

# Shakespeare Lives in Spanish

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## 1 Executive Summary

This report examines the online conversation around the Shakespeare Lives programme in Spanish on social media platforms throughout 2016. It reveals the values associated by different audiences and actors with the Shakespeare Lives programme, Shakespeare himself, and Britain as a whole.

We begin by giving a summary of findings from our research of Shakespeare Lives on Twitter and Facebook, before giving recommendations on how social media can be used to promote, and promote engagement with, ambitious international cultural programmes such as Shakespeare Lives.

We then provide analysis from the first phase of our social media research on Shakespeare Lives in Spanish, which focused on the weekend around Shakespeare Day (23 April), the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death. This most notably included [Shakespeare Day Live](#), a day of live Shakespeare Lives broadcasts streamed around the world through a digital pop-up channel co-curated by the BBC and the British Council. Highlights of Shakespeare Lives were also made freely available through the BBC iPlayer. We will then provide analysis from the second phase of our research on Twitter, which studied engagement with Shakespeare Lives in Spanish more broadly in the period following Shakespeare Day (May-September). Our third phase of research on Twitter focused on two case studies of Shakespeare Lives in Spanish-speaking countries: a production of [Othello](#) at the Teatro Real in Madrid which was livestreamed around the world (for which we also look at promotion of the event on Facebook), and the [Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven](#) Festival at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). On Facebook, we provide analysis of the promotion of, and engagement with, British Council posts about Shakespeare Lives, focusing in particular on the British Council Mexico page.

## 1.1 Summary of Findings: Twitter

- **The British Council was successful in adapting the Shakespeare Lives programme to local contexts in the Spanish-speaking world.** In Spanish-speaking countries, Shakespeare was celebrated as a part of the commemorations of World Book Day and St. George (16% of tweets). Shakespeare was also often remembered alongside Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) (27%).
- **Global-national-local dynamics were used to good advantage in the British Council's localising strategies.** Key to this was collaborating closely with domestic partners in order to organise and promote events. Users engaged with Shakespeare Lives events via the mediation of local cultural organisations and not through the British Council (e.g. *Othello*).
- Expressions of positive engagement, emotions and opinions as well as reflections on the values associated with Britain were frequently found in relation to specific events and Shakespeare more broadly, rather than towards the British Council, Shakespeare Lives, or Britain specifically.
- **The British Council is effective in engaging at the local-national level, but some controversy still arose as a result of cross-cultural differences.** While mutuality is

highlighted in the majority of cases, the fact that the Shakespeare Lives programme might stir some negative comparisons is still something to be mindful of. For example, the fact that Shakespeare was given an emoji by Twitter and Cervantes initially was not viewed negatively by some users. *Mutuality has to be real and felt.*

- **The local staff in Spanish-speaking centres are highly instrumental to programmes like Shakespeare Lives.** They show a high awareness of their role as agents of cultural relations and work towards building cultural bridges by promoting British culture, while rooting it in the national and local context as well as tapping into digital networks.
- **British Council staff do a good job of responding to members of the public.** The British Council centre in Mexico interacts frequently with its users and always responds to comments on Facebook, improving the relationship with its students and the broader public that visits its page.
- **Use of multiple social media accounts, official and personal/professional, helped engagement.** The centre in Madrid has a wider range of initiatives that are promoted not only by their official Twitter and Facebook accounts, but by the accounts of the local staff which both feed into and from it. They not only embed different interventions into the local context, but into domestic social media networks, reaching a number of users that are beyond the reach of the British Council alone.
- **Shakespeare Lives events were received very positively by users from Spanish-speaking countries.** The most popular events on the Spanish Twittersphere were live events like the Shakespeare and Cervantes Live festival, or the performance of Henry V dramatised by the actor Mario Iván Martínez accompanied by the Mexican National Symphony at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico on 6-8 May in Mexico. These were more popular than digital initiatives such as Mix the Play.
- **Twitter users also expressed enjoyment and surprise about technological innovation.** Shakespeare's emoji to accompany #ShakespeareLives on Twitter was often noted.
- **Users engaged frequently with live events that they could access through social media.** Users valued being able to watch streamed live events such as #RSCLive via Periscope (23 April) or Verdi's Otello (24 September).
- **The programme did not succeed in widening interest in Shakespeare.** One of the main limitations of the programme in Spanish-speaking countries was that it appealed mainly to people who already had an interest in Shakespeare, Britain, and the British Council. The challenge is to expand this to a wider public.

- **A high proportion of younger publics interacting with British Council and partner organisations** was noted, both because of the educational character of the British Council and because of the age profile of many social media users.
- **Spanish users tweeting about Shakespeare like to display their cosmopolitan ‘cultural capital’**. They state that Shakespeare is a representative not only of British but of World Literature. They enjoy sharing their knowledge, quotes and ‘behind the scenes’ experiences.
- **Shakespeare is particularly valued by users involved in theatre** (and music for *Otello*). It was notable that some of the users were themselves involved in theatre, many of whom are actors and musicians.
- **Shakespeare Lives was well received by Twitter users with a prior expressed interest in Shakespeare and particular celebrities** such as Benedict Cumberbatch.
- **Shakespeare Lives’ perceived aim to bring Shakespeare closer to wider publics and appeal to popular tastes was seen as ‘welcoming’**. Users often commented on the openness and accessibility of usually high-end, expensive cultural products that were offered free.
- The popularity of the performance by Mario Iván Martínez highlights how **local and genre specific celebrities are a valuable way for users to engage with events**. The popular Mexican Shakespearean actor, as well as opera singers Ermonela Jaho and Gregory Kunde, received direct compliments from the public. All these artists interacted with the public through social media. Although known to a very specific audience, they are an example of how **targeting the right mediator can be essential to strengthening the relationship, and opening possibilities of engagement with new users**.
- **Celebrities (international or local) do not appear that frequently in Spanish tweets and when they do attention from the public varies hugely**. For example, the campaign Play your Part in Spain was not widely commented upon by users, despite using well-known Spanish actors. On the other hand, Sir Patrick Stewart’s tweet wishing Shakespeare a Happy Birthday in Spanish was the single most popular tweet in this study (711 retweets and 3,646 likes).
- Overall, **the majority of tweets come from Latin American countries, particularly Mexico**. The Mexican British Council Twitter account is very active (as is its Facebook account), but a lot of the *promotion also comes from partner Mexican cultural organisations*. As a consequence, the majority of the members of the public that engage with the programme in Latin America are also Mexican.

- **The majority of the tweets coded were neutral in tone.** In the samples of Spanish-speaking tweets the proportion of positive tweets is higher than in other languages, accounting for 36% around the time of the anniversary on 23 April, 24% during 1 Mary-17 September, 65% for *Otello* on 24 September and 34% for the Shakespeare y Cervantes festival in Mexico during October 2016.

## 1.2 Summary of Findings: Facebook

- **The British Council’s Spanish-speaking Facebook activity was generally less effective at generating engagement with the programme than its Twitter equivalents.** Different Facebook accounts have different levels of activity in promoting local and global Shakespeare Lives events. Shakespeare Lives posts are liked by some users, but are usually not as popular as other campaigns and programmes promoted by these accounts. Overall, the British Council Facebook accounts are not the place in which conversations about Shakespeare Lives or Shakespeare take place. One reason might be that the British Council is generally regarded by Facebook users primarily as an organisation of language teaching. Some of the comments that users post on Facebook seem to reinforce this view. Most of the interest of users is focused on English language courses, issues around language, studying and grants. Other popular posts include those that ask direct question about British culture or give quirky information about the UK, British popular music (The Beatles, George Michael or David Bowie) or the English language.
- **The links between Shakespeare and language generates the most engagement on Spanish-speaking British Council Facebook accounts.** Posts with quizzes that are also entertaining – for example videos like the series of cartoons on Shakespeare on the Uruguayan Facebook page – are usually the most commented on by users. The British Council could use these direct appeals more frequently when trying to engage followers in a conversation about Shakespeare.
- **The Mexican Facebook page has the most users of all Spanish-speaking British Council Facebook pages.** The launching of the Shakespeare and Cervantes Viven festival was one of the most popular overall in recent activity in the Mexican British Council Facebook page, indicating the popularity of the event. Users expressed their excitement with the event and engaged with the festival and the British Council in an intercultural conversation not only about the quality of the performances but about Shakespeare more broadly.

## 1.3 Recommendations

1. Use the possibilities offered by social media **to strengthen the relationship with existing users and to establish new relationships by tapping into different networks.**
2. **Make better use of cultural intermediaries such as relevant national, local as well as global partners, including celebrities.** Diasporic intermediaries are a great way to link diverse user groups globally. Spanish and Latin American celebrities as well as Twitter ‘celebrities’ could also act as intermediaries on behalf of the British Council and further engage the Spanish-speaking public by acting as cultural bridges.
3. **The future of cultural relations work lies in effectively blending the face-to-face and digital encounters.** British Council needs to develop a comprehensive digital and social media strategy and to invest in training staff at all levels of the organisation.
4. **Find ways to expand reach by better interacting with users** on the social networks that Twitter and Facebook provide. Try to expand reach to a broader audience and different (local) contexts.
5. **Support, train, provide resources and encourage local staff to use social media not just for information-dissemination and PR but to engage users.** If local staff are very active on social media they can become digital agents of cultural relations.
6. To **promote mutuality and connectivity by exemplifying it**, for example by ensuring that the different domestic social media accounts refer to each other, and that the main @BritishCouncil account helps promote local centres globally and at home in the UK. This would be a simple way to showcase initiatives and help relationships to become more reciprocal. It is easy to do with live streaming of events that could be broadcast globally more effectively by reinforcing social media promotional strategies.
7. **Use the advantages of digital platforms in order to provide more users at a global and domestic scale with a variety of experiences that can be accessed through social media** (Periscope, Facebook, YouTube, etc.). **Events should also be *broadcast live* more often.** It’s the mixture of global and local that users value.
8. **Continue to organise and promote local live events that are accessible to a wider (and younger) public** (open, free, in familiar settings like universities or schools) such as the Shakespeare and Cervantes Viven Festival in Mexico. This has been particularly valued by users who highlighted the *welcoming* nature of the institutions involved. The British Council could also act as a broker between high and popular culture, making events available to a wider and global public through technology and social media.
9. **Continue to collaborate closely with Spanish-language cultural organisations.** Users almost exclusively shared content in Spanish, or which originated in Spanish-speaking

media. They also commented on events primarily through domestic partners' social media outlets. **The British Council has been very successful in partnering with Spanish-speaking institutions in order to promote Shakespeare Lives.**

10. **Coordinate the promotion of events with partner organisations** via social media. If culture can sometimes function as an invisible barrier that can distort messages, there is a cultural advantage for the indigenous media, and one way of bridging that cultural gap is to build good media relations. However, the British Council then loses visibility and the conversation does not refer back to Britain. The British Council might seek to increase its visibility and presence, while ensuring that users do not perceive this as an instrumentalist approach. The British Council might attempt to balance this out by **strengthening global-local digital networks and encouraging partner organisations to mention them specifically on their social media platforms via replies, likes, comments or retweets.**
11. **Encourage users' creative engagement with Shakespeare and the programme.** Social media users are active in reusing and appropriating content, creatively and critically engaging with it. *Continue requesting the collaboration of users, by asking questions, responding to their comments, having contests, quizzes or sharing quotes.* Users often respond to direct questions when offered tickets to attend an event, but also when directly asked to share their experiences on social media.
12. **The British Council could deploy its knowledge and awareness of culture and literature to anticipate and take the lead in bringing conversations to the fore.** On occasions, like the *Otello* performance or the Shakespeare and Cervantes Viven festival, the British Council could have taken the lead to spark conversation on *diversity* in the first instance (like done through the British Council's short film on *Othello*) or *mutuality* in the second, even if risking controversy. *Values need to be made felt and real.*

## Phase One: Shakespeare Day

This section of the Shakespeare Lives in Spanish report sets out our analysis of conversation in Spanish around the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter during 22-25 April 2016, the weekend around Shakespeare Day. This case was selected for analysis as celebrations of Shakespeare Day drove a peak in discussion of Shakespeare across our languages of interest (Arabic, English, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish). This section of our report also studies how the British Council used Facebook to promote Shakespeare Lives in Spanish-speaking countries during the same period, and how members of the public engaged both with these posts and other types of content published by British Council accounts.

This analysis finds that during the period around Shakespeare Day, The Shakespeare Lives programme was successful in adapting itself to local contexts in the Spanish-speaking world and diaspora. Shakespeare was often celebrated as a part of the commemorations of World Book Day and St. George (16% of tweets). Shakespeare was also often remembered alongside Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) (27%).

Spanish-speaking members of the public tweeting about Shakespeare often display both their cosmopolitanism and their high ‘cultural capital’ and consider Shakespeare to be a representative not only of British but of World Literature. But while the British Council is effective in engaging at the local-national level, some controversy still arose as a result of cultural divides and cultural cross-perceptions. While mutuality is highlighted in the majority of cases, the fact that the Shakespeare Lives programme might stir some negative comparisons is still something to be mindful of. For example, the fact that Shakespeare was given an emoji by Twitter and Cervantes (initially) was not viewed negatively by some users, although users expressed enjoyment and surprise over technological innovations such as the Shakespeare emoji. We also found that users engage more often with Shakespeare and his legacy than they do with Shakespeare Lives events specifically.

Members of the public were more likely to give an opinion, compare and express emotions (mostly positive) about Shakespeare, and only indirectly or unknowingly about the programme itself. There is little direct expression on Twitter of emotions or opinions related specifically towards Shakespeare Lives events, although when there is it is usually very positive. Users valued being able to watch events that were streamed live from the UK (such as #RSCLive via Periscope). During this period, most members of the public that engaged with the programme already showed an interest in Shakespeare, literature and/or Britain. In addition, some users with a previous interest in particular celebrities, for example Benedict Cumberbatch, were drawn to the programme by their participation.

During this period, the British Council's Spanish Facebook activity was less effective at generating engagement with the programme than its Twitter equivalent. Different Facebook accounts have different levels of activity in promoting local and global Shakespeare Lives events. The programme-related posts are liked by some users, but are usually not as popular as other British Council content. Overall, British Council Facebook accounts were not the place in which conversations about the Shakespeare Lives programme or Shakespeare took place. Comments left by followers suggest that reason might be that the British Council is generally regarded primarily as an organisation of language teaching. Most of the interest of users is focused on English language courses, issues around language, studying and grants. Posts in the Mexican Facebook that relate to the "Education is Great" campaign are the most popular, and generate the most conversation with the British Council and also between users. Other popular posts include those that ask direct questions about British culture or give quirky information about the UK or the English language. In fact, the intersection between Shakespeare and language generates the most engagement with Shakespeare Lives on Spanish-speaking British Council Facebook accounts. Posts with quizzes that are also entertaining, for example videos like the series of cartoons on Shakespeare on the Uruguayan Facebook page, are usually the most commented by users. The British Council could use these direct appeals more frequently when trying to engage followers in a conversation about Shakespeare.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Twitter

Using Sysomos MAP, we were able to obtain tweets over the period of four consecutive days, 22-25 April 2016, coinciding with the launch of the international Shakespeare Lives programme. The search for tweets in the Spanish language used the following keywords:

#shakespearelives OR #shakespeare400 AND NOT RT<sup>1</sup>

Of 4,030 tweets returned by the query, 1,000 were randomly selected for interpretative coding and analysis. A Spanish-speaking researcher then individually analysed collected tweets according to the project's coding framework (see the Summary of Methodology document for more information on our approach and full coding frameworks).

Out of the 1,000 tweets in the sample, 126 (13%) used #ShakespeareLives while 895 (91%) used #Shakespeare400, of which 234 (24%) were used in conjunction with #Cervantes400. Most tweets were in Spanish or had been tweeted from an account located in a Spanish-speaking country. There were 146 tweets that were neither (15%), but were also coded within the sample. There were 14 tweets from bots (automated accounts) that had no relation to the programme or Shakespeare, simply using #Shakespeare400 to promote their products. These tweets were not coded; the final number of coded tweets was 986.

