

Evaluating secondary school students' ability to develop Historical Empathy through the Press

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of press, specifically newspapers, on the development and cultivation of historical empathy of secondary school students. Our study focuses on testing students. After reading newspapers, they are asked about the Asia Minor catastrophe, as an exercise in empathetic content and logical understanding, to approach historical events, without necessarily accepting them, and to describe their perspectives. The study seeks to investigate whether press as a historical source can contribute to productive thinking through the mental revival of the events described. The analysis of students' responses focuses on aspects of historical empathy: historical formation, logical understanding, emotional elements. The results showed that all students experienced mentally specific historical details of the past but mainly developed emotions, while in the actions of the historical figures they recognized implied purposes by putting themselves in a similar historical context.

Keywords: Historical Empathy, press, newspapers.

Introduction

According to Akton, history must free us not only from the excessive influence of other times, but also from the excessive influence of our own time, from the tyranny of the environment, of the air we breathe (Akton, 1906, 33). Thus, we realize that historical events cannot be completely objective, they acquire this quality, as historical, thanks to the importance given to them by the historian and his time (Carr, 1999, 204). But how are the events and their protagonists captured in the communicative unprecedented environment of Press when news are primarily politically directed and dominate reality that is constructed via press. Not only that, but also how are news finally imprinted in the readers' and students' mind? Journalists' narratives as well as descriptions and narratives of historical events could potentially help students understand historical developments and events, which are often somewhat abstract (Lee, 1984).

There is no doubt that human mind is drawn to the idea of the finite, especially when it has been fatal to the evolution of thousands of people, such as the Asia Minor catastrophe. Students with a specific historical frame of reference are asked to identify sources of possible historical actions, to understand the facts or even to identify the beliefs from which the historical figures could be drawn in the newspapers. The friction of students with the journalistic discourse of another distant era is not only superficially and in the context of a simple intra-subject analysis (language, style, etc.), but mainly by the effort to cultivate empathy and a higher consciousness based on journalistic records for socio-political views that reflect stigmas of a sad repetition. Connecting the past with the experiences-hearings of the present, which concern the contemporary refugee and immigration problem through the recent images of refugees fleeing to Europe, students are also asked to reconstruct aspects and aspects of the refugee using information material.

Having sufficient data, students try to understand the mentality and way of thinking of people of a specific period, combining imagination with knowledge. During one observation of classroom practice, we heard a history teacher asking the students the following question: 'Can you explain that?' or 'what do you think about that?'. After all, Husbands and Pendry (2000) find that students are encouraged and effectively place themselves in the historical

period when they are called to "imagine that they are ..." or "to take the place of.". It is a process that students succeed in combining emotion with logic, achieving great results. The research question of the present study is to find out if students, after reading newspapers of the examined era, are able to "capture" historical concepts (structural and content), to identify the causes or the nature of the historical change, to experience the image of the situation through emotional alternations thus giving meaning to the past. The originality of this study lies not only in the use of press as historical source, but especially in the use of newspapers of the time when the events of the Asia Minor catastrophe unfolded, meaning the year 1922. In this context, it is examined whether historical empathy is achieved as a tool for development of historical consciousness, what aspects of it emerge, and whether this can lead to a deeper and more "clear" understanding of historical knowledge. It should be noted that the present study was conducted in the context of the training of the Pilot Programs of the Experimental Schools of the Greek Institute of Educational Policy, during which a teaching scenario entitled "The Asia Minor War on the Press" was developed.

Historical Empathy in the school environment

Regarding the interpretation, value and contribution of empathy in teaching, several Greek research studies have already been submitted on the subject that have contributed the most to its perspectives and extensions in education (Kourgiantakis, 2005). For this reason and for the needs of the research we will refer roughly to general remarks and divergent views.

