

A RIGHT TO RETURN: DEFERRED TURN ENTRY IN EFL CLASSROOM
DISCUSSION*Hans C. Aarsleff; Department of English, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544, USA***ABSTRACT**

A classroom contribution does not necessarily cease to matter when the conversation moves to another point. In English as a foreign language (EFL) discussions, learners may recognise a qualification or formulate a response after the floor has passed to someone else. This article examines deferred turn entry, an optional procedure for returning to an identifiable earlier contribution while its relevance to the shared task remains intact. A learner signals the earlier point, a facilitator acknowledges the request and identifies an appropriate return boundary, and the learner retains the choice to speak or withdraw. The procedure makes the timing of participation a shared responsibility rather than leaving every late contribution to be negotiated anew. Scholarship on teacher–learner interaction, willingness to communicate, classroom silence, engagement, and interactional competence establishes the educational considerations behind this arrangement. The article distinguishes deferred entry from extended wait time, ordinary speaking queues, delayed nomination, and the storage of questions for later discussion. Three constructed classroom exchanges demonstrate how an earlier concern can affect a decision, how a delayed invitation can become ineffective, and how withdrawal can be respected when an issue is resolved. Operational tables, a classroom teaching sequence, and detailed observation rules specify what teachers and researchers should attend to. The principal distinction is between an opportunity offered in time and an actual contribution that receives a relevant response. The discussion also addresses unequal access, pressure to speak, facilitator effort, and the conditions for a fair comparison with ordinary supportive teaching. This is an instructional analysis rather than a report of observed learner outcomes. Its claim is that participation practices should protect relevant entry points without compelling learners to take them.

KEYWORDS: deferred turn entry; EFL classroom discourse; speaking opportunities; learner choice; turn-taking; interactional competence; substantive uptake

1. INTRODUCTION: PRESERVING A RELEVANT PLACE IN DISCUSSION

A classroom exchange can move forward before all possible responses to an earlier question have become available. A learner may hear a classmate describe a venue, notice that an advertised closing time creates a practical difficulty, and need additional time to formulate why that difficulty matters. During those moments, the group may already begin comparing entrances, seating, or other conditions. Speaking then involves two distinct tasks: formulating the reservation itself and securing renewed attention to a matter that has already fallen out of the immediate sequence. These tasks should not be conflated. Providing a longer initial pause can assist the first, but it does not necessarily secure a later opening for the second. The instructional issue is therefore not simply who speaks most often or most quickly; it is whether a relevant objection, clarification, or qualification still has a legitimate place in the continuing activity.

Classroom discourse research treats turn allocation, repair, teacher response, and activity transitions as consequential features of learning opportunities because they shape what participants can make relevant at particular moments. In [1], the organisation of interaction is inseparable from what participants can accomplish with classroom language. A teacher may distribute questions widely yet still close particular topics before some learners can connect an emerging idea to them. Equally, a student may be silent for reasons that an observer cannot determine from turn counts. The distinction between an observed absence of speech and a missed conversational opportunity is essential: a teacher should not attribute unexpressed intentions to learners, but can establish a procedure that protects intentions learners

actually signal.

Many EFL activities are built around joint interpretation or decision-making, where the sequence of contributions affects how evidence, alternatives, and objections are handled. Participants compare evidence, ask for clarification, challenge a recommendation, and arrive at a defensible answer. The sequence of contributions is part of the task rather than an incidental timetable. When one learner wishes to revisit a claim about closing time after another learner has shifted to location or capacity, the group must recover the referent and decide whether its implications can still be discussed. This paper focuses on that recoverability. It does not equate quick speech with competence, assume that slower responses are necessarily more thoughtful, or suggest that a return mechanism alone can resolve limitations in vocabulary or sentence formation.

Deferred turn entry is a learner-controlled request to return to a specified earlier proposition at a mutually understood point within the same continuing task. Four observable actions give the request practical force: the learner supplies a recognisable topic anchor; the facilitator acknowledges it; the group reaches a return boundary before the relevant matter is settled; and the learner accepts or declines the opportunity. If the learner speaks, interlocutors can then clarify, question, adopt, or reject the content for reasons linked to the task. Those responses determine whether a realised return receives substantive consideration. A request alone, a later invitation, and a consequential contribution are thus distinct events.

The right in the article's title refers to a limited classroom agreement rather than to guaranteed agreement with a contribution, priority over all other speakers, or a claim to unlimited speaking time. A teacher or peer facilitator undertakes to remember an acknowledged request and invite a return while the point can still influence interpretation or choice. The learner retains control over whether to speak. This arrangement is useful only if it complements ordinary participation: learners remain free to self-select, request urgent clarification immediately, and use language support. Its purpose is to reduce the extra negotiation required for some earlier-point contributions, not to place every sentence under the control of a procedural gatekeeper.

1.1. DEFINITION, PARTICIPATION RIGHTS, AND TEACHING CONTEXT

Five terms distinguish the relevant classroom events and prevent a promised opportunity from being confused with an actual contribution or with substantive peer response. *Temporal access* is the availability of an appropriate place for a contribution as a discussion unfolds. A *return request* is a learner's signal identifying a prior point. An *acknowledged return* is a request for which a facilitator accepts responsibility and identifies a feasible opening. A *realised return* is a spoken contribution that reconnects to that earlier point after intervening talk. *Substantive uptake* occurs when a subsequent contribution engages its meaning through clarification, reason, disagreement, extension, or demonstrated resolution. None of these terms implies a diagnosis of the learner or a measure of general language ability.

The teaching context considered first is a low-stakes EFL discussion in which a group is interpreting a text, weighing alternatives, or making a decision that remains open to revision. Participants must have enough shared language to recognise the earlier topic and receive appropriate assistance when its significance needs clarification. The procedure may be adjusted for different proficiency levels, but it should not silently alter the conditions of high-stakes speaking assessment. It also cannot substitute for immediate repair of a safety concern, mistreatment, or a misunderstood instruction. The present analysis addresses the organisation of a particular opportunity, not the full range of classroom participation needs.

2. PARTICIPATION, TIMING, AND ESTABLISHED CLASSROOM PRACTICES

2.1. INTENTION, FORMULATION, AND ACCESS TO THE FLOOR

A desire to contribute, readiness to formulate a contribution, and access to an appropriate turn are three analytically separate matters. A learner may already know what to say but find that the group has started another matter. Another may wish to object but need to hear more before expressing a qualification. A third may receive an invitation and have no wish to use it. Teachers cannot reliably assign learners to these categories from silence or facial expression alone. The practical response is to make an optional earlier-point request available and to treat the learner's own selection and withdrawal as decisions that have instructional standing.

The immediate setting of communication matters to willingness to communicate and can change from one moment of classroom interaction to another. Cao [2] examines classroom willingness from a sociocognitive perspective; Yashima et al. [3] examine how learners' individual characteristics and unfolding circumstances interact in situated

willingness. These studies support attending to immediate opportunities rather than assuming that a learner's frequency of speech represents a stable trait. They do not establish that offering deferred entry will increase willingness. What follows for teaching is more modest: an invitation should be recognisable and usable at the relevant moment, and students should be able to decline it without being treated as unwilling or deficient.

