When Are Response Tokens Produced During Storytelling?

Shiho Fujii*
Amagasaki Municipal High School, Japan

Alexandra Perez
Independent Researcher

Abstract
Since the way people respond to storytelling is different from culture to culture, learning a second language involves more than the acquisition linguistic elements such as vocabulary and grammar. This paper analyzes response patterns in a conversation between two North American women, focusing primarily on when they do or do not produce a response during storytelling. The results can be compared with learners' L1 language, which would be helpful for learners to have a better understanding of how English is used in an actual conversation.

Introduction

Japanese people generally use response tokens more frequently than native English speakers (Ike, 2010). In the first author's observation as an English teacher in Japan for eight years, Japanese English learners tend to overuse response tokens when communicating in English, which might give a wrong impression to their interlocutors. Some learners also feel uneasy about not receiving many responses from their interlocutors. In my view, this is because learners have little opportunity to learn when to produce response tokens.

Response tokens are often produced around Transition Relevant Places (TRP), which are points in an unfolding turn where a transition of speakers can take place. In this paper, TRPs in five storytelling sequences by native English speakers were examined to determine when a response token is produced or not produced. The findings from this analysis will help English learners understand good listenership while communicating in English and improve their interactional competence.

Response Token and Their Main Functions

Regarding listeners' responses, Gardner (2001) noted that "minimal responses" as the most pervasive type of response and categorized them into three groups: continuers, acknowledgment tokens, and news-markers. The primary function of continuers is prospective in the sense that they return the turn back to the prior speaker immediately. In contrast, acknowledgment tokens are retrospective since their main business is claiming understanding or agreement. News-markers are used to show that the listener is experiencing some change in their current state of knowledge. Norrick (2012) explained the function of minimal response tokens as showing the willingness to remain quiet in order not to interrupt the prior speaker, which encourages the speaker to continue. Ward and Tsukahara (2000) used the term "backchannel feedback" taken from Yngve (1970, cited in Ward & Tsukahara, 2000) to explain the short utterances, as well as a nod and smile produced by the listener while the speaker is talking. They defined backchannel feedback as optional responses directly related to the content of what the prior speaker said, and does not demand acknowledgment from the speaker. Ike (2010) also used "backchannel" in the same way and categorized its main functions as "continuer, acknowledgment, agreement, judgment, and emotional reaction (p. 206)." Although what each term includes is slightly different, they fall into two main functions: continuer and acknowledgment. Some typical tokens are introduced for each function, such as *uh huh* or *mm hm* as continuers and *okay* or *yeah* as acknowledgment tokens. However, some tokens function in a different way depending on the intonation. For example, when *yeah* and *mm* carry a falling intonation contour, they function as acknowledgment tokens, while they work as continuers with rising terminal intonation contour (Gardner, 2001). Furthermore, *mm* with a falling contour expresses weaker acknowledgment than *yeah*, while *yeah* with the same contour expresses strong alignment and agreement (Gardner, 1997). Therefore, what determines its function is both type and intonation of the response token.

Speakership and Listenership

Ward and Tsukahara (2000) stated that two requirements for being a good listener are being responsive to the speaker and not interrupting him. From their point of view, listeners need to be aware of the degree of speakership when choosing response tokens. Speakership indicates the likelihood of a speaker saying something substantial very soon. Considering the one-speaker-at-a-time rule in American English-Language interaction (Norrik, 2012), using tokens with strong speakership when responding can be taken as dispreferred or sound impolite by the speaker. For example, *yeah* has much stronger speakership than *mm hm* and *uh huh* since there is a tendency for the respondent to add some utterance right after *yeah*. When it comes to obtrusiveness, *mm* is introduced as a non-intrusive token since its speakership is weak, so it can be useful when responding to a delicate topic. Norrik (2012) introduced *mhm* as a pure continuer and considered it more considerate than *uh huh*. This is because *mhm* is a non-vocalic nasal sound while *uh huh* has two syllables, which is more intrusive to the current speaker's turn. He also pointed out some specific Turn-Constructional Unit (TCU)s produced to prepare for multi-unit turns, such as story prefaces. This is a signal from the speaker that they will hold the floor for a while. The interlocutor is expected not to take the floor from the speaker and play a recipient role instead.

