

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **First term interior design studio as a process of teaching, learning and expressing**

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**The first year at university can be defined as an adaptation period for the students. In this period, students try to get familiar with their professions, in addition to the physical and social environment. Within the scope of 'architectural design studios', students are included in a new learning process in which they deal with a number of concepts, which are the bases of profession with participatory educational techniques. Which skills can be improved at first year design education? Which subjects can be the bases of the first year design education for the following years? How can the theory-practice-relationship be constructed for the first year design students? What are the pragmatic ways for active-learning in design studios? Which environment improves teaching, learning and expressing activity? These are some of the questions which teachers face before starting first year design studios. In this context, the article argues the process and approaches with an example followed at Karadeniz Technical University, Interior Design Studio-I.**

**Key words:** First year design education, interior design studio, design process, teaching, learning, expressing.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid development of technology today led the increase in communication opportunities and thus resulted with inter-cultural interaction. This process which is defined as "globalization" with a popular saying has changed and developed social consciousness, habits and expectations. The provision of conditions for mental and physical comfort for human living in social, natural and artificial environment is one of the "sie qua nons" of the modern life. These demands, which are produced by humans can only be met by the professional approaches and applications of different disciplines which keep up with the necessities of our age. In the article which is carried out with this perspective within the scope design education which is the origin of every kind of applications, the method at Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Interior Architecture, Interior Design Studio-I course is analyzed.

## **Teaching, learning and expressing through education**

Education is defined as the whole of the activities carried out for purpose. "To educate" has a long series of definitions which range from "an intervention to life", "determining the perspective of life by informing and influencing value judgments and beliefs", "providing a better understanding of life" and "expanding the limits of humans" in "adding pleasures to life" and "shaping the society". Although education covers a certain period, it is a lifelong learning method. Teaching is quite similar to education. It is an informing activity provided by an individual or by an organization. It is the function of informational transfer by the people who knows, to the people who do not. It is the activity of giving information about something. Developing is carried out with the purpose of providing a detailed acquisition of an activity. It is a long-term activity and requires lifelong effort. Teaching and learning relationship has a structure which can contain many different education methodologies. One of them is the Multi-Intelligent Learning, which employs the following educational methodologies and is used successfully in design studios (Gardner, 1999a)

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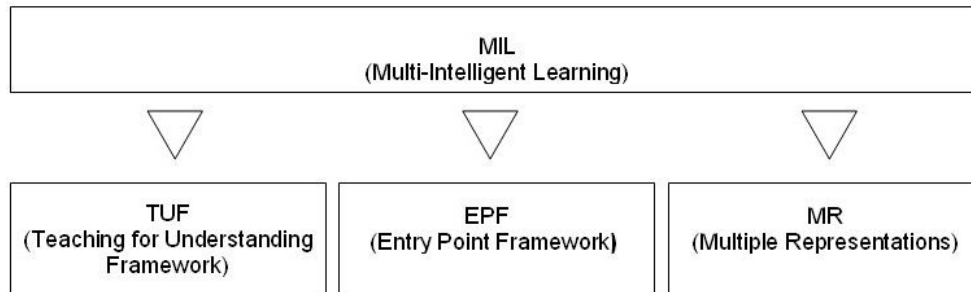


Figure 1. Multi-intelligent learning.

