagreement and disapproval. In the same way, silence is also used as a disagreement token. When the primary speaker utters something and the interlocutor sees it as a distort, the interlocutor pauses and gazes or becomes silent for the partner to know that there is a problem of understanding of the information. Sometimes, silence is used when the partner in conversation wants to think further for the right response token to apply. Hence, s/he will start with *e...em*, *mm..mm*, *aa...ah* or will become silent before giving the appropriate response tokens (Sifianou 1997).

4.3.1.8 Enthusiastic signal

These response tokens are used when the listener is showing passionate interest in the conversation or eagerness of knowing something in the conversation. Some of these response tokens are *Yoo yoo yoo* [okay okay okay] and *eye eye eye* [alright alright alright]. Some religious tokens also function the same way. Excerpt 4.3.1.8 presents this function.

Extract 4.3.1.8 Child Sickness

1 A: ehyɛɛ aseɛ na w'adi mfeɛ sen?	How old was she when the sickness started?
2 B: mfeɛ mmeinu	Two years
3 A: ei Awurade nhunu wo mmɔbɔ	Ei, God should have mercy on you
4 B: afei me kunu nenam mmaa so saa ara,	My husband is chasing women
5 na me se mɛbɔ no dua	and I told him that I will curse him.
6 A: oowu Awurade, bɔ no dua	oh lord, cure him

This is a radio conversation which is about a lady whose husband has intended to divorce her because of their sick (epileptic) child. In line 3, when A gets the information of the years the child has suffered from the sickness, she makes a religious remark, '*ei, Awurade nhunu wo mmɔbɔ*'. Again, the primary speaker makes a remark that her husband is chasing another woman so she will curse him. This makes the interlocutor use '*oow Awurade, bɔ no dua*' [oh lord, cure him] in line 6. This is an expression to show empathy. Again, it is a sign of prayer made for the primary speaker. This makes the function convergence and an agreement showing that he shares her pain.

4.3.1.9 Agreement

Another function of response tokens in the data is agreement. Interlocutors used different types of response tokens to show agreement in the data. These are the foot crossing and tapping foot softly on the ground, head nod and vertical head shake, vocalizations, single words, phrases and clauses. These occur where there is a need to converge on an understanding of what is common ground or shared knowledge between participants. The picture in Figure 11 shows the posture of the various foot movements and head nod (Maynard, 1987a, 1993a).

4.3.1.9. Demonstration of Agreement Tokens

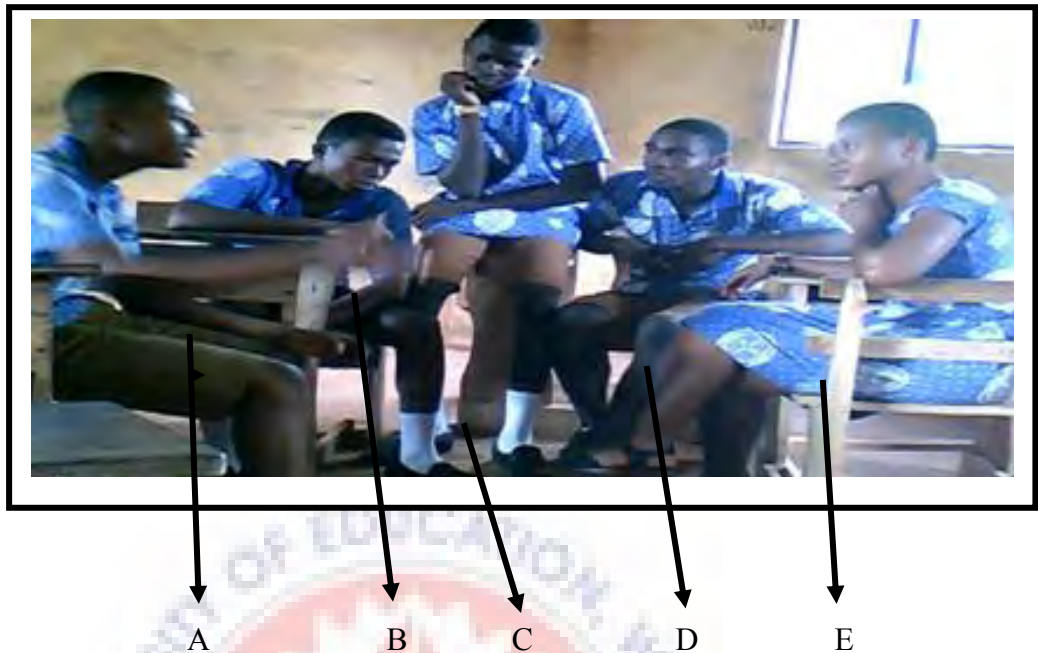


Figure 11 students sitting in various positions showing foot movement in conversation

In figure 11, the students have put their feet in different position while listening to the conversation. The only lady among them has placed her right leg on the left one. This functions as an agreement because of her relaxed position in paying attention to the talk. The rest of the students have diverse way of the feet to respond to the ongoing talk. For instance, the second person from the lady nods his head as an alignment to the talk (Miyata and Nsisisawa, 2007). Excerpt 4.3.1.9 presents further explanation to agreement function in a conversation.

