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The Role of Listener's Response Tokens Mm and Oh: The Case of Ga

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Abstract
This paper aims to examine the functions of '**Oh**' and '**Mm**' as used in Ga, a Kwa language that is spoken in the southern part of Ghana. There has been linguistic research in Ga and there is still the interest to study the language. Currently, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study we know of, that specifically explores response token in Ga from the point of linguistics. The two response tokens *mm* and *oh* as found in natural conversation recorded in Ga form the basis for linguistic analysis in this study. We chose the two tokens because of their contribution to meaning and various contextual nuances they reveal. Response token is referred to as the verbal and non-verbal behavior of listeners in response to his or her co-conversationalist's talk. These tokens could be particles such as, right, *yes, yeah, mm…, oh*, and connectives such as, *so, because* and *but* . The aim of the research is to: **(i)** analyze the role of "Mm" and "oh" in the Ga language. **(ii)** analyze errors in using the particles if there is any. We adopt the conversational analysis coupled with the descriptive and interpretive approach in analyzing the study. After the analysis, *oh* is used as pure surprise and a mitigator while *mm* is used as a brief request for clarification and agreement of what the speaker said. However, the study identified an error in the use of *oh*.
Keywords: Backchannel, listener's response, response token,

1.0 Introduction:

Several researches have been conducted in the area of backchannel responses by different researchers in different languages, especially in English and Japanese with varied results. However, there is no such studies conducted in the Ga language, a gap to fill since a listener's response token may serve more than one function within a speech community, and the same token may have different range of interpretation from community to community. For this reason, the researcher investigates listener's response tokens (L RT) *Oh* and *Mm* in the Ga language.

Conversation requires at least a speaker and a listener who take turns at each time. Sometimes, listeners may not express their active participation openly, but their participation is observed in the form of verbal responses or comments with short cues such as: *yeah, ok, uh huh,* and *mhmm* or display facial expressions like smiles, head nods and gestures (Bavelos& Gerwing2011). These elements are refered to as backchannel responses, listener's response tokens (Fraser 2010; Fox Tree & Tolins 2014; Ike 2010; Li 2010; Limbertz 2011; Norrick 2010; 2012; Shelly & Gonzalez (2013). Listener's response tokens, the term to use in this study belong to devices providing feedback to the current speaker. These devices most often appear in both face – face and spontaneous conversations. The use of response tokens make the conversation flow swiftly and interesting. Secondly, it helps easy understanding of the utterances, and even more polite, though it does not change its grammatical meaning. Fraser (1988: 22) stated that: 'the absence of the discourse marker does not render a sentence ungrammatical and / or unintelligible. It does, however, remove a powerful clue about what commitment the speaker makes regarding the relationship between the current utterance and the prior discourse'. From that statement, we can see that listener's response tokens (L RT) can make a conversation easier, and more interesting.

The researcher intends to find out the pragmatics use of these response tokens and contribute to the field of pragmatics in the Ga language. Thus, the researcher carried out the research entitled "The role of '*Mm*' and '*Oh*' in natural conversation: the case of Ga". The purpose of the research: (1) to analyze the role of '*Mm*' and '*Oh*' as they occur in the conversation of Ga students of University of Education,Winneba (2) Identify and analyze the errors of these elements: '*Mm*' and '*Oh*' in the conversations of the students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Review of Research

Response token is part of the conversation in our speeches that many people do not think of or notice unless a person's response varies from what is expected. The listener plays this part in a conversation. There are both verbal and non-verbal response tokens. A non-verbal example of response token is a head nod. Throughout a conversation, the listener may nod the head continuously to indicate that he/ she is paying attention to the speaker. At other times, the hearer may respond through verbal signals such as *yeah, ok, oh, mm* and *mhmm*. Sharifi&Azadmanesh, (2011) posit that there are learned expectations for listener's response within different cultures. Do the speaker and listener make errors in their conversation? Does the speaker expect non-verbal cues such as head nodding to show attentiveness or does the speaker expect verbal responses such as *oh* and *mhmm* to indicate that listeners are paying attention? Do we have something like too much response token or too little?

The questions we seek to answer in our study are as follows:
1. What function do the response token '*Mm*' and '*Oh*' play in conversation?
2. Do students make errors in the use of these elements in their responses?

