

Kasey Bohney

Dogs! As Seen on TV

Instructor: Thomas-McGill

Pull Quote: “The article provides a lot of information to help readers make their own decisions about whether introducing dogs into the workplace may be beneficial or detrimental to their working environment.”

Reading academic articles is not fun or easy. Therefore, my goal was to translate the information from an academic article into a genre that is simple and entertaining. I translated the article, “Dogs in the Workplace: A Review of the Potential Benefits and Challenges,” into a cheesy “As seen on TV” commercial, because nothing is funnier nor easier than watching TV.

Shelley Reid wrote, “Write about what you know about, are curious about, are passionate about,” is one of the most effective ways to make your writing “real” (Reid 4). I chose “Dogs in the Workplace” because I love dogs, and I am passionate about finding small ways to make people’s everyday lives better. I am also curious about making videos. As a YouTube fan, I love watching other people’s creations, and I want to learn more about editing my own videos. Choosing to write about a topic I’m passionate about and using a tool I’m interested in for my genre translation, made this project really fun for me. The fun-factor of the project also made me excited about the project and less prone to procrastination, and I felt more confident in the final product. The first step of the translation was determining the audiences of the initial text and of “As-Seen-on-TV” commercials.

“Dogs in the Workplace: A Review of the Potential Benefits and Challenges” addresses the academic community looking for ways to improve the working experience. The article provides a lot of information to help readers make their own decisions about whether introducing dogs into the workplace may be beneficial or detrimental to their working environment.

Employers, employees, and human resource management personnel may find this information

useful. Additionally, the article is published in an environmental research and public health journal. Therefore, the readers are likely individuals who regularly read academic journals and are knowledgeable in the fields of environmental and public health research.

“As seen on TV” commercials are exactly what they sound like: TV commercials advertising various products. People watch TV for many reasons, but the one overall key purpose is entertainment. Additionally, “As seen on TV” commercials are attempting to sell a product, so the audience is people who watch TV, people who are willing to spend money, and people who are looking for products that will make their life better in some way. Therefore, my goal was to make a commercial that is entertaining and will convince the viewers that the lifestyle benefit of my product (a dog for their workplace) outweighs the monetary cost.

“As seen on TV” commercials have a lot of perks when it comes to displaying information. One impactful tool is they combine speech, text, and video in one platform. There are three different modes at play when transmitting information to help communicate the message in the viewer. Keeping a TV-watcher’s attention is not easy, so the commercials include multiple tactics to keep the audience’s eyes glued to the screen, such as cheesy sound effects, exciting expression words, and fun visuals. I chose these commercials because I know it can be daunting to read a lengthy academic article filled with blocks of text. I wanted to portray the information in an eye-catching, lighthearted, and interesting way. I wanted to create something that was fun to make, fun to view, and effectively translated the information.

An unfortunate consequence of choosing an “As seen on TV” commercial for my new genre is that I had to leave out a lot of the “potential challenges” of bringing dogs into the workplace. Commercials will not point out the flaws or difficulties of their products, so I couldn’t include the difficulties of introducing dogs in the workplace because that would make

the commercial far less persuasive. Furthermore, since I was appealing to a broad TV-watching audience rather than an academic group, I attempted to simplify the material as much as possible to widen the audience.

The initial challenge I faced was the daunting task of reading the academic article. Facing a lengthy paper with sophisticated language can be very intimidating. Fortunately, I used a few tips from Karen Rosenberg's article, "Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources," and was able to grasp the information in my article. She suggests paying close attention to the abstract, because it provides an "executive summary" of the article (Rosenberg 216). Just by reading my abstract I was able to determine the purpose of my article and was able to provide the reader with a summary of the current knowledge surrounding dogs in the workplace. I was also provided with a roadmap of the article's contents. Another strategy I used was making the academic reading social. After reading the article, I talked with my mom about dogs in the workplace and explained why I thought it's a great idea. This conversation not only helped me to solidify what I had just read into my mind, but also to clarify my viewpoint on the matter.

Another challenge I faced during the genre translation was deciding what parts of the article I wanted to include and what wasn't as important. I decided to pick out some of the most compelling benefits of having dogs at work and tried to emphasize those ideas as much as possible. I made sure to include how dogs increase social interactions at work, decrease stress, improve worker morale, and improve task performance (Foreman). To adhere these ideas to the conventions of an "As seen on TV" commercial in my video, I added visuals including myself, my dogs, photos from the internet, and text to further engage the viewers. Another odd thing that

came from adhering to the conventions was I had to display the dog as a product and give it a price point, since commercials are always selling something.

This was my first experience working in depth with the idea of “genre.” A section of the book *Writing about Writing* explains that genres are “recurring text types” that respond to recurring situations (Rosenberg 34). With this understanding, I determined that commercials are recurring text/video types that respond to the recurring situation of trying to sell a product on television. Furthermore, I learned the genre of “ads” requires simplicity. There is no point in adding confusing jargon or in-depth analysis because you’re going to lose the attention of your viewer, and therefore their willingness to buy your product. Additionally, I learned that academic articles are a broader genre than I had thought. Particularly, I learned that review articles were a summary of current existing knowledge on a topic; before, I thought the only type of academic journals were research articles detailing one specific experiment done.

To conclude, I chose to translate *Dogs in the Workplace: A Review of the Potential Benefits and Challenges* into a silly “As seen on TV” commercial because I wanted to prove that learning can be fun, lighthearted, and simple. I read and struggled with an academic article, learned the conventions of “As seen on TV” commercials, and edited the information from the article into my very own TV commercial. Although grappling with an academic text is challenging, using the knowledge you have acquired to create something entertaining and accessible for all backgrounds of previous knowledge is a rewarding experience.

Works Cited

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Author profile: I am a first-year honors student at UC Santa Barbara from Redondo Beach, California. When writing this piece, I decided to have as much fun as possible. I translated an academic article about dogs into an "As Seen on TV" commercial, a hilariously absurd ad promoting dogs in the workplace. During this project, I stuck to my strong belief that learning should be fun, not stressful.