

## USING PHOTOS TO THE THEME "WORLD WAR I"

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to analyse from the perspective of a history teacher and of a geography teacher the use of a photo at a history lesson. The task of designing learning activities associated with a photo was given at the discipline "Models and Paradigms of Teaching and Learning" to the first year students of the Curricular Management Master in the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education in the 2013-2014 academic year. The aim was that the MA students develop their competence to analyse and to interpret a photo and the competence to design learning activities based on a photo, using a variety of teaching methods, efficient in forming students' skills. The specific objectives of this research were: the analysis of the learning activities associated to a photo and the analysis of the role of solving tasks in the development of students' skills. At the end of this study, we reached several conclusions: in analysing and interpreting of a photo content together with students, one might use various forms of organization and different teaching methods and procedures; the photo could be used in various moments of the lesson and with different objectives; by using that photo, students developed specific competencies for history and also for geography. By solving the task, MA students developed the competences to design learning activities based on a photo and correlated with specific competences to a school subject matter. Student would be able to use that competence in the pre-university education system.*

**Keywords:** *curricular management, learning activities, competence, specific competences, activating methods*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The main objective of this study is to analyse the use of a photo at a history lesson from the perspective of a history teacher and of a geography teacher. The task to design learning activities associated to a photo was given at the discipline "Models and Paradigms of Teaching and Learning" to the first year students of the Curricular Management Master, in the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, in 2013-2014 academic year. The purpose of this task was to help the MA students develop their competence to analyse and to comprehend a photo and the competence to design learning activities based on a photo, using various and efficient teaching methods in training pupils' competences.

The specific objectives of the research are:

- 1) analysing the associated learning activities to a photo;
- 2) analysing the role of solving tasks in the development of pupils' competences.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

The content of research was constituted by learning activities with the subject "The Attrition War" (1915-1916) proposed to the students from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the theme "World War I" by the first author, the history teacher. The activities were associated to the photo "Life in the Trenches" (Figure 1). The material of the research was made up from texts resulting from solving tasks proposed for this purpose to the students.

*Subject of the research.* In this research, the subject submitted to research was the first author of this study, a history teacher at Viișoara Secondary School, Cluj County, having 11 years didactic experience in the pre-university education system, who designed the learning activities and drafted the tasks' solutions proposed to her pupils.

*Research methods.* Overall, this qualitative research is a case study. We used content analysis for the given task and for solving task. We performed the analysis and interpretation of data from the perspective of a history teacher and of a geography teacher.



**Fig. 1.** Life in the trenches

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cheshire\\_Regiment\\_trench\\_Somme\\_1916.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cheshire_Regiment_trench_Somme_1916.jpg))

## RESULTS

We present the learning activities with the subject "The Attrition War (1915-1916)" proposed to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade pupils on the "World War I" theme, designed by the first author based on the photography *Life in the trenches* and the tasks' solution proposed by students. The targeted objectives to be achieved by pupils during these activities are: identifying the components of the trenches; identifying the role of trenches in the war; describing the living conditions of soldiers in the trenches; identifying the impact of using trenches influenced the way of fighting in the war.

### Learning activity no. 1

**Specific competence:** 1.2. Using historical terms specific to the twentieth century in various written or oral communication situations.

*Operational objectives.* Pupils will be able to:

- identify the elements of trenches;

- explain the role of trenches during the war;
- describe in a literary style and scientifically the trenches and the life of soldiers in the trenches.

**Type of organization:** Individual.

**Means of learning:** *Life in the Trenches* photo, the text on page 56 in the school text book.

**Teaching methods:** observation, literary description, scientific description, exercise.

**Task 1.1:** Describe in a literary style, in writing, the trench from the photo showing the constituent elements and soldiers' living conditions.

**Task 1.2:** Describe scientifically, in writing, the trench from the photo showing the constituent elements and soldiers' living conditions.

**Task 1.3:** Describe in a literary style, in writing, the trench from the photo showing the constituent elements and soldiers' living conditions. Use the following 10 key terms: drama, despair, disorientation, weaken walls, boards, barbed wire, mourning, dying, guns, and grenades.

