



This is a typical one of the “skrr” emojis that are widely used on the internet in China.

Newest Culture of the 21th Century Is Spreading with Unprecedented Popularity

**Behind Emojis in Cyber Language: Communication,  
Division and Change.**

In China The Growing Cyber Pop Culture Exerts Huge Impact on Our Life and  
Society

Edited by **Yuxiao Zhang, Chenyu Tang**

Researches and Pictures by **Ruijia Ma, Yue Yu, Zizhou Fang**

All Interviews Are Original Works from **Binlan Wu, Maoqi Cai, Yuxin Chen**

**Chengdu Foreign Languages School AP Centre**

August 6, 2018

*Do you have any idea about the word “skrr”? Well, just a couple of weeks ago if you questioned random people on the street in China, you would probably find it hard to get a right answer. As a slang typically used in hip-hop culture it is reasonable that “skrr” is rarely known by the general public. However this situation changed overnight, after the famous Chinese pop star, Chris Wu, used “skrr” in an ironically wrong way during the popular music show, The Rap of China, because people were so amused either by the word or by Chris and created countless emojis of “skrr” that immediately dominated the internet. **Suddenly every young Chinese and even elder people knew about this word.***



**The variety of emojis can be created by the popularity of a simple word “skrr”**

Of the cultures alive and observable in the current world, places with internet will most likely form a new sort of culture within the internet community, which plays a large part in modern "pop culture". **EMOJIS** are typically type of them.

As a populous nation of approximately 14 billion people, the emojis along with the cyber pop culture have undoubtedly exerted significant impact on China's complex society and culture since computers and phones became widely owned. From the “EXM” face of Nick Young that has been known for half a decade, to the famous “Yao Ming's Laughter” and “Chinese Field Dog”, or more recently the popularity of “skrr”, with the rise of a new trend, comes with the structural change in, if

not political society, everyday's "mundane society". The flow of the news alters the way we used to think and react in the past (which is still observable in older portion of the population). While emojis brings obvious functionality in our communication, demonstrates people's opinions and social values, it also inflicts new problems that raises considerable attention and requires changes in our minds as well as our culture and society.

A 26 years old young man we randomly interviewed at Shidai Square, downtown Chengdu, said that a lot of times emojis *"can express specific meaning when words prove inadequate"*. As the purpose of its birth early in the 1990s to increase the humorous language tone and environment, emojis shows its convenience, humor and functionality in our everyday communication. Depicting our emotions through pictures are a lot more relate-able then pure words. People tend to resonate with the emotions emitted through pictures more as it is more direct, therefore emojis became a way of effective emotion expressing.

Emojis are especially crucial to the communication between lovers, who usually become extremely careful and sensitive to their partner's expression and feeling. A relationship can see either improve meant or doom because of slight differences in communication. According our random interview with a 30 years old lady at a community called Ludao in Chengdu, because *"sometimes during your conversation with your love one, frictions can easily take place if one misunderstands the other's expressions and moods, using emojis can more accurately make him/her empathize with you."*

So it seems unreasonable that emojis can also be widely used in formal situations, but our random interview with a 50 years old businessman at a park in Chengdu gives us some different ideas. He argues that because it is important for one in a company to get along with both his superiors and subordinates, *often to avoid awkwardness in communication, emojis can successfully replace official and serious words to convey one's precise instructions and meaning with less harsh and unpleasant attitudes, while adding humor and relaxing to the talks.*

A situation that fits everyone of us is when we first meet someone. There's always inevitable awkwardness during initial encounterment with a stranger. Most of us may have struggled and even suffered to find some ice-breaking words, but with emojis, which contains widely known humorous meanings, the situation gets easily. A teenager we randomly interviewed at a big shopping center in

Chengdu gave us some of her feelings about this, *“most of the time when I first meet someone, I would send him/her emojis more than words, because that makes both me and our topics more interesting and easy.”*

From those instances we can see that emojis have become inalienable part of daily life for Chinese people in the 21th century, with their simplicity in forms yet full of interest in meanings seem to boost communication. But as every new things emerge, it will inevitably face confrontation and challenges, no exception for our cute emojis.

