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Retweets in COP16

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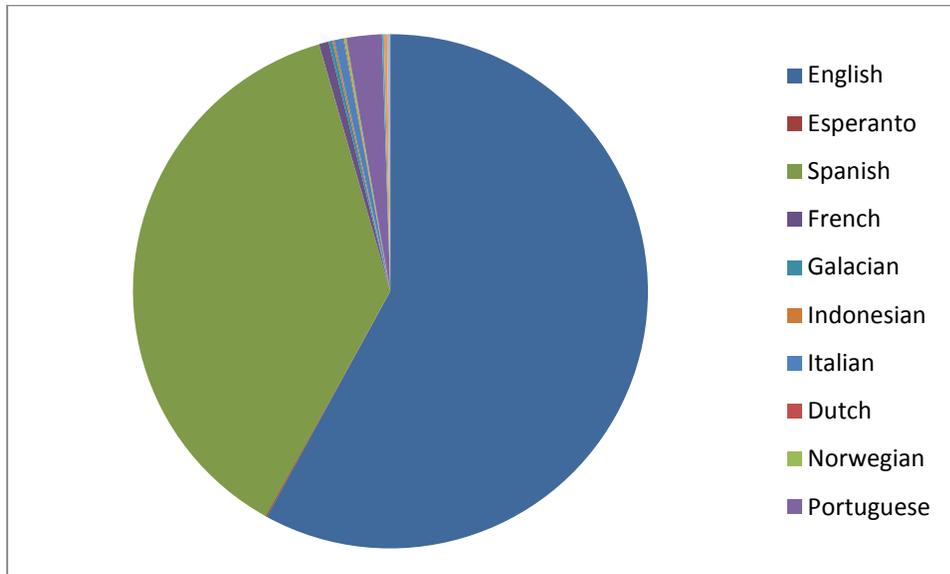
Retweets in COP16:

By David Clayton, Jeremy McDaniel and Emilie Lee

The question at hand here is what do the re tweeted messages about COP16 tells us about an emerging globalized culture? COP 16 is a United Nations Climate Change conference which is being held in November and December of 2010 in Cancun Mexico. Given that this is a United Nations sponsored event and being held outside of U.S. soil it would be likely that a certain amount of globalized communication would be present on Twitter. In focusing on the re tweeted messages specifically we can get a better idea of what messages are the most popular as re tweets are essentially forwards of previous messages. By looking at the language use within the re tweeted messages and focusing on the most repeated messages we will look to better understand the nature of global communication.

The procedure of our research started with accumulating tweets with the keyword (COP16) through the search engine archivist. Once these tweets had been amassed and placed onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet we separated the re tweets by deleting all messages that were not re tweeted. Next we separated tweets by language and counted to see which tweets were the most often repeated. Our research came out as follows.

Despite the international nature of this conference, there was not much variation in language within the re tweeted messages. The language breakdown is shown in this graph.

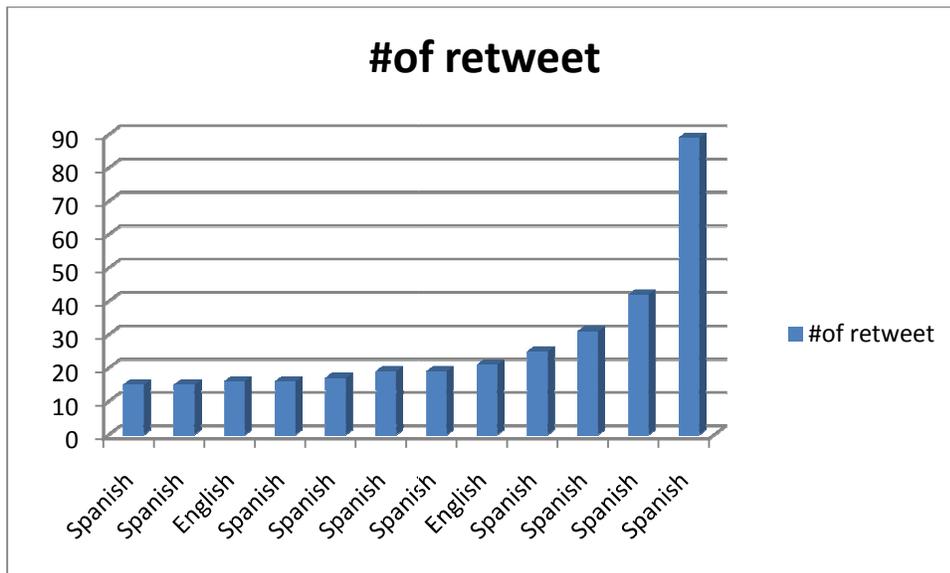


English	2036
Esperanto	3
Spanish	1316
French	21
Galician	9
Indonesian	4
Italian	20
Dutch	2
Norwegian	5
Portuguese	78
Swedish	4
Uzbek	7
Vietnamese	7

Although there are a number of languages used, the messages in general are dominated by the English and Spanish languages. Of the 3512 re-tweeted messages 2036 (58%) were in English and 1316(37%) in Spanish. These two languages make up roughly 95% of all re-tweeted messages showing a lack of truly global communication via diverse language use. The fact that English and Spanish are the two most used languages is not surprising given that English is the most common language on twitter and the event in question is being held in Mexico, a Spanish

speaking nation. What is surprising is the gap between these languages and the other languages used, which is extremely large. It seems that these numbers tell us that communication about this event is more local than global.

Our other focus in our research was on the most common re tweets. By looking at the messages that were repeated the most we can get a better understanding of the nature of this event and the communication about it. The following graph shows the messages that were repeated 15 times or more and the language in which the message was written.



language	#of retweet
Spanish	15
Spanish	15
English	16
Spanish	16
Spanish	17
Spanish	19
Spanish	19
English	21
Spanish	25
Spanish	31
Spanish	42
Spanish	89

There are twelve messages that fit our 15+ criteria and although they are all in English and Spanish, as expected, it is surprising that ten out of the twelve are in Spanish. Also, the four most re-tweeted messages are all in Spanish, which we roughly translated to look at the content of the most frequent re-tweets. Three of the four messages are from CNN affiliates in Mexico advertising trips to the conference and looking for citizen reporters to help cover the event. The other of the four, which is also far and away the most re-tweeted message, with 89 messages, reads, "Workers continue to build agreements on COP16. Urgent global commitment against climate change: Mitigation and adaptation." This message is basically stating fundamental goals and ideals of the conference as it recognizes the need for the international community to take proactive steps to be more environmentally conscious and counteract the possible devastating effects of climate change.

The research on the overall language use as well as the languages in the most often repeated re-tweets both indicate that the communication about COP16 is relatively local rather than truly global. While a variety of languages did exist within these messages, the overwhelming majority were either in English or Spanish. Our research focused on only the re-tweets contained in the COP16 messages, which was 3512 out of 7932 or 44.3%. Previous research has shown that this is a fairly average percentage of re-tweets as searches for "Obama" and "Bin Laden" resulted in 54% and 57% re-tweets respectively. This tells us that although re-tweets may not contain any original communication they are important in understanding communication on Twitter, as they contribute to roughly half of the messages in the mentioned research. What the re-tweets in the COP 16 data tell us is that in this instance communication is more localized than global, illustrated by the lack of language use other than English and Spanish.