The Journal of Classics Teaching (2026), **27**, 64–73
doi:10.1017/S2058631025100718

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Research Article

Teaching Latin and Greek with a student-created video game: a case study from an Italian classical high school

Daniela Canfarotta[1,2,3] and Manuela Pipitone[4,5]

[1]Department of Humanities, Liceo Classico Francesco Scaduto, Bagheria, Italy, [2]Doctor Europaeus, Joint Degree, University of Palermo & Burgos, Palermo, Italy, [3]Department of Education, Burgos, Spain, [4]University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy and [5]Department of Sciences, Liceo Classico Francesco Scaduto, Bagheria, Italy

Abstract

This article explores an innovative case study in classical language education, focusing on a high school student who independently designed an educational video game inspired by Greek mythology. The project illustrates how digital creativity can effectively support the teaching and learning of Latin and ancient Greek. Three key aspects are examined: student autonomy and creativity in classical studies, the educational potential of merging classical content with digital media, and the implications for reimagining the role of Classics in modern curricula.

The initiative combines classical themes with interactive gameplay, transforming the learning process into an engaging, active experience. Rather than simply transmitting knowledge, the game reinterprets ancient content through digital storytelling and mechanics. This approach promotes critical thinking, interdisciplinary skills, and aligns with science, technology, engineering, art, and maths (STEAM) education principles. The teacher's role shifts from traditional instructor to facilitator, enabling authentic and student-driven learning. Overall, the study demonstrates how digital tools can foster immersive and meaningful engagement with classical languages and cultures. It presents a replicable model for curriculum innovation, showing that integrating technology with humanistic content can revitalise Classics education. The project positions ancient languages not as static relics, but as dynamic fields open to reinterpretation and creativity through contemporary digital means.

Keywords: ancient Greek; Latin; video game; student-led learning; STEAM

Introduction

The teaching of classical languages – particularly Ancient Greek and Latin – faces a crucial challenge today: how can we transmit the cultural legacy of antiquity within a society shaped by rapid communication, immersive technologies, and increasingly visual, interactive, and experiential modes of learning? The temporal, linguistic, and conceptual distance separating today's students from the ancient world often results in disaffection, a sense of alienation, or a perception of irrelevance, especially when teaching still relies on traditional content-driven and transmissive models.

Yet, the educational value of Greek and Latin – in terms of logic, argumentative rigor, linguistic structure, symbolic thought, and anthropological insight – not only persists, but becomes even more essential in an age defined by algorithms, automation, and artificial intelligence (Hunt and Bulwer 2025).

In this context, classical language teaching is called to reinvent its methods and forms of communication. Rather than sacrificing content depth, educators must find new ways to make classical material culturally meaningful, communicatively effective, and cognitively engaging for new generations of learners. As Hattie (2009) emphasises, the quality of teaching and the design of learning environments significantly influence educational outcomes. It is not enough to transmit content; learning must be made authentic, motivating, and transformative.

In recent years, the growing interest in the educational potential of video games has led to their increasing recognition as tools capable of promoting engagement, critical thinking, and active learning – even in the humanities. As Hunt (2022) notes, the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic marked a turning point for Latin teaching, forcing educators to experiment with digital strategies and integrate new technological skills into their regular classroom practice. Moreover, recent studies (Cannatella 2022; Di Donato and Taddei 2024) have shown that game-based learning can foster a creative and immersive relationship with classical heritage, harnessing narrative, simulation, and interaction. What is more, Ferding and Gandolfi (2023) offer an extensive overview of how games are employed for teaching and learning, addressing current industry trends such as eSports, game communities, and extended reality, as well as key debates on game toxicity, addiction, and media determinism. Projects such as *Gaming the Past* (Adelani, 2024) and *The Trojan War* (Salapata et al., 2024) demonstrate how historical and mythological games can stimulate source analysis, ethical reasoning, and learning through play. In Italy several meaningful initiatives have emerged as well, showing how video games can serve as inclusive and

Corresponding author: Daniela Canfarotta; Email: danielacanfarotta@hotmail.com
Cite this article: Canfarotta D and Pipitone M (2026). Teaching Latin and Greek with a student-created video game: a case study from an Italian classical high school. *The Journal of Classics Teaching* 27, 64–73. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

motivating tools, especially for students less responsive to traditional school approaches.

From a theoretical perspective, the effectiveness of video games in education is grounded in 2 major frameworks: the sociocultural model of situated learning (Vygotsky 1978), which emphasises the role of mediated environments in fostering active knowledge construction; and the reinforcement-based logic of behaviourist education (Vu 2017), which employs feedback, levels, and rewards to sustain motivation. Video games thus represent complex pedagogical spaces in which digital languages and classical content intertwine in polysemic ways, giving rise to interdisciplinary and culturally meaningful learning experiences.