This is not the only case where the speaker signals their expectation. According to Ward and Tsukahara (2000), about half of backchannels are cued by the speakers. For example, low pitch produced by the speaker often shows that the conveyance of some information has been completed, so acknowledgment from the listener is expected. It also occurs in moments of disfluency where the speaker needs the listener's encouragement to continue. Vowel lengthening is another cue for disfluency or seeking agreement so that listeners can support speakers with the use of response tokens. Therefore, listeners need to catch the signals from the speaker and assess the appropriate timing, and the choice of tokens. One way to know how the speaker processes the response token is to observe how she or he reacts to it. If the speaker continues talking smoothly, she or he treats it as a continuer without being interrupted. Even though the response token overlaps with the speaker's utterance, if it is a token with low speakership and does not occur at a transition relevant point (TRP), the speaker continues talking and considers it as no threat of losing her or his turn (Norrik, 2012). However, repeating the same tokens might interrupt the speaker, since it can give an impression of boredom or inattention, although there is an exception of using repetitive tokens in closing sequences to show a listener's enthusiasm or encouragement (Schegloff, 1982, cited in McCarthy, 2003). On the other hand, the absence of response tokens can be taken as a lack of interest or attention by the speaker, causing the speaker to pause or stop their telling (Norrik, 2012). In face-to-face interaction, non-verbal responses such as head nods are also used as a low speakership token. Because of their less interruptive attribute, they are likely to occur before the speaker completes his or her utterance and are often unaccompanied by any verbal utterances (Rosenfeld & Hancks, 1980). The data collected by Ike (2010) also shows that more than half of the backchannels used by Australian English speakers were non-verbal. The bottom line is that listeners try their best not to interrupt speakers while supporting them with appropriate response tokens.

Research Questions

1. When do recipients produce a response in storytelling in English ordinary conversations among friends?
2. When do recipients not produce a response in storytelling in English ordinary conversations among friends?

Methodology

The data come from one 30-minute phone call conversation, Call Home 4822 from the CA bank in [TalkBank](#) (see Appendix for the five excerpts used in this paper). It is a conversation between North American female participants identified as A and B. Five storytelling sequences from their conversation were used in this paper; two are A's storytelling, and three are B's. Each sequence is counted as one excerpt. All TRPs were identified in each storytelling sequence and marked with a number sign ("#"), yielding a total of 117 TRPs consisting of 37 with responses and 80 without responses. Listener responses that are follow-up itemized news inquiries are not counted as a response token. The analysis examined why or why not a response was produced per TRP.

We used conversation analysis (CA) to understand the possible elements to induce responses by examining intonations, voice volumes, pace, overlapping, and pause (Shegloff, 2007; Have, 2007).

Analysis
When Response Tokens are Produced
Our analysis of the TRPs in the data suggests that a response token is often produced in the following contexts: recognition, affiliation, and reaction.

Reaction
Extreme Case Formulation. Response tokens seem to be produced when a speaker uses 'extreme case formulation' (Pomerantz, 1986) such as *totally*, *never*, and *any*.

Example 1
```
03 A: we had <ei BA:sh.>#
04 B: oh my go:d.
```

The extreme formulation here is "bash," a stronger word than the neutral word "party" (line 3). It is also produced with a louder volume, sound stretch, and lengthening. This emphasis and extreme formulation seems to invite a response by the listener (line 4).

Example 2
```
05 A: you have never seen so much alcohol consumed by [our bosses..#
06 B:                                               [m-
07 B: re- r ↑↓REAlly.
```

The extreme formulation here is "never," used to emphasize a situation that would normally not happen (line 5). It seems to invite a response by the listener. In fact, the listener begins to produce a response soon after the first potential completion point "you have never seen so much alcohol consumed," but since the speaker continues with the prepositional phrase, the listener withholds further response until the TRP is clear.

Example 3
```
09 A: =they brought all this <GIN?# [and VODKA.>#
10 B:                               [h ha
11    $really. gin?=
```

A specific piece of information, "gin," is produced by enunciating in a louder voice with a rising intonation (line 11). This, along with the laughter in line 10, really demonstrate extreme formulation and leads the listener to respond.

Receiving Unexpected Information. When a listener receives unexpected information, they may respond with change-of-state tokens.

Example 4
```
22 A: =no.# =we're (.) actually in the process of painting the room now.#
23 B: ↑↓o:h=
```
A treats the information she is presenting as unexpected via the use of "actually" (line 22). B orients to this perspective with a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984). This token "oh" is formed with increased volume, changes in intonation, and lengthening, demonstrating that their current state of knowledge has shifted (line 23).

Example 5
```
29 A: allen's doing the painting.#
30 B: ↑↓o::h:
```

The information from A seems to be new to B (line 29), as seen in B's change-of-state token "oh" with shifting intonations and sound stretching as a response.

