

ARTICLE – DIGITAL MODERN LANGUAGES

Teaching Bilingual Literature and the Semantic Classroom: Using Scalar to Create Bilingual Collaborative Literary Resources

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Language(s) which the tutorial aims to study or research: English, Spanish.

A short summary of the tutorial: This tutorial demonstrates how to use Scalar to create bilingual collaborative editions in the context of teaching bilingual literature. In particular, it focuses on bilingual or even polylingual classrooms wherein students have varied language competencies and fluencies.

Summary: Teaching literature in bilingual contexts is challenging, not just in terms of linguistic barriers but also the logistics of texts. For literature teachers who aim to challenge the primacy of Anglophone literature and to bring literature in translation to students, digital tools provide inclusive spaces for students from a range of linguistic standpoints.

Using the example of Chicano author Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales’s epic poem ‘I am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín’, this tutorial demonstrates how to create a multimodal textbook for teaching the poem in both its original English form and Spanish translation. Chicano literature, while an established field of literary study, remains a challenging space in teaching and learning given the bilingual, and even polylingual, approaches taken by authors such as Gonzales. Even when the students reading the literature are not bilingual, there is educational value in immersing them in both translated and original versions of texts. For example, translations of ‘Joaquín’ into Spanish shed light on postcolonial politics of language. The English source text contains code-switching, and different print publications include ephemera such as illustrations, chronologies and so on. The film adaptation offers interesting insights into issues such as the politics of literacy, and the relationship between translation and adaptation. In terms of the content of the poem itself, it is abundant in cultural, political and social histories, historical figures, events and consequences specific to the Chicano community. Gonzales bypasses dominant white-washed narratives of colonial history in the US–Mexico borderlands. Instead, he privileges figures of Chicano and Aztec myth and folk history, and retells historical events through a Chicano gaze.

The sheer length and cultural richness of the poem, as well as its versions (English, Spanish, film), make it ideal for exploration in Scalar, where these elements and intricacies can be explored, compared, contrasted and analysed in detail, while at the same time developing students’ critical digital literacies. The multimodal, non-linear pathways that can be created in Scalar allow students to explore

these issues and draw linguistic and cultural connections. Contemplating how to represent, organise and explore materials using Scalar braids literary and cultural criticism with digital literacy. Informal, playful contact with other languages without the requirement to 'learn' said language can inspire students to take an interest in, and perhaps even pursue, that language.

Collaborative editions can unify bilingual cohorts by creating an inclusive translingual digital space where students can read, translate, annotate and communicate. In particular, this tutorial provides guidance on how to build a textbook using a range of content, including text, audio, video, maps, timelines and images. Moreover, this tutorial suggests how teachers can arrange multimedia content into diverse, bilingual narratives that bring the semantic possibilities of Scalar into the pedagogical approaches being used to teach. Pedagogically, this tutorial is rooted in universal design for teaching and learning, translanguaging pedagogies, intersectionality and bell hooks' belief that education is the practice of freedom (4).

Difficulty: Medium.

Aims: To showcase how Scalar can be used in teaching literature in bilingual contexts, to capture what can get lost in translation in teaching bilingual literature via analogue methods. Demonstrate how translanguaging pedagogy, digital pedagogy and universal design can work together in contemporary teaching and learning contexts.

Target audience:

- Those who teach and learn literature in connection with the study of modern languages;
- those who want to overcome challenges to teaching in bilingual or even polylingual contexts;
- those who would like visualise bilingual texts in non-linear, collaborative and intersecting ways;
- those interested in teaching and learning about the politics of translation using digital tools and methods.
- This tutorial is suitable for teaching in higher education and second level, especially where there is a focus on research-based and -led teaching and learning.

Translanguaging Pedagogies, and the Challenge of Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching

In an article on 'A Pedagogy of Translanguaging', Laura Hammon, Emeline Beck and Aubrey Donaldson discuss a range of translanguaging strategies, including Beck's use of collaborative translation with a group of third grade students to 'explicitly "bridge" students' developing competencies in English and Spanish and to build upon their existing writing skills' (n.p.). Translanguaging pedagogies are particularly useful in the context of this tutorial because they ask us to move beyond the binaries of language and consider more inclusive practices to avoid marginalising or privileging one language over another.

