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The Escape Room: An Educational Tool in the CLIL Approach

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To my friend Boris,

for being my great support throughout this master's course and for welcoming me so warmly into her life.

To my parents,

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THE ESCAPE ROOM: AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN THE CLIL APPROACH

Abstract

The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach is presented as an innovative methodology that integrates content and foreign language learning simultaneously. In this context, educational escape rooms have emerged as an effective proposal that aims to address classroom dynamics by including gamified elements and other methodologies such as cooperative learning and problem-based learning (PBL). In the CLIL approach, specifically, educational escape rooms provide an interactive scenario for students who must solve a series of puzzles, challenges, or activities related to the content covered while reinforcing foreign language learning. For this reason, this dissertation addresses the hypothetical introduction of the educational escape room into the first-year secondary school History curricula following a CLIL approach. This would be accomplished through the creation of a didactic proposal based on the dimensions of life in Ancient Rome: society, politics, economics, art and religion. Through this proposal, students would be immersed in the heart of Rome, where they would encounter a mysterious character whose identity, they would have to reveal by following a series of clues that would lead to the resolution of the final mystery. Thus, the aim of this proposal would be to demonstrate the effectiveness of the educational escape room in the CLIL approach in terms of improving content acquisition in the subject of History and developing communication skills in a foreign language, in this case, English.

Keywords: CLIL, educational escape room, English as a foreign language, communication skills, cooperative learning

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

THE ESCAPE ROOM: AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN THE CLIL APPROACH

Resumen

El enfoque AICLE o Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (CLIL, por sus siglas en inglés) se presenta como una metodología innovadora que integra el aprendizaje de contenido y lengua extranjera de manera simultánea. En este contexto, los escape rooms educativos han emergido como una propuesta eficaz que pretende abordar la dinámica del aula mediante la inclusión de elementos gamificados y de otras metodologías como el aprendizaje cooperativo y el aprendizaje basado en problemas (ABP). En el enfoque AICLE, en concreto, los escape room educativos proporcionan un espacio interactivo para el alumnado que se ve capaz de resolver una serie de acertijos, retos o actividades sobre el contenido abordado mientras refuerza el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Por este motivo, el presente trabajo aborda la introducción del escape room educativo en el currículo de Historia de primero de la ESO siguiendo el enfoque AICLE. Este proceso se lleva a cabo mediante la creación de una unidad didáctica basada en las dimensiones de la vida en la Antigua Roma: la sociedad, la política, la economía, el arte y la religión. A través de esta, los estudiantes se sumergen en las calles de Roma donde conocen a un personaje misterioso cuya identidad deben revelar con ayuda de una serie de pistas que conducirán a la resolución del misterio final. El objetivo de esta unidad es demostrar la efectividad del escape room educativo en el enfoque AICLE en cuanto a la mejora de adquisición de contenidos en la asignatura de Historia y el desarrollo de habilidades comunicativas de una lengua extranjera, en este caso, de inglés.

Palabras clave: AICLE, escape room educativo, inglés como lengua extranjera, habilidades comunicativas, aprendizaje cooperativo

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Table of Contents

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

THE ESCAPE ROOM: AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN THE CLIL APPROACH

Introduction

In recent decades, the field of education has undergone a major transformation in terms of its functioning, methodologies and pedagogical approaches. Increasingly, more meaningful learning is being promoted, allowing students to assimilate knowledge and apply it in practical contexts, rather than just theorizing the concept without focusing on understanding it. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach has emerged as an innovative methodology and the main advocate of this theory, as it has become very common in education. This perspective, which combines language instruction with the teaching of curricular content, is gradually being integrated across all educational levels (Sanad *et al.,* 2017). Its application in both secondary and primary education has proven to be highly effective in terms of improving students' academic performance, fostering communicative competence in a second language, facilitating dynamic content acquisition and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Mehisto *et al.*, 2008).

One of the primary strategies that has enabled the implementation of CLIL has been gamification. Beyond being a simple game, gamification seeks to integrate students into learning through playful elements to promote cooperative learning while simultaneously maintaining a dynamic and interactive environment (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). In this line, educational escape rooms have emerged as an innovative proposal based on traditional escape rooms, as they allow students to solve a series of challenges in order to achieve their objective (Nicholson, 2018). Unlike traditional escape rooms, whose purpose is based on player entertainment, educational escape rooms have a pedagogical function as they use the dynamics of the game to transform the classroom into an immersive environment where students acquire the curricular content through active and playful participation, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Its application in CLIL contexts is particularly suitable as the language is integrated with the curricular content to create a highly motivating and intriguing experience, enabling students to work collaboratively, follow instructions, formulate reasoning or put their language skills into practice to achieve their final goal. Thus, this approach is addressed not only to enhance students' motivation, who are not limited to memorizing and learning concepts, but also to applying them in an interactive context.

This Master's Thesis aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the usefulness of the educational escape room as a gamified resource within the CLIL approach, promoting its effectiveness as an innovative tool that should be fully integrated across diverse pedagogical areas. To this end, the theoretical foundations of the CLIL approach, gamification and more specifically, educational escape rooms, will be first presented. The key elements of these

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

concepts will be explored to obtain a preview for the subsequent didactic proposal. This proposal involves engaging students as active participants in an educational escape room based on a trip to Ancient Rome, as part of the History curricular content for a 1st ESO classroom using the CLIL approach.

For this reason, the structure of this work begins with the problem statement and a justification of the chosen topic, highlighting the importance of the escape room in the educational field. Next, the objectives of this work will be defined, followed by an extensive theoretical description of the concepts of CLIL methodology, gamification and within this, educational escape rooms. The final section presents the hypothetical didactic proposal, consisting of six sessions in which the students have to find the clues by solving puzzles to reach the goal. This work will conclude with a teacher evaluation in the form of a rubric that evaluates the whole learning process. The dissertation will culminate with a global reflection on the entire process and its limitations.

Justification

Play-based teaching remains a rare didactic resource in education. It is not common to approach classroom dynamics through games, as traditional methods continue to be employed, where the teacher conducts the class and the students are limited to taking notes and completing exercises through memorization (Richard & Rodgers, 2014). Play has never been considered an effective tool because it is generally associated with entertainment and as a means by which students can enjoy themselves outside the educational context (Suwastini *et al.,* 2022). A notable example could be escape rooms, which have traditionally been perceived as mere leisure for those wishing to enjoy quality time with friends to disconnect from the academic or professional environment.

In the same vein, CLIL methodology is still regarded as an undervalued strategy, since bilingual teaching is often considered a burden for students who are obliged to master a second language while simultaneously acquiring content, which, for many teachers, is not very effective (Nguyen *et al.*, 2025).

For this reason, the focus of this dissertation is on addressing these two elements: both CLIL and educational escape rooms. The aim is to demonstrate that the implementation of game dynamics in the classroom with a pedagogical purpose can also be a beneficial resource to involve students in the learning process. This is significant in methodologies in which students must learn the curricular contents in a language other than their mother tongue. Such learning generates a significant workload both cognitively and linguistically. Thanks to their

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

components (both CLIL and educational escape rooms), it becomes evident that the integration of educational escape rooms in CLIL can create a more attractive and stimulating learning environment with the capacity to influence students' motivation and engagement. Not all learning must be founded on lectures and exercises: other classroom dynamics can also be approached to interactively involve students, offering enjoyable experiences while acquiring knowledge.

Objectives

The general objective of this work is to develop a didactic proposal to promote student motivation in the first year of ESO. An educational escape room will be created as a learning tool for the teaching of the content from the History curriculum through the CLIL approach. The specific objectives are described below:

To identify the key elements of the CLIL approach.

To examine the mechanism of gamification in pedagogical contexts.

To define the fundamental structure of the design process of an educational escape room.

To evaluate the didactic proposal designed through a rubric that assesses aspects related to CLIL as well as oral and written comprehension, oral and written expression and student engagement.

To draw conclusions based on the development of the theoretical framework and the design of the didactic proposal.

Theoretical Framework

CLIL

The CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach is an educational methodology that integrates the instruction of subject-specific skills with the acquisition of a foreign language. Emerging in the 1990s as an innovative pedagogical model, CLIL is founded on the principle that language learning is most effective when integrated into an academic context through subject-based teaching. This section will, therefore, present a detailed analysis of this approach, including its definition, origin, classifications, the 4Cs framework on which it is based, its core features and its main benefits.

Definition

According to Coyle *et al.* (2010, p.1), Content and Language Integrated Learning, also known as CLIL, can be defined as:

> A dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. Each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time. CLIL is not a new form of language education. It is not a new form of subject education. It is an innovative fusion of both. CLIL is closely related to and shares some elements of a range of educational practices. […] CLIL is content-driven, and this is where it both extends the experience of learning a language, and where it becomes different to existing language-teaching approaches.

In essence, it is an innovative methodology that enables students to learn a second foreign language such as English or French through the content of specific subjects such as History, Literature or Mathematics. Primarily, learners are not required to master the new language before they start studying. Instead, they learn the target language simultaneously with their subject knowledge, reinforcing both learning areas. Teachers of both English or other languages and subject teachers can implement the CLIL methodology to explain their contents (Sanad *et al.,* 2017). While they do not need to be specialists, they must strike a balance between the content and the language. Whether the primary focus is on using English to teach a subject or using the content to enhance language proficiency, in both cases, simultaneous acquisition of both content knowledge and language skills is achieved (Sanad *et al.,* 2017).

The objective, therefore, of CLIL teaching is to develop students' language proficiency while simultaneously fostering their subject-specific skills. This approach differs from

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

traditional teaching methods, which are centered on only one aspect, either the content or the knowledge, and often adopt a theoretical focus centered on acquiring knowledge. In contrast, CLIL focuses on the active participation of learners, on understanding knowledge in a more dynamic and not-so-theoretical, more practical approach. Traditional teaching is based on memorization, grammar drills and vocabulary exercises in the case of language learning (Richard & Rodgers, 2014). In contrast, CLIL presents a challenging methodology that fosters cooperative learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing learners for simultaneously using both language acquisition and subject content knowledge (Mehisto *et al.*, 2008).

Origin of CLIL and its Main Types

Since the 1990s, the expansion of globalization and European unification has boosted the learning of multiple foreign languages. With the United States being the world's economic power, English has emerged as a language of reference throughout the world. De Graff *et al.* (2007) emphasize that his tendency has particularly been evident in the field of education, due to the need to integrate globalization into school curricula. In response to this educational tendency, the European Commission with the support of David Marsh, has developed an Action Plan for Language Learning to enable European citizens to acquire proficiency in at least two foreign languages besides their mother tongue. In order to achieve better language learning outcomes, practical approaches focusing on understanding the meaning and form in language acquisition were implemented (De Graff *et al.,* 2007).

According to De Graff *et al.* (2007), the application of the foreign language into real-life contexts has proven to be an effective strategy for consolidating foreign language acquisition. Consequently, language learning began to be combined with non-linguistic content within the school curricula, adopting a dual-focused approach. The success of this methodology in international schools and Canadian immersion programs facilitated its expansion into European education systems. As a result, a new approach to foreign language learning emerged, aiming at promoting European linguistic diversity while ensuring better academic outcomes (De Graff. *et al.,* 2007). This approach became known as CLIL, a term first coined by David Marsh in 1994 and Maljers and Hartiala (Coyle *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, between 1995 and 2006, it began to gain recognition, appearing in papers and documents published by the European Commission. The main objective was to promote the CLIL approach and encourage multilingual teaching across Europe (Mehisto *et al.,* 2008).

Depending on the number of hours employed, the degree of integration between content

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

and language and whether the main focus is on subject learning or language acquisition, CLIL methodology can be classified as soft or hard. In soft CLIL, content is taught in the learner's mother tongue, with the foreign language used selectively to explain certain concepts. In hard CLIL, however, more than half of the subject content is described in the target language. A modular CLIL program is located between these two approaches, as some schools integrate content teaching in the target language for a limited number of hours, traditionally around fifteen hours during a term (Bentley, 2023).

The 4Cs Framework

The CLIL approach is based on 4 principles that explain the teaching objectives and learning outcomes (Bentley, 2023). These are the so-called 4Cs: Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture (Coyle, 2006). They appear in Figure 1.

> The 4Cs Framework suggests that it is through progression in knowledge, skills and understanding of the content, engagement in associated cognitive processing, interaction in the communicative context, developing appropriate language knowledge and skills as well as acquiring a deepening intercultural awareness through the positioning of self and 'otherness', that effective CLIL takes place. From this perspective, CLIL involves learning to use language appropriately whilst using language to learn effectively (Coyle, 2006, p. 6).

Figure 1

The 4Cs Framework of CLIL
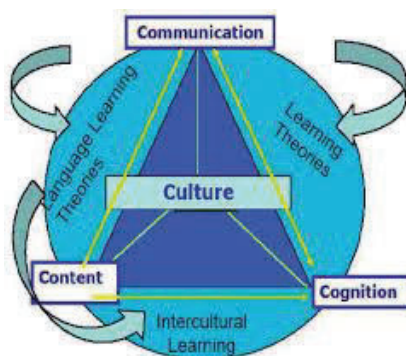
Note. Adapted *CLIL Content and Language Integrated Learning*, by D. Coyle, P. Hood, & D. Marsh, 2010, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2010 by Cambridge University Press.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Content. Content is an important part of this approach as it constitutes its primary basis. It refers to knowledge, concepts, and subjects and includes specific subjects such as Science, History, and Geography as well as more interdisciplinary subjects such as global citizenship, sustainability, or community development (Coyle, 2015). Beyond subject-specific knowledge, it also focuses on students acquiring knowledge and skills and, on their ability, to construct this knowledge and understand and develop these skills (Coyle, 2006). Therefore, content cannot be considered in isolation, since it plays a fundamental role in fostering cognitive growth and intercultural awareness of learners (Coyle, 2015).

Communication. Communication is another component of the Cs framework that underpins the CLIL approach. In this regard, Coyle (2015, p. 90) states that "language [is] used to learn, to communicate and to externalize and internalize understanding". Thus, language, i.e., communication, serves both as a learning tool to transmit knowledge and as a communication tool to promote teacher-student interaction.

According to Coyle (2015), teachers need to differentiate between using language and learning language, as both aspects are essential in the CLIL approach. Language teachers do not consider the role of language as a learning tool, they often view it as an element of grammatical progression. However, this perspective is not very feasible for content-based subjects such as Science or History that require the use of a more complex and specialized language, a kind of language that is not taught in general language classes. Each discipline possesses its own discourse patterns and conventional teaching does not always provide the language necessary to access knowledge in subjects such as Science or History. Therefore, CLIL teachers must reconceptualize their methodologies to integrate language not only as a subject of study but also as a tool for learning and communication. They have to combine both intentionally (Coyle, 2015).

To identify and structure the use of language in any CLIL-focused classroom, it is necessary to pay attention to the three dimensions of language proposed by Coyle who designed the Language Triptych (2010), as shown in figure 2 below. This concept divides language into three dimensions according to its role in the learning process: language of learning, language for learning, and language through learning. Language *of* learning refers to the content of the language, including vocabulary, expressions, lexis and key phrases that are essential in a CLIL lesson. Secondly, language *for* learning concerns the language that should be appropriate for teaching, specifically the register that should be employed according to the context. Finally, language *through* learning is related to the language learners acquire as they broaden their knowledge and deepen their understanding of previously learned material.

Figure 2

The Language Triptych

Note. Adapted from *CLIL Content and Language Integrated Learning*, by D. Coyle, P. Hood, & D. Marsh, 2010, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2010 by Cambridge University Press.

Cognition. Cognition is also central to the CLIL approach. It concerns the cognitive level of learners, specifically the development of critical thinking, competencies such as problem-solving skills and metacognition.
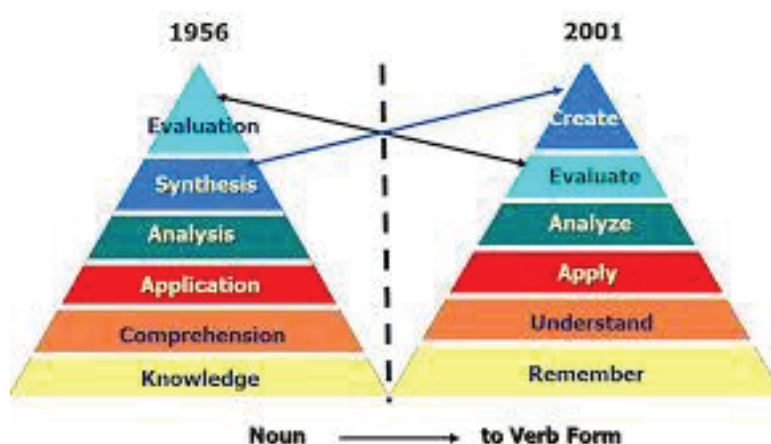
According to Coyle (2015), cognition refers to the level of thinking required by the tasks in relation to the content. Based on social constructivism, she states that deep learning occurs in environments where learners formulate their ideas before internalizing them individually. Traditionally, language teachers have never considered thinking in their teaching methods, but have always based their teaching on second language acquisition for language learning. On the other hand, she also emphasizes that teachers of specific subjects are used to teaching concepts and encouraging problem-solving, but do not always consider how language influences the learning process in their planning. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that in CLIL, learners often possess a cognitive ability in their subject knowledge superior to their proficiency in the target language (Coyle, 2015).