Extract 4.3.1.9 Death

1 A; metee se mmaa bi na	I learnt that some women
2 ...εpea no kromfoɔ kromfoɔ	shouted thief
3 C: ‘..’ (w’aka ne nan ayan so CrF na ɔbɔ ne ti nko)	Crossed feet (CrF) and nod head (NH)
4 A: na kuro no mu foɔ	So the people in the town
5 ...betu boroo no kum no.	came out to beat him to death.
6 B: ‘..’ εye awereho oo TF	it is sad oo (Tapping feet TF)

The talk is on a military captain who lost his life through false information some women gave. Five people were in this conversation. They are coded A, B, C, D and E. In the excerpt, line 3, C was relaxed listening to the information with her feet crossed on the other one. being tapped on the ground slowing, C was listening with the legs crossed and placed on the other one in line 3 and nods alongside with foot movement to show agreement. While the others, some were shaking their legs, others were watching the speaker intently in alignment. The response of B in line 6 above ‘*εye awereho oo*’ shows that she agrees with what A is saying. It would have been a reactive token if she had tapped her foot strongly on the ground as a response token to the information received.

In addition, silence was found as a response token in the data with different functions. The function relevant to agreement is demonstrated in the conversation in Excerpt 4.3.1.9.1.

Extract 4.3.1.9.1 Poor Parenting

1 A: ɔnhwɛ ne yere ne ne mma ...	he doesn't look after his children and wife
2 B: e...em '...' Kofi anaa	e...em '...' is that kofi?
3 C: m...mm '...' ɛyɛ den o	m...mm '...' it's difficult?
4 A: ne yere na amanɛɛ no nyinaa da ne so	all the burden is on his wife.
5 B&C: "... " wɔhwɛ no haa,	they gazed quietly at him
6 ...na wɔrebɔ wɔn tiri nko	and nod their heads

The excerpt 4.3.1.9.1 is on students who were chatting on the cause of their friend's dropout. The coding is ABC for the partners in the conversation. From the conversation, B started his response with a vocalization and pause before coming out with a question, '*kofi anaa?*'. This shows that B wanted clarification on the one talking about, hence, he used a question to seek for the clarification. Further, C align with A by saying *ɛyɛ den oo* [it is difficult oo] thus, it is difficult to pass through such an experience. Finally, both interlocutors applied the pause in line five (5) to support the conversation. This shows that an agreement to the problem has been identified and support is given to the primary speaker. Agyekum (2002) posited that Twi speakers have expressions that are used to indicate communicative silence. In this instance, the listener would say "*me nka m'ano ntomɛ* or *me mua m'anoɛ*" which is also a token to allow the primary speaker continue his conversation. He gave the following examples;

"(1) *Menka hwee/menni hwee ka*, 'I will not utter a word',

(2) *Menni asem biara meka*, 'I have nothing to say',

(3) *Menni ho bi*, 'I have no response or explanation to this',

(4) *Memmaa wo*, 'I will not mind you'

(5) *Memmue m'ano*, 'I will not open my mouth', (pp.33).”

In some instances, however, silence can be seen as evidence of powerlessness (Tannen, 1995; Tsuchiya, 2010). If a listener says *memmue m'ano*, 'I will not open my mouth', then s/he has become so fed up and powerless in the situation that s/he deems it better to keep quiet. Some of the above expressions are also used to avoid expressing anger when the interlocutor feels that any “emotional” utterance would be offensive (Jaworski 1997, p. 391; Egbert, 1996).

4.3.2. Summary

In terms of comparison at the level of function, the data brings to light a number of points. Firstly, we see that a broader range of forms is used by Clancy et al (1996). Nevertheless, this study further looks at negative, reduplication and religious response tokens, which deals with one token repeatedly for emphasis. Conversely, the use of verbal response tokens can be placed both in vocal sounds without lexical meaning and words with meanings. Further, the nonverbal response tokens were discussed according to the five divisions. Thus, head movements, hand gestures, feet movement, facial expression and pause. It was realized that they have the same functions as the verbal response tokens. The head movement for instance, can function as disaffiliation or topic curtailment and act as marker of transition to a new topic. In addition, hand gesture also functions as reactive expression, continuer and displeasure.

Schegloff (1984) posited the importance of gestures in conversation and analyzed the functions of hand gestures in it. According to him, gestures are normally used by speakers in conversation to support their verbal description of an idea, Schegloff (1984, p. 271) reported three types of hand gestures used by non - speakers: (1) to show intention to be a next speaker, (2) “in lieu of talk” which is used by the listener to communicate without interrupting the current speaker, and (3) to interrupt

the current speaker. The issue he raises out is significantly related to turn-taking organization: according to Schegloff, gestures can be used for initiating turn by listeners and taking back a turn from an interrupter, which can be interpreted as gestures functioning as floor seeker. On the contrary, this study is on response tokens but his point 2, “in lieu of talk” which is used by the listener to communicate without interrupting the current speaker’ is very relevant in this topic.

Finally, Kendon (1972) categorizes combinations of hand gestures and head movements in great detail, such as “forearms rotate, fingers extend [extd] and abducted” and “left forearm raised, lowered, palm open”, to match each motion with each speech unit. The same details were found in the present data that listeners use the hand gesture which has a function as reactive expression, alignment, agreement and many others as noted already in the functions, but mostly they are demonstrated with verbal responses.

4.4.0 The importance of the usage of Response Tokens

This section discusses the importance of response tokens to the Asantes. The data on interview is presented according to the respondent’s views on importance of respond tokens. The importance has been discussed from 4.4.1 - 4.4.1- 4

4.4.1. Perk Up Conversational flow

It was discovered in the data that response tokens help perk up the flow of conversation. Most especially, the backchannels under minimal response tokens were seen as important in this area. They are very important in perking up conversations without making it a distort. The conversation in excerpt 4.4.1. presents an interview discussion on this importance.

