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**MULTIMEDIA LONGREAD AS A TYPE OF CREOLIZED TEXT**

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*Abstract*

The present article focuses your attention on multimedia longreads as one of the most perspective formats of contemporary journalism. Due to the fact that longreads are to be considered as a brandnew phenomenon, it becomes ever more relevant because longreads were not studied properly yet. The purpose of the present article is to study multimedia longreads as a phenomenon of modern media sphere, to frame its term as a new type of creolized text. 14 special projects pertaining to the section “AIF Special Projects” published on the official website of Argumenty I Fakty (AIF) newspaper during the period 2014 — 2016 were analyzed. Besides we have analyzed some current special projects that were published in AIF newspaper in other sections of the newspaper at the end of 2016—at the beginning of 2017. The term of multimedia longread as a type creolized text was formulated, its types were defined and demonstrated. The whole picture of possibilities and formats of usage of multimedia content by contemporary mass media was formed after analysis of the special projects published on AIF website.

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**Keywords:** Creolized text, multimedia longread, verbal content, nonverbal content, visual content, multimedia journalism.



## **1. Introduction**

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was marked by new types of texts and other types of content generated by authors writing in the traditional system of mass communication. About five years ago the phenomenon of longread appeared on media scene whose representatives talked about the fact that long texts become a thing of the past. Reputable and world-famous mass media entities have actively become developing this format and creating a large diversity of sample of such media texts. Russian mass media entities have joined the main stream. Now Kommersant, Lenta, Chaskor, Snob and other mass media representatives rely not only on mass production of latest information but also on thoughtful long serious texts. This trend is supported by several factors. First of all, it is the fatigue of media consumers from an enormous informational flow which largest part can be characterized as junk and trash. It is an element of branding and increasing of prestige of a mass media entity that consider longreads as a unique product for intellectual elite (a text is considered to be a longread if it contains 1.5—2 or more thousands of words) that helps to highlight mass media players using longreads among other mass media entities. And finally it is an attempt to save high-quality journalism drowning the ocean of informational fast-food.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The problem of separating of new types of texts functioning in Internet communication is very relevant. Some authors suggest to use conversational characteristics such as hypertextuality, intertextuality and creolization (Kiuru, 2015) as the grounds for separating new types of text. Philological studies have focused their attention on creolized text because this type of text is considered to be dominating in contemporary media communication. This fact is stipulated by the changes that have occurred to media consumers – now they prefer visual content to verbal. Many works of contemporary investigators are dedicated to studying of creolized text. A.V. Dymova (Dymova, 2017) identifies levels and properties of creolized text. M.G. Shvetsova (Shvetsova, 2016) analyze advertising text as a type of creolized text. We can also determine some works that are dedicated to analysis of visual element of creolized text. O.O. Spodarets (Spodarets, 2015) studies influencing potential of visuals of texts of American political media discourse. A.M. Gorbachev (Gorbachev, 2015) considers Information graphics as a type of creolized text. A.V. Sergeeva (Sergeeva, 2015) analyzes nonverbal resources of creolized texts. The proportion of verbal and nonverbal parts of text was analyzed in S.N. Chizhikova's work (Chizhikova, 2016). M.V. Yagodkina's article gives us a detailed description of special properties of creolized text in Internet communication (Yagodkina, 2017).

## **3. Research Questions**

### **3.1. Multimedia longread as a media phenomenon**

Long journalistic materials that are called “longform” in media area (English: long form, long text, long-form journalism) or longread (English: long read) become more relevant at the collision of the above mentioned processes. The national media practices determine “media longreads” as “long stories that study

deep predicted patterns of social processes including the existence of a separate person, human” (Zolotuhin, Mazharina, 2015).

Complex topic, long empirical investigations, detailed analysis of actual information and the presence of additional information are to be considered the determining characteristics of large-form journalist works. It becomes a good basis for creating multidimensional complex and thoughtful text that gives the opportunity to expose the problems, events, aspects of social life and of a certain human’s destiny. So the material becomes long-formed because there is no possibility to present information in shorter and more impartial form. Information of a longread must not be hackneyed. “Practicing journalists as well as investigators agree that in the age of huge informational flow and audience’s mosaic perception longread must contain only vivid and more qualitative information than it is usually intended to use in mass media” (Kolesnichenko, 2015). It is very important to remember that a longread of high quality can help a media consumer not only to make a detailed analysis of a certain problem but also provide a high quality of sympathy and give the opportunity to make a deep dive into the content of the material. M. Voitovich, professional copywriter and blogger, says “the purpose of a longread is to let the reader dive into the material, give him or her the possibility to feel empathy for the story presented, to show him or her the aspects of a certain problem that were concealed from his (her) view” (Voitovich, 2017). This is the exact material that is able to draw and hold the attention of a media consumer for the period from ten to forty minutes.