### 2.2 Facebook

Facebook is useful to assess the level of engagement with the programme by the members of the public who are already followers of the British Council. It can also provide insights into different Facebook account strategies from different Spanish-speaking centres. The British Council has centres in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela. All of them have Facebook accounts except for Peru (and all use Twitter except for Chile). They all post in Spanish, although there is a Facebook page for the British Council Barcelona that uses English instead. Comparing them to each other, the most active and popular ones are the Mexican (121,934 total page likes), the Colombian (60,427) and Spanish pages (26,991). The population in Mexico is substantially larger than that in Spain or Colombia. Pages with smaller followings are Venezuela (14,747), Chile (14,589), Argentina (8,951) and Uruguay (2,246).

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<sup>1</sup> Using 'AND NOT RT' at the end of a Boolean search on Sysomos MAP means that retweets are excluded from search results

It was decided to use a qualitative ethnographic approach to analyse the promotion of, and user engagement with, Shakespeare Lives on Facebook. This involves describing and comparing the themes of British Council posts, and the level of engagement with these different types of post as well as how users engage with them. The four pages chosen for analysis were Mexico, Spain, Venezuela and Uruguay. The Mexican page is the most active both in terms of the number of posts and the number of comments from its followers. It was also chosen because of the strategic interest of the British Council in Mexico. Focusing on it might also serve as an example of successful strategies of engagement for the rest of the British Council Facebook pages. The Spanish British Council Facebook page serves as a good comparison to evaluate strategies/responses in Europe. Venezuela is an interesting case, primarily because of the lack of engagement with the Shakespeare Lives programme outside of the 22-24 April weekend, and Uruguay is an example of a very active account with fewer followers that posts frequently on the Shakespeare Lives programme. Comparing popularity between these centres must take into account that country population and the number of Facebook users vary quite substantially.

The accounts were monitored from 22- 24 April 2016. The number of posts on the Shakespeare Lives programme was compared to the total number of posts during that period, and an analysis of examples of user engagement provides comparative case studies. User comments were included when available, but likes and shares were used as an approximation to evaluate the relative popularity of a post.

### 2.3 Notes on Coding for Values and Value

The tweets were manually coded using the project coding framework, in which each tweet was coded for the categories of type of actor, location, focus, tone, reaction type, direction of reaction, values, added values by users, and whether they used quotes, adaptations and humour (see the Summary of Methodology document for full coding frameworks).

The *values* which the British Council sought to promote through Shakespeare Lives – creativity, diversity, innovation, mutuality, welcoming – were coded as recognised or debated by users when there were explicit mentions in the messages or when there was strong evidence of implicit appreciation in users’ original intent. They were coded in relation to both the British Council Shakespeare Lives programme and to Shakespeare separately from the programme. For example, the value of “creativity” was recognised frequently because of the high level of creative engagement with Shakespeare and his work. “Mutuality” was coded as recognised in a tweet when there was specific mention of the value in relation to Shakespeare or the programme, but also when it came up implicitly by the comparison with other writers, such as Cervantes, usually emphasising universality. “Innovation” was coded as present whenever users appreciated a technological innovation, particularly live streaming. “Welcoming” was coded not only when organisations openly invited people to join them for events, but when users expressed that the event had brought

something valuable to a wider public, highlighting openness. “Diversity” was coded when the tweet valued difference.

We also coded for whether tweeters perceived something (Shakespeare Lives, or Shakespeare more broadly) to *be valuable*, for being useful/relevant, quality, and/or enjoyable. Table 1 below shows a list of the keywords used to identify tweets as referring to a value, or the perceived value of Shakespeare or Shakespeare Lives.

Diversity	Autism, inclusive, women, black, racism
Innovative	Special effects, contemporaneous, non-traditional , multimedia, Periscope, emoji, digital platform, connected, technology
Welcoming	Accompany, inclusive, people, human right, “as if I were there”, “from home”, close, unity, free, open, “to bring closer”
Creative	Inventive, create, reinvent, genius, original, non-traditional, singular, whole new way, imagination, talent , imagined, changes, break the pattern
Mutuality	Languages: use of English, universal, humanity, lives in his work, eternity, translations, current , legacy, exotic, immortal, transcend, global, bring people together
Useful/Relevant	Significant
Quality	Magnificent, great, talented, marvellous, impressive, a classic, clásico (142), best, famous, perfect, excellent, incomparable, luxury, sublime
Enjoyability	Love, enjoy, marvellous, funny, great,

Table 1: Examples of keywords used to code values, and perceived value

We will now set out the findings from our analysis of tweets collected during the weekend around Shakespeare Day, looking at who tweeted about the programme and what they were talking about, before looking at how the British Council in a variety of Spanish-speaking countries used Facebook to promote Shakespeare Lives, and how followers engaged with these and other types of British Council post.

## 3 Findings and Analysis

### 3.1 Twitter

#### Shakespeare as a Universal Figure

**Shakespeare is considered as a universal, rather than only a British writer, which might indirectly have a positive impact on the UK's soft power.** Most tweets in the sample focus primarily on Shakespeare, not necessarily referring directly to the British Council Shakespeare Lives programme or its events, although they used #Shakespeare400. Hardly any tweets refer either to the British Council or the UK directly. Most quotes are, for example, in translation in Spanish. There is no mention of the source language and no “exoticising” strategies to mark Shakespeare’s British-ness or non-Spanish-ness. Instead, users enact a “naturalising” process by which the foreign elements of the text are eliminated, giving the reader an impression of familiarity (Holmes 1988: 47). There is rarely any mention of Shakespeare being an English or British writer. Users often reflect on the quality and relevance of Shakespeare’s work for them today, not as necessarily crossing geographical or cultural borders, but noting how his legacy is immortal or timeless: “#Shakespeare400 Increíble 400 años y sus obras aún siguen pasando de generación en generación” [*#Shakespeare400 Incredible 400 years and his work still passes from generation to generation*].

In this way, users’ routine translation as well as explicit reflections express how Shakespeare’s work symbolises universal values: “#Shakespeare400 #Cervantes400 sus grandes obras hablan sobre la libertad el amor la amistad la esperanza y la justicia” [*Shakespeare and Cervantes, their great Works speak about freedom, love, friendship and justice*]. Mentions of celebrations mostly refer to celebrations on a global scale. An article by the Latin American channel teleSUR TV gave examples of celebrations in different countries and not just in the UK; this was shared by four percent of all tweets. Shakespeare’s genius and creativity was also regarded as a global phenomenon – there is even a map that shows the international locations of Shakespeare plays:

## Map of Shakespeare's plays #Shakespeare400



Image 1: Map of Shakespeare plays shared on Twitter

The values associated with Shakespeare are rarely also associated with the UK, or the Shakespeare Lives programme. This points to a tension in how soft power operates. The difficulty with “universal” values is that they are invoked as attractive and beneficial for the world’s population as a whole, whilst at the same time they are attributed as belonging to a specific actor. Can an asset seen as universal have a positive effect on a specific nation’s soft power? We would argue it can, since this shows soft power operating in a way that is discrete to global audiences, not forced or strategised.

Spanish-speaking members of the public who tweet about Shakespeare often display a cosmopolitan cultural capital. Shakespeare is considered as a representative of not only British, but World Literature. As a consequence, Shakespeare also appears in tweets alongside other “universal” writers, primarily Cervantes whose death is also commemorated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April (see Image 2 below). On occasion, Shakespeare and Cervantes are commemorated alongside another, less well-known, Spanish-speaking writer, the Peruvian Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), who also died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. It must be noted that other than Shakespeare, universality is usually claimed in these tweets for these two Spanish-speaking writers, because fate had it that they all died on the same day. The Mexican Secretary of Culture promoted World Book Day with this campaign that celebrated all three writers as examples of World Literature:

Hoy recordamos a tres grandes de la literatura. #Shakespeare400 #Cervantes400 🇪🇲 y #GarcilasoDeLaVega via @cenartmx



Image 2: Tweet commemorating Shakespeare and Cervantes

*Translation for Image 2 above: [Today we remember three literary figures ... 23<sup>rd</sup> of April is a symbolic day for World literature. Since 1995, UNECO promoted the international celebration of World Book Day. This day was chosen then to celebrate the death of three great writers of world literature...]*

At times, other writers in the “Spanish” pantheon of World Literature are also mentioned. For example, a young Ecuadorian who praised Shakespeare’s emoji in order to celebrate World Book Day (see section 3.1.2 for more on the emoji) posted in subsequent tweets about Mario Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortazar. These represent two of the most important contemporary Spanish-speaking writers, mostly acclaimed for their universal appeal. Other users celebrated other literary stars such as Spanish Nobel prize Camilo Jose Cela, Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario and Catalan writer Ramon Llull: “Además de #Cervantes400 se celebra hoy #GarcilasoDeLaVega400 y #RubenDario100 #CamiloJoséCela100 #Shakespeare400 y #Llul400 [*Besides Cervantes we today celebrate ...*].

Related to universality and a global outlook, mutuality is the most frequent value associated with Shakespeare and the programme (26%, see Figure 1 below), and it is mostly recognised when users compared Shakespeare with other writers (see Figure 2 below). The following section will focus on the way Spanish-speaking engaged with both writers in the Twittersphere.

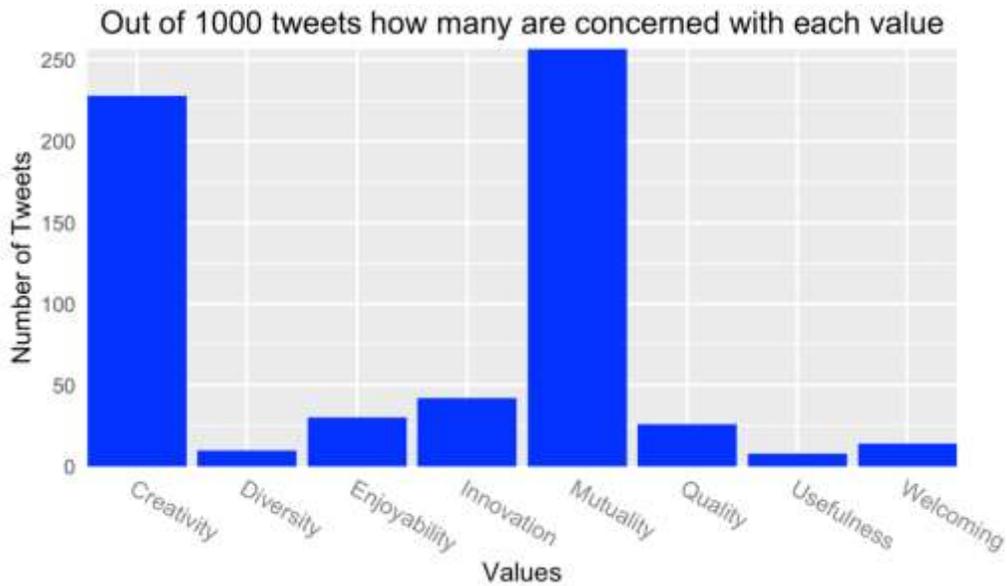


Figure 1: Number of tweets referring to a value, or the value of Shakespeare/Shakespeare Lives

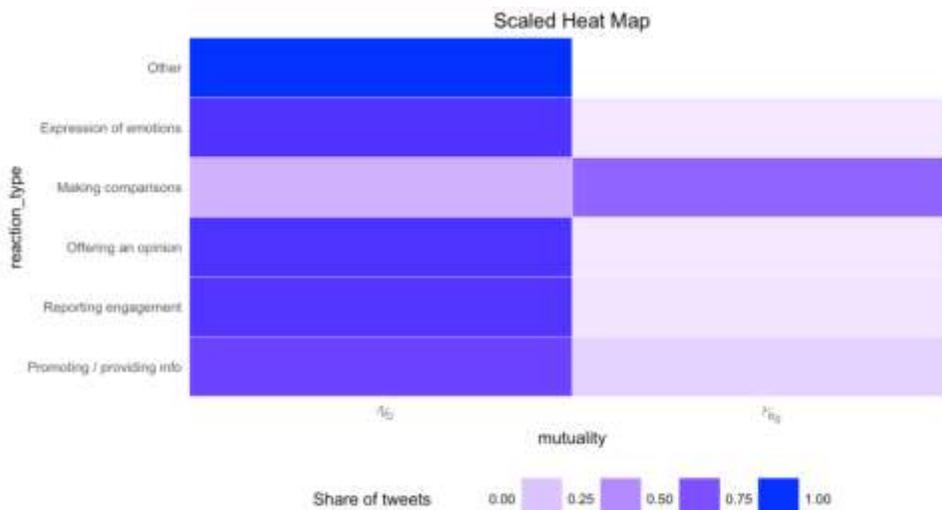


Figure 2: Heat map showing references to mutuality by each actor type

### Comparison between Shakespeare and Cervantes

In Spanish-speaking countries, Shakespeare was often celebrated as a part of the commemorations of World Book Day/St. George (16% of tweets), and therefore Shakespeare was often compared with Cervantes. Shakespeare was often celebrated alongside Miguel de

Cervantes (27%). Most tweets are celebratory of both writers; many wish them Happy Birthday and there is a general sense of celebration of world literature, culture and reading in a very positive tone. Other writers are also included, for instance in the following tweet that celebrates Shakespeare, Cervantes and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (who also died on 23 April 1616). This user celebrated World Book Day and St George's (hence, the dragon) mentioning the three writers and the rose, which is a typical gift in Catalonia (*Sant Jordi* is the patron saint of Catalonia and the day is specially celebrated there).



Image 3: Tweet celebrating Shakespeare, Cervantes, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, and St George

In some cases, there was a playful comparison between Cervantes and Shakespeare or some of their characters. A frequently tweeted article from BBC Mundo compared Quixote and Falstaff. The comparison sometimes turned into a competition; a user from Madrid replied to a tweet from *Time* magazine about Shakespeare by sharing an application in which users can vote on who they believe to be the better writer:



Image 4: Tweet sharing a link to a poll

But more often than not, competition was presented in a playful way, such as when this young user simulated a poll to share her admiration towards both authors:



Image 5: Tweet sharing a poll

Translation for Image 5 above: [Shakespeare or Cervantes? That is the question! ;) What do you say? 100% Both]

Within the celebratory tweets of this emblematic day for literature in the Spanish-speaking world, it often happened that tweets were focused on Cervantes and not Shakespeare, but that the user had included #Shakespeare400 alongside #Cervantes400.



Image 6: Tweet commemorating Shakespeare and Cervantes

Translation for Image 6 above: [Edition marvellously commented by Martín Riquer #MiQuijoteyYo (background is a tribute to #Shakespeare400)...]

The use of #Shakespeare400 is, in these instances, not directly related to the Shakespeare Lives programme. It would be interesting to know, however, if the comparison between the two writers happens every year, if this year's comparison is due to the fact that it was the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their deaths, or if it was a direct result of the British Council promoting the use of #Shakespeare400. For instance, the British Council in Spain tweeted on 23<sup>rd</sup> April: “Hoy no podemos sino conmemorar también el IV centenario de la muerte de Cervantes #ShakespeareLives #400Cervantes” [*Today we can't but also celebrate the 4th centenary of Cervantes' death*]. Events directly sponsored by the British Council reflected on the relationship between the two authors. British Council Spanish partner institutions such as Círculo Bellas Artes frequently used both hashtags together. For instance, one of the most important events on 23<sup>rd</sup> April in Spain is the 48-hour non-stop reading of Don Quixote by members of the public in the arts centre in Madrid, Círculo Bellas Artes. This year, the Complete Walk from the Shakespeare Lives programme was often advertised as part of the event for the weekend alongside #Quijotenonstop. Note that there is no mention of the British Council (see Image 7 below).



Image 7: Tweet promoting The Complete Walk

*Translation for Image 8 below: [More activities during #QuijoteNonStop. 5 short films FREE ENTRANCE. The Complete Walk...]*

The fact that both writers are so often linked by users is probably due to the efforts of the Shakespeare Lives programme in Spain and Latin America. This was enhanced by media coverage of both writers. Media content that was often shared through tweets included the already mentioned BBC Mundo article comparing Quixote and Falstaff, and an article from the Spanish newspaper *El País* which celebrated both authors; in fact, the most important Spanish newspapers, *El País* and *el Mundo*, have webpages dedicated to the comparison.

