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Globalized Culture Through Play

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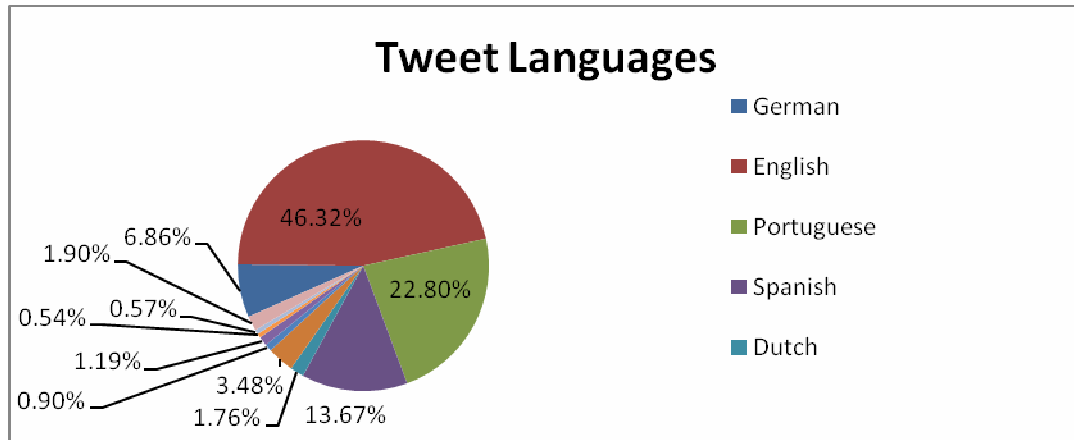
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The question this report will attempt to answer is this, how globalized has the world's culture become? Specifically, how much does Twitter cause and reflect an emerging trend of a global culture as opposed to cultures segmented by nation and language. In order to do this we looked at tweets about Osama Bin Laden and analyzed them in two ways, languages used and number of tweets classified as jokes and not jokes. In order for one to understand a joke and for that joke to be funny a person must understand all elements of a joke. That being said, if we see a large amount of jokes regarding Osama Bin Laden we can assume that Bin Laden has accumulated enough of a celebrity status for the average person to know who he is without being told. The combination and variety of languages used about Bin Laden and the prevalence of jokes, or playful language, will give us a better idea about how globalized this aspect of our culture really is.

The procedure used to gather this information is the search engine www.archivist.visitmix.com using the search words "Osama Bin Laden" to accumulate tweets containing the key words. We then analyzed the tweets using Microsoft Excel to view tweets and separated them by language. After separating by language, we went through and looked at the tweets in English individually to determine if each was using a joking, playful tone or it was more straightforward.

The languages came out as reflected in the following table.

Language	Tweets	Pct (%)
Afrikaans	1	0.0005
Breton	2	0.001
Danish	1	0.0005
German	144	6.86
English	973	46.33
Esperanto	12	0.57
Spanish	287	13.67
Finnish	1	0.0005
Filipino	1	0.0005
French	4	0.002
Galacian	25	1.19
Hungarian	5	0.0025
Indoesian	19	0.905
Icelandic	1	0.0005
Italian	9	0.0043
Kurdish	2	0.001
Latin	1	0.0005
Luxembourgish	1	0.0005
Malay	73	3.48
Dutch	37	1.76
Norwegian	11	0.54
Occitan	2	0.001
Portuguese	479	22.81
Romanian	1	0.0005
Swedish	2	0.001
Swahili	1	0.0005
Uzbek	3	0.0015
Vietnamese	2	0.001



As would be expected the most prevalent language is English, making up just over 46% of the total tweets. Being that English is the most frequently used language on Twitter, this is normal, but what is also evident in these numbers is that other languages share a significant portion of the total tweets. Portuguese (22.81%), Spanish (13.67%) and German (6.86%) all hold a substantial position in this set of tweets showing that Osama Bin Laden evokes responses from many different nationalities and cultures. 28 different languages were used in the 2100 tweets we observed, spanning virtually the entire globe. Compared to previous research we have done using key words “eight troops killed in Afghanistan”, referring to a car side bombing killing American troops, the messages regarding Bin Laden show a vastly greater amount of linguistic variety. In that research out of a total of 329 tweets, 317(96%) were in English, showing an English monopoly which is not reflected in our current research. While the tweets may be dominated by a few major languages, it is clear that Bin Laden transcends languages and cultures, providing evidence for a more globalized culture.

The second aspect of our research involves the use of playful language in the tweets about Osama Bin Laden. Before we observe the numbers for this topic we must first be sure to understand what exactly is meant by a joke or playful language as opposed

to more straightforward statements. Here is an example of a tweet we classified as a joke, “And the 33rd person to be pulled from the Chilean mine... Osama Bin Laden.” It is clear that no one really thinks that Bin Laden is hiding in a Chilean mine but rather the author is playfully putting together two aspects of popular culture in an attempt of humor. An example of a tweet about Bin Laden that is not a joke is, “Bill Maher just used an Osama Bin Laden quote in a positive light. SO offensive.” Here it seems evident that the author is literally expressing an opinion rather than being playful. This being said, out of a total of 973 English tweets, only 118(12%) were not classified as jokes. One reason for this large amount of playful language about Osama Bin Laden is that an episode of South Park, a comedic television program, featuring Bin Laden had aired just prior to this data being collected, prompting a significant number of joking tweets about the program and Bin Laden. Although this may account for a significant number of joking tweets it is still clear that a strong majority of tweets about Bin Laden are playful, thus showing him to be a sort of celebrity or icon that is recognizable on a global scale.

Given the data collected from our research it seems that these tweets about Osama Bin Laden do show a certain amount of globalized culture that has taken place via Twitter. Given our previous research it is clear that not everything on Twitter draws global attention, but given the right topic, Twitter becomes a very global space. The variety of languages and prevalence of jokes about Osama Bin Laden indicate that his celebrity is worldwide, a villain consistent in cultures across the globe.