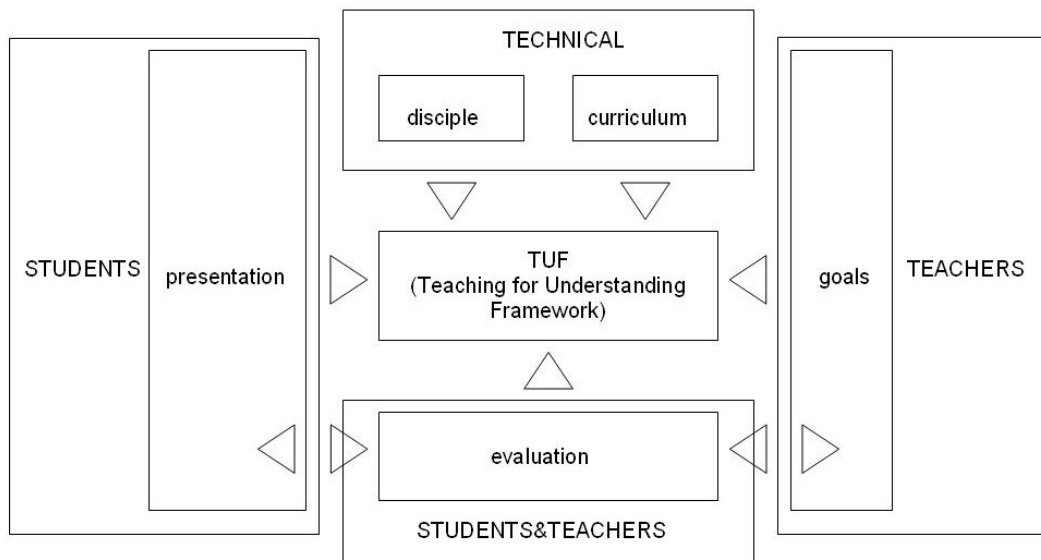


Figure 2. Teaching for understanding framework.

(Figure 1). Teaching for 'understanding framework'; provides a comprehensive approach for planning "learning outcomes" and "curriculum". Teaching for Understanding Framework educational methodology is designed to assist teachers in course development. The starting point in 'teaching for understanding' is to develop generative topics, topics that are central to a discipline, and understanding goals to provide focus to the instruction (Perkins and Blythe, 1994) (Perkins, 1998) (Figure 2).

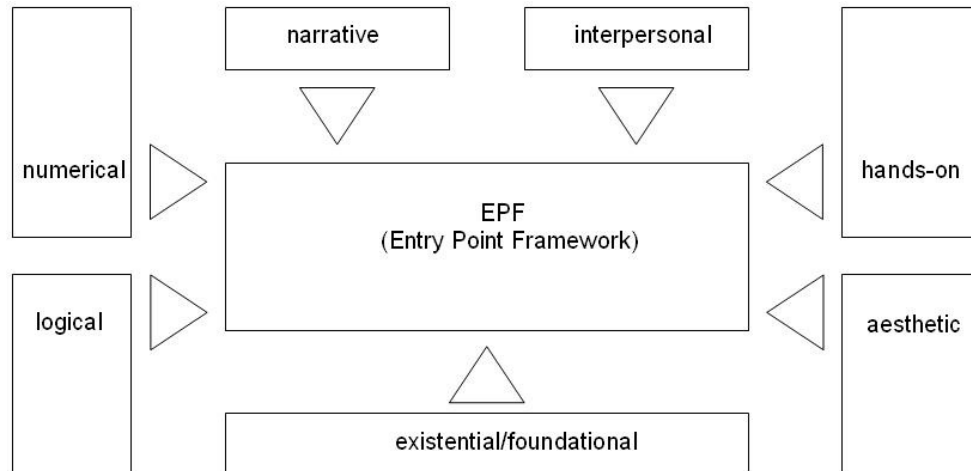
The 'entry point framework' accommodates "individual differences" by providing multiple ways to introduce a topic or concept. An engaging point of entry piques the interest of students and invites them into the learning experience to delve more deeply into the subject matter (Gardner, 1999b). While certain entry points activate particular intelligences, a one-to-one correspondence does not exist between entry points and intelligences. The 'entry point framework' offers seven points of entry into a topic (Figure 3).

### **Narrative**

Introducing topic through "story-telling". Narrative entry point (Gardner, 1999b) is a way to introduce a topic that engages students in learning through relating stories. "Linguistic", "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" intelligences are activated through "verbal storytelling" with additional intelligences activated through "symbolic narrative forms" including "movies" and "mime".

### **Numerical**

Engaging learners through computation. Numerical entry point is a way to introduce a topic that offers students who like to deal with "numbers and numerical relations" the opportunity to learn through measurement, counting, listing and determining statistical attributes of the topic being studied (Gardner, 1999b).



**Figure 3.** Entry point framework.

### **Logical**

Deducing cause and effect to learn “new concepts”. Logical entry point is a way to introduce a topic that allows learners to deduce the cause and effect of certain occurrences and “apply deductive reasoning” to understand the “relationships among various factors” involved in the study of a particular topic (Gardner, 1999b).

### **Existential/foundational**

“Asking fundamental questions” to introduce topic. Existential/foundational entry point is a way to introduce a topic that allows individuals to approach a topic through “addressing fundamental questions”, such as “meaning of life”. Philosophical issues invite certain learners to engage on a deep level which piques and holds their interest in studying a “particular topic” (Gardner, 1999b).

### **Aesthetic**

Engaging “the senses through artwork”. Aesthetic entry point is a way to introduce a topic that engages the senses through “works of art” that relate to the subject matter being studied. Also, concepts and examples have their own aesthetic properties, which can be examined and discussed in conjunction with the topic at hand (Gardner, 1999b).

