

## Multimodality of media text and narrative strategies in digital communication: analysis of Johnny Harris's YouTube videos

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The paper discusses the narrative strategies of multimodal media text in digital communication. Elisabetta Adami determines multimodality as a „phenomenon of communication“ which defines the blend of „different semiotic resources, or *modes*, in texts and communicative events“, e.g. speech, image, video, writing, layout, gesture or proxemics [1]. Thus, media text is considered to be a multimodal one.

Among all the types and formats of digital media text multimodality is most clearly reflected in video blog. Wide range of video content makes creators to produce their content in much more creative, appealing way in order to grasp attention of the most of viewers. It means that creators of video content expand usage of different non-linguistical modes (for instance, more advanced visual effects or sound design) together with the linguistical ones and create new visual imagery.

The research analyses what exact techniques of multimodality do video journalists use on the example of Johnny Harris's videos. Harris is a popular American video journalist and filmmaker, twice Emmy award nominee, who now makes videos about international history and politics for his YouTube channel. He is famous for his original narrative strategy and usage of advanced visual effects and infographics.

One of the methods of multimodal narration that Harris uses is the **insertions of brief TV news excerpts**. Harris embeds them right into his monologues. For instance, he used this technique in the video about fraudulent medical supplements (published on December 13, 2023) on 22:35 [2].

The story which is being told by Harris interrupts with the part of the news and the TV program record appears on the screen. Such inserts make viewers immerse themselves deeper in the context, give the feeling of interaction with daily routine things as TV news. Background music, used by Harris, is also changing right after the TV excerpt begins.

Moreover, the stylistic contrast in the speech also makes Harris's videos more unique and attractive. The informal language of journalist (in the above example he uses informal word *gummy*, contractions *it's*, adverb *like* in the sense of emphasizing an adjective, which is informal according to the Cambridge Dictionary [3]) goes before the abruptly appearing formal speech of TV anchor (for instance, she uses full verb form *have been*).

Another specific characteristic of Johnny Harris's videos is the demonstration of real **physical paper documents**, not their graphic version. While narrating about something related to the law or any historical paper, journalist almost always has this document printed out in his hands. At this time clear and loud sounds of paper are heard. Harris uses in his speech specific linguistic markers so as to highlight that the document is physically printed (e.g. he

stresses demonstrative pronouns: *And **that** is what we have been looking through*. At this moment Harris is shaking papers in his hands). This method of video narration makes viewers feel that Harris has researched a lot of documents and is competent in the issue.

Johnny Harris also uses other distinguishing methods of multimodal narration. For instance, the great amount of his videos is based on **maps**, mostly animated. It is noteworthy that **music** always matches the tone of the story and creates a sophisticated narrating effect.

Johnny Harris combines verbal and non-verbal modes of communication in his viral videos. The most remarkable thing in his approach for video narration is using visual evidence as a crucial moment of each video. Harris calls these evidences **visual anchors** (e.g. exact narrow examples of a big story). Every video begins from a visual anchor in order to grasp audience attention. The profound story **context** told directly by the journalist goes only after a visual anchor and usually alternates with them. Such approach is very different from traditional TV report, where context is in the center of narration.

Multimodal methods and specific narrative strategy contribute to the unique author's image, facilitate the perception of the information and make videos more appealing for the audience.

1. Adami E. Introducing Multimodality. *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society* / Ed. Ofelia Garcia, Massimiliano Andrea Spotti and Nelson Flores. Oxford University Press, 2017. 451 p.
2. Your Supplements are a Lie. YouTube: Johnny Harris. URL: [https://youtu.be/WIT5\\_SMIa-HE?si=VJEzoCkV5FDjVjOg&t=1352](https://youtu.be/WIT5_SMIa-HE?si=VJEzoCkV5FDjVjOg&t=1352) (date of application: 20.01.2024).
3. Cambridge Dictionary. Like. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/like> (date of application: 21.02.2024).

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