

1996

Role Play

Mainus Sultan

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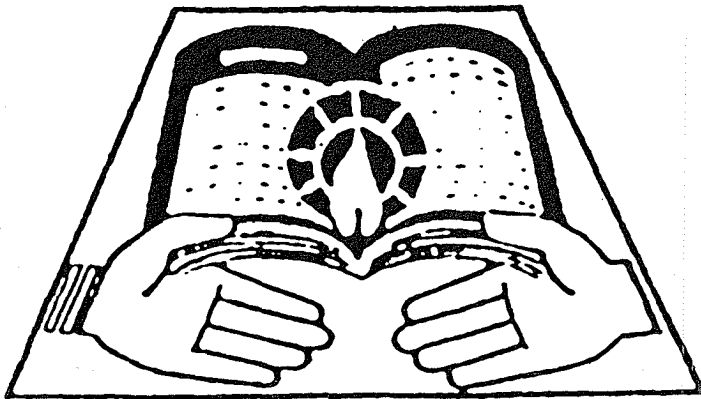
role play

Action-Learning Manual

A Guide for Literacy Practitioners

by

Mainus Sultan



A Literacy Linkage Series Manual from the
Literacy Linkage Program

Role Play
Action-Learning Manual

A Guide for Literacy Practitioners

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The **Literacy Linkage Program**
The Center for International Education
Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development

The Literacy Linkage Series Manuals

Producing a Newsletter for New Literates

Role Play

Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing

Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities

Assessment

Supervision and Facilitator Support

Gender Perspectives in Literacy

These manuals were made possible through support from the University Development Linkages Project, Global Bureau, Human Capacity Development Center, U.S. Agency for International Development under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. DAN-5063-A-00-1108-00.

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ISBN 0-932288-98-7

Foreword

This manual is part of a series of Action-Learning Manuals that was developed to assist community-based practitioners to expand their knowledge of the theory and practice of adult literacy and nonformal education. The purpose of the series is to assist practitioners to develop literacy activities and materials based on local needs, interests and resources.

The series offers the practitioner a wide variety of activities to choose from to meet the diverse needs of community literacy groups. The manuals are designed to complement each other, but can also be used independently. Two of the manuals, *Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing*, and *Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities*, provide the core concepts for literacy learning. The other five manuals provide creative ideas and techniques for implementing those concepts. It is not imperative that *Whole Language* and *Family Literacy* be read before a practitioner attempts to implement ideas found in the *Role Play* Manual, for example, but it might be helpful.

The *Whole Language* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies for teaching reading and writing skills by involving learners in the creation of lesson activities and learning materials. The *Literacy and Learning* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies that develop locally relevant literacy activities and materials through researching issues and resources in the family and community. The other manuals in the series provide additional information and guidelines for implementing effective local literacy programs.

This manual, *Role Play*, was designed to provide more detailed information on how to stimulate discussion and writing about issues and themes which are relevant for developing local literacy materials. It was written by Mainus Sultan of the Center for International Education who has experience developing innovative literacy programs in Bangladesh. The manual was reviewed and edited by staff of the Literacy Support Initiative and Center for International Education.

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Introduction

What is the purpose of this manual? The purpose of this manual is to help practitioners use role play as a tool for creating learner-generated activities in a literacy class, or in a facilitator training program. This manual provides a framework to help you understand the concept of role play and how it can be part of an adult literacy program. Included is a detailed discussion of the process of role play implementation. The step-by-step presentation is intended to help you generate your own ideas for role play, as well as to encourage the learners to conceive of, and implement, their own role play.

Who is the manual for? This manual is intended for literacy and nonformal education practitioners, and for facilitators, facilitators and supervisors.

What do you need to do? The manual can serve as a starting point for using role play in a literacy class or in a facilitator training. Read the contents and consider how this material applies to your situation. Work through the different activities. Upon completion of the activities, either write a brief report or record the learner-generated ideas and the role play process.

PROCESS

1. Read the manual carefully. Consider the process. You do not have to agree with everything described in this manual, but think how elements of the process can be applied to your situation. You may disagree with parts of the process. If so, the literacy team that designed this manual would like to hear from you.

2. Think about how the information in this manual can be used in your work situation. Parts of the manual may not apply to your particular work context. If this is the case, make whatever changes are necessary to adapt the ideas to your situation. Keep a record of these changes.

3. The manual contains scenarios for implementing a role play. You may find that the scenarios do not address the issues you would like to discuss with your learners or facilitator, or that the scenarios are inappropriate for your cultural context. If a scenario does not work for your situation, adapt it.

