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Newspaper Theatre: Applying performance-based learning to journalism education

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Abstract

Bob Carr – The Musical? George W Bush visits the Big Brother diary room?

These are some of the scenarios devised by first-year communication students at Charles Sturt University as part of a “Newspaper Theatre” exercise.

This paper describes the application of Augusto Boal’s theatre techniques, and Paulo Freire’s cultural action perspectives, to critically engage communication students with media coverage of contemporary issues.

Newspaper Theatre requires students to research news and advertising copy. They analyse the voice of the writer, the sources of information, the messages and the content. Working collaboratively in small groups, they then reframe the information using conventions from popular culture to reveal counterpoints, countervoices and alternative information.

This paper outlines the principles and techniques of the Newspaper Theatre exercise in a way that educators from a non-drama background can apply to their classrooms.

Introduction

Australian journalism educators have long lamented the lack of general knowledge among their students, particularly regarding the political process (Richards, 1990), current events (Patching, 1994), geography (Patching & Hirst, 1998; 2003) and history (Van Heekeren, 2005).

On one level the need for such background knowledge appears obvious - journalists with a good general knowledge of how the world works would seem to be more likely to produce "better" news stories than those who do not. Better in the sense of being able to interpret the significance of often complex global political and cultural issues for their local audiences (Patching & Hirst, 2003, p.170); better in the sense of a willingness to engage with more difficult or deeper stories, rather than superficial lifestyle and celebrity pieces.

A common approach to encouraging students to develop and or maintain their news sense - or to at least pay more regular attention to newspapers, broadcast bulletins, or mainstream online news sources - is the introduction of regular quizzes on current affairs or general knowledge:

"we consistently harass them about reading and absorbing the content of newspapers and of *at least occasionally* watching a current affairs program on the ABC rather than the sit-coms that litter commercial television" (Patching & Hirst, 1998, p. 130).

These days you could probably replace sit-coms with reality TV as the main culprit in producing "students who are completely immersed in the discourse of popular culture" (Alysen & Oakham, 1996, p. 50). The US Project for Excellence in Journalism also describes a kind of news obesity, where our news diet is overstocked with "too little that can nourish citizens and too much that can bloat them" (PEJ, 2005). The media, and journalism educators, can contribute towards a "healthy" news diet by educating consumers to be more aware of their news selection.

And that, after all, is the primary purpose of such geography and news quizzes in journalism education. We are not politics or geography teachers, but rather we are trying to encourage our students to "read" the media more critically, and to link their existing knowledge and theoretical understandings with the real world in which they will eventually wish to be journalists (Patching and Hirst, 1998).

We have certainly noticed that our first year communication students at Charles Sturt University tend to not have an accurate historical perspective concerning the development of mass media technologies and communication formats pioneered during the twentieth century; and they do not have an working vocabulary for describing and guiding their analysis of different media communications. In Paulo Freire's terms, they did not have a vocabulary for "naming the world" (1987, pp. 35-36) because they had not yet developed a critical - and therefore transformational - stance in relation to either their own studies, or to the cultural action dimension of their aspirations to work in a range

of entertainment, communication, and information (ECI) industries (Moran 1994, p. 29) upon completion of their degree. Their lack of critical literacy could be addressed, but to get them to move from naïve thinking to a more critical sensibility (Freire, 1974/1998, pp. 17-20) would require a strategy for teaching and learning that addressed these issues directly.

Accordingly, we developed a range of assignments that the entire first year cohort of undergraduate communication students would tackle in a compulsory unit of study called Media Production and Presentation. The assignments are designed to get the participants to work in small teams in order to analyse a learning task by defining its goals and articulating how they will initiate and sustain their production process through to completion. One of these assignments, accounting for 40% of their final grade, uses Augusto Boal's concept of "Newspaper Theatre" (1979; 1998, pp. 234-246) as a basis for addressing a range of specific learning objectives. These include developing their capacity to:

- present an analysis of media communications using concepts such as framing and reframing, dramatic role conventions, and in-role performances to create a critical communication transaction with a live audience;
- demonstrate interpersonal, vocal and presentation skills in live and mediated performances;
- manipulate image, sound and text for presentation purposes; and
- work collaboratively to conceive, develop and produce live and electronically mediated performances.

