



Investigating Turn-Taking Patterns on Students' Conversation on Synchronous Discussion

Sylvia Putri Ainurrifah¹, Dian Ratnawati², Irma Khoirot Daulay³

^{1,2,3} English Language Department, Graduate Program, State Islamic University Syekh Wasil, Kediri, East Java

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01	<i>This study investigates turn-taking patterns and students' management of the conversational floor during synchronous online discussions in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. As synchronous platforms grow more prevalent in language learning, understanding how students organize interaction in digitally mediated situations becomes increasingly crucial. The data were collected through a single recorded Zoom discussion involving three EFL students, using a descriptive qualitative approach guided by Conversation Analysis (CA). This study investigates how platform affordances and pedagogical expectations influence turn-taking behavior in teacher directed synchronous classroom context. In contrast, previous CA studies in online EFL contexts that generically address interactional competence. The findings demonstrate that turn-taking in synchronous settings is highly regulated and heavily influenced by teacher oversight. Turn initiation was primarily through teacher nomination, while student self-selection emerged only at clear transition points. Significantly, no were no instances of overlap or interruption were observed, demonstrating that participants complied with platform norms and institutional requirements. Students also utilized self-initiated repair strategies, including hesitations, repetitions, and reformulations to maintain the language challenges and maintain speakership. Overall, turn-taking in synchronous EFL discussions was systematic and non-competitive, influenced by technological affordances and pedagogical framework. Furthermore, the findings of the study enhance the theoretical comprehension of how technologically mediated environments shape interactional patterns and turn-taking frameworks in instructed language-learning settings. Despite the small sample of three participants, these findings provide preliminary insights into interactional approaches within online language classes and highlight the necessity for instructional strategies that encourage equitable participation in synchronous learning settings.</i>
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Corresponding Author: Sylvia Putri Ainurrifah sylviarifah@gmail.com English Language Department, Graduate Program, State Islamic University Syekh Wasil, Kediri, East Java	

1. Introduction

The rise of synchronous online discussions as a core component of contemporary language teaching has transformed how students coordinate interaction, share ideas, and co-construct knowledge. Unlike asynchronous forums, where participants to manage immediate turn-allocation in the presence of technological constraints such as audio latency, muted microphones, and platform specific affordances. Significantly, it is contrast with real-life conversation, where eye contact, gestures, and physical proximity facilitate seamless turn transitions. Comprehending how students assume and regulate turns in synchronous online environments is essential for explaining interactional patterns that influence participation equity, learning engagement, and instructional design.

Theoretically, the study of turn-taking has found great relevance in the Conversation Analysis (CA) framework. Sack, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) proposed a "simplest systematics" for organizing turn-taking in conversation. They pointed out that typically, one speaker speaks at a time during an interaction, with transitions marked by identifiable turn-constructual units (TCUs) and transition relevance places (TRPs), at which another speaker may start. According to CA perspectives, turn-taking is an ordered system that involves participants managing overlaps or gaps, choosing who speaks next through either other self-selection, and monitoring when turns are approaching completion (Heritage, 1984; Iwasaki, 2024).

Beyond turn allocation, CA also examines on how students organize their speaking turns in synchronous conversations is made possible by processes which speakers claim, hold, yield, and negotiate by expended the speaking terms and repair mechanism through the participants manage the understanding disruption, self-repairs such as hesitations, repetitions, and reformulations (Sack, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1977). This theoretical framework integrates turn-taking organization, floor management, participation patterns, and online interaction, particularly relevant in synchronous online environments where medium constraints may prevent traditional turn-taking mechanisms.

Empirical research has recently started to explore how students participate in synchronous online learning. These behaviours have been connected to students' comfort levels, language competency, and task design. Studies have recorded a variety of turn-taking strategies in online classes, including the preference for silence, the use of chat to claim the floor, and clear verbal indicators for turn requests. The results of studies that have been informed by conversation analysis in synchronous online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment demonstrate that instructional techniques and the architecture of interactions both have an impact on turn-taking. Watanabe (2024) demonstrates the systematic

application of the teacher's microphone movements to assign turns and facilitate speaker transitions. Brinham (2021) observed that students in Zoom breakout rooms actively negotiate turn-taking locally, utilizing nonverbal cues to self-select who select the next speaker. Additionally, Prastiningrum (2022) discovered that while synchronous EFL classes frequently employ IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) patterns, they also permit students to start contributions. Gender dynamics are also important. According to Chalak & Karimi (2022), male students often take more turns than female students in virtual EFL classrooms, and teacher selection dominates turn distribution.