Excerpt 4.4.1. Talk with a man

1 A: kasa nngyeyeho no, deɛ ɛwɔ he na ɛho hia?	Which of the response tokens is important?
2 B: menemu deɛ no ɛho hia paa	the vocalization is very importance
3 A: aden nti na ɛho hia paa?	why is it very important?
4 ...kyerɛ mu	explain what you've said
5 B: ɛmma wo hunu nipa no adwene	it helps one to know the thoughts of the interlocutor
6 ... bre a nkɔmmɔ no rekɔ so	while the conversation is ongoing.
7 A: m̩m̩m̩	m̩m̩m̩
8 B: mmhm yi ma wohunu nipa no	even m̩m̩m̩ helps one to know the partner's thought
9 B: se ebia, obi a ɔwɔ sika tumi ka se	for instance, a wealthy person may say
10... menni kaprɛ	I don't have a penny
11 m̩m̩	m̩m̩
12 mekɔ edwamu a yento adeɛ	I don't make sale at market
13 m̩m̩	m̩m̩
14 me ne me yere nyinaa	my wife and I
15 m̩m̩	m̩m̩
16 deɛ yeredi koraa ɛden.	It is difficult to get housekeeping 21 money
17 m̩hm̩m̩	m̩hm̩m̩
18 A: medaase	thank you

The excerpt 4.4.1 presents an interview which occurred at Bosomtwe district. The interviewer is A and the interviewee is B. The main idea behind the interview was to find out if response tokens are important to the Asantes. In line 2, B said that the vocalizations are important in conversations than the other. In line 3-6, A asked B to further explain why he said it is very important. In line 7, the interviewer gave a

response token *m'mhm* to signal continuation and affiliation (Barth-Weingarten, 2011) but B based on that to say that *m'mhm* has some importance in conversation with different variations to help the flow of talk. From line 9– 18, B gave a scenario a rich man who claims he has no housekeeping money) demonstrating some different importance of mm. In line 10, the rich man said ‘... *meni kapre*’ and the response tokens is *m'm* meaning “I didn’t hear you well so come again”. Then in line 12, he said ‘*meko edwamu a yento adee*’ another response token that came is *m'm* meaning “okay I have heard you”. In line 14, when the speaker said both he and his wife were not making sales, the listener said *m'm* which signals doubt that the listener doesn’t believe that both of them could have that experience. Finally, in lines 16 - 17, when the speaker said ‘*deɛ yeredi koraa eden*’ the response tokens is *m'h'm'm* meaning it is too much for me to believe you. From the conversation, it is confirmed that vocalization has so many importance (Gardner, 1998, 2001, 2002) among the Asantes that its usage does not bring distortion in conversation.

4.4.1.2 Investigate Issues

In the interview data, the respondents made it clear that silence and facial expressions used as response tokens are very important to the Asantes. This is important because, silence helps interlocutors to go deep into matters. In other words, it helps the primary speaker to investigate well into the issues under discussion if there is a problem.

Further, the facial expression of a partner in conversation is important in the sense that the primary speaker can determine if what he is communicating is understood or not. Moreover, if the listener is silent it may communicate that the primary speaker is wasting his time in talking without being heard. The conversation below presents some importance of response tokens.

Excerpt 4.4.1.2 Marriage Problems

1A: <i>ɔnnoa na aduane nko</i>	He cooks his own food
2B: [,,,] <i>dinn</i>	silent
3 A: <i>aden? woredwene dee?</i>	Why? What are you thinking of?
4 B: <i>oow, meretie</i>	oh, I'm listening
5 ... <i>wopɛ sɛ menyɛ deen?</i>	what do you want me to do?
6 A: <i>ase w,dwene nni nkɔmmɔ no so</i>	it is as if your mind is not on the talk

The conversation is between two women. A is telling B of her marital problems. Her problem was that her husband cooks his own food when he gets drunk. In line 1, A started her complains while she was expecting B to listen to it. But in line 2, B was silent. The Asantes' frown on this behavior which shows that the listener's mind is not on the conversation and it seems useless to him/her. This situation made A asked a question in line 3, but B confirmed he is listening and further asked a question on what A thought she should do. Finally, A made her aware that her behavior shows she was not listening. On the contrary, it is posited in the literature that, people like to be silent but that does not mean that no communication is going on (Agyekum, 2002). This led to the interrogation *aden? woredwene dee?* [Why? What are you thinking of?]. In line 4, she uses *oow, meretie* [oh, I'm listening] and *wopɛ sɛ menyɛ deen?* It seconds (Agyekum, 2002) argument that being silent does not mean that no communication is going on. The discussion indicates that failing to use listener responses or using inappropriate ones is death to a conversation, "likely to make communication less efficient and to leave conversational participants dissatisfied" (Heinz, 2003, p. 1125).

4.4.1.3. Share of Support and Empathy

The researcher found in the data that the Asantes use some response tokens to share their affiliation to their fellows. This is when the interlocutor responds emphatically to a statement made by the primary speaker, which indicate more than simple continuer, understanding, or support. The non-primary speaker uses swearwords that refers to a deity in which people believe in to show their empathy as well as sharing their prayer to support the primary speaker. This is relevant because, the primary speaker feels that there is somebody behind him/her in times of trouble. Excerpt 4.4.1.3 below presents some of these importance.