Example 6
```
04 B: ↑YEAH.#I'm going friday to um (.) flying to san francisco?#
05    .hh a:::nd I'll take the airporter into ma↓ri:n?#
06    cause judy's wor↓king?# and richard will pick me up ↓there?#
07    and (.) u:m tks >and then< we'll hang out with ↓ju:de?#
08    on ↓saturda:y?# and we're gonna camp overnight at bodega ↓ba:y?#
09 A: wonderful.=
```

A's assessment response "wonderful" (line 9) comes after B finally mentions an extraordinary event, camping overnight (line 8). This shows A's orienting to this detail in B's telling as extraordinary, perhaps, which is more unusual than the previous details telling an uncommon occurrence (flying to San Francisco, taking the airporter into Marin, being picked up by Richard, hanging out with Jude, etc. in lines 4-7). This seems to be enough information for A to make an assessment.

Shifting Towards Subjective Assessments. Speakers tend to switch their explanations from objective to subjective when giving an assessment.

Example 7
```
12 B: .hhh and he lives in °ell ey,# and° he- and I met him
13    when he was visiting he:r,# about a MONth ago.#
14    .hh a:nd (.) you know,#(.)I ↑thought he was kind of ↑cute.#
15    but >he was like< (.) TOTAlly enamored of me.#
16 A: ↑↓WOW=
```

B's description of a man is objective in lines 12 and line 13, since it only provides factual

details of the events that occurred. It becomes subjective in lines 14 and 15, as B adds her own personal opinion (line 14). This, together with the extreme case formulation "totally" (said in louder volume), prompts A's loud response with shifted pitch.

Recognition

Marking Noteworthy Information. Through increased voice volume, raised pitch, and lengthening, speakers can mark specific information as noteworthy.

Example 8
```
04 B: a:nd two of them live here:.# an and the friend lee:?#
05 A: °mhm°
```

The specific information "Lee" is produced with lengthening, emphasis, and rising intonation (line 4). This seems to invite recognition, and acknowledgement is produced in line 5.

Example 9
```
13 B: and I think Tasha is going to come from Berkeley
14    and meet us and then .h um
15 A: [she's back at school right.
16 B: [Monday &um.
17    yeah# =she's up at berkeley.#°yew siy° ((UC)) berkeley.#
18 A: =°yeah.°
```

B seems to invite recognition from A when she repeats "Berkeley" with a modifier, "UC," to aid recognition (line 17). A's quieter response in line 18 shows recognition as well as a request for B to proceed with the story.

Receiving Sufficient Information. When listeners can recognize something, picture a situation, answer a question, or make an assessment, their response may show that they do not need further elaboration.

Example 10
```
08 B: =remember I toldju that e:ve,# d boyd who's(.)d an o b g y n doc. #
09    young thi:ng.#
10    (.)
11 B: u:m (.) tks her brother was >kind of< wooing me,=#
12    he's from ell ey:((L.A.)),#did [I tell you about him,#
13 A:                               [↑↓NO]
```

A's response to "No" (line 13) is an answer to B's question, "remember I told you that Eve Boyd…" (line 8). However, the data show that it takes a while for A to answer the question because she needs enough information from B for recognition. Once A perceives enough details to answer B's question from line 8, she produces a response with louder volume and raised-then-lowered pitch.

Example 11
```
04 B: ↑YEAH.#I'm going friday to um (.) flying to san francisco?#
05     .hh a:::nd I'll take the airporter into ma↓ri:n?#
06     cause judy's wor↓king?# and richard will pick me up ↓there?#
07     and (.) u:m tks >and then< we'll hang out with ↓ju:de?#
08     on ↓saturda:y?#and we're gonna camp overnight at bodega ↓ba:y?#
09 A: **wonderful.=**
```

A's assessment "wonderful" (line 9) comes after B finally mentions camping overnight (line 8). This shows A's orienting to this detail in B's telling as extraordinary, perhaps more unusual than the previous details (flying to San Francisco, taking the airporter into Marin, being picked up by Richard, hanging out with Jude, lines 4-7).

Example 12
```
22 B: [and then when it went into the ↑night.#
23     so I was out there °at night wi-° sta:rs,=and the mo:on,#=and.
24     >we had< a campfire,#=and singing,#=and [all that.#
25 A:                                          [oh, that's wonderful.
```
B provides several details during the telling (line 23-14) then ends her turn with a general extender, "and all that" (line 24). This seems to indicate the end of her telling. Perhaps because of this signal and because A has already been able to picture the situation by this point, A responds with an assessment, "oh that's wonderful," in line 25.

Humor. When a speaker adds humor, it can elicit a response or demonstrate shared experience.

