

## Implementation of verbal and visual-graphic means of multimodality in “Captain America” comic book

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the use of verbal and visual-graphic means in “Captain America” comic book. A comic book as a multimodal text includes both verbal and paralinguistic means of transferring the information. Verbal elements are represented by words, phrases and sentences used to convey the message, while the means of a graphic game are characterized by the use of paralinguistic (non-verbal) means.

**Keywords:** text, comics, multimodality, verbalization, image, visualization, font.

**Introduction.** The proper perception of the text is an essential element for the reader since this is the single way to understand the functioning of the language and its implications in a particular work. Modern text implies the use of verbal means of linguistic system and its heterogeneous components [4, p. 88]. A comic book as a multimodal text consists of verbal and visual-graphic components that are interconnected and complement each other. Comic books are paralinguistically active texts due to the use of paralinguistic tools that emphasize its verbal part and add new content.

One of the key views on the visual literacy (the ability to use visual information) of the reader is recognizing visual elements in the text and their functions. The author uses a variety of ways to manipulate visual elements to achieve a special effect on the reader [9]. Therefore, the problem of the implementation of verbal and non-verbal means for conveying the message in the visual graphic text draws attention of many linguists.

**A brief review of publications on the subject.** The analysis of verbal and nonverbal means explication is presented in the research conducted by Jewitt C. The author analyzes the notion of multimodality that leaves an impact on the reading and writing of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Teo van Leeuwen dedicated one of his publications to a semiotics of topography, ideational, textual, and interpersonal meanings. The research conducted by Malec W. and Rusinek M. presents a new vision into language structure and extends the borders of contemporary linguistics.

Bekhta I. emphasizes the functions of multimodal means of cohesion and coherence in modern literary tales. According to T. Anokhina, the paragraphemic means are represented by “capitalization, decapitalization, paragraph, unusual spelling of words, italics, and icon set” [2, p. 73].

O. Anisimova considers that paralinguistic means are represented by the “graphic segmentation of the text, arrangement of the textual space, spaces, line length, page breakdown, color, font, italics, caption, typographic characters, numbers, lines, and underlines, graphic symbols, means of iconic language (photo, drawing, table, diagram, caricature), extra signs (number, %), punctuation, fields of the paper, paper size and other means that can vary from the type of text” [1, p. 7].

**The goal** of the article is to analyze the use of verbal elements and means of graphic game and to study out

their relationship in conveying the message in the English-language comic book as a visual-graphical multimodal text.

**Materials and methods.** The material for the research is presented by “Captain America” comic book as a multimodal text. A multimodal text is defined as a semiotic association, which is formed with the combination of any sign system (pictures, images, pictures, pictures or music) and the sign system of the language (written, oral, or printed). Multimodal text is a consequence of the process of creolization and the combination of different semiotic systems in a complex way [5].

In multimodal texts, coherence is created by combining verbal and graphic elements. This combination allows the reader to receive a complete picture of the characters and events in the text. Verbal and graphic elements are not perceived separately, but in a relationship. In multimodal texts, elements of cohesion can be represented by both words and illustrations. In such type of the text, non-linguistic means play an important role, because they reveal the methods of interaction between verbal and non-verbal means and their functions. Verbal and nonverbal components are an integral part of comics as a multimodal text, since they create additional context and narrow the meaning.

The verbal part of the text includes words while the visual component covers visual (photo, pictures), collage or graphic elements that are relevant to whom the text is directed. Both verbal and nonverbal components contain important information that cannot be ignored. The visual part is an integral part of multimodality. However, to create a holistic and comprehensive image, the visual element must be combined with verbal means in the text. Neither the visual nor the verbal component can exist separately since they are not self-sufficient, but should complement each other, thereby creating the general and logical content of the text [4, p. 88-89].

Verbal elements of multimodal text include the tools of a language code, such as words, phrases, sentences, and texts used to convey information. Verbal components are the most important means for the communication, because in “typical everyday communication they are considered as keys to the values presented in the messages” [3, p. 57].

The use of verbal means of communication establishes a contact between the speaker and the recipient and their

mutual understanding. However, in addition to verbal means, there are also visual, which convey messages as well. According to F. S. Batsevych, “nonverbal means of communication are components of the communicative code, in which there is non-linguistic (but sign) nature containing the elements of the language code, which function for the formation, transmission and perception of any information” [3, p. 58].

Since visual components are perceived easier than the verbal ones, they have strong capacity to influence the reader's perception. Compared to verbal components, illustrations created by a talented artist can “outshine” the verbal part of the text. As a result, illustrations and verbal elements exist separately in multimodal texts. In this way, the verbal part of the text is perceived through visual means. Visual tools not only accompany the text, but also help to interpret it. Very often, writers avoid illustrations in their texts in order not to evoke such distinctness [5].

