

**EEIA 2019**  
**International Conference "Education Environment for the  
Information Age"**

**CARNIVAL IN DISTANCE**  
**(PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL EPOCH)**

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*Abstract*

The article analyzes the results of the 39-day correspondence between participants of a closed online group of the street theater actors, which was founded with the aim of mobile solving the arising problems associated with the creation of a street performance. The hypothesis is being tested that the communication of contemporary street actors refers to the farce form of carnival existence, which is not translatable into the language of Internet communication. In the analysis of Internet messages, the polyphonic model by S. Trausan-Matu was used, developed on the basis of the concept of carnivalization and polyphony by M.M. Bakhtin; classification of relations with banter by A. Radcliffe-Brown; family matrix of the youth subculture by T.B. Shchepanskaya; the concept of the physicality of the farce by I.P. Uvarova and Y.V. Chesnov. When analyzing Internet texts for the content of a humorous algorithm in them, the semiotic model of the comic texts by V.I. Karasik and V. Raskin's classification of humorous communication styles were used. The obtained results coincided with the results of the testing, developed by the author in 2018 of the "Humor vs. Irony" method, in which the carnival structure of communication contributes to the process of creating a friendly environment by neutralizing the irony with humor. It was possible to trace the positive correlation of banter and reliable attachment. In conclusion, it was concluded that in the carnival, familiar contact, with his inherent bodily pseudo-aggressive interaction, a farce model of "quasi-related relationships with banter".

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**Keywords:** Carnival, Internet, communication, youth, friendship, physicality.



## 1. Introduction

Today, scientific literature in Russia about the presence of a carnival in the Internet environment is redundant (Vavilova, 2014; Grishkova, 2010; Dubovskiy, 2016; Zagoruyko, 2018; Mogilevskaya & Bratnikova, 2014; Savenkova, 2010; Semenova, 2019; Chernavina 2017; Abbots & Attala, 2017; Gaufman 2018; Trausan-Matu, 2017, 2018; Yegorova, 2012).

In general, there is a polarity of views on carnival Internet communication. There are three distinct positions. The first, quite common, is that the carnival is not only possible in a virtual environment, but also real.

The second position is based on the belief that in the virtual world there are only some separate carnival components. The third position is based on the idea that the carnival is categorically not portable to the Internet, since it does not contain the most important carnival component - bodily matter.

As a rule, those who share the first position overestimate the possibilities of virtual communication (Zagoruyko, 2018), believing that in the Internet, as in the carnival square, “everything to each other is on “you” (Chernavina, 2017, p. 102). The authors consider anonymity and carnivalization to be the main characteristics of the Internet (Ierusalimskaia & Kartashova, 2015). Though M. Bakhtin distanced the masquerade line from the carnival, some researchers distinguish that masquerade in the main criterion of the virtual carnival, a game populated by fictional characters who deny real life (as cited in Vavilova, 2014, pp. 58-59; Wu, Fore, Wang, & Ho, 2007). Often, traditional forms of carnival are identified with Internet aggression (Zagoruyko, 2018, p. 119), offensive humor (Graefer, Kilby, & Kalviknes Bore, 2018), competition (Abbots & Attala, 2017).

The views of those who share the second position seem more convincing. As a rule, these authors are interested in the elements of laughter, humor, carnivalization, expressed verbally, visually, etc. (Ierusalimskaia & Kartashova, 2015; Boxman-Shabtai, 2019; Brodie, 2018; Fox, Lampe, & Rosner, 2018; Reichenbach, 2015; Suslov, 2017; Shtembul'skiy, 2009; Shifman, 2018; Rovisco, 2016; Rudenko & Mogilevskaya, 2017).

We can agree that the virtual and carnival reality is similar in that the deviation from language norms in them is one of the most important forms of “manifestation of comic otherness” (Dubovskiy, 2016, p. 50).

To this position can be attributed the views of J. Brun, who considers the thinking of M.M. Bakhtin into the intermediate perspective, noting that all media and texts are mixed, “transmedial”, “hybrid”, carnivalized (as cited in Thune et al., 2018, pp. 161-162). Such funds include the parody (Denisova, 2017; Fox et al., 2018), in particular, as the central component of the Internet language (Boxman-Shabtai, 2019, p. 3), combining autonomy and commercialism, individuality and collectivism, hegemony and carnival (Boxman-Shabtai, 2019, p. 4). In the context of the parodic dialogue, “fake news”, changing the rhetoric of parody in the digital world (Brodie, 2018), problems of upholding national identity with digital music (Shipley, 2017) and carnival (Rovisco, 2016) are discussed.