The review by Zhang et al. [4] places situational influences on willingness to communicate in the foreground and cautions against interpreting classroom participation as a fixed personal disposition. The opportunity that seems helpful to a teacher is not necessarily welcome to a particular learner. Publicly displaying a marker may invite pressure, while a private spoken cue or discreet topic note may be acceptable in the same group. The convention should therefore be negotiated, not imposed as a universal response to hesitation. Learner comments about privacy, attention, and the freedom to withdraw would be informative in any classroom investigation, although neither a request nor a withdrawal alone reveals the learner's underlying motives.

Research on silence reinforces that caution by showing why an absence of speech cannot be assigned a single psychological or cultural explanation. King [5] examines silence in Japanese university language classrooms, and King and Harumi [6] bring together accounts that resist reducing silence to a single cultural or individual explanation. Their contribution to this discussion is methodological as well as pedagogical: a teacher must not infer a hidden wish to speak simply because a student is quiet. Deferred entry begins with an intentional request or a clear choice to use an agreed signal. Silent attention, hesitation, disengagement, and contentment with listening remain possible but unverified interpretations unless participants supply further evidence.

2.2. WAITING FOR A RESPONSE AND RETURNING TO AN EARLIER POINT

An extended wait leaves the current question available for an answer, whereas a deferred return makes an earlier question available again after subsequent talk has moved the sequence forward. The distinction depends on the conversational position, not the number of seconds elapsed. Consider a group comparing event venues. A pause immediately after the teacher asks whether Room East is suitable belongs to the current question. If peers move on to Room West's entrance before another learner voices a concern about Room East's closing time, the concern requires a backward reference and a renewed place in the comparison. Neither a longer pause nor a speaking-order list automatically tells participants who will provide that place.

Ingram and Elliott [7] analyse wait time in relation to the management of classroom speakership, showing why pauses should be understood as interactional practices rather than merely as measurable stretches of inactivity. Waiting remains appropriate when the current response position is open. Deferred entry responds to a different difficulty: the classroom needs to continue, yet a potentially relevant earlier issue should not vanish merely because one learner is still preparing to address it. The two approaches may work together. No claim of instructional superiority follows from identifying their different purposes.

Planning time, written comments, speaking queues, and designated lists of postponed questions also address participation, but they distribute responsibility for timing, topic recovery, and follow-through differently. Planning helps learners prepare before a task; it cannot anticipate every claim made by peers. Written comments preserve wording but may never receive oral attention. A queue secures speaker order, yet a turn can arrive after the relevant decision. A question list may preserve an issue until the end of class, when peers are no longer able to reconsider it. Any existing practice that also safeguards an earlier point, identifies responsibility, permits withdrawal, and returns before consequential closure already performs the central functions described here.

2.3. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR A RETURN

A learner's ability to interrupt, redirect, or reopen classroom activity is not new. Jacknick [8] documents how students negotiate teacher-led shifts of activity, while Waring [9] examines the learning opportunities generated through learner initiatives. These studies direct attention to the work required to gain recognition at a transition. For a student still forming a response, returning after a topic shift may demand an additional interactional move before the intended content can be discussed. Deferred entry provides an alternative: the learner signals a brief request now and makes the substantive contribution at a mutually recognised opening.

The distinctive classroom decision is to distribute that transition work explicitly between the learner and the facilitator. The learner identifies the earlier point and remains free to cancel; the facilitator undertakes to check it before the point loses its relevance; peers are expected to listen and respond to the content rather than treat the invitation as a token turn. An established classroom rule can make the opportunity predictable, but it can also create a second queue, procedural delays, or unwanted visibility. Thus, the educational question is not whether a new term

has been introduced. It is whether the arrangement makes a relevant conversational opening more dependable at a tolerable social and instructional cost.

The expression *temporal access* names the interactional condition at issue rather than a stable learner attribute: a proposition remains discussable at the moment when a learner is prepared to address it. In a decision task, this may mean reopening a reservation before agreement is declared; in textual interpretation, it may mean comparing an alternative reading before the teacher treats the passage as settled. The term points to the observable timing of participation and does not purport to measure learners' cognitive speed, motivation, or competence. A classroom may already provide adequate temporal access without recording requests at all.

Teacher response remains consequential after learner initiation because recognition alone does not guarantee a useful opportunity to return. Table 1 summarizes how deferred turn entry differs functionally from wait time, speaking queues, postponed-question lists, delayed nomination, and spontaneous topic return. Donald [10] examines learner-initiated sequences in EFL classroom interaction, illustrating the relevance of how subsequent turns are managed. An acknowledgment that merely promises a future speaking slot is insufficient if the topic becomes irreversibly closed. Likewise, a well-timed invitation can still fail when an objection receives only praise and the discussion moves away. Deferred entry therefore involves both the return opening and a genuine possibility that peers will consider the contribution, whether or not they agree with it.

TABLE 1. FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CLASSROOM SPEAKING ARRANGEMENTS

Speaking arrangement	Access ordinarily provided	Treatment of an earlier point	Allocation of responsibility and choice
Wait time after a question	Additional space while the current question remains active.	Does not by itself reopen a proposition following a transition.	Opportunity is managed through local pause and nomination practices.
Raised-hand speaking order	A later position in an ordered set of speakers.	A topical link can be lost unless the group explicitly keeps it available.	Facilitator allocates order; the rules may or may not allow withdrawal.
Postponed-question list	A record of an issue for subsequent attention.	Discussion may resume only after the decision or activity has ended.	Return timing, ownership, and voluntary participation depend on the local rules.
Teacher-delayed nomination	A speaking slot selected for a learner by the teacher.	The teacher can revive an earlier topic but need not act on a learner request.	Participation may be obligatory, unlike a retractable learner-led request.
Spontaneous topic return	An earlier point made relevant again by the learner.	Success depends on recognition and response in the ongoing interaction.	The learner negotiates the opening without a prior commitment from a facilitator.
Deferred turn entry	A learner-requested, acknowledged later entry while its topic remains open.	The earlier point is recovered before consequential closure.	Facilitator manages the opening; the learner may withdraw without explanation.

These arrangements can coexist within one discussion, and none should be treated as a fixed or mutually exclusive classroom category. Their differences matter when an earlier contribution would otherwise arrive too late to influence the work at hand. A reasoned rejection after a timely return remains a legitimate educational response; a polite invitation after the matter has been settled does not provide the same opportunity.

3. CONDITIONS FOR A DEPENDABLE DEFERRED RETURN

3.1. A BRIEF REQUEST WITH A RECOVERABLE TOPIC ANCHOR

A return cue should be easier to produce than the contribution it is intended to protect, otherwise the procedure simply relocates the original formulation difficulty. In a venue-selection task, the learner might say "Closing time, please", move a small marker next to a heading marked *Opening hours*, or use an agreed hand signal accompanied by the word "time". The cue need only identify the earlier proposition; it should not require a full objection before the learner is ready. If it is ambiguous, the facilitator may ask "The six o'clock closing time?" and accept correction. Learners should have alternatives that do not depend on quick handwriting, colour recognition, rapid typing, eye contact, or possession of a personal device.

