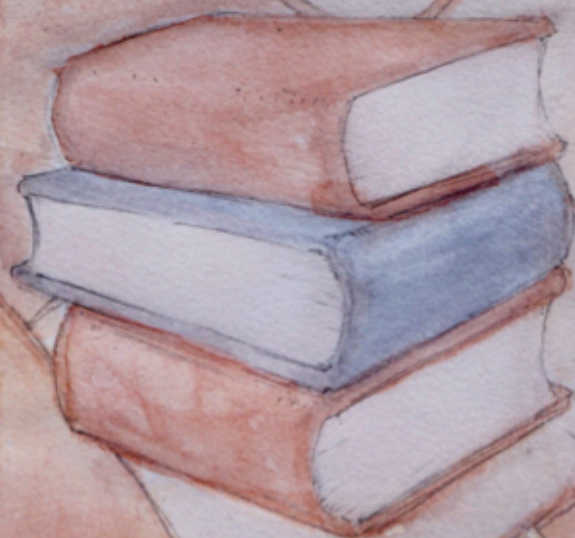


FRAGMENTS OF MEANING

Dialogues in Language,
Literature, and Culture



Montse Martínez Vázquez,
Daniel Nisa Cáceres
Sonia Casal Madinabeitia
(Editors)

Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture

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2024

Montse Martínez Vázquez, Daniel Nisa Cáceres, and Sonia Casal
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Preface

Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture brings together a selection of peer-reviewed contributions originally presented at the 47th International Conference of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies (AEDEAN), held at Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Seville, from 6 to 8 November 2024. With the participation of over 500 scholars from Spain and abroad, the conference reaffirmed AEDEAN's role as a leading forum for scholarly dialogue in the fields of English linguistics, literature, and cultural studies.

For the first time, Universidad Pablo de Olavide had the privilege of hosting this distinguished event—an occasion of particular significance, as it marked the association's return to the city where it was founded in 1976. Organising the conference was both an honour and a considerable undertaking for our young institution.

We are deeply grateful to AEDEAN for the trust placed in us, and to the Executive Board for their guidance and steadfast support throughout the planning process. Our sincere thanks extend also to the panel coordinators for their dedication to the design and peer review of the papers that underpin this volume, and to all contributors whose work is presented herein. We are especially indebted to our colleagues in the organising committee and the student volunteers, whose commitment and professionalism were vital to the successful execution of the event. The support of the Vice-rector for Research, the Department of Philology and Translation, the Faculty of Humanities, and the contributing research groups is likewise gratefully acknowledged.

This volume reflects the intellectual vitality and interdisciplinary breadth of the conference. Its essays explore how meaning is constructed, contested, and transformed across linguistic, literary, and cultural domains. Taken together, they form a compelling academic contribution, attesting to the dynamic, plural, and fragmentary nature of meaning itself. We hope that this collection will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, educators, and students alike, and as a testimony to the ongoing relevance and vitality of English Studies within both Spanish and international contexts.

The Editors

Introduction

The volume *Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture* is divided into three sections: Language and Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies, and Roundtables.

The first section brings together contributions that address the study of language from diverse but interconnected perspectives, including historical dialectology, sociolinguistics, digital communication, and foreign language pedagogy. Uniting these papers is a shared commitment to empirical rigour and interdisciplinary inquiry. The authors explore how language is shaped by and embedded in social practices—whether through the documentation of regional dialects in literary texts, the evolution of idiomatic fragments in contemporary usage, or the metalinguistic awareness of learners navigating multilingual digital spaces. These studies address critical questions regarding identity construction, linguistic variation, and the affordances of new media, offering valuable insights into the dynamic processes by which language is learnt, used, and transformed in both historical and contemporary contexts.

The second section of this volume comprises a diverse range of contributions examining Anglophone literature, film, and cultural production through the lenses of gender, identity, postcolonialism, memory, and affect. Collectively, these essays explore how literary and visual narratives negotiate complex intersections between history and imagination, trauma and utopia, embodiment and ideology. The contributions span a wide temporal and geographical spectrum—from Victorian fiction to twenty-first-century Caribbean, African, and Indigenous voices, demonstrating how literature and cultural texts continue to function as vital spaces for contesting normative structures and reclaiming marginalised perspectives. Applying critical frameworks including feminist theory, affect studies, eco-criticism, and posthumanism, the authors examine how aesthetic form interacts with sociopolitical structures, and how representation becomes a terrain of both constraint and resistance. This section seeks to affirm the enduring role of narrative in shaping, challenging, and transforming cultural meaning across contexts.

The third and final section of this volume features roundtable discussions and collaborative inquiries that push the boundaries of disciplinary thought in literary and cultural studies. These contributions engage with evolving theoretical paradigms—assemblage theory, the network turn, environmental

humanities, and transnational media criticism—to reflect on how literary texts and cultural forms can be reconceived in light of new epistemologies. Moving beyond the analysis of individual works, these roundtables examine larger conceptual constellations that shape and reshape scholarly inquiry. Whether interrogating the philosophical implications of networks, the aesthetic functions of care, or the imaginative capacities of post-western narratives, the section provides a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and methodological innovation.