**Task 1.4:** Describe scientifically, in writing, the trench from the photo showing the constituent elements and soldiers' living conditions. Use the following terms: moat, stakes, boards, barbed wire, soldier, camouflage uniform, metal helmet, boots, rifle, military operation, and grenades.

#### The Attrition War

From 1915 on, they imposed a new way of wearing the war. Millions of soldiers were "buried" in the trenches dug in the ground, protected by stakes and barbed wire networks, the armies mutually wasting their "lifeblood" with new types of weapons: grenades, machine guns, mines, and heavy artillery shells (position or wear war). To protect soldiers, they generalized the iron helmet, the gas mask, and the camouflage uniforms. Soldiers ate and drank beside the dead mates, they slept surrounded by dying soldiers, they laughed, sang among the inert bodies. The mud made the walk almost impossible. It was the limit of what one could bear (Constantiniu, Cojescu, Mamica, 2008, p. 56).

**Solving task 1.1.** Like a crack in the ground, the trench strengthened with planks and stakes, closed between its walls the fragile body of a soldier exhausted by physical effort, but also mentally exertion. The barbed wire from the edge of the trench completes this terrifying picture. Climbed on the trench's wall, the soldier follows the enemy troops' deployment, being ready to fight back. The inert bodies of his comrades, killed by the shrapnel of grenades and by enemies' bullets, are spread throughout the trench.

**Solving the task 1.2.** The trench consists of a ditch between 2 and 2.5 m, dug in the soil, reinforced with planks and stakes and protected at the top by a network of barbed wire. The soldier from trenches wears camouflage uniform and a metal helmet to protect him against the shrapnel of the grenades and against the stones thrown by their explosions. Inside the

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trench, one may notice several other inert bodies, probably soldiers killed by the shrapnel of the grenades and by the enemy troops' bullets. The state of chaos which reigns on the front is also suggested by the disorder inside the trench: the bodies of dead soldiers are "mixed" with ammunition boxes, protective equipment, stones, soil, and boards.

**Table 1.1. Solving task 1.3.**

Keywords	Literary description
tragedy, agony, disorientation, weaken walls, boards, barbed wire, despair, moribund, weapon, grenades	In the trenches, soldiers lived a real <u>tragedy</u> . They were gripped by boundless <u>agony</u> and <u>disorientation</u> . <u>The weaken walls</u> of the trench, dug in sandy and unstable soil, and fortified by wooden <u>planks</u> , risked to collapse over the soldiers any moment. <u>The barbed wire</u> at the top of the trench ripped the opponents' flesh who ventured up to there. The trenches were places of <u>despair</u> . Who was alive ate and drank alongside the deceased and slept in the middle of the <u>moribund</u> . The enemy <u>weapons'</u> bursts and the shrapnel of the <u>grenades</u> threatened the soldiers' life who were in these ditches of death.

**Table 1.2. Solving task 1.4.**

Keywords	Scientific description
ditch, stakes, boards, barbed wire, soldier, camouflage uniform, metal helmet, boots, rifle, military operation, grenades	The trench is a <u>ditch</u> dug in the ground, between 2 and 2.5 m deep. It is reinforced with <u>stakes</u> and wooden planks and provided with <u>barbed wire</u> entanglement at the top, designed to enhance the safety of soldiers. The <u>soldiers'</u> equipment consists of camouflage <u>uniform</u> , <u>metal helmet</u> , <u>boots</u> , and <u>rifle</u> . The picture shows a soldier with a gun in his hand crawling toward the top of the trench to see the <u>military operations</u> from the front and fight back if necessary. Inside the trench, one may see more lifeless bodies of some soldiers killed by the enemy troops' bullets and by the shrapnel of the <u>grenades</u> , as well as weapons and military equipment boxes.