Multimodal aspects of classroom communication warrant attention without inviting automatic interpretation of every movement, gaze, or gesture. Sert [11] examines the resources through which participants organise second-language classroom interaction, and Jacknick [12] places audible and embodied participation within the same interactional field. These approaches support explicit agreements about what a gesture or marker means in a particular

class; they do not allow a teacher to treat every movement as a request. Where a topic cue is private, learners may briefly use resources from their existing language repertoires, an option compatible with the pedagogical possibilities examined by Cenoz and Gorter [13]. The ensuing speaking task can still pursue its stated English-language aims. Choice of signal and confidentiality should be discussed before public use.

3.2. ACKNOWLEDGMENT BEFORE A RELEVANT DECISION BOUNDARY

An unacknowledged request is not yet a dependable arrangement because the learner cannot know whether responsibility for the return has actually been accepted. The facilitator must show that the cue has been understood and identify the opening to which the class is committing. “I have closing time; we will return to it before deciding” communicates the earlier issue and the relevant boundary without interrupting the current speaker’s explanation. A brief visible note may supplement spoken acknowledgment, but it does not replace mutual recognition when the learner cannot tell whether the request was received. The responsibility lies in making the return possible, not in demanding advance proof that the learner’s contribution will be impressive.

The return boundary must follow the purpose and decision structure of the activity rather than a fixed number of seconds. In the venue example, a concern about cleaning after closing time should be heard while room choice or event schedule remains open. In a discussion of a literary passage, a question about a character’s motive must return before the class treats that interpretation as settled. An appropriate opening may follow the current speaker’s comparison, precede a vote, or occur during a planned summary in which the decision can still change. Recording only the number of seconds between request and invitation can conceal failure: an invitation after final selection is too late even when it follows quickly. When several requests accumulate, facilitators should acknowledge their order, combine only genuinely related anchors, and shorten or restructure the task if reliable follow-through becomes impossible.

3.3. WITHDRAWAL AS A GENUINE PARTICIPATION OPTION

At the agreed boundary, the facilitator checks whether the learner still wants the return, thereby preserving the difference between an offered opportunity and compulsory performance. “Do you still want to add the closing-time point?” permits either an affirmative reply or a simple “No, thank you”. A withdrawal may mean the concern was answered, the learner changed position, the moment became uncomfortable, or something else entirely. Unless the learner says so, the reason is unknown. The routine therefore requires that the teacher neither demand an explanation nor convert the declined invitation into a compulsory speaking performance. A student who decides not to return has exercised, rather than forfeited, the promised choice.

A return can also become impracticable through the facilitator’s mistake, a premature closure, or an unexpected end to the activity. The omission should be acknowledged: “I closed that choice before checking your request. We can reopen the choice now if the group agrees, or consider the concern at a specified later activity.” A written after-class comment may be worthwhile, but it cannot automatically replace a promised contribution to a live oral decision. The event record should distinguish cancellation requested by the learner, an invitation declined at the agreed boundary, a negotiated alternate opening, and a commitment missed through facilitator action. These distinctions help locate instructional difficulties without treating every outcome as a success.

3.4. A RESPONSE THAT ADDRESSES THE CONTRIBUTION

The purpose of the return is to place an earlier proposition back into shared reasoning while it can still influence interpretation, evaluation, or choice. A learner may explain why a room’s closing time affects setup, limit agreement to part of another speaker’s claim, or request a missing condition. Peers can ask what the objection refers to, provide contrary evidence, make a qualified concession, or explain why the group will keep its decision. This response need not be lengthy or affirmative, but it must bear on what was said. “Good point, next question” after an irrevocable decision does not provide the same opportunity as “We cannot end earlier because the speakers arrive at five; should we choose the other room instead?” The latter is relevant disagreement, even if the original preference is not adopted.

3.5. PRESERVING THE CORE CONDITIONS ACROSS TEACHING SETTINGS

Dependability comes from preserving the underlying conditions rather than requiring every group to use identical cards, words, signals, or facilitator roles. The teacher may initially manage requests and later rotate responsibility among learners. One class may rely on oral cues while another uses a single discreet note. The differences become consequential when a learner cannot register an intention, an earlier point is not recoverable, the opening arrives after

the matter is settled, declining becomes unsafe, or the contribution is treated as disposable. Table 2 defines those boundaries so that a teacher can distinguish changes in delivery from failures of the underlying agreement.

TABLE 2. ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS, PERMISSIBLE VARIATIONS, AND BREAKDOWNS

Essential condition	Acceptable classroom variation	What counts as a breakdown
Initiation controlled by the learner	Spoken cue, familiar gesture, private card, or learner-authorised peer support.	A teacher turns perceived hesitation into a request without the learner's agreement.
Identifiable earlier proposition	One-word topic cue, reference to a shared heading, or prompt to clarify the anchor.	Neither speaker nor facilitator can identify what is to be reopened.
Acceptance of responsibility before closure	Acknowledgment by teacher or rotating peer; an orally stated or visibly recorded boundary.	The acknowledgment is missed, forgotten, or followed by invitation after final closure.
Freedom to decline the invitation	Spoken refusal, discreet withdrawal, or agreed cancellation of a pending request.	Declining is graded, criticised, or met with pressure to justify silence.
Opportunity for relevant peer response	Clarifying question, supported disagreement, reasoned acceptance, or reconsidered choice.	A return receives only ritual praise or is cut off because the decision cannot be reopened.

4. THE DISCOURSE SKILLS OF RETURNING AND RESPONDING

Returning to an earlier contribution is itself an EFL language task because speakers must reconstruct reference across intervening talk and show why the earlier point still matters. Speakers need to identify a prior assertion, show how their qualification relates to it, and reconnect that qualification to the current purpose. Listeners must track the reference and respond without assuming that the earlier issue has become irrelevant. Loewen and Sato [14] review the role of interaction in instructed second-language acquisition; their work supports examining the opportunities for negotiation and response that arise in classroom talk, but does not establish an improvement from deferred entry. The teaching target here is an intelligible sequence of referencing, qualifying, explaining significance, checking understanding, and responding.

The expressions used to teach those moves should remain flexible enough to serve ordinary conversation rather than become a mandatory script. To identify an earlier point, a learner might ask “Could we go back to the room’s closing time?” To make its significance clear, the learner might continue “We need twenty minutes to clear the tables after the event.” A bounded disagreement could be “I agree about the number of seats, but the opening hours are a problem.” A listener can test understanding with “Is the problem the event time or the clean-up time?” and respond with “Then we should compare an earlier finishing time.” The same work can be done through simpler clauses and collaborative clarification; reciting a polished phrase is not the instructional objective.

