

News and Reports

Insights on Classics in Praxis at the Delphi Economic Forum

Eugenia Manolidou¹, Christophe Rico², Jenny Teichmann³, Juan Coderch⁴, Marco Romani Mistretta⁵ and Steven Hunt⁶

¹Elliniki Agogi, Athens, Greece, <https://ellinikiagogi.gr>

²Polis, The Jerusalem Institute of Languages and Humanities, Jerusalem, Israel, <https://www.polisjerusalem.org>

³Triodos Trivium, Germany, <https://www.triodos-trivium.com/>

⁴University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk>

⁵The Paideia Institute, Rome, Italy, <https://www.paideiainstitute.org>

⁶University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK, <https://www.cam.ac.uk>

On Friday April 28th 2023, *Delphi Classics | Classics in Praxis* took place for the second year. Last year we had invited Professors of Classics to make their own presentations in Greek or Latin in an attempt to show – mainly to the Greek people – that Classical Greek and Latin can also be spoken. In Greece the majority of the people still find it strange that Classical Greek can actually be spoken. It is my goal and dream to prove to them that by incorporating spoken Comprehensible Input Greek to the curriculum, not only will the students learn faster and easier, but they will be able to master the language much faster than those who have no Greek language background. The aim is that they will eventually read and understand most Classical Greek texts and benefit from our ancestors' wisdom (Figure 1).

In collaboration with LanguageCert, we invited nine experts in teaching Classical Greek to primary or secondary school students, or Classics majors in College, to tell us how they do it, what is their impact and share with them ideas on how we can convince countries to change their curriculum, in the interest of the students. The conference took place in Delphi, at the international Delphi Economic Forum, an annual conference that brings together thought leaders, policymakers, business executives, and academics to discuss economic and geopolitical issues facing Greece, Europe, and the world. The Delphi Economic Forum attracts high-profile speakers from around the world, including heads of state, CEOs of major corporations, prominent academics, and thought leaders.

There were three panels: one that focused on the global aspect of supporting the teaching of Classical Greek; a second one that showcased teaching Comprehensible Input Greek as a living language; and a third one where motivating and encouraging learning by certifying different levels of knowledge was discussed. The session was finished by the former Ambassador of the United States of America the Hon. Alexandros Mallias, who spoke about the value of the Delphic Maxims in our days.

The first panel consisted of Byron Nicolaides, President and CEO of PeopleCert/LanguageCert, Panagiotis Petrakis, Emeritus Professor of Economics and Scientific Supervisor of the E-Learning Programme of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,

and Alexis Phylactopoulos, President of College Year in Athens, a non-profit educational institution that offers academic programs and cultural activities for students interested in studying in Greece (Figure 2).

Byron Nicolaides was very excited to announce all four levels of the [Classical Greek Certificate](#) by LanguageCert, a leading language certification company globally and focused on the importance of discovering the exact number of people, of all ages and academic interests, that learn Classical Greek today.

Panagiotis Petrakis spoke about the newly-launched e-learning program for beginners [Classical Greek level A](#) by the University of Athens and expressed his surprise that so many people around the world were interested and are applying for this 12-week programme that offers the opportunity to be introduced to the language without prior background.

Alexis Phylactopoulos presented [College Year in Athens](#) which has been operating since 1963 and hosts students of Classics from all around the U.S. for a year, in order to study and learn about Greece's history and culture, either in Athens, or in other cities all around the country. He pointed out that even if one student wants to study Classical Greek for a semester or a full year, the institution creates a class just for this one person.

The second panel consisted of Classical Languages' specialists who presented ways on how someone can teach Classical Greek as a living language, based on their own experience (Figure 3).

Juan Coderch, Senior Language Tutor in Greek and Latin at the University of St. Andrews, spoke about the need to simplify and make Greek fun to study and learn. He is actively involved in translating modern literature in Comprehensible Input Greek and tries to introduce as many texts as possible to his students, rather than making them memorise grammar and syntax rules.

Jenny Teichmann, Language Tutor in Greek and Latin at *Triodos Trivium*, which is based in Germany, has students from all over the world, with all kinds of backgrounds and creates audiovisual material in order to cover their needs.

