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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DESCRIBES: HOW I LEARNED THE BEST?

Abstract:

Learning is a dynamic process. There are some factors that affect learning positively or negatively and in other words, facilitate or complicate learning. Learner, learning methods, types of issues to be learned and the learning environment are some of these factors. The purpose of this research to determine students' opinions studying at the university which course they have seen until this time how they learn best. The working group consists of totally 140 students studying in 2015-2016 academic year at Necmettin Erbakan University. The study conducted in the form of qualitative research method and data were collected by semi-structured interviews. In the form of student interviews were asked to write the lessons they have learned best and explain how they learn best. The data were analyzed by content analysis. According to findings it has found that students have learned mathematics, history, literature and Turkish lessons the best. It has revealed that they learned better via expression, problem solving and through experience.

Keywords:

Learning, learning methods, teaching methods, students.

Introduction

Learning is a dynamic process. There are some factors that affect learning positively or negatively and in other words, facilitate or complicate learning. Learner, learning methods, types of issues to be learned and the learning environment are some of these factors.

Learning strategies have long been an important issue in the field of education. It is generally accepted that instructional practices should assess and accommodate learning strategies of individual students. It is, however, not an easy task to design and implement truly adaptive modes of instruction in public education because learning strategies may vary significantly from one student to another (Simsek & Balaban, 2010). Learning strategies can be defined as, behaviors and thoughts in which a learner engages and which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. Thus, the goal of any particular learning strategy may be to affect the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge. Good teaching includes teaching students how to learn, remember, think, and motivate themselves. Some major categories of learning strategies are (Weinstein & Meyer, 1983):

1. **Rehearsal strategies;** such as copying, underlining, or shadowing
2. **Elaboration strategies;** such as paraphrasing or summarizing
3. **Organizational strategies;** such as outlining or creating a hierarchy
4. **Comprehension monitoring strategies;** such as checking for comprehension failures
5. **Affective strategies;** such as being alert and relaxed.

Teaching method is path to reach the goal for students (Sunbul, 2010). The most appropriate strategy should be used for fulfill learning successfully. Using learning strategy which is a predictor of academic achievement, individuals may be more successful in both courses, as well as be able to improve themselves (Erdem, 2005).

The purpose of this research to determine students' opinions studying at the university which course they have seen until this time how they learn best.

Method

The study conducted in the form of qualitative research method.

Study Group

The working group consists of totally 140 students studying in 2015-2016 academic year at Necmettin Erbakan University.

Table 1. The distribution of the study group according to departments

Computer and instructional technologies education	Mathematics	Turkish	English Prep Class	Engineering	Total
9	50	56	18	16	140

Data collection

Data were collected through interviews of qualitative research techniques. Semi-structured interviews was used as data collection form prepared by the researchers. In the form of student interviews were asked to write the lessons they have learned best and explain how they learn best.

Analysis

Data was analyzed by the content analysis method. Content analysis was done according to phases that stated by Yildirim & Simsek (2013) as 1) Coding the data 2) finding themes 3) organizing the codes and themes 4) commenting the findings.

Findings

Findings indicated that Mathematics lesson is one of the best students have learned.

Table 2. Lessons that students learned the best

Lessons	n
Mathematics	39
History	25
Literature	22
Turkish	19
Sciences	19
Geography	12
English	7
Geometry	6

Students learned the best via their learning strategies (n=53) and teacher's teaching methods (n=87). It is observed that teacher's teaching methods is more effective.

Figure 1. Ways that affect learning

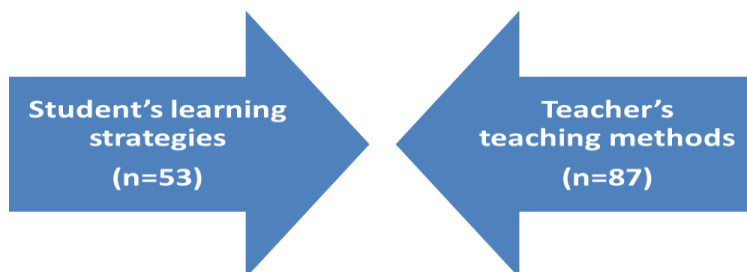
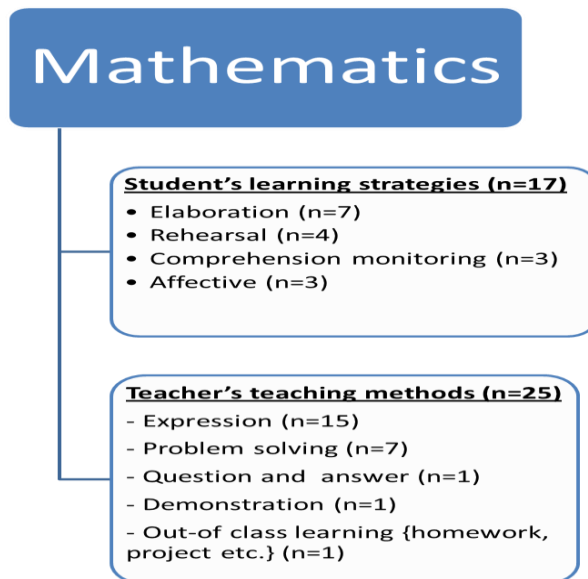