In an educational landscape increasingly shaped by digital environments, pedagogical practice must also engage with the transformation of subjectivity itself. As Benanti and Maffettone (2024) note, the relationship between human beings and technology can no longer be understood in purely instrumental terms: we live in a *techno-human* condition, in which technology actively contributes to shaping individual and collective identity. In this context, technology becomes not only a tool, but also a form of cultural expression and self-representation. The figure of the 'augmented human' emerges – one who is capable of acting, thinking, and creating in symbiosis with algorithmic systems, thus generating new forms of learning, interaction, and design. From this perspective, the authors propose the concept of *digital paideia*: a renewed form of humanistic education that does not oppose tradition and innovation, but integrates them, reviving classical values through the codes and languages of the present. The ethical foundation of this vision lies in digital sustainability – defined as the safeguarding of personal dignity and freedom in technologically saturated environments.

Faced with this profound transformation, teaching cannot merely use technology as an add-on; rather, it must critically engage with its meaning and direct its use towards ethical and humanistic educational goals. Even in the field of classical languages, this opens new avenues for an integral education – one that can bring tradition and innovation and memory and future into meaningful dialogue.

Research context and objectives

The case study presented in this article concerns a high school student enrolled in a science, technology, engineering, art, and maths (STEAM)-focused classical high school in Southern Italy, with a strong personal passion for both Ancient Greek and Mathematics. Motivated by an educational stimulus received at school and a personal interest, the student independently designed an interactive video game using Python and integrated artificial intelligence (AI) tools within the Unity platform with the aim of engaging younger audiences with classical culture.

The project, which combines mythology, storytelling, classical language elements, and digital interaction, serves as a tangible example of digital paideia: an educational model that harmonises tradition and innovation, regenerating ancient knowledge through contemporary technologies in an ethical and intentional manner. In this light, the student's creative act is not seen as an isolated effort, but as a possible educational response to the challenges facing Greek and Latin instruction in the digital age.

Within this framework, digital paideia is conceived as a form of *augmented classical education* – a model that combines cultural depth, technological design, and anthropological awareness. The use of technology is not aimed at simplifying content, but at making it more accessible and meaningful, especially for students who live and learn in increasingly interactive, multisensory, and dynamic environments.

The student's video game functions as a hybrid educational space where innovation and tradition meet, and where creativity becomes a form of cultural agency. Its primary goal is not entertainment in the strict sense, but rather cultural and educational: to offer children and young people an accessible and engaging interactive experience that introduces them to the richness of the classical world. Through digital environments, mythological symbols, and etymological storytelling, the game seeks to foster curiosity, critical thinking, and active learning, promoting a view of classical culture as a living and shareable legacy.

The originality of this initiative becomes particularly significant when considered in the context of the student's educational background. In Italy, the school system, regulated by the Ministry of Education and Merit (*Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito*, MIM), is divided into 2 main cycles: the first includes primary school (ages 6–11 years) and lower secondary school (ages 11–14); the second includes upper secondary school (ages 14–19), comprising *licei* (classical, scientific, linguistic, human sciences, arts, and music high school), as well as technical and vocational institutes (Figure 1).

Since the 2010/2011 academic year, a national education reform has distinguished between 5-year upper secondary school programmes and regionally administered vocational training pathways (*Istruzione e Formazione Professionale*, IFP). In particular, technical and vocational institutes are designed to prepare students for direct entry into the workforce, whilst *licei* – and especially the classical high school – offer a predominantly theoretical and humanistic education (Table 1). Within this framework, the autonomous adoption of a complex development tool such as Unity – typically associated with technical or professional curricula – and the creation of an educational video game highlight not only strong self-directed learning abilities, but also the development of skills already aligned with real-world professional contexts.

The STEAM curriculum context and research objectives

The STEAM curriculum includes, in addition to the standard *Liceo Classico* (classical high school) programme, several subject enhancements. In the first 2 years (the *biennio*), an Art History module is introduced in English, taught using the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) methodology, with one weekly hour dedicated to this subject. Mathematics is reinforced throughout the 5-year programme with one additional hour per week: 4 hours weekly during the *biennio* and 3 hours in the final 3 years (*triennio*). Additionally, one extra hour of Natural Sciences (which includes chemistry, biology, and Earth science) is provided during the *triennio*, bringing the weekly total for that subject to 3 hours (MIM 2010). On the basis of this context, the objectives of this study are:

- To explore how a student's autonomous initiative can contribute to the transmission of classical culture in innovative ways;
- To analyse the educational and symbolic meaning of the project in light of the concepts of digital paideia and the techno-human condition (Benanti and Maffettone 2024);
- To reflect on the pedagogical implications of integrating humanities content and digital tools for the enhancement of Greek and Latin education.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