Already from the 18th century the concept of empathy is presented in the writings of the philosopher and historian Giambattista Vico (Pompa, 1971), while its protagonist in the field of history is generally considered to be the English historian and philosopher R. Collingwood, who through his work "The Idea of History" 1946/1994, essentially established the concept of "historical empathy" or "sympathetic understanding" (Pattiz, 2004). According to Collingwood (Foster, 2001, 60-63 & Smirnaios, 2008, 170-171) the past is made up of actions, not events. Historical knowledge is fundamentally different from knowledge of the physical world because it includes knowledge of both the external / observable and the internal / unobservable. By "interior" Collingwood meant the thoughts of people involved in an act and was what actually provoked or pushed them to act (1946/1994).

Therefore, it would be desirable to reconstruct this inner part through empathy, to capture mentally through the historical evidence the thoughts of the people of that time, in order to understand it with energy and to "integrate" in its spirit.

In this context, the concept of empathy appears more and more often in the vocabulary of historical school education, although there are also objections and doubts as to whether this key concept of Collingwood can contribute to the historical understanding and teaching of history (Jenkins, 2006). Thus, for the past two decades, the concept and function of historical empathy in the school environment seems to have gained fans as well as important critics.

Initially, Lee and Ashby's empirical contribution, through a broad research framework in England (CHATA program, Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) opened a field of dialogue on the subject of rational understanding or perspective conception. They believe that the history teacher's effort should focus on giving students ideas that are stronger and more effective than they were at the beginning of learning, and that teaching through historical empathy is, to a degree, an exercise in providing students with multiple and different assumptions and strategies for them to reflect on and take action on (Lee & Ashby, 2001, 25).

However, for Ashby-Lee students who understand what counts as empathy and have learned the steps that lead to achieving it, have not only taken a step forward in history, but are much better able to face the modern world (Ashby & Lee, "Children's concepts", 64, in, Kourgiantakis, 2005).

For VanSledright, on the other hand, studies in American schools have also shown that through press students acquire their own historical perspective on events and indirectly perceive and make sense through multiple representations of people and situations today

(VanSledright, 2010, p. 123). In the same vein, Foster, also, argues that students should clearly have a relevant knowledge of the history and chronological context before re-emerging in the chosen subject, but considers that obscuring students with quantitatively excessive information material, at least in the initial stage of search, probably not productive. The history teacher at school should direct his students to ask themselves about the reasons or prejudices that may have influenced them, in order to understand more deeply a historical source or an act of the past (Foster, 2001, 175-178). Leading researchers such as Kitson, Husbands, Steward (2011), and Barton, Levstik (2004), have supported this perspective with their studies. But the most important but recent contribution to empirical research and study of historical empathy in the school environment is that of Australian University of Auckland professor Martin Charles Davison on *"It's Really Hard Being In Their Shoes"*. *Developing Historical Empathy in Secondary School Students* (2012), who in written communication with the author, seemed to share the above positions. The research data he presents quite positively subverts the landscape regarding the study of historical empathy and its contribution to historical education.

On the contrary, the postmodern historian Jenkins argues that the regeneration of the past cannot be achieved, since imagination helps in its regeneration only through the sources. In particular, he argues that we study the history via the historians' thinking and not that of people of the past, and this may mean that the past seems to be unrecoverable through empathy, thus insisting on its controversial ideological function (Jenkins, 1991, 47). Walsh, Stanford, Knight, and Brickley follow the same ideological line, questioning its effectiveness, as the method has been timidly associated with progressive movements in teaching history in England, and empirical research remains scarce, especially if it is feasible, but also desirable in school (Cooper, 2011, 87). The period of questioning the role of historical empathy is far from today, when apparently digital technology, new pedagogical teaching methods have managed to drastically change the educational reality, so that it is directly involved in school events. So are newer empirical studies subverting this landscape and how?