Generally, it seems that response token behavior is a common characteristics of human communication, but these response token behavior is different to languages and cultures (Sharifi&Azadmanesh, 2011; sherlly&Gomerz 2013: 98). A response token may sometimes serve more than one function within a speech community, and the same token may be interpreted differently from one language to another. Based on this statement, we decide to investigate the different functions '*Mm*' and '*Oh*' play in students' conversation and social activities in the Ga language, and the errors they might make in the use of these elements in their conversation.

There are many researches on backchannel/listener's response tokens, out of the lot; Fraser (2010), compared five cultures on back-channels. From his studies, he found out that both cultures make use of continuers, acknowledgement, and change of tokens. Heritage (1984) also did an extensive study of one listener's response token '*Oh*' that he called a 'change of state token'. He found out that *oh* is used to "propose that, its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness" Heritage (1984: 299). From his research, it could be pointed out that the sequential role of '*oh*' is essentially backward looking and scarcely continuative. This means that '*oh*' by itself does not invite or promote any continuation of information from the primary speaker. Another research on *Oh* is defined by Tree and Schrouk (1999). In their research entitled 'Discourse Markers in Spontaneous speech *Oh* What a difference an *Oh* makes'. They argue that recognition of words is faster after *Oh* than when *Oh* is either excised and replaced by a pause of excised entirely. They also reported that semantics verification of words heard earlier in the discourse is faster after *Oh* than when *Oh* is either excised and replaced by a pause or excised entirely, but only when the test point is downstream from the *oh*. From their research, it can be deduced that '*oh*' is not only a potential signal to addressees, as has been suggested by corpora analysis , but that it is in fact used by addressees to help them integrate information in spontaneous talk. A considerable amount of attention has been given to backchannel utterances in particular: *yeah* and *mm* (Drummond 1993a, 1993b; Gardner 1998, 2001; *)*. Gardner primarily addresses *mm* and *yeah* and noted, "such unobtrusive response tokens as *yeah, mmhm, okay* and *mm* turn out to be exquisitely complex, in a way that is still becoming apparent" (2001, p.1). Gaedner outlined four major distinctions in backchannels: (1) continuer, that functions to hold the floor (e.g. *mm* and *uh huh*), (2) acknowledgement, which claims agreement or comprehension of the prior turn (e.g. *mm* and *yeah*), (3) newsmaker, which marks the prior turn as newsworthy and (4) change - of - activity token, which marks a movement towards a new topic or action in a conversation (e.g. *okay* and *right*). According to Gardner (2001), *mm* can function as both a continuer and an agreement token, whereas the function of *yeah* is primarily as an agreeing utterance. Gardener (1998) used the term *receipt tokens* and analyzed the occurrence of short responses *yeah*, *mmhm*, and *mm*. These responses are analysed with respect to their intonational difference and to their turn allocations. Gardner emphasized the importance of intonation and prosody information in those responses.

Other researchers like Li (2006; 2010) examined the relationship between the frequency of back-channel responses and enjoyment of the conversation. His research centered on a comparative study among Canadian/Canadian and Chinese/Chinese conversation. He found out that both languages use '*nod*' with '*ok*' or any other backchannel responses.

Limbertz (2011) also worked on backchannel: The use of yeah, ok, uh and mhm to portray engaged listenership. He focused on Australian English and found out that the most commonly used types of backchanneling were continuers and signals of acknowledgment.

.Shelly and Gonzalez (2013) examined the functions of backchanneling and L1 Effects. Their findings suggest that the most commonly used types of backchanneling were continuers and signals of acknowledgment. Goddard (2014) and Cruz (2010) both studies centre on *oh* as an interjection. Norricks (2010b; 2012) and Tolins and Fox Tree (2014) also worked on backchannels. Ike (2010) worked on Backchannel: A feature of Japanease English.

2.0 Data collection / Methodology

The data were collected from natural conversation of Ga students at the University of Education, Winneba, Ajumako campus at the Central region and at social contexts. We collected Forty tokens (40) and transcribed. After the transcription, we identified the response tokens, and those conversations containing the response tokens are carefully selected for the analysis in order not to repeat utterances. After the selection, twenty- five (25) tokens are reselected for the analysis, out of which fifteen (15) were used for the analysis. We conducted unstructured interviews with two scholars of linguistics who are native speakers of the language. We did this in order to confirm or disconfirm researchers' intuitive knowledge regarding certain usages. The ages of the respondents range between 25 – 35 years of age. We collected the data during discussions in composition lectures and other conversations at social gatherings. The researcher recorded the discussions of the various

conversations after we have given the informants enough education on the use of the conversation. Conversational analysis and descriptive / interpretive model is adapted for the study.