Dao [15] examines interaction-strategy instruction in peer interaction. Galaczi [16] investigates how test-takers manage interaction together, while Galaczi and Taylor [17] discuss the challenges of identifying interactional competence. The relevant object of attention is therefore an exchange involving at least two speakers rather than the returning learner’s turn in isolation. An unfinished sentence that receives clarification and a thoughtful peer response may sustain joint reasoning. A grammatically elaborate objection that cannot be located in the preceding discussion may not. This distinction matters both for feedback during instruction and for selecting meaningful observations of classroom practice.

The following three exchanges are constructed specifically for teaching and analytic illustration. They portray the same venue-selection task under different interactional arrangements; the times, rooms, speakers, and utterances are not observations from an actual class. Line numbers support close reading of the sequence only. They should not be interpreted as a transcription convention for timing, pauses, gesture, overlap, or intonation. Together, the exchanges show why a registered request, a spoken return, and a response that can still affect the task are not interchangeable accomplishments.

4.1. A RETURN THAT CAN STILL INFLUENCE THE DECISION

A group is deciding between Room East, which accommodates more guests but closes at six, and Room West, which has a more convenient entrance. Table 3 presents the first constructed exchange, in which the acknowledged return occurs before the group closes the venue decision. The decision remains open until outstanding topic requests have been checked. Learner B notices that an event ending at six may leave insufficient time to clear the tables and registers that specific issue while C continues the comparison.

The exchange shows the conditions working together within a sequence whose outcome remains open. At lines

02–03, B identifies the earlier subject and the facilitator confirms a return before decision-making. Lines 04–05 move to entrance and seating, making B’s later contribution a genuine return after intervening talk. Line 06 leaves B free to withdraw. The objection at line 07 distinguishes the event’s end from clearing the room, and C’s question at line 08 identifies the precise problem. A’s suggested earlier finish at line 10 creates an alternative the group can still examine. The constructed sequence demonstrates what counts as a meaningful contribution to a decision; it provides no estimate of how often real learners would use the procedure or improve their language as a result.

TABLE 3. CONSTRUCTED EXCHANGE 1: A TIMELY RETURN AND REASONED RESPONSE

Line	Speaker	Teaching exchange
01	Learner A	Room East is available until six, and our event ends at six. It also has more seats.
02	Learner B	Can I come back to the closing-time point before we decide?
03	Facilitator	Yes. We have a return on closing time before choosing the venue. C, finish your comparison.
04	Learner C	Room West has fewer seats, but it is closer to the main entrance. Visitors could find it more easily.
05	Learner A	I still prefer East because everyone can sit together.
06	Facilitator	Before we choose: B, do you still want to return to closing time?
07	Learner B	Yes. If the event finishes at six, when would we clear the tables? I prefer East too, but we need time afterwards.
08	Learner C	So the concern is the time after the event, rather than which room you prefer?
09	Learner B	Exactly. Could we finish earlier?
10	Learner A	We could finish at five thirty. If that is possible, East still works.
11	Facilitator	Let us check that schedule against choosing West. The venue is still provisional.

4.2. WHY A SPOKEN TURN CAN ARRIVE TOO LATE

The same venue discussion can demonstrate failure without any interruption of the learner’s eventual speech. Table 4 shows the contrasting case in which the learner eventually speaks but the promised return arrives only after consequential closure. B asks to raise the closing-time concern before the decision, and the facilitator agrees; nevertheless the room is announced as the final choice before B receives the promised opening.

TABLE 4. CONSTRUCTED EXCHANGE 2: THE DECISION CLOSES BEFORE THE RETURN

Line	Speaker	Teaching exchange
01	Learner A	East closes at six. Our event finishes then too.
02	Learner B	Can I come back to closing time before we choose?
03	Facilitator	Yes, we will check it before deciding. C, what about the entrance?
04	Learner C	West is easier to find, but East has more seats.
05	Facilitator	East is our final choice. We are now writing the report. B, say your closing-time point quickly.
06	Learner B	We may need time to clear the tables after six.
07	Facilitator	Good point. We cannot change it now. Who will present?

A speaking count could register B’s response at line 06, but the promised conditions of participation have not been honoured. The facilitator promised a pre-decision return at line 03 and then treated the decision as final at line 05. B’s concern is acknowledged only after the group has stopped considering rooms. Praise at line 07 does not repair this missed boundary because it explicitly rules out reconsideration. A teacher who recognises such an omission may still reopen the choice or arrange another discussion, but should distinguish that repair from timely delivery of the initial commitment. Otherwise, a class may appear to offer more speaking opportunities while excluding contributions from the decisions to which they belong.

4.3. WITHDRAWAL AFTER THE CONCERN HAS BEEN ANSWERED

The permission to withdraw is just as important when intervening talk has already answered the learner’s concern. Table 5 illustrates a timely invitation that is legitimately declined because the intervening discussion has already resolved the concern. In the next constructed exchange, the facilitator still checks the request at the agreed point but does not require an additional objection merely to prove that the procedure was used. The outcome is successful protection of choice without a later speaking contribution.

At line 06, B explains that the information offered by A and C has resolved the concern. The facilitator accepts the withdrawal and continues the decision process. A classroom observer could record the acknowledgment, timely

invitation, and voluntary decline, but should not assume that every real withdrawal signals satisfaction, comfort, or confidence. A learner who is reluctant to return may make the same outward choice. Student accounts and the surrounding conduct, rather than a numerical tally alone, are needed to investigate whether the option to withdraw is genuinely experienced as free.

TABLE 5. CONSTRUCTED EXCHANGE 3: AN INVITATION RESPECTFULLY DECLINED

Line	Speaker	Teaching exchange
01	Learner B	Please keep a return for the closing-time point.
02	Facilitator	We will check that before choosing. A, continue.
03	Learner A	The information sheet says the room closes at six, but organisers may clear it until six thirty.
04	Learner C	Then we can keep the event schedule and still clear the room afterwards.
05	Facilitator	B, do you still want the closing-time return?
06	Learner B	No, that answers it.
07	Facilitator	All right. Shall we check the entrance before settling the choice?

4.4. RECEIVING AN EARLIER-POINT CONTRIBUTION

Teaching a return involves listeners as well as speakers because a recovered point becomes useful only when others can locate and address it. A learner may have enough language to indicate “the closing time” without yet being able to explain why it matters. The next speaker can support the exchange through a clarification that remains close to the task: “Do you mean time for packing after the event?” The listener’s response should not erase the learner’s position by supplying an unrelated interpretation. Asking for confirmation preserves the learner’s authority over the intended meaning and makes the reasoning jointly available. When a return concerns a disputed claim, speakers can separate agreement with one part of the claim from disagreement with another; the group’s response can then focus on the point of difference.

A teacher can draw attention to four conversational moves after such an exchange: locating the earlier proposition, identifying the point of qualification, explaining why the qualification affects the present task, and responding with information or reasoning. The order is not a script and may change as participants clarify one another. Students can practise these moves in brief paired exercises and return to the primary activity without being rewarded merely for placing a marker. The language bank in Appendix C offers phrases for speakers and facilitators at different levels of complexity.