De cómo las dos más grandes plumas se  
fueron juntas hace 400 años

#Shakespeare400 y #Cervantes400 🤝



Image 8: Tweet sharing comparison of Shakespeare and Cervantes

*Translation for Image 8 above: [On how the two great writers departed together 400 years ago... Cervantes and Shakespeare in the 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of their deaths. El País commemorated the 400 anniversary of the deaths of Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare, the most important writers in World Literature]*

Though mutuality was usually invoked with a positive tone towards both Shakespeare and Cervantes, it sometimes happened that the contrast triggered explicit or implicit criticism towards one or the other writer. In fact, as Figure 3 below shows, most tweets which were coded as negative in tone were tweets comparing the writers, or comparing the efforts to commemorate them. This shows that the effort to bridge cultural differences might be sometimes challenged by audiences.

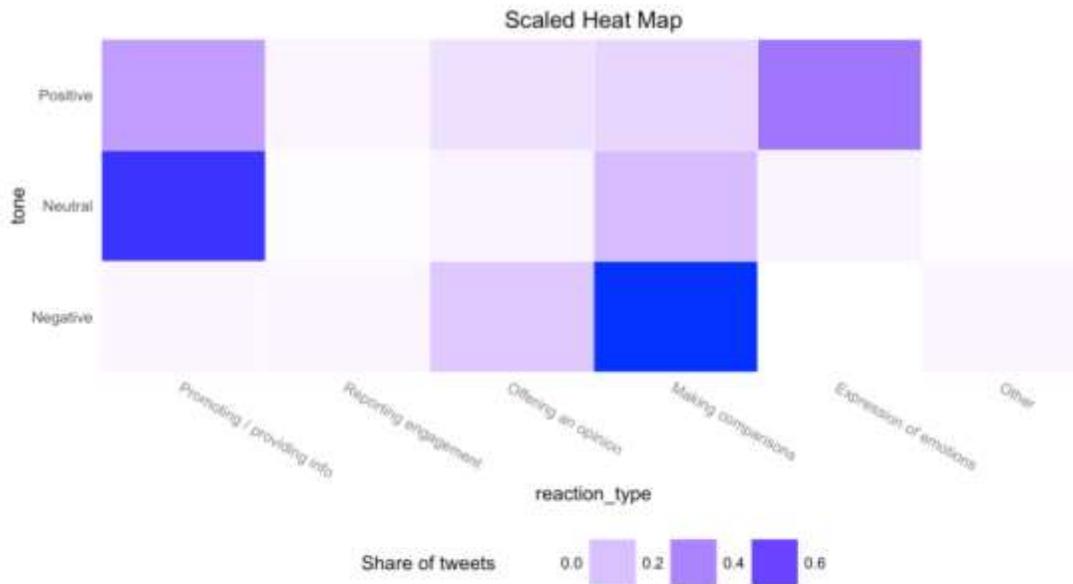


Figure 3: Heat map showing the tone of tweets by reaction type

**Shakespeare might also highlight cultural differences between British and Spanish-speaking cultures.** If universality is recognised by most Spanish-speaking users who celebrated Shakespeare and Cervantes, an instance in which Shakespeare’s Englishness is indirectly highlighted is when compared with Cervantes’ Spanishness, usually when the latter is being vindicated in reference to the former. Many users wondered why Twitter or Google did not design an emoji or a doodle for Cervantes as they did for Shakespeare: “#Shakespeare400 tiene su propia imagen y #Cervantes400 no... ¿Acaso todavía nos odian los ingleses?” [*Shakespeare has an image and not Cervantes... Might it be that the English still hate us?*]

It is usually through humour that the relative importance of both authors is contrasted, and a slight national cultural rivalry displayed.



*Image 9: Cartoon showing Cervantes and Shakespeare*

*Description of Image 9 above: Cervantes is annoyed at Shakespeare because of all the celebration, while he is trying to watch the cartoon TV adaptation of El Quijote.*

However, with the celebration of Shakespeare's work, a slight antagonism towards the UK is expressed by some Spanish-speaking users, separating "us" from "them" rather than reinforcing mutuality. Similarly, another level of conflict might potentially arise between Spain/Europe and Latin America, with the celebration of a specifically Latin American writer, the Peruvian Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. If a campaign was aimed at reinforcing these three writers as equal members of the world republic of letters, members of the public were quick to post about any difference in international recognition. Interestingly, many of the tweets defending Inca Garcilaso's legacy came from Spain, often mentioning that he is usually forgotten in favour of Cervantes and Shakespeare. This Spanish journalist and writer reminded us that Garcilaso de la Vega was the great forgotten writer of 23 April: "#Garcilaso de la Vega el gran olvidado del 23 de abril <https://t.co/J1VdYeEAHZ> #Cervantes400 #diadellibro #Shakespeare400".

Shakespeare can therefore be used to celebrate mutuality and universal values, and as a consequence have a positive effect on British soft power. However, his name and legacy can also be used to reinforce certain stereotypes, highlighting undercurrent conflicts in Anglo-Spanish (including Latin American) relations, as those set in motion by, for example, what has been termed the Spanish Black Legend, the idea that the Protestant North, and particularly UK and US, have constructed an image of Spain and Latin America based on negative stereotypes fed by historical rivalry. On occasion, Spanish-speaking users fed into this narrative and criticised the Spanish Government for not having being efficient in organising events on Cervantes as the UK organised

celebrations for Shakespeare. In these instances, Shakespeare Lives was highly praised in comparison to the Spanish efforts. A user in Mexico shared an article that highlighted this issue:



Image 10: Tweet sharing link to an article about commemorations of Cervantes

*Translation for Image 10 above: [We are really struggling with the anniversary... Homage in search of private funding. On February 9<sup>th</sup> the [Spanish] government presented a programme to commemorate Cervantes's death after criticism of the fact that the act had been delayed and improvised.]*

Criticism towards Spain and its campaign was common. However, other Spanish-speaking users posted that any criticism towards Spain, Cervantes and Don Quixote as embodying some of the deficiencies of the Spanish character was unfounded. A university lecturer in Spain, who obtained his PhD in the UK and stayed to work as a lecturer, shared an article he wrote in which he criticised the attitude of Spaniards who use Shakespeare to reflect on what they see as the shortcomings of Spain and Spanish culture in comparison with modern Britain and sophisticated Shakespeare.

Turno de tarde: mi artículo de hoy sobre #400Cervantes 🇪🇸 y las comparaciones con #Shakespeare400 [elespanol.com/opinion/201604](http://elespanol.com/opinion/201604) ... via @elespanolcom



El fantasma de Shakespeare recorre España - EL ESPAÑOL  
Coincidiendo con la conmemoración de los cuadricentenarios de Cervantes y Shakespeare, el autor cuestiona el viejo cliché de que los españoles son más tontos...

Image 11: Tweet about comparison between Cervantes and Shakespeare

*Translation for Image 11 above. [Afternoon shift: my article from today on Cervantes and the comparisons with Shakespeare... The ghost of Shakespeare goes across Spain – El Español (a Spanish journal). Coinciding with the commemoration of the fourth centenary of Cervantes and Shakespeare, the author questions the old cliché that Spaniards are more ignorant than the British...]*

Some users noted the global attention given to Shakespeare in contrast with the lack of international recognition of Cervantes. This could trigger a slight negative attitude around, if not towards, the Shakespeare Lives programme. One Chilean user commented in this respect, “Oye, a nadie le importa Cervantes. Abúrranse. #ShakespeareLives” [*Hey, no one cares about Cervantes. Get bored. #ShakespeareLives*]. Some users used the writers to reflect on the contemporary reality of many Spanish-speaking young people who come to the UK in search for jobs. A Spanish young man noted that most likely today Cervantes would have probably met Shakespeare while serving him a coffee in London: “Hoy día #Cervantes400 se habría encontrado con #Shakespeare400 al servirle un café en Londres”.

Although it is by no means the norm, Shakespeare was used to highlight other cultural and political tensions within Spain. A young supporter of Catalan independence, who usually tweets in the Catalan language, chose to tweet in Spanish to express how he preferred Shakespeare over Cervantes, as the latter represents Spanish-Castilian literature. This user’s biography quotes Hamlet in English “we know what we are, but we know not what we may be. (Hamlet: Act 4, Scene 5)”, perhaps also in reference to his political position regarding Catalonia. He wrote, “#Cervantes400 🇪🇸 el Quijote es un peñazo aburrido de narices. No hay quien se lo lea. Prefiero a #Shakespeare400 mil veces más” [*Quixote is a real bore. No one can read it. I prefer Shakespeare a thousand times*].

While mutuality is highlighted in the majority of cases, the fact that the Shakespeare Lives programme might stir some negative comparisons is still something to be mindful of. The British Council must balance the benefits of Shakespeare being appreciated and Britain being perceived as a modern, organised, welcoming and creative country without explicitly suggesting any contrast with Spain and Latin American countries that could be negatively interpreted. However, the British Council cannot prevent users appropriating Shakespeare and Shakespeare Lives to make points about the strengths, weaknesses, connections or divisions within their own countries and cultures. Overall, an optimal strategy to reinforce cultural ties in as equal terms as possible is by reinforcing the value of mutuality, as the British Council is already doing, but remaining aware of differences that users may evoke. Reinforcing relational strategies can build on cultural diversity as an asset rather than a difficulty (Zaharna 2009). Zaharna (2009: 129) refers to the “cross-cultural equation” that “dictates being equally cognizant of one’s own culture as well as the other culture”. The British Council is well aware of what image of British culture it seeks to promote, but perhaps not always attuned to how British culture is perceived in specific cultural contexts. It would be ideal if the British Council deployed its awareness of Spanish literature to *anticipate and take the lead* in making comparisons, for example between Falstaff and Quixote, rather than leave it to users to make such connections

Shakespeare is relevant today for Spanish-speaking users who often use his legacy to reflect on contemporary issues that concern them. Social media users are active in reusing and appropriating different content, creatively and critically engaging with it. Since this cannot be controlled, the British Council must attempt to anticipate and harness the different meanings that Shakespeare takes beyond their initial expectation, even if mild controversy arises from it.

### **The Popularity of Quotes, Polls, and Emojis**

Users engaged with the programme mostly by providing information about Shakespeare, either by using quotes (15% of tweets), by sharing content generated by the programme in the form of articles or photo galleries, or by commenting on technological innovation such as the emojis or the live streaming of events through Periscope. Members of the public were more likely to give an opinion, compare and express emotions about Shakespeare separately from the events, and only indirectly or unknowingly about the programme. Providing information about Shakespeare separately from the programme, or seemingly so, is the most frequent reaction from users in our sample (see Figure 4 below).

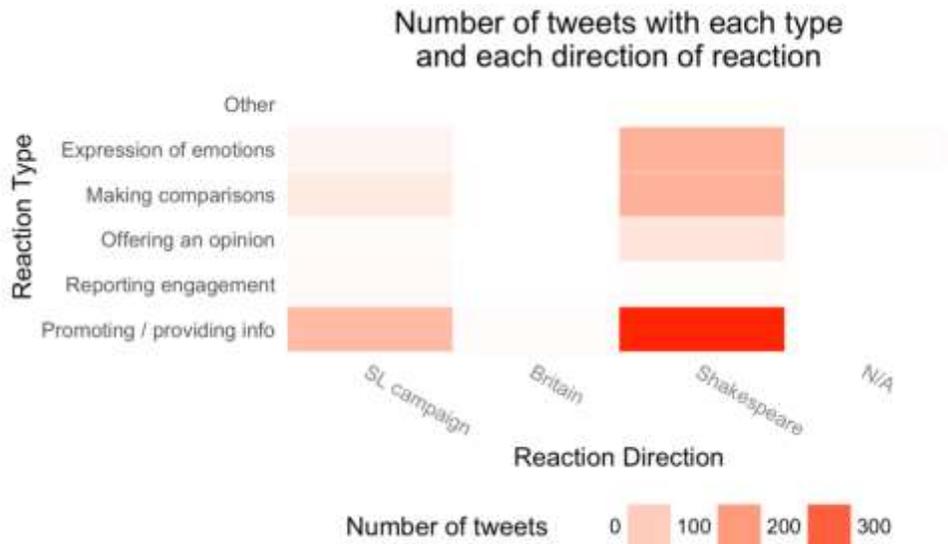


Figure 4: Heatmap showing the type of reaction by the direction of reaction

Particularly relevant were the mentions to his work, his poetry, plays, theatre, film and TV adaptations. This Mexican writer for example, shared a poll he had conducted asking other users about their favourite tragedy:



Image 12: Tweet sharing a poll

Translation for Image 12 above: [Which of these four William Shakespeare’s tragedies is your favourite?]

Sharing quotes from Shakespeare’s works, mostly in Spanish, was one of the most common ways in which users engaged with the programme, representing 15% of all tweets. Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet were the most popular plays in the tweets.

TITLE	Number of tweets
Romeo and Juliet	37
Hamlet	36
Julius Caesar	9
Macbeth	7
King Lear	6
The Tempest	6
A Midsummer Night's Dream	5
Othello	5
Sonnet 116	4
Twelfth Night	4
Henry V	3
The Merchant of Venice	3
As you Like it	2
Richard III	2
All's Well that Ends Well	1
Antony and Cleopatra	1
Henry IV	1
Henry VI	1
Henry VIII	1
King John	1
Much ado about Nothing	1
Richard II	1
Sonnet 29	1
Sonnet 57	1
Sonnet 130	1
Timon of Athens	1
Titus Andronicus	1
Two Gentlemen of Verona	1
TOTAL	143

*Table 2: Number of tweets including quotes from works by Shakespeare*

## Technological Innovation Drives Engagement

The Shakespeare emoji, which appeared when a user included #Shakespeare400 in their tweet, was the theme of 3% of the tweets in our sample (not just using the emoji, but discussing it). About a third of these tweets came from media sources, both mainstream and alternative, and mostly shared the article that launched the emoji for #Shakespeare400 from TwitterEspañol – a translation of the English version from TwitterUK “*Is this an emoji I see before me?*” (an adaptation of *Macbeth’s famous line*): “¿Será un Twitter emoji lo que veo delante de mí? Un homenaje a #Shakespeare400”. One user shared the “Tuitear o no tuitear” article from CNet in Spanish, also a translation of its English homologue “To tweet or not to tweet”.

The emoji was also appreciated by members of the public. About half of public tweets mentioning it were positive towards the emoji and the programme. A young female Ecuadorian tweeted about the emoji on Shakespeare in order to celebrate World Book Day: “Me encanta el emoji de #Shakespeare400 A celebrar el #DiaDelLibro con buenas lecturas!!” [*I love the #Shakespeare400 emoji. Let’s celebrate World Book Day with good reads*].

About a third of the tweets were critical of the fact that Cervantes did not have an emoji. The Colombian journalist Diana Montoya (110, 945 followers) expressed what other members of the public felt:



Image 13: Tweet by journalist about an emoji for Cervantes

Figure 16. [*If there is an emoji for #Shakespeare400, I think that we should have one for #Cervantes400 #DigoYo @twitter @TwitterLatAm @TwitterEspañol @TwitterSpain. The Reply noted: “I agree”*]

It is interesting to note that an emoji for #Cervantes400 was launched by TwitterSpain on June 25 and it appears retrospectively. For that reason, the images of the tweets in this report contain an emoji for Cervantes, instead of an emoji for Shakespeare, which disappeared after the weekend of the 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Due to its popularity, the British Council might consider reintroducing it.

Users also noted that #Shakespeare400 was a trending topic and that Google had used a [doodle](#) for Shakespeare on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Some of these tweets had a negative tone, once again, because of the perceived injustice against Cervantes. Not all users considered Britain the culprit, but blamed the Spanish-speaking public. A Spanish student living in London tweeted: “Vamos a ver el español es el segundo idioma más hablado del mundo y el 1º TT es #Shakespeare400 WTF. #Cervantes400 A tope!” [*Let’s see, Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world and the number 1 TT is #Shakespeare400 WTF. #Cervantes400 Let’s go!!*]

The general public often shared and expressed joy about other technological innovations, such as the use of Periscope to livestream Shakespeare Lives events worldwide. Users also shared interactive maps to locate opinions about Shakespeare and Cervantes, polls or, as shown in Image 14 below, a link to a blog in which you can record and listen to people reading fragments of Shakespeare and Cervantes.



Image 14: Tweet sharing a link to a blog about Shakespeare and Cervantes

*Translation for Image 14. [Tweet encouraging people to send audios of their readings of Shakespeare]*

Aside from commenting on or sharing technological innovations, users often engaged creatively with Shakespeare and Shakespeare Lives. They quoted and often adapted quotes, showing an interest in playing with words and in using humour. They shared images, videos, GIFs and links to all kind of creative material. Both the format and the content lend themselves to this display of creativity. Tweets tend to be playful and creative, partly because of the 140 character limit, to ensure popularity. In tweeting about language, literature and an author that revolutionised both, users have tended to react creatively in turn. The prominence of the value of creativity highlights

how the interconnected public are “producers” of social media content that not only user but produce or reproduce digital content imaginatively and resourcefully (Bruns, 2008).