Benjamin Kantor, Research Associate at the University of Cambridge, teaches Biblical Greek, and spoke about the way he teaches it in order to build fluency over time. Although people who learn the language ultimately want to read the texts, without understanding the language in itself, the pictures, the feelings, and the culture, the goal is hardly ever achieved. Decoding the language is just the first of many steps in understanding it.

Author of correspondence: Eugenia Manolidou, E-mail: e.manolidou@ellinikiagogi.gr

Cite this article: Manolidou E, Rico C, Teichmann J, Coderch J, Mistretta MR and Hunt S (2024). Insights on Classics in Praxis at the Delphi Economic Forum. *The Journal of Classics Teaching* 25, 77–82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000685>



Figure 1. Eugenia Manolidou.

Angela Dix, Latin and ancient Greek Teacher, is in charge of the East of England *Classics for All*, a charitable organisation that trains primary state school teachers to teach Classical languages to their students. This is in order to introduce them to the beautiful texts and the philosophy of the Classical literature, a tool, as Angela said, to learn more about themselves.

Gerardo Guzmàn, Professor of Ancient Greek at the *Vivarium Novum Academy* in Rome, speaks Greek to his students at the very first moment they enter the class. He helps them understand what he says by gestures and repetition and manages by the end of the first year to have all the students read, write, and actively participate in everyday dialogues.

The third panel focused more on the practical ways with which we can promote the language and convince academics and governments to include this method in schools' curricula (Figure 4).



Figure 2. Panel One: Alexis Phylactopoulos, Panagiotis Petrakis, Byron Nicolaides, Eugenia Manolidou.



Figure 3. Panel Two: Angela Dix, Benjamin Kantor, Juan Coderch, Eugenia Manolidou, Gerardo Guzmàn, Jenny Teichmann.



Figure 4. Panel Three: Ignazio Armella, Steven Hunt, Eugenia Manolidou, Christophe Rico, Marco Romani Mistretta.

Steven Hunt, Senior Lecturer in Classics Education at the University of Cambridge, lectures and publishes extensively on the benefits of the active language method regarding both Classical Greek and Latin. He not only believes that things in the field may change, but is convinced that change is already happening.

Christophe Rico, Dean of the *Polis Institute* in Jerusalem, believes that assessing and certifying students motivates them to progress and excel. He is one of the first modern – day professors that applied active Greek in his institution after he discovered that just studying the language was simply not enough.

Ignazio Armella, Vice-President of the *Vivarium Novum Academy*, described the success of the Academy's active language teaching program that starts in class and continues throughout the whole day. He finds the certification to be a very useful tool for the students to get them to know the level of knowledge they gradually achieve.

Marco Romani Mistretta, the director of the European branch of the *Paideia Institute*, finds that travelling to Greece or Italy inspires students to learn more about the Greek and Roman civilisations. Experiential learning, and simple or simplified texts, facilitate learning for students of the *Paideia Institute*, who follow classes either in New York or online.

All speakers described in their own manner the approach to teaching Classical Greek through immersion, using real-life situations and interactions to help students learn the language in a natural way. They explained that by creating an immersive environment, students not only learn the language, but also the culture, history, philosophy and mythology of the Ancient Greeks. This benefits them educationally, but also spiritually and emotionally; since they connect to the texts they end up reading from the original, and not someone else's translation. The importance of technology was also mentioned, since in a few years the educational environment will be totally different. Who knows what the school of tomorrow will look like?

With the influence of technology getting more and more overwhelming to young people, initiatives such as the Delphi Classics Forum acknowledge and promote the solid foundation Classical Languages offer. The International Delphi Economic Forum, as do many other fora of this kind around the world, invites and supports opinion makers and decision leaders and hosts global events that shape the world. The very fact that, for the second year, we have been invited to participate is another proof that Classics

today is greatly needed and valued. Critical thinking, insights into human nature, morality, the common good – these are principles abundantly found in classical literature and they provide a solid foundation for children and youth, future citizens, future IT's, and future politicians. Our children and our students will be held responsible for the world's success, or failure. And if things don't work out, we will be the ones to blame.

Personally, I am grateful to the Delphi Economic Forum and LanguageCert for giving me the opportunity to invite all these experienced and charismatic people to showcase their work, expose their expertise and show a fraction of what Classical Greek can offer the world. I was pleased to receive extremely positive feedback from the audience, among which the Vice President of the Academy of Athens Stamatios (Tom) M. Krimizis, Ministers of the Greek Government, reporters and delegates from different parts of the world.