Visual and graphic elements play an important role in the transmission of structural and semantic features of the text. The most common graphic elements are quotation marks, capital letters and italics. These are the tools that provide additional information in the textual space, since through the use a particular graphic marker, the reader can easily recognize the author's purpose in constructing the message [4, p. 88].

There are three aspects of graphical representation in the text: 1) font variation; 2) non-literary graphics; 3) the graphic image of the textual element, which is perceived visually [6, p. 228]. Paralinguistic means are differentiated through three criteria: 1) the degree of attachment to verbal elements in the text; 2) functions in the text; 3) the role in organizing the structure of the text [7, p. 81]. One of the paralinguistic tools that are often used in comics is the bold font, which emphasizes specific elements of the text and draws attention of the reader to them. There are many non-verbal means of a “graphic game,” which constitute a part of the multimodality of the text. They include an actual graphic element, its location, line spacing, font, color, underlining, sharpness, and transparency [12].

In addition to the above, the paragraphemic means may also include monetary and physical symbols, mathematical symbols, punctuation marks, and signs of other alphabets. A set of paralinguistic tools is quite extensive, and all of them are important elements of the text, because they perform a range of distinctive functions. The effect of a graphic game is created through the unusual use of paralinguistic means. Theo van Leeuwen argues that paragraphemic means are an integral and important part of the text. Due to these tools, the reader can define the additional value of the fragment [11]. Thus, its functional value and purpose can change.

The paralinguistic components of the multimodal visual graphic text can be divided into four groups: 1) text segmentation and graphic elements; 2) non-photographic and non-typographic textual elements; 3) iconic language elements; 4) other nonverbal means [8].

The group of text segmentation and graphic elements includes text arrangement on a sheet, line spacing, fields, page orientation, text positioning (horizontal, vertical, diagonal, situational (or arbitrary), text width, underlining, correction, insertion, selection, strikeover, intentional embodiment of textual elements without an interval [8].

The color and font group includes color and font variations (capitalization, italics, bold, unusual spelling, use of several sizes and font sets [8].

The group of non-photographic and non-typographic textual elements includes punctuation marks (comma, dot, question mark, exclamation point, dash, colon, quotes, brackets (square, round), apostrophe, diacritical marks (accent sign, tilde, macron, gravis, acute, circumflex, etc.), typographic signs, numbers, abbreviations (verbal and nonverbal elements), and mathematical symbols [8].

The group of iconic linguistic elements includes illustrations of various genre and type (landscape, still-life, painting, picture, drawing, or computer programs), comics, caricatures, pictograms (abstract, logo, logo), emblems, logos, photos, maps, smiley faces. The group of other nonverbal means may include tables, charts, schemes, diagrams (circular, columnar) [8].

Artistic illustrations in multimodal texts are considered more autonomous compared to verbal component of the text. While creating a text, both the author and the artist-illustrator have a common goal in presenting information. However, the artist-illustrator, as a creative person, can display his own way of looking at things through visual elements [5]. In such a way, the artist can influence the meaning of the text.

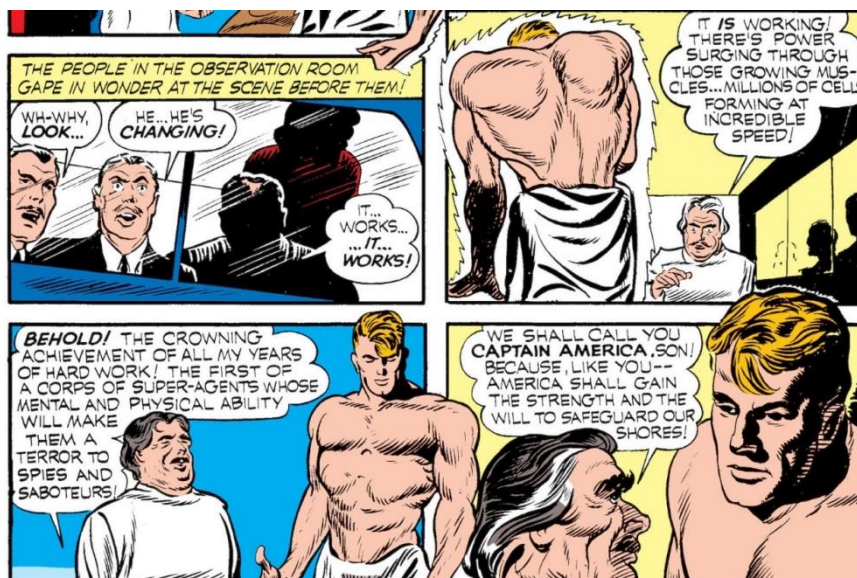
**Results and discussion.** A visual text always implies multimodality. Multimodal visual text requires the existence and interpretation of visual indicator, interval, color, font, style, and other ways of information representation. The multimodal approach to understanding and analyzing the text is based on the interpretation of various visual means as its essential components. In some multimodal texts, the written component is dominant, while in other texts it is not as valuable for presenting the information. The combination of the visual and written component of the text affects the overall meaning and perception of the text by the reader [10].