## Celebrities and Shakespeare Lives in Spanish

**While celebrities prove to be popular with users, they did not play a crucial role in the Spanish language sample.** The Shakespeare Lives programme often made use of celebrities to engage the public, but these figures did not show up very frequently in the Spanish language sample. Benedict Cumberbatch is the most frequently mentioned celebrity, but only appears in 0.5% of tweets. Still, followers of some celebrities involved in the programme came into contact with Shakespeare Lives through their admiration for the celebrities themselves. A user from Spain who is a fan of Tom Hiddleston, so much so that the actor figures on her profile photograph and she has a Facebook account dedicated to the actor’s career, engaged with the programme through his appearance in *The Hollow Crown*: PURO SENTIMIENTO /// PURE FEELING #TheHollowCrown #Shakespeare400 Hiddleston”. Another Mexican user describes herself as a “👉: Professional fangirl. 🎯 : Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman, SHERLOCK, et al” tweeted about the programme as a result of Cumberbatch’s appearance in the RSC: “#AvisoParroquial Hoy a las 2:30 PM CDMX Ben estará en el evento de #ShakespeareLives. Streaming aquí :)” [*... Today at 2:30 Ben will appear in #ShakespeareLives. Streaming here :)*]. Not all celebrities managed to engage the public. President Obama was one of the few public figures whose visit to the Globe Theatre made it into the Spanish Twittersphere, but the majority of tweets about his visit came from media or government accounts.

Another way to engage the public is through celebrities who have large followings on Twitter. Sir Patrick Stewart (2,217,803 followers) wished Happy Birthday to Shakespeare in Spanish, while sipping a margarita. It was the most popular tweet of the sample (711 retweets and 3,646 likes), and had many replies from members of the public. Most of them were in English, but there were also some from Spanish-speaking users. Within this group, most replies were positive and expressed admiration for Shakespeare, for the actor and for his use of “Spanglish” in the tweet, despite the fact that he misspelled “cumpleaños”, which a few users corrected. Getting celebrities to tweet in other languages might prove to engage the audience more widely.



Image 15: Sir Patrick Stewart tweets in Spanish about Shakespeare's birthday

Translation for Image 15 above: [Happy Birthday to William Shakespeare. A toast with a margarita]

Aside from Sir Patrick Stewart, the only other public figures whose tweets appear in the data set are the Colombian journalist Diana Montoya (110,945 followers) and the Colombian comedian Andres Lopez Forero (3,566,014 followers). Both of these celebrities tweeted about Shakespeare having an emoji while Cervantes did not.



Image 16: Andres Lopez Forero tweet about Cervantes emoji

Translation for Image 16 above: [...Testing to see if there is a #Twitteremoji for #Cervantes400 ... nope...]

Considering the potential influence of popular Spanish and Latin American celebrities, the British Council should consider recruiting some Spanish-speaking celebrities to promote cultural programmes, because of the number of followers they have and their role as influencers. This is especially the case if the British Council has an objective of trying to reach people who are not already interested in British culture to engage with Shakespeare. This strategy would work alongside the already planned events aimed at a more cultured audience already familiar with Shakespeare and British culture.

The British Council should also ensure those Spanish-speaking celebrities have a social media presence. Twitter celebrities can ensure reach as well as also functioning as cultural bridges. Colombian Rosa Moreno, a 62-year-old woman who has become famous in the Latin American Twittersphere, posted on 23<sup>rd</sup> April a quote from Henry IV that, compared with other tweets in the sample, was relatively popular (19 retweets and 59 likes):



Image 17: Rosa Moreno tweet sharing a Shakespeare quote

*Translation for Image 17: [See, "A kingdom for a stage, princes to act and monarchs to behold the swelling scene ... within this wooden O ...]*

## The Role of Spanish Media

**Users almost exclusively shared content in Spanish, or which originated in Spanish-speaking media.** The most shared articles by members of the public came from mainstream media sources in Spanish. An article from BBC WS in Spanish (BBC Mundo) on Don Quixote and Falstaff (20 tweets), an article on Shakespeare celebrations on a global scale by the Latin American teleSUR TV (40 tweets) and a website created by the Spanish newspaper *El País* speculating on possible

encounters between Shakespeare and Cervantes were often shared by users. This suggests that users engage with content in their own language, but also with what is, or perceived to be, local media.



Image 18: Tweet comparing Shakespeare and Cervantes characters

*Translation for Image 18 above: [Quixote vs Falstaff, what is similar and different between these two famous knights? ...]*

The article from teleSUR TV emphasised Shakespeare as a universal figure. Similar photo galleries and articles appeared in other Latin America mainstream media. Celebrations in Poland, Denmark, UK and Peru were shown in what these articles claimed were a global celebration of Shakespeare as the writer of “all human passions”: “teleSURtv: #Galería | William #Shakespeare400: autor de todas las pasiones humanas | <https://t.co/aUZAW1PfZ> <https://t.co/abMyZ2MZsC>’.

## Sharing Emotions and Opinions

**There is little direct expression on Twitter of emotions or opinions related specifically towards Shakespeare Lives events. When there is it is usually very positive.** Events from the Shakespeare Lives programme are mostly promoted by the organisations directly involved, the local British Council institutes or partner organisations (both more likely to be using #ShakespeareLives than members of the public). Members of the public are more likely to share content from the programme and therefore contribute to the promotion events, rather than express an emotion or opinion about it. When users do comment on Shakespeare Lives events, it is usually in positive terms, often noting the quality of the event and expressing their joy at being able to be a part of it.

The most popular event from the global Shakespeare Lives programme was the celebration at the RSC, #RSCLive, that was broadcast through Periscope (2% of tweets). This event was often appreciated by users, not simply promoted. Expressions of joy such as “Qué cosa más bonita está

haciendo la BBC2 con el #RSCLive... #Shakespeare400” [*What a beautiful thing the BBC is doing with #RSCLive... #Shakespeare400*”] were frequent among those who mentioned it. Being able to watch an event in the UK live from abroad was highly valued by the users commenting on it. This reinforces the previous finding that Twitter users enjoy and engage with technological innovations.

TV shows and films about Shakespeare were also often mentioned by users, often highlighting the roles played by different British actors. The show that was most positively valued was “The Hollow Crown”. A comic artist from Mexico tweeted: “Mención especial para The Hollow Crown. La segunda serie debería ser aún más espectacular con Cumberbatch como Richard III. #Shakespeare400” [*Special mention to The Hollow Crown. The second series should be more spectacular with Cumberbatch as Richard III...*]. This user’s tweet on The Hollow Crown followed another one in which he expressed his admiration for Shakespeare film adaptations, “Completan mis adaptaciones favoritas del Bardo: el Richard III de Loncraine, el Henry V de Branagh y el Titus de Taymor. #Shakespeare400” [*these films complete my favourite adaptation of the Bard: Loncraine’s Richard III, Branagh’s Henry V and Taymor’s Titus*]. Tweets on film adaptations of Shakespeare’s work were common in the sample.

It is worth noting that the Shakespeare Lives series of short films based on Shakespeare plays, hosted on YouTube, were absent from the sample of tweets in Spanish. It is interesting because Julio Cesar was in fact directed by a Spanish young filmmaker Pedro Martín Calero. This could have been promoted in Spanish-speaking countries more emphatically, but wasn’t. It was not mentioned on any of the British Council Facebook pages.

Some members of the public reacted negatively towards the programme, but not necessarily towards Shakespeare. A Colombian living in Paris, with an interest in progressive causes and left-wing politics, while quoting from Don Quixote, argued that the effort and money spent on commemorations would be better spent on libraries.



Image 19: Tweet about commemorations of Shakespeare and Cervantes

Translation for Image 19 above: [*“to die sane and live insane” Fewer tributes and more libraries*]

## Global-Local Dynamics

**There are interesting global-local dynamics regarding events. Aside from directly sponsored performances, the fact that Shakespeare was often framed within the wider commemoration of El día del Libro and San Jorge shows how the Shakespeare Lives programme was successful in adapting itself to the local context.** Local events on Shakespeare seem to feature prominently, for example a performance of “Trabajos de Amor Perdidos” [*Love’s Labour’s Lost*] in Navarra on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016 which although not specified was part of the Shakespeare Lives programme. It is in this local context that we can find more examples of the public’s engagement with the programme. For example, tweets from Spanish and Latin American schools show how on this particular 23<sup>rd</sup> of April they focused on Shakespeare, alongside the more usual celebration of Cervantes, probably as a consequence of the Shakespeare Lives programme resources for schools. This school in Madrid celebrated World Book Day by commemorating both Cervantes and Shakespeare. They wrote titles and quotes from works by both writers on each step:

Los alumnos del @ColegioJABY rinden homenaje a #Cervantes400 y #Shakespeare400 hasta subiendo las escaleras



Image 20: Tweet showing celebrations of Cervantes and Shakespeare in a Spanish school

*Translation for Image 20 above: [Students from the @colegioJAYB commemorate #Cervantes400 and #Shakespeare400 even when going up stairs]*

Other local events from unlikely actors also celebrated the Cervantes-Shakespeare relationship. The hotel and restaurant La Posada Real Santa Maria, set in the middle of Don Quixote’s region of La Mancha, advertises itself through its relationship with Cervantes by playfully adapting the most famous sentence in the novel, its opening words: “En un lugar de La Mancha con todo el encanto de Cuenca, descubre el más cálido emoturismo...y la mejor paella del mundo” [*In a village of La Mancha*”, with all the charm of Cuenca, discover the warmest emotourism... and the

*best paella in the world*]. This year they decided to also commemorate Shakespeare as part of World Day Book celebrations, with food:



Image 21: Tweet sharing collage of images from a restaurant, celebrating Cervantes and Shakespeare

*Translation for Image 21 above: [Thank you @jlopezbrox for sharing the Gastronomic tribute to #Cervantes400 and #Shakespeare400 and for your collage]*

While these events had a limited impact on social media, they demonstrate the trickling down of the programme to members of the general public who perhaps were not initially interested in Shakespeare. While most users who engaged with Shakespeare or Shakespeare Lives already seemed disposed towards Shakespeare, these local events offer promotional mechanisms that can generate wider reach.

### Who Was Engaged by Shakespeare Lives?

**Most members of the public that engaged with the programme already had an interest in Shakespeare, literature, and/or Britain.** Users interested in Shakespeare tweeted often about the events to celebrate his anniversary, and expressed very positive emotions towards the programme. A Mexican PhD student in Madrid who writes her thesis on Shakespeare adaptations tweeted on the 24<sup>th</sup> April that “Tengo resaca shakespeariana. Esto no lo cura una michelada de litro 🤔 #Shakespeare400” *[I have a Shakespearean hangover. It won't even be cured by a litre of [the Mexican drink] michelada]*. During the 23<sup>rd</sup> she had tweeted several times expressing her engagement with and enjoyment of the programme. She also tweeted in English that “The nicest part of #Shakespeare400 is find out that there is so many people passionate about Shakespeare as

me” and creatively merged Shakespeare with Spanish culture. tweeting with humour that “No quiero una paella mar y tierra, quiero una sonido y furia #ShakespeareLives” [*I don’t want a (specific type of) paella (called) land and earth, but one of sound and fury (in reference to Macbeth)...*].

People with an interest in theatre also tweeted frequently about Shakespeare and the programme. A theatre critic and producer from Chile tweeted and shared interesting content about Shakespeare during the weekend. This particular article emphasises Shakespeare’s legacy for contemporary popular culture, from TV shows to rap music.

En qué se parecen Shakespeare y Eminem  
#Shakespeare400 #ShakespeareLives  
[lanacion.com.ar/1891189](http://lanacion.com.ar/1891189)



Image 22: Tweet sharing a link to a piece about Shakespeare's influence on contemporary popular culture

*Translation for Image 22 above: [How are Shakespeare and Eminem similar?]*

Some users came to engage in the programme through their love for British culture as a whole. This young woman from Spain described herself on Twitter (in English) as follows: “The Beatles and Oasis are my life. I’m a bit obsessed with Doctor Who but it’s bigger on the inside. I am Sherlocked. Oh wait, did I mention The Beatles?” She tweeted (see Image 23 below) that she had been following [Shakespeare Day Live](#) and this particular tweet was prompted by the surprise of seeing Cumberbatch.

Yo: \*sale Benedict al final de  
#ShakespeareLives \* \*pega un gritito\*  
Mi madre: que no grites!!!!!!!

Yo:



Image 23: Tweet about seeing Benedict Cumberbatch appear during Shakespeare Day Live

*Translation for Image 23 above: [Me: \*Cumberbatch appears at the end of #ShakespeareLives\*  
\*she screams\* My mother: don't scream! Me: Gif]*

But did Shakespeare Lives engage users who were not familiar with Shakespeare, or interested in theatre? There are multiple examples in the data that show that some users came to be interested in Shakespeare through British popular culture and, in particular, the popularity of TV shows and actors (although celebrities were not the most relevant theme in this data set).

As we saw in the events section, some users with no previous interest in Shakespeare engaged with the programme through their participation in events organised by, for example, schools, university or even restaurants (see Image 21). A young user from Mexico engaged with the programme on social media by sharing a video of her participation in an act at university in which she read a fragment of Shakespeare: “Y así leo yo a #Shakespeare400 en la #LiturgiaLiteraria de #AbrilUAEM bien penosa yo <https://t.co/XrDScQkvle>” [*And that's how I read Shakespeare in #LiturgiaLiteraria at #AbrilUAEM so pitiful...*]. Giving users the chance to broadcast their contributions, or finding and publicising them, would be another way to engage them and their followers with the programme.

It could be argued that even in cases where the user might not have had any previous interest in Shakespeare, the programme seems to have been successful enough to get a few people commenting on Twitter on how they were not interested at all in either Shakespeare or Cervantes. This young man from Colombia whose Twitter account is devoted to Colombian sport tweeted ironically “Soy de los pocos, muy pocos que no ha leído el Quijote y #Shakespeare400 ¿eso es malo?” [*I am one of the few, very few, who has not read the Quixote and #Shakespeare400, is that a bad thing?*]. Seemingly not interested, he nonetheless dedicated 140 characters to Shakespeare and Cervantes on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

## 3.2 Facebook

The following analysis looks at the Facebook accounts of the British Council centres in Mexico, Spain, Venezuela and Uruguay, and how the content of and engagement with these pages varies. For each of them, it focuses on posts from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016 from the Shakespeare Lives programme, comparing user engagement with other British Council posts from the same period. Aside from posts related to the Shakespeare Lives programme, most British Council Facebook posts give information about British Council English courses, studying in the UK and events (co)organised by the British Council. There are also posts on the English language, for example common mistakes, idioms, and more general posts on British culture, including British curiosities, art, cities, and education.

The events that the British Council advertises seem to be liked by some users, but the British Council Facebook pages are not the place in which conversations about the Shakespeare Lives programme, Shakespeare, or Britain take place. This may be because the British Council is regarded by users primarily as an organisation of language teaching; the comments that users post on Facebook seem to reinforce this view. Most of the interest of users is focused on language courses and issues around language.

Posts about Shakespeare Lives events and campaigns in different countries generate fewer comments than other British Council posts, unless the post is asking users to answer a direct question, usually as part of a contest to win tickets for a Shakespeare Lives event. Even then, most answers are straightforward and do not develop into a conversation. Very few comments give an opinion of a Shakespeare Lives event, add information or express any kind of emotion. Shakespeare Lives videos are liked and shared but often less so than other British Council videos.

### **Mexico:**

The Mexican page has the most followers of British Council Facebook accounts in Spanish-speaking countries (121,934 total page likes) and people engage much more, in general, with their posts than is the case for the other British Council Facebook pages considered here. They express admiration, gratefulness, and indicate personal relevance, as well as sharing and liking posts. The Mexican British Council Facebook page is quite active, and posts are varied and interesting content; rather than only offering information about their courses, the page shares a variety of posters from several campaigns, and focuses on British Arts and Culture.