In this direction, historical empathy can support a student-centered, active, exploratory, exploratory, collaborative learning by creating a framework of interaction between teachers and learners through experiential activities (Raptis & Rapti, 1999). In general, therefore, it is interesting to study further the connection between the contribution of the printed press and historical empathy as a connecting bridge of approach to historical knowledge, understanding and consciousness, without this meaning that other skills, such as spiritual, mental and psychological, are eliminated at the same time. etc. related to the cognitive objectives of the course teaching.

Press as a primary historical source

According to many researchers, press as an ideological mechanism, as a political shaper, as a source of information (Karikopoulos, 1984), recording events, attitudes, views and mentalities, becomes a source for history (Bakounakis, 2016). On the other hand, as a means of communication, it has the power to provoke events and in turn to form attitudes, views and mentalities. In short, press disseminates knowledge and at the same time reorganizes the practices and standards associated with it, while shaping and preserving the collective memory.

Preparing students

Initially, the teacher based on the pedagogical principle of the occasion presented in the computer lab in a short presentation (10 minutes), using presentation software and video projector, making a plan of historical structure of the period, with selected photos and maps from the course of the Asia Minor war.

We consider the anniversary year (2022) of the Asia Minor catastrophe to be crucial, for which some students have an image from personal hearings from their family environment or

keep it as an inherited legacy with objects (heirlooms) of their relatives (utilization of previous knowledge). In addition, their statements to the plenary of the class contributed to the development of a dialogue. At the same time, the causes of the campaign, the events and its results were presented and discussed, without detailed details, so that the students know the historical context, before starting, the search for more specific information. The teacher noted on the whiteboard basic historical terms (structural or content) of the unit while explaining and analyzing their meaning (e.g disaster).

The research process

Sample/Population

The sample of the present research was all the students of the 3rd grade of Junior High School. The number of 51 students can be considered a sufficient student population to be a reliable sample (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Wisniewska, 2011). The research was conducted during the second period of the school year 2021-22, in an urban school in Volos. The anonymity of the participants was respected throughout the research.

The method

Our study focuses on testing the views of secondary education students on how to perceive and understand the events of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and its consequences through newspaper excerpts from press of that period. At first, the theoretical framework was presented and after that a questionnaire was made related to our research question. As a methodological tool we used the questionnaire in the context of qualitative research analysis with open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allow the answers to be collected in the "natural" language of the respondents. These questionnaires according to Cohen and Manion are used in combination with other methods to conduct a survey (Cohen & Manion, 1994). It is the most common methodological tool of educational and social research which is presented as a form in which the answers or reactions of an individual are noted (Bell, 1997, 121-139).

The purpose of this methodological tool is to measure attitudes, opinions and perceptions. The primary data obtained from the questionnaire (descriptive answers) were processed with the methodological tool of content analysis (qualitative analysis), through which the data categories and data and the correlations between them emerged (Cohen & Manion, 1994). After all, in research, content analysis has the greatest importance, as its main purpose is to take a verbal, symbolic non-quantitative document of a society or a culture and to transform it into qualitative and quantitative data. The way they were conducted gave the children the opportunity to respond as freely as possible. The occasion was the creation of a relevant scenario for the needs of training in the New Pilot Programs of IEP, according to which the trainees are invited to implement a teaching scenario of the course they teach. In combination, research-action was used, in the form of reflective inquiry, as a method of "improving daily practice, which has a beneficial effect on the people involved in the educational practice" (Kemmis, 1985, 38). This practice can lead to an improvement, both in practice itself and in its understanding but also in the situation in which it is practiced (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). In the context of action research, the teacher and the students participate as equal collaborators and co-researchers, they think and reflect on the learning strategies - in this case - they proceed to critical analysis, they interact and they strengthen their collaborative skills (Somekh, 1994).

