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VIDEO GAMES: REFORMULATING TEACHING HISTORY

A Systematic Review.

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ABSTRACT

Educational video games have emerged as innovative tools for teaching history. This article presents a systematic review using the PRISMA method, analyzing studies on titles such as Assassin's Creed and Age of Empires. Findings indicate that these games enhance student engagement, foster critical thinking, and support the understanding of complex historical concepts. Both educators and learners report positive perceptions. Of the 32 studies reviewed, most are European, with Spain leading in research output. While observational studies dominate, the field requires more experimental and longitudinal research to strengthen its academic foundation.

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1. Introducción

Over the decades, capturing students' interest in history has been a persistent challenge, as the subject is often perceived as abstract and distant (Evaristo et al., 2016). The traditional approach, focused on the memorization of dates and historical figures, has reinforced this perception by reducing the discipline to the accumulation of data, leaving little room for critical reflection or connections to contemporary reality (Lahera & Pérez, 2021). In response to these limitations, educational video games have emerged as a multimodal resource capable of rekindling interest and transforming teaching into a meaningful and interactive experience (Ibagón, 2018; Orta Casado & Peña-Acuña, 2022; Rubio Alcala et al., 2023).

These games not only provide a dynamic avenue for exploring the past but also position students as active agents within the historical narrative, fostering critical and in-depth understanding (Moreno, 2018). Immersive interaction generates motivation and meaningful learning by integrating cognitive and emotional dimensions (Evaristo et al., 2016), thereby enhancing retention, critical thinking, and empathy. In Europe, their use has gained significance in reinterpreting wars, conflicts, and democratic transitions (Venegas, 2022). Examples such as Assassin's Creed illustrate their potential to bring contexts like the Third Crusade or ancient Greece closer to learners, although they also carry the risk of simplifying or distorting history if not applied critically.

1.1. Narrative Reframings of Recent History Through Video Games

Narrative reformulations, defined as reinterpretations or modifications of a story or set of events from a new perspective, approach, or structure, have played a significant role in the revision of historical events (Esnaola & Levis, 2008). This process allows the original elements of a narrative—such as characters, events, or contexts—to be altered, expanded, or retold from a different point of view. In this way, a new interpretation or version of history is offered, which often occurs when a narrative is adapted to a new cultural, social, or technological context, or when perspectives previously marginalized or ignored are incorporated (Simons, 2007).

In the realm of video games, these narrative reformulations have proven to exert a significant impact on the ways players perceive and understand historical events, as video games allow users to interact with complex narratives that provide multiple perspectives on events traditionally interpreted in a one-dimensional manner. According to Venegas (2022), video games enable players to explore diverse dimensions of a historical event, including the viewpoints of participants in armed conflicts. This stands in contrast to the linear and simplified narratives frequently found in school textbooks. Video games also facilitate the critical discussion of themes such as colonialism, resistance, and social struggles, creating a space for the exploration of alternative historical possibilities (Rodriguez, 2021).

Beyond their function as entertainment, video games are assuming an increasingly relevant role in historical research and education, allowing players not only to experience different historical perspectives but also to actively engage in the construction of collective memory. A clear example of this phenomenon is the depiction of the Spanish Civil War in video games (Kuschel, 2023). According to Kuschel (2023), video games have traditionally approached this conflict by focusing on military action, thereby simplifying its complexities and the multiple causes that gave rise to it. This approach tends to perpetuate a binary view of the war, with clearly defined sides, while overlooking the profound social, political, and cultural divisions that characterized the conflict.

However, some recent video games have adopted a more critical and in-depth approach, exploring individual experiences and the social consequences of war. This trend contributes to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of a historical period as complex as the Spanish Civil War (Kuschel, 2023). As video games continue to evolve in terms of narrative and technical complexity, their capacity to reframe historical narratives also expands. They are becoming platforms for exploring new stories and alternative realities that challenge traditional accounts and foster a deeper understanding of the past.