But not all longreads obtain the same attractive qualities. The matter is “journalist’s text of long forms” typologically can be divided into two groups. The first group includes the texts of traditional longreads containing long text and static illustrations. The second group includes multimedia longreads. The last ones can be called an actual form of traditional longreads transformed in the conditions of Internet communication. They use all the resources of multimedia. All these features allow them attract and hold media consumers on one media platform for a long period of time that is necessary for reading on this type of longreads calling them “the Renaissance of “long reading” in the process of consumption of journalist information”.

Investigators have created a large number of definitions of this format on the waves of total interest to multimedia longreads. For example, A. Miroshnichenko, a media expert, briefly gives his idea. He suggests to consider “very long story based on linear narration, a feature-story itself, accompanied by slides, audio and video podcasts. And all these elements should interact in harmony and correctly from multimedia point of view” as a multimedia longread (Miroshnichenko, 2014).

M.N. Bulayeva gives us more detailed definition including the whole set of characteristics of the studies phenomenon. In one of her articles she writes “Multimedia longread is a special format of transmitting of information in Internet. It is based on journalist’s text that is created on a separate page and is characterized by large volume and long form of material; combines all the diversity of audio and visual resources; is based on multimedia narration. It is a multi-authored multimedia project of editorial office dedicated to a certain event, an actual problem, an important date, a multiaspect topic that requires the most thorough analysis and study of the material” (Bulayeva, 2015).

D. Kulchitskaya and A. Galustyan who was one of the first in Russia who started to create multimedia longreads, offer us a very similar rendering. From their point of view multimedia longread is

“journalistic creation based on a long text and chockfull audio and visual content. Its format supposes giving the audience a deep dive into topic, and careful and thoughtful examination of a large number of sources relating to the subject of his (her) investigation by a journalist” (Galustyan, Kulchitskaya, 2016).

D. Kulchitskaya and A. Galustyan give us a detailed explanation of a thesis relating to the necessity of thorough studying of the material. They acknowledge the necessity of long and careful work with the sources of the material which usually includes dozens of sources, and they consider that time-consuming and hard field work is inevitable. They also point out architectonic of the material that supposes the division of the material into chapters preserving the linear narration of the journalist creation “which should be read successively” as one of the most important characteristics. Besides D. Kulchitskaya and A. Galustyan accentuate the unique visual execution of multimedia longreads analyzing the studied texts as “a certain narration containing multimedia elements in proper places; a reader moves along a story by scrolling; and there is no need to click mouse bottoms as video and audio components are activated by autorun” (Galustyan, Kulchitskaya, 2016). In the previous text we have accentuate the idea that “visual components <...> start to play a leading role and are able to give additional significance and even transform verbal component. This idea received the most vivid implementation in Internet mass media due to multimedia component as a specific feature of Internet communication” (Simakova, 2015). The significance of the visual component is obvious as visual component is a strong point of a longread and helps it to succeed. Multiple multimedia elements (Image Gallery, video podcasts, audio podcasts, drawings, sketches, animated graphics (also interactive), panoramic views) accompany a text, become a part of it demonstrating its nonverbal component. Very often an author chooses some very important moments of the text so-called “anchors of the material” that are activated on autorun while a read is scrolling the text. Other multimedia content can be activated on reader’s wish: to watch Image Gallery (all images or not), watch videos (or refuse from watching) etc. This device helps to make the audio and visual component of a longread less excessive. “Consumers choose the order of watching the elements on their own discretion. That is why the main goal of authors of a multimedia longread is creation of integral material that includes different multimedia elements” (Bulayeva, 2015). Wide range of audio and visual components makes a text multi-faced not plain and illustrative. But a wide choice of audio and visual components has some obvious risks. One must remember that every multimedia components interrupts linear narration and throws a reader out from the context of the material. That is why an author should ask him(her)self “Does my material REALLY need one more video or audio podcast? Is it necessary to insert one more photo?”

A multimedia longread possesses some more specific features that define its format along with expressive visual component. First of all, multimedia longreads are created on a separate page; very often the page is free of advertisements. The second point is they have a special type of web slicing that is called parallax slicing. The main effect of parallax is “separate elements (photos, text, background image) moves with different speed, sometimes they even move in different directions” (Lychavko, 2017).

Visual characteristics make contemporary multimedia longread an original media product, very attractive and even exciting. But all the multimedia components are useless when there is no attractive verbal component. A unique format should be accompanied by a unique text. Verbal component of traditional longread as well as multimedia longread is of great significance. Mass media analytics have a

common opinion that text of a multimedia longread is of primary significance (Bulayeva, 2015) as the text governs all multimedia components, creates an integral art space from separate attractive elements.