The most categorical is the third position, according to which the carnival cannot be transferred to the Internet without certain losses (Savenkova, 2010; Semenova, 2018). The views of Petrilli (2017) can be attributed to the third position. Petrilli (2017) believes that M.M. Bakhtin, reflecting about the carnival interaction, had in mind the participant “inter-body dialogue”, which is interconnected with the grotesque,

dialogical body (p. 401). The virtual dialogue, according to the researcher, is characterized by its monologue, in which “voices merge and identify with each other” (p. 401), and non-verbal signs associated with the grotesque body gradually disappear (pp. 429-430).

Strong evidence in this direction is given by Trausan-Matu (2017), who is claiming that artificial intelligence is not capable to spawn a carnival because it does not have a sense of empathy (p. 378). Based on the M.M. Bakhtin’s polyphonic model, the researcher developed and tested computer techniques based on the technology of artificial intelligence in teaching students. One of the effective ways to promote creativity Trausan-Matu considers the unification of students in a chat around a joint solution of the problem.

The researcher came to the conclusion that the carnival in chat can be created in two ways. The first way is that the carnival is generated spontaneously, for short periods of time, during serious communication. The second way is that the carnival is deliberately superimposed on a serious dialogue in order to launch the creative process. For example, four students did not cope with the solution of an arithmetic task when they tried to solve it individually but succeeded in solving it when they began to cooperate with each other in a chat. The decision came to them after a series of alternate carnival sayings. One student, arguing about solving a problem, used mathematical terminology, ending his phrases with the text (“ha-ha”) as a frank admission that it was a joke (Trausan-Matu, 2018, p. 348).

Trausan-Matu (2018) explains that only the carnivalization process is possible in the Internet environment, but not the carnival, which occurs only when there is joint group activity (p. 347).

In the carnivalization process, however, the physical presence of the communicators is not necessary, since this process can occur remotely. It proceeds according to the laws of polyphony, in which the process of generating ideas is provoked by the dissonance of centripetal and centrifugal forces, leading to the solution of problems.

Carnivalization is a polyphonic game of centrifugal, centripetal / dissonance-consonance. It is similar to the divergent-convergent stages of creative action or syncretism and anacrisis, which were techniques in the Socratic dialogue, in which “anacrisis was understood as a means to identify and provoke the interlocutor’s words, forcing him to express his opinion and express it thoroughly”. In the Socratic dialogue, as M.M. Bakhtin believes, syncretism and dialogical anacrisis lose their narrow, abstract-rhetorical character (as cited in Trausan-Matu, 2018, p. 349).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Although the opinion of Trausan-Matu seems convincing, the polarity of opinions about the subject of movement the carnival square into the Internet environment cannot be ignored. It is possible to assume such an unexpected transformation, if we allow the mutation of a person as a species, which will occur atrophy of carnival receptors, which develops due to the lack of demand for carnival corporeality in Internet communication. As a result, the carnival will turn into atavism. This is evidenced by the transgressive, monstrous cyber images (Bykov, 2017; Vavilova, 2015; Zagoruyko, 2018) inhabiting the Internet space. But if we take into account that an aggressive return to physicality is historically inevitable, then the materialization of a new, hybrid physicality can be expressed in the “cyber carnival”, “the carnival of artificial intelligence”.

Baudrillard (2017) described these processes quite vividly. He saw this as hyperreality, which is characterized by such phenomena as simulation, simulacrum, cloning, hologram, united by a common desire to immobilize, destroy bodily reality and death, creating its disembodied, holographic copy-sign.

Fortunately, bodily interaction is the main need for carnival communication among young people, which occurs in a locally allocated zone of joint interaction (Chesnov, 2007). A review of the literature on the subject of specific humor, which correlates with sympathy and friendship, shows that this type of humor is different from a verbal joke. It can be attributed to a variety of carnival communication that occurs in conditions of prolonged affection, physical interaction, distinguished by its involuntariness and spontaneity.

Gordon (2014) focuses his attention at the correlation of friendship, intimacy and humor in various types of friendships. The author considers the intimate nature of humor between close people, which differs from joke in that it strengthens friendly relations by reducing the distance between people (Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987).

In the Phillips' (2016) book "Humor: Emotional Aspects, Role in Social Interactions and Health" is devoted to examining the impact of humor on the development and on the hindrance of close relationships. The author analyzes common cases of a specific type of humor, often manifested in intimate relationships between friends, in which humorous bullying is tolerated.