A standard reference to illustrate the cognitive process in CLIL is Bloom's Taxonomy revised by Anderson and Krathwool (2001). Bloom (1956) presents a pyramid divided into six levels, in ascending order, from the simplest to the most complex and demanding cognitive processes. The main distinction between Bloom's (1956) version and Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version lies in the shift from nouns to verbs at each level to produce more emphasis. Concerning the cognitive levels, the actions 'evaluate' and 'create' were reordered, positioning creativity at the highest level. Thus, the new order consists of the following levels: 'create', 'evaluate', 'analyze', 'apply', 'understand', and 'remember'. In addition, Anderson and Krathwohl introduced a classification of knowledge into four

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

dimensions: 'factual' (fundamental elements essential for in-depth knowledge of a discipline), 'conceptual' (interrelationships among key components), 'procedural' (methods and techniques for the tasks) and 'metacognitive' (knowledge of the cognitive process in general) (Anderson & Krathwool, 2001).

Figure 3

Bloom's Taxonomy Revised: Understanding the New Version of Bloom's Taxonomy

Note. Adapted from *Understanding the New Version of Bloom's Taxonomy*, by L. O. Wilson, 2016 (**http://thesecondprinciple.com/teaching-essentials/beyond-bloom-cognitive-taxonomy-revised/**). Copyright 2016 by Leslie Owen Wilson. Reprinted with permission.

Culture. The final element that constitutes the 4Cs framework is culture. Cultural awareness is a fundamental component of the CLIL approach, as learners must understand how to interpret the world through language. Furthermore, through cultural engagement, learners become more involved, and the learning process becomes more dynamic (Coyle, 2015).

As Diab *et al.* (2018) state, culture is indirectly integrated into the CLIL methodology since, through the study of various relevant topics covered in different subjects, the existing cultural and linguistic richness is explored. Consequently, teaching through the CLIL approach not only facilitates the learning of content through the foreign language, but also enables a deeper understanding of other cultures and encourages the development of a critical self-analysis.

Core Features in CLIL

In addition to the elements that comprise the 4Cs framework, several fundamental

principles influence the strategies employed by teachers and directly impact student learning. Mehisto *et al.* (2008) outline six principles that contain relevant aspects of the CLIL approach: multiple foci, safe and enriching learning environment, authenticity, active learning, scaffolding and cooperation.

The first component and most significant principle is the multiple foci which refer to how learning is promoted through cross-curricular themes and projects. Students acquire the content of a specific subject while simultaneously developing their language skills in the language of instruction. Therefore, language learning is integrated into non-language classes, and content acquisition is included in language classes.

In CLIL, it is also essential to create a safe and enriching learning environment, as students are constantly doing tasks and making every possible effort to achieve both academic and linguistic objectives. This element is related to the authentic material teachers use to enhance learners' confidence and promote effective teaching while addressing content and language. There are different strategies for achieving this, such as employing repetitive routine activities that help to use the language and content frequently, enabling the learner to become accustomed and improve their skills in comprehension and understanding.

In the same vein, authenticity constitutes another characteristic principle in CLIL. Authenticity occurs when teachers link learning with the students' lives, including examples from their personal experiences in the teaching process. Authentic materials commonly used by learners are employed to establish connections with other speakers of the target language. Concerning learning, CLIL is characterized by active learning, which means that students are the ones who are able to be more active in communication than the teacher in the learning process. They also contribute to defining the learning outcomes and assessing their own progress. Thus, teachers assume the role of facilitators to promote a cooperative classroom environment.

In CLIL, feedback is a fundamental part of the teaching process. The principle employed to achieve this is scaffolding, which is an instructional strategy in which the teacher provides structured guidance to the learner to facilitate appropriate progress and improve creative and critical thinking. As the learner progresses, the level of support gradually decreases, promoting greater autonomy.

The final principle is cooperation, a strategy that implies collective instructional planning involving CLIL and non-CLIL teachers, parents, and the local community. Interaction with people outside academic life increases the opportunities to use the language in real-life contexts, boosting the learners' confidence within the CLIL environment.

Benefits of CLIL

The CLIL approach has been presented as a practical methodology among teachers due to its positive impact on students. In this regard, Coyle *et al.* (2010) stress that CLIL teaching enhances students' language proficiency as they are continuously exposed to the target language in the classroom. In the same vein, Dupuy (2011) highlights that CLIL strengthens proficiency in the target language and broadens linguistic awareness in both the first and second language.

Furthermore, CLIL also provides students with the opportunity to learn academic content in a richer and more contextualized way by integrating language into the content. Students engage with topics that are interesting to them and the language serves as a tool to explore new concepts and different perspectives.

Additionally, research indicates that students' participation in CLIL programs increases their cultural competence since they engage with content from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This exposure offers them a broader understanding of language (Dzulkurnain, 2024).

Finally, CLIL teaching fosters a favorable environment for both students and teachers, since teachers also acquire new skills and interests while students enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Dzulkurnain, 2024). In addition, if the teacher is predisposed to apply this methodology, the learner is more likely to be motivated to engage with the content in a foreign language.

Gamification

For several years now, games have gradually been integrated into the classroom as an effective educational tool. As part of the emergent concept of gamification, games are becoming an important part of the educational environment, promoting different dynamics to enhance student motivation. For this reason, this section will explore gamification in great detail, including its definition, its main aspects, its origin, the key elements for its development and the long-term benefits it brings in terms of students' academic performance.

Definition and Key Concepts

The most widespread definition of gamification is that proposed by Deterding *et al.* (2011). According to them, gamification can be defined as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (p. 9). We obtain the following elements if we analyze the definition in detail: game, element, non-game context and design (Deterding *et al.*, 2011).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Firstly, we observe the word 'game'. When describing *ludus* or the 'game' itself, we refer to the elements of the game, which involves compliance with rules and a series of competitions among participants to achieve specific objectives and outcomes (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). In contrast, we distinguish it from the term 'play' or *padia,* which is characterized as a playful activity that does not follow strict rules and whose interactions are spontaneous. Nevertheless, both concepts are complementary, since games and gamified systems foster playful attitudes and behaviors (El-Shoubashy *et al.*, 2020).

The following term of the definition is 'element'. There is a constant debate regarding the classification of 'serious games' or 'full games' versus 'gamified applications' concerning the characterization of their elements (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). While serious games focus on training, research or advertising users (Groh, 2012), gamified applications aim to include game methodologies in non-game contexts. They often foster an educational environment for learners by obtaining a series of badges or achievements as a reward (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). However, this boundary can sometimes be very ambiguous as it is sometimes unclear whether a person is singularly 'using' an application to learn or 'playing with it'. A clear example could be *Foursquare,* one of the first applications on the market to incorporate game dynamics into non-gaming activities (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). This platform employed game mechanics in the process of moving around the city, therefore, increasing user motivation through active participation in the game (Foursquare, n.d.). For this reason, it is essential to conduct a more in-depth analysis and consider both technical and social aspects of the game in addition to focusing uniquely on the non-playful elements such as avatars, time constraints, feedback and ranking systems or levels (Groh, 2012).

The third component to consider is 'non-game context'. Deterding *et al.* (2011) emphasize that gamification should not be limited to specific contexts or purposes, since it can be applied in many domains, beyond merely in education, to enhance user experience in practical contexts.

The final element to consider is the term 'design'. Deterding *et al.* (2011) highlight that gamification comprises design components beyond game engines and other technological components derived from gaming practices. Among these elements are: interface design patterns, such as badges, levels or leaderboards; game design patterns also known as game mechanics; design principles or heuristics that are criteria for addressing a design problem or analyzing the effectiveness of a design solution; conceptual models of game design units such as the MDA (Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics) framework comprising the primary components of game design (game mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics); and game design

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

methods including specific practices used in game design, such as playtesting to detect problems among users and design processes (Deterding *et al.*, 2011).

Origin

The concept of 'gamification' has existed for a long time. From the 1950s onwards, the first game-related applications and elements began to be introduced in various fields such as commerce, digital design and business. However, it was not until the 2000s that the gaming industry extended and in 2002, the computer programmer Nick Pelling officially coined the term 'gamification' (Sharma *et al.*, 2023).

In 2009, *Foursquare* emerged as one of the first gamification platforms that introduced gamification elements, such as a system of badges permitting users to explore different locations (Sharma *et al.*, 2023). From the 2010s onwards, new gamified applications arose. Particularly, in 2011, the formal definition of 'gamification' was established by Deterding *et al.* (2011). Consequently, in 2012, Werbach and Hunter (2012) established the core elements of gamification that would be integrated into the categories of 'components', 'mechanics' and 'dynamics'.

From 2013 onwards, gamification broadened into other areas such as education, health and human resources, thus becoming a sector of significant relevance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sharma *et al.*, 2023).

Key Elements of Gamification

Gamification elements are crucial for its development as they directly influence the learner's outcome. They determine whether gamification is a practical approach for the students' learning process. However, the progression of these elements will be reflected to a large extent by the type of player present in the game. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the different profiles that an individual can embody in the game, such as the achiever, the explorer, the socializer, or the killer.

> Successful gamification depends on a good design of gamification elements that is to ensure the effectiveness of its usage and become a tool or instrument that [is] beneficial to the user i.e. in presenting an interactive and exciting contents to learners. (Khuzzan *et al.*, 2021, p. 64)

Indeed, integrating the suitable elements is fundamental for designing and implementing a well-structured and meaningful gamification system for users (Nicholson, 2012). According to Werbach and Hunter (2012), gamification elements are classified into

three categories: mechanics, dynamics and components (see figure 4).

Figure 4

The hierarchy of gamification elements
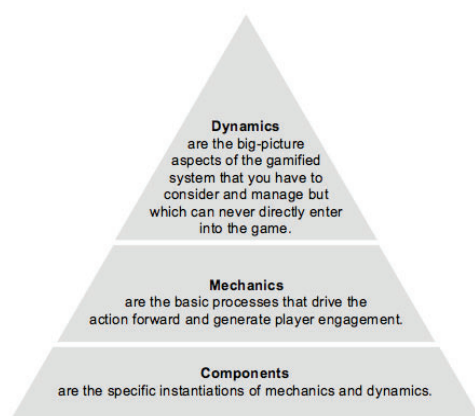
Note. Adapted from *For the win: How game thinking can revolutionize your business*, by K. Werbach & D. Hunter, 2012, Wharton Digital Press. Copyright 2012 by Wharton Digital Press.

The elements of gamification are organized in a pyramid hierarchically i.e. first the dynamics, then the mechanics, and finally the components, in order to establish a dependency relationship between them. It can be perceived from both the perspective of the designer and that of the player or student. From the designer's perspective, the creation of the game begins with the choice of the components or elements that act individually, to be able to then incorporate the mechanics or rules or instruments that make the game possible, and finally, the dynamics with the objective of generating a motivational and engaging experience. From the player's perspective, on the other hand, the gamified experience happens in reverse, since the player first perceives the dynamics or sensations produced by the game, then obeys the rules or mechanics that must be overcome, and finally interacts with the components of the game, such as points, rewards or levels, among others. All of these elements will now be described in detail.

Firstly, game dynamics refers to how the game mechanism is executed, which determines the attitudes and behaviors of the players. This section is composed by abstract features that are reflected in the course of the game. They are the following: constraints, emotions, narrative, progression and relationships.

Constraints have to do with the limitations or restrictions that occur in the game and

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

directly impact the learner. They do not present a negative barrier for the student; on the contrary, students consolidate their problem-solving skills by thinking critically with limited resources.

Emotions are also feelings that students experience during the game. The most common are competitiveness, frustration, happiness or curiosity. Competitiveness is an adherent element in gamification, however, it is natural for learners to experience mixed emotions such as feelings of anger simultaneously with happiness for their achievements and curiosity about their observations during the game.

In addition, for the gamified experience to occur, there must be a narrative, which constitutes a central element. It is a story that introduces the game, defining the participants and the objectives of the game itself. It is fundamental that students comprehend both the purpose and the context of the game to engage with the learning process. As Christopoulos *et al.* (2023) highlight:

> An adeptly constructed narrative offers the potential to cultivate emotional resonance and player commitment, thereby inciting continued interaction and anticipation for unfolding events within the game. Within pedagogical frameworks, the narrative serves as a scaffold, contextualizing information and rendering it more resonant and enduring in events within the game. (Christopoulos *et al.*, 2023, p. 1233)

In the dynamics of the game, progression is also a key element as the users are allowed to track their progress as they complete their tasks. This process involves a progress bar that enables students to view the points earned and the remaining time to complete the entire process. Relationships are also a key component of the dynamics of the game. Essentially, these are interactions between participants that foster a sense of belonging within the game.

Secondly, mechanics refer to the primary elements of the game, the set of rules and feedback systems that facilitate interactions within the gameplay experience (Christopoulos *et al.,* 2023; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). The main mechanics include challenges, chances, competition, cooperation and feedback.

Challenges constitute the crucial element that enables gamification to occur. These are activities that require effort from their participants to solve problems in order to progress and complete the assigned task. Throughout them, elements can be introduced unexpectedly generating a sense of surprise for the user: these are the so-called 'chances'. In every type of game, competition is inherent, as players must endeavor to score the highest points. Essentially, it is a game strategy that encourages rivalry among its participants in order to achieve the

desired objective. Therefore, it is fundamental to maintain fair and healthy competition. Along with this, cooperation is essential, because in the same way that groups compete against other, group members must work together and collaborate in all aspects necessary to achieve their goals. Cooperation, in this sense, plays a very important role in gamification, because the absence of teamwork would prevent the group from reaching its objective.

Feedback constitutes a very important part of gamification, as every educational activity requires constructive reflection provided by the teacher. In this case, feedback refers to the information that players receive as an assessment of their performance. In gamification, as stated by Khuzzan *et al.* (2021), feedback contributes to improving students' performance by correcting the mistakes they make during the completion of tasks or missions, which increases their motivation to continue the game and keep learning.

Throughout the gamified experience, students receive incentives or rewards in recognition of their achievements after completing certain activities, a process that, according to Khuzzan *et al.* (2021), increases "students' level of engagement with the game" (p. 65). In addition to the distribution of rewards, transactions or exchanges of items between participants are also conducted, either directly or through intermediaries for the purpose of achievement (Werbach & Hunter, 2012).

Finally, components are the resources used to incorporate both the dynamics and the game mechanics into the gamified activity. The main ones are achievements, avatars, badges, leaderboards, points and levels. Achievements are awards granted to users after completing specific tasks in recognition of their efforts and goals achieved. Avatars, additionally, are digital representations of the players that contain their personal information (Villagrasa *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, according to Christopoulos *et al.* (2023), avatars provide students with the opportunity to express their identity, creativity and personal preferences by allowing them to design the avatar in their own image.

In addition to achievements, badges are often awarded to players. Although similar to the first ones, in this case, participants receive badges throughout the experience as they reach certain achievements. In fact, badges have been proven to positively influence learner motivation due to their visual component that is specifically designed to engage the user (Khuzzan *et al.*, 2021).

Another key component, which is also characteristic of gamification and any game, are leaderboards. These are lists of rankings that display participants' scores, enabling them to track their progress throughout the game. They usually contain personal information about the student, as well as their interactive and academic progress (Christopoulos *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, this type of tables or rankings have been proven to enhance students' motivation, since they feel more predisposed to complete the subsequent activities (Khuzzan *et al.*, 2021).

All these elements work in conjunction with others, such as points and levels. Points, primarily, are numerical rewards granted to players after achieving certain objectives which reflect users' progression and allow them to obtain rewards and advance in the ranking of the game. Levels, in turn, represent the students' position within the game. The more advanced the level, the more difficult the task the students have to complete and the more constrained they are.

Besides these three gamification elements —dynamics, mechanics and components—, another important factor to consider when applying this methodology in the classroom is to be aware of the type of player we may encounter. There are different profiles of students who, depending on their characteristics, develop one type of player profile or another, resulting in diversity in the classroom. According to Bartle (1996), players are classified as achievers, explorers, socializers and killers. Achievers are players characterized by being competent, both with themselves and with the other players, whose main objective is to accumulate the highest possible score and obtain rewards. Secondly, explorers are players who love exploring the different mechanics of the game as well as the strategies aiding them to earn achievements. They tend to be curious learners, captivated by every part of the game. Thirdly, socializers are players who prefer interacting with other players and enjoying the game experience rather than just focusing on winning. They value collaboration and teamwork and prioritize the participation of all team members. Finally, killers are players who do not tolerate losing or being at the bottom of the rankings. Moreover, they often confront the rest of the students to feel superior and invincible.