My interest in this stems from a background in English studies, often finding my attentions turning to ChicanX literature and authors who write bilingual, polylingual and code-switching texts in opposition with my anglophone discipline. On the other hand, modern languages raises question marks over my lack of fluency in Spanish, while at the same time valuing my expertise in literary criticism. Such is the plight of the interdisciplinary researcher, so often encouraged and hampered at the same time by the pitfalls of the academic penchant

for buzzwords. We frequently attach these disciplinary-isms to our work, attempting to demonstrate flexibility and dynamism in an increasingly precarious career path. Meanwhile our students remain, by and large, rigidly segregated by discipline.

Despite these challenges, one of the most enriching teaching experiences in my career so far has been an interdisciplinary module on US-Latino Literature (HS2046). This module is coordinated by the Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies (UCC), and was made available as an interdisciplinary module to students in the School of English several years ago. Working with the students in the module over the past few years, experimenting with methods of unifying students across programmes and linguistic barriers while also challenging my own linguistic abilities, is what informs this tutorial. Students taking this module via Spanish have a language requirement that informs their learning outcomes and their assessments. Students engaging as part of their BA in English are most interested in literary criticism. When these administrative necessities fade into the background, and a collective approach to teaching, learning and cross-cultural and cross-linguistic engagement takes centre stage, the module is at its best in emulating hooks' teaching philosophy. The module becomes a space where different abilities, knowledges, learning contexts and skills are not just welcomed, but required. In this way, we can avoid hooks' worst-case scenario in which education becomes a demonstration of how students can best 'become clones of [their] peers' (5).

Pre-requisites/practical/technical setup

1. Contact [The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture \(ANVC\)](#) to request a registration key for Scalar. Be aware that it may take them +24 hours to respond to your request, so ensure that you do this well in advance of when you need to complete your digital edition on Scalar.
2. Once the ANVC emails you a registration key, you can go ahead and register for Scalar.
3. Compile a list of all the resources (articles, images, videos etc.) that you want to include on Scalar. It can be helpful to mind-map these so you can begin to consider what connections or pathways you want to make between them before you begin creating your Scalar book. This step is essential because it will save you a lot of time later.
4. Finally, read and bookmark the [Scalar User Guide](#). This tutorial is not a substitute for that. In many ways this tutorial is actually a short list of suggestions and ideas of how Scalar might be used to create resources for students in bilingual classrooms, with step-by-step instructions of how to execute them. The nuts and bolts of the tool are addressed in more detail in the User Guide.

Some things to consider

Scalar allows users to perform a **public install** or a **local install**.

Public install means you will be working within Scalar's server. This requires a lower level of digital competency, and is therefore best for users who are new to Scalar. This tutorial focuses on the public install.

Local install means that you can run the software on an independent site. Reclaim Hosting lets users do this via one-click install. This usage allows you to have more storage space, better for larger digital projects.

Copyright: Please ensure that you only use this tutorial to create digital editions of texts that are out of copyright or that you have obtained permission to publish.

Scalar User Guide: As mentioned in the previous section, Scalar provides a detailed [User Guide](#) that you should familiarise yourself with. This tutorial is not going to replicate that, but will focus specifically on creating a bilingual teaching and learning resource. To learn the basics of using, editing and publishing on Scalar, please refer to the User Guide. Pay particular attention to the sections on 'Getting Started', 'Working with Media', 'Working with Content', 'Working with Widgets' and 'Working with Structure'. These will introduce you to the key functions and capabilities of the software, enabling you to build a resource that is media and content rich.

Tutorial

This tutorial demonstrates a few useful features of Scalar when creating a bilingual resource for students studying a piece of literature that has been published and translated in more than one language. In particular, I suggest and take you through a layout that works well for a non-linear approach to teaching, learning and discovering texts. I then explore the uses of annotations for providing bilingual information and collaborating with students.