Elliot (2017) concurs with Esnaola and Levis (2008) and Simons (2007) in asserting that video games enable the creation of interactive narratives that generate an active and participatory experience in the reconstruction of history. Unlike traditional media such as books or films, this interactivity grants players the opportunity to make decisions that directly influence the unfolding of the narrative. In this way, players acquire greater agency in constructing their own version of historical events. Furthermore, video games offer the advantage of questioning official accounts of historical facts by presenting alternative interpretations and allowing the exploration of diverse perspectives. In this sense, video games contribute to dismantling myths and fostering a more critical and nuanced understanding of history.

Similarly, Denning (2021) argues that the cultural practices and social networks surrounding video games provide insight into the mechanisms of modern historical imagination and contemporary culture. Video games can popularize certain historical events or figures, shaping a society's collective memory. The choice of themes, the representation of characters, and the overarching narrative influence how the public remembers and engages with the past, thereby creating a connection between history and the present.

1.2. The Impact of Video Games on Historical Education

The influence of video games on history education has emerged as a topic of growing interest within the educational sector. Although traditionally regarded as a form of entertainment associated with leisure, video games have proven to be valuable instructional resources, particularly in the context of history education. A clear example is the use of the game Civilization III, which has been studied in various educational settings, highlighting both its benefits and challenges in the classroom (Squire, 2005).

One of the most significant benefits of video games in history education is their ability to increase student motivation and interest. Unlike traditional teaching methods, which are often perceived as rigid and dull, video games offer an interactive and dynamic experience that can engage students who might otherwise be disinterested (Evaristo et al., 2016). According to Squire (2005), many students who exhibited apathy toward conventional historical instruction found in Civilization III an opportunity to learn through exploration and historical simulation. This game allows players to recreate and modify historical scenarios, thereby promoting analytical reasoning and an understanding of the various factors that influence historical events.

Furthermore, video games can help students develop a deeper and more contextualized understanding of historical events. In Civilization III, students do not merely learn about isolated historical facts; they experience the interrelation of factors such as geography, economics, and politics. This integrated perspective can be difficult to convey through traditional methods, but video games achieve it by requiring players to make strategic decisions based on multiple factors. For example, students must consider how geographical location influences military and economic choices, providing a more complex understanding of history (Squire, 2005).

However, the incorporation of video games into the classroom is not without challenges. One of the most notable issues is the complexity and difficulty of certain games. Civilization III, for example, spans millennia of history and presents a wide array of concepts and variables that students must understand in order to progress. This can be overwhelming for some students, particularly those who are not accustomed to such complex games. In some cases, students reported feeling frustrated by the game's difficulty, leading a significant percentage of them to abandon the activity (Squire, 2005).

Another challenge highlighted by Squire (2005) is the mandatory nature of video games in the school setting. Part of the appeal of video games lies in their ability to provide players with meaningful choices and the freedom to explore at their own pace. However, when video games are introduced as part of the school curriculum, this freedom can be constrained by predetermined educational objectives. This may diminish the interest and engagement of some students, who perceive the game as an extension of schoolwork rather than as an enjoyable and enriching activity.

Despite these concerns, the educational potential of video games remains considerable. In contexts where the traditional pedagogical approach to history has been insufficient to capture students' interest, video games can provide an engaging and effective alternative for involving students in historical learning (Denning, 2021). Educators, therefore, must carefully select the video games they use in the classroom, ensuring that students receive a balanced and critical historical education.

The research question guiding this study is as follows: What is the current state of the use of educational video games in the reformulation of historical narratives?