Collectively, the research indicate that turn-taking in synchronous online environments is influenced by pedagogical organization, platform capabilities, and participant interactions. Nevertheless, several enquiries remain unanswered on how students navigate floor transitions during teacher-led synchronous discussions, how repair strategies are implemented under the demands of real-time online interaction, and how participation patterns develop when institutional and technological constraints intersect. This study examines these limitations by concentrating primarily on turn-taking and floor management within a singular synchronous EFL discussion session.

This study aims to identify turn-taking strategies and floor management patterns in a synchronous EFL discussion, therefore enhancing the theoretical knowledge of how technologically mediated environments transform interactional norms in directed language learning. The following research questions of this study are; 1) What is the turn-taking strategies that occurs in students' synchronous discussions? and 2) How do students manage turn-taking during synchronous discussions? To address these questions, a descriptive qualitative approach guided by Conversation Analysis (CA) is utilized to examine these enquiries, facilitating an in-depth analysis of naturally occurring interactional data gathered from a single recorded Zoom discussion involving three EFL students.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative research approach to investigate into how students take turns during synchronous discussions. A qualitative method was selected because it enables a thorough investigation of spontaneously occurring interaction rather than depending just on numerical data, a qualitative method was selected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive component focuses on recognizing and describing observable turn-taking occurrences as they appear in online discussions that occur in real time.

The study is situated within the framework of Conversation Analysis (CA), a methodological technique that looks at how talk-in-interaction is structured (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). CA was chosen for this study because it offers methodical techniques to examine how participants create, assign, and negotiate turns in spontaneous speech.

The participants of this study were three students (2 males and 1 female) enrolled in online English course, which was conducted through Zoom platform and participated voluntarily in a group. Despite the limited sample size, this aligns with the CA tradition, which emphasizes the sequential and structural organization of interaction above statistical generalizability (Sidnell, 2010). CA research frequently utilizes limited and intentionally selected samples, as the objective is a thorough microanalytic investigation of interactional patterns rather than broad generalisation.

They were selected using purposive sampling, as they had experience in participating in synchronous discussions conducted through online platforms. The discussions were part of their final exam class activities, which ensured that the interactions analyzed were authentic and reflected natural communication patterns. Thus, the researcher was also the teacher who recognized potential power dynamics between themselves and the participants.

Participants were guaranteed that their participation or lack thereof in the study would not affect their academic success. Before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the research and provided written consent. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the study.

Data were gathered from a single synchronous Zoom conversation session lasting roughly 20 to 25 minutes, during which all three participants interacted collectively. The session was documented with the platform's integrated recording functionality, ensuring enough audio quality for transcription and analysis. Field notes and conversation transcripts were collected to furnish more interactional context.

All participant identities were anonymised through the use of pseudonyms to ensure privacy protection. Despite the data corpus being confined to a single session, this is considered suitable as Conversation Analysis emphasises depth of sequential examination rather than the quantity of data (Heritage, 1984). The single session provided adequate interactional sequences to examine the research questions concerning turn-taking strategies and floor management.

The recorded interaction was transcribed utilizing Jefferson (1984) transcription notation approach, a conventional standard in conversation analysis research. The transcription documented interactionally significant aspects such as pauses (shown by numbers in brackets, e.g., (0.5) for half a second), micro-pauses (.), overlapping speech ([]), latched utterances (=), and emphasis (underlining). These norms facilitated a detailed description of the sequential structure of discourse, which is crucial for conversation analysis.

The researchers analyzed data by using the principles of Conversation Analysis (CA) as outlined by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). The analysis including several steps. First, the recorded interactions were repeatedly reviewed to identify segments where turn-taking behaviours were salient. Second, the

transcribed data were examined to identify turn-taking patterns, such as turn initiation, overlap, interruption, and repair sequences. Third, the researcher analyzed how students managed turn-taking, including how they claimed, held, yielded, or negotiated the conversational floor.