4. The purpose of this manual is to create learner-generated activities through the use of role play in the context of a literacy class or facilitator training. This is done incrementally, allowing for the gradual increase of learner involvement. If the learners or facilitators you work with are ready to contribute ideas for role play, involve them in the process from the start.

5. Certain activities require that you write a reflection paper. The guiding questions are designed to help you think through the process of implementing a role play. If you would like to provide additional information that is not referred to in the guiding questions, please do so. The reflection papers are to help you articulate your process, difficulties, and thoughts. It might seem odd to write something knowing that you may be the only person to read it, but it is strongly recommended that you use this exercise to facilitate your own understanding.

6. Some of the activities require you to either record the role plays or collect the learners' writing. The purpose of recording participant-generated role plays is to create a pool of ideas for future use. Additionally, a collection of learners' writing can be used as reading materials.

7. Create a filing system. A filing system will help you organize your efforts and help you store the recorded role plays and learners' written responses. These can be used as educational materials for future programs. Keep and file copies of the reports, recorded versions of the role plays that your group produces, and learners' responses to a role play.

8. If at any time you need additional information about the role play process, contact the Literacy Support Initiative office at the address provided in the Foreword.

The Concept of Role Play

This activity explains the meaning of a role play. The discussion covers the approach, usefulness, and potential problems that you may face when implementing role plays. It may be more beneficial for you to alternately read portions of the manual, then reflect on them before taking action. You may disagree with some of the information. Please write down any major points of contention. At the end of this activity, you will write a brief reflection paper to help you organize your thoughts.

What is role play? Role play is many things; it is a communication technique, an educational medium, as well as a tool which can be used to help learners articulate their emotions. Through the enactment of a role, a message is communicated.

Through role play, a learner enacts social situations. A social situation involves the interaction of a person with the people and culture around him or her. An example of a social situation is as follows: A learner borrows money from a moneylender. The learner is anxious because there is an obligation to pay back the money. This is a specific social situation in which an individual feels burdened by expectations involved in a financial arrangement.

There are many ways that a facilitator can generate discussion about a social situation. One way is to outline the issue. Based on the outline provided by the facilitator, the learners can then generate information from the outline.

Role play can also serve as a technique for generating discussion. In this case, a learner will act out a personal experience. After the role play has been performed, peers can offer suggestions on how to address the social situation. This allows the learners to participate in the conversation, both physically and emotionally.

Role play is different from drama. Drama often requires acting experience, rehearsal and other preparations such as costumes, a script, and possibly a stage. Role play does not require any of these things, but can be done in a very spontaneous manner. In these ways, role play is less complex than drama. What it does require is a learner who is willing to share his or her experience.

ROLE PLAY IN A LITERACY CLASS

You can use a role play in a literacy class in many different ways. Some suggestions include the following:

Creating atmosphere: Have a learner act out a role at the beginning of a class. The role play does not have to be serious. Sometimes, a funny role play can create a light atmosphere and encourage learners to participate.

Emotional expression: Role play can be a way for learners to show emotions that might otherwise be difficult for them to express. If a learner has been hurt by someone, or has experienced social oppression, maybe the learner can try to act out this experience for the other learners. In this manner, learners share their experiences. Role play may also give the person doing the role play a different insight into what happened as they re-enact or reflect on their portrayal.

Discussion generation: Relate the contents or message of a role play to a social issue that is familiar to the group. This can serve as a technique for generating discussion.

Information sharing: Role play can be a useful tool for sharing information. For example, if you want to share information about women's rights, ask a group of learners to enact a situation where women's rights are violated. In this way the issue may become more real to the learners than had they remained passive. Their action may help them see the connection between the information being discussed and their social reality.

Needs assessment: Role play can serve as a method for assessing learners' educational needs. Educational needs in this context refer to the kind of literacy skills a learner needs on a daily basis. For example, a learner may act out what happens when she or he doesn't know how to write a letter or an address. With this knowledge the facilitator can then address this need.

Learner-generated materials: Role play can be a way of creating learner-generated materials. Learner-generated materials in this case are reading materials that learners write themselves. Even if learners can only write one word, using that word in a literacy lesson may be an important way to spark their interest. To assess their writing ability, after a role play, ask the learners to write their reactions, whether it be one word, a sentence or a paragraph. These written reactions may become the basis for learner-generated materials.

There are many other ways to incorporate role play into a literacy class. This manual will address some of the possible techniques. Hopefully, you will find information that can work in your situation.