A useful instructional debrief should ask what the return made possible rather than whether the returning learner spoke fluently or perfectly. Did the others recognise the earlier topic? Could the concern still inform the group’s choice? Was disagreement addressed with a reason? Did the facilitator preserve the learner’s option to withdraw? Those questions direct attention to the shared quality of classroom interaction. They do not confuse an effective local exchange with independently demonstrated language development.

5. PUTTING DEFERRED ENTRY INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

5.1. APPROPRIATE TASKS AND PRELIMINARY REHEARSAL

Implementation can begin with recurring small-group discussions in which the purpose is clear and a conclusion remains provisional long enough to revisit an earlier point. Introduce three contrasting actions: an immediate request for understanding, a request to come back to something already said, and a decision to cancel a pending request. Students should hear and practise both the learner’s request and the facilitator’s response. A few shared headings, such as *Seats*, *Entrance*, and *Closing time*, can support recognition of the earlier topic without turning spontaneous discussion into a transcript-writing exercise.

A venue-selection task does not require students to disclose personal experiences or vulnerabilities and therefore offers a comparatively low-stakes context for initial practice. Lambert et al. [18] examine how learner-generated task content relates to engagement, a reminder that learners’ involvement in the substance of a task deserves attention alongside speaking arrangements. Text interpretation, campus planning, or a reasoned response to a fictional proposal can all give learners material to revisit. Language support should address the actual difficulty: identifying the earlier referent, distinguishing partial agreement from disagreement, or explaining why a condition changes a choice. None of these teaching decisions authorises the teacher to infer language anxiety, slow processing, or low ability from who

chooses to use a return cue.

5.2. FACILITATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CLASSROOM LOAD

In a small group, facilitation can rotate after learners have practised the procedure, reducing reliance on the same confident speaker to manage every contribution and return boundary. The responsible person needs to watch for requests, remember their topical anchors, and avoid closing a decision prematurely. The teacher continues to monitor dominating talk, overlooked signals, and disagreements that are set aside rather than resolved. In plenary discussion, one teacher may face too many simultaneous requests for reliable follow-through. A smaller discussion unit or a brief group phase before whole-class reporting may be more practicable than building an ever longer visible queue.

Facilitator effort has its own instructional cost and should be treated as part of feasibility rather than as invisible background work. Sulis and Mercer [19] investigate relationships between learner and teacher engagement, while Aubrey et al. [20] examine changes in speaking-task engagement over time. Their studies justify considering attention, effort, and the conditions of a speaking task rather than treating any additional turn as a straightforward benefit. A return rule that makes participants watch markers instead of one another, or that redirects more talk to administrative reminders than to the topic, may undermine the purpose of discussion. In such cases, simplifying or suspending the procedure is preferable to preserving it at any cost.

5.3. SITUATIONS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE RESPONSE OR ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT

Some problems should be addressed immediately rather than placed in any deferred-return procedure. Misunderstood instructions, exclusionary behaviour, urgent welfare concerns, and interruptions required for safety do not belong in a postponed-return queue. Similarly, a tightly timed assessment may be intended to measure unaided response under particular conditions; quietly introducing deferred opportunities can change what is assessed. Teachers should tell learners when the convention is available, when an immediate request takes priority, and how participation will be evaluated. Repeated late invitations, forced returns, unresolved domination, and visible loss of attention to the topic are indications that the arrangement requires alteration, not merely more learner practice.

5.4. AN EIGHT-STAGE TEACHING SEQUENCE

A practical teaching unit can use four-person groups choosing between two venues for a student event, with the decision remaining provisional until acknowledged requests have been checked. The group considers seating capacity, ease of access, and closing time before justifying one choice. A short discussion period is set by the teacher, but the decision remains explicitly provisional until all acknowledged return requests have been checked. The communicative goal is to compare alternatives and justify a decision; the discourse goal is to refer to an earlier proposition, explain a relevant qualification, and respond to it. The four-person group is an example suitable for demonstration, not an evidence-based ideal size.

Before the main discussion, the teacher models an immediate clarification (“What does capacity mean?”), a return cue (“Can I come back to closing time?”), and a withdrawal (“No, that’s been answered”). Students practise acknowledging each other’s request and explaining the relevant decision boundary. The teacher stresses that spontaneous entry is allowed and a pending cue does not oblige its owner to speak. Table 6 then gives facilitators a clear order of actions without prescribing identical expressions or materials for every group.

Following the discussion, an optional brief check can ask learners whether their topic was remembered, whether the invitation arrived in time, and whether they experienced the option to decline as genuine. Facilitators can describe occasions when an anchor was unclear, requests accumulated, or other participants could not respond to the return. These are teaching reflections, not participation grades or evidence of improved ability. When used only for instruction, a topic note can be discarded at the end of the activity; consent and secure handling are needed before any learner’s responses or recordings become research material.

The first cycle of practice may be teacher-managed and followed by peer facilitation once students can recognise and honour each action reliably. Teachers can increase language support or change the cue without altering the central commitment. Making the return mandatory, allowing a final decision to precede the return boundary, or withholding peer consideration would alter that commitment. The sample topic note and the facilitator’s quick checklist in Appendix A help make these distinctions inspectable while keeping paperwork proportionate to the amount of classroom talk.

TABLE 6. CLASSROOM PROCEDURE FOR A DEFERRED RETURN

Stage	Teacher or facilitator responsibility	Learner choice and observable feature
1. Establish the task	State the question, language objective, provisional decision, and relevant closure point.	Learners can request instruction clarification immediately.
2. Establish the convention	Demonstrate a minimal anchor, acknowledgment, return invitation, and withdrawal.	Learners choose an accessible signal; no personal reason is required.
3. Register	Notice the learner-initiated signal and resolve an ambiguous anchor briefly.	Record only a short topic cue and, if needed, the requester.
4. Acknowledge	Identify responsibility and a feasible boundary, leaving the current speaker to finish.	The learner can correct the topic or indicate that the proposed timing is unsuitable.
5. Continue	Maintain spontaneous participation and monitor pending requests without halting every turn.	Learners may cancel a request or contribute spontaneously.
6. Invite before closure	Reopen the point while its purpose remains possible; ask whether the learner still wants to return.	Accept, withdraw without explanation, or negotiate another feasible boundary.
7. Consider	Allow the connection and reason to become clear; invite clarification or a relevant response.	Peers can agree, disagree with reasons, extend, or show that the issue has already been resolved.
8. Close and repair	Check outstanding commitments before closure; acknowledge an omission and negotiate repair.	Retain missed, withdrawn, renegotiated, and realised returns as different outcomes.

6. EXAMINING CLASSROOM USE AND EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

6.1. WHAT SHOULD BE OBSERVED

The consequences of deferred entry must be examined at more than one level because delivery, interactional response, learner experience, and longer-term development are different outcomes. The first concerns delivery: a learner registers an identifiable earlier point, receives an acknowledgment, and can accept or decline an invitation made while the issue is still open. The second concerns interaction: an actual contribution restores the earlier point and receives a response that addresses its content. The third concerns learner experience and longer-term learning. Philp and Duchesne [21] distinguish cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social aspects of engagement; Hiver et al. [22] document differences in how engagement is defined and investigated. A rise in audible contributions would therefore be insufficient evidence of more engaged learning or improved competence without additional appropriate observations.