Impact on Learning

Gamification has proven to have a significant impact on students' academic performance. Nacional (2023) states that the introduction of interactive elements, such as badges, points, rewards, etc., enhances students' motivation. They tend to demonstrate increased interest in the learning process, as these elements can typically be present in any video game (Faiella *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, Deterding *et al.* (2011) highlight that gamification also improves academic outcomes due to the immediate feedback students receive, which allows them to identify their mistakes and quickly rectify them for future situations. As Faiella *et al.* (2015) stress, it is an opportunity to practice, fail, keep trying and progress.

In the same vein, Werbach & Hunter (2012) argue that gamification improves participation due to the sense of competition that occurs during the game. Students compete to reach the top of the leaderboard and obtain the highest scores, which increases their engagement in the game, where interaction becomes inevitable.

Gamification can be integrated into different instructional approaches, such as the CLIL methodology. For this purpose, a variety of game-based activities are usually performed, including challenges, competitions or escape rooms, as will be seen in the following section.

Escape Rooms as Educational Tools in CLIL

The educational escape room represents an innovative pedagogical tool that has increasingly become integrated into traditional teaching (Manojlovic, 2022). More and more teachers are incorporating this approach into their teaching techniques as it allows students to enjoy an immersive experience while acquiring content. In the context of the CLIL approach, escape rooms not only enable students to gain knowledge, but also provide them with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the content as they learn the foreign language. Therefore, this section will be dedicated exclusively to the application of educational escape rooms in the CLIL methodology, which is the main focus of our work.

Definition

The concept of educational escape room has been defined by a multitude of authors, however, we present the one proposed by Nicholson (2018), which has been updated on numerous occasions and remains one of the most frequently referenced in this field. According to Nicholson (2018, p. 1), educational escape rooms can be defined as "live-action team-based games where players discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to accomplish a specific goal (usually escaping from the room) in a limited amount of time".

Nevertheless, the particularity of this definition lies in the fact that it does not include the educational component. Thus, Veldkamp *et al.* (2020) clarify that educational escape rooms are based on traditional escape games with similar game mechanics; however, in this context, small game spaces are created within the classroom, where students must solve clues of the subject-based activities to achieve the educational objective.

Therefore, the primary objective of traditional escape rooms would be simply to entertain, while the function of educational escape rooms would be purely didactic, either to introduce new information or to consolidate previously learned content (Lozano-Monterrubio

et al., 2024).

Origin

The first documented example of an 'escape room' was organized by the company SCRAP in Kyoto, Japan, in 2007, originally designed for teams of five to six players in a single room. Gradually, this type of game expanded into a large-scale event involving thousands of participants (Clarke *et al.*, 2017).

Between 2012 and 2013, the format spread rapidly, first to Asia, then to Europe (with Hungary as a central hub), and then to Australia, Canada and the United States. Numerous companies drove this new industry such as HintHunt in London, Escape the Room in New York and Room Escape Adventures in the United States (Nicholson, 2015).

The themes of escape rooms have varied over time. Initially, they ranged from horror-based scenarios with zombies, murderers and haunted houses to mystery and adventure with Indiana Jones as the main character (Clarke *et al.,* 2017).

In addition, educational escape rooms began to be integrated into classrooms in 2017 and have since become another learning tool for all academic levels, including foreign language teaching within the CLIL pedagogical approach. It involved an innovative pedagogical proposal that promised to enhance students' academic performance by improving their cognitive capacity and learning efficiency through the resolution of a series of riddles related to previously addressed subject matter (Manojlovic, 2022).

Theories beyond Educational Escape Rooms

Educational escape rooms are grounded in various theories. One of them is Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Theory, which indicates knowledge is constructed through experience. Specifically, in educational escape rooms, learning occurs through the interaction of students with the tasks and activities presented. In addition, students are actively engaged in teamwork, enabling them to construct knowledge through solving challenges or puzzles (Vorderobermeier *et al.*, 2024).

Educational escape rooms are also founded on Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (1990). Flow is considered as a state of optimal experience, which the author describes as a feeling of total surrender or enjoyment since the individual who experiences this emotion becomes wholly immersed in the activity. In this state, the maximum attention is concentrated on the present task to achieve what is worthwhile. Therefore, in escape rooms, students feel absorbed by the game, as it is an engaging activity that motivates them; they are better concentrated on

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

the task at hand and consequently, learning outcomes are improved.

Educational escape rooms also build on other theories, such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which argues that learning "is rooted in experience, where the learner actively engages with the environment, adapting to the world" (Vorderobermeier *et al.*, 2024, p. 6). According to Kolb (1984), learning is structured around four sequential stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. When applied to educational escape rooms, these stages can be distinctly observed. In the first stage, students actively participate in the game by solving a series of riddles or puzzles. In the second stage, students analyze the manner they have solved the riddles. In the third stage, students connect these experiences to the theoretical concepts previously addressed. Finally, the fourth stage would be better envisioned as a long-term process, as it would center on the reutilization of previous actions to address future challenges (Vorderobermeier *et al.*, 2024).

Furthermore, the educational escape room would be rooted in collaborative learning as it requires the collaboration of all participants, who must coordinate efficiently to maximize the use of time and employ their collective skills to manage all the challenges (Vorderobermeier *et al.*, 2024).

Similarly, it would include problem-based learning (PBL) as learners are required to take responsibility (Vorderobermeier *et al.*, 2024), as every challenge represents a problem they must address. In this context, problems are presented as real-world problems that students must solve with the utmost attention.

Game Methodology and Design: the Star Model

The design of an escape room is not an easy task, as several factors must be considered to positively influence students' academic performance. Typically, the Star Model by Botturi & Babazadeh (2020) is employed for the creation of the educational escape room, which is structured around a five-pointed star representing the five key game elements necessary for the design of the escape room which are learning, narrative, equipment, puzzles and game-flow, as shown in figure 5 below. Surrounding the star are the elements that encompass the previous ones, since they are the ones that place the experience in the context. These context elements include players, constraints, evaluation and debriefing (Botturi & Babazadeh, 2020).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Figure 5

The Star Model

Note. From *The Star Model*, by L. Botturi, 2019, [Publisher/Source of the 2019 work]. Copyright 2019 by Luca Botturi.

Concerning game elements, learning is the most important element since it constitutes the basis of the educational escape room, the underlying rationale behind its execution. Primarily, it would contain the components of the legal framework— LOMLOE (2020) in our case— surrounding the escape room: curricular and extracurricular contents, specific competences, evaluation criteria and learning objectives, among other fundamental aspects.

Narrative is another key element which constructs the story that introduces the game, establishes the role of the players and indirectly defines the type of educational escape room to be tackled. In addition, it serves to foster immersion in the experience and promote student engagement with the game (Botturi & Babazadeh, 2020).

For the development of the educational escape room, it is essential to establish the game-flow or the sequence of activities that allows players to progress through every challenge. In educational escape rooms, this sequence can be open or sequential. However, it is not recommended to stick to a specific sequence; instead, it is appropriate to combine both in order to find the solution in a more flexible and more efficient path (Remmele *et al.*, 2021).

Solving an escape room involves solving a series of puzzles or challenges, which constitute the main objective of the escape room. They can be divides into different categories: cognitive, physical and meta-puzzles (Botturi & Babazadeh, 2020). Cognitive puzzles require thinking skills and logic to be solved. Physical puzzles, on the other hand, require physical interaction with the environment and finally, meta-puzzles or puzzles that are formed by

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

solving other puzzles or previous tasks.

Similarly, it is essential to have the appropriate equipment or material, whether physical or digital, for the creation of the escape room. This includes the area or classroom where the activity takes place, the narrative elements that produce the storyline, the components that implement the mechanics of the game (such as puzzles and challenges) and, in some cases, technological tools such as projectors, lights, loudspeakers, among others (Remmele *et al.*, 2021).

Concerning the contextual elements that enable the game to take place, the players are the most important element. In the educational escape room, it is evident that players are the students with their unique profiles, both personal and academic, which influence on how the dynamics of the game progress (Botturi & Babazadeh, 2020).

Space and time constraints must also be considered. In terms of space, it is important to pay attention to the size of the classroom, whether one or more classrooms are required. In terms of time, the experience should be carried out in a limited period of time, such as the typical duration of a class session. Therefore, all these factors are essential to ensure the effectiveness of the educational escape room.

As with any educational activity, an evaluation process is necessary. The process should involve observing the students, asking specific questions to gather data from the participants and analyzing the results to assess their performance.

In addition, it is crucial to provide a debriefing, allowing students to reflect on the decisions they have made during the game, as well as the skills they have brought to the game and the theoretical concepts they have learned. Similarly, teachers should propose areas for improvement and praise the achievements of the game (Botturi & Babazadeh, 2020).

All these elements follow a chronological order in the design of the educational escape room. Remmele *et al.* (2021) propose a series of key steps for this process. The first step before initiating the game is to define the intended learning objectives, specific competencies and curricular and extracurricular content, basically, the components that are indirectly integrated into the escape room. These should be related to the contents of the specific subjects (History, Literature, Music…) as well as to the principles of the CLIL approach.

Secondly, attention must be given to the number of students in the class as well as to their characteristics regarding the cognitive and learning needs to adequately design the escape room and adapt it to their needs. Similarly, the limitations in terms of space and time must also be considered, as adjustments will be necessary for these factors and certain activities may be omitted or completed within a reduced period of time.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Thirdly, it is essential to determine the type of educational escape room to implement. In this case, as it is a CLIL approach, the educational escape room would contain the specific competencies of foreign language teaching but applied to the contents of specific subjects (History, Music, Literature…).

Fourthly, it is necessary to develop a coherent narrative, which constitutes the story that will immerse students into the storyline and will foster motivation to solve the puzzles (Reuter *et al.*, 2020). The fifth step involves establishing the structure or flow of the game with all its activities following a logical sequence, as well as defining the working groups and the phases included.

The sixth step would be based on designing each of the tasks or puzzles it will incorporate in order to orient them toward the objective and present them as challenges to be overcome. In this case, challenges should be designed around academic content and the use of the foreign language with the aim of fostering the skills related to it as well as the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

As a final step in the entire process, it would be fundamental to ensure that all elements of the game are adequate to provide an enjoyable, effective and productive experience.

Throughout the entire process, the teacher plays a fundamental role acting as a designer, moderator of the game, evaluator and observer (Manojlovic, 2022). In essence, it is the teacher who will accompany the students throughout the whole process.

Learning Outcomes in CLIL

As mentioned in previous sections, educational escape rooms can be applied in the CLIL approach. In general, educational escape rooms in CLIL produce several long-term benefits.

Firstly, these activities improve students' motivation and engagement with both the theoretical content and the use of the foreign language. When integrating the foreign language into the escape room, students feel less pressured and judged as they are more focused on the game and the language content is learned interactively. Moreover, collaborative learning also contributes to increased motivation as students feel more inclined to solve the challenges by producing collective learning (Bellés-Calvera *et al.*, 2022).

Similarly, the use of language in playful environments allows students to develop their critical thinking, social interaction and problem-solving skills (Manojlovic, 2022) as well as other more language-related skills such as oral production, listening and reading comprehension.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

In addition, educational escape rooms foster the promotion of autonomy in language. Although students work collaboratively, they are continually required to make their own decisions when finding the clues and solving the puzzles (Bellés-Calvera *et al.*, 2022).

Another advantage of escape rooms has to do with time management. Students have time constraints to solve the puzzles, which can be beneficial for future activities to enhance time management skills, but simultaneously, a hindrance because they may feel they lack time to complete all the tasks.

Throughout this section, the fundamental concepts of the CLIL approach have been presented, as well as its insertion within gamification and, more specifically, within educational escape rooms. The CLIL approach is a methodology that is not widely adopted in the classroom, however, it is beginning to be integrated gradually due to the increasing demand for bilingual education and integrated content and language learning. The use of educational techniques such as gamification favors its insertion by fostering an interactive learning environment that allows students to learn the contents in a more dynamic way (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). Within this, the so-called educational escape rooms, based on traditional escape rooms, are particularly noteworthy, which enhance student learning in the classroom while immersing them in an engaging experience (Veldkamp *et al.*, 2020).

THE ESCAPE ROOM: AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN THE CLIL APPROACH

Didactic Proposal

Introduction

The didactic proposal *Unlocking the Secrets of Rome: Exploring Roman Life!* presented below would be founded on the creation of an educational escape room focused on Ancient Rome with the aim of reinforcing and consolidating hypothetical content previously addressed from assumed earlier sessions. The CLIL approach would be utilized for this purpose, integrating the 4Cs framework: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture.

The educational escape room is oriented to the first cycle of Secondary Education, specifically to the first year of ESO. This is a stage in which students have recently finished Primary Education and the nature of this playful proposal is very effective for navigating the transition between Primary and Secondary Education.

The decision to approach the escape room with these two subjects (English and History) is motivated by the purpose of immersing students in History while improving their oral and written production and oral and written communication skills, as well as the oral interaction in a second language. This methodology offers the opportunity to reinforce History from a different perspective by integrating the foreign language in a meaningful context. Furthermore, the realization of this process through the game is an effective strategy for motivating learners in both subjects. In general, these subjects tend to be tedious for students, therefore, it is essential to employ methodologies that encourage active participation.

Intended Student Background

The didactic proposal had been designed to be hypothetically implemented in a high school setting in the first bilingual ESO classroom of the following characteristics:

Concerning educational stages, this institution would offer a wide range of education, from Secondary Education to *Bachillerato* and Vocational Training. Regarding the number of students, the classroom would consist of 18 students of diverse origin, mainly from Valladolid, although there would be also a presence of foreign students, which would promote the linguistic and cultural diversity of the high school. In general, all the students would have an intermediate level in English equivalent to A2-B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which would foster the multilingual capacity developed through the school's bilingual approach.

As indicated above, the bilingual paradigm pursued by this proposal would correspond to the *sección bilingüe* model in Castilla y León, which is regulated by the Orden EDU 6/2006 of 4 May, which has been modified by the Orden EDU/1847/2007 of 19 November,

establishing the essential requirements for the proper implementation of bilingual education in publicly funded schools providing Primary and/or Compulsory Secondary Education in the Community of Castilla y León.

In this model, at least two non-linguistic subjects must be taught in a foreign language, using active approaches such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This methodology enables students to perform their tasks in a specific language on the aforementioned subject content, promoting communication, content, cognition and culture, which are the fundamental principles of this approach. The languages permitted in this bilingual model are German, French, Italian, English and Portuguese.

The application of the planned teaching unit would be proposed for the curriculum content of the History subject for the first year of ESO, with English as the language of instruction. Therefore, it would follow the educational parameters of Order EDU 6/2006, of 4 May.

Methodology

Primarily, the methodology of this unit would be founded on a communicative, participative and active approach based on gamification and collaborative learning. All activities had been designed to be performed in an interactive way, integrating play elements into the learning process for students to interactively learn the content. The process would be implemented through the development of an educational escape room in which the students would engage in a series of challenges in each session in order to reach their final objective. Moreover, the activities would be carried out in groups of four or five students, fostering simultaneous cooperation with each other to achieve the learning objective.

Additionally, all of them would be designed according to the 4Cs framework (Communication, Content, Cognition and Culture) of the CLIL approach, in which learners would be expected to acquire History content while simultaneously improving their foreign language skills. Regarding the C of the Content, each session would explore the main theoretical concepts of Ancient Rome: religion, politics, society, economy, art and architecture. In terms of Communication, students would improve their past tense language skills in English by carrying out activities that would require them to interact, produce and understand different communicative materials. As for C Cognition, the escape room would promote critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, memory retention and logical reasoning abilities, among others. Finally, with respect to the C of Culture, students would be able to reflect on the legacy of Ancient Rome and compare it with that of today's society through various reflective

questions. Among the activities included in the didactic proposal promoting the development of all four Cs would be the following: reading comprehension, listening exercises, sentence correction, interactive games, true or false activities, matching tasks, and even reflection activities, among others.

As for the role of the teacher, it would consist of monitoring each of the sessions and providing the students with the necessary materials and appropriate instructions to guide their learning process throughout the escape room experience. The teacher's role here would be vital in ensuring that the unit's progress is developing properly. They would be responsible for fostering the necessary support to create a good working environment and address any questions or doubts that students may have. Additionally, they would conduct the assessment process with the awarding of badges at the end of the first five sessions and also, the final assessment in the sixth session. Similarly, they would guide the debriefing process with the aim of encouraging students to reflect on the implementation of the teaching unit. Their support would be essential to ensure the smooth running of the didactic proposal.

The final evaluation of the escape room would be carried out through a rubric that would assess all aspects related to the CLIL approach as well as the competences addressed: oral and written production, oral and written comprehension and oral interaction. However, a self-evaluation process would be taken into account at the end of each session as well as a debriefing process at the end of the whole escape room experience.