Extract 4.4.1.3 Information at Women's Fellowship

1 A: ɔsomaɔ sɛ ɔmmɛfrɛ me,	he sent for me
2 ...mekɔɛ na ɔbɔɔ me amanɛɛ sɛ	when I went he informed me that
3 ... ne kunu no afiri mu.	her husband has joined his ancestors
4 B: Awurade	Lord [showing empathy]
5 A: ɔse ɔda nyaneɛ a,	She told me that in the morning
6...ɔkɔɔ ne kunu dan mu no,	when she went to her husband's room
7 ...na wawu.	he was dead.
8 B: ɔɔu, Awurade nhunu ne mmɔbɔ .	Oh, lord should have mercy on her

Excerpt 4.4.1.3, is based on a conversation between two women who were talking about their friend who has lost her husband. The interlocutors are coded A and B. In line 1-3, the primary speaker was telling B how she got the information. In line 4, B used 'Awurade' to express sentiment or affection for A to know that she is feeling the sadness with her. This made A in line 5 -7, continued the chatting with her. B in line 8 used the response tokens B 'ɔɔwu, Awurade nhunu ne mmɔbɔ' [meaning, oh, God should have mercy on her]. In this expression, one could note that B has expressed

empathy and also shared A's pain and sadness with her. The Asantes consider this as most important among their tradition. This does not end here, in the Asantes cultural norms if A is to visit the widow, B needs to follow her and wail with her at the entrance of the widow's house to show sentiments and empathy.

4.4.1.4 Sense of Politeness

Response tokens generate a sense of politeness among interlocutors. That is, showing courtesy as well as the ability to perceive and motivate by moral and ethical principles in the society. Politeness plays a significant role in face-work. An expression or utterance is said to be a polite expression if, in the words of (Yankah, 1991, p. 41) it is "suffused with terms of politeness or courteous addressives". Politeness is socially prescribed and polite speech is used to express either solidarity or deference. For instance, the Asantes frown on collaborative finishers among an adult and child. If collaborative finishers occur between the two, the young one is considered as 'menimmenim' [knowing everything] and it is a sign of disrespect on the part of the child. In addition, the Asantes do not encourage the use of negative response tokens. These are insults *nsemhunu* [folly issues], disagreement *empene* [do not allow], discouraging words *eye tane* [it is not appetizing], *owuo sei fie* [death destroys our homes]. It is not encouraging to use negative response tokens in our daily conversations and when they are used excessively, the user is classified as 'w'ani mmueε [not well trained] or *wompε me yie* [you don't want my progress]. Hence, response tokens are important among the Asantes to direct and teach the young the traditions, cultural norms and ethics of the land. Excerpt 4.4.1.4 presents a conversation on an interview.

Excerpt 4.4.1.4 Politeness and Cultural Norms

1 kasa nngyegyeho deɛ ɛho hia	response tokens are they important
2 B: ɛkwan bɛn so	in what ways
3 A: ɛmma ɔtiefɔɔ no hunu sɛ wonhyɛ ne so	the listener doesn't feel impose
4 B: ɛno nkoa	is that the only one
5 A: n'ani nso gye nkɔmmɔdie no ho	she feels good in the talk
6 ...yɛfa so kyerekyerɛ amamere	we use it to teach our culture
7 ...deɛ ɛsɛsɛ wo yɔ ne deɛ ɛnsɛsɛ woyɛ	the dos and don'ts
8... wɔ ne panin rekasa a ɛsɛsɛ wohwɛ n'anim	when conversing with an adult you need
9 ...na worebɔ wotiri nko	to be silent and nod as a response token.
10 ... ɛmma n'ani ka wanim,	interlocutor feels comfortable
11 ...na wɔntumi mfa hwee nsie	she doesn't hide anything

This excerpt 4.4.1.4 is about an interview conducted at Bekwai. The interviewer is B, and the interviewee is A. In line 3, A said *ɛmma ɔtiefɔɔ no hunu sɛ wonhyɛ ne so* [the listener doesn't feel imposed] thus it is important because it helps the conversation to flow since the interlocutor does not feel imposed. Again, in line 5, '*n'ani nso gye nkɔmmɔdie no ho*' [she feels good in the talk], also, in line 6, A said it helps to teach our cultural values to our offspring. Culture may be described as socially acquired knowledge: that is the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society (Lyons, 1990, p. 302)

That is those which are culturally accepted and those which are not accepted in the society (Yanka, 1991). Yankah posits that in Asante, terms of respect, may be suffixed to requests, to expressions of thanks or gratitude, as well as to greetings and response tokens, in order to signal politeness (p. 56). In line 8-9, speaker A gave

examples like *'wɔ ne panin rekasa a esese wohwe n'anim'* and *'na worebɔ wotiri nko'* respectively. This points to the fact that the elderly is given the utmost respect among the Asantes (Saah, 1986). Further, in line 10, speaker A stated that the listener feels comfortable when response tokens are applied, and in line 11, A said again that, it uncovered every hidden issues non-primary speaker wants to find out. Thus, he said, *'na wɔntumi mfa hwee nsie'*. It helps the listener to unveil every hidden issue through the use of appropriate response tokens. This in addition helps to sustain the topic development as the conversation goes on.

Saah (1986, p. 369) remarks that among the Asantes “a person who uses plain or blunt language instead of euphemisms is regarded as not being able to speak well”. Any interactant who uses plain response tokens is said to be communicatively incompetent. However, Saah (p.367) argues, “a person who is able to decorate his speech with such embellishments as proverbs, metaphors, and idioms is seen in the eyes of the elders as a wise or witty person”. The above assertions point to the fact that verbal and non-verbal artistries are highly cherished among the Asantes.

4.5 Summary

The section discussed importance of response tokens across the data. It was realized that the response tokens are very relevant to the Asantes. The Asantes use them to facilitate the flow of conversations. They further help the adults to teach the youth their cultural values and societal norms. Also, the incorrect use of response tokens can cause difficulty in understanding the content of the talk. Equally important is the fact that response tokens are the major components conversations cannot do away with. They make interlocutors feel part of the conversation, make them happy and help not to impose the talk on interlocutors.