Section I: Language and Linguistics

In “Late Modern Devonshire Speech: Exemplar Dialectal Realisations in Gwendoline Keats’ *On Trial* (1899)” René Tissens examines the literary representation of the Devonshire dialect in Keats’ novel *On Trial*, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies within the theoretical framework of enregisterment as proposed by Agha. The study uncovers how specific phonological and morphological features—such as initial fricative voicing (*vrom* for “from,” *zeed* for “seen”) and pronoun shifts (*her* for “she”)—index a stereotypical Devonshire persona, particularly the figure of the farmer. Based on historical sources and corpus analysis, Tissens demonstrates that Keats’ use of dialect reflects a broader social process of dialect recognition and stylisation, which serves to both authenticate characterisation and participate in the linguistic codification of regional speech. The paper contributes to the growing body of research on Late Modern English dialectology by highlighting underexplored southwestern varieties. “This Fragment Has Become Idiomatic, *if at all*” investigates the construction *if at all* in contemporary American English from a Construction Grammar perspective. Based on a comprehensive corpus analysis of nearly a thousand examples from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), Yolanda Fernández-Pena and Javier Pérez-Guerra trace the construction’s syntactic behaviour, semantic function, and diachronic development between 1990 and 2019. The authors posit that *if at all* functions as a construction in its own right, inheriting properties from conditional clauses and degree modifiers. It serves to ‘disfactualise’ propositions by introducing a gradient scale of likelihood, typically in final, anaphoric, and negatively polarised environments. Their analysis reveals a shift from written to speech-related registers and an increasing fixation of *if at all* in sentence-final position, suggesting ongoing conventionalisation.

The following four chapters deal with language teaching and acquisition. In “Exploring Social Media as Tools for English Language Teaching, Learning, and Research”, Ignacio M. Palacios Martínez and Paloma Núñez Pertejo present findings from an empirical study on the pedagogical and research potential of social media platforms in English language education. Conducted with over 230 undergraduate students at the University of Santiago de Compostela, the project encouraged learners to analyse their own social media discourse across platforms such as *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter/X*. The results reveal high levels of engagement, linguistic creativity, and metalinguistic awareness among participants, many of whom operated plurilingually, which underscores the viability of integrating informal digital practices into formal academic instruction and linguistic inquiry. María Deseada López Fernández offers a critical overview of linguistic mediation in “Linguistic Mediation in Adult Language Education: Past, Present and Future”, aligning her discussion with the evolving descriptors introduced in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and its Companion Volume. The chapter traces the pedagogical trajectory of mediation—from marginal consideration to its current status as a core communicative competence—highlighting how adult learners engage with texts, meanings, and social contexts through mediatory practices. Emphasising tasks such as summarising, paraphrasing, and facilitating intercultural understanding, the author advocates for a more integrative and dialogic model of instruction. Through a historical lens and forward-looking pedagogical proposals, the paper reaffirms the centrality of mediation in fostering plurilingual and pluricultural competence in adult learners.

The contribution by Grace Westfall Talamo and Isabel Oltra-Massuet focuses on primary education. In their paper, “Using Social Stories and Coping Skills to Teach Vocabulary in Primary Education”, they explore the use of social stories—a strategy originally designed for children with autism spectrum conditions—as an innovative approach for teaching English vocabulary in primary education. Talamo and Oltra-Massuet propose that these narrative-based interventions, which are structured around socially meaningful scenarios, not only support lexical acquisition but also foster emotional regulation and contextual understanding. From the findings of a pilot study, the authors demonstrate that combining social stories with explicit coping strategies enhances learner motivation and retention, which highlights the pedagogical relevance of tailoring vocabulary instruction to developmental and affective needs, while suggesting that such hybrid methodologies can

benefit a broader spectrum of learners beyond their clinical origins. In “The Other Side of CLIL: When Fear Disrupts Collaboration”, Noelia Castro-Chao and Tamara Bouso investigate the emotional and interpersonal challenges faced by pre-service teachers participating in *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) programmes. Based on a qualitative analysis of reflective journals and interviews, the authors expose the latent tensions and anxieties that often undermine collaborative teaching in CLIL settings. Rather than celebrating only the advantages of CLIL, the study reveals that fear—of linguistic inadequacy, of peer judgement, or of institutional expectations—frequently impairs cooperation and reduces teaching efficacy. The paper advocates for greater emotional awareness and institutional support in CLIL teacher training, calling for an approach that recognises vulnerability as a crucial factor in fostering genuine pedagogical collaboration.

The use of new technologies is discussed in the following two chapters. Rosana Villares and Carmen Pérez-Llantada investigate the intersection of digital literacy and science communication in “Digital Science Communication Training: Approaching Methods, Frameworks, and Outcomes”. By examining how digital tools are used to train early-career researchers in effective public engagement and framed within the theoretical paradigms of multimodality and genre theory, the authors present a synthesis of training models that equip scientists with communicative strategies for diverse audiences across online platforms. The study reveals a shift from traditional dissemination practices to more interactive and dialogic forms, such as blogs, video abstracts, and social media outreach. This shift emphasises the need for a pedagogy that combines rhetorical competence with technological fluency. Inmaculada Pineda studies in “Glance Back: Using Transmodal and Translingual Strategies in the Construction of Digital Identity” how users construct digital identities through transmodal and translingual practices across social media platforms. Using examples from *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and personal blogs, the study demonstrates how meaning-making in online spaces involves a dynamic interplay of visual, textual, and linguistic codes. Pineda adopts a semiotic and sociolinguistic perspective to show how users strategically navigate between languages and media modes to express affiliations, emotions, and stances. The paper posits that digital identity is co-constructed through interaction and shaped by audience design, technological affordances, and socio-discursive positioning, calling for pedagogical models that acknowledge and exploit these multimodal, multilingual resources as legitimate forms of communicative capital.