The most popular posts are usually from the “Education is Great” campaign. They target young Mexican students who want to go to the UK to study. These followers are active and engage frequently with the campaign. Not only do these posts get the most likes and shares, but they receive a high number of comments relative to other posts. They are also the posts that generate the most interactive conversations. Often present, past and future Mexican students in the UK engage in debates about their hopes, experiences and views. Other times, the conversation is about

English language and culture more generally. A post from 5 May on how to pronounce “Leicester” (53 comments, more than 1k likes and 186 shares). It triggered a conversation on the British accent, perceptions of Britain and the role of the British Council.

Across 22-24 April, the Mexican British Council Facebook administrators offered 25 posts about the Shakespeare Lives programme. Most people responding to these posts seem to be students, whether in the British Council or with an interest in the English language or in Britain. The most popular post of the Shakespeare Lives programme during 22-24 April (321 likes, 47 shares and comments) was about Shakespeare and the Beatles (24/4).



Image 24: British Council Mexico Facebook post

*Translation for Image 24 above: [Did you know that the Beatles used quotes from King Lear in the song “I am the Walrus”]*

One user answered that “at the end of the song you can hear a fragment of King Lear (turn up the volume)”. The Mexican British Council usually responds emphatically, and users appear to feel encouraged to participate if there is a British Council response to their comments. The demographic might also explain why the most popular post overall during that same period was one from the “Education is Great” campaign, about Scotch eggs (581 likes, 37 shares and 28 comments). Indeed, users seem more engaged with the “Education is Great” campaign, which is probably more clearly relevant to their personal experiences and hopes than the Shakespeare Lives programme.



Image 25: British Council Mexico Facebook post

*Translation for Image 25 above: [Scotch eggs. If you were in the UK, you would be having this for breakfast]*

In general, the posts that create more engagement are those in which, regardless of the topic, direct questions are asked, for users to respond. Followers also like and share more often quirky posts that give curious and perhaps not well-known information about the English language or British icons (#UKFacts) – hence the popularity of the post on the Scotch egg (Image 25).

On occasion however, if not phrased appropriately, questions might trigger some negative comments, highlighting cultural differences instead of offering a welcoming message. For example, when posting an image from “Education is Great” that showed the number of Mexican students in UK universities and asked “Si ellos ya están allí, ¿por qué tú no?” [*If they are already there, why aren't you?*], it got 80 comments, many of which answered that the main reason was the lack of money, the lack of opportunity to get grants or that it was difficult to get a visa.

Around Shakespeare Lives events on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, users expressed engagement more frequently than in other Facebook accounts such the Spanish one (see the following section). However, as on the Spanish Facebook page, most comments were posted in response to direct calls to participate in exchange for tickets to events, for example, comments such as “Quiero ir a ese concierto #ShakespeareLives for ever!!!” or “#ShakespeareLives in mi [heart]” were posted in response to a call to use #ShakespeareLives in order to get tickets for a concert on 5 May (this had 40 likes).

## Spain

Like Mexico, Spain also has a popular Facebook account compared with other Spanish-speaking British Council centres (26,991 total likes). It posts about the Shakespeare Lives programme, but

these posts are not more popular than other types of British Council post. There were only five posts during the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of April (none on Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup>) about the Shakespeare Lives programme, urging users to celebrate *El día del Libro* with Shakespeare. The most popular posts were those that ask users to finish an idiom (for example, \_\_\_\_\_ fire with fire) in order to win a competition to get tickets for the online film festival on Shakespeare. However, while the British Council offered 40 tickets, the post only received 26 comments, 4 shares and 31 likes. There were only two comments that added information other than completing the idiom with “fight”: one saying that Shakespeare wrote many expressions that we use today, and one explaining the idiom’s meaning. However, when changing their cover photo on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April to one of the posters that also asked people to complete the idiom “\_\_\_\_\_ is blind” (but with no specific call to do so or any incentive), this photo received only five comments, two of which were ironic or humorous (“Steve Wonder?” and “Yeah, yeah I’ve got it. Many old people, no?”). Interestingly, both were written by English-speaking people. This seems to suggest that engagement happens more frequently when users are offered incentives. Another post on 14 April asked users to share a promotion and answer a question about what character Mel Gibson played in 1990. This received 31 shares, 25 likes and 29 comments. One user wrote he had seen it with the pass he got from the British Council as a result of participating in the contest. The rest simply answered, “Hamlet”. The British Council may consider engaging more frequently with some of these more active users by regularly replying to their comments.

## Venezuela

Most posts by the Venezuelan British Council inform their students and prospective students of new courses, schedules, exams and language-related information. The most comments they get, and the debates that engage most people, are about the users’ (often bad) experiences in trying to register for courses online, and even those mostly only receive two or three comments or likes. The British Council answers many but not all questions asked by users.

During the 22-24 April period, the Venezuela British Council Facebook page posted 15 times about Shakespeare out of 19 posts in total. They included some facts, quotes, and events scheduled for the Shakespeare Lives programme. These were liked by a few users (at most seven), but not commented upon and hardly shared at all. This is in line with or even better than the overall average of engagement for Venezuela British Council Facebook, however. The most popular posts are the series that follow one specific local event.

The first Shakespeare Lives post is from 1 March (reposted the next day) announcing “Sorry, Señor Shakespeare”, a series of workshops on 2-3 March and a ‘boot camp’ on 4 March with London theatre director Arne Pohlmeier. These posts were liked by 11-12 people each and shared by six people in total, mostly by people related to theatre or education and commented by two people, one of them recommending the event. On 18 March Venezuela British Council Facebook posted 59 pictures of the event, which were shared twice and liked six times. The event seems to have attracted a large group of participants related to the theatre. These more focused and local events

generated more engagement than the generic content from the global Shakespeare Lives programme. Another well-liked post on 23 April concerned the YouTube video of this event. It was commented on once by a user who thanked them for the workshop, one of the few expressions of emotion on the Venezuelan Facebook page. After the Shakespeare Day celebrations, the Venezuelan British Council Facebook has not consistently promoted the programme.

## Uruguay

In comparison with the Venezuelan page (which has more followers), the Uruguayan British Council Facebook page posts much more frequently on Shakespeare. The page promotes events organised by themselves or partner institutions, as well as quotes and videos; these produce relatively little engagement. As with the Mexican and the Spanish pages, posts that ask users to participate in order to win tickets to an event are the most popular. Recently, the most popular event was a screening of “High Rise”, which received 141 likes; liking the page was how followers could participate in the promotion.

During the period 22-24 April, 14 out of 16 posts were about the Shakespeare Lives programme. Again, user engagement did not depart from the norm. The most popular posts are a series of videos of a cartoon Shakespeare who finds himself in a contemporary situation, such as having to find a date through Tinder: “How would Shakespeare date toady?” One of the series had 210 views, but a short film on LGBT rights received 781 views a few days earlier. Videos and interactive posts engage more followers than other content.

## 4 Conclusions

The British Council is effective in engaging at the local-national level, but must remain sensitive to and anticipate cultural divides and differing local perceptions. While mutuality is highlighted in the majority of cases of engagement, the Shakespeare Lives programme might unintentionally and trigger some comparisons that generate a degree of antagonism. While controversy might engage the audience, it might also undermine the soft power advantage of being seen as promoting universal values through the works of Shakespeare.

The Shakespeare Lives programme has had an impact in the Spanish-speaking world mainly through the recognition and value of Shakespeare as a writer globally relevant today, among audiences with cultural capital that had already an interest in World Literature, Shakespeare and/or Britain. The British Council could devise strategies to engage social media users beyond these groups.

The role of the British Council in Spanish-speaking countries appears still primarily related to the English language, a strong attraction that brings the general public into contact with British culture. It is important to remind potential users that the British Council offers more than just language courses, and reinforce the cultural role of the British Council abroad; the Twitter account of the British Council Arts in Colombia is already a step in that direction. Content relating to cultural programmes such as Shakespeare Lives could also reach a wider audience and receive greater levels of social media engagement if they were promoted in conjunction with content about the English language and opportunities to learn English.

## Phases Two and Three: Shakespeare Lives in Spanish

This section of the Shakespeare Lives in Spanish report sets out our analysis and findings from the second and third phases of our research. The second phase of our research studied the use of #ShakespeareLives in Spanish tweets in the period following Shakespeare Day (1 May – 17 September). In the final phase of our research we focused on two case studies of events in Spanish-speaking countries which generated activity on Twitter: a production of [\*Othello at the Teatro Real in Madrid which was livestreamed around the world\*](#), for which we also studied promotion and engagement on Facebook, and the [\*Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven Festival at the National Autonomous University of Mexico \(UNAM\)\*](#). Having found during the first phase of our research that the British Council Mexico page is the most active account in a Spanish-speaking country, both in terms of the number of posts and the level of engagement with them, our further analysis focuses on this account, seeking to give an example of successful strategies which could be implemented elsewhere. We focused on posts about Shakespeare Lives during September 2016, to monitor both the Hay Festival in Querétaro (from 1-4 September) and the launching of the Festival Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven in the UNAM, which proved to be particularly popular with followers of the British Council Mexico Facebook page.

This analysis finds that during the period 1 May to 17 September, most of the tweets using the #ShakespeareLives hashtag were concerned with promoting events from the Shakespeare Lives programme (86%), either directly by the British Council or by cultural organisations. Users seem to report engagement and express positive opinions and emotions about the programme mostly through domestic partner organisations. The most popular event according to users' comments that used #ShakespeareLives for 1 May-17 September was the performance of Henry V, dramatised by the actor Mario Iván Martínez and accompanied by the Mexican National Symphony at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico on 6-8 May. The popularity of the performance by Mario Iván Martínez highlights how local and genre specific celebrities are a way for users to engage with events of the programme. Well-known Mexican Shakespearean actor Mario Iván Martínez and opera singer Ermonela Jaho and Gregory Kunde received direct compliments from the public. Both these artists interacted with their public through social media. However, celebrities do not appear often in Spanish tweets and when they do, not all celebrities receive the same attention from the public. For example, the campaign Play your Part in Spain was not widely commented upon by users, despite using well-known Spanish actors.

When tweeting about the broadcasting of Verdi's opera *Otello* by the Teatro Real in Madrid on 24 September and about the Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven festival at the UNAM in Mexico from 1-31 October, the percentage of subjective expressions of value was much higher. However, direct references to the British Council, Britain and even Shakespeare are less frequent in tweets of users that engage with the programme through domestic partner organisations. Overall, the majority of tweets come from Latin American countries, particularly Mexico. The Mexican British Council Twitter account is very active (as is its Facebook account), but a lot of the promotion also comes

from other Mexican cultural organisations. Users engage with the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter particularly in response to calls to do so from the British Council or partner organisations. Most users are already familiar with Shakespeare and his plays and display their cultural capital through their tweets. It is particularly in relation to theatre (and music for *Otello*) that Shakespeare is most valued by these users, many of whom are actors and musicians. However, both case studies show that bringing Shakespeare and high culture closer to a wider public is highly appreciated by users. The value of “welcoming” was particularly high in tweets relating to these events as people often commented on the openness and accessibility of these (free) events.

While the majority of the tweets coded were neutral in tone, 24% of tweets including #ShakespeareLives between May and September expressed a positive sentiment, following the 36% of positive found in the tweets collected during the weekend around Shakespeare Day in April. These figures are higher than were found in the analyses for other languages. Positive tweets for the *Otello* broadcast were 65%, and for the event at the UNAM 34%.

On Facebook, The launching of the Shakespeare and Cervantes Viven festival was the most popular post not only of the period analysed, but of the Shakespeare Lives programme as a whole. It was also one of the most popular posts overall in recent activity in the Mexican British Council Facebook page, indicating the popularity of the event. Users expressed their excitement with the event and engaged with the festival and the British Council in an intercultural conversation not only about the quality of the performances but about Shakespeare more broadly. In this report, the Mexican British Council Facebook account was a better platform to evaluate engagement than Twitter.

## 5 Methods

### 5.1 Twitter

Using Sysomos MAP we obtained tweets from 1 May to 17 September 2016. There were no significant peaks in use of this official programme hashtag over this time period. The greatest peak in the use of #ShakespeareLives was 60 unique tweets on June 21<sup>st</sup> (in the Midsummer period, which was a clear peak for tweets in English), although most tweets on this date were from the different British Council Twitter accounts in Spanish. Figure 5 below shows the number of Spanish tweets including the hashtag (excluding retweets) per day between 1 May and 17 September.

#### Selected Time Period

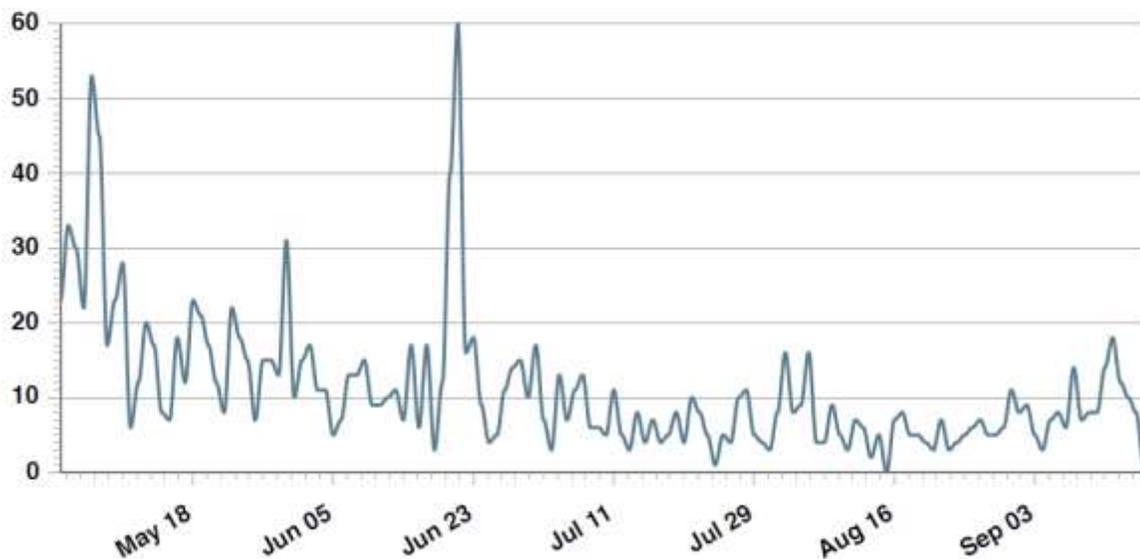


Figure 5: Sysomos MAP popularity graph showing number of Spanish tweets per day (excluding retweets) including #Shakespeare Lives

Due to a lack of significant peak around a specific event or campaign, the broad period initially searched for was selected for analysis. The search for tweets in the Spanish language used the following keywords:

#Shakespearelives AND NOT RT

The number of tweets during this period was 1563. All 1563 tweets were downloaded, and tweets which had been subsequently deleted by the poster were then removed. This left a total of 1503 tweets. 1000 of these were then randomly selected for analysis.

After coding 598 tweets, the coding workbook was amended to reduce the proportion of tweets from British Council accounts, with the aim of having more tweets which could be used to draw conclusions about how *individuals* responded to the Shakespeare Lives programme. The 598 tweets which had already been coded were removed from the original data set of 1563 tweets. These were then randomised; then all posts by British Council accounts removed. This left a total of 586 tweets. The first 402 were added to the coding workbook to form a new set of 1000 tweets.

In the third phase of our research, we agreed to focus our attention on two different Shakespeare Lives events to try to assess engagement through partner organisations. We chose the Shakespeare y Cervantes Vive Festival at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) from 1 -31 October and the live broadcast of Verdi's opera Otello by the British Council partner the Teatro Real in Madrid on September 24.

The following searches were used to collect data. For the event at the UNAM, we used:

```
("#LaCorralaenlaUNAM" OR "#FESTIVALSHAKESPEAREY CERVANTES" OR "#MedidaporMedida" OR "#TeatroUNAM" OR "#EnriqueIV" OR "#RicardoIII" OR "@teatrounam") AND NOT RT 1 Oct – 31 Oct
```

For the production of Otello in Madrid, we used:

```
("#Othello" OR "#Otello" OR "#TeatroReal" OR "#OtelloEnDirectoTR") AND NOT RT 24 September
```

These searches returned 289 and 296 tweets respectively. After removing tweets subsequently deleted by the user, a total of 499 tweets were coded according to the same coding framework used in first phase of research.