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter discussed and analyzed data on conversations, dairy notes and interviews on both verbal and nonverbal response tokens were considered. They were discussed according to types, structure, functions and importance. It was observed that the Asantes have four types of verbal response Tokens: 1. Minimal, 2. Non-minimal 3. Cluster and laughter and five types of nonverbal response tokens. These are discussed in 4.1, (types) 4.2 (structure) and 4.3 (functions).

In addition, new types of response tokens were identified as discussed in 4.2, reduplication, negative and religious response tokens. The importance of the response tokens was considered and realized that without the response tokens conversation cannot go on. In addition, due to cultural influences some response tokens are not valued much among the Asantes. For instance, the negative response tokens which include insults and bad news, and collaborative finishers which finishes the primary speakers talk with the interlocutor.

In conclusion, the study extends the reader's understanding on devices listeners use to deploy, resist, sidestep, or curtail the constraints imposed by primary speakers, thereby providing an insight into how communicative goals are discerned, responded to, and negotiated in social interaction.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings in agreement with the research questions the study has answered. Based on the findings, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made in relation to the need the research presented.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The arduous concern of the present study was to bring to bear the categories, importance and usage of response tokens in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was initiated with a review of related literature encompassing all areas relating to the effective realization of the set objectives. Sizeable literature in the field of the study was reviewed to ascertain the level of work done and how vital these are to the success of the study.

The study was based specifically on primary and secondary data collection procedures. The instruments used for the primary data were interviews and observations with video recording, while the secondary data was the researcher's diary notes. A variety of corpus-based approaches have been taken in recent linguistic research (Aston & Burnard, 1998; McEnery et al. 2006; Saah, 1986; Tono, 2004; Yankah, 1989a, 1991a, 1991b) and some research in conversation analysis has also been conducted with video-recorded data (Carroll, 2004, Heath, 1997). The researcher conducted interviews with different categories of people as well as age groups. Those who were in institutions like a school setting; permission was sought from the administration to involve the members of the institution.

Objectives of the study were to identify the categories of RTs Asantes use and their importance to the society. In the process of addressing these problems the following research questions were used:

1. what are the categories of response tokens in Asante Twi?
2. what are the importance of the use of response tokens among the Asantes?

5.1.1 The Categories of RTs in Asante Twi

The use of verbal and visual response tokens was investigated qualitatively in reference to the conversational and interview data. It was made clear that we have two main categories of response tokens in Twi: the verbal and visual. They were analyzed according to types, structure and function. The type of verbal components was minimal, non-minimal, cluster and laughter. The minimal in this study was narrowed to only vocalizations and single words such as *ei*, *mm*, *erm*, *mhm*, and *bio*. The non-minimal was phrases and clauses while cluster was both minimal and non-minimal. It was realized that there are many variations in the use of these response tokens. The researcher found in the data that ‘mm’ can have four different meanings (section 4.4.1).

In some existing studies, these sounds are described separately as *mm* and *mhm*, while other transcripts combine and transcribe these two sounds as an expression *mm*. The decision was made to treat these two sounds as two separate response tokens in the current research, adapting to Carter and McCarthy (2006). I also assumed that these two minimal response tokens, *mm* and *mhm*, might have some differences and similarities in their functions in conversation as indicated in Excerpt 4.4.1.

Again, it was observed that the non-minimal as well as the cluster can have different grammatical structures that each could be used as a response tokens. In 4.2, it

was established that the response tokens can have a form of single word, phrase or clause which could be negative, religious or reduplicate response tokens.

This disapproved the existing literature that single items could be considered as minimal response tokens. In Twi, some single items were found to be clauses (see section 4.1.2.2.1).

Researchers in grammar and interaction (Ochs, Schegloff, and Thompson, 1996), interaction-based studies of language (Ford and Wagner, 1996), language structures (Selting and Couper-Kuhlen, 2001), posit that the way in which grammar figures in everyday interaction is fundamentally intertwined with the way in which everyday interaction is organized. Thus, studies in interactional linguistics highlight the significance of grammatical structures as a resource in the production of response tokens and recognition of projected possible completion. Also, Tanaka (2000a) strongly claims: “syntax is a normative system and is not merely a description of how sentences are constructed”. Syntactic organization can thus serve as a critical resource for response tokens.

Further, the researcher found the functions of the nonverbal response tokens to be in line with the verbal RTs. Almost, all the nonverbal RTs were in used aside with the verbal. The demonstrated pictures in the text confirm it. Some existing studies on gestures have also explored functions of gestures in relation to turn-taking structures (Kendon, 1972, 2004; Knight et al., 2006). However, introducing silence as a nonverbal response tokens in this research on gestures is a new direction. Placements of hand gestures HGs, feet movement FE, silence and head movements HMs might be related to particular functions in conversation. In Japanese, vertical head movements (i.e. nodding) are typically considered as strong claim of understanding, emphasis, or affirmation in addition to continuers (Maynard 1997b: 146; See also Kubota 1991).

The verbal functions of response tokens were analyzed according to their thematic responsibilities (purpose they serve) in conversations. These were found in the Asante Twi data and in addition to the existing literature: Negative RT, Reduplicated RT, and Religious RTs.

5.1.2 The importance of the use of Response Tokens among the Asantes

The researcher found out that the Asantes see response tokens as very important ingredient in their day to day interactions. In the data it was released that response tokens perk up conversational flow, meaning, it helps the talk without interruption. Again, it is important to them because it helps them to express their emotional support in conversations. Also, interlocutors use it to investigate issues of the land. Finally, it nurtures their progeny a sense of respect and politeness. Thus, not every response token is accepted to use in public or a child to use when communicating with adults.