Kalbermatten (2018) revealed that verbal irony in many cases can both provoke a conflict situation and prevent it. The researcher analyzed extracts from ten conversations between relatives and friends. The analysis showed that the introduction of verbal irony in a conversation by one of the participants can end the conflict between the other two participants by switching the topic of interaction; extend it; do not change the trajectory of the conflict sequence, since one of the participants does not recognize the irony; resolve a dispute on an unpleasant topic for one or two participants; or initiate a dispute between relatives or friends whose relationships are not friendly.

Barrett (2016) identifies several types of humor (teasing, absurd, parodying and sarcasm) and potentially humorous phenomena (outright lies, metaphor, hyperbole and metonymy), which are mistakenly attributed to humorous irony. Some authors believe that it is important to delineate the boundaries of humorous irony, adhering to its definition of terminological and conceptual rigidity (Dyrel, 2014).

It can be concluded that the researchers, noting in the stable dyads of friendship the pronounced presence of affiliative humor (Westcott & Maggio, 2016), draw attention to the stability of the presence the irony in it, which performs a somewhat contradictory social function. It neutralizes aggression, contributes to the process of creating a friendly, carnival environment, having to familiar physical contact (playful beatings, games, etc.) (Semenova, 2019).

This banter phenomenon of today's generation of subculture of youth, in many ways, is hidden from outside observation, as it is built on the family matrix (Shchepanskaya, 2004, pp. 141-142). These symbolic quasi-related relationships can be traced in the banter relationship, when a wife or husband (a banter wife) is chosen to banter, usually not related to each other (Artyomova, 2006).

This makes it possible to consider carnival, familiar contact, with his characteristic bodily pseudo-aggressive interaction (humorous beatings, fights, insults, praise-abuse, misalliance, travesty) as the main

principle of communication between close relatives and friends, in which most of the non-verbal components (tactile contact) untranslatable into the language of Internet communication. In such communication irony, as a rule, is neutralized by humor, creating carnival communication.

### **3. Research Questions**

To find out how the Internet humor can replace direct carnival interaction, you need to understand what its specificity is. Despite the fact that the issues of correlation between friendship and laughter are sufficiently studied, the family matrix of laughter and the nature of carnival communication in a different age group of street theater actors, in which the tactile playful aggression is pronounced, remain little studied.

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

The main task was to study the correlation of the corporal game pseudo-aggressive interaction with humorous beatings, fights, insults, praise-abuse, misalliance, travesty and stable attachment and friendship; to trace how non-verbal components of carnival communication are reflected in the Internet communication with its capabilities (replication, diachrony, simultaneity, diatopism, multiplication). The main goal of the study was to test the hypothesis which previously put forward by the author that the communication of modern street actors refers to a farce form of communication in which the farce makes people related not because of their kinship, but because of their involvement in the carnival world and makes a special type of quasi-familiness.

### **5. Research Methods**

The article analyzes the results of the 39-day Internet correspondence between participants of a closed online group of street theater actors (aged 21 to 42 years), which was founded three weeks before the start of a two-week street theater project with the goal of mobile solving the problems associated with creating props, script, discussing the schedule of rehearsals. The communication of the group members was divided into three types: domestic, Internet communication and stage. The method of included observation was used.

Photos and videos of speeches have been analyzed, which the participants shared to each other in the group, the texts of correspondence. When analyzing the online messages of the online group participants, the polyphonic model of S. Trausan-Matu was used. The analysis was based on understanding the relations with banter by Radcliffe-Brown (2001), who using the example of primitive societies, examined the specific banter relations and avoidance relationships that are observed among close and distant relatives. The author used the technique of “humor against irony” (Semenova, 2019, p. 53), in which irony has a subordinate function that it performs in the process of creating a friendly, carnival environment based on building a quasi-family matrix in the educational environment of students-actors and directors of different ages.

In his study, the author relied on Petrilli’s (2017) interpretation of the carnival grotesque body, on the position of Chesnov (2007) about the carnival, vital nature of young people, on the understanding of

the carnival, bodily essence of the farce of Uvarova (2018), which remains impervious to prying eyes, despite its incarnation and physicality. A farce means a form of interaction that occurs in the border space “between fear and laughter,” in a situation of metamorphosis in which a person can at any moment transform, spiritually and physically, into another character, a mask. Farce personifies “temporality.” This is a temporary structure “for theatrical folk performances” (Uvarova 2018, p. 14). This is a local space (barn, shed, canopy, hut, house, etc.). But the mystery of a farce, as Uvarova considers, is that it goes far beyond the real carnival square. With his hyper-body condition, a farce unseen to the other’s eyes, including the eyes of Internet users.