2. Methodology

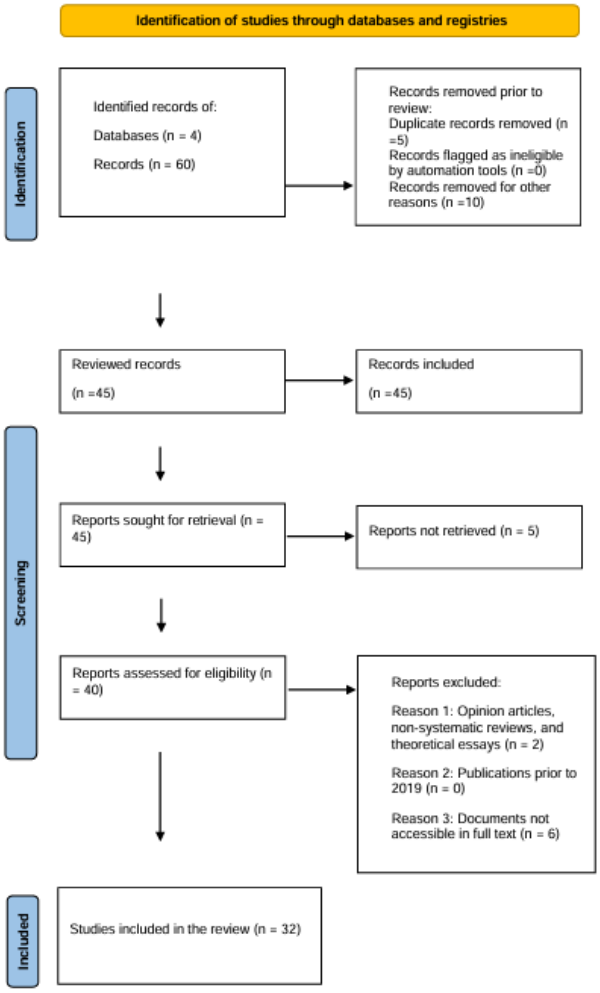
This inquiry aims to systematically review the literature on the use of educational video games in the reformulation of historical narratives, with the purpose of examining the impact of these digital tools on the teaching of recent events. The study has three specific objectives: first, to determine which topics are of interest; second, to identify the types of research that have been conducted; and third, to establish the countries to which the researchers belong.

The research was conducted in the following phases:

- Phase One: General Research Question. The central research question was formulated. Based on this question, the review was planned, a hypothesis was proposed, and the methodological criteria guiding the study were established.
- Phase Two: Sample Selection. Relevant bibliographic sources were searched for and selected. Due to the large volume of available information, specific selection methods and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied as defined in the initial planning.
- Phase Three: Assessment of Study Quality. The quality of the selected studies was evaluated to ensure they met the scientific rigor standards defined in the methodological protocol. At this stage, duplicate, illegible, and low-quality articles were removed. Additionally, Cohen's Kappa method was employed to ensure reliability, verifying that the process did not rely solely on the judgment of a single reviewer. This method measures the level of agreement among evaluators, ensuring consistency and reliability in the quality assessment process.
- Phase Four: Data Extraction and Review Preparation. Once the articles were selected, data were extracted to compile the results and prepare the discussion.

To conduct the systematic review, the PRISMA 2020 method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, Page et al., 2021) was followed, using rigorous selection criteria at each stage of the process. In the identification phase, the total number of studies found through databases is recorded, as well as the number of additional records obtained through other methods, which may include manual searches and references. In the selection stage, the total number of records after removing duplicates is indicated, and the number of records that meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria is detailed, both in the review of titles and abstracts and in the analysis of the full text. Finally, in the inclusion phase, the final number of studies to be included in the systematic review is established, which will be analyzed in depth. The process followed is described in the flowchart in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Document selection flowchart



Source: own elaboration, 2025

The search for studies was conducted in four academic databases: Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, and Education Database, covering publications between 2014 and 2025 to ensure the relevance of studies on the teaching of recent historical events in Mediterranean contexts. Key terms such as educational video games, historical narratives, and reformulation of events were used, combined using Boolean operators in English and Spanish, allowing for comprehensive coverage.

The inclusion criteria considered empirical studies on the impact of educational video games on the reformulation of historical narratives, peer-reviewed articles, publications in English and Spanish, and studies focused on recent historical events. Studies without educational video games, publications prior to 2014, and documents not accessible in full text were excluded. In addition, in the systematic review, a sensitivity analysis was performed by varying the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the studies evaluated. This strategy allowed us to observe and evaluate the impact of different decisions on the final results, providing a deeper understanding of the robustness of the findings. By adjusting these criteria, it was possible to identify how variations influenced the quality and consistency of the results, which strengthened the validity of the review.