### **Hands-on**

Physical manipulation to engage learners in experience. Hands-on entry point is a way to introduce a topic that

engages learners in “constructing experiments” with physical materials or through computer simulations. Other hands-on approaches invite learners to learn by building or manipulating a “physical manifestation” of some aspect of the topic they are studying (Gardner, 1999b).

### **Interpersonal**

“Cooperative learning” to introduce “new ideas”. Interpersonal entry point is a way to introduce a topic that engages learners “with each other” so that they can interact, cooperate, work together, or alternately debate and argue with each other. Students “learn from each other through group projects” in which each student contributes to the overall effort (Gardner, 1999b). Multiple representations offer “a family of representations” rather than a single representation that is considered to be the best. This approach allows students to choose elements from known reference areas to represent and model new subject matter. Multiple Representations is an educational methodology that is used to convey the definitive aspects of an idea or topic, by modelling them through “abstract or natural representation systems” (Gardner, 1999b). The form of the representation may be closely tied to the physical subject, such as a “photographic record, map, or chart”, or may provide a “formal model”. Multiple representations allow students to choose elements from “known reference areas” to represent and model the new topic. The use of multiple representations allows students to understand on a deeper level through developing models of the new subject matter (Figure 4). Based on these general information, it can be suggested that the main objective of contemporary education system is to provide acquisition of information by observing, applying,

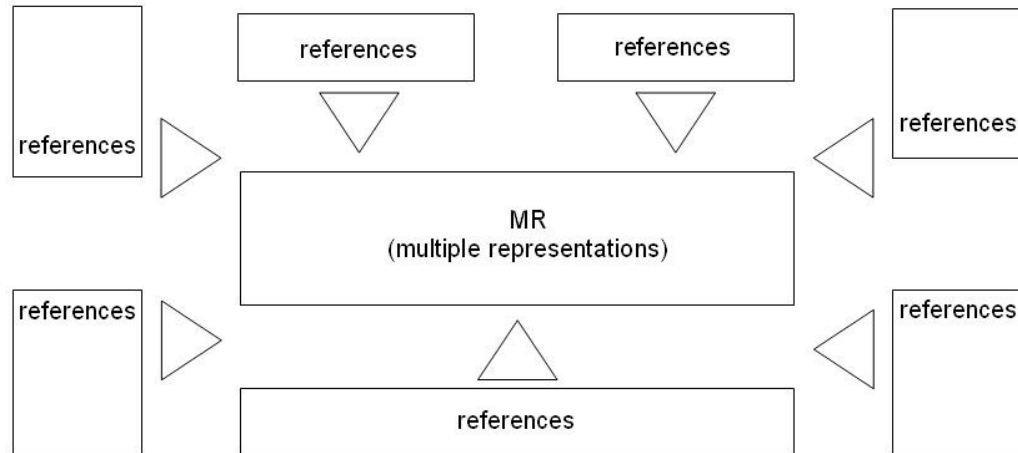


Figure 4. Multiple representations.

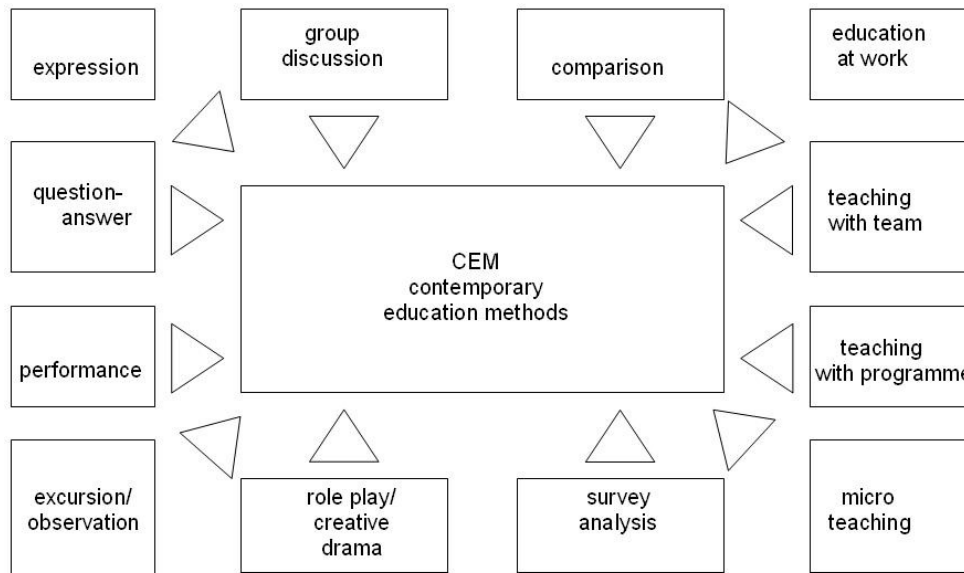


Figure 5. Contemporary education methods (Kucukahmet, 2000).