Example 13
```
06 A: .h >it was just like< alice walker story.# except that (.)
07     alice walker like went on and did ↑well. hh.#
08 B: **[hahahaha**
09 A: [.h and this one $became alice ↑walker.#
10 B: **mm=**
```

The TRP in line 6 ends with falling intonation, indicating completion of the turn. A adds a humorous comment and invites laughter by producing a laughter token after the TRP (line 7). B responds to the laughter invitation with laughter particles (line 8). A extends the humorous moment by repeating the word "Alice Walker" and ends with falling intonation in line 9. She also produces the last word "Walker" in the same way as "well" in line 7.

Listing. When a speaker has listed two items, a list completer is usually expected to follow, prompting a response from the listener.

Example 14
```
16 B: and they had< fo:::od.#=and (.)>it was just< so great to be
17     outdoors.# with all these >sort of< (.) you know. nice people,#
```

```
18     =and arty people,=and.#
19 A: °well° that was refreshing?=
```

Example 15
```
17 A: <DA:NCing around,#SPILLing stu:ff,#>[.hh
18 B:                                       [a HAHAHAHA
```

In both cases above, responses are drawn after the speaker lists two items. For example, in Example 14, B provides two lists on lines 17 and 18 regarding an art event. This causes a response from A in line 19. In example 15, B produces laughter particles after A lists humorous actions.

Affiliation

Upgrading. A speaker can upgrade his or her listener's assessment to elicit a response.

Example 16
```
11 B: .hhh and farmla:nd,#=as well as just(.)um,(.) tsk
12     a great house he built,#=and..hh >so there were< all these
13     people.#
14     >it was just so much fun it was like an (.) ha-< an art
15     happening.#
16     .hh he had sculpture:s,# sculp- his own sculptures of different
17     k:inds,#=>and then he had a< .hh a painter who showed with
18     hi:m,>#
19     and they had< fo:::od.#=and (.)>it was just< so great to be
20     outdoors.# with all these >sort of< (.) you know. nice people,#
21     =and arty people,=and.#
22 A: °well° that was refreshing?=
23 B: =>it was< VERY refreshing,#
24 A: [yeah.
```

A's assessment in line 22 is a response to B's prior storytelling. In line 23, B upgrades A's assessment from "refreshing" to "very refreshing," which draws A's response in line 24. The "very" in line 23 is said with louder volume, and this upgrade shows B's agreement with A.

Example 17
```
22 B: [and then when it went into the ↑night.#
23     so I was out there °at night wi-° sta:rs,=and the mo:on,#=and.
24     >we had< a campfire,#=and singing,#=and [all that.#
25 A:                                          [oh, that's wonderful.
26 B: it's really great.#[ >it was<°very°
27 A:                    [good for the soul.
28 B: YE:AH_>really good for the [°soul.°<
29 A:                            [yeah.
```

In line 26, B upgrades A's assessment "wonderful" (line 25) to "really great," which draws

A's response in line 27. The following line 28 is the same case, where B's upgraded assessment causes A's agreement in line 29.

Climax. Speakers can respond to a climax in a story by making an assessment.

Example 18
```
26 A: =.hh I said >so if she wants to come she can come on< sa:turday.#
27    .hh he said what.#>you're only giving her two- once a week?< (.)#
28    ↑>I said< she ↑doesn't come ↑ANY times[a week.#
29 B:                                        [sh- ((bursting sound))
30    (0.2)
31 A: so it's ↑RIDICULOUS.#
32    (.)
33 B: right.
```

The use of reported speech by A indicates the story's climax, and when A makes an assessment about her climax in a louder voice and with a higher pitch (line 31), this signals the end of the climax. At precisely this point, B produces a response to agree with A (line 33).

Beginning a Story to Mark a New Turn. To recognize a story launch and align with the telling, a recipient may also produce a response in the form of a topicalizer.

Example 19
```
01 A: good.
02 B: yeah.
03 A: >speaking of which I had the russians< come to the party on Tuesday.#
04 B: OH YEAH?
```

B ends her topic with a sequence-closing third, "yeah" (line 2). A grabs a new turn to launch a story with a disjunctive marker "speaking of which" (line 3). B responds with a topicalizer, which is spoken with a higher volume, to align with the telling (line 4).

Example 20
```
01 B: it's really great.#[ >it was<°very°
02 A:                     [good for the soul.
03 B: YE:AH_>really good for the [°soul.°<
04 A:                            [yeah.
05 B: .hhh >and then< ↑friday I'm going t to the bay ↑area.#
06    (0.2)
07 A: you ↑↓ARE.
```

After the previous story ends with A's sequence-closing third (line 4), B grabs a turn to launch a story (line 5). After providing temporal and spatial settings with some words in raised pitch, it ends with falling intonation. The short pause after the TRP also contributes to eliciting the topicalizer by A (line 7).