The visual component of the text accompanies the transmission of verbal information, creating new concepts and additional meanings. Non-verbal means expand the capabilities of verbal elements in the information transfer. This is explained by the fact that any visual means attracts attention and establishes peculiar impression [4, p. 89]. With the help of paralinguistic means, the author can manipulate the opinion and thoughts of the audience [8]. In the English-language comic book, there is a tendency to emphasize and highlight some words or their parts with a different color, font or style. The font has a linguistic value in the text, because it is an external layer of verbal communication in a certain statement.

In “Captain America” comic book, the reader's attention is drawn mostly to the image of characters. The reader receives information about the characters and events in the comic both through verbal means and illustrations. In comics, the illustrations have the complete capacity to provide all the necessary information to the reader. However, verbal elements are necessary for the proper and correct perception of the content.

In Fragment 1 of “Captain America” comic book, there is a tendency to emphasize verbal and non-verbal means by the bold font, as well as the use of non-pictographic textual elements, particularly an exclamation mark: “why, why, **look**... he... **he's changing!** It... works... **it**...

works! It is working! **Behold!** The crowning achievement of all my years of hard work! We shall call you **Captain America, son!**" [13].



Fragment 1. "Captain America" comic book.

The combination of verbal and non-textual elements helps to enhance the meaning of the message in the text. Non-verbal multimodal means involved in Fragment 1, emphasize the meaning conveyed by the verbal elements and provide an additional message in the text, thus attracting the attention of the reader. The illustrations depict a man wearing white clothes and the other man having strong physical abilities (see Fragment 1).

The reader cannot receive the holistic and complete message from these illustrations only, therefore starts reading the text that is also presented in the page. With the verbal part of the textual space, the reader understands that the man in white is a doctor who managed to achieve

his aim of hard work; he managed to "physically change" the other man and made him stronger; that other man was actually Captain America. As a result, the verbal and visual-graphic means presented in the comic book are combined in order to complement each other so that the reader can obtain the information about the characters and events to the full extent. The font as a means of graphical representation is a one of paralinguistic elements used in "Captain America" comic book. The bold font, as demonstrated in Fragment 1, is used to emphasize some words they are most valuable to the comprehension of the content, "look... changing... it works! **Behold! Captain America**" [5].



Fragment 2. "Captain America" comic book.

In Fragment 2 the bold font is used to represent key ideas and thoughts in the text. With the appearance of mysterious creatures, as depicted in upper-right corner of Fragment 2, Captain America receives one more task – to protect the citizens from them. However, firstly Captain America has to find out the origin of these creatures, he asks "where do they come from?" [5]. So, the bold font is used to highlight the main idea – the next step of Cap-

tain America's actions – find out the origin of the mysterious creatures who came to the city to raise havoc.

Further idea is revealing the secret of the creatures' boss, who says to them "he nearly revealed my **secret**... the secret of how to actually kill you huge masses of ignorance! The next one who defies my orders will meet the **same fate!**" [5]. Therefore, the secret that Captain America will deal with is the elimination of these creatures. The creatures' boss threatens them that if they defy his orders,

they will be eliminated. As a result, the font as the means of graphic representation is used to highlight some verbal content and make some linguistic elements more valuable than other components for the reader to understand the situation and events in the comic book.

**Conclusion.** The integral components of the comic book are verbal and visual means of constructing the text. By the use of visual means, the author can complement the verbal elements and transmit the idea and the message. However, the combination of visual and written elements influences the perception of the text by the reader,

creating new additional concepts and meanings. Visual means not only accompany the verbal part of the text, but also interpret it. In a comic book, paralinguistic means play an important role as they reveal the ways through which verbal and graphic elements interact, and their functions. The use of non-textual means, such as semi-bold font allocation, italics, and non-pictorial text elements, extends the author's ability to transmit information, making the message gain new meaning, so that certain elements in the textual space attract the attention of the reader.

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#### Реализация вербального и визуально-графического аспектов мультимодальности в англоязычном комиксе М. Р. Ивасишин

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена анализу употребления вербальных и визуально-графических средств в мультимодальном тексте. Комикс как мультимодальный текст включает в себя как текстовые, так и паралингвистические средства актуализации сообщения. К вербальным элементам принадлежат слова, словосочетания и предложения, которые используются для передачи информации, в то время как средства графической игры характеризуются нетипичным использованием паралингвистических (невербальных) средств.

**Ключевые слова:** текст, комикс, модальность, вербализация, изображение, визуализация, шрифт.