Dominating ideas of the text, high level of absorption into the topic – here are the key characteristics of a longread (traditional or multimedia).

A set of genres which can be used writing a multimedia longread are defined by a large volume of text, the necessity to explore a complex topic, demonstrate the complexity and significance of meaning. It is impractical to present the audience journalists' creations of informational genres in a longread format (expenditures and profit are disparate). In this case the choice of more complex genre forms is reasonable. A.V. Kolesnichenko points out the fact that longreads are very close to media analytics (Kolesnichenko, 2015). Western linguists highlight the idea that longreads have succeeded from feature stories (Galustyan, Kulchitskaya, 2016). A. A. Zolotukhin, Yu. N. Mazharina rely their hopes concerning the reappearance of sketches on multimedia longreads (Zolotukhin, Mazharina, 2015). So the team creating a longread has a wide choice of genres, but in the end everything depends on the topic, specific features of the material collected and ideas of journalists and the director of multimedia story.

As can be seen from the above nowadays a multimedia longread is one of the most interesting journalist formats for the audience. A multimedia longread has taken a high-quality verbal component from a traditional longread, but at the same time it has successfully enriched its audio and visual content in the conditions of Internet communication and convergence of mass media. "Digital revolution introduced a great number of changes into mass media. Internet mass media have received great advantages relating to technical possibilities and visual form of implementation of its content" (Simakova, 2015). As a type of creolized text multimedia longread gives not only a long text accompanied by visual content but a complex ampliative product where "animation, video and audio have become an integral part of a story or narration: text, video, audio and graphics interact and create new meanings. If we delete one of the components, the structure of the material will be destroyed and the general meaning will be lost" (Galustyan, Kulchitskaya, 2016). As a result, a media consumer has a feeling of presence, involvement and sympathy that can be compared with the same feeling which we feel while watching a movie. The feeling of involvement of a reader differs a longread from a longwrite. At the same time the feeling of involvement is a kind of currency because it makes a media consumer come back to mass media publishing longreads and pay for the pleasure of reading them with his (her) leisure time again and again.

### **3.2. Longread and genre problem**

Generation of new types of texts including Internet texts makes us to have a closer view on the problem of genre creation. K.V. Kiuru and A.D. Krivonosov point out that "the current urgent problem is the problem of defining of new types of texts, pointing out their genre-building features which allow us to attribute these types of texts as genres; also we should think about revision of fundamental features of genre-building adjusting the characteristics of those types of texts that function mostly in web-communications" (Kiuru, Krivonosov, 2016). Crealization is an important conversational characteristic of a longread. Content of a longread combines two nonhomogeneous parts: verbal and nonverbal.

Therefore, the accent made on conversational characteristics of a text allows us to introduce a multimedia longread as a new type of text into the system of different types of texts used in mass media.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to consider a longread as a new type of text functioning in Internet communications and that is marked by creolization as a main conversational feature.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The study used the method of analyzing the content of the mass media. 14 special projects pertaining to the section “AIF Special Projects” published on the official website of Argumenty I Fakty (AIF) newspaper during the period 2014 — 2016 were analyzed. Besides we have analyzed some current special projects that were published in AIF newspaper in other sections of the newspaper at the end of 2016—at the beginning of 2017.

#### **6. Findings**

A quick response to challenges of contemporary media area is the differential characteristic of AIF (“ArgumentyiFakty”). The trend for creation of multimedia longreads has become one of those challenges. AIF.ru editorial office has started its experiments with new format. Nowadays AIF.ru represents its multimedia stories devoted to the most important anniversaries, events and phenomena in its special section called “AIF.ru Special Projects”. This section contains 14 multimedia stories prepared during the period of 2014—2016. The number of multimedia stories developed by the editorial office is not limited by this value. Studying the content of this section for the period 2016–2017 we have found very interesting samples of multimedia material, for example: “Final Countdown. The chronicles of the last 12 days of the Russian Empire” was written in genre of snowfall (according to the name of the first material executed in this format) in Tilda Publishing pattern. The material created on a special background with the use of parallax-effect has contained “a long text” relating to the last days of the Russian Empire accompanies by a great number of photos, scans of documents (February 21, 2017. Retrieved from <http://february1917.aif.ru/>). “The last detective of the Empire. The case of Rasputin’s murder” (December 30, 2016. Retrieved from <http://rasputin.aif.ru/>) – is a snowfall about investigation of Rasputin’s murder was created in Tilda Publishing pattern and is remarkable by its weak plot and poor multimedia content. “Let’s go to planetarium!” is a multimedia story telling the reader about planetariums located in Russia and in other countries comprising the most interesting facts pertaining to space with the help of animated graphics, interactive maps and hypertext links to related materials (March 11, 2017. Retrieved from <http://planet.aif.ru/>). One can get access to some of the materials from the home page, but they are not included into the section “Special Projects”. We haven’t completely understood the principle of including into the section / excluding from the section “AIF.ru Special Projects” of a certain material. We suppose that this section contains only the materials that are remarkable by their outstanding features, unique verbal content, multiple appropriate multimedia elements and organized into innovative form (without using constructors). These are the materials which develop a certain brand and image of a publishing house, represent mass media entity as a progressive entity that applies brand-new technologies corresponding to world-known media trends.