### Learning activity no. 2

**Specific competence 3.6.** Presenting a historical fact relating to the twentieth century, using selected information from historical sources

**Operational objectives.** Pupils will be able to:

- analyse the elements of a trench indicating its role;
- list the elements of soldiers' safety equipment;
- describe a trench in a literary way by answering ten questions from the study guide;
- describe a trench in a scientific way by answering ten questions from the study guide;

- present the living conditions of soldiers in the trenches and their consequences, the dangers which lurk for the soldiers in the trenches;
- argue how the construction of trenches influenced the evolution of World War I;
- explain the role of military equipment

**Type of organization:** individual

**Means of learning:** *Life in the trenches* photo, text on p. 56, study guide

**Teaching methods:** study guide use, observation, exercise.

**Task 2.1:** Describe in a literary style, in a written text, the content of the photo *Life in the trenches*, taking into account those ten questions from the study guide (Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3. Solving task 2.1.**

The questions in the Study Guide	Literary description based on the questions in the Study Guide
<p>What is the meaning of the location from the photo?</p> <p>What do the colours suggest to you from your chromatic point of view?</p> <p>How are the trench walls strengthened?</p> <p>What is on the top of the trench?</p> <p>Which is the dominant element in the photo?</p> <p>How many soldiers are there in the picture?</p> <p>What does the equipment of the soldier consist of?</p> <p>How do the soldier's boots and uniform look like?</p> <p>What is the soldier armed with?</p> <p>How many inert bodies are there in the photo?</p>	<p>Into a landscape dominated by non-colours, white, black and shades of grey, there is a trench, place of loss and despair for millions of soldiers during the World War I. Trench walls, strengthened by wooden planks, extend toward the sky with a barbed wire fence. In the centre of the trench, spread over the wall reinforced with wooden planks, a single soldier animates the lugubrious landscape. The soldier is equipped with a camouflage uniform, helmet and boots. Those are covered with a thick layer of dust and dirt. In his hands, the soldier holds a heavy weapon, being ready to fight back anytime.</p> <p>Three inert human bodies are lying mixed with other objects scattered in the ditch of death.</p>

**Task 2.2:** Analyse the content of the image *Life in the trenches* based on the questions from the Study Guide (Table 1.4.). Describe scientifically, in a written text, the content of the image.

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**Table 1.4. Solving task 2.2.**

The questions in the Study Guide	Scientific description based on the questions in the Study Guide
<p>What do you think about the photo in chromatic terms?</p> <p>What does the photo represent?</p> <p>What is a trench?</p> <p>What are the constituent elements of a trench?</p> <p>Where is the barbed wire located?</p> <p>What features has the land where the trench is dug?</p> <p>What are the trench walls protected with?</p> <p>What is the central element of this photo?</p> <p>In what position is the soldier in the photo?</p> <p>What equipment does the soldier have? (What is he wearing on his head? What is he wearing on his feet?)</p> <p>What is the soldier armed with?</p> <p>How many inert bodies do you see in the photo?</p> <p>What are the items which appear in the background of the photo?</p>	<p>In terms of chromatic, the photo is black and white.</p> <p>The picture shows a trench.</p> <p>The trench is a deep ditch dug in the soil, especially in plain regions, having the role to shelter the soldiers.</p> <p>The components of a trench are: a 2-2.5 m deep ditch, protected by a barbed wire on the top.</p> <p>The land, where the trench is excavated, is made of sand and stones.</p> <p>Trench walls are excavated in sandy rock and they are strengthened by wooden boards.</p> <p>The central element of the photo is a soldier.</p> <p>The soldier in the photo is stretched over the wall reinforced with wooden planks.</p> <p>The equipment of the soldier consists of: camouflage uniform, metal helmet and boots.</p> <p>The soldier is armed with a large gun.</p> <p>In the photo, we notice three inert bodies.</p> <p>In the background of the photo, one may see dead bodies, boxes of ammunition, various objects and some wooden beams which allow crossing the trenches.</p>

**Task 2.3:** Interpret the content of the photo *Life in the trenches* considering the questions in the Study Guide

Questions concerning the interpretation of the photo content	Description
<p>What is the role of the trench?</p> <p>What role do the steep walls of the trench have?</p> <p>What role do the wooden planks have in trench architecture?</p>	<p>The trench has the purpose to provide protection for soldiers on the battlefield, in plain areas or on other horizontal surfaces where those did not have natural defences.</p> <p>The steep walls of the trench provide the soldiers with an invisible shelter. They can move in the trenches from one place to another, without being seen by the enemy.</p> <p>Wooden planks prevent the sandy walls of the trench to</p>