The research tools and the method of data collection

The students were initially given targeted excerpts and headlines from specific newspapers of the time, which covered the events of the catastrophe. The required time was given for them to study, while the teacher smoothed out language difficulties due to their specificity

and gave explanations. The students then completed the questionnaires during the history lesson. With these questionnaires, the initial attitude (feelings) of the students / three towards the events, and the skills cultivated with the educational practice of empathy were investigated. It is clear that as historical skills are explored more effectively through tests involving open-ended questions and free answers (Dickinson & Lee, 1978; Ashby & Lee, 1987; Sanson, 1987), questions have been constructed to explore historical events through historical sources (e.g. , you can identify the motives of the actor or what led to the specific action, how you evaluate the actions... etc.). In particular, the temporal function of empathy was studied, that is, whether it helped to develop motivation and activate the interest of the participating students / three (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Kosti, 2016) (indicatively, did you find this method interesting? facilitated / helped you in the study and understanding of History;).

The questionnaire

The questions that the students were asked to answer are the following:

1. "How do you feel about the title of the report?"
2. "Imagine that you are in the position of the refugees of Smyrna, as described by the authors of the articles. How does that make you feel?"
3. In the material given it is mentioned that the Kemalists (soldiers of Kemal) committed horrible atrocities. Why do you think they did this?"
4. Do you have any concerns in the newspaper reports about the attitude of foreigners towards the events? Document your answer.
5. Do you think that the way we approached this issue helped you to study and understand it better? Justify your answer.

Limitations of the Study

We must take into account the limitations of our study. The study is subject to certain methodological limitations. The sample/population cannot be considered representative, as it comes from a school in a classroom with a small sample of students. Moreover, it concerns exclusively Greece, so our conclusions cannot be generalized outside it. This is because the results of the education system are different and proportional to the background of each culture and country. Finally, our study is cross-sectional, which means that all our data were collected in a short time (Babbie, 2011). The disadvantage of our stratified-static data is that we cannot draw a causal conclusion about our variables, such as the direction of the correlations of our model.

Findings/ Results

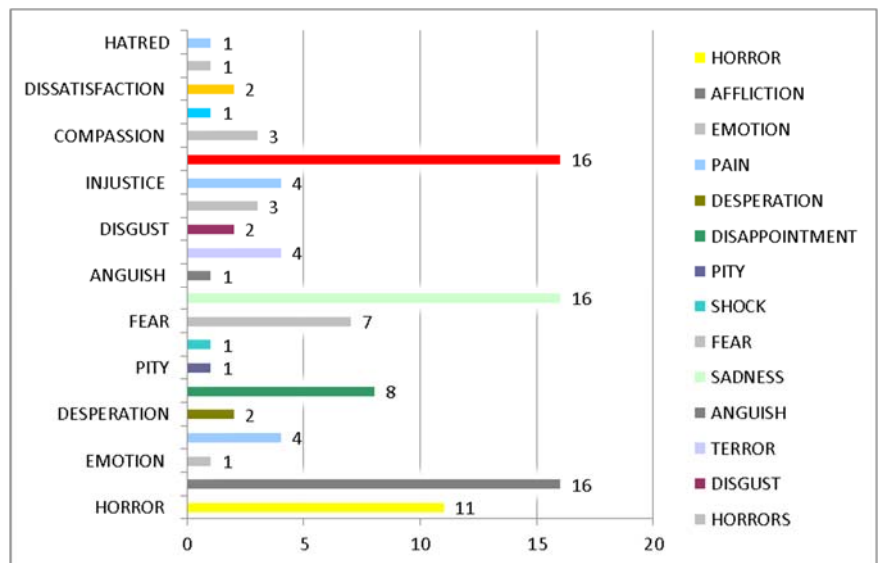
The students' answers to the questionnaire were recorded in order to accurately state what the respondents had said. The method of thematic analysis was followed by the recording, counting and coding of responses. This qualitative approach seeks in-depth investigation of the views and experiences of specific individuals, regarding a phenomenon, in order to obtain the result that researchers can process (Mantzoukas, 2007). To achieve this goal, the researcher selects "deliberate sampling" selecting individuals and locations that will help him understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2011). The information obtained from the analysis of these responses was categorized into specific themes, so as to make it easier to understand the historical and at the same time emotional perspective of the students (indicatively, how would you feel if you were in the refugee position, answered, fear, terror, despair, etc.). We believe that their answers were both honest and targeted, as well as that the attempt to reach them was successful and they were given a step to draw conclusions for our research. All the answers that describe the answers-reactions of the students-readers regarding their feelings and thoughts were categorized based on the words they gave. Additionally, the answers of the students / three were short, with two or three words (indicative, fear, despair, horror, hatred, etc.), as the questions were oriented in this direction,