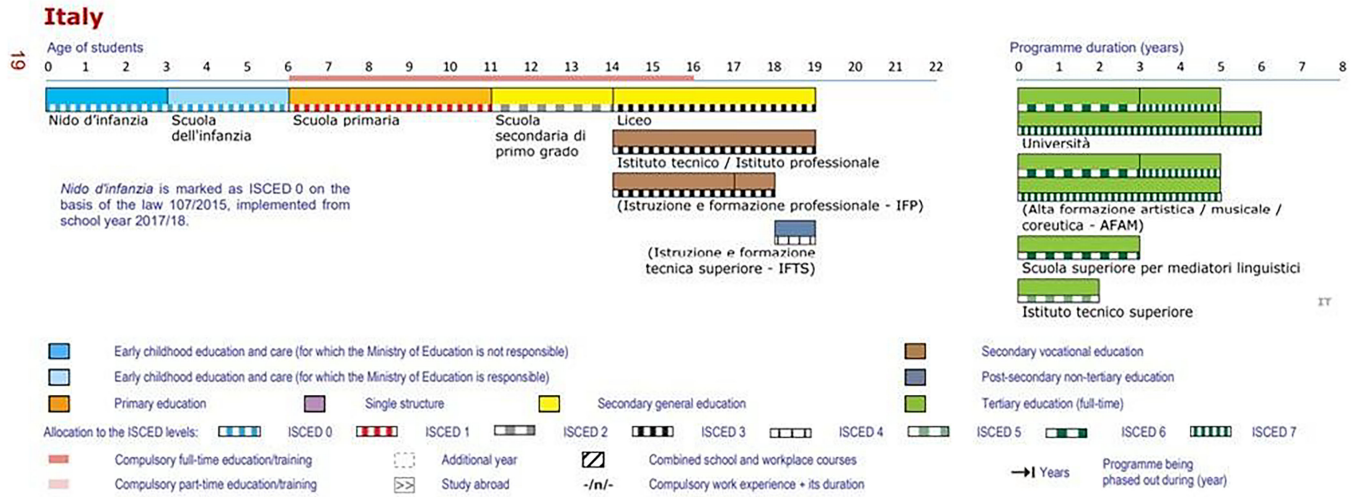


Figure 1. Education in Italy (European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency et al., 2021).

Table 1. Organisation of the classical high school subjects

Subject per week	First 2 years		Second 2 years		Last year
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Italian language and literature	4	4	4	4	4
Latin language and culture		5	5		4
Greek language and culture	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign language and culture	3	3	3	3	3
History	2	2	3	3	3
Geography	1	1	–	–	–
Mathematics	3	3	2	2	2
Philosophy	–	–	3	3	3
Physics	–	–	2	2	2
Natural sciences	2	2	2	2	2
Art	–	–	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Religion or alternative subject	1	1	1	1	1
Total hours	27	27	31	31	31

This research is guided by the following central question: How can the autonomous creation of an educational video game by a high school student serve as a meaningful example of digital paideia applied to the teaching of Greek and Latin?

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach focused on a single, emblematic case study (Bryman 2016). Through interviews with the student, direct observation of the developed video game, analysis of the materials produced, and theoretical contextualisation, the study aims to explore the cultural and pedagogical significance of the student's creative act.

To analyse the content of the student interview, an inductive thematic analysis was used, following the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interview, conducted in a free narrative form, was considered as a whole unit of analysis, with the goal of allowing meaningful themes to emerge organically from the participant's own expression.

Coding was carried out through a careful and iterative reading of the text, identifying semantic patterns, conceptual clusters, and particularly relevant passages from educational, cognitive, and pedagogical perspectives. The identified themes were grouped into macro-categories, each subdivided into descriptive subthemes, and assigned representative qualitative codes.

This method made it possible to highlight the complexity of the student's experience, revealing both the personal motivations behind the project and the independently developed skills and methodological choices. The analysis focused on 5 key dimensions:

- Individual motivation and school context
- The educational function of the video game
- The development of transversal competencies
- The implicit pedagogical approach
- The digital reinterpretation of classical culture

The methodology, in summary, privileges a symbolic and educational reading aimed at understanding how the integration of humanistic and digital languages can influence the teaching of Greek and Latin.

The analysis followed a hermeneutic approach, seeking to grasp the internal coherence of the project, its expressed and implicit educational intentions, and its symbolic relevance to classical language pedagogy.

Data collection tools

To carry out the investigation, qualitative tools were employed to capture the full complexity of the case study. Specifically, the following methods were used:

1. Documentary and textual analysis of the video game

   An in-depth study of the video game's structure was conducted, focusing on textual, narrative, linguistic, and iconographic content. The analysis examined:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

- Explicit references to Greek mythology and culture
- The modes of presenting classical content (for example, texts, puzzles, dialogues)
- The use of specialist vocabulary and any inclusion of ancient Greek language elements
- Aesthetic and symbolic choices used to represent antiquity

2. Direct and participatory observation

   The game was tested and observed during simulated sessions with peers to evaluate interaction dynamics, engagement levels, and responses to classical content. Observations were recorded through narrative field notes and critical reflections, which supported the interpretation of the game's educational value.