When Response Tokens are not Produced at TRPs
Topic Development
When a telling or topic is developing, responses may be withheld until more information is given.

Example 21
```
03 A: you ↑↓ARE.
04 B: ↑YEAH.#I'm going friday to um (.) flying to san francisco?#
05    .hh a:::nd I'll take the airporter into ma↓ri:n?#
```

In line 4, B produces an acknowledgment token "yeah" after A's topicalizer in line 3. This acknowledgment is made in a preferred way, with a higher pitch and louder voice, and ends with falling intonation. The second TRP, ending in rising intonation in line 4, receives no response because B starts launching a story by providing temporal and spatial settings.

Example 22
```
01 B: but even knowing me and °everything so°.hhh
02    BUT. in any case.#.hh (0.2) he and (.) his sister,(0.2)#
```

In line 2, by using the conjunction "but" and the disjunctive marker "in any case," B shifts the topic. She holds the turn by introducing characters to her story. The second TRP in line 2 has a slightly rising intonation, indicating that the turn has not reached a completion point, causing A to withhold her response.

Example 23
```
04 A: she DID show up.#= and she told me this WHOLE SO:B story.#
05    about her E:YE being injured b- as a ch:ild,# and .hh
```

In line 4, A provides a detail of the following telling by saying "sob story," a phrase used to describe an overly dramatic or superfluous version of a narrative. This seems to cause B to withhold her response.

Non-executable Responses
Speakers may tell a story in a way that a response is not possible.

Example 24
```
08 B: =remember I toldju that e:ve,# d boyd whose(.)d an o b g y n doc. #
09    young thi:ng.#
10    (.)
```

It can be observed that A keeps quiet from lines 8-10, perhaps to try to collect more information to answer the question B presents in line 8. The first TRP in line 8 is said with a slightly rising intonation, as it is a question for A. The absence of A's answer prompts B to add an increment, which is a detail about a character in the story (line 9). This TRP on line 9 ends with

falling intonation, followed by a micro pause, for B to wait and see A's recognition.

Blocked and Uninvited Responses

When a response is not invited or is blocked, the listener is not allowed to respond because the speaker did not extend an invitation to do so, or the listener was turned down altogether.

Example 25

```
02 B: BUT. in any case.#.hh (0.2) he and (.) his sister,(0.2)#
03    tsk know this local artist who's a sculptor.# a:nd um,(0.2)
04    tsk a- who's a white guy who's married to a na:vajo.# who-
05    and they have this(.)house.#this BIg.#>you know like.<(0.5)
06    .hh property.# um,(0.2) on the navajo reservation.#
07    so:, we went out there.# and it was ↑just beautiful.#
```

The second TRP in line 2 has a slightly rising intonation, indicating that B's statement has not finished yet. From lines 3 to 7, the TRPs end with falling intonation, which means turn end is possible. However, B's description becomes more detailed, adding specifics about different characters and places; her focus shifts several times throughout the telling. A withholds her response, waiting perhaps until B's story becomes subjective. In addition, B talks about the background of the story, and A has not received any information to clarify the content. Therefore, there is no need for the B to produce a response.

Example 26

```
08 A: =and then, I can think the twenty eighth.# we're scheduled to have
09    the rug brought.= #
10 B: ↑↓oh ↑↓wo:w
```

The TRP with falling intonation in line 8 receives no response. B withholds her response until she receives an explanation about the provided number "twenty eighth." This example exhibits a case where the listener does not respond if she needs more elaboration of specific information provided by a speaker.

Example 27

```
23 B: so I was out there °at night wi-° sta:rs,=and the mo:on,#=and.
24    >we had< a campfire,#=and singing,#=and [all that.#
25 A:                                          [oh, that's wonderful.
```

In lines 23 and 24, B produces two lists: "stars and the moon," then "a campfire and singing." A does not automatically produce a response after the first listed items. However, when B has completed the second item on the second list, A responds with acknowledgment and assessment (line 25). The fact that this response by A overlaps with B's general extender ("and all that," line 24) shows A's recognition of B's turn end.

Example 28
```
15 B: >=he's thirty seven he'll thirty eight I guess in °December.°<#
16    .hhh and he lives in °ell ey,# and° he- and I met him
```

     In line 15, B increases her speech speed and lowers her volume. This makes the details of the story, like the character's age and birth month, sound less important to the listener. Therefore, there is no response.