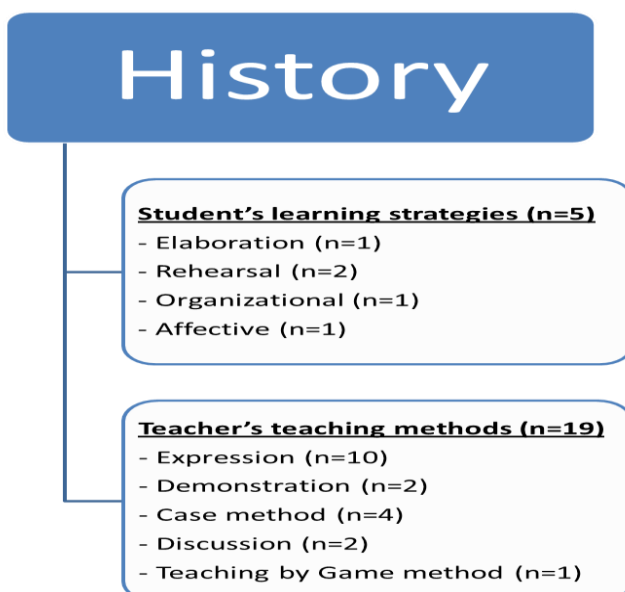
Figure 2. Lessons learned the best



Quotations from students' opinions;

- (F,M,49): "I wasn't able to understand **Maths** at all when I was in secondary school. **Maths was like nightmare for me until our Maths teacher starts teaching who has really nice style and interest about Maths.** Learning Maths was like game for us in this teachers lesson. You can affect students the best with games in these ages. My teacher did it in a very good way. She didn't teach us only Maths, she also prepared us for life."
- (M,M,43): "The best lesson I learned **Maths** and subject was inequality. While having vocational courses in teachers high school, I did presentation to class about inequality in Maths. **I was studying so good before doing presentation and I was teaching it to other people that's why it was so effective for learning this subject.**"

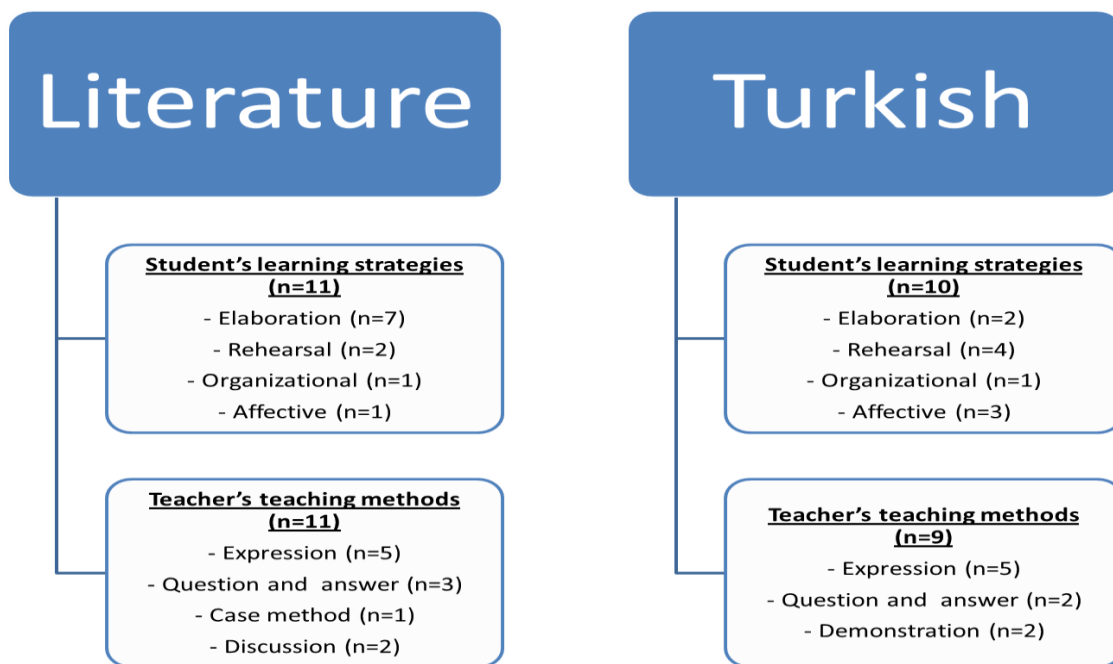
Figure 3. Lessons learned the best



Quotations from students' opinions;