Remember, these ideas are not meant to be used mechanically; if they are not working in your particular field situation, you might want to invent your own. Ask your learners what kinds of roles they are interested in playing. At times allow them to set the agenda for discussion. Learners can be a major source of creative ideas.

PROBLEMS YOU MAY FACE

Many facilitators who used role play successfully say that getting started is the hardest part; once you have started, things get easier. The following discussion addresses some difficulties that you may encounter when you first introduce role play. Below are examples of problems that other facilitators have faced, and how they responded

Communication: One possible problem that you might have is communicating the idea of role play to learners. Language may turn out to be a barrier. For example, in Bangladesh there is a word for role play in the Bengali language, but when a group of Bangladeshi facilitators used the word, the learners did not know it. Even having the right word in the necessary language did not help the learners understand the concept.

In this instance, the facilitator planned to begin the class with a role play. He explained the idea several times, but realized that nobody understood what he was talking about. Finally he said to the class, "I am going to do something and I want you to observe." He began to do the role play that he had originally planned for the learners to do. After the brief play, he asked the learners for their reactions. The learners quickly became involved in a lively discussion. At some point, the facilitator asked the group, "Can you tell me what I did just now?" The learners did not respond right away. After a long pause, one man said, "It looks like acting." Then the facilitator explained how a role play was different than a drama. He invited the learners to participate.

Shy learners: You may find that some learners are not comfortable participating in a role play. They may be shy. These same learners may have ideas for a role play, but be reluctant to act them out. They might wonder what they would gain by doing a role play. Your role as facilitator is crucial in terms of easing the shyness of learners. Be prepared to play a role at the beginning of a class; be the first one to take that risk. Your demonstration may help the learners to overcome their shyness.

Field experience suggests that it is helpful to create an environment where as many learners as possible feel free to contribute. Some facilitators find it helpful to develop rules before they start a role play. Let the students discuss rules of behavior that would help them feel comfortable participating. Some suggested rules include the following:

- * all learners have the right to participate or to decline to participate in role plays;
- * there are no right or wrong opinions;
- * everyone is allowed to express themselves as they wish in role plays (as long as other actors do not object to an action that may be directed at them);
- * no one will be criticized for bad acting;
- * learners will not use role play for mocking each other.

Do not impose rules just because you think they are important. Discuss with the group what an appropriate environment for role plays might be, and what needs to be done to create that environment. As part of the discussion you may suggest the above rules. Wait for their responses. If they agree with a particular rule, go ahead and write it down on poster paper. Remember, rules need to be those that the learners think are important for them. Hang the poster on a wall, or in another prominent location.

Setting rules can help to create an environment where shy learners feel comfortable participating. But if this doesn't happen, don't be frustrated. Some experienced facilitators claim that when it comes to role plays there are three categories of learners. The first category of learners is super-enthusiastic. These learners usually do not need extra motivation. They volunteer to participate in role plays.

A second category, which is usually the largest, is comprised of the comparatively shy learners. Once these learners see others acting, they usually will as well. Learners in this category usually require some initial motivation and encouragement.

A third category of learners will never feel comfortable participating in role plays no matter what you do. Do not pressure these people to participate if it makes them ill-at-ease regardless of how valuable you think the activity is. Besides, you will always need to have some learners who observe while others act out the roles.

What is the connection?: Some facilitators find that occasionally learners do not understand the relationship between role play and literacy. Some learners come to a literacy class with one expectation: they will read and write. When they see something else happening, they may wonder what is going on.

One facilitator tells of three learners who kept asking when they would start reading and writing. One learner even asked, "Why do we waste time acting? We are here to read books." The same teacher was aware that these three learners had dropped out of school. This is how the teacher handled the situation:

At first I was not quite sure how to respond. I tried to explain that the nonformal educational approach is very different from the formal schooling system. In the middle of my conversation, I realized that it was difficult for me to communicate the word nonformal. So, I said, "Look, we are older people. We cannot learn everything by reading a book. Of course we will be reading books, but we will be doing other things too. We have real lives and problems around life. Books are not the only way to learn. We want to discuss our problems."

At this point I paused and asked the learners, "Can we discuss our problems and read?" One of the learners replied, "Yes, we should discuss our problems, but how can we if we are acting?" I answered, "How about if you wait a few days and see if the plays help us to solve some of our problems? If that does not work, we will stop." After a week, I checked back with the learners. Two learners told me they had ideas that they would like to role play. Another learner never participated, but did not resist the activity of a role play.