## 5.2 Facebook

The qualitative ethnographic analysis of user engagement with the Shakespeare Lives programme through Facebook was conducted on the Mexican British Council Facebook accounts for the period 1 to 30 September, to monitor both the Hay Festival in Querétaro (from 1-4 September) and the launching of the Festival Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven in the UNAM. The Mexican British Council Facebook account is the most active of all the British Council Spanish language accounts, both because of the number of posts and the number of comments of its followers. It was also chosen because of the strategic interest of the British Council in Mexico. Focusing on it might also serve as an example of successful strategies of engagement for the rest of the British Council Facebook pages. The analysis focuses specifically on posts from the Shakespeare Lives programme, highlighting the most popular events as per likes and shares and including user comments when available.

# 6 Findings and Analysis

## 6.1 Twitter (Phase Two: 1 May to 17 September 2016)

### How Was #ShakespeareLives Used?

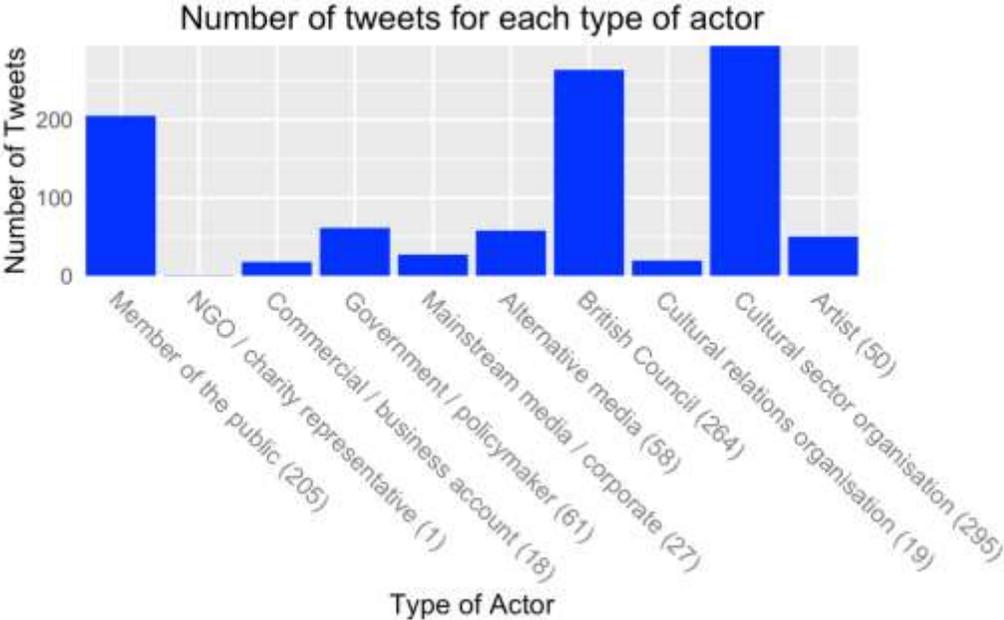


Figure 6: Number of tweets including #ShakespeareLives between 1 May-17 September by actor type

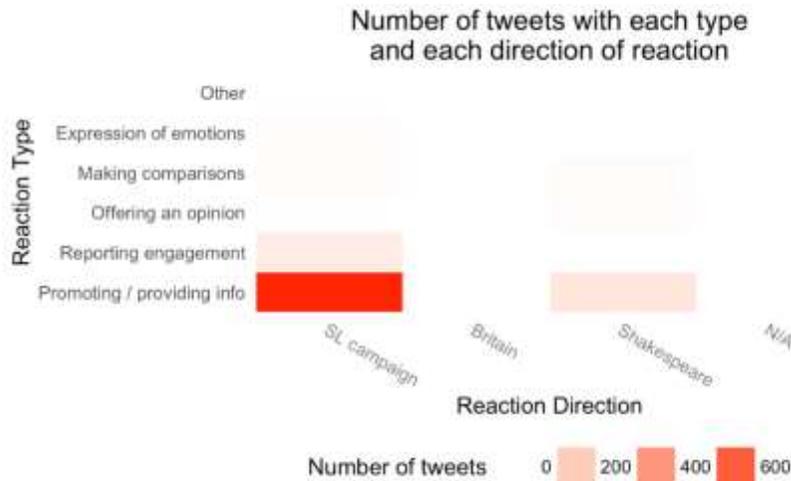


Figure 7: Heat map showing tweets including #ShakespeareLives between 1 May-17 September by reaction type and direction

**Most of the tweets using #Shakespeare Lives came from the British Council or other cultural organisations, and were aimed at promoting events from the programme** (see Figures 6 and 7 above). As a consequence, there is little conversation around the programme or Shakespeare, as most tweets limit themselves to providing information about local events. Aside from the British Council, most tweets came from cultural organisations, the media or governmental accounts, such as the Cine El Cairo, Cineteca Nacional, Centro Cultural Helénico, Bellas Artes, UNAM and CENART in México; Centro GAM in Chile, Alma Viva Teatro in Madrid, Famfest 2016 and the Hay Festival 2016. The events consisted mostly on performances of Shakespeare’s plays, exhibitions, theatre workshops and film passes.



Image 26: Bellas Artes tweet promoting a production of Hamlet

*Translation for Image 26 above: [Contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's #Hamlet in @PalacioOficial on 5 and 6 of August #ShakespeareLives]*

Around 20.5% of tweets came from members of the public. Of these, 59% also promoted events and provided information about Shakespeare, with only 26% reporting having attended an event or going to do so (a total of 54 tweets from members of the public). Most of these users were already familiar with Shakespeare and his work, and many of them have also an interest in theatre and film. This contrasts slightly with the tweets posted during the weekend around Shakespeare Day in April, in which a lot of the conversation was centred around literature more broadly.

### Direct Questions Encourage Engagement

**Users engage with the programme on Twitter in response to calls to do so from the British Council, or other cultural organisations.** Many tweets that mention Shakespeare Lives are direct replies to calls from the British Council or other cultural organisations to use #ShakespeareLives in order to get tickets to attend an event. Out of the 82 tweets reporting engagement, 32 were replies (that is, expressing an interest in attending such an event). This in itself shows that there is an interest in the Spanish-speaking public in Shakespeare and in attending events from the programme.



*Image 27: British Council Mexico tweet encouraging people to use #ShakespeareLives to win tickets*

Translation for Image 27 above: [Who wants tickets for “Hangmen” from @NTLive? Tell us with the hashtag what we are celebrating with #ShakespeareLives]



Image 28: Member of the public replies to the above tweet (Image 27)



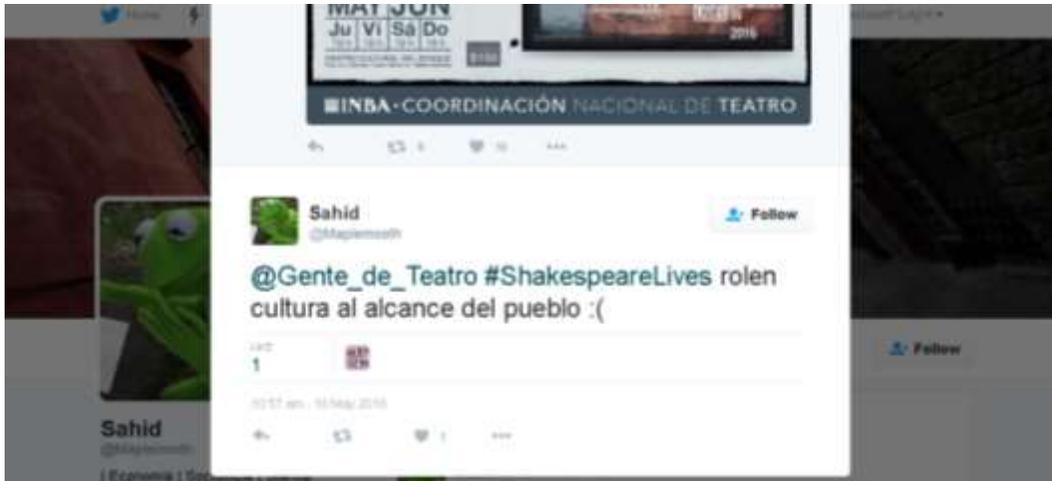


Image 29: Teatro Inba tweet offering free tickets, and member of the public reply

*Translation for Image 29 above: [#CortesiasGT Mention #ShakespeareLives and win tickets for ... Don't forget to tag us] [@Gente\_de\_Teatro #ShakespeareLives make culture affordable for the people :(]*

In general, users engaged with and promoted the programme in very positive terms. Some specific users appear frequently in the data, tweeting about multiple events from the Shakespeare Lives programme. Therefore, users can also play an active role in promoting the programme, reaching audiences that would not necessarily be following the British Council. This effect of social media could potentially be used more by the British Council by targeting active users and engaging them in the programme further, or giving them incentives to share Shakespeare Lives content. This particular user, for example, tweeted on eight occasions about Shakespeare Lives events in Mexico:



Image 30: Member of the public tweet about a Shakespeare Lives event in Mexico

Across the collection of Spanish language tweets, it was normal for users to share content in Spanish, but on occasion some users also shared Shakespeare Lives content in English. This happened most frequently when users engaged with events from the global programme, rather than with local events, for example, with [Mix the Play](#). The following user from Mexico is sharing a Mix the Play video in English from another user. This type of engagement between users, without directly referring back to the British Council and other cultural institutions, opens the possibilities of an intercultural dialogue between members of the public, which indirectly increases the soft power value of the programme. However, this sort of behaviour was rather infrequent in the sample.



Image 31: Member of the public tweet sharing another user's Mix the Play video

*Translation for Image 31 above: [I liked a @YouTube video from @jeansthought...]*

In order to encourage this, the British Council could perhaps engage more often in direct conversation with some of its followers. The British Council in Spanish was less active on Twitter than in the other languages studied (although it is a tactic that is widely used on the Mexican Facebook, for example). In the few instances that this happens, users react positively to straightforward questions, such as in the example below (Image 31). When asked by the Mexican British Council about what it is that he likes about Shakespeare, this user explained that he thought that “his poetic language was delightful”.



*Image 32: British Council Mexico tweet asking a question to followers, with member of the public reply*

Although time consuming, if the British Council wants to generate more of a conversation on social media, it should consider targeting some of its key followers to try to engage them in direct conversations (as it does on Facebook), hoping that they would in turn become actively promote and provoke conversation about Shakespeare Lives with their own followers. As mentioned earlier, one of the limits of the programme in Spanish-speaking countries is that it appeals to people who already have an interest in Shakespeare, Britain, and the British Council for that matter. The challenge is to expand this to a wider public.

Although a slightly different case, a good strategy for appealing to a broader audience is the one followed by the British Council in Spain. The Head of Arts of the British Council in Spain, Ludovic Assémat, is very active on Twitter and tweets on events related to culture and the arts more broadly, often referring to events from the British Council and particularly from the Shakespeare Lives programme. His tweets are retweeted in turn by the British Council official Twitter account, which

is mostly concerned with providing information about its language courses as well as promoting the Shakespeare Lives programme. These two accounts have very different publics in mind, covering both people interested in the UK and in studying English on the one hand, as well as users with an interest in the art scene in Madrid. The events organised and promoted by the British Council are integrated in Assémat's account into a different context, a Spanish context of contemporary and interesting cultural (both high and popular) events happening locally. This strategy could be used by other members of the British Council. The Twitter followings of people working for and with the British Council could be a great asset, and British Council accounts should retweet and interact with these accounts frequently.

### Events Were Positively Reviewed by Members of the Public

**When engagement was reported, events from the programme were positively reviewed by members of the public.** There is not much evidence of users attending events. Most of the information about engagement is offered by the cultural organisations themselves, such as the Cine El Cairo, a cinema that participated in Shakespeare Lives by showing weekly passes of Shakespeare movies.



Image 33: Cine El Cairo tweet sharing an image from a Shakespeare Lives event

*Translation for Image 33 above: [Shakespeare masks from #ShakespeareLives took over on Sunday in the public Cine, genius!]*

When users reported direct engagement with an event it was always in positive terms. The performance of Henry V at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico on 6-8 May was praised by several users.



Image 34: Member of the public shares a selfie from a production of Henry V in Mexico

Translation for Image 34 above: [*#ShakespeareLives with the emotion of listening and watching Mario Iván*]

Users also replied directly to Mario Iván congratulating him for the performance:



Image 35: Member of the public tweets Mario Iván to praise his performance

*Translation for Image 35 above: [@CunetosMIM Bravo Mario Iván. Marvellous concert dramatised with the @OSN\_MX #ShakespeareLives]*

However, it must be noted that the tweets reporting on the event had been previously encouraged by Anglo Arts with a tweet that requested visitors to “share their photographs from the @OSN\_MX concert and Mario Iván Martínez with hashtag #ShakespeareLives”. This fact reinforces the idea that users do respond well to direct calls to participate through social media and, as in this instance, it is not always in return for something. All events should encourage audiences to share photos from events including the programme hashtag, as a means of increasing engagement with events among those who attended, and promoting the programme to their networks.



## Celebrities and Shakespeare Lives in Spanish

**Celebrities do not seem to play an important role in the Spanish-speaking Twittersphere.** Local celebrities like the Mexican Mario Iván Martínez generated very few tweets (1% ). Spanish celebrities used for the campaign [Play Your Part](#) did not seem to have generated much interest among the general public, beyond the theatre milieu. Despite being one of the most famous actors in Spain, this post on Emilio Gutierrez Caba’s video only attracted a mild response (3 retweets and 12 likes), mostly from other actors and cultural institutions. It seems like the celebrities used in the campaign are famous at the national level and do not have a relevance across all the Spanish-

speaking countries. This might explain the relative lack of impact, although the reaction of the public at the national level was not generally that enthusiastic either.



Image 36: Tweet sharing Emilio Gutiérrez Caba's video for Play Your Part

There is also very little presence of British celebrities in the data. David Tennant was mentioned on three occasions using the hashtag #QueremosDavidTennantEnMexico [We want David Tennant in Mexico], one of which is one of the few direct references to Britain (see Image 27 below). Sir Ian McKellen's visit to China was mentioned once, and he appears on two other occasions being praised for his work as a Shakespearean actor alongside other names like Helen Mirren.



Image 37: Member of the public tweet about David Tennant

*Translation for Image 37 above: [ @UKinMexico you have so much talent in your country like #DavidTennant #ShakespeareLives ...]*

## Values

Only 19% of tweets in this data set were concerned with the values the British Council sought to promote through Shakespeare Lives (see Figure 8 below for the number of tweets referring to each value, or to the value of the Shakespeare Lives programme). This is probably due to the very neutral content of tweets informing followers of dates of coming events, which form the bulk of the tweets analysed. In fact, most values were highlighted by the organising institutions of events rather than by members of the general public, either by saying so directly or by sharing reviews of the events in which these values were noted.

Diversity (3%) was coded in relation to ideas and identities whenever there were instances of openness and an appreciation of difference as a positive value. Tweets in this category include those that promoted the work of Kelly Hunter with children with autism through Shakespeare. She gave a workshop in the prestigious Festival de Alcalá in Madrid, which commemorated both Cervantes and Shakespeare.



Image 38: Tweet promoting Kelly Hunter's work with children with autism through Shakespeare

Translation for Image 38 above: *[We are with @LaSalaRNE to discover the @Flute Theatre #ShakespeareLives project with children with autism @rne]*

The value of innovation (2%) was given not only to those tweets that highlighted some technological aspect of the programme (such as the Shakespeare emoji or the use of Periscope to livestream events), but to those that highlighted the technological innovation (and not only the creativity) of some of the performances, which used special effects or multimedia platforms.

Tweets were coded as displaying the value of welcoming when they specifically invited users to join in a conversation, an event or the programme, or there were signs of openness and hospitality.

A collective of theatre aficionados in Mexico called attention to the Shakespeare Lives programme by tweeting “Teatro para todos! #ShakespeareLives” [*Theatre for all #ShakespeareLives*].

Tweets were coded as displaying the value of creativity whenever there was an obvious attempt on the user’s part to engage creatively with the programme or Shakespeare (for example, by adapting it) or whenever the tweet recognised it by using terms such as inventive, genius, original, non-traditional, singular, talent, imaginative, breaking the pattern, and so on.