The study selection process, based on the PRISMA diagram outlined above, ensured the transparency and reproducibility of the analysis. Sixty relevant studies were identified, of which 45 remained after removing duplicates. After reviewing titles and abstracts, 15 studies were

discarded, resulting in 32 studies selected for full review. Finally, all the studies reviewed met the established requirements and were included in the analysis.

3. Results

Several studies have addressed the use of educational video games for history education, highlighting their potential to reframe narratives of recent historical events and improve students' understanding. Authors such as McCall (2016) and Wainwright (2014) examine a variety of approaches to integrating video games into history education, from case studies in university courses to action research projects in secondary and primary school classrooms. These inquiries underscore the relevance of assessing the educational influence of video games and the need for teachers to act as mediators to guide students toward a critical understanding of the past (Bass, 2020).

Historical strategy video games, such as Civilization, provide a broad and abstract perspective on historical processes, emphasizing strategic decision-making, whereas action-adventure games, such as *Assassin's Creed*, offer a more specific and immersive experience, albeit often with a simplified narrative (Mol et al., 2017; Radetich & Jakubowicz, 2015). These games are increasingly employed as pedagogical tools in history courses, enabling students to explore different historical models and gain a deeper understanding of the social, political, economic, and technological contexts of specific periods. Research reflects a growing interest in the use of video games for history education, encompassing diverse pedagogical approaches, game types, and research methodologies (McCall, 2016; Wainwright, 2014).

An example of this approach is provided by Cuenca and Jiménez (2018), who evaluated the effectiveness of *Libertus: Route to Freedom* among first-year secondary school students at IES El Galeón (Huelva, Spain). The study demonstrated that the game facilitated meaningful immersion in the history of Roman Baetica while promoting key competencies, including social and civic skills, digital literacy, and cultural awareness. Data collected through participant observation and interviews with teachers and students suggest that the game bridges abstract heritage content with students' contemporary interests, thereby enhancing motivation and classroom engagement.

Similarly, Téllez and Iturriaga (2014) investigate the use of the *Assassin's Creed* series as a didactic resource in history education. Although these games offer visually detailed representations of various historical periods, the authors emphasize that they should complement, rather than replace, traditional instructional methods, as they encourage critical reflection through multiple perspectives on historical events. In the same vein, Gilbert (2019), based on interviews with U.S. secondary school students, demonstrates that narrative video games can foster empathy and deepen understanding of the past, while also cautioning that learners must remain aware of the fictionalized nature of these narratives.

Politopoulos et al. (2019) conduct a critical analysis of the narrative and gameplay of *Assassin's Creed*, highlighting its educational potential while noting limitations such as repetitiveness and simplified historical interactions. The study raises concern about representing history as a *playground* and underscores the value of enhanced collaboration between scholars and developers to enrich educational experiences.

Quintero (2017) presents an alternative approach by focusing on the Discovery Tour mode of *Assassin's Creed Origins*, designed specifically for educational exploration. This mode eliminates violent content from the main game, rendering it more suitable for younger learners. Quintero underscores the alignment of this gameplay mode with the Spanish curriculum in history, geography, art, and culture, positioning it as a valuable pedagogical resource across multiple educational stages.

In the realm of historical strategy games, Mugueta et al. (2015) evaluated the impact of *Age of Empires II* on secondary school students in the Autonomous Community of Navarre. When combined with an appropriate pedagogical intervention, the study revealed improvements in students' understanding of multicausality and historical time. Nevertheless, some students

exhibited overexcitement, highlighting the need for careful integration to channel enthusiasm toward meaningful learning.

Building on this work, Mugueta and Manzano (2016) investigated *Age of Empires III* with primary school students. Initially, learners struggled to connect game dynamics with actual historical events; however, through structured reflective tasks and the analysis of primary sources, they cultivated historical reasoning competencies, including multicausality and diachronic comparison between past and present.