There is a discrepancy between the result of this study and that of Clancy et al. (1996) with respect to the distribution of the different types of listener response tokens, the present study did not compare the frequency among the research sites as well as the population of the study. This can be due to both methodological and cultural factors. Methodologically, the two studies differ from each other, in that, where this study adopts large respondents (30) and different definitions for both backchannel and RE (4.3.1 and 4.1.3.3). This definitional difference for reactive expressions and backchannels may account for part of the discrepancy in this respect. Another likely reason may be cultural, the conversational style of the Asantes are not the same as that of the Japanese, Americans and Chinese. Clancy et al (1996) suggest that Chinese listener behavior “is part of a ‘non-coercive cultural orientation’ that places high value on personal autonomy and avoids putting oneself above others” (pp.382-383). Thus,

any two ethnic groups might also exhibit the differential use of conversational strategies (Tannen, 1981a, 1981b, 1984 & 1989).

5.2 Some Future Research Areas

I hope that this study serves as a good reference for other studies in interactional relations in other Ghanaian languages. The following recommendations are made for future research in the area:

1. Future works may have to look at RTs nuanced meaning and functions in sequential context as well as in entire conversations.
2. Occurrences of L1 transfer and multiple identities in interlanguage need to be further explored in order to indicate elements to become a successful intercultural communicator.
3. Studies on the use of RTs in communication media such as messaging and online chatting programme are required.
4. Lecturers of higher institutions should encourage communication students to study the traditional systems of verbal and nonverbal communication, so they would come out as ambassadors to educate others.
5. Cultural festivals should be encouraged by chiefs to help the children come face to face with their cultural assets and heritages as far as verbal and nonverbal RTs are concerned.
6. Further research should investigate whether cultural or gender issues have an effect on how people use response tokens in Asante.
7. In terms of functions and forms of response tokens, collocations between verbal and visual response tokens were not fully explored in the current study. This can be one of the areas to be highlighted for future research. Analyzing the relation between the use of particular response tokens and turn-structural

episodes from the perspectives of intercultural communication is another issue to be highlighted for further research.

5.3 Conclusion

The study is based on pragmatics and its means of carrying meaning through conversations. The meaning includes verbal and nonverbal elements of response tokens and it varies according to the context, to the relationship between utterances, also to many other social factors. According to Knapp and Hall (2002), interaction is generally defined as having both a verbal and nonverbal component. Whereas verbal interaction often refers to the words we use in communicating, nonverbal interaction refers to communication that is produced by some means other than words (facial expressions, body language, or foot movement). Both types have different structures as well as functions. The types functions and structures are fully discussed in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. The importance of the usage of the response tokens is discussed in 4.4.

The researcher sums up by quoting the following linguists on the need of the interlocutor in conversation. Jakobson and Waugh (1979, p. 95) claim, "we speak in order to be heard and need to be heard in order to be understood" (cited in McGregor 1986: xi). Pellowe (1986) argues that listeners have 'intention,' and as a consequence, "they govern the direction of conversation." He also claims, "hearers are more powerful than speakers" (1986, p. 11). The linguist Hinds (1987, p. 143) states, "the person primarily responsible for effective communication is the listener." Having these in mind then the response tokens of the listener is essential in every interaction among the Asantes'.

Finally, this study discussed the types of response tokens, structure, functions and importance. It is observed that their usage is highly relevant in conversations, and even though they may appear trivial, their contribution to the interactive nature of

discourse cannot be ignored. If conversations are to be constructed and understood in a way which communicates meaning, both speakers and listeners have a responsibility to make sure that essential elements such as response tokens, no matter how minimal, are utilized so that fluency can be maintained.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter for Permission

Wesley High School
P.O.Box 80
Bekwai – Ashanti

The Headmistress
Wesley High School
Bekwai - Asanti

Dear Madam,

Permission to use the School Library

I am a final year student of Applied Linguistics in University of Education Winneba and would like to seek your permission to conduct interview at the school's library for barely one month in working days (Monday – Friday). The purpose of this interview is to enable me to investigate in the 'pragmatics use of response tokens in Asante Twi'. The study will share knowledge on the problems some members of the communities have on given response tokens to facilitate the flow of conversation.

There will be two phases of data collection. In the first phase, I will engage some teachers in interview for 10 - 15 minutes. The participants would be engaged during their free periods. In the second phase, I will record students when they are engaged in conversation to capture how they use gestures as response tokens.

During this period, high ethical standards would be maintained to ensure that no harm is caused to any of the participants. I would ensure that any information provided would be confidential by using it only for the purpose of this research. Also, the anonymity of the participants would be protected by ensuring that the recorded information of the research findings do not contain the names of the participants.

The support of your office is very significant if meaningful progress would be made in this study. Therefore, it would be appreciated if permission could be granted to conduct the study in your school. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Nyarko.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Below is the interview guide used by the researcher to solicit respondents' views on types, structure, functions and benefits of response tokens in Asante Twi.

Form/categories

- i. Do Asante Twi speakers use response tokens in conversation?
- ii. What are the categories /forms of response token by the Twi speaker?
- iii. Can you give few examples of response tokens in Twi language?
- iv. When do people use them and why?
- v. Do non-verbal responses serve some value in conversation?
- vi. Okay explain
- vii. How would you categorise laughing in conversation?

Functions

- a) Why do people give response tokens such as “aane, yoo, saa” in conversations?
- b) When do people ask follow –up questions in conversations?
- c) What are follow-up questions meant for?
- d) Do partners in conversations give short statements as response tokens? Why?
- e) Do we attach emotions to our responses in conversations? Give some examples
- f) Would you suggest any function of response token that we have not mentioned in our conversation?