While it is so true that emojis, along with the cyber pop culture, has become such an irreplaceable part of our society and culture, it doesn't mean that every one of us, especially people of different ages, will have similar attitudes and views towards them.

Notice that people of different ages not only vary in simply the number of years they have been born, but more importantly their social and moral values, point of views and attitudes towards the emergence of new things, such as those emojis.

For instance, during our random interview with the twelve years old boy and his 50 years old grandmother at a supermarket in Chengdu, their ideas clearly differentiated. The little boy told us that sometimes he and his friends would *“send multiple emojis to each other just for fun”*, and he thought *without emojis the conversation would be “boring”*. But the grandmother told us that she used emojis *“much less frequently than those youngsters do”*, and the emojis she showed us were out of trend and probably would be viewed by younger generations as “rustic and unrefined”.

In further inquiry we got to know that the old lady was born in the countryside and led a life as a farmer until her son who left to work in the city became rich and moved the whole family to Chengdu. It may be difficult to imagine a boy dressed in fashionable shirt and jeans is playing popular games on his phone, accompanied by his grandmother who clearly suits the image of a hard-working yet uneducated rural woman. But the scene is in fact reasonable and common in China, a largely agricultural and unindustrialized nation who became the second largest economy of the world in just 20 years. Without this incredible speed of economic development comes the significant changes in culture

and society, which inevitably created a huge gap between the advanced cities fulfilled by new things and the comparatively still poor and conservative rural areas.

So the Chinese people who were constantly pushed back and forth between new ideas and old values, such as this urban boy with his rural grandmother, differentiates greatly in their attitudes towards the emergence of cyber pop culture as well as the emojis. Those emojis, other than containing simply humor and fun, are often related to the newest culture and gossips springs up with the current society and reflect the status of it, which serves as the indicator of the new era. New emojis and new hot words are often born with new popular event going on. To be more precise, emojis are often created later than hot words, but will be roughly at the same time.

For example the recent wave of “*skrr*” emojis is because of the growing attention and favor in hip-hop music and culture, which though proves popular among younger generations growing up in cities who is willing to accept anything new, keeps unknown or even resisted by the elder generations who are so used to the old way of life and social cultures that they may feel hard to understand and accept the new cyber pop culture.

However the situation can not be deemed thoroughly negative. Our interview with one of our group members’ 70-year-old grandmother shows that she didn’t even have any ideas what “emojis” are. But when we showed her how it basically works, she didn’t seem to completely resist them, instead she expressed apparent interest with emojis and even said that she would ask her granddaughter to teach her more of it so that she could “*keep pace with the time*”. Certain examples demonstrated that our old generation may not be so obstinate and resistant to the new culture and trend as we often suppose, and the emojis along with the cyber pop culture may be more acceptable and adaptable than we previously imagined.

The impact of emojis and the internet culture represents not only the progress of our time in communication as well as a fresh new area in our society and culture, but also a new division in our society and culture inflicted by the clashes between the new creation and the old values. Hot words are often really creative - if positively put. Negatively speaking, a lot of them violate lots of rules that we would normally follow in the non-internet life. It may cause inappropriate behavior and damage the traditional culture. But judging from multiple reports, we cannot see online language and online culture as some sort of monster - because they are not. Rather, they are a new social phenomena, or a

new ‘society dialect’. Some online words are already written into official dictionaries. Emojis serve as tools for people to rethink about themselves and society. To change the destructive tone of it to constructive, to change the ‘entertainment first’ mind set of it and make actually to be a valuable part of social construction, our society will be able to embrace the new cyber pop culture in an optimistic way. So, *did you “skrr” today?*