3.0 Response Token

Response is any verbal or nonverbal (nod only) act occurring during the conversation in a non-intrusive manner (not interrupting the speech turn of the current speaker). It can be presented as one word (e.g., *yeah*) or a statement (e.g., *oh, I see*) or a question (e.g., *is that so*).

Kjellmer (2009) defines response token or backchannel as noise/sounds/utterance, made by non-speakers, not wishing to take over the floor. On the other hand, response token is a short utterance aimed at expressing the listener's attention to the conversation. Such a short utterance may or may not interrupt the current speaker to stop speaking. The regulative function of response token is to encourage the other part to carry on. Common listener's responses in English are interjections like '*un huh, mmhmm, yeah, yes*' etc. that are produced by the listener, to indicate that 'I'm listening'. The listeners employ response tokens to acknowledge that the other speaker has the floor, and that they want the interaction to continue. Klellmer 2009 (citing Tottie (1991) distinguishes the "supportive" function of response token , signaling understanding and agreement, and the "regulative" function, encouraging the speaker to continue his/her turn. In short, these two functions are seen as 'agreement' and 'continuer'. For easy understanding of the analysis we present the full meanings of the abbreviated words.

. 1SG – First person singular,1 PL – First person plural 2PL – Second person plural, 3SG- Third person singular, HAB – Habitual Aspect , FUT – Future Aspect, POS – possessive , PST – Past tense . CONJ – conjunction, ICV-Inherent compliment verb, PROG – Progressive aspect, INDEF – Indefinite article, DET-Determiner, PREF – Perfect aspect, OBJ – Object, MP – Motional prefix, INDEF – Indefinite object, NEG – Negative.[1]

4.0 Analysis of the listener's response tokens

Oh as Response token in Ga:

In this study the researcher uses conversation to illustrate the functions of *Oh*. We use *Oh* as response token device to register reception and recognition as a sign of assessment and politeness functions. For example:

4.1Politeness Function

1a. A: ò - bàá- nyɛ́ ò - wó nìì ò- hà - mì?
2SG FUT can 2SGtake thing2SG give 1SG
(Can you help me with my things?)
B: óò!, òfàìnɛ́, mì - nyɛ́ŋ ŋ' ninè mii- wà ŋ' hè.
Oh! Please 1SG cannot 1SG hand PROG pain 1SGself.
(Oh please l can't, l have pains in my hand or Oh please l can't, my hand is paining me.)

From the conversation above, the listener (student) used *Oh* in her response to function as a mitigator to avoid face threatening act (FTA), though B has used negative politeness, *ofainɛ,mi-nyɛŋ* (please l can't) that has the same meaning that is, to avoid FTA. We can look at the example below and compare with the conversation where the *Oh* is implicit.

1b. A: ò - bàá- nyɛ́ ò - wó nìì ò- hà mì?
2SG FUT can 2SG take thing 2SG give 1SG
(Can you help me with my things?)
B: òfàìnɛ́, mì- nyɛ́ŋ ŋ' ninè mii- wà ŋ' hè..
Please 1SG cannot 1SG hand PROG pain 1SGself.
(Please l can't, l have pains in my hand
or Please l can't, my hand is paining me.
A: Eei!nakai?
Eei! Is that
C: Oo anɔkwale, o naa akɛ e nine e fuu? kwɛmɔ.
Oo true, 2SG see that 3SG hand 3SG swell? look
(Oh, it's true, don't you see that the hand is swollen? Look at it).

The listener can try to avoid FTA by using negative politeness strategy *mìnyɛ́ŋ* (l can't), apologizing using the word *òfàìnɛ́* (please), but the first one in (1a) above is still considered to be more polite than the conversation in (1b) which has no '*Oh*'. In (1c) the speaker used *Oo* to assess what (b) said. *ŋninè ŋwà ŋhè*(my hand is paining me). (C) went on further to ask (A) don't you see that the hand is swollen? Look at it.

(2) A: A wìé ní òsɔfó àyá- kpa nùùmó' ɛ fàí.

[1]

INDEF speak CONJpriest MP beg oldman DET
(Osɔfo had been implored to apologize to the old man)

B: Ŋ'tèè.
1SG go
(I went)
C using Oo as a Strong Marker of Confirmation

C: óò! lɛ̀ɛ̀lɛ́ŋ, é -téé é – yá – nà lɛ̀ mómó.
óò! true PERF go 3SG MP see 3SG OBJ already
(Oh truly, he has done that already.)