Importance

- i. Is it necessary to use response tokens at all? Yes/No.
- ii. If yes why? If no explain

Appendix C

Sample Translated Conversations

Conversation one (1)

Vocalizations

The conversation is based on President Nkrumah's corpse. There were three people seriously involve in the talk. The participants have been indicated with the alphabet A, B, and C.

Conversation 1

1.A: na ɔda ahwehwɛ funu adaka mu.	He was lying in glass coffin
2.B; oow saa	Oh is that so
3.C: na ɛyɛ ahwehwɛ adaka	It was glass coffin
4...na wɔde nnuro awowɔ mpanɛɛ	and they have injected him with medications.
5.B: aah nti na waammɔn	Aah, so he wouldn't smell.
6.A; ahaa saa pɛpɛɛɛ.	ahaa exactly that.
7... nti Rawlings baɛɛ no	So when Rawling came
8... na ɔfaa funu no de kɔɔ Nkraan.	and picked the corpse to Accra
9.C: mmhm a ɔde rekɔ yɛ deɛn?	Mmhm what was he going to use it for

In Asante Twi, the vocalization mmh, mm, mhm, ɛɛm and others like oowu, tsitsitsitsi, ahaa, can be added to words, phrases or clauses to form resumptive openers in lines 2, 3, 5, and 9 in conversation 1. Other examples of vocalizations are in the table 1 in appendix D

Conversation Two (2)

Negative Response Tokens

In the data, some of the response tokens were negative with two functions: disapproval and confirmation. The following conversation demonstrates some of them.

Conversation 2

1.	A: papa no kɔkaa kyereɛ	The man told
2.	... maame no maa no frɛ no	the woman to call her
3.	B: sɛ mmo nye no deen?	that you should do what for him?
4.	A: aane na yɛsɛ ɔredi agoro?	Yes, do you think he was joking?
5.	B: ahokyere kankai	unnecessary behavior
6.	A: deɛ ye te ho nie oo	This is what we are staying with.

In conversation 2, lines 3 and 5 are negative response tokens. Other negative response tokens found in the data are listed in table 2 in appendix D. In Asante Twi, all the above listed words could be used in negative sense as a token to help conversation to move on. Most of the negative words are pre-modified by ‘ɛnye’ [it’s not good]. Whenever ‘ɛnye’ is used, then it means there is a negative sense in whatever is communicated. Some of these are discussed in the main work. Also, some words were repeated and used as negative response tokens. Among them were vocalizations. Table 3 illustrates some examples in appendix D.

Conversation three (3)

Reduplication

Another example is on reduplication conversation. It is a repetition of a word or part of a word used to create a new word or other linguistic elements. These kinds of tokens are used for emphasis, alignment and convergence. The conversation below illustrates some of the functions.

Conversation 3

1 A: ɔntumi nware	she can't marry
2 B: aden nti?	Why that?
3 A: suban woyi?	This character?
4 B: suban tantantan	very awkward behavior
5 A: aah, afutuo bɛn na ɔnyaa yɛ?	ah, what advice has she not received?
6 B: ɔbaa fɛɛfɛfɛ se yi.	This beautiful woman
7 ...ɛɛ ɔbɔ mpaɛ twitwatwitwa mu	she needs to pray and cancel it totally.

The conversation is about a lady who doesn't portray a good behavior. In line 4, 6 and 7, B used reduplication to show convergence in the ongoing talk.

Conversation four (4)

Religious

Some religious response tokens found in the data are in the conversation below. This kind of response token has two functions which show appreciation, alignment, encouragement and invoke blessings on the interlocutor. An illustration follows in conversation 4.

Conversation 4

1 A: me ne no nni asem biara	I don't have problem with him
2 ... meto no a me kyia no	I greet him whenever we meet
3 B: Awurade nhyira wo	God bless you
3 A : ono mmom na dee wayo no	it is rather him, because of what he has done
4 ... ohia kasa kyere	he needs advice.
5 B: gyea ma Awurade	leave it to the lord
6 A: eeden oo, nso mehwe Awurade	it's not easy oo, but I'm looking up to the Lord
7 B: Awurade beye	the lord will do it

The conversation is about a lady who was having problems in her marriage. She was expecting her husband to realize his mistakes and render an apology to her but the man didn't see it that way.

In conversation 4, line 3, the interlocutor invokes blessings on the primary speaker for speaking to her husband. In line 5, B advised her to leave everything to the lord and in line 7, B again, encourages her that the lord will do it. The Asantes also believe in their traditional gods. Other religious tokens are in table 4 in appendix D.

Conversation 5

Single word Response token

This finding suggests that participants use single words with different prosodic cues to accomplish different interactional tasks. On the contrary, the present study does not look at suprasegmental features or prosody of the various RTs, even though the Asantes' language is a tonal language. But in the data, one lexical item (RT) can give different meaning as well as function differently in different interactions.

Conversation 5

1 A: ɔbaa no de ne ho abɔ sewaa	She is now Anty's friend
2 B: sáá?	is that so?
3 A: makɔto wɔn se wɔredi ho nkɔmmɔ	I've heard them discussing the issue
4 B: yòò	realization
5 A: ɔse ɔbetu mo afiri fie ho	he said he will eject you from the house
5 B; àmpá	is it true?

The conversation is about a court case. After the death of B's husband, the man's family wants to eject the widow from the man's house. The nice sent the case to court and the one B trust her most has joined a member of the opposing family. In ii. B used sàà [is that so?] low tone of doubt. Indicating she does not believe the lady will join her ante's group. Further in IV, B again used yòò which is a token of realization which show that she has believed what the lady said. Finally, àmpá too signal doubt meaning they cannot eject her from the house. Other examples in the data are outline in table 5 in appendix D.

