

## ***From the Egyptian pyramids to our smartphones***

*The ancient Egyptians - oh gods of hieroglyphs! - would have never suspected that symbols and drawings would rebirth as a language through the invention of emojis*



Hieroglyphs are composed of groups of symbols and were used in ancient Egypt as inscriptions in tombs and temples to refer most commonly to sacred rites. Although humanity was aware of their existence for many centuries, they remained a mystery until the 1820s when Jean-François Champollion, with the help of the famous Rosetta Stone, finally accomplished the decryption of hieroglyphic writing.

Since then, humanity has witnessed the discovery of paper, pencils, markers and most importantly an alphabetic system to communicate. Then Internet emerged to speed everything up! With the arrival of Internet came a new way to look at the world, an accelerated rhythm to connect with it and to communicate with each other. We no longer have the time to use a hammer and chisel to convey a message, most of the time not even paper and pencil... or even words!

Nevertheless, there is no need to panic. 20 years ago, the Japanese interface designer Shigetaka Kurita created 176 emoticons for NTT Docomo, a mobile communication company. Two decades later, with the proliferation of social networks, and more specifically WhatsApp, Emoji has become a universal language.

## Do you speak Emoji?

Many may argue that Emoji must not be considered as a language. Professional art critic and contrarian Jonathan Jones, writing in *The Guardian* in 2015, contended that 'After millennia of painful improvement, from illiteracy to Shakespeare and beyond, humanity is rushing to throw it all away.' Emoji is, he proclaimed, a 'huge step back for humanity.'

On the opposite side, the British linguist, [Vyvyan Evans](#) considers that these symbols are the body language of the digital age. He defends the use of emoticons as communication codes which translate the notion of non-verbal communication into digital supports. For Evans, Emojis are helping us to become better communicators by adding the context we miss when we are not face to face.

In favour or against, it is impossible to deny the place emojis has gained in communication over the past years, even beyond our mobile phones. Artists have been using emojis to explore new forms of expression and adapting classics to this unconventional system of communication. So why resist to what seems to be an unstoppable stream?

Fortunately, to learn this new language you won't need to pay for an expensive online course, nor spend six months in a foreign country. The OIE Engagement and Investment Department started training by creating stories inspired by the emojis most frequently used by each of the team members and developing our very own emoji-description in our [Wiki Teams' page](#).

Are you ready to train yourselves? Just take a look at the [Emojipedia](#), have fun creating stories from the most frequently used emojis in your phone, and get inspired by these famous quotes translated into Emoji:



*"Be the change you want to see in the world".*

- Mahatma Gandhi



*"Dance like there's nobody watching, love like you'll never get hurt, sing like there's nobody listening and live as it's heaven on earth".*

- William W. Purkey



*"All is fair in love and war".*

- John Lyly

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