Being a movie star: One problem some have observed while doing role play in a literacy class is that some learners, being very familiar with local folk operas and television dramas, want to perform like stage actors and actresses. They want a little glamour. This is how one teacher dealt with that situation:

In one class, quite a few learners wanted to play the role of an imaginary prince and princess. They demanded that I find royal clothes, ornaments and even a sword. I told them that I was unable to find these kind of items. But, if they were serious about doing a drama, I would be happy to help them in some other way. The learners decided they were serious, so we proceeded.

Instead of royal clothes, I suggested having written tags hanging on their chests, to signify who was prince and princess. The learners performed a short drama enthusiastically. There was even a brief battle between a prince and a demon. Both characters used a piece of bamboo for fighting instead of swords.

Once the drama was over I asked, "Was this something we do in real life? How many of us are a prince, a princess, or a demon?" One learner replied, "I am not a prince, I am a carpenter, but I like playing the role of a prince. It is fun." I agreed with him that it was quite entertaining.

I asked again, "Is there any way we can play real life roles? We've played the role of a prince. Is it possible to play the role of carpenter or a

farmer?” The carpenter replied that he would try to play a carpenter in the next class. After the carpenter’s performance in the next class, we opened up the discussion as to which was better, a real-life role play or a fantasy drama. After a long discussion, we failed to reach an agreement. Quite a few learners wanted both. Eventually, we decided to have one role play at the beginning of each class and to have a drama once a week.

These experiences illustrate some of the potential situations that you may encounter. But don’t be discouraged by them. The purpose of this discussion is to help you become aware of what can happen in a field situation. If you are prepared to expect small problems, you may be better prepared when they arise. There are also many rewarding and enjoyable aspects of role play to look forward to, as many facilitators have found. There will be classes where learners practice role play enthusiastically. Learners may quickly contribute many creative ideas. It’s possible that you won’t have any problems, but just in case, be aware of what could happen.

APPROACH TO ROLE PLAY

The approach that you take to role play entails many considerations including how you communicate with the learners, what kind of environment you would like in the classroom, how you give the learners instructions, and what guidance you provide.

The learners’ backgrounds: Consider the backgrounds of the learners when developing your approach. Think about the people in your literacy class. What would be the most effective way to communicate with them? What kind of instruction do they need? Can they act independently? Do they always need guidance? These are some of the things that you should consider when designing an approach. Keep in mind that approach is not a static concept. Try something. If it does not work, change it.

Just like home: Some facilitators have observed that creating a family-like atmosphere helps the learners to get started in a role play. Imagine how family members and relatives sometimes chat together in a relaxed mood. If the grandfather is telling an experience, the grandchild may add something which may give the conversation a new direction. Have your learners sit in a casual manner. Encourage somebody to sing a song or tell a joke. These things help to create the right kind of atmosphere.

Ask the learner: Encourage learners to contribute ideas. Provide guidance as necessary, but do not impose your ideas. If learners see that their ideas are important, they may be more likely to voice them. Imposing your own point of view may weaken the process of participation. Ask the learners to

come up with ideas for role plays. Their ideas may, at times, seem irrelevant, but allow them to implement their ideas.

Assist with an Outline: If the learners are having difficulty finding ideas, an outline is a tool that can help them get started. Help them to design an outline. It might be a good idea to have the learners work in pairs or groups to come up with ideas. It is okay if they move away from the outline. You may find that some learners have lots of ideas, but don't want to act them out. Find learners who wish to implement their ideas. You will observe that people alter ideas while acting. Remember, ideas are like seeds; they sprout roots and grow.

REFLECTION #1

You have read how a role play differs from a drama. You have also studied how the role play can be useful and what potential problems you might face. Now, take a break from reading and give yourself time to think about this for a while. It is recommended that you write a two or three page reflection paper to process your thoughts. Consider the following guiding questions when writing your paper.

- * What is your general impression of using a role play in a literacy class or a facilitator training?
- * Do you have any disagreement or criticism of the concept as it was presented?
- * Do you think role play can be useful for increasing learners' involvement with literacy activities?
- * What problems do you think you might face in implementing a role play?
- * How would you address these problems?

Preparation

The purpose of this section is to help you prepare to implement a role play in a literacy class or facilitator training program. The discussion covers the techniques of preparation and how to combine literacy with role play activities. You may find some of the techniques helpful. Other suggestions may not fit with your work context. If this is the case, please come up with new ideas. At the end of this activity you again write a brief reflection paper. Include any new ideas for literacy activities that you might have.