Layout

1. Upon registration you will be directed to a page with examples of publicly available Scalar books. Click 'Create New Book'.
2. Enter a title for your book and choose whether it is a 'book', 'project' or 'article'. For the purposes of this tutorial I suggest 'project'. However, you may wish to create a full textbook, in which case select 'book'.
3. Your created book(s) will appear in a list on the right-hand side of the page. Click on the title of your book.
4. You will now see your blank Scalar book ready to be populated with media and information.
5. Click on the **pencil icon** in the top right corner to edit the current page.
6. Scroll to the bottom of the editing dashboard to view the list of options for formatting the current page.
7. **Layout:** for the purposes of this tutorial, select '**Connections**'.

Connections (See **Figure 1**) showcases the links between all of the content at the top of the page. Below the connections visualisation, a basic text and media layout can be used to expand on the materials, post your lecture, study notes or provide space for students to write content for the textbook as part of their studies.

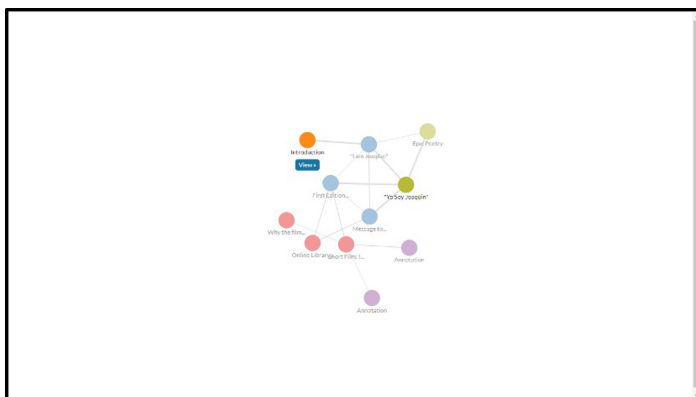


Figure 1: Sample Connection Layout.

To learn more about each Layout, click 'learn more' at the bottom of each pop-up description to open the relevant page in the Scalar User Guide.

'**Connections**' allows you (and your students if you choose to give them editorial access to the Scalar book) to create organic, non-linear connections. Students can click on any of the icons in the connections to view that particular resource and see how it connects with other materials and resources. Rather than segregating English and Spanish versions of the poem and supporting materials, students can hop from one section of the textbook to another. Using Scalar's 'pathways' and 'annotations', students forge their own learning journeys. **Figure 1** shows a simple example of a Connections visualisation for teaching 'Joaquín'. The visualisation can contain far more than is evidenced here.

Annotations

Annotations are a really useful aspect of Scalar. For teachers, they can be employed to provide supplementary information for students. This is especially useful for online courses and blended learning. Students can be involved in the Scalar book by offering them editorial access. They can then be invited to provide annotations as part of assignments, allowing them to collaborate and share knowledge with their peers.

To annotate something in Scalar

1. Open the page you wish to annotate.
2. Click the paper clip icon in the top-right corner.
3. The annotation editor will open. (See **Figure 2**)
4. Fill in the text boxes with your title and annotation. If annotating an audio or visual file, you can link your annotation to a particular time. The Scalar User Guide gives instructions on how to do this.
5. Click 'save' when you are finished annotating.
6. To view an annotation you have two options:
 - a. underneath the media, click annotation and select the annotation you wish to view from the list;
 - b. or, click 'Citations'. This opens up a new page (see **Figure 3**);
 - c. click the annotation you wish to view.

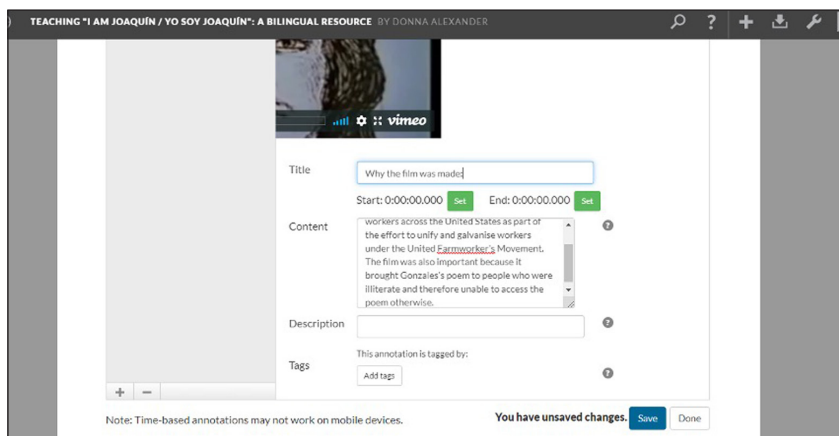


Figure 2: Annotating media.