Details of some of the organisations mentioned appear below, written by their contributors:

Polis – The Jerusalem Institute of Languages and Humanities by Christophe Rico

Polis – The Jerusalem Institute of Languages and Humanities is an academic institution founded in 2011 by an international group of scholars. Our goal is the renewal of Humanities through the revival of the languages that are at the foundation of Western civilisation. Our conviction is that learning from the past helps build mutual understanding and respect of different cultures and peoples in the Middle East and in Western Civilisation.

The Polis method

The method of teaching ancient languages through full immersion helps students acquire an intuitive understanding of the language.

Theoretical Principles

- 1) Total Immersion: Our classes are taught entirely in the target language: the only language spoken, written, or read is the one being taught. This principle marks the main difference from the traditional grammar translation methods.
- 2) Dynamic Language Development: The order in which the learner internalises various features of the target language

respects the inner structure and dynamics of that same language. Research on first language acquisition that offers insights to that inner structure is considered in laying out the grammatical progression.

The Polis Method, however, recognises the learner's advancement much more holistically than on a strictly grammatical scale: particularly in the early stages, pragmatic communication skills are regularly prioritised over grammatical analysis. Students are not only able to comprehend more than they can produce, but they are also able to use language that they cannot analyse yet. We recognise the student's continuous progression in language acquisition based on the Four Basic Language Skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and modes of discourse or literary genres (from dialogue to narration to argumentation to poetry).

Practical principles

We have, with some modifications, been able to utilise a few techniques developed by various teachers and researchers since the 1970s. These techniques have proven to be particularly useful set-pieces for the practical implementation of our theoretical principles: TPR (Total Physical Response) (Asher, 1996), TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) (Ray and Seely, 1998) and Story Building (Thomson, 2017). These are combined with other activities like chain drills for paradigm internalisation and pair and group work for the development of conversational fluency. A number of pre- and post-reading strategies are also used to teach literary texts. Furthermore, Polis instructors are currently experimenting on a new tool, referred to as Living Sequential Expression (LSE), a technique that was first conceived and developed at Polis and which is inspired by the work of François Gouin (1831–1896). Through LSE, students will learn sequences of logically connected actions by performing and then reporting on them.

Language Courses

The Polis Institute offers regular language courses in Jerusalem during the school year which include Ancient and Modern Hebrew, Arabic, Ancient Greek, and Latin, as well as ancient language summer courses in the United States and Europe. We receive a total of more than 500 students in more than 60 different courses each year.

Academic Programs

The Polis Institute is currently offering two third-party MA programs – in Ancient Philology and Near Eastern Languages – each of which has an accompanying One-Year Program. We also offer two-year long Fluency Certificates in Arabic and Ancient Greek. Registered students come from several different countries. The MA programs are accredited by three European universities.

Research

Our three current lines of research are:

- Research on second language acquisition which leads to improved techniques for teaching ancient and modern languages.
- Developing a database on historical and archaeological sites.
- Applying modern technology to presentations of the Holy Sites: the first Multimedia Center supervised by Polis is located in Abu Gosh, close to Jerusalem.

Triodos Trivium

by Jenny Teichmann

Ancient Greek is often said to be a difficult language, with its intricate verbal system, hundreds of particles and thousands of grammatical exceptions. And yet, every child in the Ancient Greek world could learn this language with ease. The aim of *Triodos Trivium* is to recreate that ease and to cultivate Ancient Greek as a living language that can be intuitively understood rather than just scientifically dissected and translated into other languages. For this purpose, we offer classes in spoken Ancient Greek and Latin, online and in person, for beginners as well as advanced students. We also publish videos in Ancient Greek that range from simple language lessons ('How to introduce yourself in Ancient Greek') to interviews with philologists from all over the world that were conducted in the 'dead' language itself. The videos are used by teachers of Ancient Greek as well as self-learners: They are available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@triodostrivium> to anybody with an internet connection and a desire to learn (Figure 5).

Report on the Delphi Economic Forum

by Juan Coderch

I had the pleasure of attending the *Delphi Economic Forum* for a second consecutive year thanks to the Invitation by LanguageCert. Although this Forum deals rather with economics and politics, as it takes place in such an emblematic cultural place like Delphi, the organisation has the kindness to reserve a little corner of the Forum for Classics.