<p>What role does the barbed wire have on the top of the trench?</p> <p>When do you think were the longest trench systems built?</p> <p>By whom were the trench systems built during World War I?</p> <p>What are the main risks to which the soldiers are exposed in the trench?</p> <p>For what reason is the soldier stretched over the ground border?</p> <p>How do you explain the presence of dust on soldiers' boots and pants?</p> <p>Where do you think the soldiers eat and drink while fighting in the trenches?</p> <p>Why aren't the dead or dying soldiers transported outside the trench?</p> <p>What is the role of the metal helmet?</p> <p>Why different objects are spread all over in the trenches?</p> <p>What indicates these objects spread in the trenches?</p> <p>What do you think are the feelings of soldiers who spent a long time in trenches?</p> <p>Which type of war is characterized by trench battles?</p> <p>In what war had trench battles been used?</p> <p>Why is it said that trenches had slowed</p>	<p>collapse.</p> <p>The barbed wire from the top of the trench walls is an obstacle in front of enemies during attacks, increasing their safety on the inside.</p> <p>They built thousands of kilometres long trench systems during World War I.</p> <p>The trench systems were built during World War I by excavating the soil in the plain areas.</p> <p>The trench systems were built during World War I on the Western Front, in France and in Belgium.</p> <p>The trench systems were built during World War I by millions of soldiers belonging to the Triple Entente and to the Central Powers.</p> <p>The soldier sheltered in trenches is exposed to several risks: bullets and grenade shrapnel penetrating the sky; hunger, cold, rain, the crumbling trench walls in portions without boards.</p> <p>The soldier, laying over the mound of earth, follows the movement of adverse troops, being prepared to fight back.</p> <p>The dust stuck on the soldier's boots and pants comes from grenade explosions and from the sand from the trench walls.</p> <p>The soldier lives squeezed between the walls of the trench, along with the dead and dying comrades.</p> <p>Dead or dying soldiers can be evacuated from the front only in quiet moments.</p> <p>The metal helmet is designed to defend the soldier against enemies' bullets or against the metal fragments of the grenades.</p> <p>In the trenches, there are objects spread all over because soldiers do not have time or mood to gather them or any place to store them.</p> <p>Different items – weapons, ammunition, clothes – spread all over through the trench, betrays the soldiers' fatigue, exhaustion, perpetual agitation, and despair.</p> <p>Soldiers who stay a long time in the trenches feel fear, hopelessness, and despair.</p> <p>Trench battles are specific to the position warfare.</p> <p>Trench battles were used in World War I.</p> <p>But their construction had an unfortunate consequence, namely the movement war turned into a long lasting attrition war since behind the trenches, armies had resisted for months without being obliged to launch a final attack. Each military alliance waited for the other side to take the lead of the final battle and thus the war</p>
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<p>the moving war and turned it into a position war (in trenches)?</p> <p>What consequences does the position war (in trenches) have on the soldiers' morale?</p>	<p>lasted a very long time.</p> <p>The long time spent with the dead and dying comrades, the misery, the hunger, the permanent sound of explosions and weapons affected the soldiers' physical and mental health. Many young people were left with scars and they needed help from their families and professional support to recover after they had returned home.</p>
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### Learning activity no. 3

**Specific competence 3.6:** Presenting a historical fact related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, using selected information from historical sources

**Operational objectives.** Students will be able to:

- explain the role of the trench in the war
- describe the equipment of the soldier in the trenches
- list 10 keywords representative for soldiers' living conditions and their moods
- present the relationship between trenches and the attrition war