Didactic Justification

Through this didactic unit, students would be immersed in the fascinating world of classical culture, cultivating their interest in each of its constituent elements. Utilizing gamification and its key elements, students would interactively engage with the content, encouraging their interest to continue learning and actively participating in all the tasks. During each session, students would learn a wide variety of terminology in English related to various aspects of Ancient Rome, enriching their linguistic and cultural development. Similarly, grammatical content focusing on past tenses would be integrated into different activities, considering that the didactic context would be framed within a historical context. The combination of these structures, together with the vocabulary studied, would enable students to place events in the past, thereby increasing their awareness and veracity.

Generally, collaborative work would promote meaningful learning as students would collect the information from each session with their respective group members in order to apply it in the final session. Consequently, each participant would bring their key ideas to the

resolution of the exercise, thus developing joint decision-making and conflict resolution skills. Through this approach, they would acquire the cognitive and rational development skills fundamental for completing the escape room experience and perform the final role-play.

Timing

All activities would be organized around six sessions of about 50-55 minutes each. In general, each of the activities would take about 10, 15 or even 20 minutes. Exceptionally, the last task of each session would take approximately 5 minutes as it would be employed as a reflection activity.

The timing of this unit would be rigorously structured in order to deal in depth with the content of each session. However, the pace of the unit would be flexible, permitting unforeseen modifications as the process progresses.

Legal Framework

The legal framework underpinning this didactic unit would be determined by the Ley Orgánica 2/2006, of 3 May (LOE), which has been modified by the Ley Orgánica 3/2020, of 29 December (LOMLOE), as well as by the Real Decreto 217/2022, of 29 March, which establishes the organisation and minimum teachings of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO). In Castilla y León, it is specifically governed by the Decreto 39/2022, of 29 September, which establishes the organisation and curriculum of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) in the community of Castilla y León.

In addition, the *sección bilingüe* in which this didactic proposal would be framed is regulated by the Orden EDU/1847/2007, of 19 November, amending the Orden EDU/6/2006, of 4 January, which establishes the essential requirements for the proper functioning of bilingual sections in publicly funded schools providing Primary and/or Compulsory Secondary Education in the Community of Castilla y León.

In turn, the CEFR would be employed as a reference to certify students' language proficiency and assess their knowledge of the language.

Stage Objectives

Among the educational stage objectives [1]addressed in this didactic proposal would be the

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[1] The stage objectives have been extracted from the Spanish Boletín Oficial del Estado and subsequently translated literally to avoid any confusion, considering that the whole work is focused on the foreign language.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

following according to the Spanish Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE):

"b) To develop and consolidate habits of discipline, study and individual and team work as a necessary condition for the effective performance of learning tasks and as a means of personal development" (p. 41576).

"c) To value and respect the difference between the sexes and the equality of rights and opportunities between them. Reject stereotypes that discriminate between men and women" (p. 41576).

"e) To develop basic skills in the use of information sources in order to acquire new knowledge with a critical sense. Develop basic technological competences and advance in an ethical reflection on their functioning and use" (p. 41576).

"g) To develop entrepreneurial spirit and self-confidence, participation, critical sense, personal initiative and the ability to learn to learn, plan, make decisions and take responsibility" (p. 41576).

"i) To understand and express themselves in one or more foreign languages in an appropriate manner" (p. 41576).

"j) To know, value and respect the basic aspects of one's own and other people's culture and history, as well as artistic and cultural heritage" (p. 41576).

Key competences

Additionally, the unit would focus on the development of seven[2] of the eight key competencies[3] that are integrated into the curriculum, in particular, the following:

- Plurilingual Competence (CP). Students employ both English and Spanish to communicate effectively and perform tasks appropriately.

- Linguistic Communication Competence (CCL). Students engage in listening, speaking and writing activities collaboratively and are able to recognize concepts of significant relevance.

- Digital Competence (CD). Students are able to utilize collaborative digital tools such as Kahoot to actively complete certain activities.

- Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Competence (CPSAA). Students are able to

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[2] Since this unit focuses on learning cultural and historical content, with English as the language of instruction, the STEM competence is not included. The development of science and math skills involving the scientific method, mathematical representation, and engineering methods is not included.

[3] The full name of the key competences is presented in English because the information is foreign language oriented. The acronyms of the key competences instead remain in Spanish, as they refer to official elements that technically belong to a Spanish legal document (Decreto 39/2022).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

work collaboratively with other classmates and to manage their time to ensure completion of the tasks.

- Civic Competence (CC). Learners understand historical elements in the foreign language and relate these concepts to contemporary reality, promoting a critical and participative spirit.

- Entrepreneurial Competence (CE). Students develop critical thinking, reflection and problem-solving skills in solving the proposed activities by transforming them into personal challenges.

- Competence in Cultural Awareness and Expression (CCEC). By studying historical events, students learn ways of thinking and forms of expression from other periods and cultures.

Contents

Since the didactic unit would follow the CLIL approach within the subject of History, the contents[4] addressed would belong to both History and the foreign language (English).

History

"B) Societies and territories" (p. 49153).

- "Research methods for the construction of knowledge in Geography and History. Methodologies of geographical thought and historical thought" (p. 49153).

- "Geographical determinants and historical interpretations of the emergence of civilisations. The great trade routes and strategies for the control of resources: thalassocracies and empires, conquest and colonisation. Economy and society. Social status in antiquity. Artistic and cultural expressions in the different civilisations. Cultural diversity and richness. Respect for and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage" (p. 49153).

- "Classical roots of Western culture. The political organisation of mankind in the ancient world: democracies, republics, empires and kingdoms. Greece: from its origins to the empire of Alexander the Great. Interpretation of territory and landscape. The city and the rural world throughout history: the emergence of the polis. Violence

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[4] In addition to the stage objectives, the contents have been extracted from the Decreto 39/2022 of Castilla y León and subsequently translated literally to avoid any confusion, considering that the whole work is framed within the foreign language. Specifically, they have been taken from the subjects of Geography and History and the First Foreign Language, which is English.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

and armed conflict. The growth of armies from the hoplites. The invisible people of history: women, slaves and foreigners. State formulations in the ancient world. Origins and stages in the history of Rome. Monarchy, Republic and Empire. Civilians during the wars. Expansion into the Mediterranean. The role of religion in social organisation, the legitimisation of power and the formation of identities: polytheism, monotheism and the rise of the great religions. Art and culture" (p. 49153).

English

"A) Communication" (p. 49257).

- "Basic strategies for planning and executing comprehension, production and co-production of oral and written texts" (p. 49257).

- "Basic communicative functions appropriate to the communicative domain and context: greeting, saying goodbye, introducing oneself and others; describing people, objects and places; comparing people and objects; placing events in time; placing objects, people and places in space; asking for and exchanging information on everyday matters; giving and asking for instructions and orders; offering, accepting and refusing help, propositions or suggestions; partially expressing liking or interest and basic emotions; describing present situations and habitual actions; narrating past events" (p. 49257).

- "Basic linguistic units and meanings associated with these units such as expression of entity and its properties, quantity and quality, space and spatial relations, time and temporal relations, affirmation, negation, interrogation and exclamation, basic logical relations" (p. 49258).

"B) Plurilingualism" (p. 49258).

- "Strategies and techniques to respond to a basic and concrete communicative need in a comprehensible way, despite the limitations derived from the level of competence in the foreign language" (p. 49258).

- "Commonly used vocabulary and expressions to understand statements about communication, language, learning and introduction to the knowledge of communication and learning tools (metalanguage)" (p. 49258).

"C) Interculturality" (p. 49258).

- "The foreign language as a means of interpersonal and international communication, as a source of information and as a tool for personal enrichment" (p. 49258).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Specific Competences

The specific competences [5] would be articulated around the 4Cs of CLIL methodology. Therefore, the principles of the CLIL 4Cs framework (Communication, Content, Cognition and Culture) would be briefly explained for the corresponding specific competences according to the activities addressed for this didactic proposal.

English

"1. Understand and interpret the general meaning and most relevant details of texts expressed clearly and in standard language, seeking reliable sources and making use of strategies such as inference of meaning, in order to respond to specific communicative needs" (p. 49252).

It would be related to Communication, as it involves both listening and reading comprehension activities in which students must watch a video about the political system of Rome and take notes for subsequent activities, or read a text about Roman social classes or the Roman economy and then answer questions.

It would be also focused on Cognition, since, in the activities mentioned above, students must reflect and discuss in groups the content they have just read or viewed through the target language in order to obtain the most accurate answers possible.

"2. Produce original texts of medium length, simple and clearly organised, using strategies such as planning, compensation or self-repair, to express relevant messages creatively, appropriately and coherently and to respond to specific communicative purposes" (p. 49253).

It would be related to Communication, because it focuses on oral and written production, especially oral production. Regarding oral production, students must perform a role-play on the topic covering all the content addressed, as well as discuss a video on the Roman political system and answer questions reflecting on aspects of Ancient Rome in relation to the present day. Regarding written production, students must complete all kinds of activities, such as doing crossword puzzles about Roman art, putting sentences about Roman gods in order, and determining whether statements about the Roman economy or society are true or false.

This competence skill would also be linked to Cognition, as students must critically

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[5] In addition to the stage objectives, the specific competences have been extracted from the Decreto 39/2022 of Castilla y León and subsequently translated literally to avoid any confusion, considering that the whole work is framed within the foreign language.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

reflect on the differences between certain aspects of Roman society and those of the present day in terms of politics, economics, religion, art, and society in order to reach a conclusion. Additionally, they must apply their critical thinking and problem-solving skills to the writing activities mentioned above.

"3. Interact with others with increasing autonomy, using cooperative strategies and employing analogue and digital resources, to respond to specific communicative purposes in exchanges respectful of the rules of politeness" (p. 49253).

It would be related to Communication, since students engage in a communicative exchange in which they contribute ideas to reflect on various topics involving Ancient Rome and the present day. Similarly, they perform a role-play in which they have a conversation with the supposed mysterious character whom they must help reveal their identity by providing relevant information in the form of questions and answers.

This competence would also be linked to Cognition, since students are required to engage in critical thinking about what they are going to intervene with and then communicate their ideas effectively in the oral exchange such as the role-play or reflection debate.

"5. Expand and use personal linguistic repertoires between different languages, reflecting critically on how they work and becoming aware of one's own strategies and knowledge, respecting cognitive, social and cultural diversity, in order to improve the response to specific communicative needs" (p. 49254).

This competence would be closely related to Cognition and Culture, as students expand the lexical and grammatical content on Ancient Rome in a foreign language after completing the various activities, which enables them to establish similarities and differences with their mother tongue and their culture when acquiring the terms.

"6. Critically evaluate and adapt to linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity based on the foreign language, identifying and sharing similarities and differences between languages and cultures, in order to act empathetically and respectfully in intercultural situations" (p. 49255).

It would be related to Culture, since students must carry out various activities on Roman culture, thus appreciating its various characteristics relating to politics, economics, religion and art, and establishing similarities and differences with the present day.

History

"1. Seek, select, process and organize information on relevant topics of the present and the past, critically using historical and geographical sources, in order to acquire knowledge, elaborate and express content in various formats" (p. 49148).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

It would be related to <u>Content,</u> as students must be able to extract relevant information from a text on economics in order to answer questions, watch a video on Roman politics to arrange historical events chronologically, complete a crossword puzzle on Roman art, or extract relevant words from a text on social classes in Rome, among many other activities.

"2. Investigate, argue and develop your own products on geographical, historical and social issues that are relevant today, from the local to the global, in order to develop critical thinking that respects differences, contributes to the construction of your own identity and enriches the common heritage" (p. 49149).

It would be related to <u>Cognition,</u> since students must develop their critical thinking skills to carry out all the activities involving the political, social, religious, economic and artistic legacy left by the Romans. Furthermore, they must be able to draw small conclusions about the content studied in order to obtain an idea of what society was like at that time.

"3. Know the main challenges that different societies have faced over time, identifying the causes and consequences of the changes that have occurred and the problems they face today, through the development of research projects and the use of reliable sources, in order to make proposals that contribute to sustainable development".

It would relate to <u>Content,</u> as students carry out activities that include small challenges or problems about historical and cultural aspects of Ancient Rome.

In addition, <u>Culture</u> would be promoted, as students must compare various aspects of Roman society with today's society.

"7. Identify the foundations that support the different identities, both our own and those of others, through knowledge and appreciation of the tangible and intangible heritage that we share in order to preserve it and respect feelings of belonging, as well as to promote processes that contribute to territorial cohesion and solidarity in accordance with the values of Europeanism and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (p. 49150).

It would be related to <u>Content,</u> since the third session deals with topics related to sculpture, painting, architecture, and the historical heritage that the Romans have left us today. Activities include identifying Roman artistic elements that still remain today and assembling puzzles featuring these elements.

Additionally, this competence would also be linked to <u>Culture,</u> as students ask reflective questions to enable them to delve onto the artistic and cultural heritage left to us by the Romans in terms of how it is similar to and different from today's culture.

Evaluation Criteria

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

In conjunction with the specific competences [6], the evaluation criteria would also be articulated around the 4Cs of CLIL methodology. Therefore, the principles of the CLIL 4Cs framework (Communication, Content, Cognition and Culture) would be related to the corresponding evaluation criteria within each of the subject involved in this didactic proposal.

English

"1.1 Interpret the overall meaning and specific information of short, simple oral, written and multimodal texts on frequent, everyday topics of personal relevance and close to the learner's experience, from the fields of interpersonal relationships, learning, the media and fiction, expressed clearly and in the standard language through a variety of media" (p. 49255).

It would be focused on Communication and Cognition.

"1.2 Select, organise and apply in a guided way the most appropriate strategies and knowledge in everyday communicative situations in order to understand the general meaning and the most relevant details of texts; interpret non-verbal elements; and search for and select information" (p. 49255).

It would be focused on Communication and Cognition.

"2.1 Orally express short, simple, structured, comprehensible texts, appropriate to the communicative situation, on everyday and frequent matters of relevance to the student, in order to describe on specific topics, in different media, using verbal and non-verbal resources in a guided manner, as well as strategies for planning and controlling production" (p. 49256).

It would be related to Communication.

"2.2 Organise and write short, comprehensible texts with clarity, coherence, cohesion and appropriateness to the proposed communicative situation, following established guidelines, using analogue and digital tools, on everyday and frequent matters of relevance to the students" (p. 49256).

It would be related to Communication.

"2.3 Select, organise and apply knowledge and strategies in a guided way to plan, produce comprehensible, coherent and appropriate texts according to the communicative intentions, using with help the most appropriate physical or digital resources depending on the task and the needs of each moment, taking into account the people to whom the text is addressed" (p. 49256).

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[6] Along with the stage objectives, the specific competences have been extracted from the Decreto 39/2022 of Castilla y León and subsequently translated literally to avoid any confusion, considering that the whole work is framed within the foreign language.

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

It would be related to <u>Communication</u> and <u>Cognition</u>.

"2.5 Describe facts, express opinions orally or in writing clearly in analogue and digital contexts, exchanging information appropriate to different everyday contexts of their personal and educational environment" (p. 49256).

It would be related to <u>Communication</u>.

"3.1 Plan and participate in short, simple interactive situations on everyday topics of personal relevance, using a variety of media, relying on resources such as repetition, slow pace or non-verbal language, and showing empathy and respect for linguistic politeness, as well as for the different needs, ideas and motivations of the interlocutors" (p. 49256).

It would be connected with <u>Communication</u> and <u>Cognition</u>.

"3.2 Select, organise and use, in a guided manner and in close settings, appropriate strategies for initiating, maintaining and terminating communication, taking and giving the floor, and requesting clarification" (p. 49256).

It would be connected with <u>Communication</u> and <u>Cognition</u>.

"3.3 Make themselves understood in short interventions, even if it is necessary to resort to hesitations, pauses, hesitations or repetitions, correcting and reformulating what they want to express and showing a cooperative and respectful attitude" (p. 49256).

It would be connected with <u>Communication</u>.

"5.2 Use knowledge and strategies to improve the ability to communicate and learn the foreign language with the support of other participants and of analogue and digital media" (p. 49257).

It would be related to <u>Cognition</u> and <u>Culture.</u>

"6.1 Act respectfully in intercultural situations by building bridges between different languages and cultures and rejecting any kind of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping in everyday communication contexts" (p. 49257).

It would be related to <u>Culture.</u>

History

"1.2 Contrast and argue about issues and events of prehistory and the Ancient Ages, locating and critically analysing primary and secondary sources as historical evidence" (p. 49151).

It would be aligned with <u>Content</u> and <u>Cognition</u>.

"2.1 Critically discuss current issues using geographical and historical knowledge, comparing and evaluating different sources" (p. 49151).

It would be related to Cognition.

"3.1 Acquire and construct relevant knowledge of the world today and of history, through inductive processes, research and project work, challenges or problems, by producing products that reflect an understanding of the phenomena and problems addressed" (p. 49151).

It would be associated with Content and Culture.

"7.1 Relate the cultures and civilisations that have developed throughout ancient history with the different collective identities that have been built up to the present day, reflecting on the multiple meanings they adopt and the contributions of each one of them to human and universal culture" (p. 49152).