Example 29
```
26 A: =.hh I said >so if she wants to come she can come on< sa:turday.#
27     .hh he said what.#>you're only giving her two- once a week?< (.)#
28     ↑>I said< she ↑doesn't come ↑ANY times[a week.#
```

     The climax of the story is presented by A on line 28. A increases her speech speed in lines 26 and 27 while approaching the climax and uses direct reported speech like "I said" and "he said" to emphasize and make the story dramatic. The listener never interrupts at this point, most likely because A exaggerates the content to make her points.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of 117 TRPs reveals the conditions where a listener tends to produce or not to produce a response in storytelling. Overall, differences in intonation at TRPs hardly seem to affect the occurrence of a response. Once a listener notices that a speaker is launching a story, a listener aligns with the telling by being a listener, unless a speaker signals a need for a response or a listener needs to clarify something to follow the story. A speaker invites a response by combining a few ways to exaggerate a specific term by increasing voice volume, changing pitch, or lengthening the word. The more ways a speaker combines these elements, the more likely they will receive a response, no matter what type of intonation the TRP has. The usage of extreme case formulation is one of the signals from a speaker, which is often used in a climax. A speaker prefers to receive an affiliation when they make an assessment, create a humorous part, or insert their subjective perspective. A topicalizer or a continuer is preferred when a listener launches a story in their new turn. On the other hand, speakers can also signal when they prefer to avoid being disturbed. Increasing speech speed is one of those signals. A speaker increases their speech speed when they consider a certain part less important and want to reach the climax as fast as possible, or to describe the climax enthusiastically using direct reported speech.

     Aside from a speaker's signals, there are some cases where a listener needs to respond in order to practice efficient listenership. Generally, a speaker elaborates an event or situation during storytelling. Even when it sounds vague at the beginning, a speaker will provide detailed information as the story progresses. Therefore, unless there is something which needs to be clarified, a listener withholds responding. However, when a speaker shows extra effort in order to help a listener recognize a situation by adding increments or listing information, and a listener has already recognized it, the listener needs to produce a response to let the speaker know so that the speaker can proceed with their storytelling.

As Ward and Tsukahara (2000) stated, a speaker often produces cues to request a response and a good listener is expected to catch the cues and be responsive while observing the one-speaker-at-a-time rule (Norrik, 2012). This analysis clearly supports their claims, in spite of the limited data sample size.

The analysis shows how both a speaker and a listener collaborate with each other in a storytelling sequence by signaling and responding, which is especially useful for teaching listenership. In most language classes, both teachers and learners place more importance on speakership than listenership. Although listeners' responses are included in some dialogues and learners can practice responding to a certain situation by using short dialogues, teaching the usage of minimal response tokens tends to be considered less important than other communicative tools, and teaching responses using whole storytelling sequences is rarely introduced in a class. Needless to say, when not to respond is hardly discussed in a class. Considering situations where language learners communicate with native speakers or speakers with higher language proficiency, they play a listener's role more often than a speaker's role. Even learners with high proficiency have many opportunities to play a listener's role. This is because being a good listener is as important as being a good speaker. As the analysis above shows, playing a listener's role is not a passive endeavor since it involves tuning in to the speaker's signals regarding when to respond or when not to. How successfully the storytelling is conducted depends on how a listener and speaker can collaborate

Another reason why teaching responses has received less attention is the common perception that there is little difference in the way people respond in the world. However, there are some differences, at least when comparing American culture with Japanese culture. Although English is a world language, we do not suggest teaching one way of responding in a specific culture. However, realizing cultural differences helps learners to understand how communication can be conducted successfully between people with different socio-linguistic norms.

For these reasons, listenership should be focused on more in the future. Learning the different ways to respond to storytelling can contribute to better listenership, which will help learners to improve their interactional competence.

References

Gardner, R. (2001). When Listeners Talk: Response Tokens and Listener Stance. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gardner, R. (1997). The Conversation Object Mm: A Weak and Variable Acknowledging Token. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, vol.30(2), 131-156. doi: 10.1207/s15327973rlsi3002_2

Have, P. (2007). Doing conversation analysis: A practical guide, 2nd edition. Sage

Heritage, J. (1984). A Change-of-State Token and Aspects of its Sequential Placement. In Structures of Social Action, ed. by J. Maxwell Atkinson, and John Heritage, 299–345. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Heritage, John. 1984b. Garfinkel and Ethnometh

Ike, S. (2010). Backchannel: A feature of Japanese English. *JALT 2009 Conference Proceedings*, 205-215. Tokyo: JALT.