Extending these studies to higher education, Mugueta (2017) examined the use of historical strategy games such as *Europa Universalis IV* and *Rise of Venice* at the Public University of Navarre. Findings indicated enhanced understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in history and increased empathetic engagement with historical actors. Nonetheless, difficulties in organizing and articulating acquired knowledge were observed, suggesting that these games should be complemented with additional pedagogical resources to foster deeper critical reflection.

Campillo and Casado (2022) advocate for integrating video games such as *Imperator: Rome* and *Crusader Kings II* into secondary education curricula, arguing that they may enhance student engagement and promote complex cognitive skills related to historical causality, although empirical validation of these claims remains pending.

Sentañes (2017), within the *Viagiocando* project, integrates video games and digital tools to teach Iberian identity in Sardinia. The study, conducted with over 100 secondary school participants across Spain, Italy, and Andorra, demonstrated increased student interest and engagement, as well as the development of cognitive and social competencies.

Cózar-Gutiérrez et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study at universities in Spain and Portugal to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding the integration of video games in education. Initial findings indicated a generally positive attitude toward their use, highlighting the potential of video games to stimulate creativity and problem-solving skills among students. However, a significant barrier was also identified: the lack of specific teacher training on how to effectively implement these resources in the classroom, which constrains their practical application.

In previous studies, Cózar-Gutiérrez et al. (2021) note that technology has transformed leisure activities, including the use of video games, and research has explored their potential as educational tools. In particular, video games provide opportunities to immerse students in multisensory virtual environments that recreate historical spaces and periods. This capability is especially valuable in history education, as it allows for the transmission of representations of the past. However, for effective educational use, video games must meet standards of historical accuracy and be guided by teacher supervision.

Jaldón-Méndez (2021) examines the use of the video game *Dominations* in teaching Mesopotamian culture to first-year secondary school students. The findings indicate that, although the game enhanced students' geographical and heritage-related understanding, only a small proportion were able to perform in-depth analyses of historical events, highlighting the necessity of careful instructional planning.

Egea Vivancos et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of the virtual reality video game *El Misterio de la Encomienda de Ricote* on secondary school students in Murcia. Using an experimental design, the study demonstrated an increase in students' understanding of the *Encomienda de Ricote*, highlighting the role of narrative and visual elements in enhancing information retention.

Jiménez (2016) emphasizes the potential of historical video games as motivating tools for learning, while cautioning against historical distortion due to the presence of anachronisms. In 2021, Jiménez provides a theoretical analysis of how video games can influence identity construction through faction selection and interaction with historical elements, suggesting a valuable foundation for future research in this field.

Venegas (2022) examines how educational video games in Poland are integrated into a governmental strategy aimed at promoting an official historical narrative that reinforces national identity. The state funds and supports these projects to counteract negative historical representations, such as those implying Polish complicity during the Holocaust.

Kuran et al. (2018) present the university course *Playing with the Past*, offered at Abdullah Gul University in Turkey. Students engage with historical strategy video games, such as *Civilization* and *Crusader Kings II*, to compare their gameplay experiences with historical sources, enabling a deeper understanding of historical periods.

Mavrommati and Corbell (2014) investigate the use of the video game *Searching for Great Alexander*™ in a primary school classroom, where students enhanced their historical interpretation skills through a pedagogical design that combined the game with supplementary resources, such as the film Alexander.

Bekas and Xinogalos (2024) evaluate the use of augmented reality in the educational video game *Exploring Ancient Greece*, which allowed primary school students to explore archaeological sites, resulting in increased historical knowledge and a positive learning experience.

Sánchez (2014) analyzes the integration of the video game *Pharaoh* in an educational setting in Spain, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing motivation and understanding among secondary school students with learning difficulties, who achieved meaningful learning of concepts related to ancient Egypt.

