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Using geomojis to communicate geosciences: from development to use

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Communication across linguistic and cultural borders is vital in our globalised but compartmentalised world, where different people from different origins mix and interact. In the context of geological hazards and the geological environment, we are working towards a clear system that enables specialists in different fields to communicate effectively with each other, and for a common system that allows all types of non-specialists (e.g. general public) to communicate as well. This works using symbols and pictograms to represent geological and environmental phenomena and features, for example geohazards, that can be used to communicate clearly and efficiently. Certain hazard symbols are already in use across the globe, such as those for chemical or environmental hazards, or such as 'rock fall' warning signs that are universal. In this project, we focus on the geological environment and geohazards, and much of the work is done within a UNESCO Geoscience Programme project 'Geoheritage for Resilience', using geoheritage sites as sites for communication and testing, and more recently with a Franco-Mexican ECOS exchange project 'Building Sense in Natural Heritage'. Our geological pictograms, or 'geomojis', bridge the gap between simple symbols and words, crossing language borders by representing concepts that we have identified as particularly important for understanding geohazards and risk. Our geomojis are linked to the Global Framework for Geology (see Global and Planetary Change, 2018 - <https://digitalcommons.mtu.edu/michigantech-p/427>), allowing the context of each geomoji in the Earth system to be understood. We are currently running international workshops to promote discussion and test the geomojis that we have created. These workshops have raised new pictographic needs and the problems associated with them. The goal of these workshops is to consolidate geoscience knowledge from different specialisations and create a basic standardised set of symbols for all geological hazards. This standardisation of geohazard symbols could improve communication not only between specialists and non-specialists, but between geologists themselves. The global framework and geomojis help us to think outside the box of our specialist environment. These geo-pictograms can be used for geoscience communication in all forms, from hazard and risk publications to signage at geological sites and in discussions with local populations. They can be adapted and modified for the local context and needs, while providing a central, and global, base for comparison. We plan to use the set of reference geomojis to accompany a multilingual glossary on geological hazard and risk terminology, a project that we hope will help international geoscience communication.