Newspaper Theatre

Newspaper Theatre was conceived and developed by Brazilian theatre teacher and activist Augusto Boal (1979; 1998) as a set of simple techniques for people to make their own theatre. As a secondary aim, it attempts to demystify the media, and educate people to question the notion of objectivity.

At its simplest, Newspaper Theatre can be created by taking a story from a newspaper and re-contextualising or re-framing it using one or more of the following techniques.

Simple reading

The news item is read without comment or commentary, but it is detached from the context of the newspaper. The audience is therefore not influenced by such biases as the position of the story in the paper, or the size of the headline.

Complementary reading

The news item is read, but information generally omitted by the newspapers is added to give a more "complete" version. This additional information can be sourced from other news or research.

Crossed reading

Two contradictory or linked stories are read in crossed (alternating) form to shed new light on each story, add deeper explanation or provide a new dimension.

Rhythmical reading

The news item is read (or sung) with a rhythm as a musical commentary, for example to samba, tango, Gregorian chant. The news item is then “filtered” by the connotations of the new rhythm.

Parallel action

The item is read, while parallel actions are mimed to show either the context in which the reported event really occurred, or to complement the spoken story.

Improvisation

The news is improvised on stage to explore/exploit variants and possibilities. It is open to re-playing, and suggestion and involvement from the audience.

Historical reading

The news item is read, together with facts or scenes that show the same event in other historical moments, or other countries or social systems.

Reinforcement

The news item is read or sung with the aid or accompaniment of reinforcing material, such as audio/visuals, jingles, advertising or publicity materials.

Concretion of the abstract

Revealing on-stage what the news often hides or masks beneath clichés, over-used terms or matter-of-fact reporting. Concepts such as torture, hunger, unemployment are shown concretely. Graphic imagery, real or symbolic, is used to reclaim the emotional impact of abstracted concepts.

Text out of context

The news item is presented out of the context in which it was published, for example an actor portraying the Prime Minister delivers a speech about austerity while devouring a huge dinner. The truth behind the words is demystified, for example the PM wants austerity for the people, but not for him/herself.

It is important to remember that we do not wish to have to teach our Communication cohort drama techniques to enable them to engage with this task. Just as Boal’s principles for newspaper theatre are designed for use with non-performers (eg illiterate farmers or workers), we try to avoid devoting too much class time to the performative aspects of the task. Rather, we find that once armed with some guidelines on possible ways to re-contextualise news and information (as outlined above), students will naturally draw upon their experience of popular culture to find their own suitable performance frames such as musicals, reality TV, game shows, and sitcoms.

The social issues chosen by the participating groups vary according to their topicality at the time the assignment is engaged. Thus a focus on Pauline Hanson is not evident in 2005, whereas themes associated with the war in Iraq, or the current Australian prime minister’s role as George W. Bush’s “deputy sheriff” who is a “man of steel”, or the plight of refugees who fled from the

Taliban and Saddam Hussein only to wind up behind razor wire with their children in Australian detention centres do figure in newspaper theatre performances during the past few years. But so too, do local state political issues such as a 2005 presentation called, "Carr Crash." This newspaper theatre performance zeroed in on the multiple challenges facing the then Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, as he attempted to manage the transportation problems associated with inadequate bus and train services, ferry crashes, the crumbling infrastructure of the railways, freeway tolls, and an ever burgeoning number of people who insist on using private motor vehicles as sole occupants in their daily commute to work.

The point is that the newspaper theatre assignment provides a framework that empowers students to decide upon the topic, the point of view, and the performative conventions that they will use to develop their project from pre-production through to their post-production evaluation and submission of portfolios which document the debates they had, and the decisions they took to research, rehearse, perform, and reflect upon their collaborative endeavour.

Our Newspaper Theatre assignment

At Charles Sturt University, our first year cohort of communication students consists of about 200 students. They are enrolled in specialised streams covering journalism, public relations, advertising, commercial radio, and theatre/media. There are also some students from other disciplines such as marketing or human movement who are studying double degree programs with an advertising or journalism component. The entire cohort studies Media Production and Presentation, with this subject taught as a combination of a one-hour weekly lecture, a one-hour weekly computer laboratory class covering digital media production skills, and a two-hour studio workshop where students engage in a range of physical and mediated presentation exercises.

