Task one

Work in pairs to have the conversations below.

Conversation 1
Speaker 1: Tell your partner about a time in your life when you were disappointed.

Speaker 2: Show no sympathy to your partner. Don’t say what you think they’d like you to say. Be abrupt with them. You have somewhere to go in two minutes and don’t really have time to listen to this.

Conversation 2
Speaker 1: Tell your partner about an achievement of yours.

Speaker 2: Show real interest in what your partner is telling you. Respond in a way that you think they’d like you to respond. Try to show your friendship and fondness for this person through your language.

Record your thoughts about how these conversations went. How did you feel?

Conversation 1

Conversation 2
Representations of turn-taking

‘Conversation is an exchange of turns, and having a turn means having a right to hold the floor until you have finished what you want to say.’ (Deborah Tannen)

**Task two**

Complete the table with the following features of turn-taking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred response</th>
<th>Cooperative overlap</th>
<th>Competitive overlap</th>
<th>Interruptions</th>
<th>Back-channelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-preferred response</td>
<td>Affirmative</td>
<td>Discourse marker</td>
<td>Holding the floor</td>
<td>Discourse manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Speech feature or term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Well, okay, so, right then …</td>
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<td>Matt: I’ve got a really bad headache. Dylan: Stop complaining.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When one speaker snatches the turn away from another speaker.</td>
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Turn-taking in the play  
*A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams

<table>
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<th>Speaking at the same time as another speaker in a collaborative way.</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A word that shows agreement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing the speaker you are listening.</td>
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1. What speech features keep a conversation going amicably?

2. What speech features create conflict in a conversation?

3. Write down an example of when one of these speech features has caused conflict in your experience.

**Representations of turn-taking in a play**

Dialogue is built upon turn taking and our understanding of how that occurs in the real world. Playwrights use this understanding to show relationships between characters. Of course, the turn allocation is selected by the writer, not the speaker, and is purposely crafted to reveal important aspects of character and to drive the plot forward.

**Structuring turns: adjacency pairs**

Adjacency pairs have patterns and predictability, forming patterns of question/answer, greeting/response and so on. You need to analyse how the writer uses these patterns and what characters’ compliance or disregarding of conventions shows about their
feelings, attitudes or behaviour.

**Task three**

How does Williams use turn-taking to convey ideas about relationships and characters? What kind of atmosphere is created on stage?

Read the extracts below and analyse the methods Williams uses to present the relationships and characters, as well as considering the atmosphere that is created. One example is given to get you started.

Please note that we have used the Penguin Classics (2000) edition of the play.

**Extract 1** (pp.117-119 from EUNICE: [finally]: What’s the matter, honey? to EUNICE: I’ll drop by the bowling alley an’ hustle her up.)

Example: Eunice is the discourse manager - Williams uses questions to present her as interested in Blanche’s background.

**Extract 2** (pp.120-121 from STELLA [calling out joyfully]: Blanche! to During the pause, BLANCHE stares at her.)

**Task four**

How does Williams use turn-taking to create tension in Act 1 Scene 1? Consider:

- Blanche’s attitude towards Stella’s friends
- Blanche’s desperation for alcohol
- Blanche’s domineering relationship with Stella.
## Teacher answer sheet

### Representations of turn-taking

#### Task two

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---|---
A word that shows agreement. | Affirmative
Showing the speaker you are listening. | Back-channelling

1. Features which keep a conversation going amicably:
   - back-channelling
   - eye contact
   - preferred responses
   - positive and negative politeness
   - co-operative overlaps
   - convergence.

2. Features which create conflict in a conversation:
   - lack of eye contact
   - divergence
   - non-preferred responses
   - interruptions.

**Task three**

How does Williams use turn taking to convey ideas about relationships and characters? What kind of atmosphere is created on stage?

Extract 1 (pp.117-119 from EUNICE [finally]: What’s the matter, honey? to EUNICE: I’ll drop by the bowling alley an’ hustle her up.)

Eunice is the discourse manager - Williams uses questions to present her as interested in Blanche’s background.
Blanche gives non-preferred responses (particularly, ‘what I meant was …’). She does not follow politeness rules. Williams presents Blanche as uninterested in Stella’s friends, contributing to the idea that she sees herself as superior to them.

Eunice interrupts Blanche showing her awareness that she has been snubbed.

An awkward atmosphere is created on stage.

Extract 2 (pp.120-121 from STELLA [calling out joyfully]: Blanche! to During the pause, BLANCHE stares at her.)

Williams presents Blanche as holding the floor, emphasising her dominant and flamboyant personality and her domineering relationship with Stella.

Blanche interrupts Stella to tell her not to add coke to the liquor, hinting at her addiction.

When Stella says ‘Stanley?’ she ignores Blanche’s hesitation and reluctance to say Stanley’s name.