

ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS

Below are two of the role play exercises we have used. These are even more effective if they are based on situations that have occurred with your trainees.

Scenario 1

In this role play the key issues are custom and tradition. One person's customs are not known and understood by others of different cultures and so problems and misunderstandings can arise. The purpose of this role play is to understand the inter cultural differences and find solutions.

Katerina comes from Greece. She is 28 years old and recently married. Two months ago she and her husband moved to the UK. Her husband speaks English fluently and easily found a job as an electrical engineer. Katerina had more difficulty in finding a job. Fortunately she got a job that she really likes in a baker's shop. She is very happy and she is trying to work hard and prove what she can do.

The past 3 weeks she has found herself in a very difficult position. On the one hand, she is very happy as she has found out she is pregnant. On the other hand, her job involves lifting heavy objects and standing up for many hours and she is afraid she might jeopardize her pregnancy. She does not know what to do. In the Greek culture it is frowned upon to reveal a pregnancy before the 3rd month so she feels she cannot ask permission to avoid heavy work at this stage. Of all the people at work, Katerina is closest to Rafia because they do exactly the same job and they work very closely. The last few days Rafia seems annoyed because Katerina is avoiding hard jobs and so Rafia is having to do them. Rafia does not know about the pregnancy and thinks that Katerina is lazy. One day Rafia decides to complain to Katerina.

(The instructor has to choose two volunteers to perform a dialogue. One should be Rafia and the other Katerina. The volunteers should be given 5 minutes to prepare some dialogue before performing it. After the role play all the participants can make comments and discuss the situation. If the purpose of the role play does not come out through discussion, the instructor can assist the procedure.

Another possible combination could be a dialogue between Rafia, Katerina and their supervisor. Rafia is angry with Katerina and complains to the supervisor. The supervisor calls Katerina and the three of them discuss about the problem)

Scenario 2

The key issue in this scenario is the meaning and the use of politeness rules among people of different cultures. It demonstrates how the lack of knowledge of the politeness rules of others can lead to problems. The purpose of this role play is to look at these differences and find a way to show common understanding and respect.

Thomas is British. He is 23 years old. He has just finished his training as a civil engineer and got a job in a construction company. His company has sent him to supervise a big construction in the Jiangsu region in China. He has to work very close with a lot of Chinese and therefore his employer arranges for him to attend a Chinese language class.

From the beginning of the lessons he has problems socializing with his classmates and especially his teachers. They act as if they are not comfortable with the way he is referring to them, using their first names, as he would have done among other adult British people. They keep referring to him with his last name and he feels that they are trying to keep a distance. Mr Xie, one of Thomas' teachers is particularly annoyed by this situation and decides to talk to Thomas and ask him to be more polite. At the same time Thomas is very disappointed and unhappy because he thinks that he cannot fit in.

(The instructor has to choose two volunteers to perform a dialogue. One should be Mr Xie and the other Thomas. The volunteers should be 5 minutes to prepare some dialogue before performing it. After the role play all the participants can make comments and discuss the situation. If the purpose of the role play does not come out through discussion, the instructor can assist the procedure.

Another possible dialogue could be between Thomas and one of his classmates. Thomas is worried and approaches one of his classmates in his effort to understand why his teacher seems offended and asks for advice.