

## Re-performing news narratives in the case of living newspapers

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The term "living newspaper" or *zhivaya gazeta* originated in Russia during the October Revolution of 1917. It refers to public readings of party political news for audiences (mostly) in rural locations. During the 1920s, the idea was coopted by agit-prop theatre groups across Europe and became a type of proto-documentary theatre, transforming news and actuality into short public performances (Cosgrove, iv).

By the mid-1930s, the US Federal Theatre Project, under the directorship of Hallie Flanagan, had established a Living Newspaper Program to "dramatize a new struggle" through mixed-media stagings of news stories.

In the 1960s, the Brazilian director Augusto Boal revived the form as part of panoply of techniques using theatre for social change. Boal saw in the living newspaper the potential for audiences to transform and critically challenge daily news articles or non-dramatic texts through simple staging techniques - including simple, crossed, rhythmical and complementary readings of newspaper articles (Wardrip-Fruin, 346)

For the past two years, as part of a course on media literacy at Konan Women's University, I have been exploring the potential of Living Newspapers with ESL students as a form of process drama towards critical media analysis. As part of this work, students engage with the reading and reception of news stories, deconstruct "official" news accounts, question how narratives are formed, edit and perform their own living newspapers.

The exercises are intended for students with little to no experience of drama training and a core part of the work is geared also towards language learning. In this presentation, I would like to share the results of this project with conference participants, drawing on practical examples of student work and presenting an analysis of my methodology.