Our Newspaper Theatre task is developed and performed primarily in the studio workshop classes, although supporting audio/visual elements such as PowerPoint presentations or digital graphic slideshows are created in the computer tutorials. Students work in groups of five or six drawn from their workshop class. They are given the first six weeks or so of the teaching session to individually survey print-based media messages – that is, news stories and advertising content.

The students are instructed to note which topics or advertisements grab their attention and interest, or conversely which items they choose to avoid or ignore. The aim is to encourage students to take a more critical view of the media messages they are consuming, and to look for juxtapositions or dissonances that can be exploited later in the development of a live performance. Students build up a research file as "homework" during this period, guided by notes provided in the printed subject outline and additional resources delivered electronically via a Web-based learning environment. Key readings include Boal's description of Newspaper Theatre (1998, pp. 234-246), and the methods and approaches are further discussed in the workshop classes. The students know that they will

have to present their research to their workshop group, along with a justification of their proposed topic, and this provides at least some peer pressure to engage with news media during this period.

At the end of the early research phase, around week seven of the teaching session, groups hold a brainstorming session. They bring examples of the print-based material that has provoked a strong or interesting personal response during their research phase. They pitch their ideas to the group in terms of a theme to be developed further into a live performance that analyses the underlying messages. The group must agree on a topic to be taken forward in their collective effort to document their research and rehearse their performance. Workshop tutors can provide input, or even arbitration, to smooth out this process. Leading up to this phase, students have also been provided with lecture, tutorial and reading resources that outline and discuss effective methods of brainstorming and creative collaboration.

Once the group has settled on a topic, or set of related topics, they work collaboratively for another three weeks to further research their chosen theme and develop a short (10 minute) performance piece. Much of this work must take place beyond the classroom, but they may be called upon in workshops to give a progress report or even show small pieces of their emerging live performance in order to receive feedback from the tutor and their classmates. In the past, some groups have also brought more senior students into the development/rehearsal process to provide advice on elements such as choreography, staging, costuming and in-role performance.

This development process culminates around week ten in a workshop class where each group gives a brief seminar presentation outlining the rationale for choosing their theme, and providing an overview of the research and rehearsal process. Each group also gives a “work-in-progress” performance which is critiqued in class, allowing a last chance for fine-tuning. In the following week, the tutor formally assesses the live Newspaper Theatre performance. The criteria-based marking sheet has been made available for students since the first week to use as a checklist when preparing their assignments.

As an added twist, each workshop class nominates the “best” performance, and these ten or so groups are invited to perform their pieces for a paying public audience in an on-campus venue. We have found that not only does this type of performance event appeals to the students’ desires for a touch of instant - albeit brief - celebrity, but it adds a touch of colour to the cultural calendar of the campus.

Pedagogy: A critical, constructivist sensibility

Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is read and discussed over a four-week period by all of the people enrolled in Media Production and Presentation. We want them to encounter an internationally influential book that calls into question the efficacy the approach to learning and teaching that they have likely experienced throughout their previous twelve years of schooling. Freire is uncompromising in his denunciation of the “prescription[s]” of “systematic

education" (1994, pp. 29, 36). Throughout his many published writings, he used a range of synonyms to describe the "banking concept of education" (1994, p. 53) as the "extension" and "transmission" stance (1974/1998, pp. 95, 99) of the "nutritionist" (1985, p. 105; see also, 1994, p. 57) approach to teaching and learning. These rely on the construction of the "verbalistic lessons" (1994, p. 57) that characterise "narrative education" (1994, p. 52). All of these terms are synonymous with what he called the "banking concept of education."

According to Freire, the banking approach to teaching and learning denies students the opportunity of discovering that they too can "educate the teacher" (1994, p. 53). Yet, it is hard to imagine that this might even be possible when one lectures in a large hall to over two hundred first year communication undergraduates. Freire's characterisations of the relationship between teachers and students emphasise power at the expense of "authentic thinking" and "true communication" (1994, p. 58).