associating with life, to improve the skills of the learner for accessing to new information, for adaptation to new situations and to improve their creativity. In this system, to attain such an objective, it is underlined that the student should be an active participator rather than a passive receptor. Especially at first year design education, the objective is to support and improve creativity, judgment ability, team spirit, communication and manual skills, graphic thinking, three-dimensional perception and designing activities with the theoretical information.

Contemporary education system suggests the methods for motivating students using various education methods in teaching, learning and expressing stages (Figure 5). In

this context, it is believed that the Interior Architecture Education and the process of Interior Design Studio-I should be parallel to the contemporary educational methodologies. Based on the given information, within the scope of Interior Design Studio-I, it is tried to apply addressing fundamental topics such as meaning of life, meaning of design, analyzing semiotic, numerical and artistic relationships, story telling by intrapersonal/interpersonal ways, constructing new experiments and experiences within the context of individual differences by using questions and answers, simulations, presentations, group discussions, teaching with a team, programmed teaching, role play and creative drama.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Teaching, learning and expressing at interior design studio-I

Within the scope of the first semester at Karadeniz Technical University, Interior Design Studio-I, the aim is to organize each weekly program in a way to supplement each other as successive courses. This means that each weekly program should serve as a phase which constitutes wholeness with the previous and next processes. As a result of this, a single product; an interior design project comes into being but in this process, it is tried to allow the students to acquire some certain concepts which are the basis of the profession using participatory educational techniques. In addition to being informed, the students are expected to improve their creativity and skills of conveying their designs using sensory tools such as oral, verbal, visual and tactile ways. In this context, at Interior Design Studio-I course the process does not start by directly assigning a project subject. Instead of this, a structure is organized with different phases, which mentally prepares the students to design process. The phases, which are carried out in a systematic way with the determined aim, focus on “dreams”, “imagination”, “plays”, “expressions”, “presentations”, “tasks” and “applications”. The problems are organised individually and as group actions. In addition, the teachers hold seminars on basic concepts such as “design”, “creativity”, “abstraction”, “surface”, “space” and “sketches”, which should be learned systematically throughout the first semester design education.

From this part of the article, the results of the educational process of Interior Design Studio-I course may be seen as phases with phase themes, topics, problems, aims, contents, methods and products.

## RESULTS

### The process

#### *Phase I*

Theme: “A good beginning is half a succession”, Chinese proverb.

Topic: Introduction.

Problem: Introduce yourself and explain your expectations and hesitations about the physical and educational environment.

Objective: To make an interactive start and to motivate students for the education process they will experience.

Method: Oral and written expressions.

Result: The first discussion platform.

In the first course at university, as the first year students are at the beginning of the process of getting familiar with a new city, school, profession, friends and lecturers, they attend the class with many questions and hesitations. In such an environment, the students need to be motivated for expressing themselves to communicate and adapt to the environment. Bearing this in mind, in the first lesson,

the teachers first introduce themselves and then each student is asked to tell about their impressions about their classmates sitting next to them in ten seconds. As a result of this, the students have their first dialogs with their friends and they overcome their timidity. Later, two papers are given to the students and the students are asked to list their expectations in the first paper and their hesitations or fears in the second paper, about their new environments and new profession. The students are not asked to write their names on the papers. Thus, the students are allowed to write all their ideas with confidence. After that, these papers are collected, grouped, and hanged on the wall.

Finally, according to the information collected from the students, there obtained a platform to discuss every expectations and hesitations with all students and teachers.

#### *Phase II*

Theme: Everyone has a story, a tale.

Topic: Cogitation.

Problem: Explain the “fairy tale concept” with lines and writings.

Objective: To make students think and express the abstract concepts without knowing anything; to analyse and understand the relationship between thinking, understanding and expressing.

Method: Linear and written expressions.

Result: Two dimensional searches and approaches.

The aim of Phase II, which is applied individually without explaining anything about design education is to make each student to think about what the fairy tale concept means for them and to journey through their inner (Figure 9).

#### *Phase III*

Theme: “To know something is possible by understanding it”, Socrates.

Topic: Selection.

Problem: Read and tell a classic fairy tale which contains space descriptions.

