Multilingualism and digital methods teaching: conceiving pedagogical materials in a multilingual-first approach

There has been a recent proliferation of scholarly literature regarding multilingualism in digital humanities; the tendency becoming more perceptible from 2021 on, as shown by Josh Brown (2022) or this recent call for contributions of (Viola & Spence 2022). According to Paul Spence (2021), who observed a relative shortage of theoretical debate on the implications of linguistic diversity on DH scholarship, various spaces nevertheless opened in practice for scholars to express themselves in languages other than English in recent years. Spence sees that trend, for instance, through initiatives such as the editions in Portuguese and in Spanish of the DayofDH, the releases of edited issues of the DHQ journal in Spanish, French and Portuguese in 2018 and 2020, or even the linguistic versions of Programming Historian in these three languages in addition to the original version in English.

It is in fact through practice and various degrees of community engagement that multilingual initiatives – or indeed non-English language-centered initiatives – were born in the second half of the 2010s as a result of the need for (self)training on digital methods and tools. With the exception of *The Digital Orientalist* (Lit 2015) and various networking activities on Slavic languages, these initiatives concerned the three linguistics spaces of the French-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world. Up to a certain degree, these were European-led projects – such as [Ranke.2](#) or of global vocation, but essentially Western initiatives.

OpenMethods and the linguistic versions of Programming Historian (PH) are perhaps the best known among these initiatives. The former was created in 2017 (Engelhardt 2017) as "a multilingual hub and point of reference for researchers looking for existing tools that might be relevant to them" (Horvath 2021). The latter, founded in English in 2008, became a community-led methods review in 2012, and since 2016 gradually [added three linguistic subteams](#) to first launch *Programming Historian en español,* two years later *en français* and lastly *em portugês*. These two projects interact with linguistic resources in different ways. OpenMethods, on the one hand,[does not publish original contributions](#); it rather federates curated content in various languages without necessarily creating bridges between these contents, otherwise than aggregating them and diffusing them through a common website. PH, on the other hand, is principally mobilizing translations between its different linguistic versions. If, in the beginning, the non-English versions started as relays of translations of the lessons in English, they soon began publishing original lessons: the Spanish version [did so in 2019](#), the French [in 2021](#). Also, since 2022, an interesting movement could be observed: not only was the first translation from Spanish to English published, but two more were also published from Spanish to Portuguese. No doubt this was up to a certain degree an outcome of a conscious policy of PH (Sichani et al. 2019); nevertheless, a strongly community-based project, PH is rightly considered as one of the beating hearts of digital history (Clavert & Schafer 2019), and as such it can serve as an indicator of trends in the field of Digital Humanities.

In this context, we would like to present how we consider developing a multilingual-first initiative for creating teaching materials based on Tropy for historians in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French), none of which is English. Tropy is an open-source, free and

user-friendly tool that allows scholars to streamline the process of managing and making sense of the vast corpora of digital archival photographs that now form the basis for most historical research. With Tropy, researchers can easily add metadata to their photos, search and filter their archives based on different criteria, and analyze their collection to draw insights and connections. It also enables users to export their data in different formats and work on other platforms. Tropy is used by a large community of users and its user interface interface (UI) is available in a variety of languages, including English, German, French, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish, which also allows us to conceive the multilingual pedagogical materials using screenshots from its different UI's locale.

The three authors of this paper have been involved in various types of training activities for Tropy, in multiple linguistic environments. The teaching materials are meant to be developed on their firsthand experience with Tropy, as well as on their encounters with users from variegated cultural and linguistic settings. Thus, through a "collaborative" praxis (Gil and Ortega 2016), we wish to highlight work done in other languages and scientific traditions.   In addition to the pedagogical approach, we would also like to present the implications such an original initiative raises for authorship, translation and datasets used for training on digital methods in history and the humanities in general.

References

Alves, Daniel, Jennifer Isasi, Sarah Melton, Sofia Papastamkou, Jessica Parr, Riva Quiroga, Nabeel Siddiqui, Brandon Walsh. 'The Programming Historian: A Global Case Study in Multilingual Open Access and DH Tutelage/Instruction' (panel), *Global Digital Humanities Symposium*, Michigan State University, East Lansing, USA, 12 April, 2021.

Brown, Josh. "Whose Language? Whose DH? Towards a taxonomy of definitional elusiveness in the digital humanities", *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 2022;, fqac072 (2022). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqac072

Clavert, Frédéric & Valérie Schafer. « Les humanités numériques, un enjeu historique », *Quaderni*, 98 (2019). DOI : 10.4000/quaderni.1417

Engelhardt Claudia, Claudio Leone, Nicolas Larrousse, Delphine Montoliu, Yoann Moranville, Pierre Mounier, Jenny Oltersdorf, Paulin Ribbe, Ulrike Wuttke. "Open Humanities Methods Review Journal". Research Report. DARIAH, TGIR Huma-Num (UMS 3598), Göttingen State and University Library. 2017.

Gil, Alex, & Élika Ortega. "Global outlooks in digital humanities: multilingual practices and minimal computing" in Constance Crompton, Richard J. Lane and Ray Siemens (eds.), *Doing Digital Humanities*, 22-34. London: Routledge, 2016

Horvath, Alíz. "Enhancing Language Inclusivity in Digital Humanities: Towards Sensitivity and Multilingualism: Includes interviews with Erzsébet Tóth-Czifra and Cosima Wagner". *Modern Languages Open*, (1), 26 (2021). DOI: http://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.382

Lincoln, Matthew, Sarah Melton, Jennifer Isasi, François Dominic Laramée, 'Relocating Complexity: The Programming Historian and Multilingual Static Site Generation', *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 16, 2 (2022).

Lit, L. W. C. (Eric) van. "The Digital Orientalist: Scholarship Is Becoming Bigger and Better." *MELA Notes*, 88 (2015): 24–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43741180.

Melton, Sarah, Joana Vieira Paulino, Nabeel Siddiqui & Riva Quiroga, 'Programming Historian: A Multilingual Open Access Publication', *Open Publishing Fest*, (17 November, 2021).

Papastamkou Sofia, Jessica Parr & Riva Quiroga. 'Challenges for Digital Literacy in the Humanities: The Open, Community-Based and Multilinguistic Approach of The Programming Historian', *NewsEye's International Conference*, Europe, 17 March, 2021.

Quiroga, Riva. 'Multilingual Digital Humanites', Digital Humanities Long View Seminar, UCLDH, UK & CESTA, USA, 10 March, 2021.

Rojas Castro, Antonio , Sofia Papastamkou, and Anna-Maria Sichani, 'Three Challenges in Developing Open Multilingual DH Educational Resources The Case of The Programming Historian', *DH 2019 Conference*, ADHO, Utrecht, Netherlands (8 July 2019) https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02277639

Sichani, Anna-Maria, James Baker, Maria José Afanador Llach, and Brandon Walsh. "Diversity and Inclusion in Digital Scholarship and Pedagogy: The Case of the Programming Historian". *Insights: The UKSG Journal* 32 (1): 16 (2019). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.465

Spence, Paul J. & R. Brandao (2021). "Towards Language Sensitivity and Diversity in the Digital Humanities", *Digital Studies / Le champ numérique* 11(1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/dscn.8098

Viola, Lorella & Paul Spence (2021). "CfP - Chapters solicited for an edited volume on "Multilingual DH"", https://www.c2dh.uni.lu, https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/news/cfp-chapters-solicited-edited-volume-multilingual-dh