In their comparative study “Easy-to-Read in the UK, Ireland and Spain: Analogies and Differences”, Ana Medina Reguera and Desirée Avilés Márquez analyse the implementation of Easy-to-Read (E2R) guidelines across the UK, Ireland, and Spain, with a focus on accessibility in public discourse. Medina Reguera and Avilés Márquez examine policy documents, institutional initiatives, and sample texts to assess how E2R principles—aimed at enhancing linguistic accessibility for individuals with cognitive or linguistic challenges—are adapted within different sociocultural and legal frameworks. The findings reveal significant variation in the degree of institutional support, terminological consistency, and design approaches. The authors argue for the urgent need to harmonise E2R practices internationally and to reconceptualise them as tools for inclusive communication rather than mere technical accommodations. Finally, in “Motion Verbs in English Narratives: Is Manner Always the Most Frequent Verb Type?” Sílvia Garriga Galobardes investigates the use and distribution of motion verbs in English narrative texts, challenging the assumption that manner-of-motion verbs (e.g., *run*, *stroll*) are consistently dominant in English, a language typologically classified as manner-salient. Based on a corpus of fictional narratives, the study quantifies and categorises motion verbs according to Talmy’s motion event framework. While manner verbs remain prominent, Garriga’s nuanced analysis reveals contextual factors—such as genre conventions, narrative perspective, and characterisation—that influence the distribution of path and deictic verbs as well. The paper contributes to cognitive and typological linguistics by illustrating how pragmatic and stylistic considerations modulate the theoretical patterns established by motion typology.

Section II: Literature and Cultural Studies

Eduardo Varela Bravo’s “Joseph Blanco White’s Spanish and Irish Identities and Love: Rose Cusiack’s Symbolic Significance in *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833)” revisits the nineteenth-century religious polemic *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman* by Joseph Blanco White, examining the character of Rose Cusiack as a symbolic site where personal, national, and religious identities converge. The analysis elucidates how Blanco White—an exiled Spanish theologian with complex ties to both Catholicism and Anglicanism—constructs Cusiack not merely as a romantic figure but as an allegory of reconciled difference. A close reading of the text and its historical context suggests that that Cusiack’s representation mediates the author’s own bifurcated cultural affiliations, offering an idealised vision of

transnational and interfaith unity at a time of deep political and sectarian division. Francisco Muñoz Peláez's "The Utopian Solution to Feminist Dystopias: Reclaiming Women's Voices in Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* and Christina Dalcher's *Vox*" contrasts two feminist dystopian novels—Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984) and Dalcher's *Vox* (2018)—to explore how speculative fiction imagines language as both a tool of subjugation and a site of resistance. The analysis examines how each narrative constructs a linguistic dystopia in which women's speech is controlled or suppressed, and how both protagonists reclaim agency through linguistic innovation and subversion. The author contends that while *Native Tongue* posits a separatist, constructed language as utopian remedy, *Vox* relies on technological allegory and bio-political critique. Despite differing visions, both texts ultimately reclaim women's voices as a counter-discursive force capable of dismantling patriarchal structures, which highlights the enduring relevance of feminist linguistic utopias in a neoliberal age. Christina Angela Howes applies affect theory, particularly Lauren Berlant's notion of "cruel optimism" in "Ordinary Affects and Cruel Optimism: A Phenomenological Study of Affective Responses in Rachel Seiffert's 'Field Study'". The affective disorientation experienced by the protagonist as he confronts the aftermath of war and ethical complicity in post-conflict Bosnia is analysed. Through a phenomenological lens, Howes contends that Seiffert's prose enacts a slow temporality that resists narrative closure and accentuates affective ambivalence, contributing to the growing body of scholarship on affective ethics in contemporary literature and highlights how fiction can stage the fragility of moral perception in post-traumatic geographies.

In "Who Tightened the Umbilical Cord? A Gendered Reconstruction of Anja's Identity in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*", Gema Maíz Villalta re-examines the Holocaust graphic novel *Maus* through a feminist lens, focusing on the underexplored character of Anja, Vladek Spiegelman's wife. While much scholarship has centred on paternal trauma and testimony, Maíz Villalta highlights Anja's fragmented, silenced presence as emblematic of gendered erasure in narratives of survival. The chapter employs a psychoanalytical framework, invoking trauma theory and feminist psychoanalysis, to interpret Anja's suicide, fragility, and textual absence as symbolic of the pressures exerted by patriarchal memory structures and maternal expectation. The author challenges the text's androcentric focus, arguing for a "gendered reconstruction" that honours Anja not only as a victim, but as a subject whose erasure demands critical redress. M.^a Ángeles Toda Iglesia's chapter "Reading

Food in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks* (1871)" examines Hawthorne's European travel writings to explore the symbolic and cultural functions of food in shaping national and moral perception. Analysing descriptions of meals and food encounters in Hawthorne's *Notebooks*, Toda Iglesia shows how culinary experiences become encoded with broader anxieties about otherness, civility, and cultural distance. Italian abundance is often filtered through Protestant discomfort, while French refinement is approached with ambivalence. Food thus becomes a medium through which Hawthorne articulates both aesthetic appreciation and moral judgment. The paper highlights how everyday acts such as eating reflect deeper discursive patterns of national identity formation and cross-cultural encounter in nineteenth-century American literature. Iván de la Torre Franco's "The Monstrous Mother: An Exploration of Afro-Caribbean Motherhood in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and *Halsey Street* (2018)" explores maternal representation in two Afro-Caribbean diasporic novels: Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Naima Coster's *Halsey Street*. De la Torre Franco analyses how both texts interrogate dominant narratives of idealised motherhood by presenting complex, often painful, mother-daughter relationships shaped by colonial legacies, migration, and gendered trauma. Examining theories of monstrosity and maternal ambivalence, the chapter foregrounds how these novels resist normative scripts by portraying mothers as neither purely nurturing nor villainous, but as conflicted agents shaped by structural violence. Ultimately, the paper asserts that the "monstrous mother" becomes a site of narrative and cultural re-signification in contemporary Caribbean-American literature. Paula García-Rodríguez investigates the fusion of magical realism and feminist critique in "Magical Feminism, Violence and Fairy Tales in Atkinson's *Human Croquet*", focusing on how the novel reconfigures fairy tale tropes to expose gendered violence and historical silencing. The chapter situates Atkinson's work within the tradition of "magical feminism", where fantastical elements serve not as escapism but as subversive tools for rewriting patriarchal narratives. García-Rodríguez analyses how motifs such as time travel, enchanted forests, and metamorphosis are used to interrogate domestic abuse, female madness, and genealogical trauma. Consequently, Atkinson's revisionist storytelling challenges linear historiography and restores narrative agency to female characters through imaginative reclamation.

