

CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE HOLOCAUST THEME BY MATERIALS OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS (IN RUSSIA AND GERMANY)

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Abstract

Purpose: The article deals with the problems associated with the transformation of historical memory in the teaching of the theme of the Holocaust. The relevance of this issue is connected with the growing problems of migration flows, intercultural and racial conflicts in the world. The authors conducted a comparative analysis of approaches to the study of this issue in the context of modern educational reality of Germany and Russia.

Methodology: The main method was the discourse analysis of the texts in modern textbooks. It is noted that in recent years the Holocaust has been the subject of attention in school education.

Result: Ideological goals pursued by the state are most often realized through the translation of ideas in the school literature. A similar situation was observed in the period of the Soviet state when a number of historical facts were distorted; the same situation is observed in the post-Soviet period. The results of the discourse analysis reveal the main context of the transmitted ideas. It is that the Holocaust is being studied as a tragic page in history. At the same time, this topic is allocated a very small amount of space in textbooks, which leads to the conclusion of its weak accentuation. It is concluded that it is necessary to increase the importance of this page of history in the process of formation of adequate historical memory of schoolchildren and the development of their tolerance.

Applications: This research can be used for universities, teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Holocaust Theme by Materials of school Programs (In Russia and Germany) is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: *Holocaust, school education, history, textbook, discourse analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

For modern historical education, the study of the Holocaust remains a difficult, necessary and relevant topic up to this day, because it is continuously connected with the formation of the historical memory of the subsequent generations of peoples who participated in the Second World War. However, the history of the Holocaust was often influenced by socio-cultural and political influences: the post-war transformation of the world, the confrontation during the Cold war and global changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union. So, should someone remember the lessons of the past? And the most important question – what for? [Toptayeva, B. \(2018\).](#)

The relevance of this issue is connected with the growing problems of migration flows, intercultural and racial conflicts in the world. However, can we say that today the methods chosen for teaching this topic correspond to the set goals? Is it possible to make the knowledge gained about the Holocaust the basis to influence the formation of the inner world of the younger generation, which will face modern manifestations of xenophobia and anti-Semitism? And what is the situation with the study of the Holocaust in German and Russian educational institutions? [Cambray, J., & Sawin, L. \(Eds.\). \(2018\).](#)

In modern educational realities, the Holocaust is inextricably studied in correlation with the second world war and the great Patriotic war. This contributes to a better understanding of the structure and ideology of totalitarian States that violate human rights and commit genocide against other peoples. [Cambray, J., & Sawin, L. \(Eds.\). \(2018\).](#)

Totalitarian regimes make the most use of xenophobic themes to achieve their goals. At the same time, the debunking and disclosure of taboo episodes in the life of countries are caused, on the one hand, by the need to repent before the people of their country; on the other hand, it can be used for ideological purposes. The younger generation has the least stable consciousness and very easily influenced by propaganda. Erasing the facets of objective perception, it is easy to distort historical memory through such influence. This happens in the process of school education; the tool is the usual school textbook. Needless to say, the ideological goals pursued by the state are most often realized through the translation of ideas in the school literature. A similar situation was observed in the period of the Soviet state when a number of historical facts were distorted; the same situation is observed in the post-Soviet period. Playing with history, of course, cannot lead to the positive development of the country, because the generation with a distorted historical memory, has no close connection with the past. Hence, it is not able to build a promising "bright" future. [Cambray, J., & Sawin, L. \(Eds.\). \(2018\).](#)

METHODS

Theoretical methods: theoretical analysis of Russian and foreign literature authors on the research problem.

The method of empirical research: a discourse analysis of texts.

Analytical: analysis of theoretical and empirical research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed that the subject of the Holocaust in today's discourse is studied widely ([Abramsky, 2007](#); [Altman, 2016](#); [Bauman, 2010](#)), due to debunking myths around it in recent years. [Toptayeva, B. \(2018\)](#).

Abroad, the theme of the Holocaust was gradually entrenched in popular culture, literature, and historiography. Specialized memorial archival complexes, educational institutions for the study of the Holocaust, based in the United States, Germany, Russia, France, Israel, took a special place in the development of interdisciplinary studies of the Disaster. For example, since the end of the Second world war, Germany is increasingly turning to the study and analysis of its Nazi past. The study of the Holocaust is now mandatory in all 16 Federal States.

In History lessons, the period of Hitler's reign is continuously studied in the context of German or world history of the twentieth century. The theme of the Disaster is mandatory in the training programs in Sekundartstufe (9th-10th grades, age 14-16 years) and in the next stage – Sekundartstufe II (11th-13th grades, age 16-19 years). In general, 16-20 lessons are allocated for the study of the period of National Socialism in primary and high school ([Brenner, 2014](#)).

Civic studies lessons are inextricably linked with the study of social and political institutions in Germany that control the legal life of the state. In the course of consideration of right-wing radical incidents and manifestations of racial extremism in the modern world, teachers draw parallels with the chauvinistic ideas of one nation over another. Thus, students are aware of the importance of tolerance, as well as the need for institutions that protect freedom and democracy in society. German post-war literature was also aimed at rethinking the era of Hitler's rule and the tragedy of the Holocaust. Stories and biographies of witnesses of the Disaster are the focus of attention in the literature lessons. Students study the works of such authors as Ilse Aichinger and Heinrich Boll, discuss the issues of guilt and responsibility of those Germans - bystanders, who remained aloof, ignoring the destruction of ethnic minorities which led to "grief of one nation" ([Hrytsak, 2010](#); [Marouf, Hasian, 2006](#); [Shlink, 2004](#)).