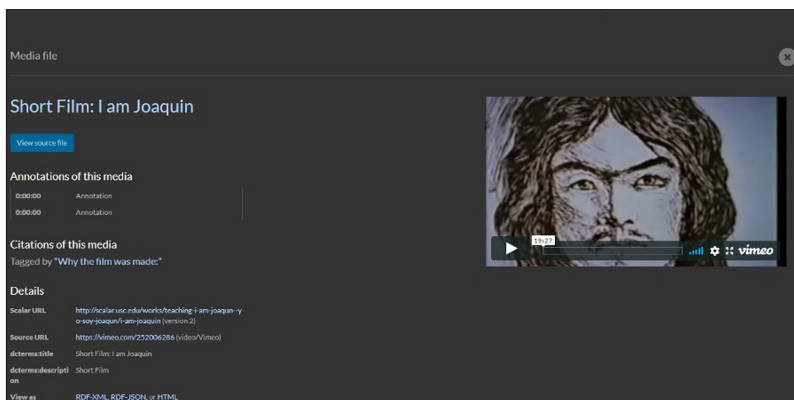


Figure 3: Citations menu including list of annotations.

Allowing students editorial access

Annotations, as mentioned earlier, are a nice way to introduce a collaborative element to using Scalar in the classroom. Moreover, you could task your students with writing 'chapters' or short blog-style posts for the book. You can ask them to leave comments in pages reflecting on what they learn as they progress through the materials. Whatever type of digital engagement you choose encourages critical digital literacy, an issue that is increasingly foregrounded as a key graduate attribute. If you are interested in exploring this issue further in relation to your teaching philosophy, I suggest consulting [Bloom's Digital Taxonomy](#). This revises the original taxonomy to focus on learning outcomes in the context of digital tools and methods. The terminologies in the digital taxonomy are useful when considering how to connect aspects of digital literacy with lower- and higher-order thinking skills.

Adding users

1. Students should request a registration key and register for Scalar following the steps outlined earlier in this tutorial.
2. To add students as users, go to your Account page.
3. Hover over the title of your book in the list on the right side of the page.
4. Click on **Dashboard**, which pops up next to the book title.
5. Click on **Users** and search for students' usernames.
6. Once they are added, you can select their level of access from a dropdown menu. These include: Author, Editor, Commentator, Reviewer and Reader. Take a look at the [User's Tab page](#) in the Scalar User Guide to learn about what each level of access allows a user to do.
7. At the very least, I suggest adding each student in the cohort as a Reader. This ensures that you know each student has access to the Scalar textbook if you choose not to make the book public. You can change the level of access at any time.

Possible challenges/difficulties

Copyrighted texts cannot be published without permission of authors and publishers. However, users can explore open repositories such as **Project Gutenberg** or **Internet Archive**. These contain many out-of-copyright books, poetry collections, essays and other texts that are free to use so long as they are properly referenced. While you may not have permission to reproduce a text, if it is available online Scalar can comfortably embed most types of media and webpages within its interface. Therefore you can still insert media which is loaded from its parent page, thus avoiding any copyright infringement. There is also a

valuable lesson in this for students when they are invited to add resources to the site. This dovetails with the lower-order thinking skill in Bloom's Digital Taxonomy: **Remembering and Understanding**. Students can search, retrieve, bookmark, annotate and so on. Then, students can *apply* what they have learnt so far and merge this with their digital literacies by uploading, annotating and categorising resources.