Carmen Velasco-Montiel explores how the publication and subsequent adaptations of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* have transformed her

reception in the Spanish cultural and academic spheres in “Turning the Tide of Ambivalence: The Impact of *The Handmaid’s Tale* on Margaret Atwood’s Feminist Reception in Spain”. Through an analysis of critical essays, translations, media responses, and academic syllabi, a shift is traced from early ambivalence—characterised by reluctance to label Atwood as feminist—towards her more recent status as an iconic feminist author. The study examines how the socio-political climate in Spain, especially in the wake of the feminist mobilisations of the 2010s, contributed to this reframing. Velasco-Montiel positively argues that the novel’s dystopian resonances with contemporary gender politics catalysed a renewed engagement with Atwood’s work, reinforcing its relevance in global feminist discourse. Paula Rustarazo Garzón’s “Representing Infertility: Identity and the Body in Myriam Steinberg’s *Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)Fertility*” analyses Canadian author Myriam Steinberg’s graphic memoir as a site where the affective and embodied dimensions of infertility are rendered visible and narratable. Blending visual rhetoric with autobiographical narrative, the memoir challenges dominant cultural silences around infertility by centring the female body as a space of agency, vulnerability, and perseverance. Steinberg uses the graphic form to depict bodily fragmentation, emotional cycles, and bureaucratic medical processes, thereby subverting the often-invisible experience of assisted reproduction. Ultimately, Rustarazo Garzón situates *Catalogue Baby* within a growing corpus of graphic pathographies that reclaim reproductive health as a feminist issue. In ““We Have Our Own Black Heroes’: British Black Power and the Figure of Michael X in *Who Needs a Heart?* (1991) by Black Audio Film Collective”, María Piqueras Pérez examines the political and aesthetic strategies employed to recuperate and reimagine the figure of Michael X, a controversial British Black Power activist. Rather than offering a linear biographical account, the film constructs a fragmented, polyphonic meditation on memory, militancy, and the aesthetics of resistance. Accordingly, the chapter analyses how the film resists hegemonic historiography by deploying non-narrative montage, affective soundscapes, and a refusal of moral closure. Piqueras Pérez contends that the film embodies a radical form of Black British historiography that contests invisibility and reclaims agency through experimental form. Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz interrogates the deconstruction of racial and cultural stereotypes in “Challenging and Dismantling Stereotypes in Jones’s *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* and Edwards’s *Monsters*.” Ibarrola-Armendáriz’s argument is that both American films challenge the visual and narrative conventions through which Latinx and marginalised subjects are traditionally

portrayed in Anglo-American media. By subverting genre expectations—neo-western and science fiction, respectively—these films articulate a critique of border politics, imperialism, and xenophobia. The analysis employs postcolonial and film theory to show how both works create ethical encounters between characters that unsettle viewer assumptions and promote intercultural empathy, while underlining the power of cinema as a medium for ethical imagination and sociopolitical critique.

Next, in “Cabinets of Curiosities, Labyrinthine Gardens and Kitchens Full of Spices: Victorian Spaces Through the Child’s Gaze in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*” Andrea Valeiras-Fernández examines how Lewis Carroll reconfigures quintessentially Victorian domestic and natural spaces through the imaginative perspective of a child. Based on spatial theory and childhood studies, the chapter analyses how cabinets, gardens, and kitchens become sites of both wonder and epistemological instability when filtered through Alice’s curiosity. These spaces, traditionally associated with order and domestic femininity, are subverted by scale shifts, magical transformations, and absurd logics. Therefore, Carroll’s depiction of space resists adult rationalism and Victorian hierarchies, offering instead a poetics of spatial disorder that mirrors the fluidity of childhood subjectivity. Esther Jiménez Rodríguez examines in “The Battle Between Order and Chaos and Its Reconciliation in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*” how this novel acts as a narrative meditation on the dialectic between political chaos and personal order across generations and geographies. Set against the backdrop of the Naxalite insurgency in 1960s Calcutta and the diasporic trajectories of its characters in the United States, Lahiri’s narrative navigates the aftermath of political violence within familial and affective realms. The tension between emotional withdrawal and ideological commitment structures the protagonists’ lives, ultimately proposing reconciliation through memory, transgenerational care, and quiet endurance. Lahiri’s minimalist style is read as a deliberate aesthetic of restraint that gives voice to submerged trauma and interstitial belonging. Violeta Duce’s “The Importance of (Self-)Representation: Adunni’s Herstory in Abi Daré’s *The Girl with the Louding Voice* (2020)” focuses on the narrative of Adunni, the Nigerian teenage protagonist of Abi Daré’s debut novel, who resists patriarchal and class oppression through linguistic and narrative empowerment. Written in a stylised, non-standard English that evolves alongside Adunni’s growth, the novel foregrounds self-representation as both theme and method. Duce argues that Adunni’s “lounding voice” reclaims narrative space for marginalised girls and critiques social structures

that silence them, while she situates the novel within African feminist traditions and global narratives of girlhood, emphasising the ethical and political stakes of allowing oppressed subjects to narrate their own lives in their own terms. In “‘Got My Loud Coat and Put It On Proudly’: Colour and Clothes in Anita Heiss’ *Avoiding Mr Right* (2008)”, Catalina Ribas Segura investigates the politics of dress and racial identity in Anita Heiss’s chick lit novel *Avoiding Mr Right*, focusing on how fashion functions as a performative marker of Aboriginal urban femininity. Ribas Segura reads clothing not simply as surface detail but as a symbolic system through which the protagonist asserts pride, resistance, and cultural hybridity in predominantly white spaces. She makes use of critical race theory and material culture studies to demonstrate how sartorial choices embody acts of defiance, visibility, and self-fashioning. The text challenges stereotypical depictions of Indigenous identity, presenting fashion as a site where postcolonial subjectivities are negotiated and affirmed.