Trapero (2021) proposes the use of gameplays (video game recordings) for history education, allowing students to engage with past events and develop critical analyses of the historical accuracy of video games. Foy (2021) examines the design of the video game *Tales of Iona* as an educational tool for students in Scotland, promoting an understanding of the cultural and historical significance of the island of Iona. Anderson (2019) underscores the potential of *Valiant Hearts* to create immersive learning experiences by combining narrative, aesthetics, and informational context, conceptualizing it as an interactive museum that makes history more accessible and memorable. Finally, Camuñas et al. (2024) investigate engagement attributes in cultural heritage video games, emphasizing that narrative quality and ease of gameplay are key elements for fostering learning in educational video games.

Guerra-Antequera and Revuelta-Domínguez (2022) conduct a systematic literature review on the use of video games in education between 2015 and 2020. Analyzing 90 studies, they conclude that quantitative methodology is the most commonly employed approach in research on educational video games. Educational video games are noted for their didactic potential, although the authors emphasize the necessity of careful pedagogical integration to maximize their effectiveness in the classroom.

Rossi (2018) examines, from a broad perspective, the main trends in video game research in Latin America and Spain. The study presents three focal areas: the definition of video games, their relationship with education and learning, and their impact on social theories. Rossi concludes that video games are valuable educational tools but require critical and contextualized analysis.

Table 1 summarizes the studies considered, synthesizing their thematic focus and research type. Accordingly, the sample is represented in Table 1 below, with the various studies arranged in ascending chronological order.

Table 1. Results of Studies on Educational Video Games in History Education

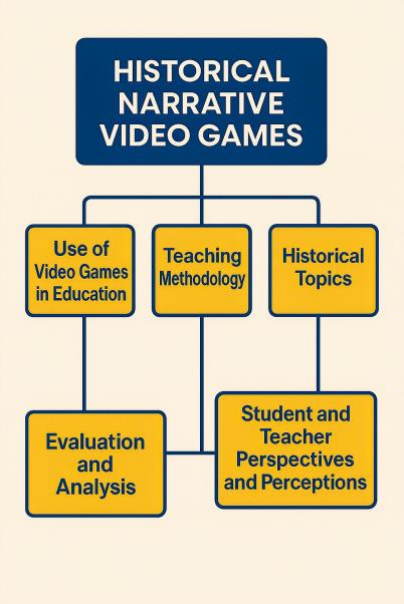
Authors	Year	Type of Research	Country	Study
Wainwright	2014	Observation	United Kingdom	Action-research projects in primary and secondary classrooms
Téllez & Iturriaga	2014	Qualitative	Spain	Use of *Assassin's Creed* in history teaching
Sánchez	2014	Observation	Spain	Integration of *Pharaoh* in secondary education
Mavrommati & Corbell	2014	Observation	Greece	Use of *Searching for Great Alexander™* in primary school
Radetich & Jakubowicz	2015	Observation	Poland	Use of *Civilization* and *Assassin's Creed* in teaching
Mugueta et al.	2015	Quantitative	Spain	Evaluation of *Age of Empires II* in Navarre
McCall	2016	Observation	USA	Integration of video games in university courses
Jiménez	2016	Qualitative	Spain	Potential of historical video games as motivating tools