Objective: To analyse and form the relationship between reading, understanding and expressing.

Method: Oral expressions.

Result: Oral presentations that supports self confidence.

The aim of Phase III is to make each student to read a classical fairy tale and to analyse its theme, characters and spaces. In the process of telling the fairy tale, the students are expected to make use of oral expressions (Figure 10).

#### *Phase IV*

Theme: "To see is the start of renewal", H. Matisse.

Topic: Creativity.

Problem: Tell the theme (main message) of the fairy tale you chose by drawings.

Objective: To analyse a written form (fiction) by graphic thinking.

Method: Two dimensional expressions.

Result: Two dimensional searches and approaches.

The aim of Phase IV is to make students to express the theme by re-thinking through the method of drawing, without having any information about the concepts of creativity or abstracting. In other words, the aim is to test their graphic thinking abilities. In the following phases of the process, a seminar is held by teachers on "creativity" and the students are introduced design education. Believing that there is confusion among students about skill and creativity, the seminar puts forward the fact that creativity can be improved by supporting it with education. To eliminate the students' apprehensions about their abilities, they are encouraged to improve themselves by anew prospect (Figure 11).

#### *Phase V*

Theme: "Thinking is the self-dialogue of the soul", T. Bernard.

Topic: Design.

Problem: Explain the theme of the fairy tale you chose, using inorganic materials such as card board, colourful cartoons, strings, metal wires, sticks... etc.

Objective: To understand and form the relationship between two and three dimensional expressions.

Method: Three dimensional expressions.

Result: Three dimensional searches and approaches.

At Phase V, the aim is to pass from two-dimensional thinking and expression to three-dimensional dramatization and design techniques by using different materials (Figure 12). In the following phases of the process, a seminar is held by teachers on "design". The concept of design, which is among the most basic concepts, is explained with design approaches and techniques.

#### *Phase VI*

Theme: "Coming together is a beginning, standing together is progress and working together is success", H. Ford.

Topic: Analyze and synthesize.

Problem: Make groups of four. Combine four different fairy tales and create a new fairy tale.

Objective: To analyze and synthesize individually and as a group.

Method: Oral and written expressions as group action.

Result: Oral and written searches and approaches.

At Phase VI, the students are asked to analyze the fairy tales chosen in groups of four people, to make a synthesis and to create a new fairy tale, composed of the names, themes, spaces and characters of all four fairy tales. This study has two objectives. The first objective is to make a group action and to improve the ability of communication skills, social interaction and team spirit. The second objective is to compose different things with experiencing a new way to reform a whole by using creativity.

#### *Phase VII*

Theme: "The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire", F. Foch.

Topic: Abstraction.

Problem: Make a presentation of the new fairy tale created by the group.

Objective: To abstract with different techniques.

Method: Free expressions as group action.

Result: Abstract searches and approaches.

At Phase VII, which is carried out as group presentation, the students are asked to use all presentation techniques such as oral, verbal presentations, drawings, graphics, collages and models. In this presentation, in addition to the pleasure and challenges of group study, the objective is to discuss all aspects of the new fairy tales created by the groups, whether they make a whole or whether they have missing parts and to provide the class to think on the new subject. In the following lesson, the concept of “abstraction” is explained by teachers. Producing easily-remembered, striking and creative products in the field of design is parallel to the ability of abstract thinking. Depending on this idea, it is tried to convey the importance of abstraction and abstracting methods in solving design problems.

### *Phase VIII*

Theme: Walking hand in hand, one side of me is fairy tale; one side of me is real.

Topic: Surface and Space.

Problem: Discuss the characters that the new fairy tale implies, with your group.

Determine the properties of the main character such as physical appearance, hobbies (interests), phobias (fears), habits and other striking behavioural properties in details and explain one day of the character using visual tools such as photographs, posters and films.

Objective: To feel spaces by surfaces.

Method: Two dimensional expressions as group action.

Result: Visual/cinematic searches and approaches, short films.

At Phase VIII, the main character will be in different spaces in a day and as a result of this, it is expected that certain space descriptions will be made using the properties of the character. The student is made to think and interpret the concept of “space” which is the basic element of interior design discipline. In the following lesson, a seminar about “surface” and “space” are given to the students. The purposes of these seminars are to explain general information about the surface around us, the spaces that the surfaces define and to make the students notice the various space formations and space types.

### *Phase IX*

Theme: “Hearing means forgetting, seeing means

forgetting, applying means understanding”, Chinese proverb.

Topic: Body language.

Problem: Make a space description using your body language.

