

The Art of a Recipe

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Pull Quote:

In this assignment I took on the task of translating an academic article about living a sustainable life into an easy to read recipe. These different genres of writing had very different conventions: from audiences to components. When transforming all of these conventions during my translation, it was still essential to deliver the original message to the reader.

In the original academic article “Going Green: The Process of Lifestyle Change,” by Janet A. Lorenzen, the message delivered was that, “Green practices are not isolated decisions or actions, but components in an ongoing project” (94). This means that when decide to live a sustainable lifestyle, it is not a single choice that automatically produces an earth-friendly experience. Instead, it is a choice to continue an ongoing battle against our generation’s large, unsustainable companies.

Like many other genres of writing, such as children’s books or textbook chapters, the conventions of a recipe were created by people who found what techniques worked over time. According to Lisa Bickmore in her piece “Genre in The Wild: Understanding Genre Within Rhetorical (Eco)systems,” “A genre is a typified utterance that appears in a recurrent situation. A genre evolves through human use and activity to be a durable and usable form for carrying out human communicative intentions in fairly stable ways” (35). This means that the rules of a genre were not created by a single person, but by a group of people who refined this type of writing over time. In the case of recipes, since recipes usually produce a complex product, it became essential to the genre to have easy-to-read instructions. With the growing popularity of

cookbooks and the internet, it also became expected that there was a description of what the end product would be. To me, these characteristics felt the truest to the recipe genre and something I could not have strayed away from.

However, when writing the list of ingredients for my recipe, I broke the rules by not having the amount of ingredients needed. For example, a typical food recipe includes how many cups of a certain ingredient is needed. I think this rule was able to be bent in my case because there is no specific number of bags or hooks to buy to start living a sustainable lifestyle. One bag, ten metal utensils, or two hundred fluorescent light bulbs at the end of the day are all working toward a more sustainable life.

The conventions of a typical recipe include a title, a description of the product, and a list of ingredients and directions. When creating my first version of my recipe, my primary focus was trying to make it *look* like a typical recipe. However, appearances are not the only thing that matters. This draft of the recipe felt empty. It had lost the meaning of the academic article during translation. It seemed as though Lorenzen's message was getting lost within all the recipe conventions. Within the lists, descriptions, and fancy headings, this version of the recipe looked and felt vacant. I was stuck asking myself, "How does the reader know the importance of their actions and why their choices matter after reading this recipe?" The truth was that they did not.

After evaluation from my peers and myself, many changes were made. First, I transformed my chunky introduction into a one-line statement. Then I created a separate line to simply state Lorenzen's message in my own words. By separating my introductory paragraph from my main points, the reader is able to quickly and easily understand why their actions against climate change are needed. After that, I simplified my list headings. When I replaced "Here's what you'll need" with "INGREDIENTS," the reader was prepared to view a list of

ingredients needed. Then I created different categories within my ingredients and directions list to better demonstrate how these choices battled against different areas of climate change. By creating these categories, the whole recipe felt cohesive. This was because it summed up how to be sustainable and why. A recipe by definition is a manual on how to create something seemingly difficult with easy steps. The audience for a recipe can be anyone and everyone. These changes were all made because they allowed for the recipe to be more comprehensible for people of any age or education.

Once I turned in the second draft and was able to get feedback from my professor, I evolved my second draft version of the recipe into a blog-style online recipe with space for comments. Because my recipe was not about food, my comments section represented the different groups of people who went green, such as volunteers, eco-conscious homeowners, or religious environmentalists, and how they used this recipe. My professor helped me realize this change was necessary because the perspective from these groups of people were lost in translation in my previous drafts. By creating a comments section, I was able to stay true to these groups of people's input while honoring the conventions of a recipe.

When translating this academic article, I analyzed the conventions that made it itself. From noticing that it was very dense, included an abstract, and was targeted toward an educated audience, I quickly realized that these were all things that had to be changed in order to produce an effective translation of a recipe. Though recipes do not conventionally have an abstract, the information held within the academic article's abstract had to be included. The abstract highlighted and summarized Lorenzen's article into a few coherent sentences, which was helpful when deciding between what information I was going to include and exclude in my translation.

The most challenging part of translating was conveying why the message of Lorenzen's

article needed to be told. In the article “Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources,” Karen Rosenburg writes, “I trained myself to spend days from dawn until dusk hunkered over a carrel in the library’s basement armed with a dictionary and a rainbow of highlighters” (211). This proves that academic articles are often intimidating and difficult to understand to the average reader. Academic writing has a selective audience of people who want to be further educated. The reader of Lorenzen’s article already understood the importance of living a sustainable lifestyle. The audience of a recipe, on the other hand, is an average person who is just looking for steps to achieve an end result. It was challenging to find the words to transform the call to action from Lorenzen’s article into the colloquial language used in recipes. As a result, in the end I resorted to using statistics to deliver the importance of making sustainable choices.

When translating a piece from one genre into another it is essential that the meaning stays true even in its new form. With the characteristics of an academic article being drastically different from those of a cooking recipe, it was important to be very conscious of the changes being made during translation. Though no genre has a specific set of rules to follow, it was essential to include things like an eye-catching title, clear product description, and ingredients list to produce a coherent recipe. In her article, Janet A Lorenzen tried to convey the message that living a sustainable lifestyle is part of the role everyone plays, and that it is a process not a product. Through refining and reflection, my recipe translation should also do the same work that Lorenzen’s article did. Writing is so powerful that the same message can still be delivered despite different formatting.

Works Cited

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Go to the Cover Page of Open English @ SLCC, Open English @ SLCC, 1 Aug. 2016, openenglishatslcc.pressbooks.com/chapter/genre-in-the-wild-understanding-genre-within-rhetorical-ecosystems/.

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Author Profile: I am a first year biological science student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Though I am just starting my academic writing career, I have had significant growth throughout my quarter in Writing 2. During my free time I like to play soccer and get food with my friends.

To read Aiko Hirose's recipe go to <http://www.startinglinesmagazine.com/easy-recipe-to-start-going-green/>