It is worth mentioning that from the point of view of technique and format AIF.ru's multimedia materials are of great interest due to the fact that all of them were not created with the help of the same pattern. It is obvious that the authors of multimedia materials think about their materials as a vast space for experiments, laboratory of creative solutions. That is the reason of absolutely different formats of all the materials. For example, special project "Heroic Pioneers" (March 3, 2015. Retrieved from <http://pioner.aif.ru/>) telling the reader about acts of heroism and destinies of pioneers during World War II represents material stylized like war newspapers containing the narration about children and teenagers who made their contribution into the Russia's victory in World War II. 10 children—10 plots, 10 texts, 10 chapters of the history of terrible war that took lives of a great number of children. The visual component of the material is represented only by archival photos and the design of the material that looks very authentically. Strong and heart-piercing texts are the core element of the special project. Visually ascetic material highlights the tragic character of the stories.

The multimedia story "A hundred years of World War I" (August 1, 2014. Retrieved from <http://ww1.aif.ru/>) has absolutely different representation. The authors have made the main accent on modern technological representation of material. The AIF.ru editorial office comments on this material: "A hundred years of World War I" is not a standard set of articles but an independent product with its own navigation, logic and content. The special project available on [www.aif.ru](http://www.aif.ru) represents an interactive map of Europe containing the landmarks, built-in longreads and animated graphics. While creating the project a lot of time was devoted to high-quality and convenient navigation and analysis of reader's behavior. That is why we tried to create a product which would be intuitive and simple, that would not take much time from a reader to understand the principle of its work. We have created a complex mechanism but it is intuitive for a reader, that is why the navigation will be easy and convenient". The above mentioned interactive map is provided with timeline with active points. A reader can witness the changes of the battle line and borders of countries participating in the conflict, state the members of different blocks etc. by scrolling the timeline. The special sections "Persons" and "The reverse side of the war" introduce the key figures of military actions, reasons and consequences of this process. This principle of building of the material helps in structuring a huge text telling us about World War I, dividing it into blocks, linking to certain countries, dates and battles, stating reasons and consequences.

Therefore, we can conclude that AIF does not follow the same pattern while creating its projects but offer its readers a diverse impressive projects aimed at wow-effect. Opening a new media creation a reader witnesses a new form of representation and as a consequence a reader has a desire to read the material up to the end.

In continuation of the conversation relating to technical component of AIF multimedia projects we can't but mention that multimedia content of journalist creations plays an important role along with the outer shell of publications.

Authors of special projects use different multimedia means. Their choice depends on the tasks. For example: "Berlin operation. The last days of the war" snowfall (April 15, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.aif.ru/society/history/1489884>) contains archival photos and image galleries, video podcasts, audio podcasts in the form of sound track, animated graphics represented by interactive maps, strip structure charts, circle diagrams, tables. Box quotes and box facts as well as interactive line in the

form of headlines with popular myths about battles for Berlin make the narration more vivid and attractive. A reader can open each headline and get new information. Besides, the material includes history test that allows a media consumer test his (her) knowledge about battle of Berlin. The section “Inscription of Reichstag” allows a reader to choose one of the texts written by Russian soldiers on the walls of German parliament and share it in social media. A long text, multiple archive photos and box quotes bear the organizing role of this special project. Multimedia components hold the attention of a reader up to the end and create the main impression from the text.

## 7. Conclusion

On the basis of work performed we have generalized information received from the study in the sphere of multimedia journalism and analyzed representation volume of empiric material. Therefore, we can conclude the following: multimedia as a specific feature of contemporary convergence journalism gave a second life to longreads (“long texts”). According to opinion of media experts longreads were expected to become a thing of the past because of contemporary situation of informational oversaturation. But longreads have not disappeared due to multimedia possibilities. They have even taken rightful place in contemporary media area. Therefore, we can conclude that multimedia longread possessing a set of specific features (using of parallax effect, linear narration, multimedia component (audio and video podcasts) integrated into a text, prevalence of documental genre and nonfiction journalism etc.) can be considered as a new type of text that is functioning in Internet communication. Creolization (the combination of verbal, visual and audial content) is the dominating conversational characteristic of this type of texts.

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