McCarthy, M. (2003). Talking Back: "Small" Interactional Response Tokens in Everyday Conversation. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, vol.36(1), 33-63. doi: 10.1207/S15327973RLSI3601_3

Norrik, N.R. (2012). Listening practices in English conversation: The responses responses elicit. *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol.44, 566-576. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.08.007

Pomerantz, A. (1986). Extreme Case Formulations: A Way of Legitimizing Claims. *Human Studies*, vol.9, 219-229.

Rosenfeld, H.M. and Hancks, M. (1980). The Nonverbal Context of Verbal Listener Responses. In Key, M.R., The Relationship of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication, 193-206. Hague, Paris & New York: Mouton

Schegloff, E. A. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction: A primer in conversation analysis, vol. 1.* . Cambridge University Press.

Ward, N. and Tsukahara, W. (2000). Prosodic Features Which Cue Back-channel Responses in English and Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol.32, 1177-1207. doi: 10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00109-5

About the author

Shiho Fujii holds an MA in TESOL from Hawaii Pacific University and is currently teaching English in Japan. Her research and teaching interests are style shifting between Japanese and English and project-based teaching involving peace education.

Alexandra Perez holds a BA in TESOL from Hawaii Pacific University and is currently teaching English to adults in South Florida. Her research and teaching interests are decolonizing pedagogies, particularly as they relate to English language instruction.

Appendix
Data Used in Analysis

Excerpt 1 - 11:07-11:56 (11-31) B's story
```
01 A: dju have friends lor?
02 B: um,(1.0).hhh ↑sort of.#
03    .hh ↓I have, (.) you know I have the midwi:ves.#
04    a:nd two of them live here:.# an and the friend lee
05 A: °mhm°
06 B: a:nd then u:m (.) >I actually went to< an ART thing.#
07    >which was< really fun.# u:m (0.2)saturday.=#
08    =remember I toldju that e:ve,# d boyd whose(.)d an o b g y n doc. #
09    young thi:ng.#
10    (.)
11 B: u:m (.)tks her brother was >kind of< wooing me,=#
12    he's from ell ey:((L.A.)),#did [I tell you about him,#
13 A:                              [↑↓NO]
14 B: well he's like she's thirty (0.5) ((hissing sound)) six.=#
15    >=he's thirty seven he'll thirty eight I guess in °December.°<#
16    .hhh and he lives in °ell ey,# and° he- and I met him
17    when he was visiting he:r,# about a MONth ago.#
18    .hh a:nd (.) you know,#(.)I ↑thought he was kind of ↑cute.#
19    but >he was like< (.) TOTAlly enamored of me.#
20 A: ↑↓WOW=
21 B: =immediately which was very suspect.#
22    [>I mean< before even know me.#
23 A: [even when you're even though you're older and ↑everything.
24 B: yeah.#
25 A: wow.
```

Excerpt 2 - 13:10-14:11 (68-92) B's story
```
01 B: but even knowing me and °everything so°.hhh
02    BUT. in any case.#.hh (0.2) he and (.) his sister,(0.2)#
03    tsk know this local artist who's a sculptor.# a:nd um,(0.2)
04    tsk a- who's a white guy who's married to a na:vajo.# who-
05    and they have this(.)house.#this BIg.#>you know like.<(0.5)
06    .hh property.# um,(0.2) on the navajo reservation.#
07    so:, we went out there.# and it was ↑just beautiful.#
08    >°I mean°< wa:y out.#[>you know< BIG RED ROCK kind of thi:ng,=#
09 A:                     [↑mhm mm
10    =↑↓mh::m
11 B: .hhh and farmla:nd,#=as well as just(.)um,(.) tsk
12    a great house he built,#=and..hh >so there were< all these people.#
13    >it was just so much fun it was like an (.) ha-< an art happening.#
14    .hh he had sculpture:s,# sculp- his own sculptures of different
15    k:inds,#=>and then he had a< .hh a painter who showed with hi:m,>#
16    and they had< fo:::od.#=and (.)>it was just< so great to be
17    outdoors.# with all these >sort of< (.) you know. nice people,#
18    =and arty people,=and.#
19 A: °well° that was refreshing?=
20 B: =>it was< VERY refreshing,#
21 A: =>it was< VERY refreshing,#
22 B: [and then when it went into the ↑night.#
```

```
23  : [and then when it went into the ↑night.#
24    >we had< a campfire,#=and singing,#=and [all that.#
25 A:                                          [oh, that's wonderful.
26 B: it's really great.#[ >it was<°very°
27 A:                    [good for the soul.
28 B: YE:AH_>really good for the [°soul.°#<
29 A:                            [yeah.
```