Bárbara Arizti Martín “Competition and Cooperation in Peter Carey’s *A Long Way from Home*” is an analysis of the tension between competition and cooperation in Peter Carey’s novel *A Long Way from Home*, set during a 1950s car race that spans the Australian continent. The chapter investigates how the race allegorises national narratives of progress, settler colonialism, and Indigenous erasure, while also providing a space for unexpected solidarities and ethical reappraisals. Through shifting narrative perspectives and revelations about Aboriginal histories, Carey critiques white Australian mythologies and gestures toward reconciliation. Arizti Martín proposes that the novel stages a dialectic between individual ambition and collective responsibility, ultimately proposing a model of national identity grounded in historical reckoning and relational ethics. Lastly, in his historical investigation “Rafael Viera y Ayala y el nacimiento de *La Prensa de Nueva York*”, Juan Antonio Sánchez Jiménez rescues from obscurity the figure of Rafael Viera y Ayala (1880–1972), a Canarian immigrant and founder of *La Prensa* (1913), which would eventually become *El Diario/La Prensa*, a cornerstone of Spanish-language journalism in the United States. Using newly recovered archival material, including photographs and diplomatic correspondence, Sánchez Jiménez reconstructs Viera’s trajectory from Cuba to New York, tracing his entrepreneurial efforts and sociopolitical influence. The paper highlights Viera’s foundational role in shaping a modern, illustrated Spanish-language periodical intended to serve and represent the growing Hispanic community in early twentieth-century Manhattan. Sánchez Jiménez situates Viera’s work within a broader narrative of neglected Spanish contributions to U.S. media

history, calling for further academic attention to this overlooked yet foundational legacy.

Section III: Roundtables

The first roundtable, entitled “Assemblage Theory and the Network Turn: A Conceptual Framework for Anglophone Literature and Culture”, outlines the theoretical underpinnings and applications of assemblage theory within the ongoing research project “RELY” (Re-orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture). Rosario Arias, Carmen Lara Rallo, Ana Belén Martínez García, and Raquel García-Cuevas García offer a genealogy of the term “assemblage,” invoking the works of Deleuze and Guattari, Latour, and DeLanda, and connect it to the broader “network turn” in the humanities. The discussion emphasises the concept’s relevance across ontology, materiality, aesthetics, and care ethics. Each speaker contributes a unique perspective: Rosario Arias on assemblage and feminist care; Carmen Lara Rallo on Actor-Network Theory and Bill Brown’s re-assemblage; Ana Belén Martínez on the literary assemblage as epistemic practice; and Raquel García-Cuevas on feminism-as-assemblage following Braidotti and Grosz. Together, they advocate for assemblage thinking as a flexible, generative tool for engaging with contemporary literary and cultural crises.

In “Resisting the Capitalocene: Narrative Representations of Hope across Genres”, Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández, Leonor María Martínez Serrano, María Porras Sánchez, Silvia Pilar Castro Borrego, and Susana Nicolás Román confront the environmental and ideological crises of the Capitalocene through literary and cultural texts that foreground resistance, resilience, and speculative hope. Engaging with works across multiple genres—from eco-fiction to Indigenous storytelling—the speakers explore how narrative strategies articulate alternative futures beyond capitalist extraction. Topics include feminist reimaginings of relationality, ecological grief and repair, and posthuman entanglements. The participants collectively assert that literature serves not only to document planetary degradation but also to stage affective and political responses rooted in care, interconnection, and transformative imagination.

Alberto Lázaro, Fernando Galván, Silvia García-Hernández, and Marta Martín Amor’s roundtable “Voices from the Past: Creating and Recreating Historical Worlds” addresses the resurgence of historical fiction as a critical genre for re-examining dominant narratives through the creative reanimation of the past.

Focusing on the role of female perspectives, marginalised voices, and mythological reinterpretation, the speakers assess how contemporary novels rework classical and historical settings to expose silenced experiences. From Pat Barker's re-voicing of Briseis in *The Silence of the Girls* to Elodie Harper's *The Wolf Den* series on enslaved women in Pompeii, these works exemplify how fiction can interrogate and recuperate women's roles within canonical histories. The discussion affirms that historical fiction can operate as a feminist and decolonial strategy of narrative revision.

Finally, in "Other West(ern)s: Representation(s), Twists, and Transnational Visions", Amaia Soroa-Bacaicoa, Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz, and David Río Raigadas reconsider the cultural form of the Western through its postmodern, hybrid, and transnational permutations. Contributions analyse *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* as a fragmented meditation on justice and absurdity, Spanish "weird westerns" that blend gothic horror with frontier myth, and the podcast *Atlantic Express*, which revisits the American West from a Spanish perspective. The panel demonstrates how the West remains a productive symbolic terrain, capable of accommodating new media, hybrid genres, and global perspectives. By unsettling the mythic binary of savagery and civilisation, these texts reveal the elasticity and ongoing relevance of the Western in the twenty-first century.

Digital Science Communication Training: Approaching Methods, Frameworks, and Outcomes

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Abstract

Communicating science to the general public using the Internet and social media has become a key social priority on the professional development agenda of EU scientists. Here, we report on the complementarity of different research methodologies and frameworks used in the Erasmus+ DILAN project to address this priority. First, we applied ethnomethodology and AI tools to track EU STEM researchers' scientific productivity, the impact of their online science communication practices and their digital language and communication training needs. We also applied design thinking, the research methodology used to co-create an e-learning platform to address the scientists' training needs and all other users' needs (e.g., course facilitators). Finally, we summarise how we took the frameworks of genre theory and English for Academic Purposes, among others, as the theoretical basis to design two types of online training courses, a 4-week course and a massive open online course (MOOC).