It would be related to Content and Culture.

Assessment Process

Regarding the assessment process, a summative approach would be conducted. The teacher would evaluate the students' final role-play in the final session through a rubric designed to assess all the content covered throughout the sessions, that would be reflected in the role-play. This rubric would be aligned with the specific competencies and the assessment criteria established for the Geography and History subject and the English as a Foreign Language subject defined by the LOMLOE (Ley Orgánica 3/2020 of 29 December), as stipulated in the Decreto 39/2022 of Castilla y León. Furthermore, the rubric would include the four principles that underpin the CLIL approach: Communication, Content, Cognition and Culture (see the **rubric** in Appendix B). Specifically, the LOMLOE assessment criteria linked to the 4Cs of the CLIL approach would be evaluated through achievement indicators that would be included in the rubric (see the Table 1 below with the corresponding achievement indicators being evaluated related to the 4Cs framework).

Table 1

ITEMS	EVALUATION CRITERIA
Communication	2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.3 (English)
Content	3.1, 7.1 (History)
Cognition	2.3, 5.2 (English) 1.2, 2.1 (History)

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Culture	6.1 (English) 7.1 (History)

Note. Table created by the author of this dissertation.

Additionally, a self-assessment process would be carried out at the end of the first five sessions, during which students would be given ten minutes to reflect on the content covered during the session and respond to reflective statements concerning their learning process. In the sixth session, however, the teacher would carry out the assessment process through the aforementioned rubric. Moreover, a debriefing process would take place at the end of the final role-play assessment, during which students would reflect and respond to a series of general questions about the entire didactic proposal.

Relation with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

This didactic proposal would align with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which would promote inclusive, equitable and quality education by working in collaborative groups where each student would play a key role. Similarly, students would develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they had to complete the escape room in a limited amount of time, taking into account that every session would last approximately 50 to 55 minutes. Additionally, the proposal would foster the development of other linguistic skills, allowing students to deepen their learning of the foreign language.

Development of the Proposal: "Unlocking the Secrets of Rome: Exploring Roman Life!"

This proposal would be founded on the principles of the CLIL methodology through the curricular content of the History subject. The educational escape room that articulates this proposal would be structured into six sessions, each consisting of four activities oriented towards the resolution of clues and challenges to gradually unveil the identity of a character from Ancient Rome (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

Development of the didactic proposal '*Unlocking the Secrets of Rome: Exploring Roman Life!*'

	CLUES	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	RESOLUTION + SELF-EVALUATION
SESSION 1: '*I am a plebeian, and you?*'	Clue 1	'Who were you in Ancient Rome?'	'Match the Roman!'	'Who Was I?'	'Reflection challenge'	Resolution Clue 1 + Self-Evaluation
SESSION 2: '*Silent in the Room, Your Honour!*'	Clue 2	'Listen to the Roman!'	'Timeline Builders'	'True History, False Claims'	'Reflection challenge'	Resolution Clue 2 + Self-Evaluation
SESSION 3: '*Look Mum, the Roman Colosseum!*'	Clue 3	'Crack the Art Code!'	'Reveal the Hidden: The Roman Gallery'	'Rebuild the Ruins!'	'Reflection challenge'	Resolution Clue 3 + Self-Evaluation
SESSION 4: '*I Can't Find My Terracotta Vase!*'	Clue 4	'Unlocking Roman Economy!'	'Economic Fakes or Truths?'	'Artisans at Work!'	'Reflection challenge'	Resolution Clue 4 + Self-Evaluation
SESSION 5: '*God is Omnipresent*'	Clue 5	'Pray for God!'	'Unscramble the God!'	'Which God Was I?'	'Reflection challenge'	Resolution Clue 5 + Self-Evaluation
SESSION 6: '*Echoes of Rome*'	Final Resolution of the Clues	'The Final Revelation'	Debriefing Process	X	x	X

Note. Table created by the author of this dissertation.

Every session would be presented on a different content theme, such as social organization, politics, economy, architecture or religion (Content C of the CLIL methodology) except for the final session, which would contain the resolution of the escape room and a role-play as a review of all the content. Similarly, some grammatical aspects related to the foreign language would be covered, including the past simple and the past continuous, as well as the

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

verb *to be* in the past tense, which would be reflected in the development of activities based on the content covered (Communication C of CLIL). In each session, students would receive a new clue about the character's identity, which they would have to discover by completing four activities or riddles related to the content addressed. Students, indeed, would have to apply their English language skills to them as well as other critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Cognition C of CLIL). Furthermore, they would also develop cultural awareness skills to value their own cultural heritage with that of another era (Culture C of CLIL). Only through this manner, could they reveal the character's real identity. In addition, during the last session, they would have to represent a scene assuming the role of different characters from Roman society who have interacted with the character in question, thus revealing the final pieces of the mystery.

Each escape room session (except the final one) would include a set of clues and their resolution at the end of four activities. Regarding these activities, the first one would function usually as an introductory task, while the next two would be usually reinforcement activities and the last one would be a closing activity. All of them would promote the development of oral and written production, oral and written comprehension and, particularly, oral interaction. The first three activities would focus more on the content itself, while the final one would be based on reflection questions on the subject matter. The final session of the escape room, however, would not include activities. It would focus on the educational escape room resolution that would contain a final role-play as a review of all the content covered throughout the whole unit.

As mentioned above, the tasks would be performed in groups of about 4 or 5 students. Therefore, the classroom would be arranged to ensure that the 18 students could work collaboratively and without disruption. In addition, they would have about 45-50 minutes to complete all the tasks in each session, since the last 10 minutes would be devoted for the teacher's assessment and feedback. As this is an escape room, reward badges would be awarded based on the outcome of the activities, alongside a self-evaluation process. Similarly, the teacher would monitor each session offering support to the students and resolving any doubts as needed. At the end of this session, a debriefing process would take place, in which students would reflect on all the content covered throughout the educational escape room together with their peers and the teacher.

For the design of the educational escape room, **a comprehensive sheet** (see Appendix A) has been created describing the narrative, the learning objectives, the game-flow, the puzzles, the equipment, the players, the constraints, the debriefing process, the evaluation and

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

the badges that the players would obtain throughout the escape room experience. Subsequently, the puzzles or activities contained in each of the sessions along with the material required for each of them would be described as well as the expected duration and the type of activity addressed. Additionally, the activities would be attached in Appendix A of this dissertation as well as the corresponding clues and their resolutions in image format created with the Canva design platform. All materials would be provided in printed form, except for one activity that would require the use of the technology, to facilitate the work material to the students.

First Session

The immersive experience would begin with a brief description of the escape room narrative in the first session, which would last 5 minutes. Students would listen carefully to the teacher to immerse themselves in the story and understand the challenge they would be going to face in order to boost motivation in advance and present the escape room as an experience different to traditional methods. Students would be explained that they are in the Ancient Rome age due to a malfunction in a time machine and that they would encounter a mysterious man who they would have to help to recover his identity by following a series of clues.

The teacher would also explain how they would work with regard to the introduction and resolution of clues and the development of activities, the progress of the session and what content would be covered during the first session (see the **general template** in Appendix A). Next, the students would be asked to position themselves accordingly, that is, in groups of four or five people, as has been mentioned throughout the work.

Subsequently, the activities would begin, and the teacher would provide the necessary materials as well as the appropriate instructions for each task and for the self-evaluation process. This process would be repeated in each session, except for the final one, in which the teacher would explain the final task and the debriefing process would take place.

During the first session, entitled 'I am a Plebeian, and you?', students would be introduced to the social context of Ancient Rome. Therefore, through the four activities, they would explore the diverse social classes (patricians, plebeians, slaves, clients and freedmen), their role in society and the distinctions between them. Additionally, the study of the verb 'to be' in the past tense would be implicit in the activities.

Before starting with the riddles of the first session, the **first clue** would be revealed to the students: *'The citizen cannot remember his social status. His clothes do not reveal much information about his identity. Only by investigating through Roman society, will you discover a clue that will uncover the truth about his position'.*

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Activity 1: **'Who were you in Ancient Rome?'.** Once the clue had been discovered, the introductory activity would begin. In this activity, students would have to read a text[7] retrieved from the History website platform El Historiador (n.d.) and identify the main words related to the Roman social classes. For this task, each group would receive a card containing the text on it and a worksheet to note the information they had extracted related to it. They would have about 15 minutes to finish this activity.

Activity 2: **'Match the Roman!'.** The next activity would be a reinforcement activity consisting of matching each character in the social structure with a representative quote or expression. To do this, students would receive a sheet in which they would have to match the elements from the first column to those from the column on the right. They would have to be quick, as they would only have 10 minutes to complete the activity.

An example of a sentence that could be found in the exercise would be: *'I am a prisoner and do not have rights for nothing'.* It would fit with the image of the slave.

Activity 3: **'Who Was I?'.** The next activity, also as a reinforcement, would be based on guessing the character in the society. To do this, one member of the group would place a card on his or her forehead and would have to describe the element on the card for the rest of the group. A series of cards on the contents of the unit would then be handed out to all members of the group to play this game in approximately 10 minutes.

For example, a student would place the card on their head and would claim: *'The right everyone has in elections'.* Another teammate would reply: *'vote'*

Activity 4: **'Reflection challenge'.** The fourth and final activity of the session would be based on several reflection questions in which students would have to compare the social structure of Ancient Rome to that of modern society. It would be important that they would have a short discussion with the members of their group for 5 minutes and write down the most important aspects on a piece of paper. The questions would be on a little card student would receive.

At the end of the fourth activity, the **clue** for the session would be solved: *'plebeian'.*

Once they had completed all the activities and solved the clue, the teacher would dedicate the last 10 minutes of the session reviewing the tasks. The groups that successfully

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[7] This text has been extracted from the platform El Historiador (n.d.) and subsequently, translated by the author of this dissertation.
Pigna, F. (n.d.). *Los romanos*. El Historiador. Retrieved May 11, 2025 from **https://elhistoriador.com.ar/los-romanos/#:~:text=En%20los%20primeros%20tiempos%2C%20la,poderosos%2C%20grandes%20propietarios%20de%20tierras** (translated by the author).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

solve them would receive a 'Winning Group' **badge,** while the groups that had made some errors would receive a 'Reinforcement' badge. During this time, students would receive **a self-assessment sheet** to reflect on the content learning tackled during the session. They would fill in a sheet containing statements such as: *'I have actively participated in all the activities'.*

Second Session

In the second session, 'Silent in the Room, Your Honour!', students would be introduced to the politics and government of Rome. Through the four activities that comprise this session, they would learn the basic concepts of the Roman political system (monarchy, republic and empire) along with their functioning. Additionally, the basic grammatical concepts of the Past Simple tense would be implicit in the activities.

Before we start the activities, the **second clue** of the unit would be revealed: *'Julio Antonio remembers being in the senate, but he doesn't remember when or where it occurred'.*

Activity 1: 'Listen to the Roman!'. Once the clue had been solved, we would start with the introductory activity. In this activity, students would watch a short video[8] called 'Roman Empire' from the Youtube account Happy Learning English (2017) about the core elements of the political system in Ancient Rome. Then, they would extract and discuss the main ideas of the political system in a piece of paper to lately discuss them in groups. They would have 15 minutes to complete the activity.

Activity 2: 'Timeline Builders'. The second activity, as a reinforcement, would consist of ordering events chronologically. Therefore, students would receive cards containing sentences of historical events which they would have to order according to whether they correspond to the monarchy, the republic or the empire. They would have 10 minutes to complete the task.

Activity 3: 'True History, False Claims'. The next activity, also as a reinforcement, would be based on a true or false exercise. For this, students would have to determine whether some statements about the Roman political system occurred, or conversely, whether they never took place. Each group would be given a card and all members would have to reach an agreement to correct the wrong sentences. This activity should be completed in approximately 10 minutes.

For example, this sentence could be found on this activity: *'Rome originated 2.700 years ago'.* The students would discuss with their team members and would state that is false:

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[8] Happy Learning English (2017). *Roman Empire.* [Video]. Youtube. **https://youtu.be/b9bcohqsTGk**

'Rome originated 2.800 years ago'.

Activity 4: 'Reflection challenge'. The closing activity of this session would be based on several questions prompting students to reflect on and discuss for 5 minutes with their groupmates, the similarities of Roman politics and today's political system, as outlined below. The questions would be on a little card students would receive.

At the end of the activities, the **second clue** of the unit would be solved: *'republican'.*

After the completion of all the activities, the teacher would spend the last 10 minutes of the session reviewing each group's activities. Those who have done everything correctly would be awarded with the 'Winning Group' **badge**, while the groups with errors would be given the 'Reinforcement' badge to encourage improvement. Meanwhile, students would complete **a self-assessment sheet** to reflect on their learning process which would contain sentences similar to those used in the fourth activity of the previous session.

Third Session

The third session, entitled 'Look Mum, the Roman Colosseum!', would focus on the fundamental content related to art in Ancient Rome. After having immersed themselves in Roman politics and society, students would explore the most important artistic legacy of the Roman world: painting, sculpture and architecture. Through the four activities proposed, they would acquire foundational theoretical concepts of these art forms. Similarly, the review of the grammatical content covered in the previous session would be reinforced in this session.

Before commencing the activities, the **third clue** of the unit would be revealed: *'Julio Antonio treasured a precious object in his house, that his father had given him'.*

Activity 1: 'Crack the Art Code!'. Once the third track would be unveiled, students would conduct the introductory activity of this session. In this activity, they would complete a crossword puzzle with essential terminology relating to painting, sculpture and architecture. To do this, they should read the definitions and attempt to deduce the corresponding artistic element. For this, each group would receive one paper sheet containing the crossword and the definition of the terms. They would have 15 minutes to complete the task.

For example, this definition could be found on the exercise: *'Painting made of plaster to decorate the walls of a house'.* The term being defined would be: *fresco.*

Activity 2: 'Reveal the Hidden: The Roman Gallery'. The following activity, which would be the first reinforcement activity, would involve an image-based exercise where students would determine what artistic element would be involved. In the same line, they should deduce their function in Roman life and some of its main components. To do so, they

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

would receive a sheet with images of different Roman creations and would have approximately 15 minutes to complete the challenge.

In the exercise, there would be a photo of a Roman arch, among others. Student should provide details about the image in question.

Activity 3: 'Rebuild the Ruins!'. For the third activity, which would be the second reinforcement activity, students would assemble puzzle pieces to form images representing some of the artistic beauties previously studied. Therefore, each group would receive different puzzle pieces to create different puzzles, thus obtaining varied images. They would have 10 minutes to complete the activity.

Activity 4: 'Reflection challenge'. As in previous sessions, the final activity would involve a reflection on the content covered in the session. Students should reach a conclusion with their group members in about 5 minutes and write it down on paper. The questions would be on a little card student would receive.

At the end of the session, the **third clue** of the unit would be solved: *'sculpture of emperor Trajan'.*

As in previous sessions, the teacher would spend the last 10 minutes reviewing the activities by awarding the appropriate **badges** to the respective groups. Meanwhile, students would respond to **self-assessment statements** in relation with the session.

Fourth Session

The fourth session entitled 'I Can't Find My Terracotta Vase!' would explore content relating to the main economic activities of Ancient Rome: agriculture, trade, mining and craftsmanship. Therefore, through the proposed activities, students would be introduced into this miniature world to learn about how the economy in Ancient Rome worked. Additionally, the use of the Past Continuous would be implicit in the activities.

Before starting the activity, the **fourth clue** of this unit would be revealed: *'Julio Antonio enjoyed creating handicrafts in his spare time'.*

Activity 1: 'Unlocking Roman Economy!'. Once the fourth clue had been revealed, the introductory activity for this session would take place. In this activity, students would be asked to read a text[9] from the digital economic platform Economipedia about the main

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[9]Several parts of this text have been eelected and subsequently, translated by the author of this dissertation: Cabia, D. L. (2024). *Economía del Imperio Romano: Qué es y cómo funcionaba*. Economipedia. **https://economipedia.com/definiciones/economia-del-imperio-romano.html** (translated by the author).

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

economic activities in Rome and then, solve a series of questions related to the text. To do so, they would receive two sheets of paper: one containing the text and the other containing the questions to be developed very briefly. Due to the length of the text, students would have 25 minutes to complete this task.

For example, there would be questions such as: *'What was the main activity of the Roman economy?'* Students should answer: *'agriculture'*.

Activity 2: 'Economic Fakes or Truths?'. In this second activity, which would serve as a first reinforcement activity, students would have to determine whether the sentences about Rome's economy would be true or, on the contrary, false. They would have to test their prior knowledge in order to complete the exercise properly. They would be provided with a paper sheet with the sentences to be taken into account and would have to complete the exercise in about 10 minutes. For example, the sheet would contain the sentence: *'Plebeians owned the latifundia'*. Therefore, students had to decide if it is true or false.