To study the variability of models of banter’s positive correlation and reliable attachment, a questionnaire of attachment to close people by Sabel'nikova and Kashirskiy (2015) was used. When analyzing the Internet texts of the group members for the content of a humorous algorithm, was used the semiotic model for the classification of humorous texts by Karasik (2018), as well as Raskin's (1979) classification of humorous communication styles.

## 6. Findings

As a result of the analysis of 1050 online messages created during the 39-day correspondence by fourteen members of a closed online group of street theater actors, it was revealed that, most often, the group members launch carnival processes in online correspondence in the form of play-phrases (see Table №1).

**Table 01.** Play-phrases of group members

1.01.2019	Time	Name	Message	Interval
	0.12	Slava	I will be absent tomorrow (just kidding, probably) Good night to everyone!  AND GOOD MORNING! If it happens ... I'll get the traditions and games! 😂 ! I can linger!! but I will try to remain a fan of my business and return to 11! ☺!	00:02

An important role in the launch of carnival processes is played by an oxymoron, often used in the algorithm for constructing anecdotes (Karasik, 2018, p. 914) as a response (second) replica to a not very good or strange statement (“You don’t reflect on me simply, don’t identify.” Say full name! ”-“Position, weight, carry the analysis ??? Or do we manage with nonsense?”), As well as the use of code words (see Tables № 2, 3) born in the process of communicating in the dressing room. Code words gradually form the specific slang of this community, emphasizing a certain private tone of communication. In the Internet communication of the group members, the code words pull the train of straight comic communication behind themselves (in the conditions of theatrical stage and the make-up room) (see Table №3).

**Table 02.** Messages and intervals

4.01.2019	Time	Name	Message	Interval
		Arina	NORMAL!!!!!!!!!! I THINK.....	
		Slava	Sure...	00:07
		Lyalya	LoVeD	00:00

**Table 03.** Messages of group members

31.12.2018	Time	Name	Message
	21:22	Arina	Guys! I am so glad to be with you all these days! Each and every one of you is incredible, talented, bombastic! I love everyone!!!
	21:25	Lyalya	FINE!.... PHENOMENAL..... THINK !!!!!
	21:29	Arina	Think?? 🤔🤔🤔
	21:40	Lyalya	🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷🐷 🐷
	22:11	Slava	🍌😭😭😭😭🌞

Parody, self-deprecating statements of participants in online correspondence are used to show that the speaker is well aware of his mistakes, tardiness, etc. To be as less vulnerable as possible for criticism, you need to parody yourself before other members of the group do this (see Table №4). The same technique is basic in the art of clowning. In this case, this principle was fundamental in creating your own stage character mask (Cerulo, 2015), positively influencing the overall friendly and cheerful atmosphere in the team (in the dressing room and on the stage). As a rule, every day the role of "clown", that is, the guiltiest, is performed by someone alone in the group. The rest unite in relation to him "in the banter family." As a rule, there is a pair of banter, in which there is a wife and a husband, whose age is about the same. There are frequent cases of full, joking families consisting of a mother, father, and daughter, as well as incomplete families in which, for example, there is only mother and son, etc.

**Table 04.** Message sample

5.01.2019	Time	Name	Message	Interval
	22:11	Slava	I went the wrong way on the subway 🚶♂ I'm dead ... *****,	35:00

Often in Internet communication, there is a symmetrical reflection of events in the dressing room (successful performance, unexpected events, etc.). The largest number of messages was observed at the days of preparation for the performance and after the most successful speeches. In those days when only one part of the team works on the street platform, the non-working part of the group acts as its Internet viewer, critic and educator, reacting as a family, giving some fatherly ideas, cheering, code words, emoticons, etc. to photos and videos posted in the online group (see Table №5). In this you can see the aspiration to signal the desire to continue and strengthen the carnival relationship. It is significant in this respect that the behind-the-scenes communication is a symbiosis of humorous and ironic games, expressed in pseudo-aggressive, carnival communication techniques (tactile touch, kisses, tweaks, hugs, friendly, playful beatings, carnival praise and battle). Least of all photos and videos in the group are made

in the dressing room, which can be explained by the fact that in moments of carnival general communication, everyone is immersed in the process of the game sacrament. Rarely in this situation there are observers with a camera in their hands.

At the most intense days of speeches, online correspondence is informational and businesslike.

**Table 05.** Messages of group members

09.01.2019	Time	Name	Message
	13:03	Slava	The thing!
	13:11	Anton	The thing!!!!!!
	13:21	Veronika	So funny there with you
	13:34	Marina	So, what is that black hat for the king
		Marina	Back off! Take action! Find options! In my green bag to the left of the hanger there is a white snood as an option.
	13:53	Oleg	What artists are doing when there are no visitors!