Objective: To express spaces with bodies.

Method: Role play and creative drama techniques.

Result: Bodily expressions.

At Phase IX, the students are allowed to use some accessories, mainly based on role play and creative drama techniques, without using any verbal presentations and asked to give the impression of different space types in the minds of the audience. The aim is to make students to make space connotations using their imaginations and creativity by using their bodies and thus to make them mentally interpret and adopt the concept of space and space types (Figure 13).

### *Phase X*

Theme: “The biggest power a person holds is the power to choose”, M. Kone.

Topic: Construction.

Problem: Chose the dominant space in your new fairy tale and make 1/1, 1/2 or 1/5 scaled models of this space with your group.

Objective: To gain construction knowledge.

Method: Three dimensional expressions as group action.

Result: Constructions of abstract and concrete spaces.

At Phase X, the aim is to make the students to reach to a new synthesis by composing the dominant space in the fairy tale with their information about the concept of space. In addition, the objective of this study is to improve the construction creating skills by selecting and composing the materials by co-decision (Figure 14).

### *Phase XI*

Theme: “Music is the architecture of sounds”, Madem de Stael.

Topic: Rhythm.

**Problem:** Imagine the music of the fairy tale spaces you created. Perform your original music without using any known musical instruments.

**Objective:** To feel the relationship between architecture and music.

**Method:** Musical expressions as group action.

**Result:** Musical searches and approaches, short musical compositions.

The sense of rhythm exists with the music and addresses to the humans' inner world. Rhythmic sounds may give certain feelings such as pessimism, joy, fear and love. Similarly, the sense of rhythm is reflected in architecture with the systematically organized styles, forms, surfaces, spaces, materials and colours. The aim of this study is to improve the sense of rhythm by conveying the main theme of the fairy tale spaces with the music they melodised (Figure 15).

### *Phase XII*

**Theme:** "When thinks alone, a person challenges everyone", La Fontaine.

**Topic:** Sketches.

**Problem:** Make a visual impression sketch based on your near surrounding.

**Objective:** To make sketches.

**Method:** Two dimensional expressions.

**Result:** Different types and characters of sketches.

At this phase, the teachers give a seminar about "sketches". By emphasizing the importance of sketches in design studies, which can be defined as a graphical thinking method and provides rapid thinking in design process, the students are asked to observe their near surroundings and make visual impression sketches which reflect this environment.

### *Final phase*

**Theme:** I am where small feet take large steps...

**Topic:** Interior Design Project-I Subject.

**Problem:** Design a playroom for a child.

**Objective:** To make use of different knowledge gained all

through the semester.

**Method:** Architectural presentation techniques (orthographic drawings, perspectives, modellings).

**Result:** Different alternatives of playrooms.

Within the scope of Interior Design Project-I course, the subject of Interior Design Project-I aims to re-interpret the concept of "fairy tale" within the context of an interior space design. In this context, the subject of Interior Design Project-I is determined as "a playroom" for a child. The playroom will be shaped according to the original scenarios and creative ideas of the designer by considering inner-outer space relationship. The final phase takes almost four weeks and it includes two dimensional and three dimensional expressions of design according to the obtained information and requirements. The objective of this study is to re-consider all topics previously given during the semester, and to finalize the semester within the context of an interior space design (Figure 16).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The method, which is held in Interior Design Project-I Course at Karadeniz Technical University, the objective is to give the design basic concepts that should be adopted within the Interior Design discipline. In this aim, XIII phases are constituted depending on the duration of the first semester. The content of each phase includes themes, topics, problems, objectives, methods and results in each week (Figure 6). Themes, topics, problems, objectives, methods and results, which are the contents of the phases, are related to the teaching, learning and expressing relationship process (Figure 7). The phases are organised to serve the design basic concepts and to maintain the continuity throughout the semester. So, the process of Interior Design Project-I Course is structured as an association to represent wholeness from the beginning till the end in the bases of teaching, learning and expressing relationship (Figure 8). Throughout the process, it is observed that the successive application of the concepts and explanation of them in continuity with creative and enjoyable studies/workshops are advantageous for the participation of the students to the course. Moreover, it is observed that, the completion of the process, which continues successively with a final study, motivates students better. The students not only solve the problems they are assigned in every phase, but are aware of the objectives, benefits and results of the whole studies. The studies continue with individual and group studies. As a result of this, students are made to understand the importance of individual and group studies and to make assessments about the reactions of each other about communication