Activity 3: 'Artisans at Work!'. In the third activity, which would be the second reinforcement activity, students would have to complete a series of sentences about various professions of craftsmen using the Past Continuous of the verbs provided. Therefore, each group would receive a sheet with sentences about craftsmen from different sectors to complete it with the corresponding verb form. For this activity, the students would have only 5 minutes, so they would have to be quick to finish the activity in the time limit.

This activity could include sentences such as: *'The carpenter … (make) a wooden chair'*. The answer would be: *'The carpenter was making a wooden chair'*.

Activity 4: 'Reflection challenge'. The last activity of the session would focus on a series of questions for students to reflect with their group members on aspects of the Roman economy that are still relevant today. They would have to reach a conclusion which they would have to write down on a piece of paper to complete the activity in 5 minutes. The questions would be on a little card students would receive.

At the end of the session, the **fourth clue** of the unit would be solved: *'vessel'*

As in previous sessions, the teacher would spend the last 10 minutes reviewing the activities by awarding the appropriate **badges** to the respective groups. Meanwhile, students would respond to **a brief self-assessment sheet** related to the session.

Fifth Session

The fifth session entitled 'God is Omnipresent' would deal with content related to Ancient Rome religion, i.e. polytheism and domestic worship. Through the activities, students

would learn the various functionalities of Roman divinities. The use of the Past Continuous, which would be implicit in some of the activities, would also be reinforced. This session would be carried out in the computer room, due to one of the activities would require the use of computers for one activity.

Before starting the activity, the **fifth clue** of the unit would be revealed: *'Julius Antonius was a very devout man and worshipped the gods in his house'*.

Activity 1: 'Pray for God!'. Once the clue had been revealed, the first activity of the session, the introductory one, would be conducted. It would involve the use of the digital platform Kahoot, where students would carry out a quiz on the Roman deities to select the god corresponding to the function being asked. To do this, each group would use a computer in the computer room and access the digital resource Kahoot. The teacher would provide them with the necessary code to log into this platform. Each question would have a duration of approximately 30 seconds, thus limiting the time for reasoning, since it would be a speed-based challenge. The activity would be expected to be 15 minutes long because although the questions had to be answered in a shorter time, the transition between one and the other also would take time and lengthen the duration of the whole activity.

In the Kahoot, this question could be found: *'Polytheism: Who was the goddess of love'*. There would be four possible answers: *'Minerva', 'Venus', 'Vulcan'* and *'Apollo'*. Students should choose the proper one.

Activity 2: 'Unscramble the God!'. The next activity, which would act as a reinforcement activity, would consist of a series of scrambled sentences about the Roman gods' routines. Therefore, students should order them to get correct sentences with a subject, a verbal form in Past Continuous and the appropriate complements. For this activity, students would receive a sheet and have about 15 minutes to complete it.

For example, students should order this sentence: *'houses-guarding-the-were-Lares-Roman'. ('Lares were guarding Roman houses')*.

Activity 3: 'Which God Was I?'. The third activity, acting as the second reinforcement activity, would consist of a game based on guessing the god being described or an element related to religion. For this purpose, students would receive various cards containing the terms mentioned above related to the topic. A member of the group would place a card on the forehead to describe it and the rest of the group would find out which religious element would be involved, whether it would be a specific god or an abstract religious idea. For the completion of this task, students would have 10 minutes.

For example, one student would place a card representing a god on their forehead and

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

describes it: *the god of wine.* Another member of the group should say the name of that god (*'Bacchus'*).

Activity 4: 'Reflection challenge'. The final activity of the session would consist of a series of questions through which students should reflect on the religious system in Rome and the current religion in general. They would have 5 minutes to reach a conclusion with their teammates and write it down on paper. They would be given a card with the questions to facilitate their comprehension.

At the end of this session, the **fifth clue** would be solved: *'Lares'*.

After the completion of all the activities, the teacher would dedicate the final 10 minutes of the session reviewing each group's activities. Those who had successfully solved the activities would receive the 'Winning Group' **badge**, whereas those who had made some errors, would get the 'Reinforcement' badge to encourage improvement. Meanwhile, students would complete a series of **self-assessment statements** to reflect on the learning tackled during the session.

Sixth Session

The sixth session entitled 'Echoes of Rome' would be the final session of the teaching unit. For this reason, the established routine activities of the previous sessions would not be carried out. Instead, the **escape room resolution** would be performed with the support of the clues that had been revealed in each session providing brief information about the identity of the mysterious character *('Julius Antonius was a plebeian, a republican, and a passionate enthusiast of arts and architecture, as evidenced by a sculpture of the emperor Trajan at his house—a gift from his father. He was also a great artisan of vessels and a devotee of the gods, especially the Lares')*.

The Final Revelation. A final role-play activity would also be conducted to review all the content covered throughout the unit. In this mini-theatralization called 'The Final Revelation', students would perform a scene with the members of their group, in which one of the members would be Julio Antonio and the remaining would act as citizens. Each group would be assigned a specific aspect of Roman life, whether it would be politics, economy, society, art or religion, although the latter would be more focused on the clues previously given. Citizens should provide Julio Antonio with essential information about their assigned section by contributing with relevant content previously tackled in the corresponding session as well as their prior knowledge about the character.

Each group would receive a **supporting card** containing useful statements they could

María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

incorporate in their speech in case they needed support in developing the dialogue. To ensure that all students cover all the topics, these cards would rotate among all the groups during the activity. This task would last approximately 40 minutes, since in the last 15 minutes **a 'debriefing' process** would take place, where students would have an opportunity to reflect on the whole teaching proposal.

For example, the card about politics would contain these helpful questions and statements:

'JULIO ANTONIO:

- *"What was I doing in the government of the Republic?"*

CITIZENS

- *"You were making decisions all the time to protect the homeland".*
- *"You and your father greeted each other every day when you met in the great room".*

And that would be where the educational escape room experience would **end***: 'Congratulations, travellers! You have solved all the challenges and helped Julio AntonIo recover his identity. You are now back in the present, with a wealth of knowledge about ancient Rome. Excellent job!'*

Although it has not been implemented, this teaching unit would be a valuable resource for addressing the dynamics of the History subject in the first year of secondary education within a CLIL approach. It would provide an opportunity to reinforce previously acquired content. The integration of gamification, particularly through the educational escape room, would allow for the consolidation of theoretical content related to this subject more dynamically. Thus, students could deepen their understanding on the disciplinary content of Ancient Rome related to social classes, economics, politics, and religion in a more interactive way. The aim would be to motivate students by transforming this process of acquiring content into an engaging experience, in a kind of game in which students could overcome various challenges combining playful and educational elements to accomplish a goal, rather than a monotonous experience. In addition, the CLIL approach would be considered the appropriate methodology for applying this pedagogical resource, that is the escape room. This approach, requires students to acquire subject-specific content through a foreign language, presenting a significant challenge as it demands the simultaneous development of both linguistic competence and conceptual understanding. For this reason, the integration of playful elements would be an effective strategy in tackling this process and reducing the cognitive load.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, the use of the CLIL approach is addressed as a methodological proposal for integrating both language and content learning in the classroom. According to Coyle *et al.* (2010), this approach is structured around four key elements: Communication, Content, Culture and Cognition. These elements have proven to be effective in meaningful contexts, thus fostering the development of a wide range of student abilities while facilitating content acquisition and foreign language consolidation.

The educational escape room, as a gamified resource, is presented as a suitable tool to be employed within this approach. The application of playful elements in teaching has been demonstrated to enhance the motivation and active participation of students, since they do not perceive the learning as a stressful process, but rather as an enjoyable experience in which they have to overcome small obstacles or activities to achieve a final objective (Nacional, 2023; Faiella *et al.*, 2015; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Specifically, the escape room has been chosen as a novel resource that enables young people to overcome a series of challenges or mysterious puzzles to 'escape' and reach their goal. Moreover, when applied to education, escape rooms are not only integrated into gamification, but also include other approaches such as cooperative learning, involving activities conducted in groups and problem-based learning, since each task presents a challenge that must be tackled in order to progress through the experience.

In a CLIL environment, educational escape rooms allow the integration of the foreign language into a series of puzzles or challenges on the curricular content of a specific subject. This could be reflected through the development of a hypothetical didactic proposal for students in the first year of ESO, based on aspects of life in Ancient Rome. In this teaching unit, students would be offered the opportunity to discover how the Romans were organized politically, socially, economically, artistically and religiously by solving a series of clues and activities. The objective would be to obtain a complete description of the life of a fictional Roman character. Additionally, this proposal would promote the integration of skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, time management, intercultural awareness, and linguistic-communicative skills. All of them would be align with the 4Cs.

Consequently, the use of the escape room emerges as a useful resource to address the dynamics of any classroom, especially within a CLIL framework, in which students must stay focused to comprehend new concepts while simultaneously reinforcing their learning in a foreign language as a means of transmitting that content. Integrating this dynamic through a game allows students to visualize learning not as a complicated process of memorization, but as a manner of achieving small goals, allowing them to obtain small rewards, leading to achieve

the final goal.

Although the proposed didactic unit has not been implemented, its design and structure allow us to visualize how it could have been developed in a real classroom context. All the elements involved in the unit have been carefully created according to the educational escape room design methodology and the Star Model proposed by Botturi *et al.* (2020), as well as the pedagogical principles of Coyle's (2006) CLIL approach.

Organizing classroom dynamics through playful elements or interactive strategies, different from traditional methods, represents a different alternative to be applied in any classroom. In this project, it has been decided to analyze this issue, specifically for the first year of ESO, taking into account that this grade acts as a transitional stage between Primary and Secondary Education, where students are required to work with simplified and less extensive content, unlike higher-level courses, which require more sophisticated academic content. Nevertheless, the dynamics of escape rooms could be implemented in the upper levels of ESO or in *Bachillerato* by increasing the level of content. Alternatively, other classroom dynamics beyond gamification could be investigated to assess their effectiveness for students. Different combinations of learning strategies could be employed, or alternative methods could be applied to challenge the assumption that traditional pedagogical models are always the most efficient. Therefore, ongoing research into future pedagogical strategies remains essential for achieving optimal teaching outcomes.

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María Elena Muñoz Verdú   Universidad de Valladolid

Appendix A

Educational Escape Room Guidelines

EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOM
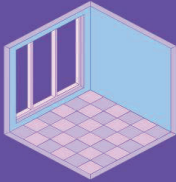
NARRATIVE

You're travelling in a time machine to explore the life of your ancestors, but suddenly, the machine breaks down - oh no, you're trapped in Ancient Rome! To get back to the present, you will have to delve into every aspect of life in Rome during each class to help Julio Antonio recover his identity. Therefore, you will have to solve a series of challenging puzzles that will bring you closer to your ultimate goal. From politics and religion to art, society and architecture, you will uncover a whole new world full of surprises and fascinating discoveries. Now your only mission is this: working together with your teammates (in groups of 5). Only through collaboration will you return to the present with your family and friends. The adventure begins now! I wish you the best of luck, travellers!
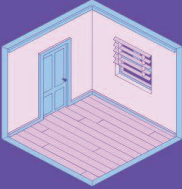
EQUIPMENT

Cards with each of the activities will be distributed to each group.

PUZZLES

Reading comprehension activities, listening comprehension exercises, sentence correction, interactive games, true/false activities, matching tasks and even reflection activities, among others.

GAME-FLOW

-SESSION 1: Roman society + Verb 'to be' (past)
-SESSION 2: Political system + Past Simple
-SESSION 3: Art + Past Simple review
-SESSION 4: Economy + Past Continuous
-SESSION 5: Religion + Past Continous review
-SESSION 6: Resolution + Role-play

Note. Author's own work.

EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOM

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To explore the main features of life in Ancient Rome, including politics, society, economy and architecture (Content), while reinforcing the use and understanding of past tenses in English and developing communication skills in English (Communication), promoting critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving abilities (Cognition) and reflecting on the cultural legacy on Ancient Rome and its influence on today's society (Culture).
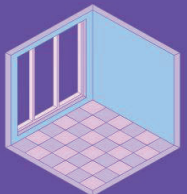
CONSTRAINTS

Students will have a maximum of 45-50 minutes to complete the activities in each session.
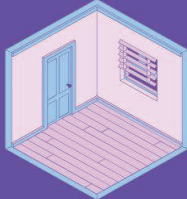
PLAYERS

The activities will be carried out in groups of 4 and 5 players.

BADGES

Students will receive badges according to the work performed.

DEBRIEFING

At the end of all the sessions, a debriefing process will be carried out so that students can reflect on what they have learnt.

Note. Author's own work.

First Session

Clue 1

> CLUE 1
>
> THE CITIZEN CANNOT REMEMBER HIS SOCIAL STATUS. HIS CLOTHES DO NOT REVEAL MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT HIS IDENTITY. ONLY BY INVESTIGATING THROUGH ROMAN SOCIETY, WILL YOU DISCOVER A CLUE THAT WILL UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS POSITION
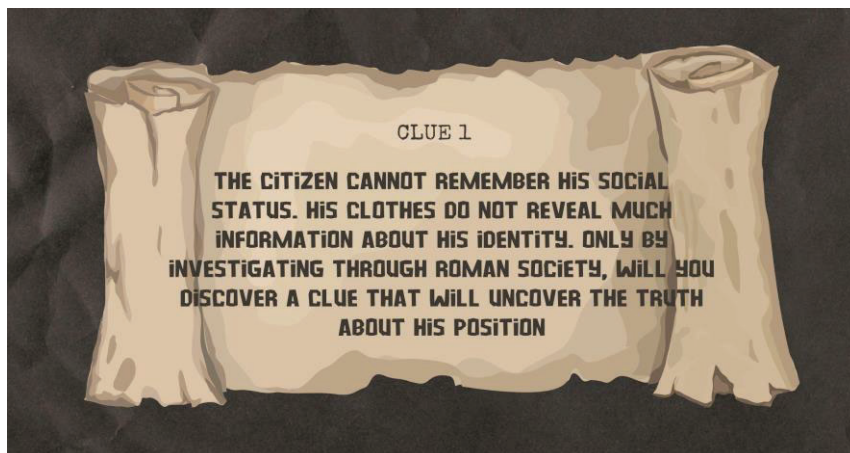
Note. Author's own work.

Activity 1

Who were you in Ancient Rome?

In early times, Roman society was divided between the patricians, the clients, the plebeians and the slaves. The patricians were the most powerful, large landowners. They were the only Roman 'citizens', they could vote and be elected to public and religious office. Clients were foreigners who were placed under the protection of a patrician, receiving financial assistance and judicial protection. The client paid for these services with labour and by participating in warfare alongside his protector. Patrician families prided themselves on having large clienteles.

The plebeians were the members of the plebs (the people). This social group consisted of foreigners and clients who no longer enjoyed the protection of the patricians. They were free men but not citizens. They were excluded from political and religious life, and were forbidden to marry members of the patricians.

Slaves were prisoners of war. They were engaged in the heaviest labour and had no rights whatsoever.

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 2

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 3

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 4
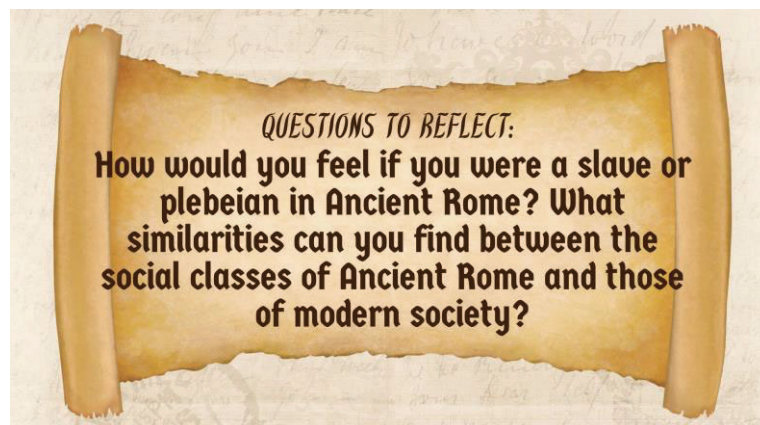
Note. Author's own work.

Resolution of the clue 1

Note. Author's own work.

Badges

Note. Author's own work.

Resolution of the clue 1

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Self-Evaluation Sheet

Note. Author's own work.

Second Session

Clue 2

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 1

https://youtu.be/b9bcohqsTGk

Activity 2

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 3

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 4

Note. Author's own work.

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Resolution of the clue 2

Note. Author's own work.

Badges

Note. Author's own work.

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Self-Evaluation Sheet

Note. Author's own work.

Third Session

Clue 3

Self-Evaluation Sheet
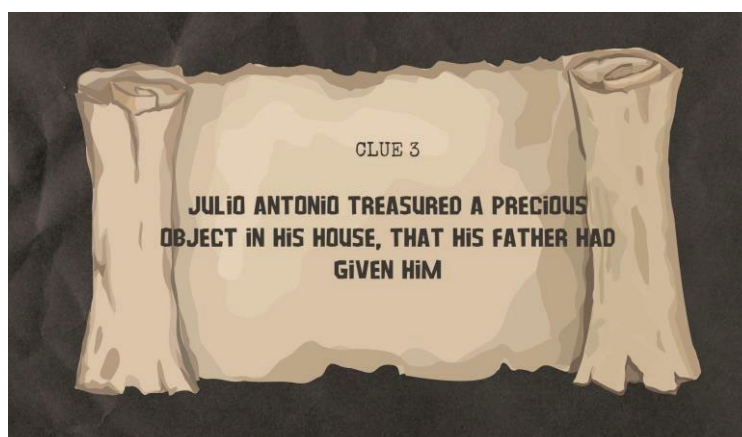
Note. Author's own work.

