

THE EMOJI FASHION... A NEW LANGUAGE !!!

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ABSTRACT

For the first time ever, Oxford Dictionary has chosen as the word of the year, not a word but an emoji of 'face with tears of joy'. Since its incorporation into the keyboards of smartphones, it has become a visual language of choice among many and was the most used one globally, and the decision of the Oxford University to salute the changing cultural phenomenon proves the fact that it is officially here to stay.

This is the kind of thing that usually draws divided reactions. Some worry about what they see as the fading away of the true meaning and sense of language with the changing times and scenarios. People from such a school of thought do wonder if few years down the line, the language will go extinct. The world is giving impetus - a continuous one - on shrinking itself into 140 characters or on some platforms even less than those.

On one hand, the life of a common man is getting busier. And to add to the busy schedules is the fully loaded smartphone in each and every hand (in most cases, more than one in one hand). What happens majorly as an inevitable part of communication is that after the arrival of innumerable social media platforms like Facebook or Whatsapp, sending any number of messages has become free (unlike the old good days when you were charged pretty much for a single SMS) and hence instead of typing long messages to convey the meaning, one simply prefers the emojis with a wide range of expressions and cuteness for the sake of convenience and effectiveness.

But are emojis fully equipped? Is a human mind and heart capable of executing only what emojis are limited to? With the excessive use of emojis in half of every sentence on Facebook, Whatsapp, or Instagram, does it seem that the emoji fashion is here to stay? To many, this would be an exciting evolution of the way we communicate; to others, it is linguistic Armageddon.

KEYWORDS: *Emoji, Oxford Dictionary, Face With Tears of Joy, Language, Extinct, Social Media, Fashion, Evolution*

Did you just send that you didn't want to? No issues. Just send a 😊. Or in some other situation, ridicule somebody in a healthy manner by a 🤔.

All of this has become routine. So much so that a complete message can nowadays be conveyed through emojis. As Nick Stockton writes for Wired, they add context, enable wordplay, insert nuance, and let you speak your mind while taking the edge off your message. They're tone-of-voice for a medium that has no tone and no voice.

Emoji means picture (e) character (moji). Of course, emoji weren't the first attempt to add an emotional layer. Before emoji there were kaomoji—those looked kind of like this: ☺(~ ~)☺, (o_o), and (= ` ω '=). And before that there were emoticons :-). By all means, emojis aren't just emotional punctuation. Emoji are clever, are puns, are art, are jokes about art, are games, are songs, and are stories. So when you think about them that way, they start to seem like a language. (Stockton Nick, 2015).

Now, one should think if this is more than a minor fashion. The visual presentation used is extremely basic and lacks the structure that is the backbone of any linguistic system. As the range of option expands, the process of selecting an appropriate emoji would become a greatly complex affair. Even today, just think for a while- do we have sufficient expression for everything that we feel? A universal language that has the same flexibility as the alphabets seems a distant prospect. Not all words of the language, not alone English can be described through the emojis.

On the other hand, the counterpoint argues that emojis make language more, rather than less expressive. They allow us to incorporate depth in our language along with gestural complexity which otherwise lacks in simple and plain letters. This can be particularly true- especially in modern day world when text messages have emotional flatness, and to be clear on whether one was being happy, sarcastic, doubtful, or confused- emojis offer great assistance. When emoji appear with text, they often supplement or enhance the writing. A phenomenon that works on the psychology, emoji usage has increased for better comprehension along with likeable and adorable expressions that come handy. This is similar to gestures that appear along with speech. Over the past three decades, research has shown that our hands provide important information that often transcends and clarifies the message in speech. Emoji serve this function too – for instance, adding a kissy or winking face can disambiguate whether a statement is flirtatiously teasing or just plain mean.

Just like verbal language uses intonation and voice modulations to make the understanding better, printed text employs italics or bold or change in fonts; emojis provide a layer of emotions on top of the otherwise bare text. A smiling emoji added next to the words would give no added interpretation to the message other than what is aimed at.

Who wouldn't have noticed that each time when Whatsapp is updated with its latest version, the users get a fresh set of new emojis, with a new set of expressions and emotions? Gone are the days when the simple SMSes were complimented by only a couple of emojis (read: smileys using brackets and colons). The active users of social networking have not only indulged in excessive use of emojis in their gestures, emoji jokes and riddles too arrive in abundance. Emojis, like the one that won the award, allow for the articulation of a level of emotional response that text would have termed unfit. May be in the times, the exam questions would read like - Comment on the situation of intolerance in India in not more than three emojis.

Thanks to evolution of English language, the length of the average sentence came down from 63 words in 16th century to 22 words by the 19th and currently to 14.3 words. By all means, it will go down even further in the days to come. We are currently in the early stages of developing a more visually expressive culture indeed. There is definitely some loss to the language- the conventional one, which started right when mobile phones came into existence with a feature of SMS in-built. Indeed, you couldn't have written complete words on your phones when conveying became possible in much less.

CONCLUSION:

Having said everything, the basic premise of language remains to communicate and disseminate the information that you want to impart. Why do we have to stick to sentences with all its complexity when there is an easier option available? Does it really matter if the communication is through words, symbols or for that matter emojis, as long as the meaning gets across? The scientists did decipher the language of primitive man through symbols and drawings on cave walls, didn't they? The emoji can never be the first language of a child. But when it comes to modern day talking and quick interaction, emojis are here to stay. Stockton terms it an evolution. The traditional language does see some decay here, but who anyway wants to speak a sentence in 63 words now?

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