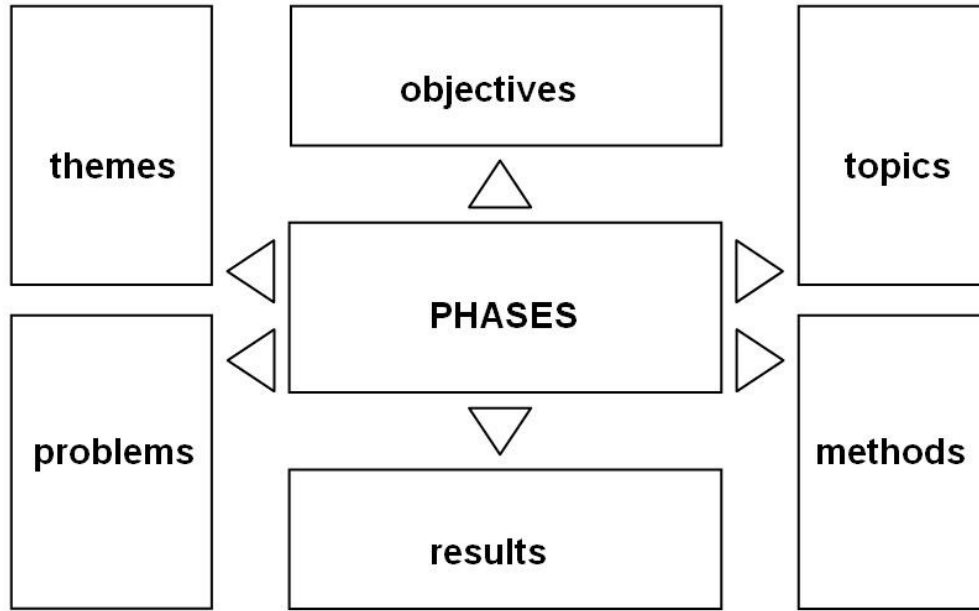


Figure 6. Content of the phases.