ie clear and unambiguous (Babbie, 2011, 398). According to Tzani & Kechagias (2005) "in qualitative analysis, what is important is what is often seen, is the number of times the concept appears, phrase, etc., this is the criterion of importance". In this context, the calculation of the frequency of occurrence of some words or phrases in content analysis with in vivo codes, acquires special importance, because it can reveal the deeper dimensions of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2017, 329). Qualitative data were very insightful concerning the need of new methods of approaching historical knowledge.

According to the student's answers the results are the following:

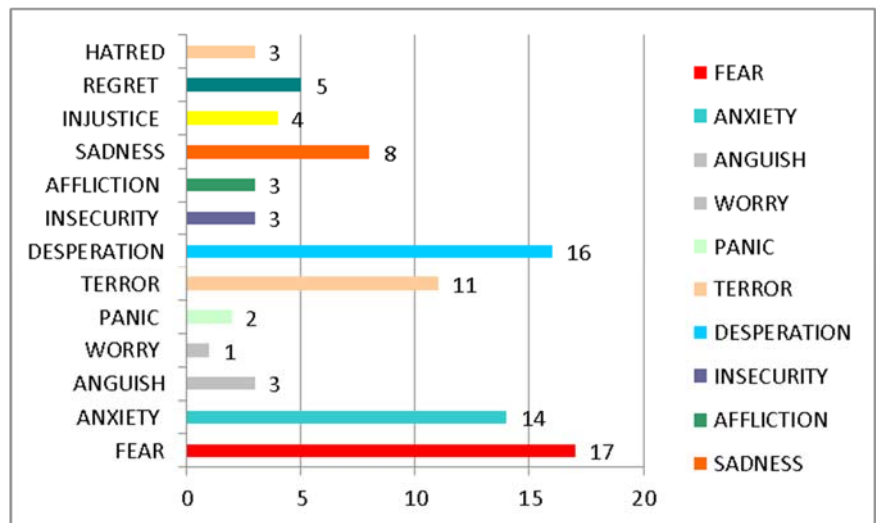
Question 1. "How do you feel about the title of the reports?"

HORROR	11
AFFLICTION	16
EMOTION	1
PAIN	4
DESPERATION	2
DISAPPOINTMENT	8
PITY	1
SHOCK	1
FEAR	7
SADNESS	16
ANGUISH	1
TERROR	4
DISGUST	2
HORRORS	3
INJUSTICE	4
REGRET	16
COMPASSION	3
ANGER	1
DISSATISFACTION	2
ANGRY	1
HATRED	1



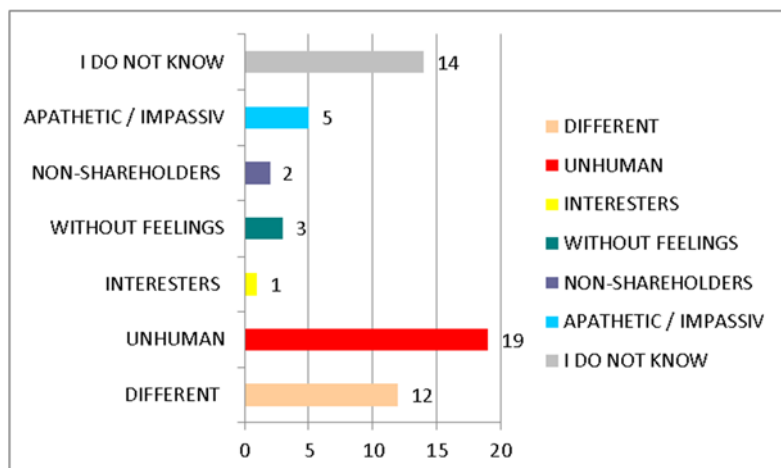
Question 2: Imagine that you are in the position of the refugees of Smyrna, as described by the authors of the articles. How does that make you feel?