Excerpt 3 - 14:11-14:58 (93-111) B's story
```
01 B: .hhh >and then< ↑friday I'm going t to the bay ↑area.#
02    (0.2)
03 A: you ↑↓ARE.
04 B: ↑YEAH.#I'm going friday to um (.) flying to san francisco?#
05    .hh a:::nd I'll take the airporter into ma↓ri:n?#
06    cause judy's wor↓king?# and richard will pick me up ↓there?#
07    and (.) u:m tks >and then< we'll hang out with ↓ju:de?#
08    on ↓saturda:y?#and we're gonna camp overnight at bodega ↓ba:y?#
09 A: wonderful.=
10 B: =yeah #°and then° ↑sunday we're going to the ↑ja:zz festival,#
11    in the russian ↑river area.# °right on the russian river somewhe-°#
12 A: >well< THA:T'll be good for you,=
13 B: =↑yeah.# .hh (.) >and I think< ta:sha is gonna come from berkeley.#
14    =and meet us,# and then .hh(.)u::m (0.2)[monday,
15 A:                                        [she's back at school right?
16 B: yeah#=she's up at berkeley.#°yew siy° ((UC)) berkeley.#
17 A: =°yeah.°
18 B: a:nda: uh: she seems happier,#
19    (.)
20 B: °I mean° she's (.) she hasn't really (.) for sure
21    gotten her classes necessarily.#=or started them.# but she's .hh
22    (0.4) hopeful about it,#=°and°she's glad to be out of santa cruz
23    [°actually? °
24 A: [yeah.]
25 B:  °and° .hh so I'll see he:r and I'll see my new look cousin.
```

Excerpt 4 - 15:30-16:09 (126-152) A's story
```
01 A: >speaking of which I had the russians< come to the party on Tuesday.#
02 B: OH YEAH?
03 A: we had <ei BA:sh.>#
04 B: oh my go:d.
05 A: you have never seen so much alcohol consumed by a bashes.#
06 B:                                                [m-
07 B: re- r ↑↓REAlly.
08 A: unbelievable.#
09 B: ↑↓oh=
10 A: =they brought all this <GIN?# [and VODKA.>#
11 B:                              [h ha
12    $really. gin?=
13 A: =they got <schNOckered.> #
14    [they they we had a <PA:Rty> here.#
15    [they they we had a <PA:Rty> here.#
16 B:                                  [a HAHAHAHA
```

```
17 A: still sticky everywhere [you are?#>I ha- I really have to clean.<#
18    =and arty people,=and.#
19 A: °well° that was refreshing?=
20 B:                               [ah ((voice produced when inhaling))
21 B: did you get your rug put in? # in your new carpet?=#
22 A: =no.# =we're (.) actually in the process of painting the room now.#
23 B: =no.# =we're (.) actually in the process of painting the room now.#
24 A: =and then, I can think the twenty eighth.# we're scheduled to have
25    the rug brought.= #
26 B: ↑↓oh ↑↓wo:w
27 A: allen's doing the painting.#
28 B: ↑↓o::h:
```

Excerpt 5 - 17:36-18:31 (205-226) B's story
```
01 A: I mean I actually ↑am. (.) inc↑luding the woman
02    >who I was supposed to be teaching to read who's breaking my heart.<
03 B: did she ever show up?
04 A: she DID show up.#= and she told me this WHOLE SO:B story.#
05    about her E:YE being injured b- as a ch:ild,# and .hh
06    >it was just like< alice walker story.# except that (.)
07 B: [hahahaha
08 A: [.h and this one $became alice ↑walker.#
09 A:                     [↑mhm mm
10 B: mm=
11 A: = and this woman? #(0.2)stops studying and forgot how to ↑RE:AD.#
12 B: °mhm°
13 A: .h so anyway I went out and bought a:ll these books,#
14    and like >threw myself into it heart and soul,#
15    and then she never shows ↑up.< = #
16 B:  =tsk .hhh
17 A: she's always >calling,#and cancelling,#
18    =or not calling,# and not showing,# and.<.hhh
19    y- you know,>her husband called last week,#=and I said look.< #
20    (.)>I have a bunch of students here.#=asking for this time.< #
21    (0.3)
22 A: so,(.)I'm not >gonna be able to give two days a week anymore<#
23    and if she wants(.) if HE >had asked for three originally
24    of course she never ↑↓comes.<#
25 B: mhm=
26 A: =.hh I said >so if she wants to come she can come on< sa:turday.#
27     .hh he said what.#>you're only giving her two- once a week?< (.)#
28     ↑>I said< she ↑doesn't come ↑ANY times[a week.#
29 B:                                         [sh- ((sound of bursting out))
30    (0.2)
31    so it's ↑RIDICULOUS.#
32    (.)
33 B: right.
34    (0.3)
```