Activity 1

Group:　　　　　　　**Class:**

Crack the Art Code!

Across

5. A circular public building in which spectacles such as gladiatorial combats were held.
8. A very common art form depicting the faces of important public figures of the time.
9. Architectural element used for the construction and decoration of public buildings.

Down

1.Roman sculptures were not white; they were painted in...
2. A public building where Romans relaxed and bathed.
3. Painting made of plaster to decorate the walls of a house.
4. Giant life-size sculpture made to represent public figures realistically.
6. Decorative art form employed to decorate floors, walls and other elements by assessing small pieces of stone, glass or ceramic.

Note. Author's own work.
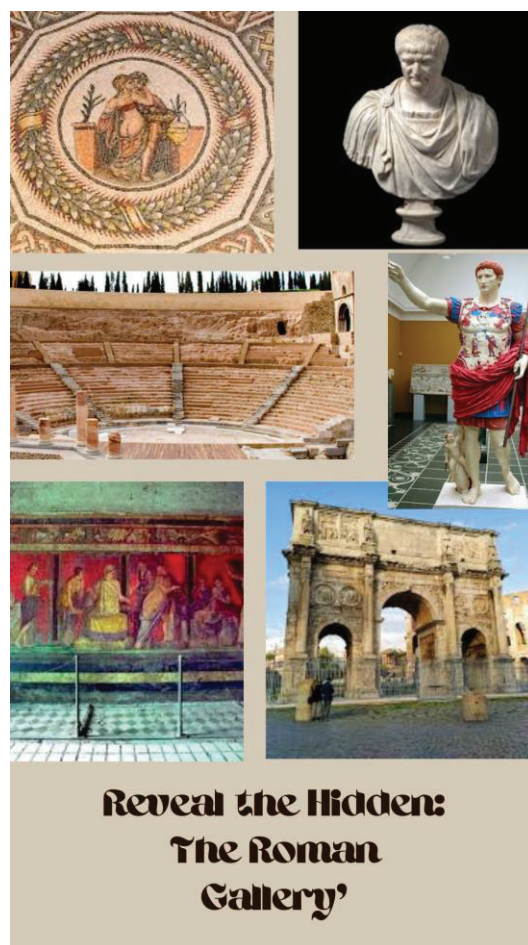
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Activity 2

Note. Author's own work.
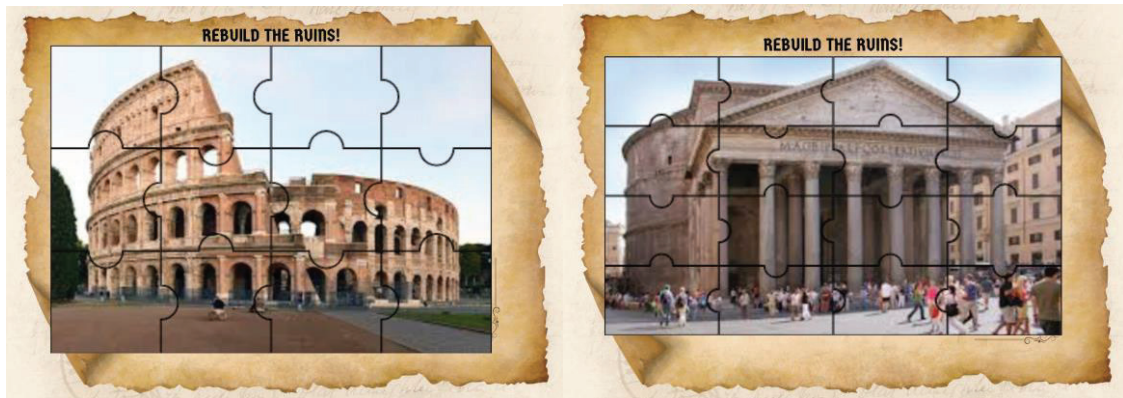
Activity 3

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 4
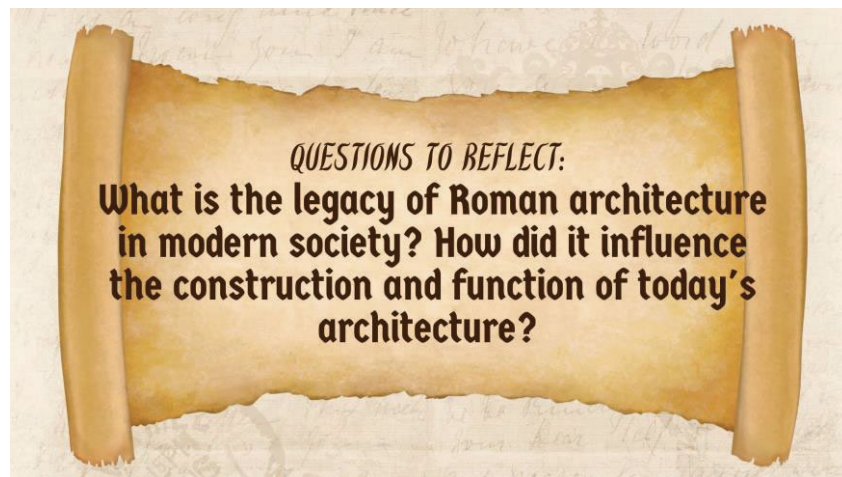
Note. Author's own work.

Resolution of the clue 3

Note. Author's own work.

Badges

Note. Author's own work.

Self-Evaluation Sheet

Note. Author's own work.

Fourth Session

Clue 4
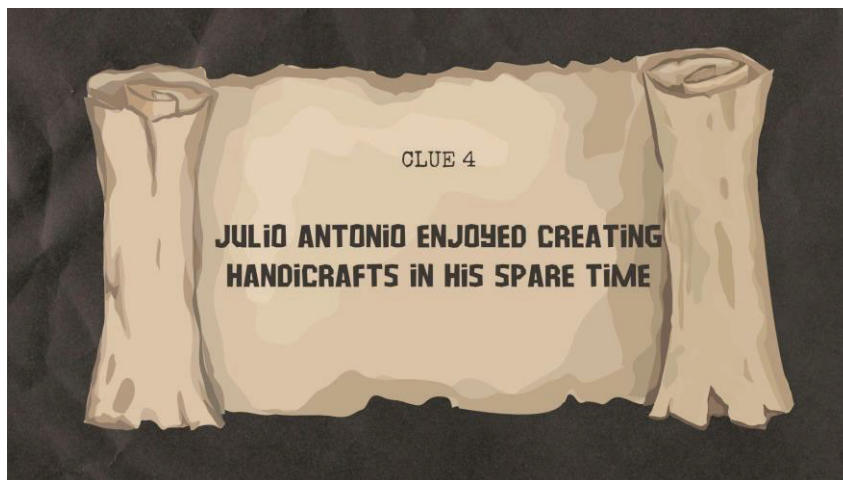
Note. Author's own work.

Activity 1

Unlocking Roman economy!

What is the economy of the Roman Empire?
The economy of the Roman Empire was characterised by its strong agricultural and commercial base. Agriculture was the main activity, and the population paid taxes to the state in return for owning and exploiting the land.

Mining in Ancient Rome
Mining was of great importance as a source of resources for Ancient Rome. Minerals such as iron, copper, gold, gold, marble, silver and copper were obtained for various purposes such as weapons, tools, building materials and decoration, among others.

Agricultural activities
In the economy of Ancient Rome, agriculture was considered a prestigious activity, as this civilisation had its origins in an agricultural and cattle-raising society. The patricians, as the social elite, owned luxurious villas and farmed large tracts of land, or latifundia. Meanwhile, slaves were working in the fields, where various foodstuffs were produced.

Handicrafts
Handicraft production was very varied and practically all the craftsmen in the city were constantly placing numerous orders for the population. In fact, they used local raw materials for their work. Thus, professions such as carpenters, blacksmiths and women weaving on looms played an important role in the economy of the Roman Empire.
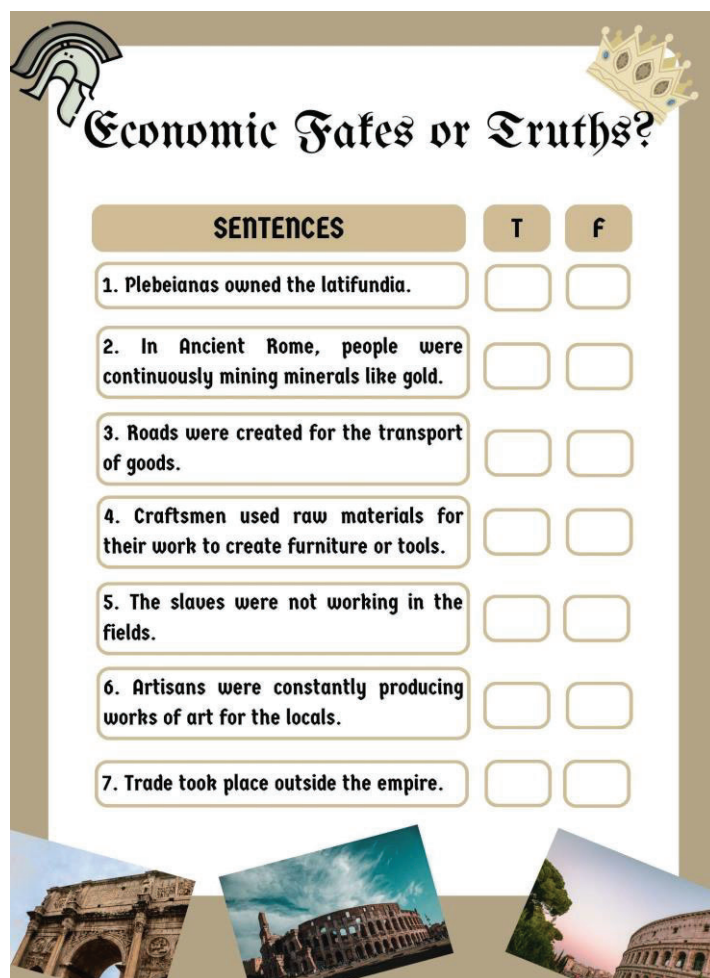
Trade and commerce
At the time of the Roman Empire, trade took place within the borders of the Empire itself. In order to facilitate the movement of goods, roads were created and maps and guides were provided. Sea transport, on the other hand, was allowing the movement of large shipments of goods.

Unlocking Roman economy!

1. What was the main activity of the Roman economy?
2. What minerals were being obtained in Ancient Roman mining?
3. Who owned the latifundia?
4. What were the professions that emerged in handicraft work?
5. How was the trade and transport of goods facilitated in Ancient Rome?
6. What were minerals extracted for in Rome?
7. What were slaves doing in the economic system of that period?

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 2

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 3

ARTISANS AT WORK!

The blacksmith .... (make) a weapon for the army to fight the next battle.

The carpenter .... (make) a wooden chair.
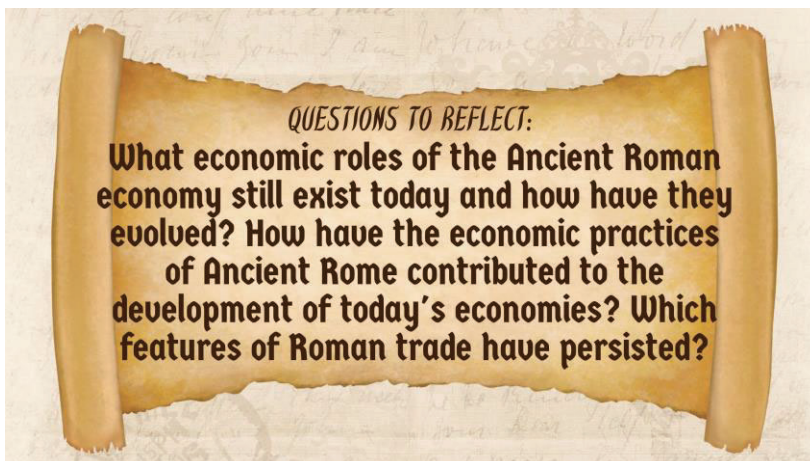
The shoemaker .... (repair) sandals for the merchants.

The women .... (weave) linen garments for their husbands.

The jeweller .... (polish) jewellery for the Roman elite.

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 4

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT:
What economic roles of the Ancient Roman economy still exist today and how have they evolved? How have the economic practices of Ancient Rome contributed to the development of today's economies? Which features of Roman trade have persisted?

Note. Author's own work.

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Resolution of the clue 4

Note. Author's own work.

Badges

Note. Author's own work.

Resolution of the clue 4

Self-Evaluation Sheet

Note. Author's own work.

Fifth Session

Clue 5
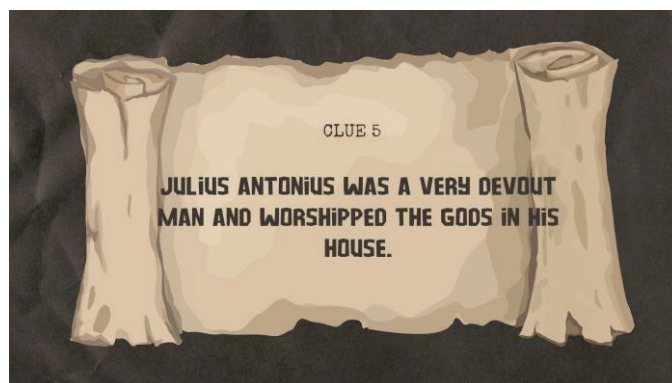
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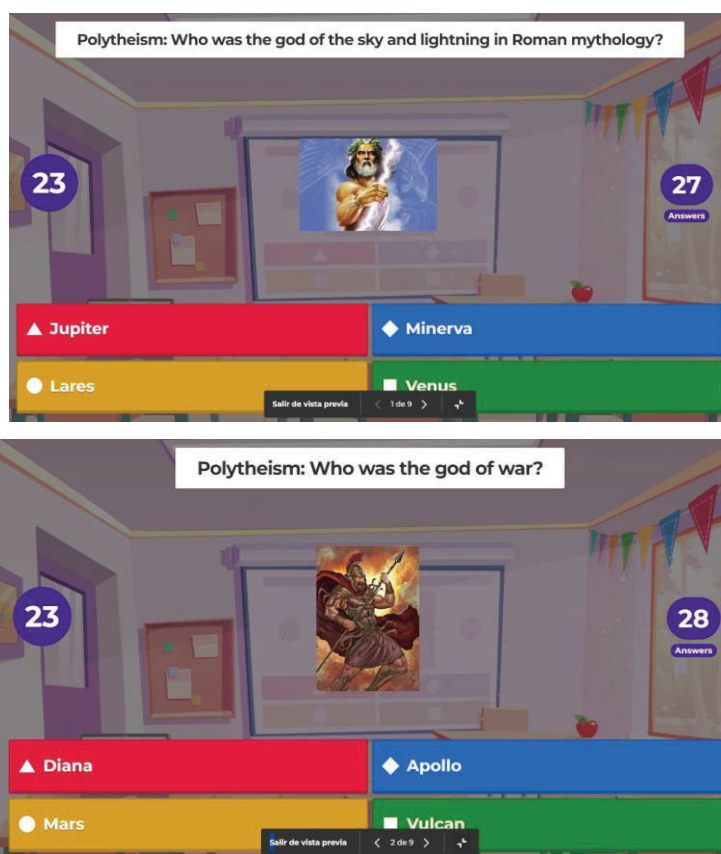
Activity 1