If at the very beginning of communication in a group in which many don't know each other, icons and emoticons prevailed in the correspondence (see Table №6), then by the middle of the project, more detailed suggestions began to appear in the chat. This can be explained by the fact that written speech conveys a personal attitude, which as the communication became more and more informal.

**Table 06.** Messages, interval

6.12.2018	Time	Name	Message	Interval
	13:02	Marina	It's like everyone were added. Actually, the chat about the upcoming spree on Poklonnaya	
	13:09	Slava	With your permission, I've changed the picture, did not have time to throw it immediately, but I was doing it since the morning and waited for the chat)))! Hellowie to everyone ☐	00:07
	13:09	Anton	Well this is a failure. 😞😞😞	00:00
	13:24	Veronika	Be aware of - HE sees everything, so don't mess!!!! 😊😊	00:15
	13:37	Sergey	Hello to everyone !	00:13
	13:38	Arina	Hello to everyone:)	00:01
	13:40	Lyalya	Hello everyone from the Bauman Institute, I am here at the conference, your candidate of doctoral sciences.	00:02
	13:46	Oleg	Hop-hop 😊	00:06
	13:51	Yura	😊😊	00:05
		Ivan	As I'll wake up I can drive up :)	

## 7. Conclusion

A strong positive correlation of banter and strong attachment was found. Using the classification of humorous texts of Karasik (2018), based on a semiotic model, made it possible to diagnose Internet



texts, as well as texts that arise during everyday communication, for the content of a humorous algorithm in them, showing that they implement three of conditions, highlighted by Karasik, for the emergence of humorous communication (p. 898) (the intention of communicate "to get away from a serious conversation"; a humorous tonality, which allows to reduce the distance in order to get even more productive, but in a "soft form" closer to the discussion of serious problems; the use of typical group behavioral patterns). It was also possible to trace that the main "keys of communication" or a communicative manner (Karasik, 2018, p. 901) in this group are friendly banter, which often ends up with an ironic crescendo. It was noted that the most "free", borderline ironic-humorous jokes are allowed among those who support the closest partnership relations with each other. It is the strategy that makes it possible, in an ironic, laudatory-abusive, teasing manner, to express most clearly its displeasure, offense, etc., in a non-improper form. Very often, in the group, there is such a thing as a "laughter debut" (Karasik, 2018, p. 901), which Karasik describes as the transition from a serious tone of communication to the frivolous and laughing. In this group of the street theater actors, this phenomenon is a sign of the expansion of the farce community due to the admission to the group of another fellow, akin in spirit. Using Raskin's (1979) classification, who considers the styles of humorous communication within the framework of script-oriented semantic theory oriented on scripts (pp. 228-229), made it possible to reveal the stability in communication of the following three types of humorous statements: soft, loving ridicule; laugh at yourself; laugh as a sublimation of protest (Karasik, 2018, p. 897). The small, cramped make-up room served as an analogue of a farce space in which all the actors physically interacted with each other in a space littered with a variety of props (felt boots, fur coats, fake puppet, skeleton doll, buckets, brooms, brooms, etc.).

It can be concluded that the "family matrix" of carnival relationships with banter strengthens as the community develops friendly relations, sympathy, the emergence of a common history of joint improvisations, numbers, overcoming difficulties on the street, theatrical platform, etc.

The results coincided with the results of testing in 2018, developed by the author of the "Humor Versus Irony" method, in which the carnival structure of communication contributes to the process of creating a friendly environment among young people by neutralizing irony with friendly humor. The carnival, familiar contact, with its characteristic bodily pseudo-aggressive interaction (humorous beatings, fights, insults, praise-abuse, misalliance, travesty) is a measure of the closeness of the relationship between relatives and friends. This form of carnival communication can be attributed to a farce, in which physicality acts as a conductor of the carnival world, contributing to the preservation of a healthy need for carnival interaction between participants of a different age group of street theater actors.

## **Acknowledgments**

The results of the study were obtained as part of the fulfillment of the state task of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia (Publication number: 27.8719. 2017 / 8.9). This study was carried out on the basis and with the support of NP "Theater-Ex". Invaluable in the preparation of this article for the author were communication with I.P. Uvarova about the theme of the carnival nature of the farce culture, as well as tips of the article design by L.L. Alekseeva, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Deputy Director for scientific work at the FSBSI "Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy

of Education”. I also very grateful to E.M. Akishina, the Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, the Director of the FSBSI “Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy of Education” for moral support in the implementation of this work.

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