Different research questions require different units of observation and analysis. A learner request and its subsequent invitation form the unit for examining delivery. A spoken earlier-point contribution, including the preceding anchor and following responses, forms the unit for examining uptake. A complete group discussion on one task is the appropriate primary reporting unit when comparing conditions. A realised return is identified when a participant explicitly reconnects an identifiable earlier proposition after at least one intervening contribution has developed another issue or moved the activity along. Continuing an uninterrupted response or speaking after an ordinary pause does not qualify. An uptake event requires a recognisably connected clarification, question, reasoned agreement or rejection, further explanation, or reconsideration. Appendix B supplies codes, exclusions, and examples from the constructed exchanges.

6.2. TESTING PRACTICALITY AND LEARNER CHOICE

Before comparing outcomes, teachers and researchers would need to establish whether learners understand the arrangement, whether facilitators can honour it consistently, and whether participation remains genuinely optional. Repeated discussion tasks in intact EFL classes can show whether the procedure works under ordinary conditions. A full account should identify the class, task, learners' proficiency context, group size, session length, facilitator arrangements, and participation routines already in use. One convenient class might reveal important problems, but would not justify claims about typical learners or classrooms. A teaching demonstration and a research evaluation should be distinguished in advance.

Where research permission is in place, analysis can combine recordings of group talk, a brief time-ordered event record, learner comments offered without grading consequences, and facilitator notes, while keeping the evidential role of each source distinct. Timestamp information helps locate events, but the crucial boundary is functional: whether the group could still reconsider the earlier proposition when the invitation arrived. Video and audio can show how an invitation was issued and received; a learner's report can disclose whether the opportunity felt usable. Neither form of evidence should be substituted for the other. An unexpressed wish to contribute cannot be counted through observation alone; if a learner mentions it later, it should be identified as retrospective self-report.

A preliminary examination should set explicit continuation criteria before observations are interpreted so that attractive individual examples do not determine the evaluation retrospectively. These criteria can concern student understanding, rate of honoured requests, avoidable pressure, facilitator effort, disruption of spontaneous talk, and the distribution of useful returns. No universal numerical threshold follows from the cited literature. A school or research team that adopts one must explain its local justification and state it before gathering evidence. Table 7 identifies the information needed for a continuation, alteration, or cessation decision. An attractive example of success does not outweigh repeated late invitations, coercion, or interference with group reasoning.

TABLE 7. EVIDENCE FOR DECIDING WHETHER TO CONTINUE, ADAPT, OR STOP

Area of inquiry	Classroom evidence needed	Possible teaching decision
Comprehension of the convention	Students distinguish immediate clarification, later return, and withdrawal; note recurring confusion.	Teach the contrast again before expanding use.
Reliability of facilitator action	Request and acknowledgment records; relevance of invitation timing; missed commitments.	Shorten the unit of talk or assign additional facilitator support.
Genuine learner choice	Optional learner reports; observed responses when an invitation is declined.	Stop compulsory or socially pressured practices.
Load and task continuity	Request accumulation; time spent managing cues; facilitator reflections; disrupted exchanges.	Reduce record-keeping or group scale, or discontinue use.
Distribution of useful opportunities	Which learners return, who receives a relevant response, and whose spontaneous access changes.	Examine concentration of speaking opportunities and peer dominance.
Quality of observation	Completeness of recordings; ambiguous topic boundaries; independent coding agreement.	Clarify coding rules before drawing comparative conclusions.

6.3. A FAIR COMPARISON WITH ORDINARY FACILITATION

The most informative comparison is not between deferred entry and an unsupported classroom in which students are hurried or given fewer opportunities to respond. A comparison group should receive the same task, preparation opportunities, reasonable wait time, language support, and teacher attention, but should not use a formal agreement to preserve earlier-point requests. Whole groups or intact classes, rather than individual students within one conversation, are plausible allocation units because the speaking rules affect all participants. Assignment, group composition, teaching personnel, and differences in task difficulty must be documented. Where students move between conditions, the possibility that they continue using an earlier-taught convention needs explicit attention.

A defensible principal outcome is the number of earlier-point contributions that receive a relevant peer response before task closure during each prespecified group-task period. The definition must apply equally to spontaneous returns and formally registered returns in both conditions. Counting only marked requests would privilege a procedure that makes intentions more visible, while counting all later speech would overlook whether the earlier contribution could still matter. The comparison should ask whether the explicit agreement provides useful additional opportunities beyond considerate ordinary facilitation. A result with little difference, or with gains confined to learners who already dominate the conversation, would weaken the case for routine use.

Report both the number of such contributions per discussion and the proportion of realised earlier-point contributions that receive relevant uptake, because these quantities answer different questions. These are different quantities: a discussion with no realised returns has a zero count, but the proportion of taken-up returns is not defined. Equal observation time and comparable tasks simplify interpretation; if sessions differ in duration, present the exposure and explain why. Request acknowledgments, invitations, withdrawals, late returns, and missed commitments should be recorded as delivery information rather than treated as a common outcome across groups that do and do not use a formal request convention.

The analysis should include every allocated group-task period for which the intended outcome can be observed, not only discussions in which learners choose to place markers. Missing recordings must be reported separately from discussions in which no relevant return occurred. Describe the distribution of earlier-point participation among learners alongside spontaneous entries, total speaking time, perceived pressure, response quality, and facilitator effort. A practice that increases the same few learners' speaking opportunities without improving access for others should not be characterised as broadly equitable. Interpretations should not depend on selectively chosen successful exchanges.

Classroom observations are not statistically independent whenever the same learners, groups, teachers, or tasks recur across occasions. Any quantitative comparison should reflect its actual level of allocation and repeated-measures structure. If the event count is adequately frequent, a count analysis accommodating unequal exposure and possible

overdispersion may be appropriate; if clusters are few or outcomes rare, descriptive results with suitable uncertainty are more defensible than treating each turn as an independent observation. Sample-size planning would require prior estimates of event frequencies, group-level variation, missing observations, and a difference worth detecting. Those estimates are not available in the present teaching analysis and cannot be inferred from the constructed exchanges.

A design in which separate classes adopt different speaking arrangements may avoid some carryover, though teacher and class differences would remain. A within-group alternation could control other differences but might fail because learners continue to request earlier-point returns after the explicit convention is suspended. For either approach, the comparison should record how decisions were made, whether teachers honoured the intended rules, and whether students encountered the same substantive speaking demands. Where ordinary facilitation already provides dependable returns with less organisational effort, that may be the preferable classroom choice.

