

Does extensive use of examples of graphic organizers made by others in the learning environment really enhance learning processes?

Hava Greensfeld and Efrat Nevo

Our study was conducted in the context of an academic course in a teacher-training college. We sought to investigate students' conceptions about the process of building graphic organizers while developing visual skills within a learning environment highly enriched with graphic representations. As instructors of the course, we hoped that understanding those conceptions would aid us in developing teaching strategies to guide our students, enable them to organize their knowledge in a meaningful manner, and help them find effective strategies to develop their visual skills. The subject of the course was "Learning styles", offered in the Center for Fostering Learning and Thinking Skills in Michlalah College, Jerusalem. The students in the course, women involved in a variety of social education disciplines, were required to construct a primary graphic organizer for a text describing a certain model of learning styles. After making their own graphic organizer, the students were asked to make use of graphic organizers made by students from previous years. The results of the study, including analysis of linguist elements, reveal a mosaic of emotions about learning from examples of graphic organizers made by others. Six types of users of such data bases are distinguished. Important issues concerning meaningful learning are raised as well, such as the place of dialogue and creativity in a unique learning environment like the one studied, with its combination of learning through construction of graphic organizers together with use of graphic organizers made by others.