3. Semi-structured interview with the student-creator

   An individual semi-structured interview was conducted with the student who created the project. The interview aimed to explore:
   - The motivations behind the game's development
   - The creative process and sources of inspiration
   - The student's personal perception of classical culture and its relationship with technology
   - The educational and communicative intentions of the product

   The interview was fully transcribed and analysed interpretively to extract key conceptual elements consistent with the study's theoretical framework.

4. Critical reinterpretation within a theoretical framework

   Finally, the data were interpreted through the conceptual lens of the techno-human condition (Benanti and Maffettone 2024), with the aim of connecting the emerging findings to a broader educational context oriented towards the construction of a digital paideia.

Case analysis

Student profile

The student featured in this study is 17 years old and currently in the third year of a STEAM-oriented classical high school in southern Italy. In October, a Latin and Greek teacher proposed a challenging assignment to the class: how to make classical culture more accessible to younger generations. The student, who is equally passionate about the humanities (particularly Ancient Greek and mythology) and STEM subjects such as mathematics and computer science, chose to combine these interests into a personal project: an educational video game built with Python and enriched with artificial intelligence functions to enable user interaction.

In the previous 2 years, the student had participated with classmates in an immersive virtual reality project using CoSpaces, as documented by the authors. Within this context, a mathematics teacher introduced them to basic programming skills using Python and supported their first experiments with AI.

Presentation of the video game

The student creatively developed a synthesis between disciplines by designing and building an educational video game, as summarised in Table 2.

The video game, developed in Italian using the Unity graphic engine, is designed to offer an immersive experience that blends fun with the learning of Ancient Greek. Within the game, well-known myths are interwoven with engaging educational elements, enabling players to explore and discover common Greek vocabulary in a dynamic environment.

Table 2. Technical overview of the educational video game *Mythos*

Feature	Description
Title	Mythos
Creator	High school student (third-year, Liceo Classico)
Development	2024
Development platform	Python programming language + Pygame libraries, integration of AI modules (NLP), Unity engine
Educational goal	To engage children and teenagers (ages 9–13) with Ancient Greek mythology, language, and culture through interactive gameplay, making abstract or difficult material more vivid and narrative
Target audience	Primary and lower secondary school students (informal education and workshop use)
Subject content	Greek mythology (Pantheon, heroes, epic tales); elements of Ancient Greek language (alphabet, key words); historical geography; core values of Greek paideia (*areté*, *sōphrosynē*, *xenía*)
Game structure	Explorable map of Ancient Greece; narrative missions; dialogues with mythological characters; vocabulary quizzes and translation games; logic minigames with cultural references
Game engine	Interaction driven by a hybrid system of predefined and generative responses (AI)
Visual and audio elements	2D graphics inspired by Attic pottery and Pompeian frescoes; historically recreated ambient sounds
Learning approach	Exploratory learning through play, interactive storytelling, immediate feedback
Innovative features	AI integration for realistic dialogues; simplified language and accessibility for younger users; modular and expandable structure (for future ancient civilisations)
Educational values	Development of critical thinking; active engagement with classical culture; promotion of digital literacy as a creative, not passive, tool

Users interact with a variety of mythological characters, including mortals, gods, goddesses, animals, and monstrous creatures. Taking on the role of the protagonist, players experience unique adventures and complete missions that vary according to the myth selected. Along the way, the player encounters Ancient Greek terms that share surprising affinities with Italian, enhancing learning through visual association and consistent reuse of new vocabulary. The linguistic connection between Greek and Italian fosters more effective retention of verbs and nouns.

The game culminates in a final challenge, where players must apply the knowledge and strategies acquired during gameplay in a conclusive showdown. Figures 2–5 show selected screenshots of the video game.

Presentation of an example of field notes for the test of the game "Mythos"

Date: 23 April 2025
Location: Classroom of the Classical High School
Session duration: 30 minutes

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 2. Home screen of the video game.



Figure 3. Example of an in-game scenario.

Number of participants: 4 students (2 male, 2 female, aged 15–16 years)

1. Descriptive observation
   - The participants were immediately curious about the game interface, set in a scenario inspired by Ancient Rome, and they began exploring without waiting for detailed explanations.
   - Interaction with the platform was natural: all players quickly understood the implicit rules through exploration.
   - During the phases when they moved from the Italian word to its Latin or Greek etymology, multiple verbal interactions occurred amongst participants: they compared hypotheses and commented aloud, sometimes with irony, but always staying focused on the objective.
   - A particularly interesting moment occurred when 2 players noticed that a Latin etymology suggested multiple plausible solutions: this generated a brief cooperative discussion that led to a shared solution.
   - An increasing competition between groups was observed, which did not compromise internal collaboration.
   - Signs of engagement: laughter, requests to "replay" a part, emotional reactions to the successful completion of a phase (spontaneous applause).
2. Critical and analytical reflections
   - The game seems to stimulate experiential learning and collaborative problem solving; although the environment is playful, the focus on etymologies activates authentic linguistic reflection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 4. Example of an in-game scenario.