In example (2), the speaker C was confirming B's answer that he has gone to apologize to the old man already. The use of the marker *Oo lɛɛlɛŋ* 'Oh truly' is signaling a strong marker of confirmation.

4.2 Expressing Contempt

(3) A: Ówúlà, ó- há- áà mì ŋ' nii ?.
Gentleman 2SG give-NEG 1SG 1SG POS thing
(Gentleman, won't you give me my thing?

B: Mà – hà - bò, bó'ɛ hà mi énúmɔ ó - fátàhè.
ISGFUT give 2SG,2SG give 1SG five 2SG add
(Iwill give you, you add five (hundred cedis) to it).

A: Óó`, ò – lè - àkɛ ǹ - l
Oh 2SGknow that 1SG fool
(Oh, you think l'm a fool?)

The conversation in (3) above, A is asking B if he is not giving him his thing which A doesn't want to disclose. B answered him saying that he will give him, but he should add another five. A angrily replied using the marker *Oh* (with a high tone) do you think l am a fool? From the above conversation, A has used the response token *Oh* as contempt.

4.3 Expressing Surprise

(4) Z: Mɛ`ɛ`bà ò yé- ɔ àwèrɛhò?
Why 2SG eat-HAB sorrow
(Why are you sorrowful).

Y A` - jù - mí - nɔfɛ́ɛnɔ
3PL IMP steal 1SG POS everything
(I've been robbed)

Z: Óò! Té è - bà lɛ tɛ́ŋ̀ǹ?
Óò Q tag MP come DET how?.
(Oh! How did it happen?).

From the conversation above, we can see that *Óò* has been used as a backchannel device to register surprise and sympathy in the context in which it is used. Aijmer (2002) states that '*Oh*' can be described not only in terms of how it serves to regulate discourse and information flow, but in terms of effect and emotionality.' She further explained that *Oh* is used in context which the core meaning of 'surprise' is back grounded: to arrive at a realization.

4.4 Expressing Retort

(5) Nanaa: A`djó, fɔ màmà- i à -hè jògbàŋ̀ǹ
Grandma: Adjo, wash cloth PL PLself proper.
(Adjo wash the clothes well)

Adjo: Óó! Jé – ée nò ǹ - fé - ɔ?
Adjo: Óó! is NEG that 1SG do HAB
(Oh! Is that not what am doing?).

The *Óó! jéée* which precedes the answer given by Adjo renders it as a kind of retort and so is interpreted as an insult in the culture of the Ga people. Secondly, the high tone on the *Oh* makes it abusive, because it looks as if Adjo is shouting at the grandma. Thereby '*Oh*' is considered a retort when the age of the participants in conversation is taken into consideration.

4.5 Expressing Confirmation

(6) X: A`wó, ŋmɛ́nɛ́ - à - wó ɔ nùù - ɛ́?
Mother,today INDEF take HAB man DET?
(Mother, is it today they are going for the man's corps?)
Y: Òò! hɛ̀ɛ̀ -ŋmɛ̀nɛ̀.
Òò! yes, today .

One use of *Oh* is to confirm something which has been mentioned previously, so in this conversation Y is confirming to X that really today is the day for the man to be laid in state.

4.6 *Oh* Expressing Change of Topic

(7) A meeting B on her way home (outside the campus) said :
A: Afia ò- yɛ̀ ?, à- kpè ètsɛ.
Afia 2SG live 3SG INDEF meet long
(Afia, are you around? It has been a long time).
B: Hɛ̀ɛ̀, ò-lènítsúmɔsànè
Yes, 2SG know work case
(Yes, it's because of work)
A: Yòò, má- nyìɛ́ nɔ nɔŋ̀ŋ̀, ŋá-----
Ok, 1SG walk on now, greet -----
(Ok, l will go now, greet……)
B: Òò! shì, Akù, nàànyɛ̀ òyiwàlàdɔŋ̀ŋ̀
Oh! but, Aku yesterday thank you
(Oh Aku, thanks for yesterday)
A: Shìdàà bɛ́
Thanks no ……
(No thanks).

From the above conversation, there is a change of topic without wanting to end the conversation.

A wants to finish the conversation, but B remembered something therefore B used *Ooshi* 'Oh but' to change the topic so that B's utterance does not impose on the hearer's face.