Scalar's non-linear format has much to offer in terms of deep learning and text analysis. This can also be challenging when trying to structure your Scalar site. Take the time to really think about your learning outcomes and/or research questions before diving into creating your digital edition. Design thinking can be a useful way to workshop the structure. While I have used the '**Connections**' visualisation in this tutorial, perhaps a more linear approach would suit your course better. If your course is film- or image-based then a grid layout might be more relevant and visually pleasing. Scalar allows us to create and structure information in a variety of ways that can reflect how we want students to approach the work. I use **Connections** for 'Joaquín' because I want students to undertake their own research on the poem. There is structure in the apparent chaos of the **Connections** visualisation, in that each student will embark on a unique journey through the learning materials. Thus, as well as developing digital literacy, Scalar presents opportunities to embed research and analytical skills. Scalar encourages this by allowing users to link resources, developing deep networks of knowledge using a range of digital resources, including text, audio-visuals and so on. These linkages need to be structured in meaningful ways, inspiring students to engage in joined-up thinking, developing strong critical digital literacies, empowered by their collective strengths and differences as people coming from varying academic contexts and requirements.

If you choose to collaborate digitally with students using Scalar you will need to allocate time to take them through the software, ensuring that they get registration keys and so forth. This can be quite time consuming, so organisation is key. Furthermore, universal design is a concern. While accessibility goes from strength to strength in online media, if there are students in the class who may have trouble accessing Scalar, or aspects of the Scalar book you create, this can mean barriers to learning. For instance, someone using a screen reader may find a non-linear and media-rich resource frustrating to use. Students at an economic disadvantage may not have access to a laptop, which can make in-class collaboration difficult unless you can access a computer lab in your institution. These are just a few examples of potential issues. The cornerstone of universal design for teaching and learning is to make a resource as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. Therefore, ensure that your Scalar textbook contains a variety of resources in order to give everyone a fair chance of encountering materials that they can engage with in meaningful ways. This will enhance the collaborative aspect of the project and provide ample opportunities for students to engage in social networking using research-based approaches.

Conclusions

While the sample text I use is in the context of English and Spanish, any literature in translation could be applied. Moreover, Scalar has so many possibilities beyond the study of literature. Within the wider context of literary studies and creative writing, Scalar could easily be employed as a tool for students pursuing creative writing, journalism and publishing. Structurally, Scalar presents so many learning opportunities beyond the content you create for students. Its novel use of pathways, annotations and comments to drive the narrative of a project moves away from the scrolling and clicking and linear blog-style open-source publishing tools of the likes of Wordpress. This in itself is not only a refreshing challenge for teachers who want to provoke new ways of thinking and drawing links between various aspects of the syllabus; it can also be an interesting exercise for students to think beyond the traditional structures that have long informed assignments such as essays, dissertations and so on.

Challenging structures is a cornerstone of my pedagogical approach. In *'Twessays and Composition in the Digital Age'*, I use cinematography theory to suggest the value of 'breaking the fourth wall of the classroom' via digital tools and methods. Pair this idea with translinguaging pedagogy, as I have in this tutorial, and we have a recipe for moving beyond perceived limitations of monolingualism into media-rich and linguistically playful digital classrooms where students can research, explore and progress in a spirit of experimentation and flexible structures. These learning infrastructures are provided not only by Scalar, a digital tool that encourages non-linearity, but also by teachers who are willing to go off the beaten path of pedagogy. In other words, the malleability of the tool is determined by the creative flexibility of the educator.

Moreover, in a world currently caught in the stranglehold of potential environmental catastrophe, attempts by conservative leaders to shut down borders and turn away refugees, and where the validity of the arts and humanities are continually questioned, pedagogical approaches that imbricate the very disciplines that allow us to communicate across borders, linguistic and otherwise, must be prioritised. Ultimately, I hope that this tutorial encompasses, in some small way, the following statement by bell hooks:

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. (207)

Author Information

Donna Maria Alexander is a writer and researcher with interests in contemporary queer and feminist poetry, pop culture, postcolonialism, and digital pedagogy. Her work is published in a range of journals including, *Alluvium*, *Hybrid Pedagogy*, and the *Forum for Inter-American Research*. She lectured in University College Cork in the School of English and Digital Humanities and the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures between 2010 and 2019. She received a 2018 UCC President's Award for Excellence in Teaching.


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