

The meaning of emoticons

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smiley. Credit: Candie_N from Flickr

The emoticons used on Twitter are a language in themselves and are taking on new and often surprising meanings of their own, according to new research.

Alex Davies, a Gates scholar at the University of Cambridge, has created a visual map of the words associated with Twitter [emoticons](#). It's not just the usual smiley and sad face emoticons whose meaning is fairly obvious and associated with words such as birthday, weekend and Friday and hospital, cold, stomach and pain respectively.

Other emoticons include:

^_^ This is associated with more immediate pleasures such as food and holidays. Words linked to it include shopping, lunch, dinner and chocolate. It is more associated with Asian Tweeters, but has begun to be

used more in the West.

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