Analytical categories Turn Constructional Units (TCUs) are defined as complete syntactic and pragmatic units that indicate potential turn completion; Transition Relevance Places (TRPs) are identified as moments when a speaker change becomes relevant after TCU completion; and repair sequences are classified based on initiation between self and other initiated and type of repetition, hesitation, and reformulation. The analysis was both descriptive and interpretive which focus on the interactional processes and contextual elements influencing turn management.

To ensure the trustworthy findings of the research, the researchers used the standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, the credibility was established through extended interaction with the data and peer debriefers with a colleague who experienced in CA and reviewed selected transcribe and analytical interpretation.

It should be noted that participant validation through member checking was not applied in this study, as Conversation Analysis emphasizes the sequential and structural organization of interaction rather than participant intentions or subjective meanings; thus, validating analytical constructs such as Transition Relevant Places (TRPs) and Turn Construction Units (TCUs) would be inappropriate (Seedhouse, 2004).

The transferability was facilitated by comprehensive descriptions of the participants, environment, and interactional context. Dependability was ensured by the consistent implementation of CA processes throughout all phases of data collection and analysis, while confirmability was enhanced through the maintenance of an audit trail and reflective notes during the research process.

3. Result

Students' Turn-Taking Management (Claiming, Holding, Yielding, and Negotiating

The data research indicates that students managed the conversational floor through a combination of cautious self-selection, and respect for teacher authority to control turn-taking. The patterns are illustrated in Table 1, indicating that turn holding (n=18) and turn yielding (n=13) were the predominant behaviours, whereas turn claiming and turn negotiating each transpired only three times. The frequency of turn holding over alternative behaviours indicates that once students obtained the floor, they actively endeavoured to maintain it, a pattern aligned with the linguistic difficulties of communicating in a foreign language in real-time online circumstances. The limited occurrence of turn-taking and negotiation suggests that students never competed for the floor and preferring instead to wait until clear

teacher appointment. Turn-taking usually occurs at the points of TCU completion, where the student produced self-selection signal. The following excerpt illustrates this pattern:

01 T : *Anyone wants to explain it?*

02 (0.8)

03 S1 : *Me?*

04 T : *Okey, bro (A) please*

In line 01, the teacher's inquiry forms a complete Turn Construction Unit (TCU), producing line 02 a Transition Relevance Place (TRP), where a change of speaker becomes interactionally relevant. The response "Me?" from S1 in line 03 serves as a minimal self-selection signal, generated specifically at this transition relevance place, indicating awareness of the turn-allocation system. S1 employs increasing intonation, presenting the statement as hesitant and asking for instruction rather than immediately claiming the floor. The teacher's response in line 04 affirms the distribution of turns, preserving institutional authority over engagement.

After securing the floor, students implemented repair strategies to maintain their turns. This sample demonstrates floor-holding by self-initiated repair:

01 S2 : *My favorite cartoon is Sunny Bunnies*

02 : *because (0.5) uh, because the graphics*

03 S1 : *Wh-I usually watch it (with my, my sister)*

04

In line 01, S2's repetition of "*My, my*" serves as a self-initiated self-repair, repeating the turn-initial element to preserve speakership while recovering the subsequent component of the utterance. The pause in line 02, followed by the reformulation "*uh, because,*" serves as a floor-holding procedure, indicating that the turn is not yet finished. The repetitions of repair signals, cut-offs, and hesitation indicators provide a dual purpose which they regulate linguistic complexity while concurrently signalling turn continuing to other participants.

Turn yielding primarily occurred through the creation of a whole TCU, followed by lower intonation or quiet, which invited teacher absorption. Teacher answers like "*Okay good*" served as third-turn confirmations, affirming the completion of a turn and concluding the interactional sequence. The negotiation, however infrequent, was exclusively facilitated through teacher-directed address forms like "*Bro (B) please,*" indicating that the interactional floor remained under institutional authority during the discourse.

