Reflection Essay

GIF Essay Link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wJWoxCvI_2e-fQKx_lk5VQF40hUQVl5Vkg4_2Ee2whQ/edit?usp=sharing

For my GIF Essay, I choose to review a deployment I experienced in 2019-2020. Normally, deployments are serious business and not something the average civilian would be able to understand and connect with. Due to this, I incorporated an explanation of concepts on how a deployment is tasked to individual members of the armed services, which admittedly made the first couple of paragraphs procedural and dry. Knowing that I was going to add GIFs, during the writing I tried to add phrases or words that I thought might make a connection with a GIF I had seen from the past. I composed the entire review, then went back and added GIFs. The arrangement and placement of the gifs followed the spatial mode's guidance of "content is organized so that readers can find their way through it without difficulty" (Arola et al, 2014). I choose to add gifs after paragraphs so that it didn't disrupt the flow of the text. After reviewing the first draft, it was apparent that the procedural nature of the first few paragraphs explaining deployment concepts were dry and lacked humor. I used ChatGPT-3 to revise the paragraphs to make the humorous and litter. ChatGPT-3 was able to select words that were quirkier and rephase some of my points to allow of a humous punchline to be tagged on. After the re-edits, I reviewed my gif selections to ensure that they aligned with the text, which they all did, and no changes were made. This process followed the Multimodal Composing Process of "drafting, revising, and more fine-tuned drafting until we only need to polish the final text." (Arola et al, 2014). I choose to write the entire review first to ensure that it was coherent and told a story

with a natural conclusion. I didn't want to find gifs first because that would have made me write my story around the gif. It could have made the story forced and interrupt the logical flow of the sequence of events.

I used giphy.com to search for the gifs used in the review essay. I searched for phrases that connected with the concepts I was conveying in the text. I searched for "live and laugh" for the opening statement and found the "Live Life, just laugh and smile" gif. Most people can connect with the meaning of that gif since we all have those "all you do is laugh" moments in life. The second gif was found searching for "Uncle Sam", which I had stated was sending us into global affairs. The portraits an Uncle Sam character acting surprised that he is being pointed out and chuckles at the end. His facial expressions and hand gestures the non-verbal communication of the Gestural Mode (Arola et al, 2014). It aligns with the humor that we all acknowledge the US government's habit of getting involved in world affairs but doesn't admit it or the harm that may come from it. The rest of the gifs were all selected in a similar fashion with the desired connections to the message of the text's ideas. The initial search topics were good enough to find a barrage of gifs that were aligned with the subject, like "desert and sand". Then, I scrolled through the results for one that aligned with my message and added humor. The shear selection of gifs showed me that there are a lot of different gifs for the subjects I was searching for that could be used for more than humor, such as sarcasm, irony, social unrest, and much more.

The advantages of writing with gifs are that I can show the reader a concept or feeling that underlines my text. It allows the reader to form a connection with the text that wouldn't be without gifs. Gifs also ensure that the reader's attention is kept by making sure that the

message is clear, and they have a connection through the shared experience of understanding the gifs underlying message. This is stated by Patkar as, "Part of the humor is finding a visual analogy that is completely surprising but relevant." A disadvantage of writing with gifs is that it is more of an art than science. Gifs, like art, are open for interpretation, so the reader could feel a connection with a concept that the writer wasn't intending to establish. There is a fine line between humor, sarcasm, and mockery and the reader could mistake one of another. Another disadvantage is that gifs are not appropriate for all types of writing, such as a research paper, policy memorandum, or news article. The writer needs to ensure that the message to be conveyed can be enhanced by a gif.

References

Arola, K. L., Sheppard, J., & Ball, C. E. (2014). Writer/designer: A guide to making Multimodal Projects. Bedford/St. Martins.

Patkar, M. (2015, January 27). *GIFs, the language of the web: Their history, culture, and future*. MUO. https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/gifs-language-internet-history-culture-art-future/