Authors	Year	Type of Research	Country	Study
Mugueta & Manzano	2016	Observation	Spain	Use of *Age of Empires III* in primary education
Mol et al.	2017	Quantitative	Netherlands	Impact of video games on historical understanding
Quintero	2017	Observation	Spain	*Discovery Tour* mode of *Assassin's Creed Origins*
Mugueta	2017	Observation	Spain	Use of *Europa Universalis IV* and *Rise of Venice* in Navarre
Señañes	2017	Observation	Spain, Italy, Andorra	*Viagiocando* project
Rossi	2018	Review	Argentina	Mapping Latin American and Spanish studies on video games
Cuenca & Jiménez	2018	Observation	Spain	Evaluation of *Libertus* at IES El Galeón
Kuran et al.	2018	Observation	Turkey	*Playing with the Past* course using *Civilization* and *Crusader Kings II*
Gilbert	2019	Qualitative	USA	Empathy development with *Assassin's Creed*
Politopoulos et al.	2019	Observation	United Kingdom	Analysis of narrative and gameplay in *Assassin's Creed*
Anderson	2019	Observation	USA	Potential of *Valiant Hearts* as an "interactive museum"
Bass	2020	Observation	USA	Importance of teachers as mediators
Cózar-Gutiérrez et al.	2021	Mixed	Spain, Portugal	Transformation of leisure and educational use of video games
Jiménez	2021	Qualitative	Spain	Analysis of video games in identity construction
Trapero	2021	Observation	Spain	Use of gameplays for history teaching
Jaldón-Méndez	2021	Observation	Spain	Use of *Dominations* in teaching Mesopotamian culture
Guerra-Antequera & Revuelta-Domínguez	2022	Review	Spain	Highlights effectiveness of educational video games and need for careful pedagogical integration
Campillo & Casado	2022	Observation	Spain	Proposal of *Imperator: Rome* and *Crusader Kings II*
Egea Vivancos et al.	2022	Observation	Spain	Impact of *El Misterio de la Encomienda de Ricote*
Venegas	2022	Observation	Poland	Integration of educational video games in official historical narrative
Foy	2021	Observation	Scotland	Design of *Tales of Iona* as an educational tool
Camuñas et al.	2024	Observation	Spain	Analysis of engagement in cultural heritage video games
Bekas & Xinogalos	2024	Observation	Greece	Evaluation of *Exploring Ancient Greece* with augmented reality
Cózar-Gutiérrez et al.	2024	Mixed	Spain, Portugal	Pre-service teachers' perceptions of video games

Source: own elaboration, 2025

To begin delving into the results, the categories identified through documentary analysis of historical narrative video games are visually represented in Figure 2. These comprise five categories that attract the greatest scientific and educational interest: the use of video games, implications as a teaching methodology, historical topics, evaluation and analysis, and, finally, student and teacher perspectives and perceptions.

Figure 2. Categories of Historical Narrative Video Games



Source: own creation (image generated by ChatCopilot), 2025

Furthermore, based on the analyzed content of the scientific articles in the sample, these five categories are broken down using the following 14 codes.

Table 2. Thematic Classification

Category	Codes	Study Examples
Use of Video Games in Education	Action research projects, classroom integration	Action research projects in primary and secondary classrooms
	Specific use of titles (e.g., Assassin's Creed, Civilization)	Use of Assassin's Creed in history teaching; Use of Civilization and Assassin's Creed in education
	Video games as motivational tools	Potential of historical video games as motivational tools
Evaluation and Analysis	Evaluation of educational video games	Evaluation of Age of Empires II in Navarra; Evaluation of Libertus at IES El Galeón
	Impact and effectiveness in teaching	Impact of video games on historical understanding; Study highlights the effectiveness of educational video games
	Narrative and gameplay analysis	Narrative and gameplay analysis of Assassin's Creed; Analysis of video games in identity construction
Teaching Methodology	Pedagogical integration, mediators	Importance of teachers as mediators; Need for careful pedagogical integration
	Use of gameplays for teaching	Use of gameplays for history instruction
	Specific projects and courses	"Playing with the Past" course using Civilization and Crusader Kings II; "Viagiocando" project
Historical Topics	Historical approaches in video games	Use of Searching for Great Alexander™ in primary education; Use of Dominations in teaching Mesopotamian culture
	Video games as interactive museums	Potential of Valiant Hearts as an interactive museum
	Video games and cultural heritage	Analysis of participation in cultural heritage video games; Evaluation of Exploring Ancient Greece with augmented reality

Perspectives and Perceptions	Teachers' and students' perceptions of video games	Perceptions of future teachers regarding video games
	Map of studies in Latin American and Spanish education	A map of Latin American and Spanish studies on video games

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The systematic review reveals that video games are effective and motivating educational tools, with a focus on pedagogical integration and impact analysis. Additionally, their potential for teaching history and cultural heritage is highlighted, along with the positive perception of both teachers and students in Latin American contexts.