Figure 5. Example of an in-game scenario.

- Interactivity facilitates the construction of meanings and not simply memorisation: students were not looking for 'the right answer' but the logic of linguistic derivation.
- The most visible soft skills were collaboration, communication, and situational leadership, and some students led the group without imposing themselves, encouraging dialogue.
- The 'historical–immersive' interface also worked on an emotional level: it brought 'to life' content that is often perceived as abstract or anachronistic.
- Emerging questions:
  - What would happen if the game were tested on younger students?
  - Can the competitive aspect help or hinder learning in different contexts?
  - What is the role of teacher mediation during these sessions?

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Interview with the student

Below is the full interview with the student explaining how the idea for the video game originated.

> Starting from a challenge launched by the Latin and Greek teacher, I investigated what I wanted to propose as an innovative and enjoyable idea for an introduction to Latin. So, I decided to create a Serious Game that, beyond defining an idea about the discipline itself, would make evident to what extent Latin is directly linked to Romance languages and how we can benefit from studying this classical 'dead' language. First, I specify that Serious Games are video games that go beyond mere entertainment but rather connect it to the development of one or more educational skills (hard skills) and also the human qualities necessary not only for school life (soft skills). I want to emphasise that Serious Games are considered such if they include 3 components: a formative component (the Serious Game must have an educational intent), a playful component (the Serious Game must have a clear game content), and a simulation component (the Serious Game must have the aspect of a reality simulation). If, indeed, the situation presented inside the Serious Game has a high degree of realism, it will be much easier for the user to apply the digitally obtained knowledge to real life. Moreover, playing can develop soft skills and thus education is understood in a broader sense. The first to be considered a true Serious Game was *America's Army*, presented in 2002, a video game that was not based on a school educational link but was focused on the responsibilities of members of the American Army. Serious Games thus originated as military life simulators (Wargames) and were implemented as tools for school education only later. So, after thorough research, I understood that creating a Serious Game for Latin would be ideal. But how can a Serious Game be linked to a classical language? What are the beneficiary and active skills we can derive from it? I wanted to create an enjoyable video game by implementing a multiplayer lobby (matches amongst multiple players) so as to allow users to interact with others to find solutions. Consequently, the user will test their leadership skills (soft or life skills), confronting their ally to reach a solution through experimenting with new strategies destined to strengthen, useful for developing critical thinking and promoting problem solving (soft skill). So I chose Unity (game development engine . . .) to bring the atmosphere of the Latin world back to life on screen, recreating the classical environment. Having done this, all I had left was to assign players an objective, which would soon make necessary and consolidate the use of the logical–deductive method and user collaboration.
>
> The game consists of 2 steps: From the definition to the Italian word derived from Latin/Greek and from the word to the Latin/Greek etymology. In this way, each player, besides acquiring the human qualities already mentioned, will increasingly approach a conception of constructive and self-regulated learning. Thus, they will actively develop new learning strategies and develop the metacognitive method that promotes the growth of each student not only at school but also in everyday life.
>
> To conclude, I want to emphasise that my project *Ludo Disciplina* aims to convey, starting from the creativity and beauty of the classical Latin language, a strong message that seeks to internationally remind the necessity of promoting the human qualities of students.

Data analysis

To analyse the content of the student interview, an inductive qualitative thematic analysis was adopted, following the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interview, conducted in a free narrative form, was considered in its entirety as the unit of analysis, with the goal of spontaneously identifying significant themes emerging from the participant's expressed content.

Coding was carried out through careful and repeated readings of the text, identifying semantic recurrences, conceptual cores, and passages particularly relevant from formative, cognitive, and pedagogical perspectives. The themes were organised into macro-categories, each divided into sub-themes or descriptive categories, which were associated with representative qualitative codes.

This method highlighted the complexity of the experience narrated by the student, emphasising both the personal motivations behind the project and the skills developed as well as the methodological choices made independently. The analysis focused particularly on 5 dimensions: individual motivation and school context; the educational function of the video game; the development of transversal skills; the implicit pedagogical approach; and the digital reworking of classical culture. Table 3 presents the entire analysis process.

The interview reveals a highly reflective student profile, capable of integrating humanistic content and digital tools within a broad and innovative educational vision. Cognitive, relational, and value-based dimensions intertwine in a project that exceeds the curricular expectations of a classical high school, positioning the student as the true protagonist of their own learning.