FEAR	17
ANXIETY	14
ANGUISH	3
WORRY	1
TERROR	11
DESPERATION	16
INSECURITY	3
AFFLICTION	3
SADNESS	8
INJUSTICE	4
REGRET	5
HATRED	3



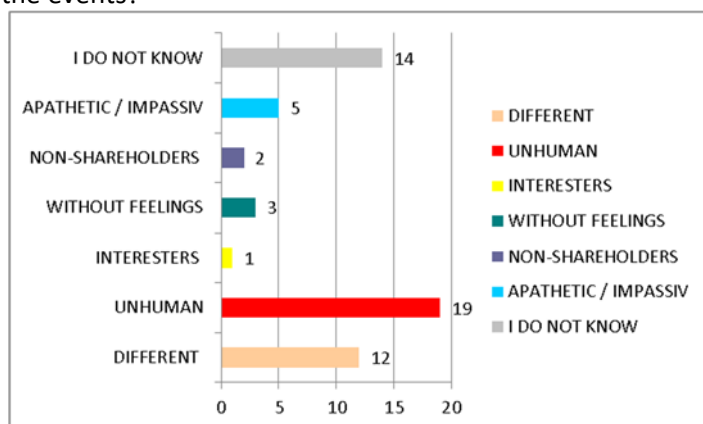
Question 3: In the given material it is mentioned that the Kemalists (soldiers of Kemal) committed horrible atrocities. Why do you think they did this? Students' views of atrocities are not surprising.

FANATICISM	10
HATRED	17
REVENGE	13
NOTHING	18
RELIGION	9



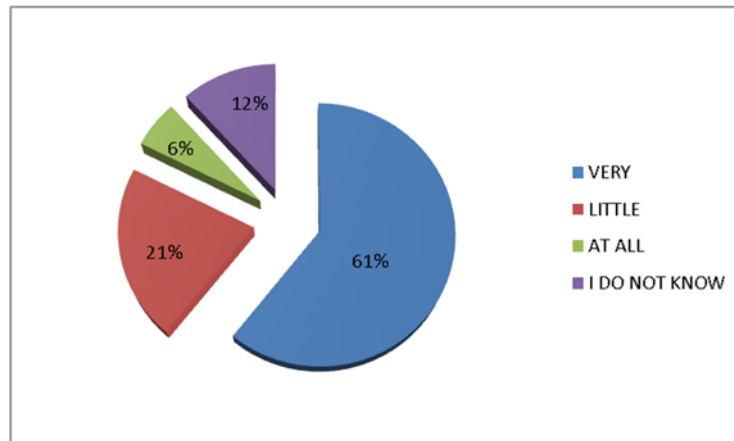
Question 4: Do you have any concerns in the newspaper reports about the attitude of the foreigners (other countries) towards the events?

DIFFERENT	12
UNHUMAN	19
INTERESTERS	1
WITHOUT FEELINGS	3
NON-SHAREHOLDERS	2
APATHETIC / IMPASSIV	5
I DO NOT KNOW	14



Question 5: Do you think that the way we approached this issue helped you to study and understand it better?

VERY	31
LITTLE	11
AT ALL	3
I DO NOT KNOW	6



Discussion and Conclusions

Due to the lack of relevant previous research findings, this paper attempts a primary examination. Utilizing the press, newspapers of the 20th century, as a historical source, for the study of this specific unit in Secondary Education, we tried to investigate through qualitative data analysis, its effect on the development and cultivation of historical empathy.