Keywords: ethnographic research; AI; course design; digital communication; design thinking; genre-based learning

1. Introduction

The technological affordances of Web 2.0 pose several language and communication challenges to EU STEM scientists. From our professional practice and past teaching experiences training scientists in specialized language and communication skills, we know that they are not always aware of the multi-semiotic affordances for communicating science online or may not have time and/or interest in the emerging innovations for multi-channeled communication on the web. Also, although scientists are increasingly encouraged by Open Science policies to engage in science communication online to attain greater societal impact, for example, through citizen science, they need to develop communication and digital skills to engage citizens in scientific research processes. Public communication of science involves

using digital collaborative platforms and tools, digital media, academic social networking sites (LinkedIn, ResearchGate) and social networks (X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). Scientists also need to master language resources and rhetoric, including visual rhetoric. Then, their main challenges are how to accommodate science (Wickman and Fitzgerald 2019) to broad expert and non-expert publics and how to disseminate science effectively on the Internet using several semiotic modes (visual/verbal/aural) and media.

To cater to these important needs, we set up the Digital Language and Communication Training for EU Scientists (DILAN)¹ project, which aims to provide practical, effective and sustainable solutions that, we expect, will have a positive impact on EU STEM and non-STEM researchers' workforce and, indirectly, higher education and research institutions, and society. The number of researchers in Europe, according to the 2023 statistics, is 2.5 million (Eurostat 2025), including the business, government and higher education sectors. Therefore, it is expected that the impact of this project and its results will benefit a great majority of individuals.

The purpose of this paper is to report on the mixed-method approach carried out between 2023 and 2024 by all the project partners in order to design informed, relevant, and up-to-date digital training materials and resources. The remaining sections of the paper describe the different methodological approaches and their contribution to the creation of the digital training courses.

2. Methodologically grounded solutions

We approached the design of the training courses and materials through different complementary methodological perspectives to carry out an initial needs analysis and identify current science communication practices as well as factors influencing these practices. Afterwards, we applied design thinking to build an e-platform that could support the two-course types we planned to develop to cater to the scientists' needs.

¹ DILAN is a three-year Erasmus + partnership that involves 6 academic partners from European universities (Campus Iberus (Spain), Université De Bordeaux (France), Université Clermont Auvergne (France), OsloMet University (Norway), Academia De Studii Economice Din Bucuresti (Romania), Universitatea Ovidius Din Constanța (Romania) and two partners representing the business sector (Fundación Ibercivis and Kampal Data Solutions). We would like to thank our partners for contributing ideas to this article.

2.1. Ethnographic study

In the first phase of the DILAN project, we designed an international research study of current practices in digital science communication. To do so, we carried out a qualitative study based on structured interviews and focus groups (Creswell 2014). Structured interviews consisted of 17 pre-written questions sequenced and asked in the same order for each interviewee. The questions were grouped around three main areas: scientists' background information, results-sharing practices to broad audiences, and training needs related to science communication, digital skills, and genres. Regarding focus groups, research and university administration staff were invited to participate in groups of up to 5 participants. The focus group protocol consisted of three sections inquiring about institutional policies to promote science communication, perceptions of new forms of communicating science, and the identification of learning and training needs.

We collected 60 interviews from EU STEM researchers and 4 focus groups. All participants were affiliated with the DILAN's partner institutions in Spain, France, Norway and Romania. Data were analyzed following quantitative annotation systems. That is, the pre-written questions and answers were displayed in an Excel spreadsheet, where the interviewer could verify whether the interviewee matched a predetermined category or not. For example, if the interviewee mentioned the video abstract genre, it was added to the count (Dressen-Hammouda et al., in preparation).

The interview results can be accessed in an open-access report, which describes the main current practices, attitudes, and training needs regarding science communication (Birch-Becaas and Reynolds 2024). Several deliverables were also created by contacting six female researchers and asking them to record a video testimonial where they explained their science communication practices in digital media using a script that we created for such purpose. To create these testimonials, we use quantitative indicators that enable us to identify successful female scientist communicators. These videos serve as examples of good practice in online science communication to other STEM scientists.²

² The video testimonials are available here: <https://dilan4scientists.eu/index.php/video-testimonials/>

2.2. AI tracking

To complement the ethnographic study, we used AI tools to track the research productivity and impact of a selection of 11 highly active researchers. In particular, we relied on scientific output scraping systems based on natural language modelling to extract metrics from the productivity and impact of the researchers' research publications. To do this, we used Kampal Research, a data visualisation tool that generates global maps of collaborations to explore the ecosystem of each researcher and their community (see Figure 1).

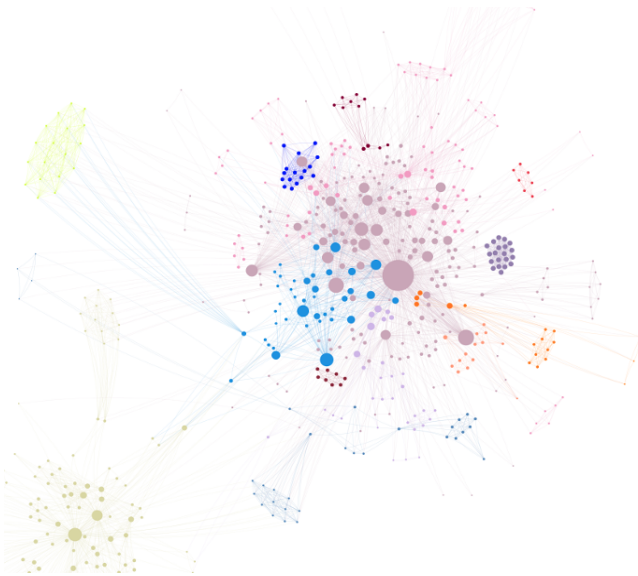


Figure 1: A researcher's network map

This network shows the researcher (node) and all the contributing co-authors who, at some point, have collaborated with them in each publication (e.g., a journal article). The links represent the collaborations made between the researchers. The different colours indicate different communities, which allowed us to identify the leaders of these communities. The size of the node represents the importance of the researcher in relation to their collaborations with relevant people in the network. That is, the larger the node, the more

important its contributors are by measuring the number and impact of their publications.