6.4. TRUSTWORTHY OBSERVATION, PARTICIPANT PROTECTION, AND CONTRARY EVIDENCE

Observation rules must be tested against both clear and difficult exchanges so that coding consistency is not established only on obvious examples. At least two coders can independently classify a diverse sample containing ordinary elaboration, spontaneous re-entry, acknowledged requests, late invitations, reasoned disagreement, withdrawal, and ceremonial praise. After resolving disagreements and clarifying definitions, their work on a separate sample can be used to describe consistency. Report the relevant category frequencies together with an appropriate measure of coding agreement and its uncertainty where the data permit. Discussion-based interpretation still needs the surrounding turns, topic movement, and participants' displayed understandings; a single agreement coefficient does not supply those details.

Masking coders completely may be impossible when recordings contain visible markers and explicit invitations associated with the procedure. Researchers can nevertheless limit the unnecessary disclosure of student identities, avoid telling coders the desired result, and apply the same definitions to both classroom arrangements. A pause, uncertain gaze, or simple sentence does not independently establish low willingness or lack of confidence. Ambiguous evidence should be retained as ambiguous. Appendix B specifies decision rules for contributions made at topic boundaries, invitations after closure, and returns that receive polite but content-free responses.

Research participation must be voluntary and clearly distinct from ordinary participation in teaching. Learners should be able to use or decline the convention even when they do not consent to recordings or interviews. Any study needs the relevant institutional review and arrangements for informed consent, privacy, secure handling, retention, and treatment of students who do not consent. Topic cues should not display sensitive personal information. Neither marks nor praise should depend on enrolment in a study. Reports that the convention creates pressure are substantive reasons to alter classroom practice, not merely a data point to record.

The strongest evaluation would remain open to finding that the arrangement is unnecessary, inefficient, or harmful in some settings. Timely invitations that learners experience as coercive, repeated missed requests, diminished spontaneous participation, additional domination by confident speakers, and time diverted away from learning are all outcomes that count against adoption. Similarly, a well-supported class that already reopens relevant matters naturally may show no benefit from formal registration. Any positive finding should specify the tasks, learners, facilitation conditions, and practical costs under which it occurred. Null, adverse, and disputed cases deserve the same analytical care as successful returns.

7. DISCUSSION: SHARING THE WORK OF PARTICIPATION

Deferred entry redistributes a small but potentially meaningful part of classroom interactional work between learners and facilitators. A student who wishes to return to a prior statement may otherwise need to remember the idea, find a fresh turn, establish its original reference, and persuade peers that reopening it is appropriate. With an acknowledged topic cue, the facilitator shares responsibility for preserving the opening, while the student remains responsible for deciding whether and how to use it. This is not a guarantee of reduced mental effort or anxiety; it is a clearly specified alteration to the management of talk. Its educational value depends on what it enables participants to do, not on the presence of markers or the number of recorded requests.

The three constructed exchanges identify three different instructional judgments that should not be collapsed into a single count of speaking turns. In the first, the return occurs before the decision and receives a response that changes what the group considers. In the second, a spoken contribution follows closure, revealing that permission to speak is not equivalent to access to the relevant decision. In the third, the facilitator respects a withdrawal after intervening

talk addresses the concern. These distinctions prevent teachers from confusing fulfilment of a promise, frequency of speech, learner comfort, and the collective use of contributions. They also show why response quality belongs to the whole group, not only to the returning learner.

Language learning can be addressed through the specific discourse actions required by these moments: identifying an earlier statement, restricting an objection to its relevant part, explaining consequences, confirming a referent, and answering a concern without personalising disagreement. Such actions need not involve unusually complex grammar. A learner may say “Not the room—the time after the event” and receive assistance in developing the reasoning. To claim lasting development, however, researchers would need to examine performance on different tasks and occasions, with less reliance on teacher prompts or memorised expressions. Successful use of a return cue during one lesson is an instructional observation, not a demonstration of transfer.

A further question concerns necessity and whether an explicit procedure adds value beyond already responsive facilitation. In a responsive classroom, a teacher may already notice learners’ earlier-point concerns, return to them before closure, and ensure that replies address their content. In that setting, introducing a visible marker and new terminology may add little. Conversely, a discussion group that routinely settles an issue before checking an acknowledged concern has a clear problem regardless of what it calls its participation arrangement. Evaluating the substantive commitments alongside less formal practice is more useful than treating a named method as the objective.

There are also risks in making the arrangement explicit and procedurally visible. A publicly visible cue may make a learner feel watched; a facilitator may interpret a one-word anchor incorrectly; a reluctant speaker may experience a promised return as an obligation; and procedural attention may be concentrated on those already most comfortable with classroom talk. Peer facilitators can also exercise power over which matters are described as still relevant. The conditions of learner initiation, mutual acknowledgment, suitable timing, withdrawal, and relevant response reduce these risks only when enacted in good faith. Relationships, assessment practices, and the legitimacy of disagreement in a class remain important determinants of whether the convention is useful.

A successful teaching outcome would be a larger repertoire of possible participation moves rather than permanent dependence on the procedure. Learners should remain free to contribute immediately, request clarification, return spontaneously, or mark a point for later consideration. Some may continue to use the cue while others rarely need it. Neither pattern is automatically a sign of success or failure. The convention becomes counterproductive if every contribution must pass through a facilitator before it can be heard. Its place is as an additional means of preserving relevance within a conversation that remains spontaneous and mutually responsive.

The limits of the present analysis are concrete and should constrain any claim made from the constructed examples. The article draws selectively from scholarship addressing related interactional questions rather than from a complete inventory of all classroom routines. The studies it discusses were conducted in varied instructional settings and do not estimate the effect of deferred entry. The teaching exchanges are deliberately constructed, and there are no recordings, learner interviews, classroom trial results, or validated outcome estimates associated with this article. What can be offered is a defensible set of classroom obligations, examples of their successful and unsuccessful enactment, and explicit rules for examining the practice in an actual EFL course. Claims about frequency, acceptability, fairness, and learning must await evidence of that kind.

8. CONCLUSION

Deferred turn entry protects an opportunity to address a recognisable earlier point while a classroom discussion can still respond to it consequentially. The learner registers the request and chooses whether to use the invitation; a teacher or peer facilitator takes responsibility for acknowledging and reopening the issue before relevant closure. The approach separates the timing of an opportunity from the quality of the interaction that follows. For EFL instruction, that distinction also identifies teachable language work: referring backwards, qualifying a claim, establishing relevance, and responding to a peer’s concern.

The procedure merits classroom use only when it remains optional, does not displace spontaneous speaking, and offers opportunities that can still affect the group’s reasoning rather than merely increase the number of turns. It may be particularly relevant in deliberative tasks where another contribution changes the significance of something said earlier. It may be unnecessary where ordinary facilitation already protects those openings, and harmful where accumulating requests or social pressure overwhelm the discussion. The practical standard is straightforward: learners should be able to return to an issue in time for their contribution to matter, without being obliged to speak simply because they reserved the possibility.