The dialogical character of "authentic" human communication is a value that we affirm; and Freire's analysis of the implications that this value holds for the conduct of the learning and teaching encounter are value/means that we also affirm. In Freire's view, the banking concept of education neuters possibilities for lecturers to shape relations so that they become "teacher-students with [students who become] students-teachers." In this scenario, "[t]he teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (1994, p. 61). In order to affect a *dialogical interaction* between tutors, lecturers and over two hundred undergraduates we had to think carefully about how to restructure tutorials as interactive workshops that require cooperative, advance planning amongst teams of students who meet to prepare for workshops encounters which are designed to promote learning through what Douglas Barnes (1976) calls "action knowledge".

The problem is that traditional reliance upon mass lectures exemplifies entrenched preferences toward the "directed" transmission pedagogy of "banking education." As such, "banking education begins with a false understanding of men and women as objects" (1994, p. 58). This is evidenced by the diverse ways in which the lecturer's role is interpreted as being a "depositor" a "prescriber" or a "domesticator" (1994, p. 56) whose function is "to regulate the way the world 'enters into' the students" (1994, p. 57).

Because "oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness" (1994, p. 33) people "must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (1994, p. 29). The problem relates to the ways in which the learning content of a given syllabus promotes a "dichotomy between reading words and reading reality" (1987, p. 136). The problem here is not that one gives lectures. On the contrary

... not all kinds of lecturing is banking education... A liberating teacher will illuminate reality even if he or she lectures. The question is the content and

dynamism of the lecture, the approach to the object to be known... Does it critically reorient students to society? ...Afterwards the class takes your very speech as an object to be thought about. Do you see? You take your speech as a kind of oral codification of a problem, now to be decodified by the students and you... Here the importance is that the speech be taken as a *challenge* to be unveiled, and *never* as a channel of transference of knowledge. (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 40)

Because the content of such a lecture is posed as a problem it has the capacity to challenge the participants to penetrate the complexity of the issues under discussion in their totality (Freire 1994, p. 89). This type of lecture gains some purchase on the possibility that the participants can “emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1994, p. 33). In this case the “transforming action” is affected through problem-posing dialogue that is oriented around the aim of achieving depth learning by stimulating more complex levels of abstraction that move beyond mere description of the contents of a newspaper article. Benjamin Bloom’s (1956) schema for the cognitive domain of intellection gives us a vocabulary for naming the types of skills that the newspaper theatre assignment promotes in terms of demonstrating the learner’s capacity for application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Yet, lectures do not often achieve the types of outcomes that indicate depth learning. Many lectures, and the lecturers who create and deliver them, do not even consider the subtleties of the learning encounter to which Freire refers; much less do they address themselves to achieving the levels of cognitive abstraction that Benjamin Bloom urges us to consider as a basis for designing the learning tasks that the students will engage. And, it must be said, students are often resistant of overt attempts that enjoin them to think in terms that are more speculative, and critically interrogative.

This discussion points to the phenomenon of how a dynamic and ever-changing world, whose social culture is created and sustained by men and women, can nevertheless be presented to students in lectures as if it were “static, compartmentalised, and predictable” (1994, p. 52). It is not hard to understand how so many seventeen and eighteen year old students have learned, through twelve years of “systematic education”, to passively accept their prescribed role as cognitive “containers” and “receptacles to be filled by the teacher” (1994, p. 53). In our experience, many undergraduates require a period of reorientation in order to wake up to the responsibility that they bear in the great task of engaging the heuristic aims that shape the design intentions of the educational processes that should differentiate university degree studies from their secondary school experience. The newspaper theatre assignment represents one of the way that we attempt to achieve this aim.

What we do is to alter our language use in order to pose problems rather than narrate the content of the syllabus for Media Production and Presentation. We set assignments that require enacted representations that promote the students use of assumed roles. This tactic empowers students to construct a range of role-

based communication initiatives that can explore multiple responses to a given topic. This approach enables participants to ignore the imperative of the "banking concept of education" - namely, that their principle role is to reply to the lecturer's questions with the "right" answer.

This issue is primarily attitudinal in terms of learning to redefine their relationship with their lecturers and with the learning tasks proposed by their units of study. This matter has implications for their cognitive and affective development as autonomous, life-long learners who need to be able to make mature, critical judgements that will shape their subsequent social interactions with others within both their professional and private lives. Often they must relearn how to study so that deductive reasoning becomes a *starting point* that allows them to form hypotheses and shape questions that will support the generation of new knowledge through induction (Freire, 1996, p. 132).