Discussion

The analysed interview highlights important aspects when compared with the initial theoretical framework:

1. Personal motivation and school context: The student shows a high degree of agency and autonomy (Mezirow 2003). The teacher's proposal acts as a catalyst, but the project's elaboration stems from an internal and reflective motivation (Lave and Wenger 2006).
2. Definition and enhancement of the Serious Game: The intervention demonstrates advanced meta-reflective and theoretical knowledge (Bruner 1998). The student builds a bridge between digital practice and pedagogical framework, making explicit the methodological assumptions of their work.
3. Transversal skills and personal development: There is strong attention to the student's integral development. The game is not only a means to learn content, but also a formative device that enhances relational and decision-making skills (Benanti and Maffettone 2024; Ferding and Gandolfi 2023).
4. Pedagogical approach and meaningful learning: The interview reflects a vision of learning as an active, reflective, and strategic process, in line with constructivist pedagogy and transformative education paradigms (Vygotskij 1978; Vu 2017).
5. Enhancement of classical culture through innovation: Classical culture is renewed and updated through technological language (Hunt 2022). It is not nostalgia, but a functional reinvention that makes it alive and useful for the present (Hattie 2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 3. Thematic analysis – student interview

Main theme	Sub-theme/category	Qualitative code	Exemplary text excerpt
1. Motivation and personal agency	External stimulus as starting point	Educational challenge	"Starting from a challenge launched by the Latin and Greek teacher . . . "
	Autonomous search for meaning	Personal initiative	" . . . I investigated what I wanted to propose as an innovative and enjoyable idea . . . "
2. Educational role of the video game (serious game)	Distinction between play and learning	Formative function of the game	" . . . they go beyond mere entertainment but rather connect it to skill development . . . "
	Conceptual structure of Serious Game	Triple component	" . . . formative component, playful component, simulation component . . . "
	Cultural and theoretical references	Historical context	"The first to be considered a true Serious Game was America's Army . . . "
3. Development of transversal skills	Soft Skills	Leadership, problem solving	" . . . Leadership capacity [. . .], development of critical thinking and promotion of Problem Solving . . . "
	Collaborative work	Cooperative learning	" . . . allowing the user to interact with others to find a solution."
4. Innovative pedagogical approach	Active and self-regulated learning	Constructivism	" . . . a conception of constructive and self-regulated learning."
	Reflection on own learning	Metacognition	" . . . actively developing new learning strategies and developing the metacognitive method . . . "
5. Digital reworking of classic culture	Use of technology to enhance humanistic content	Tradition and innovation	" . . . bringing the atmosphere of the Latin world back to life on screen . . . "
	Ethical–educational purpose	Humanisation of learning	" . . . a strong message that seeks to internationally remind the necessity to promote human qualities . . . "

Thus, this project was not a mere technical exercise. It enacted a cultural synthesis, where the depth of humanistic content was conveyed through languages familiar to younger generations. It was a form of creative translation that did not trivialise knowledge but reformulated it to make it accessible. Moreover, the fact that it was carried out by a student demonstrates that integration between classical and digital can emerge bottom-up, through authentic and meaningful personal experiences (Cannatella 2022).

The high school student's experience, mastering programming tools and artificial intelligence to create a video game introducing younger students to classical culture, represents an emblematic example of the 'techno-human condition' described by Benanti and Maffettone (2024). This creative act is not only a technical use of digital tools but also an ethical and formative act in which the machine becomes a means to humanise and transmit beauty, culture, and memory. Technology, in fact, is configured as an anthropological environment within which an augmented subjectivity articulates, capable of integrating technical–scientific skills and educational intentionality. The video game thus becomes a kind of digital agora, an interactive and participatory space where classical knowledge is resemantised and made accessible, embodying digital paideia: a model that does not replace tradition but regenerates it, creating a bridge between worlds and generations.

In light of this perspective, the young humanist programmer's gesture is a concrete expression of digital paideia, in which technique is not a mere vehicle but an ethical and formative environment. Moreover, the project embodies a form of digital sustainability, in which technology amplifies human capacity to communicate and transmit cultural values without replacing or diminishing it. The student becomes not a mere user but a co-creator of a new educational experience that combines tradition and innovation in a responsible perspective.

Furthermore, the student developed the video game on classical myths using the Unity platform, an autonomous choice that represented a qualitative leap beyond the planned educational path. Although he had only learned basic programming in Python during math lessons, the student independently tackled a tool known to be more complex and generally considered beyond the reach of a high school student without specific technical training (authors). This initiative not only highlighted high personal motivation and self-learning ability, but also demonstrated skills already applicable professionally, since Unity is widely used in commercial video game development.

This dynamic exemplifies digital project work guided by formative purpose, anthropological responsibility, and digital sustainability: founding values of integral humanistic education in the algorithmic era. This paradigm opens important perspectives for teaching, suggesting paths in which students can be active and creative protagonists, able to forge new cultural languages. In particular, an interpretation through the lens of techno-human anthropology (Benanti and Maffettone 2024) highlights:

- Humans as a bridge between times and knowledge: this student does not separate the past from the present; he uses technical language to bring alive what belongs to the ancient world. In this sense, he is heir to both Prometheus and Plato: lighting fires in young minds, bringing them the gift of knowledge not with sermons but through an interactive, immersive, current experience. This is already a philosophical action and, in a profound sense, educational.
- Creativity as a high form of the human: creating a video game is not just a technical act but an imaginative and narrative act. It requires empathy (knowing how children feel), cultural understanding (translating the Greek world into a playful

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

language), logical design (code, algorithms, AI), and an ethical goal (promoting cultural beauty). This creative act manifests a high form of the human: integrating reason, imagination, and will oriented to the good.