Table 1. Turn-Taking Management

No	Turn-Taking Behavior	Frequency
1	Turn Claiming	3
2	Turn Holding	18
3	Turn Yielding	13
4	Turn Negotiation	3
Total		37

Turn-Taking Evidence (Initiation, Overlap, Interruption, Repair)

The data transcription showed clear patterns of turn initiation, numerous repair sequences, lack of overlap, and lack of interruption. As shown in table 2 illustrates that turn initiation was the predominant trend (n=72), whereas repair transpired 22 times throughout the session. The lack of overlap and interruption is analytically important and requires explanation beyond just description.

Turn initiation occurred by two approaches those are teacher nomination and student self-selection. This section indicates that teacher nomination was the predominant method, with the teacher transparently designating the subsequent speaker through the use of address phrases. Student self-selection occurred just at distinct transition relevance places after complete teacher turn-construction units, and was consistently characterized by hesitating signals like "Me?" instead of strong claims to the floor. The distinction in initiation patterns illustrates the institutional nature of the engagement, wherein the teacher served as the principal authority for turn distribution.

Furthermore, the total lack of overlap and interruption is not just a statistical observation but an interactional accomplishment. In face-to-face dialogue, concurrent speaking at transition relevance places is prevalent and anticipated as interlocutors vie for the opportunity to speak. The lack of competition in this data illustrates two interconnected constraints. First is the technological limitations of the Zoom platform, which prevent synchronous conversation due to audio latency and microphone management and second is the institutional rules of the classroom, where students regard the teacher as the principal authority for turn allocation. Collectively, these limits generate a distinctively non-competitive interactional structure. Thus, repair sequences, although infrequent (n=22 out of 72 initiations), were analytically substantial. The following clip demonstrates a repair sequence related to stuttering speech:

01 S3 : *My favorite character is*

02 *T-t-t- uh Patrick*

03 *(0.3)*

04 S4 : *Patrick Star*

In lines 01-02, S3 begins a repair by stuttering "t- t- t-" followed by a pause "uh," prior to articulating the intended word "Patrick. The self-initiated repair in line 02 functions to maintain the floor while S3 obtains the lexical item. The

subsequent reiteration of "*Patrick Star*" in line 04 serves to affirm the completion of the repair, thereby concluding the sequence. These repair patterns align with the interactional requirements of synchronous EFL discussions, where participants must concurrently manage language production and floor control in real time.

Table 2. Turn-Taking Evidence

No	Turn-Taking Pattern	Frequency
1	Initiation	72
2	Overlap	0
3	Interruption	0
4	Repair	22
Total		94

Coding Analytical Categories (TCUs, TRPs, and Repair)

Based on the data transcription, the discussion primary used Conversation Analysis's categories Turn Constructional Units (TCUs), Transition Relevance Places (TRPs), and repair mechanisms were used to code the transcript. As shown in table 3 indicates the identification of 134 TCUs, 134 TRPs, and 22 repair sequences. It should be noted that although the equal frequency of TCUs and TRPs might be redundant. It illustrates the analytical method utilized that each TCU completion was considered to produce one potential TRP, regardless of whether a turn transition occurred at that moment. However, the majority of TRPs in this data did not result in a speaker change; rather, this particular speaker persevered, or the teacher designated the subsequent speaker, so affirming the highly regulated character of turn-taking in this context.

Additionally, TCUs ranged from single-word units to multi-clause structures. Simple TCUs such as "*Me*" or "*Okay*" served as complete interactional units despite their conciseness, indicating immediate completion and establishing TRPs for the subsequent speaker to commence. Multi-unit TCUs, exemplified by the statement "*My favourite cartoon is Sunny Bunnies because the graphics are really good,*" the extend across multiple clauses, with TRPs emerging at each syntactic completion point. This sample illustrates how TCU structure influences turn organisation:

- 01 T : *Anyone wants to explain it?* (TCU complete=TRP)
 02 (0.8)
 03 S1 : *Me?* (Self-selection at TRP)
 04 T : *Okay, Bro (A) please.* (TCU complete=TRP)
 05 S1 : *Uh me?*