We also created a second map to quantify the impact of researchers' work using Google Alerts, Google Scholar and YouTube. The aim of this exercise was to identify each researcher's publications indexed on Google's platform and to analyse their impact on the scientific community by quantifying the citations they have generated in other publications. To do this, we used the keywords from the titles of each researcher's papers, using natural language models. This allowed us to identify all publications on the web that were related to the topics of the researchers' work. In addition to quantifying these publications, we identified the website where papers were published and their impact. Finally, for researchers who have a YouTube channel on which they disseminate research results, we launched activity tracking tools to identify the views of all your published videos and the number of "likes" obtained. By obtaining data before the official DILAN training programme, we want to assess the impact of the training on these forms of communication.

2.3. Co-design methodology

To develop and implement an online e-learning platform we used design thinking methodology (Brown 2008). This methodology allows the interoperability of partners and the possibility to anticipate unexpected problems and issues, thanks to its iteration-based approach and its scalability. Design thinking makes it possible to start using the platform with the necessary functionalities in its piloting stage and add more functionalities as new user needs arise. Design thinking provided us with a solution-based approach to solving problems, in our case, the technical development of the e-learning platform. It is particularly useful in tackling complex problems that are ill-defined or unknown, by understanding the human needs involved, re-framing the problem in human-centric ways, creating many ideas in brainstorming sessions, and adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping and testing.

The co-design sessions were held with the partners and resulted in a list of technical requirements for the platform and the functionalities needed to run the courses. The following requirements and functionalities were considered:

- diversity of users
- platform sustainability
- user interface/user experience
- responsivity, that is to say, ease of accessibility

- connectivity and interoperability with other platforms
- contents hosted on the project platform
- correct data management to ensure the privacy of the data collected by the platform

These initial ideation steps and the final requirements and functionalities provided a suitable basis for a design brief for the platform (prototyping phase), where we generated and selected ideas to solve the users' needs. Once the prototype was ready, we proceeded with the technical development phase to build the platform according to the requirements.

Design thinking methodology has been useful to develop the platform taking into account the homepage design authentication system for users, roles, and services, multimedia integration, training resources workflow, security and privacy, assessment and evaluation structure, collaborative tools such as discussion boards, data management of the platform to host, display and course the training resources. Furthermore, it helped us to determine the list of qualitative and quantitative indicators to validate the effectiveness of the e-platform and that of the two course types. We selected qualitative indicators, such as learner retention, as a key indicator of course success, and quantitative indicators, like the number of participants enrolled in the courses and the number of visits to the platform. To complement these indicators, we will also validate the participants' learning experience through an assignment-based science communication portfolio produced by the participants, other assignment-based digital texts produced by the participants during the course and, lastly, participant surveys and end-of-course evaluations.

2.4. Course materials design

Genre theory (Swales 1990), academic writing and composition studies (Bazerman 1994) and English for Academic Purposes and digital genre research (Hyland 2006; Miller 2016) set the theoretical grounding for the creation of digital resources and instructional materials for training researchers in digital scientific communication. Informed by this literature, the resources and materials created are diverse and of different formats to meet the diverse needs of scientists from different academic disciplines, countries, and educational/professional systems and infrastructures. They are aligned with existing EU frameworks (the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the *Common Framework of Reference in Intercultural Digital Literacies*). The course design includes course materials and tasks that

enable STEM scientists and non-STEM scientists in different disciplines and countries to communicate their research more effectively to public audiences through digital genres and media. In addition, they aim at educating citizen-scientists about digital scientific communication and give them the skills and tools necessary for such communication, thus contributing to solving an important societal challenge.

We carried out a systematic review of existing resources, compiled the relevant ones and discussed them with the partners. The design of the instructional materials for the two types of courses relied on the relevant literature in English for Academic Purposes, academic writing, academic literacy development, rhetoric and composition and multimodal composing. All materials, tasks, and assignments use genre-based pedagogy. Videotutorials have been created with the main contents of each course module. The approach we propose for the course design will draw on the cycle of rhetorical consciousness-raising (i.e., involving analysis > awareness > acquisition > achievement) (Swales and Feak 2012). This is a meaningful pedagogy to help students sharpen their ability to analyze language (written or spoken texts), become more aware of language uses and choices, and acquire new knowledge and skills to facilitate the implementation of what is learned. We also designed a portfolio of assignments to measure the learning outcomes of the trainees participating in the two types of courses.

The main outcomes are two types of training courses. Type 1 Training comprises a fully digital (online) course for scientists from different academic disciplines and countries to improve their science communication skills via digital media. It is a short course (4 weeks) to accommodate participants' busy schedules. Topics include the following:

- purposes, audiences, and contexts for digital communication of science
- typical genres for digital science communication
- matching digital media with the communicative situation
- recommendations for effective writing process and style
- recommendations for effective use of figures and other visuals in public science communication

Figure 2 shows the structure of this course is based on the latest research and practices in digital learning: user-centered design, interactivity and opportunities for participants to talk to one another and engage in peer

learning, collaboration among trainees, sequenced and scaffolded tasks, and assignments organized into learning modules.