Preparation: A little mental preparation ahead of time can be a big help when you are doing something for the first time. You might start by asking yourself why you are doing a role play.

Objective, topic and scenario: You can begin the process by thinking about your objective, or reason, for doing a role play. Having an objective will help you come up with a specific topic for the role play to address. Think of possible scenarios or outlines. An example of an objective, topic and scenario could be the following: As your *objective* you want to provide some information regarding clean drinking water. A role play is more effective if it is followed by a discussion. In this case, the *topic* of discussion could be health. How would you design a role play to show the health problems related to drinking unclean water? One idea might be to have one of your learners act as if they drank muddy water and then became sick. Mentally sketching an idea in this way gives you a *scenario*.

Organize by writing: Some facilitators find it helpful to write down the objective, topic and scenario. This does not have to be elaborate. Just write down a few words and sentences to help you organize your thoughts.

Implementation strategy: At the preparation stage, think about the learners with whom you will be doing a role play. Before class, speak with one or two learners about having them perform role plays. Have another idea ready if the first one fails. Many facilitators get good ideas from learners; this may work for you.

COMBINING ROLE PLAY WITH LITERACY ACTIVITIES

Assuming that the focus of your literacy class is reading and writing, you may want to combine the role play with some kind of reading or writing activity. Field experience suggests that a role play usually generates discussion. As a facilitator, you can use the discussion as a background for a reading and writing activity. Specific reading and writing activities that can be used in conjunction with role play can be categorized as words, sentences and paragraphs.

Words: At the beginning of a literacy class when learners are not able to recognize letters or words, help them learn a few words from the discussion. For example, a role play has been performed in a class. The learners are participating in a discussion. Write down a few key words on a poster paper or blackboard. Make sure the words you write are emerging from the discussion. Writing down a word which the learners are using helps them to visually understand how words look. It will also help them to understand the connection between written words and verbal discussion. You can also have the learners copy the words in their notebook.

Sentences: When your learners start recognizing words and letters, try to have them write sentences. Begin the process by writing key words on a blackboard or poster paper. Then ask them to orally compose a sentence based on the key word. Have them compose two or three different sentences. Now ask them to choose a key word and write a sentence.

Paragraphs: When you sense that the learners are comfortable composing sentences, try to have them write paragraphs. The best time for this exercise is after the discussion. Begin by writing down key words, then ask the learners to write their reactions. Encourage them to write anything that they want. If they have difficulty writing, prompt them by asking a few questions. Ask them to write about their feelings. Encourage them to write about any memories they have. Their writing does not have to be factually correct. They can write imaginary stories. They also can write stories based on their real life.

Facilitator's role: While the learners are writing paragraphs and stories, your role as a facilitator is crucial. Provide help immediately if a learner has difficulty composing a word or sentence. Express interest in what they write. If the learners want, read their writing. Let them know that what they write is important enough for you to take time to read. Do not be overly concerned with spelling and grammatical errors. You can address some of the spelling and grammatical errors in a follow-up lesson.

Peer interaction: Once they are done writing, have the learners interact with each other. They may choose to read each other's writing aloud. Ask them to help each other correct errors, discuss their ideas about writing, and comment on what they liked about other's writing.

REFLECTION#2

Now you are ready to implement a role play, but before you do, organize your thoughts by writing a reflection paper. Use the following guiding questions to prepare a two to three page paper.

- * How would you like to prepare for a role play session?
- * What kind of background do your learners/facilitators have? Do they have experience in participating with role play activities?
- * How do you intend to combine a role play with literacy activities?
- * Do you think these two activities can work well together?

Implementation

This section is designed to help you implement some specific role play scenarios. You can start by using some of the ideas that are described below. These ideas are collected from a variety of field experiences from different cultural contexts. The scenarios may, or may not, be a good fit for your work context. Make any change necessary so that the scenarios can work for you. If the learners do not want to implement a certain scenario, don't pressure them. Make it clear that they are free to suggest ideas for a role play.

SCENARIO#1: LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Objective: To illustrate the practical importance and necessity of literacy in real life.

When: You can use this role play when you are organizing a class and trying to motivate people.

Number of learners: Three to four.

Role play idea: A learner receives a tax notice, but does not know how to read it.