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9. APPENDIX A. FACILITATOR CHECKLIST AND WORKED TOPIC RECORD

A facilitator can manage the convention with a single short entry for each active request. Table 8 provides worked records for the three constructed exchanges so that acknowledgment, return boundary, and outcome remain distinguishable. The essential information is the learner's topic cue, the point at which the return is expected, and whether the commitment has been honoured. A public note should disclose no more personal information than is necessary. When disclosure could embarrass the learner, a discreet oral acknowledgment is preferable. The record is a teaching aid and need not be preserved beyond the activity.

TABLE 8. CONSTRUCTED TOPIC RECORDS LINKED TO THE THREE EXCHANGES

Teaching exchange	Request and acknowledgment	Return boundary and action	Outcome to record
Exchange 1	B signals "closing time" (02); facilitator confirms before choosing (03).	Before the room choice; invitation at 06 and spoken return at 07.	Timely return followed by clarification and further consideration at 08–11.
Exchange 2	B requests a pre-decision return (02); the promise is accepted (03).	Final choice at 05, followed by a late invitation and B's statement (06).	Missed consequential boundary; subsequent praise does not restore access.
Exchange 3	B requests a closing-time return (01); facilitator accepts (02).	Invitation at 05, before selection; B declines at 06.	Timely invitation, voluntary withdrawal, no realised return.

Facilitator check before closing a task. Identify any outstanding topic cues; confirm which earlier proposition each concerns; ask whether the decision or interpretation can still change; invite the learner only if the contribution can still serve its purpose; accept a decline without demanding a reason; and acknowledge any commitment that has been missed. If more than one cue refers to the same issue, confirm the connection with the requesters instead of merging their concerns unilaterally.

A discreet working entry can consist of the topic ("closing time"), requested boundary ("before choice"), acknowledgment status ("confirmed"), and outcome ("returned and considered", "declined", "renegotiated", or "missed"). These are examples of labels, not observations from a participant study. They are intentionally concise so that maintaining the convention does not take attention away from the exchange itself.

10. APPENDIX B. OBSERVATION RULES FOR EARLIER-POINT PARTICIPATION

A recording-based investigation should distinguish a return from ordinary continuation. Table 9 specifies the event categories and exclusion rules used to separate requests, acknowledgments, invitations, timely openings, withdrawals, realised returns, uptake, missed commitments, and spontaneous returns. First locate the prior proposition that the learner later references; then identify whether another contribution develops a different issue or whether the group has visibly changed activity. Only after this separation should the analyst classify an earlier-point contribution as spontaneous or registered. The topic must remain recognisable through words, context, or the participants' subsequent clarification; analyst guesswork alone is insufficient.

Ambiguous cases. If participants disagree about what a one-word cue identifies, the request can be recorded while its anchor remains unresolved; it should not be treated as a dependable acknowledged commitment until clarification. A contribution responding to the same issue during an uninterrupted extended turn is a continuation, even if the learner pauses. If a learner returns after an apparent transition, record both the reference and the group's response before deciding whether it is an earlier-point return. If the decision has been formally announced but then genuinely reopened, record the closure, the subsequent repair, and the new opportunity as distinct actions.

Application to the constructed exchanges. In Exchange 1, REQ occurs at line 02, ACK at line 03, INV and TIM at line 06, RTE at line 07, and UPT in lines 08–11. Exchange 2 contains REQ and ACK at lines 02–03, but the final decision at line 05 makes MIS applicable; the speech at line 06 should not be counted as timely consequential access. Exchange 3 contains REQ, ACK, INV, TIM, and WDR, with no RTE. These examples clarify the rules; they are not an observed coding dataset or an assessment of inter-coder agreement.

Reporting units. Summarise request processing at the request-to-invitation level and content response at the return-sequence level. For between-group comparison, report the number of timely earlier-point contributions receiving UPT within each prespecified group-task period, including qualifying spontaneous returns under the same rule in all conditions. Report discussion duration, missing observation periods, who contributes, and the distinction between no

TABLE 9. EVENT CATEGORIES AND EXCLUSION RULES

Code	Positive decision rule	Exclusion or caution
REQ: learner request	A learner communicates an intention to revisit an identifiable earlier point.	Teacher inference from silence or an unassigned gesture is not a request.
ACK: acknowledgment	Facilitator recognises the anchor and takes responsibility for a return boundary.	A signal not noticed or a general “later” without a recoverable opening is not sufficient.
INV: invitation	Facilitator reopens the earlier point and makes acceptance or withdrawal possible.	A teacher’s compulsory nomination does not provide optional return.
TIM: timely opening	At the invitation, the group can still reconsider the earlier proposition for its task purpose.	Clock time alone cannot establish whether the relevant issue remains open.
WDR: withdrawal	Learner declines or cancels a pending return without an additional speaking requirement.	No inference of confidence or satisfaction follows without learner evidence.
RTE: realised return	Spoken contribution identifies the earlier point after intervening talk changes topic or activity.	Continuing the same active answer after a pause is not a return.
UPT: substantive uptake	The next relevant talk clarifies, challenges, supports with reasons, develops, or resolves the returned content.	A generic compliment followed by an unrelated transition does not qualify.
MIS: missed commitment	Acknowledged request receives no useful invitation before relevant closure.	A later apology may repair relations but does not make the initial invitation timely.
SPN: spontaneous return	An earlier point is successfully reopened without an antecedent registered request.	Include this category in both teaching conditions in comparative analyses.

observed events and absent or unusable recordings. In the absence of a realised return, the proportion receiving uptake is undefined rather than zero.

11. APPENDIX C. LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR RETURNING AND RECEIVING

The following expressions can be practised orally, adapted to learner proficiency, and withdrawn when students no longer need the prompts. Table 10 groups the expressions by conversational function and provides both accessible and more elaborated alternatives. They serve conversational actions, not required forms.

TABLE 10. SHORT EXPRESSIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS

Conversation task	Accessible phrase	More elaborated alternative
Register a return	“Back to closing time, please.”	“Could we return to the closing-time point before making our choice?”
Acknowledge a request	“Yes, before we decide.”	“I’ve recorded the closing-time concern and will check it before we choose a room.”
Introduce the earlier point	“About the closing time...”	“Earlier we said that Room East closes at six; that affects the plan.”
Qualify a claim	“The seats are good, but the time is not.”	“I agree about seating, but I am concerned about the time needed after the event.”
Clarify a return	“Do you mean after six?”	“Is your concern the event ending at six, or the time needed for clean-up?”
Give a reasoned response	“Then we can finish earlier.”	“If we finish at five thirty, the group could clear the room before six.”
Invite or permit withdrawal	“Still want to come back?”	“Would you like to return to that point, or has the discussion already answered it?”
Decline the invitation	“No, that answers it.”	“Thank you, but the point has been clarified and I do not need to add anything.”

Students should not be required to learn all the expressions before participating. A productive rehearsal uses one earlier point, one intervening contribution, one invitation, and a choice either to return or to decline. Peer listeners practise asking a question that connects directly to the returning learner’s point. The teacher can then review whether the contribution still mattered to the task. Pronunciation and grammatical feedback may be offered as appropriate, but should not be allowed to conceal whether the learner was heard at the intended decision boundary.