**Type of organization:** groups.

**Means of learning:** photo *Life in the trenches*.

**Teaching methods:** the quadrants method, cooperative learning, exercise.

**Task:** Analyse the photography *Life in the trenches*. Resolve in written form the tasks from the quadrants.

<p><b>Task 3.1:</b> Explain the role of the trench in the battlefield.</p> <p>The trench is designed to provide protection to soldiers on the battlefield, especially in lowland areas without natural protection.</p>	<p><b>Task 3.2:</b> Describe the equipment of the soldier located in the trenches!</p> <p>The soldier has a thick camouflage uniform, a metal helmet and boots. He has a large weapon.</p>
<p><b>Task 3.3:</b> List 10 keywords representative for the soldiers' living conditions and their moods: death, cold, hunger, despair, blood, mud, dying, anxiety, loneliness, isolation.</p>	<p><b>Task 3.4:</b> Why is it said that the trenches are specific for the attrition war?</p> <p>The long months spent in the trenches, the cold, the hunger, the isolation affected physically and psychologically most of the soldiers. The use of trenches had transformed the movement war into a positions war, a static one which lasted for months. It was a war of nerves and physical and mental strength.</p>

#### Learning activity no. 4

**Specific competence: 1.2.** Using specific historical terms for the 20<sup>th</sup> century in various written or oral communication situations

**Operational objectives.** Students will be able to:

- describe soldiers' life in the trenches
- analyse the trench elements
- compare trench warfare and movement warfare
- associate the trench image with other elements
- explain the effect of the trench battles
- argue for/against the statement that trench warfare is specific to the position warfare

**Type of organization:** individual/group.

**Means of learning:** photography *Life in the trenches*.

**Teaching methods:** the cube method, exercise, self-study/cooperative learning.

**Task:** Use the cube methodology. Resolve in writing the tasks noted on the cube faces specified in the table.

Tasks	Solving tasks
Task 4.1: <b>Describe</b> soldiers' life in the trenches!	<i>Soldiers lived isolated in shabby and narrow grooves. They were forced to live dirty and dusty for days, along with dead and injured soldiers. Enemy's weapon bullets and the shrapnel of grenades put their life into permanent danger.</i>
Task 4.2: <b>Analyse</b> the constituent elements of a trench!	<i>The trench consists of: a 2-2.5 m deep ditch, excavated in the soil, whose walls are reinforced with planks and stakes. In the upper part there is barbed wire.</i>
Task 4.3: <b>Compare</b> trench warfare and movement warfare, specifying their similarities and differences	<i>Similarities: they are military conflicts involving a large number of soldiers and use destructive weapons like: rifles, machine guns, grenades, dynamite, etc. Differences: Trench warfare is a static confrontation which puts to a hard test the soldiers' physical and mental strength. Movement warfare is dynamic, characterized by rapid movement of troops and changes in the battle front.</i>
Task 4.4: <b>Associate</b> the image of a trench with a form of relief, with a colour, a sound and a smell!	<i>Geomorphology - basins; minor riverbed; chasm; Colour - black (death, misery); Sound - thunder; Smell - stench.</i>
Task 4.5: <b>Apply!</b> Explain the statement: trenches	<i>As the soldiers were in the trenches for two years, many of them died there being impossible to be evacuated. Millions of soldiers were "buried" in the trenches on the Western</i>

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<p>have become tombs for millions of soldiers during the World War.</p>	<p><i>Front.</i></p>
<p><i>Task 4.6: Argue pro or against the statement: "trenches are specific of a position war"!</i></p>	<p><i>The trenches are specific of the position war because after thousands of kilometres of such ditches were dug, during World War I, the fronts had been stabilized for two years (1915-1916). Millions of Triple Entente or Central Powers soldiers, placed in the trenches, face to face, crushed their forces mutually till exhaustion without any concrete result for one camp or another. Germany, threatened with depletion of resources, initiated the battle of Verdun to end the position war but without success. Barely in 1917 had the war become dynamic. In 1918, the Triple Entente troops moved back to Germany, and the war ended in the fall of 1918 with the surrender of each Central Powers' members.</i></p>

### DISCUSSION

The specific skills taken from the school curriculum (2009, *Programe școlare Istorie. Clasele V-VIII*), targeted to be achieved by pupils through designed learning activities, were the following: 1.2. Using historical terms specific of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in various written or oral communication situations; 3.6. Presenting historical facts related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, using information selected from historical sources.

From the theme conducted during the "Teaching and Learning Models and Paradigms" Course, where the students were asked to design learning activities using certain teaching methods, we presented in this study the learning activities that we considered more efficient in developing pupils' competences.