It should be noted that this action-research also functioned as an exercise of empathic content, in order to clarify or not the influence of the Press as an additional and ancillary historical source. It is generally accepted that the teaching and examination of empathy is based on limited research and practical experience, and that "empathizing" may be tantamount to imagining trying to penetrate an experience of the past. We consider, then, whether the environment of a newspaper can benefit students cognitively, pedagogically and emotionally. Although the study was based on a small sample of students, their views were thoroughly tested through thematic analysis, which helped to formulate the following conclusions. Through careful elaboration of their answers and the discussion that followed, after the questionnaire, it was found that students showed particular interest in studying the events of the Asia Minor catastrophe just as the newspapers portrayed it, understanding with emotional identification the position of the actors, either positive for the drama of the inhabitants of Smyrna and the refugees or negative for the invaders but also for the inactive Forces.

The following list summarizes some of the study findings:

1. There was a tendency towards students' "emotional identification" with the facts, and an attempt to "understand their feelings, thoughts and actions" and interpret them taking into account their historical context.
2. The majority of students expressed negative feelings towards the newspaper descriptions of what was happening.
3. Most answers were one-word (indicative, sadness, indignation, etc.)
4. The majority of students gradually understood the drama of people of the Asia Minor war, through the process of logical understanding. They came close to the past, touched it, researched it, understood it and most importantly associated it with the modern world.
5. There was, however, an obvious difficulty in the linguistic smoothing of the passages due to the cleaning of the newspapers of the time, which slowed down the process.
6. The use of press as a historical source, in the teaching of history, seemed to distract them, specifically in question 5 some students answered indicatively, student 1: "I consider these sources to play a catalytic role in understanding of events, outside the context of the textbook and help me more by provoking strong emotions ", student 2:" it helped me more because it is different to study sources written at that time by those people, despite the history

book which certainly does not will be exactly what happened ", student 3:" I did not have to learn parrot ", student 4:" they were testimonies and It was like I was there ", student 5:" I had difficulty with the language, I did not understand ", student 6: "I would like it to be done after the lesson to help me understand it better", student 7: "I understood the facts better as I was able to see them from authentic sources, not only dates but also emotions that made me experience the horror of events ", student 8: «I am really enjoying the discussions, It was fun!!! Made learning more interactive."

7. Regarding question 4, about, if they have any problems in the newspaper reports about the attitude of the Forces, the students answered indicatively, student 1: "*the*" civilized "forces were probably not so" civilized ", student 2:" should be feel ashamed ", student 3:" disinterested, without feelings for the people who were slaughtered ".

8. Some students could not at all oppose the authors' reports on the apathetic behavior of foreign forces and responded neutrally.

9. Also interesting are the answers to question 3, regarding the motivations of the Kemalists for the massacres, which most of them show a deliberate attitude of the students towards what they have read. The next answer, however, attributes the causes to hatred and fanaticism.

10. 61% of students in the 5th question, indicate that they learn better when actively participating in this learning process. Using the newspapers as learning tool in history lesson they discover other perspectives like discovering the past and evaluation it through empathy.

In conclusion, according to the model of the stages of empathy that Dickinson, Lee and Ashby conclude based on their research, we conclude that through the study of newspapers, students developed a form of advanced historical empathy, as their answers showed that they are based on historical terms in relation to the wider historical context. In the actions of the protagonists they recognized implied intentions by placing themselves in a similar historical place (Ashby & Lee, 1987, 68). After all, the aim was not to reveal the qualitative or quantitative dimension of their knowledge or their level of intelligence, but the gradual investigation of their perceptual ability and develop the empathy as a logical understanding of the facts, through the communicative environment of Press. Historical empathy focuses on identifying with people in the past based on historical knowledge to explain their actions in the past.

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