- A form of contemporary paideia: in the Greek world, paideia was the formation of man through culture, beauty, and truth. Today, this young person proposes a digital paideia: educating through new tools without losing content depth. There is no betrayal of the classical, but regeneration. The medium changes, the message renews.
- Intelligence as relationship and gift: choosing to create something for others, for 'the younger ones', is not only a sign of competence but also of relationship. Intelligence, in the highest sense, is not just calculation ability but also the capacity to give meaning, build bridges, and help others grow.
- An example of anthropological hope: in a time when technology is often feared to extinguish humanity, this gesture shows the opposite: an alliance between humanism and technology, between past and future, is possible. Such a young person is not an isolated exception, but a sign of what humanity can become if harmoniously educated.

Another notable element is that the project originated from a Latin and Greek teacher who issued a challenging task (Bruner 1998). The presented case offers important insights for teaching classical languages. According to the multidimensional educational leadership framework proposed by James et al. (2020), the teacher's action can be viewed through the structural, human, political, and symbolic dimensions of leadership action:

- Structural dimension: The teacher placed the task within the normal curricular activity, exploiting possibilities offered by competency-based teaching. The task was open, authentic, and interdisciplinary, yet coherent with the subject's educational goals. Organisational structure was managed flexibly, allowing student autonomy.
- Human dimension: The teacher showed attention to students' motivational needs and potential, fostering a climate of trust and encouragement. The proposal stimulated personal commitment, making the student feel valued and free to express themselves. The teacher's role was that of a discreet facilitator.
- Political dimension: The task represented a form of innovation, potentially atypical for a classical high school. The teacher acted knowingly, building consensus around the initiative and leveraging recognised educational goals (such as education for cultural and digital citizenship). He exercised internal political leadership, negotiating spaces of autonomy and legitimacy.
- Symbolic dimension: The teacher's action had strong symbolic value, conveying the idea that classical culture can be alive and transmitted with current languages. The video game became an alternative narration of ancient knowledge, and the teacher a cultural mediator capable of linking past and present.

The analysed experience shows how classical language teaching can be renewed without losing its identity, supported by conscious and multidimensional educational leadership (Nussbaum 2010). The teacher-leader did not simply 'give a task' but designed a learning environment that fostered motivation, creativity, and interdisciplinary connection (Coutet 2024). Classical culture, in this perspective, is not simplified or trivialised but reinterpreted expressively and communicatively, valuing languages and tools close to students' world (Buday et al., 2012; Di Donato and Taddei 2024).

Table 4. Summary table

Result emerged	Educational implication	Theoretical framework reference
Student's autonomous initiative in creating an educational video game	Valorisation of agency and active involvement in learning processes	Transformative pedagogy (Mezirow 2003), situated learning (Lave and Wenger 2006)
Innovative use of classical culture in an interactive key	Reactualisation of humanistic knowledge through digital languages	Transmediality, new classical education (Bruner 1998)
Video game as space of digital paideia and augmented creativity	Digital as a formative environment, not a mere technical tool	Digital paideia, homo technologicus (Benanti and Maffettone 2024)
Teacher as facilitator and symbolic leader	Need for new teacher posture mediating knowledge and technologies	Educational leadership (James et al., 2020), pedagogy of complexity
Authentic task as engine for interdisciplinarity	Promotion of critical and creative skills via cross-disciplinary projects	Constructivism, learning by doing (Dewey 1938)
Experience as cultural and ethical gesture	Education towards complex thinking and technological responsibility	Ethics of technology (Benanti and Maffettone 2024), digital humanistic education

Therefore, this educational experience can also be read in light of the broader transformations characterising the current phase of the so-called fifth industrial revolution (Benanti and Maffettone 2024), where digital technologies are no longer conceived solely as automation tools but as allies of human ingenuity. By proposing a creative task integrating classical knowledge and digital languages, the teacher acted in harmony with this vision: not merely introducing technology in class, but promoting a human-centred innovation that values culture, ethics, and creativity (Dewey 1938).

In conclusion, the presented case demonstrates how classical subjects' teaching can be renewed through innovative didactic practices and how the teacher can act as a catalyst for activating creative, interdisciplinary, and culturally relevant processes.

This mapping (Table 4) shows how an apparently individual experience, the autonomous creation of a video game, can become a model of digital paideia: a bridge between tradition and innovation, between classical content and contemporary expressive forms, capable of renewing classical language teaching and the school's role in the 21st century.