In each learning activity, there is a main teaching method: the literary/scientific description (activity 1), the study guide (activity 2), the quadrants method (activity 3), and the cube method (activity 4). Since the course stated that the exercise was the most important method in training and developing competences, we included this method in all learning activities. Also we selected these activities considering this statement.

In each learning activity we designed several tasks to be solved by pupils. These tasks are examples and they were not all offered to be solved during the lesson or as homework. The tasks differentiate between them through the competence to be developed at history, through the learning method, the degree of difficulty, the time required for solving, etc. Learning activities or tasks are not in chronological order.

*Analysis of the learning activity No. 1 and solving tasks*

In order to form the specific competence 1.2. *Using historical terms specific to the twentieth century in various written or oral communication situations*, students may receive the task to describe in a literary manner or scientifically what they see in the photo. In the scientific literature, it is stated that description is a learning method by which are expressively presented, orally or in writing, exterior features, typical objects, phenomena, and processes and by which the aspects of shape, size, context, etc. are emphasized (Dulamă, 2008b, p. 46). Solving the tasks 1.1. and 1.2., pupils are guided by the specification of the task, to highlight the constituent elements and living conditions of the soldiers. To solve these tasks, pupils should use either the literary language (task 1.1) or the scientific language of history and geography (task 1.2).

Dulamă states that the description method aims at the pupils' acquisition of some declarative knowledge located on the first level of Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge of particular facts, forms, representations, movements, consequences, relations, influences, phenomena, processes, systems and components, etc. (2008b, p. 46), valid aspect both in geography lessons, as well as in history lessons. The fact that pupils are asked to write different types of texts – a literary text and a scientific text-, compelled them to use different types of language – literary and scientific – and to practice for developing their written communication competence in Romanian. So, the activity targets the objectives located at the application level of Bloom's Taxonomy (1997).

In the tasks 1.3. and 1.4., pupils are guided by specifying, in addition, some literary or scientific key terms which they have to use in writing the text. Imposing some terms can facilitate the development of text, but also it can increase the difficulty of the task if pupils do not know the indicated terms. In order for pupils to prove that they have the competence to use specific historical terms for the twentieth century in different written communication situations, they should describe in a literary style or scientifically the trench, independently, without being guided directly or indirectly by another person.

*Analysis of the learning activity No. 2 and solving tasks*

In order to form the specific competence 3.6 *Presenting the historical fact related to the twentieth century, using selected information from historical sources*, pupils may receive the task to describe in a literary style or scientifically what they see in the photo, guided by questions. *The Study Guide* (Vacca, Vacca, 1996) helps pupils in studying a text, in the absence of the teacher, through a set of questions that guides their attention and motivates them to focus on certain aspects of the content (Dulamă, 2008a, p. 111). Dulamă (2008a, p. 111) stresses that through questions, pupils are guided to learn an interpretative model with a certain specific content, since this activity is about the description and analysis of the photo content. The guidance through questions facilitates detailed analysis of the photo content, thus some questions aim at the observation of trench components, and

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others refer to the soldier from the centre plan and some to other visible elements in space. S. Mehedinți (1930; *apud* Dulamă, 2008b, p. 47) recommended that description to be both analytical, namely to characterize the components of the geographic space and the relationships between them, and synthetic, namely to depict the essential characteristics of the geographic area as a whole. These tasks have a lower degree of difficulty than the tasks 1.1., 1.2, 1.3., and 1.4. These questions may be used in the catechetical conversation between teacher and pupils, but then each oral answer would be formulated by just one pupil.

The task 2.3., in which students are asked to interpret the content of photo *Life in the trenches* concerning the questions from the study guide, has a high level of difficulty, because the interpretation "involves cognitive processes of higher order, including conducting judgments based on prior knowledge, the information taken from other sources and the information extracted from the photo" (Dulamă, 2009, p. 407). The same source states that "to interpret the contents of a photo is to decode, to understand the reality and significance of the photographed items", which involves the explanation of the cause-effect relationships between the photographed objects, the spread of objects in terrestrial space, the contrasts, the thresholds or the limits, conducting some assumptions and establishing hypotheses, searching for evidence to confirm or contradict the hypothesis, and drawing conclusions (Dulamă, 2011, p. 319). These questions may be used consistently during the heuristic conversation between teacher and pupils, but they would have the disadvantage that not each pupil would formulate an answer.