Outline: A man is sitting in front of his house when the postman delivers a letter to him. The man can't read the letter. He takes the letter to one of his neighbors, but the neighbor cannot help because he can't read either. The man takes the letter to another neighbor. The second neighbor can't help, but advises the man to preserve the letter carefully. After a month, government officials come to the man's house and charge him for ignoring the tax notice. The man explains that he cannot read the letter. The officials are very angry and say that the man must go to court.

Discussion: At the end of the role play, try to generate a discussion about what happened in the role play. The following questions may help you guide the discussion.

- a) What did you notice in this role play?
- b) What was the problem?
- c) Why were the neighbors and relatives not able to help the man?
- d) Does this kind of thing happen in your community?
- e) Have you had any similar experience?
- f) Would you like to role play your experience?

Key words and sentences: While the learners are talking and expressing their reactions, write down a few key words on a blackboard or poster paper. Select the key words that come out of the discussion. For example, the key words for this session may be "tax," "government officer," "notice," or "problem."

SCENARIO #2: CORRESPONDENCE

Objective: Have the learners think about the need for writing skills in their daily life.

When: At the beginning of a class, or when you discuss letter writing.

Number of learners: Three.

Idea: An older woman wants to write a letter to her son who lives far away.

Outline: An older woman is sitting in her house with her daughter. She looks very sad because she wants to write a letter to her son, but does not know how to. The older woman starts talking to her daughter and says, "Five months ago your brother left for work. We do not know what happened to him. He did not send money. He did not send any message." The daughter gives the mother a piece of paper and says, "I found this paper in the market. Why don't you go to someone and ask them to write a letter for you?"

The older woman approaches a well-dressed businessman and asks him to write a letter for her. The man yells at the woman saying, "Where is the address? You do not have your son's address. I can't write a letter without an address."

Discussion: Use the key questions below to process the information in the role play.

- a) What did you see in this role play?
- b) Does this kind of thing happen in your life?
- c) Has anyone you know had a similar experience?
- d) What is the reason for this kind of problem?
- e) How can we overcome this?
- f) Are you interested in doing a role play of your own experience?

Key words and sentences: While the learners are talking and expressing their reactions, write down some key words on a blackboard or poster paper. Select key words which come from their discussion. Examples of key words that might appear are "letter," "address," "town," or "son." Have your learners compose sentences based on key words. If they are not yet confident with their writing, have them compose sentences orally. An example of a sentence may be, "We should learn letter writing." Once the sentence construction is done, write it on the blackboard or poster paper.

SCENARIO#3: GETTING PAID

Objective: To address the importance of numeracy in real life.

When: When the learners are learning counting and doing simple addition and subtraction.

Number of learners: Two.

Idea: A man has been working for a rich merchant as a day laborer. He has been working for a month and has been getting paid irregularly. At the end of the month, he goes to the merchant and asks for his final payment. The merchant gives him very little money. The man thinks that he had earned more money. When he protests the merchant shows him the accounting book.

Outline: The merchant and the laborer are having a face to face conversation. The merchant gives the man some money. The laborer is not happy with the amount of money and demands more. He expresses his anger. The merchant says, "I already paid you most of your salary, I am paying you the rest now." The laborer starts shouting, "You did not pay me a full month of wages!" The merchant replies, "If you don't believe me, you can look at my accounting books. I wrote down whenever I paid you. An accounting book is a document and documents don't lie. If you do not believe me, go and get someone who can read. Now stop shouting and leave this place."

Discussion: Use the key questions below as a guide to process the information presented in the role play.

- a) What did you see in this role play?
- b) What was the reason for the conflict?
- c) Have you ever had this kind of experience?
- d) Why do these kinds of problems happen?
- e) How can we resolve this?
- f) Is anybody interested in acting out his or her experience?

Key words and sentences: Write down the key words that emerge from the discussion on a blackboard or poster paper. Examples of key words that might come up are "labor," "payment," "accounting book," "merchant," or "document." Have the learners compose sentences based on the key words.

SCENARIO #4: MEDICINE LABELS

Objective: To help the learners understand the danger in not being able to read the instructions for medicine.

When: For a discussion on health or nutrition.

Number of learners: Two.

Idea: A woman gets a large bottle of medicine from a local hospital for her sick daughter. She can't read the instructions and asks her mother for advice. Her mother says, "I think if you give her more tablets, the little girl will recover quickly."

Outline: A woman is sitting with a large bottle of tablets in her hand. She looks puzzled and does not quite know what to do with the bottle. Her mother comes and asks the woman how the little girl is doing. The woman says, "The little girl is very sick. She could not sleep and cried all night. I brought this medicine from the hospital, but I don't know how many tablets to give her." The mother says, "Don't worry, God will help us. Because the little girl is too sick, I don't think one tablet will work. Let me crush three or four tablets together. I will add some molasses, so that the pill will be easier for her to swallow. If we give her lots of medicine at one time, she will get better faster."