4.7 Used to Hide Speaker's Disappointment

(8) M: Wɔ- téé ní- ò- yá – wá mi
2PL go CON 2SG MP help 1SG
(Let's go and help me).
E: Ŋ' yá- áa, ŋ' yɛ̀ ní feemɔ
1SG go-NEG, 1SG have something doing
(I will not go, l have something doing).
M: Òòò, é- fé- éè nɔko, ó- tɔ́-ko
Òòò, MP do NEG 2SG wrong NEG
(Ooh, it's nothing, you are not wrong).

In the above conversation, we could see that Òòò has been used to hide the speakers' disappointment, in order not to impose the hearers' face. From the conversation, M usedOoo although he is disappointed.

4.8 Incorrect Use of *Oh*

(9) D: Làmiókór! ò- bà bìɛ́ mómó?
Lamiokor! 2SG come here already?
(Lamiokor! are you here already)?
L: Óó!---.Ku'ɛ́!---, té ò- yɔɔ tɛ́ŋ̀ŋ̀?, òfàínɛ.
Óó!--- would have--- how are you? , please
(Óó!--- l would have, how are you? , please)

From the conversation, D meeting Lamiokor asked: 'are you here already?' L replied D using the response token *Óó!* and then says '*ku'ɛ́!*' as a form of greeting. L's use of *Óó* here may be termed as incorrect because the use of ku'ɛ́ (would have) is meaningless here. The continuation of 'how are you'? and then 'please' has no bearing on the conversation. The use of *Óó* is meant to clarify anything said earlier. The question asked by D needs a simple answer yes. On the other hand, if L has used 'Oh Hai,' we could say that L is using it to express recognition. I may say that the high tone used in the articulation of the Óó! and the break before the *ku'ɛ́* have no relationship. In any case, the researcher sees the use of Óó! in this conversation as incorrect.

4.9 Mm Used as Pause Filler

(10) A: Mì–gbé tsɔɔlɔɔ nítsúmɔɔ nàà.
ISG finish teacher work edge
(I have finished the assignment)
B: Méèbè ò gbé nàà?
Qtag 2SG ICV finish?
(When did you finished it).
A: Nyè ŋ̀'kè hà lɛ.
Yesterday 1SG AUX give 3SG
(I submitted it to him yesterday)
B: M`m`- -! héwɔ- mɛ́nì ŋ̀' fé -ɔ yɛ̀bìɛ́?
M`m`- -! So what .lSG doHAB here?
(Mm--! So what am l doing here?)

B not knowing what to say at that moment uttered M`m` as a pause filler in order not to break the conversation, it is also used to express her disappointment in life.

4.10 *Mm* as Overla

(11) A: A`kwèlé, ŋmènè ó - fèé dìŋ̀ŋ̀.
Akweley, today 2SG make quiet
(Akweley, today you are quiet).
B: Nakai e – fe - ɔ beikomɛi
That 3SG do HAB sometimes
(She does that atimes).
C: E - je - ɔ gbɛ e - fe - ɔ nakai
3SG make HAB way 3SG do HAB that
(She does that intentionally).
D: Ḿḿ - - `m, Nakai e -fe ɔ.
Ḿḿ - - `m, That 3SG do HAB
(Ḿḿ - - `m, That is what she does).

Speaker D used the listener's response *Ḿḿ - - `m* as a continuer, *Ḿḿ - - `m*can be used either after complete utterances or in between pauses or breathing by the speaker. Lamberiz (2011: 11-18) citing (Farr 2003) asserts that 'The utterance can be used as an overlap, without giving the impression of being rude. Moreover, overlapping might resemble a higher engagement in listenership'.

Response token *Mm* is used as an agreement. Let us look at the example below:

4.11 *Mm* used as an Agreement Token

(12) A: Mì -nà Màà é - tsɛ
1SG see Maa PERF long
(It has been a long time l saw Maa).
B: Lɛ̀ɛ́lɛ̀ŋ, wɔ - ná– áá lɛ
Truly, 2PL see- NEG 3SG OBJ
(Truly, we do not see her).
C: E - bɛ́ hèwàlɛ
3SG NEG welL
(She is not well).
B: A` - kɛ̀ɛ́ à - fó lɛ tsòfà (Narrating the incident)
3 PL IMP say 3PL INDEF cut 3SG OBJ medicine
(They say she has been bewitched)
A: M`m`- - -m` (hoso yitso) beni B gbaa sane lɛ.
M`m`- - -m` (nodding the head) as B narrated the incident leading to the illness.
C: M`m`, è - bàáfɛ̀è ànɔkwàlè; è - jɛ́ - ɔ` mɔ` tsɔ´
M`m`, 3SG FUT make true ; 3SG insults HAB one much
(M`m`, it may be true; she insults too much).

