

Listening

Do emojis make language better?



A) Listen to the video.

B) Listen to the video again while you read the transcript.



Transcript

Sam

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Sam.

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Sam

It's nice to see you, Neil, [smiley face], [high five], [fist bump]!

Neil

What's this, Sam? Are you saying hello with... emojis?!

Sam

Yes, I am! In this programme, we're entering the world of emojis - the small characters people use to show emotions in texts and emails. Do you have a favourite emoji, Neil? Mine's the [crying tears of laughter] emoji.

Neil

I like the [smiling face with hearts] one, and with over three thousand emojis to choose from, there's one for every occasion. It's one of the reasons why emojis have become so popular over the last 20 years - they let people put back some of the human emotion that's missing in written texts and emails.

Sam

We'll be finding out more about emojis, and learning some related vocabulary, soon... but first I have a question for you, Neil. It's about the word 'emoji' itself, which was invented in 1999 in Japan for the first internet-enabled mobile phones. The name, 'emoji', comes from the combination two Japanese words, but which words? Is the word 'emoji' a combination of:

- a) face and emotion?
- b) picture and character? or
- c) message and image?

Neil

I'll say it's a) face and emotion.

Sam

OK, Neil. We'll find out if your answer gets a [thumbs up] at the end of the programme. When we talk with someone face to face, we use physical gestures like smiling, laughing or nodding to show the other person how we feel. But these gestures get lost in written communication.

Neil

That's where emojis come in - they add feeling and emotion to online messages. But not everyone is an emoji fan. Some people believe that carefully chosen words are the best way of expressing yourself, and that emojis are affecting our ability to put feelings into words.

Sam

Here's cognitive linguist, Professor Vyv Evans, author of a book about the language of emojis, explaining more to BBC Radio 4's, Word of Mouth.

Professor Vyv Evans

A lot of people, you know, language-mavens, **the grammar police** and so on, or say... have this sort of **jaundiced**, prejudiced view about emoji - that it's taking us back to **the dark ages** of illiteracy - bring back Shakespeare, and stick to the language of Shakespeare and all the rest of it.

But that fundamentally misunderstands the nature of communication. Emoji is important. In fact, it makes us more effective communicators in the digital age.

Neil

Vyv Evans describes people who don't approve of emojis as **the grammar police** - a slang term referring to people who want to see formal language and grammar - what they call 'correct' English - written online. **The grammar police** criticise modern styles of English and like to correct other people's mistakes in spelling and grammar.

Sam

According to Professor Evans, **the grammar police** have a **jaundiced** view of emojis - they only see the negative side of them because of their own ideas and experiences.

Neil

What's more, they think emojis are taking us back to **the dark ages** of illiteracy, when most people couldn't read or write. If someone refers to **the dark ages**, they mean a past time in history considered uncivilised, and characterised by ignorance.

Sam

But luckily for emoji fans, the grammar police are in the minority. Over 6 billion emoji messages are sent around the world every day, with about 70 percent containing emotion-based characters like [smiley face] and [blowing kisses].

Neil

According to Professor Evans, emoji users are more expressive, more effective communicators. So, could that be an advantage for someone looking for love online? That's what Michael Rosen, presenter of BBC Radio 4's, Word of Mouth, wanted to find out.

Michael Rosen

Is it possible to start a relationship using emoji?

Professor Vyv Evans

Well, there is research that's been conducted by Match.com, the American-based **dating** site, and what they've found, based on their research, is that the people that use more emojis tend to be **lucky**

in love, they have more success in terms of **dating**. In the digital age, using emoji makes us more effective communicators...

Michael Rosen

... more expressive ...

Professor Vyv Evans

... more expressive, we're better able to express our emotional selves, and people therefore **it stands to reason**, if you use more emojis you're gonna get more dates!

Sam

For people who are **dating**, or starting a romantic relationship with someone, it seems that using emojis helps them be **lucky in love**, an expression meaning lucky in finding a romantic partner.

Neil

Emojis let us show our true personality, so, Professor Evans says, **it stands to reason** - in other words, it seems likely to be true - that emoji users get more dates.

And that's a big [thumbs up] from me! What about your question, Sam? Did my answer get a [thumbs up] too?

Sam

In my question, I asked you which words combine to make up the Japanese word, 'emoji'.

Neil

I guessed it was a) face and emotion.

Sam

Which was [sad face] the wrong answer, I'm afraid. In fact, 'emoji' combines the words for 'picture' and 'character' in Japanese.

OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learnt about emojis, starting with **the grammar police**, people who want correct spelling and grammar online, and criticise those who don't.

Neil

If you have a **jaundiced** view of something, you only see the negative side because of your own bad experience with it.

Sam

'The dark ages' describes a period in history characterised by ignorance and a lack of progress.

Neil

If you are **dating** someone, you are spending time with them romantically, which means you are **lucky in love**, an expression meaning lucky in finding a romantic partner.

Sam

And finally, the phrase **it stands to reason** means that something seems likely to be true, or it makes sense. Once again, our six minutes are up. Bye for now!

Neil

Bye!

C) Now answer the questions.

1. What's the title of the video?
2. Write a different title for the video.
3. The name, 'emoji', comes from the combination two Japanese words, but which words? Is the word 'emoji' a combination of:
 - a) face and emotion
 - b) picture and character
 - c) message and image

D) Choose the correct definition for these phrases.

4. People who want to have correct English spelling and grammar written online, and who criticise those who don't follow grammar rules.
5. Only seeing the negative side of something because of your own bad experience with it.
6. A time in the past considered not advanced and characterised by a lack of knowledge and progress.
7. Spending time with someone you have started a romantic relationship.

8. Lucky in finding a romantic partner.

9. It seems likely to be true (that); it makes sense (that) back to the dark ages.