My presence there is due to my interest in the teaching of Ancient Greek and Latin as live languages and the production of learning material, like for example my translation of 'The Little Prince' into Greek and my translation of 'The Importance of Being Earnest' (Oscar Wilde) into both Greek and Latin, among others. Offering students something to practise out of the usual classical corpus is something that I consider useful in order to develop their interest in these two languages.

The panels, moderated by Eugenia Manolidou, Director of *Elliniki Agogi*, were very interesting, with colleagues from Cambridge, Jerusalem, Rome, etc., and I enjoyed seeing that my opinions about language teaching were in total agreement with my colleagues' opinions, something that was confirmed in our conversations before and after the panels themselves: the best method to achieve an excellent command of Latin and Greek is teaching them as live languages, even if the ultimate purpose is reading the classical texts.

Of course, I took the opportunity of attending this Forum to do the same as I did last year: I attend also other events not related to Classics but for which I feel some interest and meeting other people related to these interests. For example, I had the pleasure of talking to the former President of Taiwan Mr. Ying-Jeou Ma, also with the Chinese Ambassador in Greece Dr Junzheng Xiao, with Prof. Tang Xiaoyang of the Tsinghua University of Beijing, with Prof. He Yun of Hunan University etc. (for personal reasons, I have been developing a strong interest in anything related to China, including the study of the language).

In a nutshell: it was a very fruitful Forum which I was delighted to attend, and I really look forward to attending it again next year, to meet up again with my colleagues of Classics. Also, after swapping some e-mails with Prof. Xiaoyang, I have his kind invitation to meet him again next year in Delphi or even in Beijing if I happen to go there.

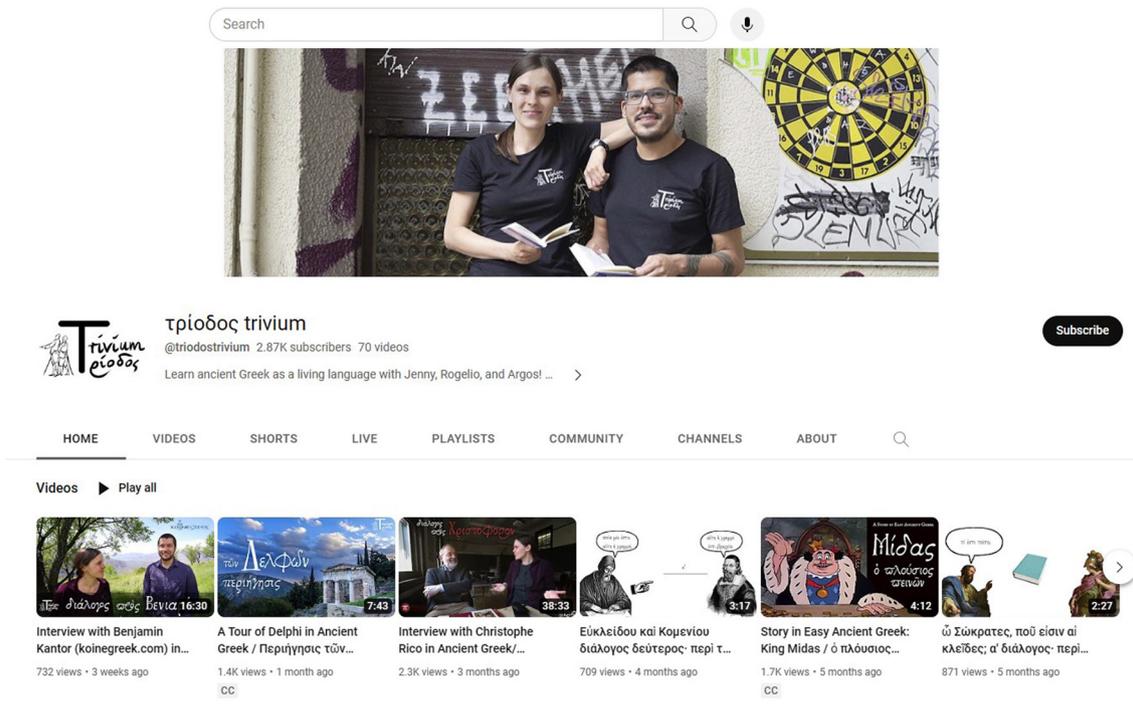


Figure 5. Screenshot of Triodos Trivium YouTube channel.

The Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study by Marco Romani Mistretta

The Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study was founded in 2010 in New York and Rome as a non-profit organisation devoted to the promotion of the classical humanities, with a focus on ancient Mediterranean languages. The Institute's founders were alumni of the summer course held in Rome by Reginald Foster, who taught generations of Latin students to love the Latin language and the city of Rome.

Since its inception, the Paideia Institute has expanded access to education in Latin and Ancient Greek primarily through student travel. Paideia's flagship travel-based programs, such as Living Latin in Rome and Living Greek in Greece, are designed to provide students with the unique experience of connecting the study of ancient languages with the places in which they were born and widely spoken for millennia.

Learning Ancient Greek and Latin amidst the tangible remains of classical antiquity makes things click for *Paideia's* students: in Athens and Rome, they come to the realisation that those languages do not solely exist in books and dusty libraries, but are the expression of flesh-and-blood human civilisations whose legacy still lives today and can be seen, touched, and sometimes even tasted.

The Institute also partners with U.S. high schools and universities to enhance their classics-based educational portfolio and to help them develop study-abroad experiences in Greece, Italy, and other parts of Europe. In addition to its study-abroad programs, Paideia offers online courses on every aspect of classical antiquity, organises events and conferences for students and teachers of Latin and Greek, and runs outreach initiatives aimed at increasing engagement with the classical humanities across all sectors of society.

More recently, the Institute has begun developing self-paced online curricula for the teaching and learning of classical languages.

Using a flexible, streamlined Learning Management System as a digital platform, these courses combine immersive, inductive learning of grammar and vocabulary through graded readings in Ancient Greek or Latin with gradual, well-paced instruction through a comprehensive series of videos.

Paideia's self-paced curricula get students reading entirely in the target language quickly, and provide regular assessment tools throughout each course. Every reading includes comprehension quizzes, immersively written in the target language, to test a student's understanding of new concepts, ideas, things and idioms. The curricula also offer teachers the means to track their student's progress, allowing them to visualise their students' scores on tests and vocabulary assessments, in order to quickly identify growth areas and pinpoint where more reinforcement might be needed.

In conclusion, the main goal of the Paideia Institute's initiatives is twofold: to provide intensive and rigorous training in Ancient Greek and Roman languages and history, and to help students form strong personal and emotional relationships with the ancient Mediterranean world. These relationships are especially powerful and enduring when Greek and Latin literature is heard, spoken, and appreciated amidst the iconic backdrop of the ancient monuments of Greece and Italy.

Why speak Ancient Greek?

By Steven Hunt

The arguments put forward about the value of listening to and speaking ancient languages as a means of supporting language acquisition and learning generally have been the focus of considerable recent interest, especially in the US and increasingly in the UK. Some evidence for the practice can be found in the book *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages*, which I co-edited with Mair Lloyd in (Lloyd and Hunt, 2019). Active Latin circles at several of the universities in the UK, including Oxford, Cambridge,

Warwick and King's London, show the potential for ancient Greek, and other ancient languages too. There are, of course, difficulties in finding acceptable speakers as good models and practitioners; but a lot of very simple practices, such as paired reading aloud and questioning while using the texts, can breed confidence. And we must try not to forget that Second Language Acquisition theory supports the idea that making mistakes and then negotiating meaning is the natural way of acquiring proficiency in a language: we do not have to obsess with getting it right from the start. Finally, how can we, an audience sitting here in Delphi, the centre of the world, which would have been buzzing with the countless voices of priests and priestesses, visitors from far and wide, and the great theatre, be satisfied with treating a language as something silent, to be studied but never turned into beautiful sounds?

Author biographies

Eugenia Manolidou, Head of Studies at 'Elliniki Agogi' School of Ancient Greek.

References

- Asher J** (1996) *Learning Another Language Through Actions*, 5th Edn. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.
- Lloyd M and Hunt S** (2019) *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ray B and Seely C** (1998) *Fluency through TPR Storytelling*. Berkeley, CA: Command Performance Language Institute.
- Thomson G** (2017) *Six-Phase Programme | Growing Participator Approach*. Available at <https://growingparticipatorapproach.wordpress.com/six-phase-programme/> (Accessed 13 July 2023).