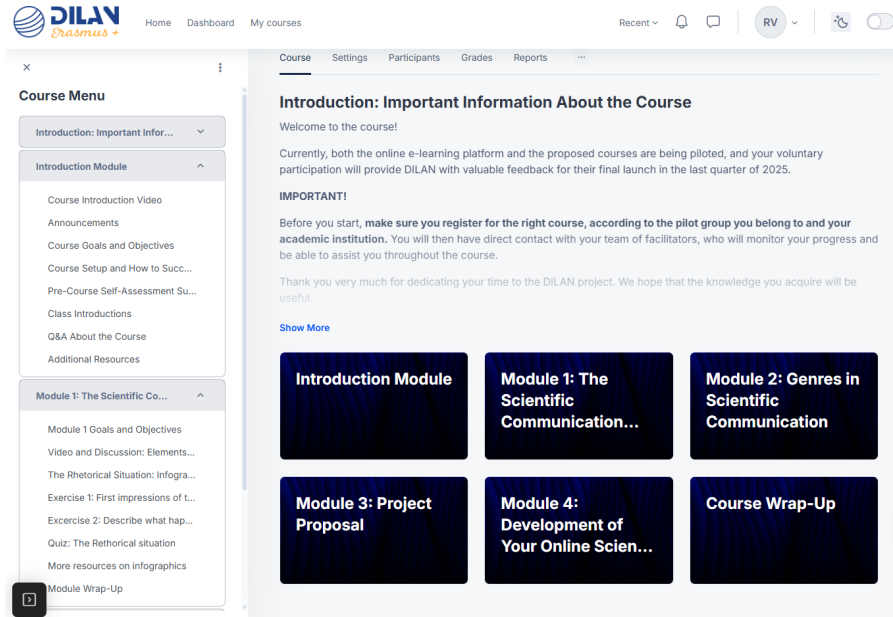
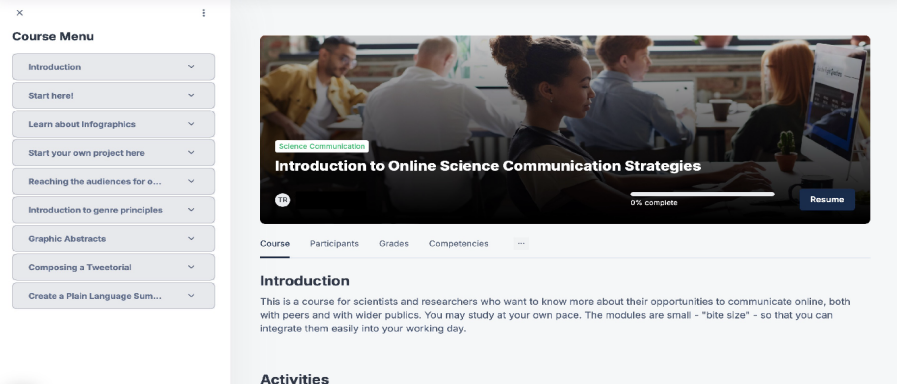


Figure 2: Overview of the 4-week course

Type 2 Training is a MOOC-style open-enrolment online course accessible to any scientists or members of the public in different countries interested in digital science communication. The target audience for this course is primarily citizen scientists and other members of the public. Therefore, the contents of the course are adjusted to meet their needs. Figure 3 displays an overview of the course.



The screenshot shows a user interface for a MOOC. On the left is a 'Course Menu' with a list of topics: Introduction, Start here!, Learn about Infographics, Start your own project here, Reaching the audiences for e..., Introduction to genre principles, Graphic Abstracts, Composing a Tweetorial, and Create a Plain Language Sum... Each item has a dropdown arrow. The main content area features a video player with the title 'Introduction to Online Science Communication Strategies' and a 'Resume' button. Below the video player are tabs for 'Course', 'Participants', 'Grades', and 'Competencies'. The 'Introduction' section contains a paragraph: 'This is a course for scientists and researchers who want to know more about their opportunities to communicate online, both with peers and with wider publics. You may study at your own pace. The modules are small - "bite size" - so that you can integrate them easily into your working day.' Below this is an 'Activities' section.

Figure 3: Overview of the MOOC

Both courses, which will be piloted, validated and finally launched in phase 3 of the project, offer innovative, lifelong learning opportunities for EU STEM scientists with different levels of expertise (cf. EURAXESS descriptors). We will train them in composing web-mediated texts such as author videos, lay summaries, explainer videos, infographics, video CVs, podcasts, three-minute thesis presentations, crowdfunding and citizen science project proposals, blogs and microblogging (X/Twitter, Facebook), among other digital innovations. The training will involve learning how to use language and other semiotic resources (multimedia/multimodal resources and digital media). In addition, aligning with the seminal genre literature (Swales 1990), we will train scientists in using their prior genre knowledge to compose other texts and in the use of transposable language resources so that they can communicate their science in different languages and reach multilingual audiences.

3. Conclusions

In today's increasingly interconnected world, higher education institutions and the R&D sector need to promote web-mediated communication in the STEM community and address the language and digital communication challenges faced by STEM scientists, in particular women scientists. It is urgent to provide professional development solutions that help scientists acquire and learn transversal skills (i.e., language, communication and digital skills) for

employability and civic engagement (European Commission 2019). The European Union has recognized that public communication of science is a key priority for society. To support this priority, DILAN provides solutions for the digital transformation of human resources in research. The integration of methods and frameworks can support innovative learning/teaching practices in creative ways. DILAN will support the European scientific community (with a special focus on women researchers) enhancing their resilience and capacity to communicate on the Internet and, by this means, promoting civic engagement, social responsibility and democratization of science, as well as other key EU values (multilingualism, digital literacy learning, and citizens' scientific literacy). We expect that the current developments of the DILAN project serve to highlight the value of integrating complementary methods and frameworks to make informed decisions about teaching/learning processes and outcomes and help scientists develop essential skills in professional and public science communication.

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