Appendix D

Kinds of Response Tokens in Tables

This section discusses the responses tokens put in tables according to their categories.

Table 1

Vocalization	Gloss
ehéé	when the listener realizes something
Aháá	for confirmation of the primary speaker's idea
óòw	the primary speaker has done what is not expected
Eei	shows frightening / unexpected happening
Mm̀	signals continuation/ go on with what you are saying

Table 2 **NEGATIVE RTs**

Negative RTs	Gloss	Negative RTs	Gloss
enyɛ	it's not good	enyɛ nokware	it's not true
eyɛ aniwu	it's shameful	ɔkwan biara so enhia	definitely not necessary
eyɛ tan	it's horrible	wo gyedi?	Do you believe it?
enyɛ anika	it's not exciting	daabi	no
enyɛ yie	it cannot be	enyɛ koraa	absolutely not
entumi ensi	it cannot happen	yere no	coerce him
dinseeɛ	sarcasm	ɔboa koraa	He/she is telling a lie

Table 3 Repetition of Single Word for Negative Expressions

	Form	Gloss	Function
Vocalization	Mhm mhm mhm	no no no	disagreement
	tɛtɛ tɛtɛ tɛɛ	no no no	disagreement
	oow oow oow	oh oh oh	being sympathetic
lexical item	daabi daabi daabi	no no no	enthusiastic reception
	kai kai kai	not at all	strong interpersonal signals
	ɛyɛ ɛyɛ ɛyɛ	alright alright alright	disagreement

Table 4 Religious RTs

A.	oowu Awurade,	oh lord
B.	Awurade betua ne ka,	God will punish him
C.	onyankopɔn nhunu ne mma mmɔbɔ	God should have mercy on his children
D.	Awurade ngye no	God should save him
E.	bɔ ne dua	curse him/her
F.	me dɔ nyame	I swear to God
G.	awurade nyankopɔn	lord God almighty

Table 5 **Single Word with Different Meaning as RTs**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Function</i>
<i>Sáá</i>	is that so	fresh information/surprise
<i>Sáà</i>	is that what you are doing to me	painful reaction
<i>Sàà?</i>	is that the truth	Doubting
<i>Yóó</i>	Yees	Realization
<i>Yòó</i>	I've heard you (neg. notion)	Reactive expression
<i>Yòò</i>	I've heard you (positive notion)	enthusiastic reception
<i>Ampà</i>	It is true	Seconding an idea
<i>Ampá?</i>	Is it the truth?	For clarification

Table 6 Structure of Some Single Word

Lexical items	prefix - (stem) – suffix	Gloss of token
1. Aninguasesem	aninguaseε - sem	Disgraceful sayings
2. Adane	a – dane	it has changed
3. Nkasa	n – kasa	Don't talk
4. Atwatia	a-twatia	it has shortened
5. Saa	Saa	Is that so?
6. hwan?	hwan?	Who are you talking about?
7. abayifoɔ	a -bayie-foɔ	Witches

Table 6 demonstrates the nature of some Asante Twi lexical data. From the table it is realized that some single words have prefix or suffix which added meaning to the stem and others were compounding. Number one (1) on the table is aninguasesem which is compounding, thus, aninguaseε and asem. in this compound there has been vowel elision of both /a/ and /ε/, this resulted in aninguasesem. Also, from two (2) to four (4) there are prefixes a-, n- and a- which have meanings on their own. The -a in two (2) and four (4) can be interpreted as 'it is' and n- is a negative prefix that means stop. Number five (5) and six (6) are stems without prefix nor suffix. While number seven (7) has circumfix (both prefix and suffix), a-bayi-foɔ, where 'a-' is a plural marker, '-bayie-' is the stem, and '-foɔ' is the agentive marker which indicates the possessor of the stem noun 'bayie'. Finally, the discussion portrays the structure of the lexical token which is not static but dynamic. This leads the discussion to the clause/phrase structure

Table 7 Structure of Phrases and Clauses in Twi

Type of Token	Structure	Gloss
ɛrenyɛ yie [clause]	[ɛ] it + renyɛ [is not] yie [possible]	It is not possible
gyae deɛ woreyɔ no [clause]	Gyae [Stop] + deɛ [what]+ wo [you] + reyɔ [doing] no [intensifier]	Stop what you are doing
Ei deɛ aba nie [clause]	Ei, deɛ [this is]+aba [what has happened] nie [intensifier]	Ei, this is what has happened
Wonnim anibɔ [clause]	Wo[you],+ nnim [don't know] + anibɔ [eyeing]	You're not sensitive to eyeing.
ɔbaa fɛfɛ yi [phrase]	ɔbaa [lady] + fɛfɛ +[beautiful] + yi [this]	This beautiful lady

From the selection of the phrases and clauses used in the table 7, one could tell that both phrases and clauses could be used as tokens in Asante Twi' depending on the situation in which a conversation is taken.

Table 8 Hand Gesture of Bad News

with hand gestures	Gloss	Position of Hands
1. asem ben ni	what kind of issue is this	open hands
2. awurade gye me	Lord save me	throw hands in front
3. me nsono mu oo	my intestines oo	on stomach
4. asem ato me	I am in doom	on top of head
5. awurade mawu	Lord I am dead	on top of head

Listeners use hand gestures depending on how best they have understood the context in conversation. They are simply labeled as ‘pointing’ gestures (Kelley and Church, 2008, p. 2). They are usually made to direct the attention of primary speakers by the listeners to specific events or objects in the environment that the talk takes place. The position of the hand as a response token has a lot of functions in conversations.