From the conversation above, A used the marker Mm- - - m as an agreement token to signal that A agrees with B's utterance as she listens attentively using head nod. However, A used the response token to confirm B's utterance. C's statement *e - jɛɔmɔtsɔ* ' s/he insults too much' makes a very strong confirmation on B's utterance.

Response token can be use to clarify an utterance that was not clear. The example below illustrates the fact raised.

4.12 Mm used for Clarification

(13) AK: Apéséò ,àdúɳ̀ ni
Apɛsɛo, monkey FOC
(Apɛsɛo is a monkey).
EV: Ḿm`! wìémɔ èkòɳ̀ɳ̀
(Ḿm`! say it again).
AK: Ŋ’ kɛɛ Apéséò àdúɳ̀ hènɔ ni
1SG say Apéséò monkey type FOC
(I said, Apéséò is a type of monkey).

From the conversation above, AK is explaining to the colleagues what Apɛsɛo is. In her first explanation, EV did not get what she said so she used the response token *Mm!* to ask AK for clarification. AK then explained the issue at stake more clearly in the next turn. Sometimes, this can be used as an exclamatory question. The example illustrated below shows that the listener’s response functions as a question. For example:

4.13 *Mm* used as an Exclamatory Question

(14) EA : Aku - nine e - shɛ shika lɛ nɔ
Aku POS handPERF get money DET on
(Aku has gotten the money).
DN : Ḿḿ`! ?

DN has used Ḿḿ`! ?as an exclamatory question. It is seen that there is nothing added to the response token used. Moreover the rising and falling tone is used which really confirms the exclamation and shows that s/he is not in agreement with what the speaker said.

5.0 Discussion/Findings/Conclusion

The analysis of the interactional data gives an insight into how listeners response by using *Oh* and *Mm* is portray in the Ga language. The findings of this research are to some extent cohesive with Gardner’s (2010) findings about *yeah* and *Mm*. The first significant result is that listeners make more use of *oh* as a listener response device than *Mm*. One of the reasons for this might be that the use of *Mm* is more neutral than O*h* and that listeners might feel that *Oh* signals a greater active engagement in the conversation.

In all, the analysis found that O*h* and *Mm* can both function as agreement, clarification, confirmation and continuers. One of the limitations of this research might be the quantity of data. It would be of interest to compare results taken from a larger range of data to obtain more functions. In addition, the use of *Oh* and *Mm* are, for example, dependent on the speakers’ relationship to each other, as response token controls the management of interpersonal relations such as control and affiliation, and the expression of emotion, attitude, and effect (Ward 2006). It is important to note that this research has only focused on response token utterances and their functions in Ga language. Every communication contains response tokens in all languages and cultures across the world, but the frequency and the use of utterances may vary and errors might occur if speakers are unfamiliar with the listener’s response utterances of the opposing speaker. However, we identified one error in the study; this may have occurred with other factors, including the context, and the culture of the language being used. The study finds out that, whenever a high tone is use to articulate the response, some sort of contempt attitude is realized in the respondent’s response and the low tone tones down the contempt attitude. In addition to the above, listener’s use both head nod and the response token *mm* which clearly indicates overt understanding and emotion. These make sense as a listener’s role during the conversational discourse. This allows the speaker to continue with his/her speech while showing understanding of what is said and displaying emotions towards the talk. The conversation actually creates a speaker-listener role change between the two participants, and their interactions often includes the speaker’s response solicitation, such as seeking understanding, supportive agreement and disagreement. The analysis also found out that in response to the speaker’s utterance, the listener never uses head nod when it comes to the use of *oh*. However, listeners use head nod in addition to the response *mm* to show overt understanding and supportive agreement. In support of the agreement, the listener nods the head up and down severally whilst the listener shakes the head from left to right to show his/her disagreement to the speaker’s utterance.

Despite the study of listener’s responses in conversation, the nonverbal aspect of the listener’s response have not received any attention in the Ga literature. It is experted that the results of this study will contribute to the study of verbal and nonverbal listener response in the Ga language and more study will be carried out to explore other functions that has not been discovered yet by interested people in this field of study.

We conclude that language, culture and context play a very crucial role in conversation, especially in the

use of these response tokens.

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