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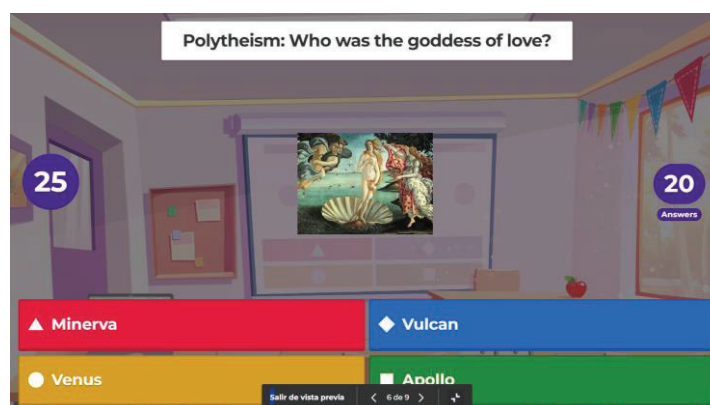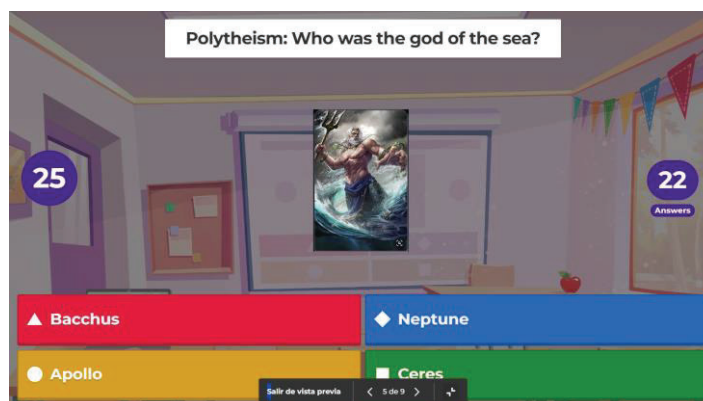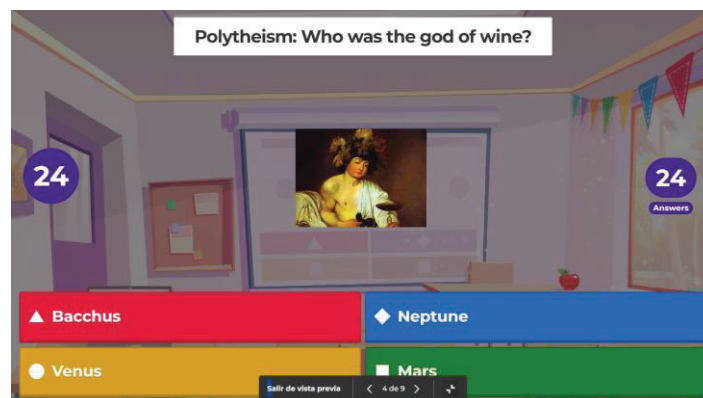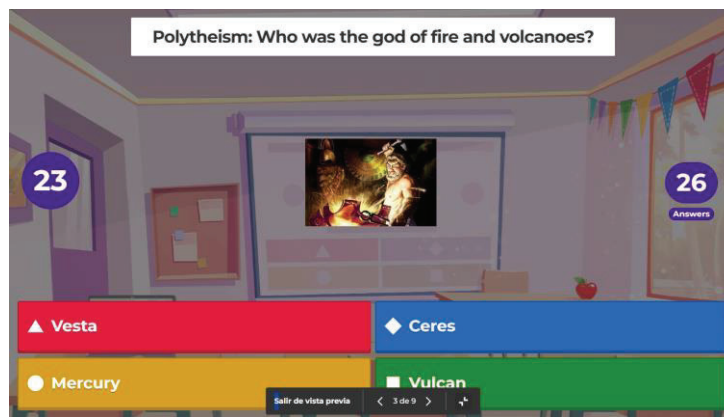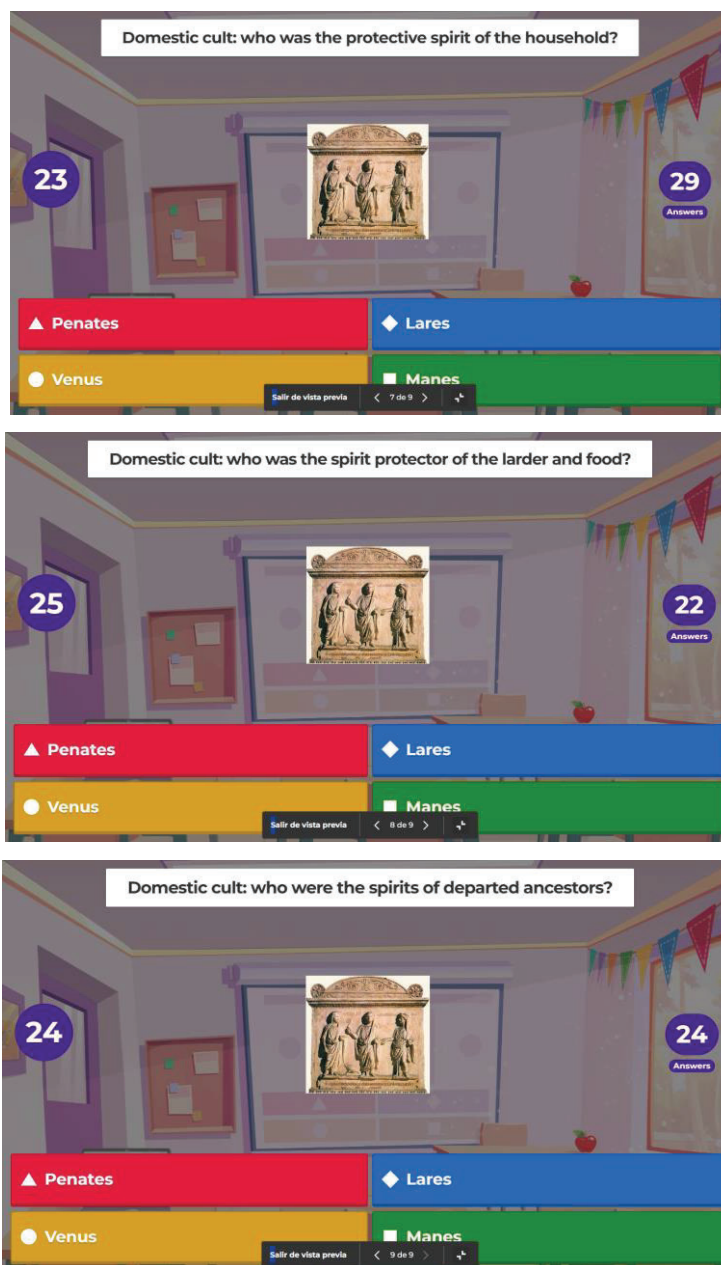
Note. Author's own work.

Activity 2

UNSCRAMBLE THE GOD!

people-to-Venus-helping-was-in love-fall

guarding-larders-were-Penates-the-Roman

houses-guarding-the-were-Lares-Roman

stirring-was-Jupiter-the-sky

for-the-heroes-weapons-Vulcan-creating-was

Note. Author's own work.

Activity 3

WHICH GOD WAS I?

PENATES	VENUS	NEPTUNE
LARES	MANES	JUPITER
VULCAN	MARS	BACCHUS
WINE	HOUSEHOLD	LOVE
POLYTHEISM	CULT	SPIRIT

Note. Author's own work.

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Activity 4
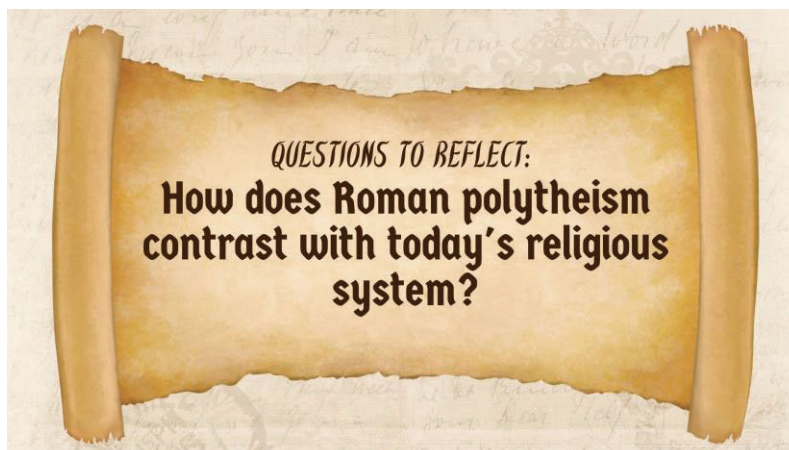
Note. Author's own work.

Resolution of the clue 5

Note. Author's own work.

Badges

Note. Author's own work.

Self-Evaluation Sheet

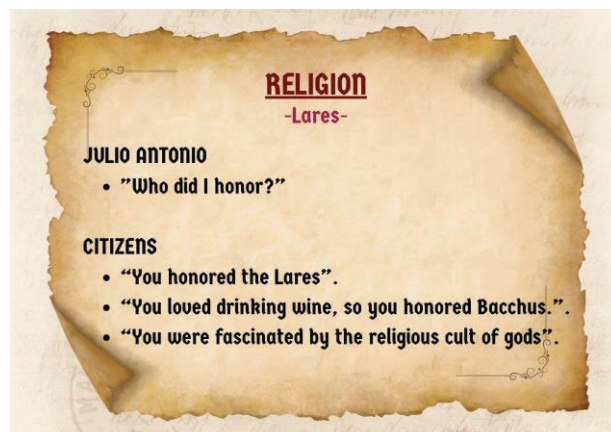*Note.* Author's own work.

Sixth Session

Final Resolution
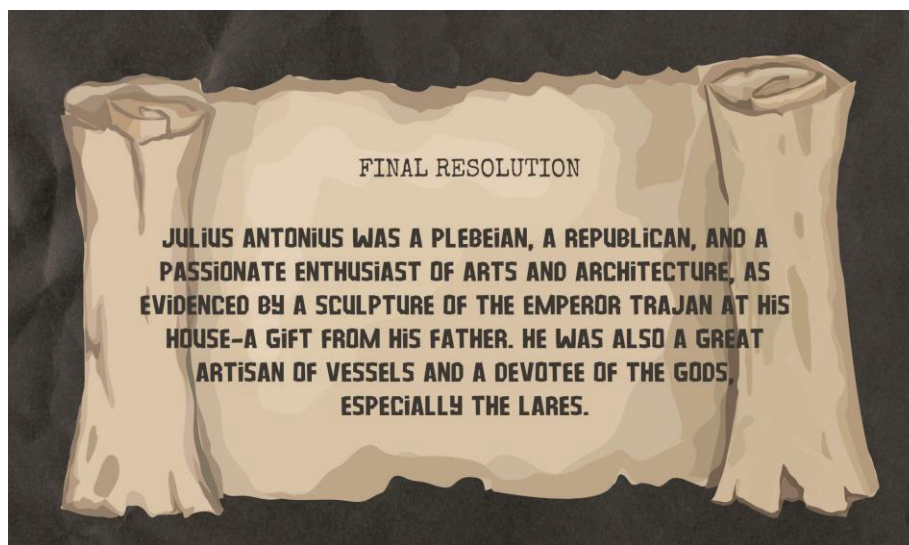
Note. Author's own work.

Supporting Cards
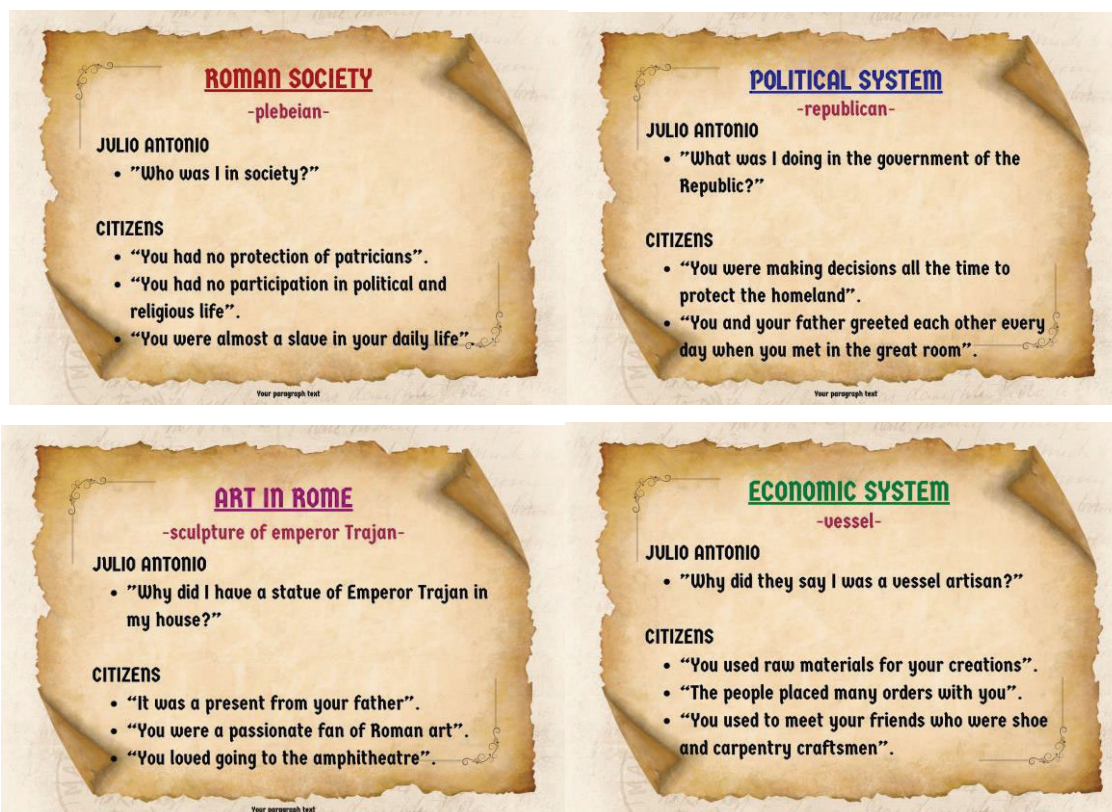
Note. Author's own work.

End of the Escape Room Experience
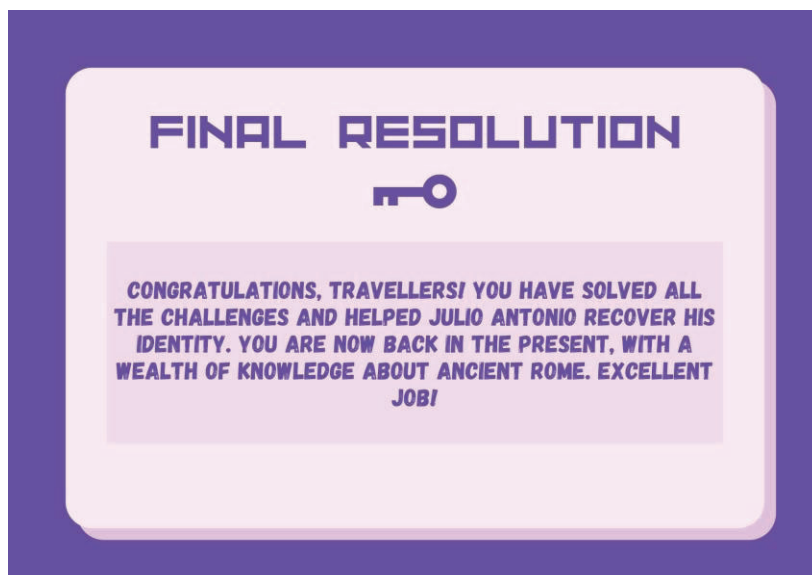
Note. Author's own work.

Debriefing Process

Note. Author's own work.

Appendix B

Evaluation Rubric

EVALUATION RUBRIC

FINAL ROLE–PLAY: 'UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF ROME: EXPLORING ROMAN LIFE!'

ÍTEM	Excellent	Good	Basic	Limited
Communication	Communicates clearly and fluently, using various grammatical structures and vocabulary, and actively participating in the interaction with respect	Communicates adequately, using a slight variety of grammar and vocabulary, and participating frequently and respectfully in the interaction	Communicates ideas with difficulty, uses similar structures all the time, and participates on rare occasions in the conversation	Expresses ideas with extreme difficulty, uses the same grammatical structures and vocabulary throughout the entire process, and barely participates in the interaction
Content	Demonstrates a deep knowledge of Roman civilisation, which reflects their involvement in the other activities of the escape room	Shows good understanding of Roman civilisation, which reflects the interest shown throughout the rest of the sessions	Recognizes general aspects of Roman civilisation and occasionally applies them to role-play	Demonstrates very limited knowledge of the theoretical content of Ancient Rome
Cognition	Appropriately applies critical thinking and teamwork skills to select appropriate information related to the content	Applies certain strategies to integrate information into the activity and express different opinions with appropriate reasoning	Applies limited information selection strategies that allow them to express very basic ideas and collaborates in a limited way in role-play	Shows considerable difficulty in understanding, selecting, and organizing appropriate resources to integrate information into discourse. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are greatly reduced
Culture	Reflects appropriately on the connection between Roman civilisation and modern society and can establish clear similarities between both, especially regarding the Roman legacy	Reflects clearly on certain aspects of Ancient Rome and is able to make significant connections with the present	Recognizes basic aspects of Roman society, but is unable to establish a clear connection with today's society	Shows difficulty in establishing similarities between Roman society and today's society and defending their opinion in front of their teammates
Collaboration	Is fully involved in the entire process, listens attentively to his teammates, shares his ideas and opinions, and collaborates in everything necessary	Participates frequently and shares specific opinions. Cooperation in resolving specific issues	Rarely participates or shares opinions. Shows difficulty interacting with the group or demonstrating a collaborative attitude	Barely participates or collaborates in the activity. Shows no interest in cooperating and supporting his classmates throughout this final process

NOTES

Note. Author's own work.