Discussion: Use the key questions as a guide to discuss the role play.

- a) What do you see in this role play?
- b) What is the problem?
- c) Will more tablets at the same time help the little girl recover faster?
- d) What should the woman have done?
- e) Is it all right to not listen to your mother?
- f) Does this kind of thing happen in real life?
- g) Does anybody want to do a role play of a similar experience?

Key words and sentences: Write down key words that emerge from the discussion. Examples of key words might be "sick," "girl," "hospital," or "medicine." Have the learners compose sentences based on these words. An example of a sentence would be, "We should learn how to read medicine labels."

Writing reactions: When the learners have composed sentences, ask them to write a paragraph or two based on their reactions. Encourage

them to write anything that they want. If they have difficulty writing, the following questions might help them to get started.

- a) What was your reaction to this role play?
- b) What would you do if you were in this situation?
- c) Has anything similar happened in your life?
- d) Do you know anybody who faces a similar situation?

Sharing: Ask your learners to listen to each other address the questions. They can share in pairs or they can read aloud to the whole group.

SCENARIO #5: SOCIAL STATUS

Objective: To allow the learners to discuss social discrimination that happens to them.

When: For a class discussion about social issues.

Number of learners: Two.

Idea: A young woman works as a maid for a wealthy family. One day, she is yelled at by the wife of the homeowner.

Outline: A young woman is sweeping the floor in a wealthy house. She approaches the homeowner's wife and tells her that she is done sweeping. The homeowner's wife yells at her, "What kind of sweeping is that? I have noticed that if I don't supervise, you don't work properly. Now go and do it again in front of my eyes." The young woman sweeps the floor again.

When the wife checks the sweeping the second time, she seems kind. She gives the young woman some food. The young woman sits on the floor to eat. The homeowner's wife comes back and yells, "I don't give you food to make a mess right here! Wipe the floor again and get out of here."

Discussion: Use the key questions below to process the information in the role play.

- a) What was the young woman's fault?
- b) Why did she get yelled at twice?
- c) How should a rich woman behave with her maid servant?
- d) Do you know anybody who was treated badly by his/her employer?
- e) Have you ever had a similar experience?
- f) Would you like to do a role play of your experience?

Key words and sentences: Write down key words that emerge directly from the discussion. Examples of key words are "servant," "behavior," "wealthy," or "discrimination." Have the learners compose one or two sentences using the key words. An example of a sentence is: "The servant of a family is never treated as an equal."

Writing reactions: When the learners are done composing sentences, ask them to write a paragraph or two based on their reactions. Tell them that they are allowed to write about anything that comes to mind. If they are having difficulty writing, the following questions might help them get started.

- a) What do you think about this role play?
- b) Why did the wealthy woman behave like this?
- c) How do wealthy people behave with their servants?
- d) Have you heard stories about servants being harassed by their employers?
- e) What would you do if you were a servant?

Sharing: Ask the learners to listen to each other read what they wrote. They can share in pairs or they can read aloud to the whole group.

REFLECTION #3

By now you have practiced a few role plays with the group that you are working with. Now take some time to think about how everything went. Think about the problems that you faced when doing role play. Think about the ideas that your learners came up with. Consider the following questions as guidelines for writing a two or three page reflection paper.

- a) What were the problems you faced doing role play?
- b) How did you address these problems?
- c) Were the outlined scenarios useful?
- d) Did the learners come up with new ideas?

Learner-Generated Role Play

The purpose of this section is to help you understand learner-generated role play. The discussion addresses the process of facilitation and how to record a learner-generated role play. This particular activity is geared towards involving learners in the process of role play as much as possible. At the end of this section, you will do two specific tasks that will allow you to record the role plays and the written responses of the learners.

Learner-generated role play: By now you have had the opportunity to implement some of the scenarios described. It is possible that the examples did not fit your cultural context. In that case, perhaps you came up with new ideas and involved the learner in the process. The next step is to practice some learner-generated role plays.

What is learner-generated role play?: A learner-generated approach to role play requires the participation of the learners in every step of the process. To practice learner-generated role plays, first have your learners come up with the ideas. Then have them design and implement the play.