Freire would have us understand that the creation of new knowledge requires that we never passively accept "the given" but that we demonstrate a healthy independence of mind that is prepared to question the presumptive authority of the lecturer, or media content, as "the giver" and be prepared to test the information that is "given." Our newspaper theatre assignment is designed to provoke the critical appreciation amongst the participants' that the world of public affairs and mass communication is not "a 'given' world, but as a world dynamically 'in the making'" (1985, p. 106).

Much has changed in terms of educational thought and practice during the last quarter of the twentieth century, but Freire's critique cannot easily be dismissed. Nor is his critique of the "banking concept of education" irrelevant to the concerns of higher education in the early twenty-first century. His epistemological reflections have a particularly tart analytic piquancy whose relevance would quickly become clear to even the most casual observer of the types of learning encounters that occur within in most university lecture halls.

In Freire's view, an authentic "act of knowing" describes "a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to new action" (1972, p. 31). This concept forms the very core of Freire's praxis philosophy. The object of this dialectic is "[a]uthentic liberation... Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire 1994, p. 60).

This transformative intention, and the actions/interactions undertaken by the first year undergraduates as they develop their response to the newspaper theatre assignment, is what characterises the students' actions as being critical. This is initiated when they start to appreciate that the newspaper theatre assignment is challenging them to reassess their assumptions about how new knowledge can be generated and applied within the context of symbolic, dramatised interactions between fictional characters who represent people, ideas, and/or social forces that relate to the newspaper story that they have selected to investigate.

The ways in which the participants encounter one another as they work through the production phases of this assignment are qualitatively different from those that they experience within their other concurrent units of study. What they discover is that their work in this subject is oriented around assignments that require them to work cooperatively as collaborators who must look to one another to generate appropriate responses to the challenges embedded within their assignments.

In this sense, the newspaper theatre assignment, and all of their assignments for Media Production and Presentation, are examples of a social constructivist (Dewey 1963, 1966) approach to learning and teaching. This approach emphasises integrated research and learning tasks that arise from the students' own interests. The assignments are not designed as ends in themselves but emphasise personal growth through cooperative group learning and the application of a range of digital skills that are taught concurrently within the same subject. Moreover, social constructivism emphasises educational tasks wherein learning "occurs through its connection with life, rather than through participation in curriculum" and provides "hands-on and experience based" activities (Roblyer, 2003, p. 63) that place the student participants at the centre of the learning.

For a start, a specific topic has not been assigned. They are being asked to follow their own interests when selecting the newspaper article that they will use as the basis for developing their performance. But their interactions with one another - as a team that is intent upon expressing a clearly defined point of view within the context of a production process and consequent newspaper theatre performance - is also transformative. The critical character of their work will be evident within the outcomes that they collaboratively generate.

The terms of the assignment require them to create concrete expressions of their learning as a portfolio of production notes that accounts for their choice of a specific newspaper article and their exploration of the social issues that it introduces. They will have conducted library and Internet research into their chosen topic and identified the different voices that are present within the article that they nominate. Through this activity the participants begin to develop a more sensitised awareness to how the writer positions him or herself in relation to the reader, and how other voices are present within the story through direct quotation, indirect reference, and through events or documents to which the article refers. Other individuals and competing social interests may be relevant to the topic but absent from the story and yet, they too, can be given voice within the newspaper theatre performance that the students develop. This point of view is consistent with an opinion expressed by Jim Thomas (1993, p. 35) when he observes, "...critical analysis can be applied to fairly mundane topics by moving beyond the immediate narrative of the subjects to the broader processes in which the narratives are embedded."

It may be of some value for readers to consider where the evidence of your own teaching practice locates you along a spectrum of behavioural actions/interactions with the adult, pre-professional learners who participate in

your communication and journalism classes. Consider the following table by thinking of the types of interpersonal interactions you tend to have with undergraduate students, the learning tasks that you have set, and how these relate to the content, the objectives, and the desired outcomes that you define for any given unit of study. Do you tend to be more oriented toward the “directed” instructional model or toward the “constructivist” approach to designing learning and teaching?