For the modern generation of Germans, the study of Nazi dictatorship is not limited to the school curriculum. Visits to concentration camps, memorials and Holocaust museums are an integral part of the educational process. German high school students make up the largest category of tourists who visit the places of memory, related to Nazi discrimination and terror. Images of "the walking dead in striped pyjamas" will emerge in the memories of visitors to these places for many years ([Antúnez, 2016](#)).

However, it is worth mentioning that initially after the war, German society approached its historical past with uncertainty, being wary of addressing the issues of the genocide of Jews. For a long time, we were talking about the Disaster only in order to get acquainted with the results of the Second World War. Teachers are often faced with the reluctance of students to delve deeply into this topic, because the history of the past "is associated with a sense of guilt", as well as the fact that students are sure that they already know everything on this topic (34% of students aged 14 to 19 years think that they study too much the Holocaust at school ([Vajravelu, 2018](#))).

The next problem is that the Holocaust is "competing" with other issues being the center of attention, and many immigrants believe that the story of Germany's past is irrelevant to them. Despite this, we can see that the Holocaust is deeply studied in the school curriculum on history, citizenship, literature, religion, and ethics. Thus, the teaching of the Holocaust in the German educational system is largely conditioned by the desire to prevent the recurrence of the Catastrophe.

What is the situation with the study of the Holocaust in Russian schools? In post-war Russia, in the conditions of " Soviet policy of elimination of historical memory of the Jewish people", silencing of the Holocaust led to the oblivion of this subject both in public space and in education system. In addition, for the Soviet Union, which singled out the heroism of the multinational people "in the deadly tension of the hard struggle" with fascism, the memory of the Jewish victims did not fit into the official policy. [Toptayeva, B. \(2018\)](#).

Mention of the victims of the Disaster in Russia became possible only from the time of perestroika and reassessment of the historical past: the implementation of the educational program "Living history", as well as active scientific and educational activities Of the center " Holocaust" to perpetuate the memory of the victims of the Disaster. They carry out the planned ideas: the display of historical and documentary exhibitions in the cities of Russia and abroad, installation of 25 monuments on places of mass executions, carrying out memorial actions. It is also impossible not to notice the opening at the Russian state university for the humanities (RSUH) of the International scientific and educational center for the study of history and genocide, where the first issue of advanced training of teachers "Archives of the Holocaust and genocide" was prepared ([Selomo, & Govender, 2016](#); [Srivastava, 2016](#)).

In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation included the Holocaust in the Federal state standard of general education, in 2012 – in history textbooks. However, does this give reason to believe that the scale of reflection and presentation of the theme of the Disaster in the school curriculum is in line with the Ministry of education's intentions? In addition, Holocaust denial in Russia can be prosecuted ([Khorrami, Fallah, & Abadi, 2015](#)).

The results of the analysis conducted in the framework of the XVI International Conference of the scientific and educational center "Holocaust", allowed to identify the main aspects by which the theme of the Holocaust is revealed in the history textbooks admitted by the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation from the 1990s to 2016.

The study period, in turn, was divided into three time periods [Cambray, J., & Sawin, L. \(Eds.\). \(2018\)](#):

1. 1995-2005: from the beginning of the regular publication and distribution of textbooks in Russia to the beginning of the implementation of the educational standard, including the Holocaust;
2. 2006-2012: from the beginning of the implementation of the educational standard to the inclusion of the Holocaust in textbooks and exams;
3. 2013-2018: since the inclusion of the Holocaust in textbooks.

As the defining provisions for this study, the recommendations of the IHRA¹, reflecting the historical understanding and interpretation of the Holocaust, which were formed in the United States, Western Europe, and Israel after the Second World War, were used. The texts of the textbooks were reviewed for the following positions: a clear division between the victims and the perpetrators; a reference to the number of victims; an explanation of the geographical and historical context; and the significance of the Holocaust today. Thus, in total 24 textbooks were studied: in each period five textbooks on the history of Russia and three on the world history of the XX century.

SUMMARY

In general, the study showed that throughout the studied period the theme of the Disaster is not hushed up in Russian textbooks, but references to the pages of paragraphs covering the events of the Second World War are too fragmentary. There are usually only a few sentences devoted to the Holocaust, as evidenced by the figures illustrating how little this topic is revealed: 29 sentences were found in the textbooks of the first period, 72 in the second and 92 in the third. Consequently, the superficial reflection of the Holocaust theme in Russia is proof of the prevalence of the "Soviet" tradition over the "Western" one. Of course, the textbook is not the only source in the study of history, museums, exhibitions, and conferences play an important role, but are they enough?

When the Holocaust is barely visible in textbooks, the role of teachers and extracurricular activities in teaching the Holocaust is doubly important: today, when anti-Semitism and racism remain a widespread reality in many countries of the world, it is more important than ever to learn from the past. "Our life is multi-layered, – a famous writer, lawyer, and publicist Bernhard Schlink, wrote in one of his novels - its layers are so tightly adjacent to each other that the past always shines through the present, this past is not forgotten and not completed, it continues to live and remain topical" ([Tereso, Ribeiro, & Cardoso, 2018](#)).

CONCLUSION

The theme of the Holocaust is relevant for study at schools. However, it is necessary to reconsider the emphasis placed on the process of its study. In particular, it is desirable to strengthen the methodological component: the use of visual methods in Russian practice - excursions, video lectures could significantly increase interest in the study of the topic by students. In this sense, the experience of Germany is positive. In general, the study of the Holocaust at schools in Russia and Germany is designed to foster tolerance of the younger generation.

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¹The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

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