Of the 32 studies listed, 24 were conducted by European scholars (75%) and 8 by American scholars (25%). Spain is the country with the most studies, followed by the United States. Among the 32 studies identified, the majority are observational, representing 81.25% of the total. This translates to 26 observational studies, while qualitative and quantitative studies each account for 18.75% (i.e., 6 studies each), and reviews represent 12.5% (4 studies). This predominance of observational studies suggests that, although there is a broad data foundation, it may be necessary to diversify methodologies to address more complex questions in the field.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Examining the Debate

The concept of narrative reformulation suggests that video games can offer reinterpretations of historical events from perspectives that have traditionally been marginalized or overlooked (Esnaola & Levis, 2008). This point is reflected in the findings, particularly in references to the use of video games such as Assassin's Creed (Gilbert, 2019; Téllez & Iturriaga, 2014), which allow students to experience historical events from multiple viewpoints. Furthermore, studies like Kuschel's (2023) on the portrayal of the Spanish Civil War in video games exemplify how these reformulations enable players to explore not only military conflicts but also the underlying social and political divisions, providing a more comprehensive and critical understanding of the past.

The use of video games as tools to challenge official historical narratives also aligns with the analysis by Venegas (2022), who explores how the Polish government employs video games to promote an official historical narrative that reinforces national identity. This reflects an approach to history that transcends entertainment, positioning video games as a medium for shaping collective memory and for reinforcing or contesting historical myths.

Regarding the potential of video games to revitalize interest in history—particularly in Europe and Mediterranean countries, where recent conflicts and transitions demand innovative pedagogical approaches—the findings present empirical evidence supporting this premise. For instance, the study by Cuenca and Jiménez (2018) demonstrates that games such as Libertus: Ruta hacia la Libertad not only facilitate meaningful immersion into the history of Roman Baetica but also foster key competencies such as digital citizenship and cultural awareness.

Similarly, the research conducted by Mugueta et al. (2015) on the use of Age of Empires II and III in classroom settings reinforces the notion that historical strategy games assist students in grasping the multi-causality of historical events. However, the authors also emphasize the importance of careful pedagogical integration to mitigate potential issues such as overstimulation or frustration stemming from the complexity of the games.

Although the findings emphasize the advantages of video games in history education, some authors acknowledge that their implementation is not without challenges (Rossi, 2018). Excessive simplification of historical events (Politopoulos et al., 2019) and the presence of anachronisms (Jiménez, 2016) may distort perceptions of the past, underscoring the importance of using these resources critically. In this regard, the role of educators as mediators is highlighted, guiding students toward a balanced and critical understanding of historical events (Bass, 2020; Mugueta & Manzano, 2016).

4.2. Concluding Reflections

As a final corollary, it is established that educational video games have proven to be valuable tools for history education, facilitating a more critical and in-depth understanding of historical events. Studies involving games such as Assassin's Creed and Age of Empires highlight their capacity to reformulate narratives and teach complex concepts such as multi-causality. However, their use must be accompanied by appropriate pedagogical integration to avoid oversimplifications or misinterpretations.

The use of educational video games in the reformulation of historical narratives has been the subject of various studies across Latin America, North America, and Europe. These studies underscore how video games can serve as effective tools for teaching history, enabling students to engage with historical events in a dynamic and critical manner.

Throughout the reviewed literature, educational video games are understood as effective didactic tools through the historical narratives they embody. Although the results are promising, their generalisation may be limited to specific educational contexts, highlighting the need for further research and development in this field. Therefore, this remains an expanding area of inquiry that responds directly to the initial research question.

4.3. Educational Applications

Following the completion of this study, we propose that it would be beneficial to develop training programs for educators, focusing on how to use educational video games effectively and critically. Furthermore, we recommend the creation of video games specifically designed for history education, developed in collaboration with historians and educators to ensure historical accuracy and pedagogical relevance.

We conclude that a substantial number of descriptive studies have already been conducted. However, in this area of research, further experimental and longitudinal studies are recommended to deepen our understanding of causal relationships and the evolution of the phenomena under investigation. We also advocate for more mixed-methods and comparative research, as this would not only provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges of educational video games, but also contribute to the development of innovative and culturally relevant pedagogical strategies.

5. Acknowledgements

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