At line 01, the teacher's question forms a grammatically and pragmatically complete turn-construction unit, indicating a transition relevance place where student self-selection is relevant. The 0.8-second pause in line 02 signifies a gap at the TRP prior to S1's self-selection in line 03. This sequential framework demonstrates how TCUs and TRPs collaboratively facilitate the shift between speakers. Additionally, repair mechanisms were classified into three categories:

repetitions (e.g., "my, my"), cut-offs (e.g., "Wh-"), and stuttering (e.g., "t-t-t-"). All 22 repair sequences were autonomously initiated self-repairs, indicating that students recognised and rectified their own speech without assistance from other participants. This tendency aligns with the non-competitive interactional order shown in the data that students addressed their speaking challenges autonomously instead of giving corrections to their friends in an institutional context

Table 3. Analytical Categories

No	Analytical CA	Frequency
1	TCUs	134
2	TRPs	134
3	Repair	22
Total		290

4. Discussion

Students' Turn-Taking Management

The results indicate that students' turn-taking behaviour in this synchronous EFL discussion was influenced by a combination of institutional authority, interactional norms, and technological limitations. The discussion evaluates the broader theoretical and pedagogical relevance of these patterns rather than simply redefining them.

The students' consistent preference to assert turns just at teacher-designated Transition Relevance Places, utilizing simple words like "Me" or hesitant expressions such as "Uh, me?" exemplifies the systematic, context-dependent characteristics of turn allocation as articulated by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). In addition, conversation analysis, self-selection at transition relevance places is a standard and relatively equitable right for all participants.

The current data is characterized by ongoing hesitance in self-selection and a tendency to seek approval, even in the presence of explicitly available TRPs, indicating that institutional authority limited the potential of the turn-taking process. This aligns to Sert (2015) and Jenks (2014) concept which regarding classroom interaction by illustrating that in synchronous online environments, institutional limitations on self-selection are more pronounced than in face-to-face classrooms, likely due to the lack of embodied cues that typically indicate students' readiness to engage in discussion.

The high prevalence of turn holding over turn claiming and negotiation, as evidenced by the frequency counts in Table 1, suggests that once students obtained the floor, sustaining it necessitated active interactional activity. Hesitation signals, repetitions, and cut-offs served not just as indicators of linguistic challenges but also as strategic mechanisms for maintaining the conversational floor, signalling turn continuation to other participants, and preventing premature speaker transitions. This correlates with Balaman and Pekarek Doehler (2022) research on

repair in online L2 interaction. However, the current data indicate an additional aspect in an examination context, the consequences of losing the floor mid-utterance are enhanced, possibly increasing students' dependence on these strategies. This alternative claim, which proposes that examination anxiety, rather than linguistic proficiency alone, influenced repair frequency, merits recognition, as it highlights a contextual element that prior studies have not systematically examined.

Turn-Taking Evidence

The structure of turn initiation observed the data characterized by predominant teacher nomination and minimal student self-selection, aligns with broader studies on institutional discourse. Markee (2015) illustrate that teacher nominations have greater control over participation in online classrooms compared to face-to-face environments. Nevertheless, instead of merely validating this conclusion, the current data encourage a more critical analysis: the near-complete lack of student-initiated contributions raises concerns regarding whether the pedagogical framework of this conversation intentionally prevented student agency. The Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) framework, as outlined by Prastiningrum (2022) in comparable EFL contexts, may serve as a contributing element by establishing the teacher as the principal authority in interactions, consequently reducing possibilities for authentic student-led discussion.

The total lack of overlap and interruption is the most analytically significant discovery in this data and necessitates deeper analysis than just attribution to platform affordances. Three overlapping explanations require further attention. First is technological limitations specifically audio delay and microphone regulation on Zoom render synchronous conversations difficult which align to Licoppe (2021) insights regarding the influence of platform design on interactional dynamics. Second is the institutional context of the classroom that regards to interruptions that are followed by students, regardless of the platform which aligns to the similar synchronous EFL setting (Ho et al. 2023). Third is the examination context of this discussion.

It may have strengthened students' commitment to institutional norms when participation is assessed, students are likely to exercise increased caution regarding turn-taking procedures, resulting in a more regulated interactional order than standard classroom discussions. Fourth is participant familiarity and social structure among the three students cannot be dismissed; students who are well-known and perceive a relative level may self-regulate more accurately than unfamiliar individuals would. The current data cannot conclusively resolve these theories, but recognizing their interaction is crucial for an exact theoretical understanding of the lack of overlap.