Image 39: Example of tweet displaying the value 'creativity'

*Translation for Image 39 above: [In my #shakespearelives mode scribbling on paper searching for an illustration for #soneto18 #sketch]*

The most widely used code was that of mutuality, which included notions of sharing, intercultural dialogues, universality, exchange and movement not only across borders, but also through time. Tweets were coded as displaying the value of mutuality whenever there were mentions of Shakespeare’s work being relevant globally and today. Words often used include humanity, legacy, eternal, global, dialogue, translation, and so on.

A particular expression of mutuality was seen where comments about Shakespeare appeared alongside comments about Cervantes, emphasising Anglo-Spanish relations. However, such posts were much more uncommon between May and September (only 2% of tweets) than during the weekend around Shakespeare Day in April (27% of tweets), probably because #Shakespeare400 often appeared alongside #Cervantes400 during the anniversary celebrations.

Expressions that the Shakespeare Lives programme was *valuable*, either through referencing the quality of an event or campaign or describing it as useful/relevant or enjoyable, were limited to those tweets that reported engagement with an event, although this also included organisations

sharing reviews of their events in which these values were noted by the reviewer. Of these, the most prevalent is quality often expressed in terms of talent, magnificent, grand, impressive, a classic, perfect, etc.

Quality was in fact the most frequently expressed indicator of value when referring to events from the programme, followed by creativity. Although quality is a value coded from the user's perspective, reviews attached to tweets were considered as proof of user's engagement with the programme and coded accordingly, even if provided by the cultural organisations themselves.

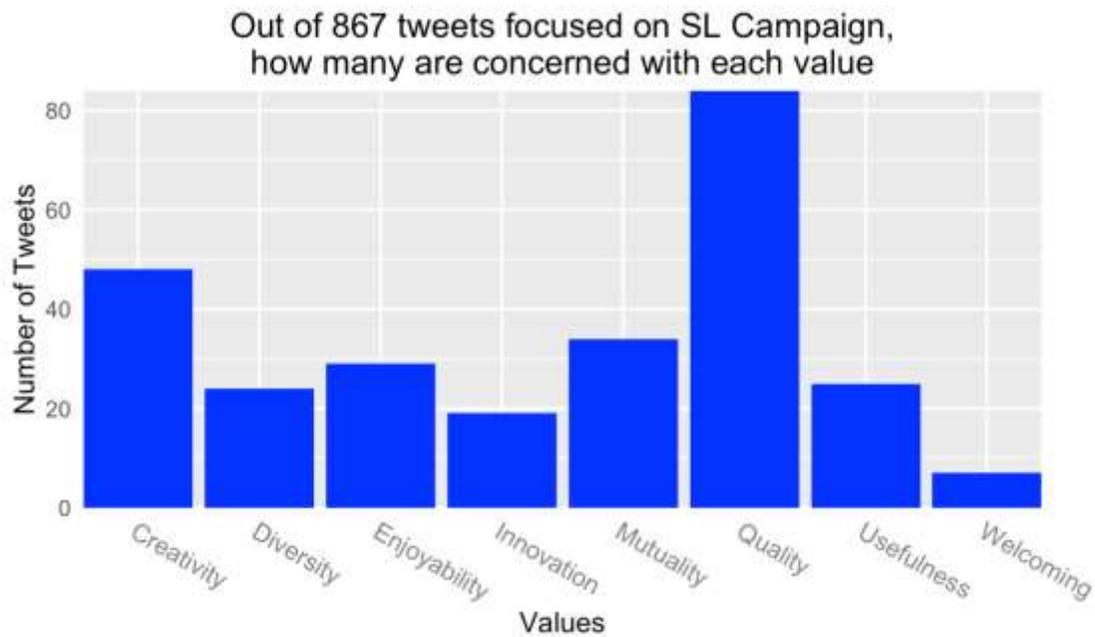


Figure 8: Number of tweets including #Shakespeare Lives between 1 May - 17 September referencing a value, or the value of Shakespeare Lives

When referring specifically to Shakespeare, the most widely seen value is that of mutuality. Often, but not exclusively, through the comparison with Cervantes, Spanish-speaking users identify mutuality above other values.

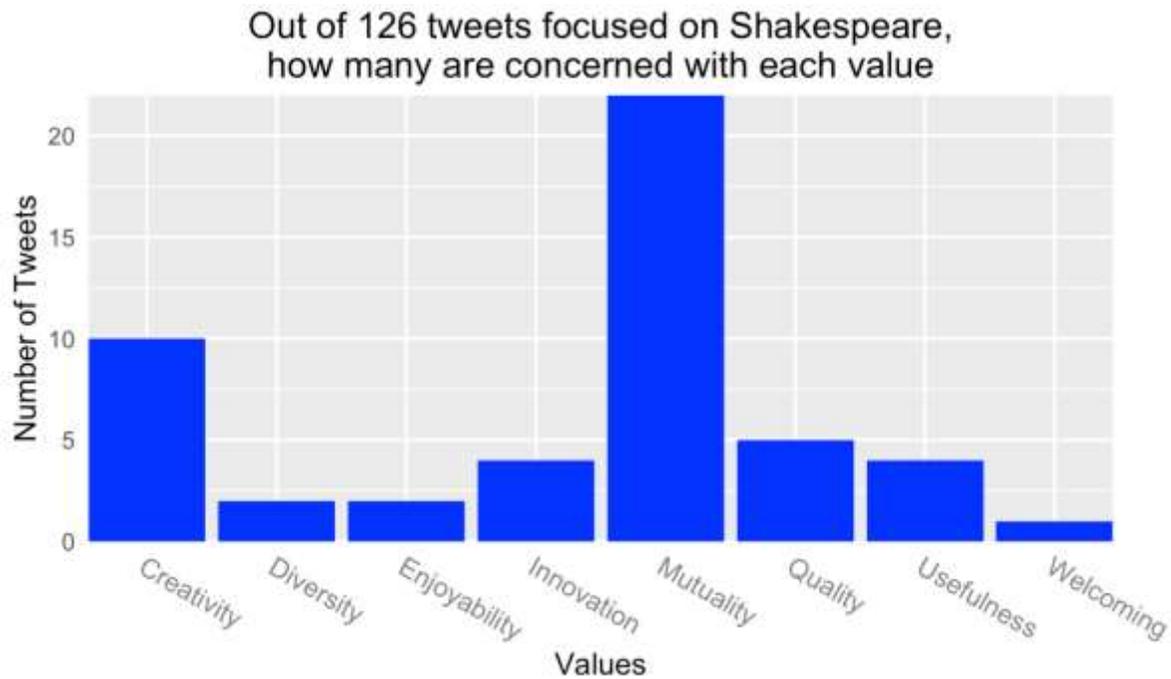


Figure 9: Number of tweets including #Shakespeare Lives between 1 May - 17 September referencing a value, or the value of Shakespeare

## 6.2 Case Study: Otello (Twitter and Facebook)

The Spanish Teatro Real in Madrid, in co-production with the English National Opera (ENO) and the Royal Opera Real of Stockholm, celebrated its 200th anniversary by broadcasting Verdi's **Otello** on 24 September 2016. One of the objectives of the Teatro Real initiative "Opera en la Calle" (*Opera on the Streets*) is to make opera a part of the everyday experiences of people. The performance could be followed in more than 80 cultural institutions throughout Spain, as well as from home through live streaming on Palco Digital (Teatro Real), RTVE.es (Spanish national TV), The Opera Platform (Opera Europa), ARTE Concert (canal ARTE) and through Shakespeare Lives (British Council).

The British Council and the Teatro Real signed an agreement in September 2016 to collaborate on this particular event, but also for a series of projects such as the British Council Cultural Shifts.



Image 40: Head of Arts British Council Spain tweet about collaboration with Teatro Real

*Translation for Image 40 above: [Otello comes to @teatroreal with the collaboration of @esbritish #ShakespeareLives. Great centenaries!]*

This was a successful event that generated a very positive response on social media, just not on British Council platforms. The event was [followed by 40,000](#) people gathering in different cultural institutions all over Spain. The Teatro Real digital platform also registered 52,000 on-line viewings. While this is impressive, it was not as successful as the first of such live streaming events by the Teatro Real in June 2016. [I puritani](#) had 175,000 viewings and generated a global social media conversation among 7.3 million people. This production was broadcast through the Teatro Real Facebook channel as well. The conversation on Twitter around *Otello* used the official hashtag #OtelloEnDirectoTR in 220 (out of 279) tweets while #ShakespeareLives was only mentioned twice.<sup>2</sup> The Teatro Real Twitter and Facebook pages registered a higher level of engagement than its Spanish British Council equivalents, measured by retweets (Twitter), shares (Facebook), likes and comments. Their video of the performance was viewed by 52,000 users, liked 1,400 times, and had 339 shares (see Image 41 below):

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<sup>2</sup> #IPuritaniEnDirectoTR was [used in 1,600 tweets](#) and it became trending topic in Spain for two hours as the fourth most popular conversation on 14 July 2016.



Image 41: Teatro Real Facebook post about Otello, showing reactions, shares and comments

Translation for Image 41 above: [Thank you all for joining #OtelloEnDirectoTR].

A British Council Spain Facebook post promoting the same event received only two likes:



Image 42: British Council Spain post promoting Otello, showing reactions

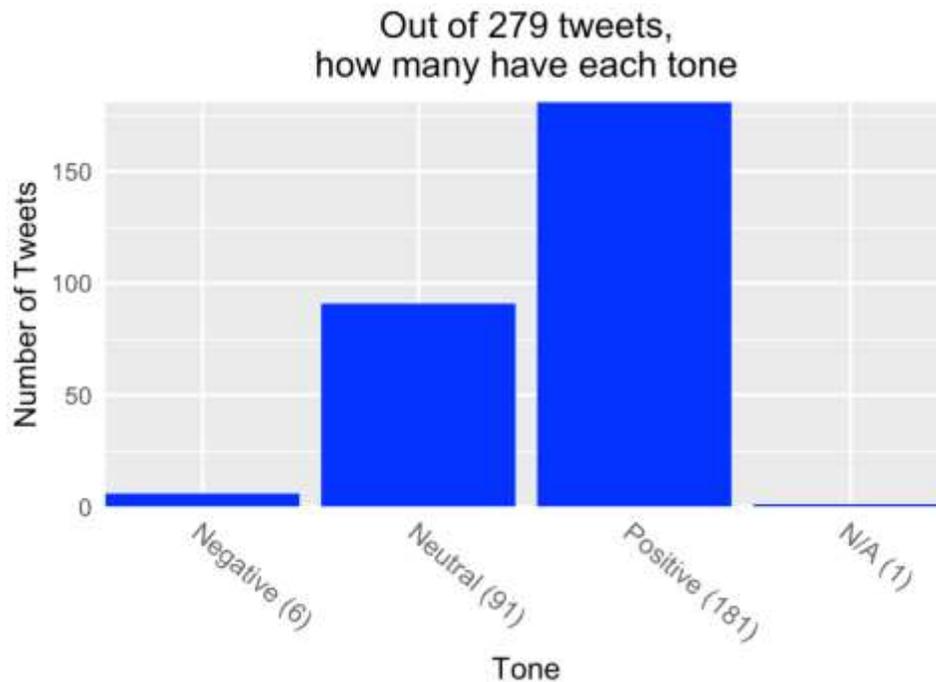


Figure 10: Number of tweets about Otello by tone

## The Role of Teatro Real

**The mediation of the Teatro Real had a positive impact on reach and engagement, but it also diminished the visibility of the British Council. Can this be balanced?** The Spanish British Council Twitter account, as well as @matthvanmayrit, promoted the event before and during the live streaming and shared links to the Shakespeare Lives page. The Teatro Real account tweeted and posted about the event more frequently, and also tweeted about the event being available on the Shakespeare Lives page twice during the days coming up to the event.

The British Council could increase its visibility on social media by continuing to promote events by using social media resources, for example by using and reminding users and partner organisations to use appropriate hashtags; replying, liking, sharing and retweeting more often; and by answering comments and commenting on other users' tweets or posts on Facebook, particularly if they are well-known figures. For example, the Facebook account of fans of opera singer George Kunde (*Otello*) posted about the online streaming and mentioned that the public abroad (outside Spain) could also follow the performance through several digital platforms, including Shakespeare Lives. Several comments from a transnational audience were joined by the Opera Platform, which drew the attention of potential viewers to the livestream:

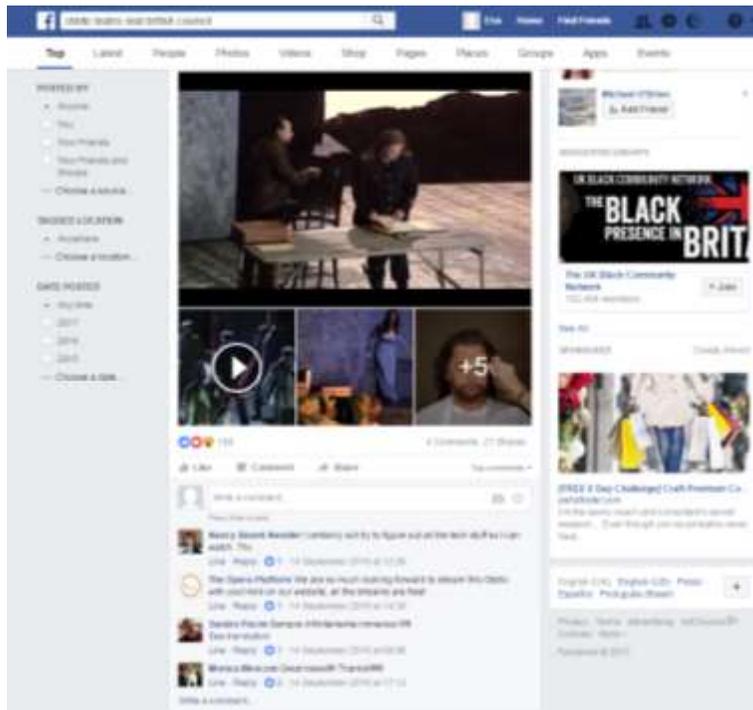


Image 43: George Kunde Facebook fanpage post about *Otello*, including reactions, shares and comments

The British Council is already following this strategy in tweets and Facebook posts that refer directly to the Shakespeare Lives programme. One of the few tweets that used #ShakespeareLives in reference to the British Council Shakespeare short films broadcast during the *Otello* event was liked five times, three of which are from British Council (related) accounts:



Image 44: Tweet about the livestream of Otello, and the Shakespeare Lives short films, showing retweet and likes

Aside from promoting specific events, by engaging in these social media interactions more frequently, British Council accounts (official and belonging to its local staff) could become more integrated with different digital networks. This would strengthen their relationships to other partner organisations and, potentially, users. While this is something that the British Council is already doing, as evidenced by the interactions of their local staff with partner organisations, users and other British Council centres, the results will become more apparent with time. Cultural relations work best by ensuring that relationships are maintained while new ones are formed.

## Values

**While values were appreciated by users, they did not refer back to Britain or Shakespeare.** Values, particularly those related to the category of “welcoming,” were often discussed by users and expressions of emotions were more frequent than in other samples, often thanking the Teatro Real and the artists for their initiative. They very often engaged back by replying, retweeting or liking. The Teatro Real also encouraged viewers to share their experiences with them. Many tweets shared photographs of them engaging in the events in different places, like Granada in Spain or from Mexico on the computer.



Image 45: Tweet sharing a photo from a public showing of Otello in Granada

*Translation from Image 45 above: [Magnificent #concert of #OtelloEnDirectoTR in the palace of #CharlesV, #shakespearelives]*

This post is a good example of the subtle ways in which cultural relations and mutuality function. It shows Shakespeare’s play as interpreted by an Italian composer and played by an international cast set against the “very Spanish” palace of Charles V (himself a “transnational” king and Emperor) in Granada (with its distinct Arab influence). The following post from a viewer in Mexico has a picture of Madrid as their background image on Twitter:



Image 46: Tweet sharing a photo of watching the livestream of Otello online

*Translation for Image 46 above: [Watching from Mexico the @Teatro\_Real #OtelloEnDirectoTR performance ... amazing!]*

Innovation was also valued as it enabled viewers to watch the performance from their “sofa” or while walking down the street.