Limits and future research directions

The study is based on a single case and does not allow for generalisations. However, it offers useful insights for educational reflection. Further research could open new horizons by building on previous years' experimentation, involving the mathematics teacher in designing introductory Unity courses aimed at classical high school students; analyse similar cases in different contexts; study the role of educational leadership in classical high schools from a comparative

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press

perspective; and investigate the impact of creative practices on disciplinary learning and students' representations of classical culture.

Conclusions

The case analysed shows how the teaching of classical culture can draw new energy from the convergence between humanistic education and digital tools, generating a digital paideia capable of renewing the cultural transmission of classical languages in a contemporary key. The act of creating a video game that tells the Greek world, carried out by an Italian classical high school student enrolled in a STEAM program, represents a form of digital paideia: an education that integrates and directs technology towards the common good.

This act, in light of the theoretical framework examined, takes on a broader significance. It exemplifies how the techno-human condition does not necessarily lead to depersonalisation or a reduction of the human, but can, on the contrary, generate new forms of responsibility, creativity, and educational care. Such a seemingly simple gesture – a educational video game – can be read as a profoundly anthropological and cultural act: it is where the human seeks itself, surpasses itself, and gives itself.

For the teaching of Greek and Latin, this implies both a challenge and an opportunity: the teacher can work by seeking languages and tools capable of bringing tradition into the present without cultural compromises, with pedagogical intelligence and an anthropological vision. Through distributed educational leadership, the teacher acts as an activator of meaning and change, showing that the future of classical culture can also pass through unexpected tools such as the video game. In this perspective, students are not only recipients of the classical heritage but co-creators of its rebirth, when placed in conditions to express their creative and critical potential also through the technologies of their time.

The challenge for teaching Greek and Latin is to use contemporary tools without relinquishing disciplinary depth.

References

Adelani, T. (2024) Gaming the past using video games to teach secondary history (J.) McCall, Pp. 210, ills, Routledge, 2022. *Journal of Classics Teaching* 26(52), 205–206. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631024000035

Benanti, P. and Maffettone, S. (2024) *Noi e la macchina. Un'etica per l'era digitale*. Rome: Luiss University Press.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: University Press.

Bruner, J. (1998) *La mente a più dimensioni*. Rome: Laterza.

Buday, R., Baranowski, T. and Thompson, D. (2012) Fun and games and boredom. *Games for Health Journal* 1, 257–261. https://doi.org/10.1089/g4h.2012.0026

Cannatella, P. (2022) Student and teacher perceptions of the value of total war: saga in motivating KS3 students in an all-boys state school. *Journal of Classics Teaching* 23, 22–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631021000775

Coutet, K. (2024) Schools and institutional leadership in action: a systematic literature review. *Journal of School Leadership* 34, 367–389. https://doi.org/10.1177/10526846241245082

Dewey, J. (1938) *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan

Di Donato, R. and Taddei, A. (2024) "Educare all'Antico". teaching classical civilisation in Italian primary and lower secondary schools. *Journal of Classics Teaching* 25, 48–51. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000648

European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Baïdak, N., De Coster, I. and Sicurella, A. (2021) *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2021/22: Schematic Diagrams*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/972889

Ferdig, R.E. and Gandolfi, E. (2023) Education. In Wolf, M.J.P. and Perron, B. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, pp. 393–400.

James, C., Connolly, M. and Hawkins, M. (2020) Reconceptualising and redefining educational leadership practice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 23, 618–635. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1591520

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. New York: Routledge.

Hunt, S. (2022) The future: is it digital?. In *Teaching Latin: Contexts, Theories, Practices*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 191–212.

Hunt, S. and Bulwer, J. (eds.) (2025) *Teaching Classics Worldwide: Successes, Challenges and Developments*. London: Bloomsbury.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (2006) *L'apprendimento situato. Dall'osservazione alla partecipazione attiva nei contesti sociali*. Rome: Erickson.

Mezirow, J. (2003) Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education* 1, 58–63.

Ministero dell'Educazione e del Merito (MIM). (2010) Allegato C al Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 89 del 15 marzo 2010. GU Serie Generale n.137 del 15-06-2010 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 128. https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2010/06/15/010G0111/sg

Nussbaum, M.C. (2010) *Non per profitto: Perché le democrazie hanno bisogno della cultura umanistica*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Oulitskaia, V. (2024) Using Assassin's Creed: Odyssey to teach Olympia as part of the classical civilisation a level. *Journal of Classics Teaching* 25, 166–172. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631024000400

Salapata, G., Tracy, J. and Loke, K. (2024) Teaching Greek mythology through a scenario-based game. *Journal of Classics Teaching* 25, 22–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000752

Vu, D. (2017) An analysis of operant conditioning and its relationship with video game addiction. *ART 108: Introduction to Games Studies*. Available at https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/art108/6/ (Accessed: 11th July 2025)

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631025100718 Published online by Cambridge University Press