### *Analysis of the learning activity No. 3 and solving tasks*

In order to form the specific competence 3.6 *Presenting an historical fact related to the twentieth century, using selected information from historical sources*, pupils may receive the task to solve in groups the tasks specified in the quadrants (Flueraș, 2003, *apud* Dulamă, 2008a). Depending on the available time, a group could solve one or more tasks. Because each pupil should form his or her targeted competence, solving the tasks in groups has the disadvantage that some pupils are not cognitively involved and they do not practice. The scientific literature states that "*the action* is the essential attribute of competence; it determines the relationship between resources and results or performance; *the action proves or demonstrates the competence*" (Dulamă, 2011, p. 11). Le Boterf (2000) defines the competence as a dynamic process which results from the update of three factors determinative for the action: to know how to act, to want to act, to be able to act.

### *Analysis of the learning activity No. 4 and solving tasks*

In order to the form specific competence 1.2. *Using specific historical terms to the twentieth century in various written or oral communication situations*, pupils may receive a group task to solve the proposed assignments through the cube method (Cowan, Cowan, 1980). Depending on the available time,

a pupil or a group could resolve, as in the quadrants method group, one or more tasks.

### *Connections to Geography*

From the perspective of geography, pupils develop specific competences in terms of geography through these learning activities (according to the secondary school curriculum source – 2009, *Programe școlare Geografie. Clasele V-VIII*): 3.2. Identify the links between elements, phenomena and observable processes (the 5<sup>th</sup> grade); 6.1. Explaining the importance of the geographical environment for human being and society (the 5<sup>th</sup> grade); 6.2. Explaining the human and natural diversity of the world by making correlations with information acquired from other subjects (the 5<sup>th</sup> grade); 7.2. Using simple methods of investigation (observation, analysis, and interpretation) (the 5<sup>th</sup>, the 6<sup>th</sup>, and the 7<sup>th</sup> grades); 7.3. Identifying time observable landmarks (the 5<sup>th</sup> grade); 7.8. Describing the observed elements, processes and phenomena (directly or indirectly) (the 5<sup>th</sup> grade); Explaining the relationships between groups of elements, phenomena and processes of the geographic environment (the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> grades).

To solve tasks, pupils need to use the concepts coming from the field of geography (soil, relief, plain, weather, trenches, etc.), to identify the components of the environment (rocks where the trench is dug, type of relief, anthropic relief features created by soldiers in the earth's crust), to establish connections between environmental components (the relationship between weather conditions and soldiers' life in the trenches; the relationship between the trench size and soldiers' life in the trenches; the relationship between the arrangement of the trench systems on the field and the existence of a position and attrition war).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of the learning activities associated with the photo *Life in the trenches*, as a means of teaching at the history lesson *The First World War* at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, we came to a few conclusions: in the analysis and interpretation of the photo with pupils, one might use various forms of organization, different teaching methods and processes (the heuristic conversation, the literary and scientific description, the dials or the quadrants, the study guide, and the cube); The photo could be used at any moment during the lesson to achieve various objectives (capturing attention, verifying previously acquired knowledge, acquiring new knowledge, and assessing knowledge), but also as a teaching means for solving homework.

From the analysis of the solving tasks' role in the development of students' skills we came to the following conclusions. By using within the history lesson the photo, "eyewitness" of one of the most important events in

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human history, students learnt to analyse different captured aspects (e.g. the constituent elements of the trenches), to describe (e.g. soldiers' protective equipment) and to understand (e.g. the living conditions in the trenches and the dangers for soldiers). By solving the tasks associated with this photo, pupils develop their competences specific to history, but also to geography.

At the end of this study, we concluded that by solving the task, MA students developed the targeted competences related to the design of the learning activities, starting from a specific competence, and that they would be able to use this competence in the pre-university education system.

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