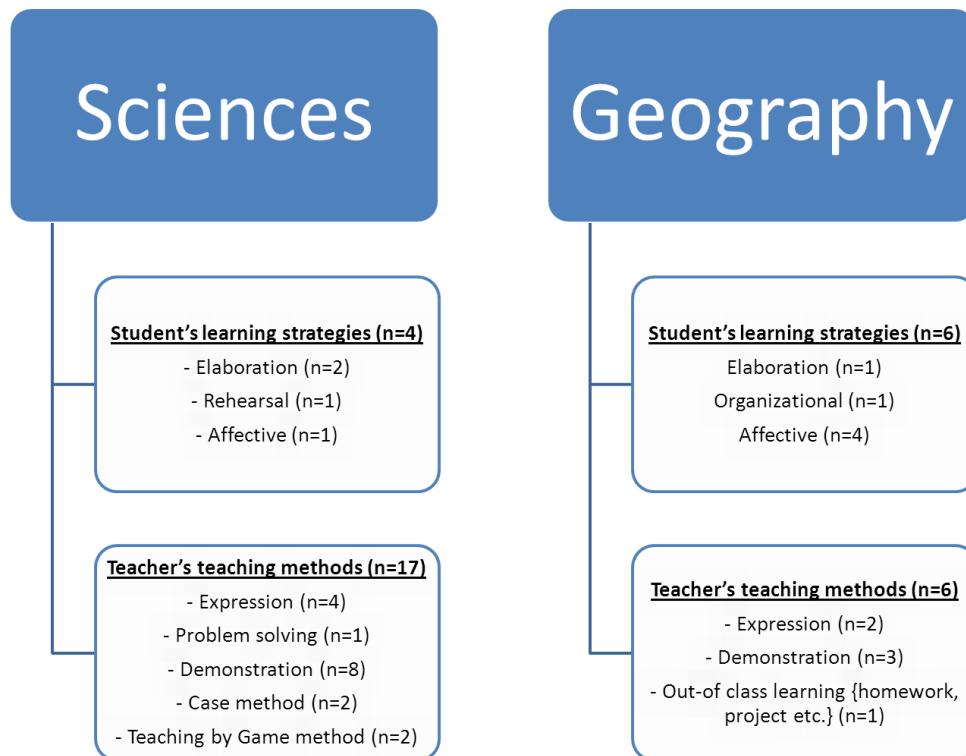
- (M,T,5): "I learnt **History** the best and especially history of Ottoman Empire. **We were discussing about it with teacher. I was repeating it later that's why I learnt it permanently.**"
- (M,T,3): "I think I learnt Sultan Selim the Stern period the best in **History** courses. **Our teacher was making stories** of life of Sultan Selim the Stern. I read books about this period as well. **Teacher was teaching it with examples like I read in books. It was very effective.**"

Figure 4. Lessons learned the best



Quotations from students' opinions;

- (F,T,4): "I wasn't able to do Paragraphs subject in **Turkish** courses before. More precisely, I had lots of wrong answers in multiple choice exams. **I did a lot of exercises** in books and **I was checking every wrong answered exercises and I was doing it once again.** My mistakes were decreased in time."
- (F,T,9): "The best topic which I had ever learnt was Tanzimat **Literature. I was taking notes** when teacher was talking that's why it had important effect in learning. **I was repeating my notes and writing once again when I go back to home.** Furthermore one method was helpful for learning it. I was pretending like I am teacher and I was teaching it to students and I was telling myself about topic."

Figure 5. Lessons learned the best**Quotations from students' opinions;**

- (F,T,11): "I learnt well about soil types and plants which can grow in these soils when I had **Geography** courses in high school. Teacher didn't teach it so good. ***I wrote its features from book at home by myself. Then, I pointed these places in World map and I painted these regions.*** I hereby learnt it very well."
- (F,T,34): "The topic I had ever learnt the best was in **Science and Technology** course in secondary school. ***Teacher brought an animal heart to laboratory for lesson and we examined it together. Teacher divided class group by group and she provided examining for everybody.*** I think I learnt it good because it impressed me."

According to Yavuz, Gülmez and Özkara (in press) research findings determined as learning strategies that are used of students located student listening, solving test, writing (taking notes), memorize, review, coding, telling, practice and self-focusing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is seen that students have learned the best Mathematics and respectively History and Literature. Teacher's teaching methods effected students' learning. According to results the following recommendations may be offered:

- Lessons should be organized to attract student's interest.
- Teachers should provide guidance students in learning strategies.
- Lessons should be conducted as from easy to difficult and practical.

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