In addition, although the repair sequences infrequent, it highlights significant aspects of students' interactional competence. The single occurrence of self-initiated self-repair, without the presence of any instances of other-initiated

correction, indicates that students actively paid attention to their speech and autonomously addressed issues. The pattern aligns with the findings of Balaman and Pekarek Doehler (2022) on L2 repair in an online context, while also presenting significant interpretative considerations. The absence of repairs initiated by others may indicate both authentic shared understanding among the participants.

Analytical Categories

The analytical categories utilized in Conversation Analysis. Those are Turn Constructional Units (TCUs), Transition Relevance Places (TRPs), and repair strategies were crucial in identifying the interactional processes and contextual effects determining turn-taking in this study. However, its implementation reveals a theoretical tension that requires discussion. The initial turn-taking model by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) was formulated based on everyday conversations among equals, where turn allocation is locally regulated and highly egalitarian.

The current data indicate that when this model is utilized in institutional online interactions, the system operates asymmetrically: Teacher Response Patterns (TRPs) that would typically allow for self-selection by any participant instead serve as opportunities for teacher nomination, with students interpreting TRPs as permission cues rather than broad invitations. This discovery enhances the expanding literature of Conversation Analysis study about institutional discourse by Ekawati (2024) and Markee (2015) which demonstrating that the online medium increases rather than mitigates institutional inequality in turn allocation.

Furthermore, the similar frequency of TCUs and TRPs in Table 3 indicates the analytical choice to consider each TCU completion as producing one possible TRP, despite the occurrence of a transition. However, this aligns with CA approach that crucial to observe that most TRPs in the data set were not succeeded by speaker change, indicating that the interactional system was significantly restricted. Repair mechanisms highlighted floor-holding behaviour, with self-repairs serving as cognitive management tools and interactional resources for sustaining speakership, in accordance to Balaman (2021) findings on repair in synchronous online L2 environments.

Pedagogical Implications and Limitation

The teacher-cantered interactional structure evident in these data indicates that existing educational methods may unintentionally reduce student independence and equitable participation. To facilitate more effective student self-selection and a more equitable floor distribution, teachers should consider explicitly teaching students turn-claiming strategies suitable for online platforms, formulating discussion tasks that necessitate student-to-student interaction rather than solely teacher-student exchanges, and establishing small group discussion

opportunities beyond examination contexts.

However, despite the sample size included on three participants, the discussion session lasted roughly 20 to 25 minutes, and the examination atmosphere may have strengthened students' commitment to institutional norms, these limitations do not affect the analytical significance of the findings. Further investigation utilising bigger participant samples, many sessions, and diverse task designs would enhance the knowledge of turn-taking dynamics in synchronous EFL learning contexts.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study utilized a Conversation Analysis (CA) methodology to explore turn-taking patterns and students' control of the conversational floor during synchronous online discussions. The data show that turn-taking is highly organized in this setting, influenced by institutional authority, platform affordances, and students' interactional skills. Students claimed turns primarily through teacher-defined Transition Relevance Places (TRPs), showing that engagement was facilitated by explicit cues rather than spontaneous competition.

The absence of overlap or interruption demonstrates how synchronous systems limit engagement, emphasizing linear and ordered exchanges. Furthermore, many self-initiated repair techniques, such as speech delays, hesitations, and repeats, demonstrated how students actively tried to maintain their turns while dealing with linguistic and cognitive difficulties.

Analytical categories such as Turn Constructional Units (TCUs), TRPs, and repair mechanisms were critical in determining the sequential structure of turns and comprehending the underlying floor management procedures. While the findings provide useful insight into interactional patterns in online EFL discussions, the study's sample size and distinctive discussion environment may limit the results' broader generalizability.

Furthermore, forthcoming studies should include larger and more distinct participant groups to see if comparable turn-taking tendencies appear across competency levels or instructional situations. Researchers may also look at multimodal aspects like gestures, chat messages, and platform tools to get a better understanding of how students coordinate their engagement online. Comparative studies across platforms or between synchronous and asynchronous discussions would enhance understanding into how technology impacts turn-taking behaviour.

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