Table 1 Methodological Differences Between Directed and Constructivist Models

	Directed	Constructivist	
	Teacher roles Transmitter of knowledge; expert source; director of skill/concept development through structured experiences	Guide and facilitator as students generate their own knowledge; collaborative resource and assistant as students explore topics	
	Student roles Receive information; demonstrate competence; all students learn same material	Collaborate with others; develop competence; students may learn different material	
	Curriculum characteristics Based on skill and knowledge hierarchies; skills taught one after the other in set sequence	Based on projects that foster both higher level and lower level skills concurrently	
	Learning goals Stated in terms of mastery learning and behavioural competence in a scope and sequence	Stated in terms of growth from where student began and increased ability to work independently and with others	
	Types of activities Lecture, demonstration, discussions, student practice, seatwork, testing	Group projects, hands-on exploration, product development	
	Assessment strategies Written tests and development of products matched to objective; all tests and products march set criteria; same measures for all students	Performance tests and products such as portfolios; quality measured by rubrics and checklists; measures may differ among students	

We have found that the type of information contained in Table 1 (above) has been very useful as an aid in assisting us to reflect upon our teaching practice. It helps us to interrogate our epistemological assumptions and to recognise that we are neither purely constructivist nor wholly directed in the ways in which we approach the design of the assignments for Media Production and Presentation. Indeed, we have developed a whole range of worksheets for the newspaper theatre assignment which, even though they represent a more directed approach to learning and teaching, nevertheless also exemplify the type of “scaffolding” support for students that Lev Vygotsky advocated (Roblyer, 2003, p. 64; Prawat, 1993).

Conclusion

While structured research in terms of evaluation surveys about this specific learning task should be considered, it is possible to offer a few observations about the character of the newspaper theatre assignment. At the end of the teaching session, the tutors engage the students in a discussion of the tasks undertaken and work accomplished. This dialogue concludes with the opportunity to voluntarily submit brief, anonymous, written comments and suggestions.

In November 2005, a handful of students chose to offer specific comments on the newspaper theatre task. The feedback that can be broadly categorised as “negative” pointed to the amount of “paperwork” required for the task, such as the research reports and briefings to classmates as outlined earlier. This complaint is occasionally directed toward other assessment tasks required for this subject, as we use a series of coversheets and checklists to prompt activity and guide students through key processes. Some find this irksome, but most (based on anecdotal evidence) find it useful. We regard these coversheets and other forms of documentation as examples of what is meant by “scaffolding” support strategies for learning tasks that are predicated upon social constructivist epistemology.

Feedback that could be labelled as generally positive pointed to the newspaper theatre task as a fun way of developing a more critical understanding of news stories. Anonymous comments such as: “Newspaper Theatre made me more aware of the agenda behind news stories, and more discerning as an audience member”, or “this task showed me that people have different views about what the real issues are or what news stories mean”, are typical of the responses in 2005. One student suggested that the public performance aspect was crucial “to gather critical peer feedback, and to celebrate and display new skills”.

Over the years, students have generally reported a feeling of satisfaction that they were able to choose the topic and the dramatic conventions that they would use to analyse that topic. Likewise, the structure of the assignment leads them to feel that they became more motivated to understand different points of view. Many included expressions of a new appreciation for the need to foster good interpersonal relationships within the context of their work group situation, and that this focus on effective teamwork promoted clearer dialogue about the larger social issues involved in the topic that they chose to examine. They appreciate

the opportunity to research, develop, and present a dramatic commentary on the “news behind the news.”

For journalism students specifically the newspaper theatre assignment engages them with a range of tasks likely to be encountered in the newsroom, including story generation, “pitching” ideas or editorial approaches to a team, background research, live deadlines, and the adoption of production and presentation roles.

We believe that this learning task is particularly important in developing the students’ capacity to work in-role and to find a voice that can express points of view that are different from their own, without the fear of “getting a wrong answer.” After they graduate they will all need to be able to work quickly, confidently, and collaboratively within a range of professional workplace environments; so they need to be able to practice the difference between speaking in a media role and speaking “as oneself”. Moreover, the newspaper theatre project enables them to practice using their actual voices in ways that promote experimentation with pause, pitch, pace, diction, and projection. These skills are developed by assuming fictional roles and by using dramatic conventions that reframe the depictive, contextual circumstances of their communication initiatives. This assignment enables them to get in touch with the type of courage one needs in order to conduct interviews, speak on radio, or present news reports on camera.

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