A described scenario vs. a learner-generated role play: Although learners do participate when they play a role in a scenario described to them, this is not enough for the activity to be called learner-generated role play. A role play is not learner-generated unless the scenario is developed by the learners. A role play is learner-generated when learners create the ideas and implement them by themselves.

Why, then, begin the process with described scenarios? The reason is that sometimes it is hard for learners to get started. They expect some guidance at the beginning. A described scenario helps them understand how a role play should be organized. Once they understand the process, they are better able to do it by themselves.

How can you facilitate a learner-generated role play? Remember, the real life experience of the learners is the source of ideas. Cultivate this source. Create an environment in which learners feel free to share their experiences.

Facilitator's role: At this point, your role will change. Previously, you were the primary initiator, generating ideas, telling the learners how to do the play. This time your job is to help the learners become initiators. You will not give them the ideas, but you will help them come up with a new design. Now you become the observer and the learners do the play as they want.

Process of Learner-generated Role Play: There are many ways to help your learners create their own role plays. Asking the right questions is one technique. You can also help your learners form small groups for idea generation and implementation. Record a role play from one group of learners and let the others observe the process.

Questions: Questions can function as a starting point for a discussion. Questioning can be a way to offer guidance, a way to help direct learners in the right direction, and a way to address practical issues. You can ask the following:

- a) What kind of experience would you like to share? Why is this particular experience important to you? What was the feeling you had during this experience?
- b) Have you encountered a social situation in which you felt discriminated against? What happened to you? Who was involved in this situation? How did they behave?
- c) Has any social incident in this locality affected your life? What happened? Who was involved in the incident? How did they behave?
- d) Did you ever feel oppressed due to lack of education and money? Under what conditions did this take place? Who was involved? How did they behave?

These are just examples of questions meant to serve as a general guideline. Come up with your own set of questions that you think will work best for your situation. Next have the learners play out the situation that they describe. Help the learners connect their experiences with a role play. Assist the learners by asking, "Can you role play what you have described now?"

Small group: Some learners prefer to work in small groups, and small groups can be a good way to generate ideas and implement role plays. When a learner agrees to act out a social situation, she or he might need one or two more people to act in the scenario. The learners can work out the details in small groups. Let the group take the initiative for their role play. Keep contact in a supporting role with each group.

Recording and discussion: You can help present and future learners by recording a role play, thus preserving the ideas and the issues addressed. A written record allows the learners to see the written version of a play that they did orally. A recorded role play can be useful educational material for other learners.

To record, observe the play carefully. Take notes while the learners are participating in a role play. You may choose to tape the event if you have the equipment. Remember the following things while recording:

- * What is the social situation?
- * What is the main idea?
- * Who are the characters?
- * How is this play organized?
- * What are the key dialogues?
- * What are the details?

Once the learners have performed the play, organize your notes, refresh your memory and rewrite. Be descriptive. Narrate the details in a way so that readers can understand what happened in the play. Read what you have written back to your learners. Ask them whether your version is the way that they remembered the role play. Can they suggest things that you might have overlooked? Write the recorded version on large poster paper/newsprint and hang it on the wall of the literacy center. This will allow your learners to read the role play in which they participated.

Learner-Generated Materials: It is suggested that you record at least five role plays generated by your learners, or more if you choose. Follow the guidelines described above for recording a role play.

- 1) Collect learners' writings. By this time, some of your learners have probably written their responses to the role plays. Collect at least ten stories or responses written by the learners.
- 2) Have some of your learners help you copy these writings. Edit the writings only if you feel the text is not communicating well, but pay less attention to the grammatical correctness of the text. Ask each writer to come up with a title for their response paper. Provide assistance as needed.
- 3) Make a little book from the collection of learner-generated materials. Make copies so each student can have one. These learner-generated books can be used as text in your literacy class.

Conclusion

You now have a selection of tools with which to implement role play in your literacy class. Adapting these tools to your situation is an important step. How that should be done will vary with each group of learners, and each set of conditions under which literacy education takes place. As you work with these activities, mold them and shape them as you, and the learners, see fit.

Keep in mind your reasons for implementing role play as you proceed. This will help you make decisions about how some things should happen. Remember that role play can be a useful method for helping students voice issues that might otherwise be difficult for them to articulate. Role play can help students to conceptualize social problems that they may be facing. Role play can also help you, the facilitator, illustrate the value of literacy as it relates to those social issues. You may find, as others have, that role play becomes an indispensable part of your literacy class.

The **Literacy Linkage Program** is a collaborative effort of the
Center for International Education, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, U.S.A.
and the **Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development**, Tribhuvan University, Nepal