Image 47: Tweet sharing a photo of watching the livestream of Otello online

*Translation for Image 47 above: [On the street and I can still enjoy #OtelloEnDirectoTR on my mobile device. You are a real pleasure @Teatro\_Real]*

The promotion of the event stressed several elements that related it back to Britain and added to its global appeal. Stage director David Alden had already put on the same production of Verdi's *Otello* for the English National Opera in 2014, which was reviewed by *The Independent* as “A flawless production”, as noted on Shakespeare Lives webpage. During the *intermezzo*, the audience could enjoy the British Council's short films on Shakespeare's plays. Within the Shakespeare Lives programme, the event must have been considered relevant enough to include a series of interviews with its performers on the [#ShakespeareLives webpage](#) under the Explore, Performances section. In these videos, Gregory Kunde (*Otello*), George Petean (Iago) and Ermonela Jaho (Desdemona) read fragments of Shakespeare's text which faded into the equivalent passage from Verdi's opera as performed by them on stage. The British Council figured as the producer of all the digital media that accompanied the live performance (interviews and short films).

Through these initiatives, the relationship between Verdi's *Otello* and Shakespeare's Othello is made specific by the organisers. However, tweets in our sample hardly mentioned the British Council (one tweet), Britain (none) or even Shakespeare (three tweets). Most of the conversation in the Spanish Twittersphere was about the event itself and its main organiser, the Teatro Real. Members of the public noted its quality, the pleasure of hearing and watching the artists sing and, above all, the fact that it could be enjoyed in many (and often remote) places in Spain or from home (what was coded as welcoming). While cultural relations work best when unnoticed (as does soft power), in this instance there is no evidence on social media of any kind of relation with Britain. Shakespeare would have been the perfect link to indirectly strengthen the cultural relations aspect of the programme on social media.

It is true that Shakespeare is mediated in this event by Verdi, who was not mentioned that often either (7% of tweets). But one member of the public suggested watching a documentary on the Italian composer, so some discussion or acknowledgment of a foreign element came into the picture: "Muy recomendable esta producción de la RAI que se pasó en @RTVE VIDA DE VERDI Parte 2 <https://t.co/SQqIdgqDNr> #OtelloEnDirectoTR" [*I recommend to watch this RAI – Italian TV – programme that was broadcast on @RTVE – Spanish TV – LIFE OF VERDI Part 2 ...*]. The connection between Shakespeare and Cervantes was noted in the promotional material for the event; why not bring this to the conversation on social media on the day of the broadcast? It seems like a missed opportunity to discuss Shakespeare's *Othello*, which could have (directly or indirectly) brought some of the conversations around the event closer to the British Council and Britain.

The public enjoyed an event that contributed, among other things, to an increased sense of citizenship. There was a sense of the democratic value of cultural events that can bridge social differences and community, as public users often expressed that they were sharing a unique experience that brought people physically closer. Users shared pictures of people gathering in public places to watch, but also digitally as the online streaming could bring geographically remote places together. Tweets like the one shown in Image 48 below contrast with the cosmopolitanism of others and are a good example of the global-local dynamics.



Image 48: Tweet showing a livestream of *Otello* in a small village

*Translation for Image 48 above: [#OtelloEnDirectoTE from Garriguella, a beautiful village of 900 inhabitants in the Alt Empordà, we send greeting and watch Otello]*

The idea of belonging to an imagined community came across many of the tweets and was in fact encouraged by the Teatro Real, who asked viewers to share their collective experiences. However, not only the national was highlighted. As with tweets about Shakespeare, there is also a sense of the opera having universal appeal and crossing not only class borders through this “open” event, but cultural ones, particularly through the common language of music.

### **Did *Otello* Reach A Global Audience?**

Through the Shakespeare Lives platform, the performance was broadcast to 140 countries, on the websites of all the British Council centres, and also in theatres such as the Shakespeare Theatre in Gdansk (Poland) and The National Theatre in Romania.

Despite this, we could only find mentions of the broadcasting on British Council Facebook accounts from British Council Poland, British Council France, British Council Italy (Milan, Roma and Napoli) and Austria. There was no mention on the Mexican or Colombian accounts, despite the event being broadcast on 30 September 2016. The British Council Theatre and Dance Twitter account (9,455 followers) mentioned it once, but the British Council Twitter account (@British Council, the main Twitter account for the global Shakespeare Lives programme, with 210,000 followers) did not have a single post on the event. As for partner organisations in the UK, the

English National Opera did not tweet about the live streaming of its *Otello* co-production on 24 September.



Image 49: British Council Theatre and Dance (Poland) tweet promoting the livestream of *Otello*, showing retweets and likes

The British Council should consider supporting local British Council centres and encourage these to interact with followers more frequently. It would give more visibility to events that have a global appeal (and are designed to be consumed by a global audience), as well as representing an embodiment of the values of mutuality, reciprocity and connection. The main British Council account could also take advantage of promoting digital events in order to reach a broader audience, but also to showcase at home in the UK their work abroad.

### 6.3 Case Study Two: Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven, UNAM (Twitter)

During 1- 30 October 2016, the “[Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven, 4 Siglos de Mitotes](#)” festival took place in the Corrala del Mitote at the UNAM in Mexico City. It was co-organised by Shakespeare Lives, British Council Mexico, Teatro UNAM and the Secretaría de Cultura through the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Compañía Nacional de Teatro. More than 40 events were held in this venue.

#### Members of the Public Promoted Shakespeare Enthusiastically

**Although the main reaction was providing information about the event, members of the public participated in promoting the event positively and enthusiastically.** Most of the tweets analysed were concerned with promoting or providing information about the events taking place (see Figure 10 below). On this occasion, however, it was not only promoted by the British Council and other Mexican cultural organisations, but by members of the public who shared with others information about the plays: where they were taking place, the time, or how to get there.

### Number of Tweets: Type of Reaction vs. Type of Actor

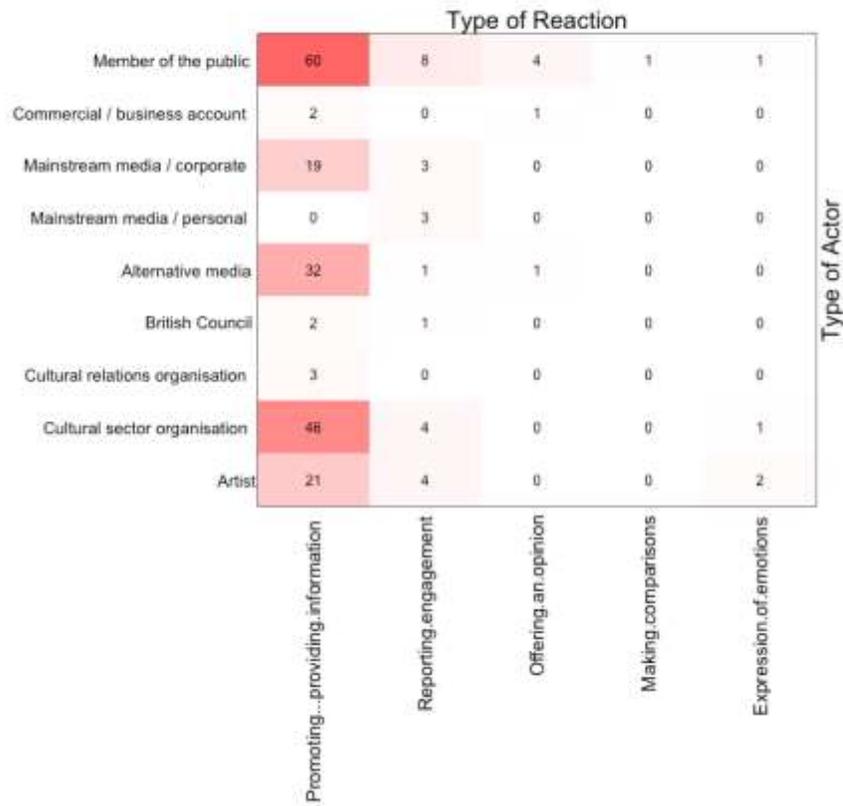


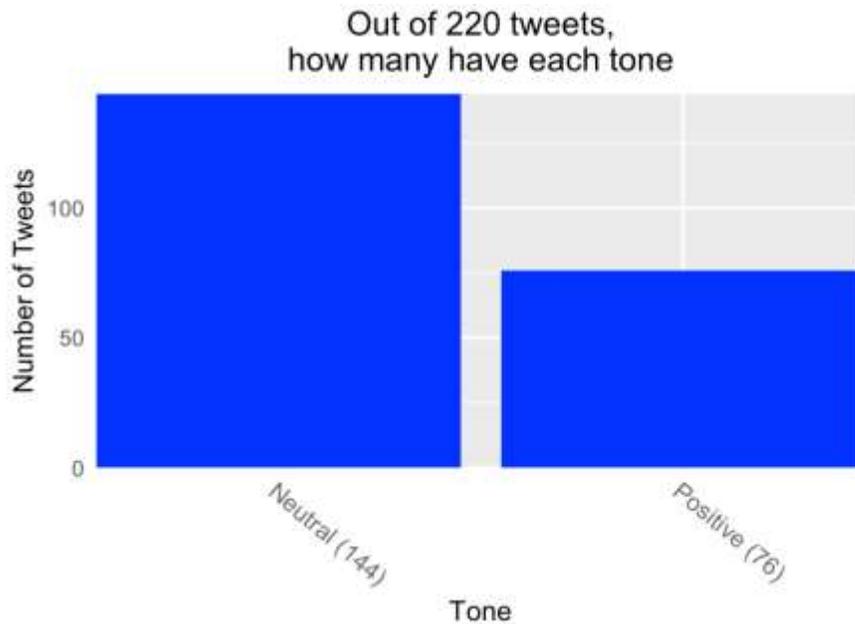
Figure 11: Heat map showing number of tweets about the Festival by actor type and type of reaction

When members of the public reported engagement or expressed their opinion and emotions, they valued the events positively.



*Image 50: Member of the public tweet about the Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven Festival*

*Translation for Image 50 above: [Marvellous Corrala del Mitote, weekends #Shakespeare and #Cervantes for children #TeatroUnam]*



*Figure 12: Tweets about the Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven Festival by tone*

Surprisingly considering the themes of the festival, there was hardly any conversation on social media about Shakespeare and/or Cervantes. The British Council could have attempted to spark conversation around the comparison, as we saw in April around the anniversary celebrations for both writers.

Shakespeare was the focus of most tweets rather than Cervantes (though we included titles of Shakespeare’s plays in the search). The conversation was mostly limited to the ways in which the plays resonated today and could be considered to have a universal legacy. The value of mutuality was the most noted by members of the public as was the quality of the performances. Events, or the festival more broadly, were also perceived to be enjoyable and welcoming, often in relation to the openness of the event and the fact that it offered viewers the unique experience of enjoying a Shakespeare play in La Corrala del Mitote (see Figure 12 below).

## Number of Tweets: Value vs. Type of Actor

	Value								Type of Actor
	Diversity	Innovation	Welcoming	Creativity	Mutuality	Usefulness	Quality	Enjoyability	
Member of the public	8	7	9	7	16	0	15	10	
Commercial / business account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mainstream media / corporate	4	0	5	7	12	0	4	6	
Mainstream media / personal	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	
Alternative media	0	0	6	2	3	2	2	4	
British Council	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	1	
Cultural relations organisation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Cultural sector organisation	3	1	12	2	8	1	5	4	
Artist	2	0	1	2	4	1	2	1	

Figure 13: Number of tweets about the festival by actor type and value/reference to the value of the events.

Although most of the conversation on Twitter did not happen around the hashtag #ShakespeareLives (nine tweets), nor mentioned the British Council (@mxbritish appears only six times), the Mexican British Council Facebook page was the most visited by users to find information about the event and express their gratitude (more so than that of the partner organisation, the UNAM).

## 6.4 Facebook: British Council Mexico

The following analysis looks at the Facebook accounts of the British Council centres in Mexico from 1-30 September 2016 and identifies those posts from the Shakespeare Lives programme, comparing user engagement with other posts from the same period. The Mexican page has the most followers of Spanish-speaking British Council Facebook accounts (163,697 total page likes) and people engage much more than in the other British Council Facebook pages with posts in general. Over the course of 2016, the level of user engagement, with the Shakespeare Lives programme but also generally, has increased in terms of the number of likes, shares and comments. During the period analysed, British Council Mexico posted 71 times, 13 of which were related to the Shakespeare Lives programme. Interestingly, there were no posts about the Hay Festival in Querétaro 1-4 September 2016.

The most popular post during this period and of recent activity in the Mexican British Council Facebook page was on 29 September, announcing the launch of the Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven Festival at the UNAM. It was liked by 4,800, shared 2,449 times and gained 380 comments that span until 12 October.



Image 51: British Council Facebook post promoting the Shakespeare y Cervantes Viven Festival

*Translation for Image 51 above: [Do you want to go to the theatre like in Shakespeare's times? We invite you and the entrance is free! All October at the UNAM ...]*

Most of the users commenting are students at the UNAM, but not exclusively. Some reported that the event was suitable for the whole family, for example. Although most people commenting might have been drawn to the Mexican British Council Facebook page because of an interest in English, many users were concerned about whether the performances would be in translations or not, feeling reassured that the plays were in Spanish. The British Council was very good at responding to the many queries of users. Many of them were asking about dates and location of events, but some also reported on having attended an event, and most of them recommended them highly to other users. This user commented on an event he attended, suggesting that:

“Esta bien padre la de romeo y julieta para dos :) a parte de lo hermoso que se escucha el griego, su actuacion esta llena de vida!” [The Romeo and Juliet one was really cool, aside from how beautiful Greek sounds, its performance was full of life!].

Other users engaged by sharing information about Shakespeare or the performances more broadly. A comment about whether the theatre would have bathrooms, in accordance to historical accuracy, generated a conversation about the origins of the expression “Mierda” [Shit] that actors say to wish each other luck before a performance, tracing this back to Shakespeare (one user claimed to have read it in a biography of the writer).

## 7 Conclusions

The British Council in Spanish-speaking countries has been successful in organising and promoting local events from the Shakespeare Lives programme, which seem to have been positively valued by those members of the public attending. However, most of these events required relatively high levels of cultural capital to enjoy fully (performances, exhibits, conferences, workshops and film). Arguably, despite some events targeting children (Viven), this reduced the scope for engagement among more socially diverse citizens and public. Users engaging in these activities were already familiar with Shakespeare. The global programme seems to have engaged fewer users than during the previous period studied, the weekend around Shakespeare Day in April 2016, and particular campaigns such as Mix the Play and Play your Part have not been particularly discussed.

The British Council has not been as successful in organising events to engage the wider Spanish-speaking public on Twitter as in other places, such as Sir Ian McKellen's visit to China or the initiative at the metro in Moscow. It has also not made the most of using local celebrities that would appeal to a wider public and further engage them in the programme. An exception is the Festival *Shakespeare and Cervantes Viven* organised in the University of Mexico UNAM, which was very successful on Facebook.

The Spanish Twittersphere was successfully engaged as a platform for discussions about the anniversary of Shakespeare's death, including conversation which contrasted the legacies of Shakespeare and Cervantes. However, this success has not been replicated for conversation on Shakespeare and associated values around subsequent events. However, where the Twittersphere did engage with this conversation, users highlighted the universality of the writer that transcends place and time, as well as his creative genius.

The British Council has been successful in engaging the public when opening a dialogue with them. Social media users in Spanish-speaking countries responded well to direct calls from the British Council to engage with the programme, either by answering questions, posting pictures of their attendance to events or participating in contests to win tickets. This strategy could probably be optimised by engaging more directly with the users.

The British Council could further engage its partner organisations, the actors and celebrities participating in the events, as well as targeting followers active in social media that could spread the programme beyond the usual list of suspects.

The level of engagement on the Mexican British Council Facebook account increased during the month of September overall, and in relation to the Shakespeare Lives programme in particular. The Shakespeare y Cervantes Festival Viven in the Mexican university UNAM has been the most successful event on social media, which has triggered a conversation about Shakespeare among Facebook users. This popular event, aimed at a more general public and made more accessible by the free entrance, has generated much more engagement and reactions to it are extremely positive.

It seems like the event attracted a public not particularly interested in English, which is an important breakthrough to overcome the view of the role of the British Council in Spanish-speaking countries is still primarily related to teaching English (nonetheless a strong attraction that brings the general public into contact with British culture). It is important to remind potential users that the British Council offers more than just language courses, and to reinforce the cultural role of the British Council abroad. The example of the way in which the British Council Spanish Twitter account and its Head of Arts Ludovic Assémat's interact is also a good example of presenting the programme in different contexts for different publics.

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