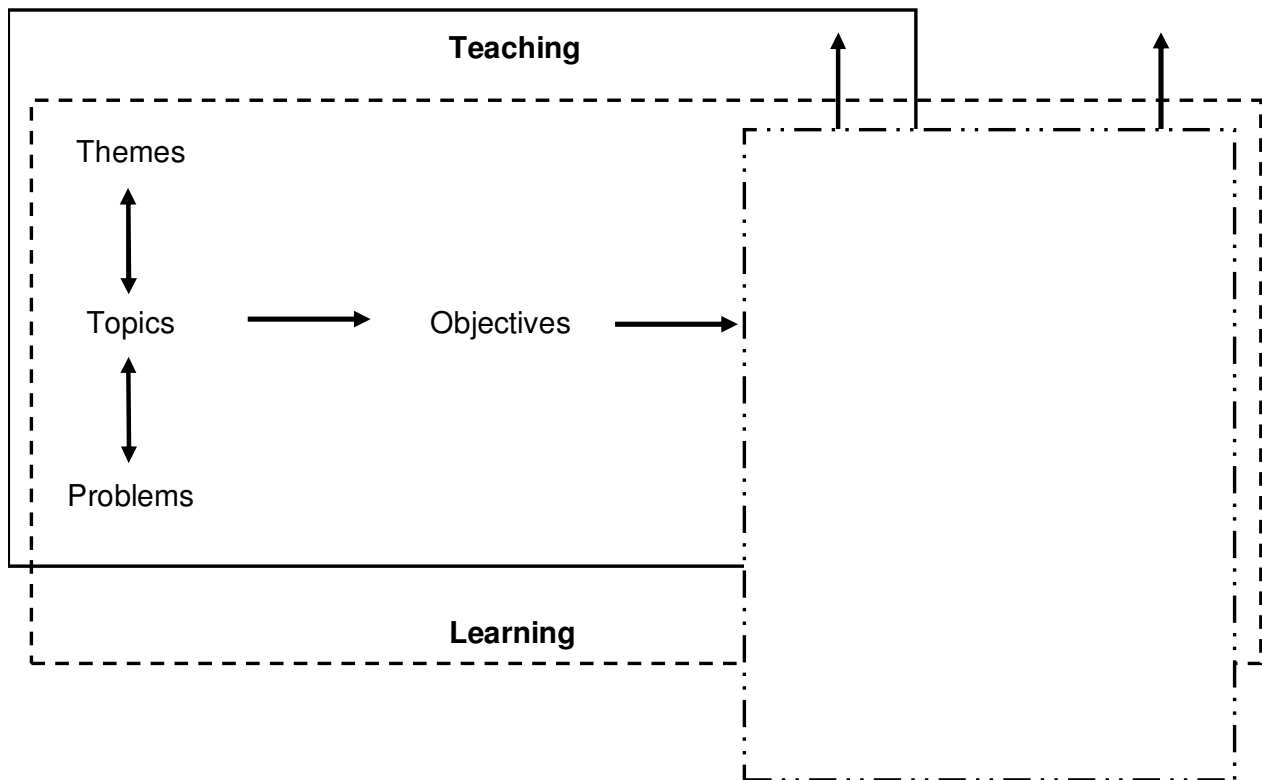
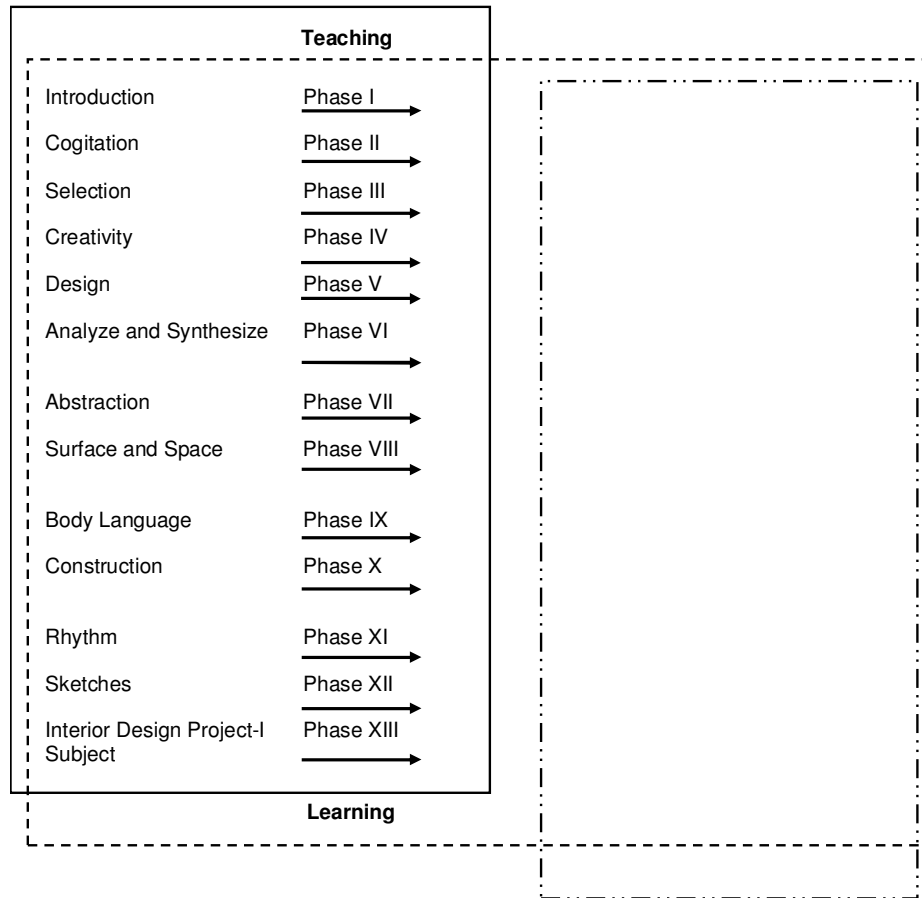


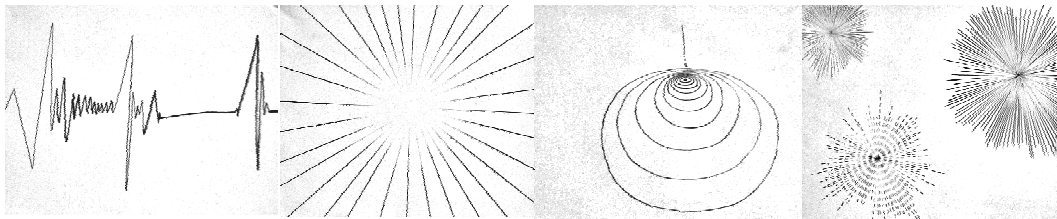
Figure 7. Teaching-learning-expressing relationship of phase analysis.

and role sharing. Depending on the idea of “one of the most important ways to obtain the motivation is awarding”

(Ozbay, 2001), competitions are organized during the semester. In these competitions, each group is asked to



**Figure 8.** Teaching-learning-expressing relationship of determined phases.



**Figure 9.** Some drawings of the “fairy tale” concept.



**Figure 10.** Some classic fairy tales.

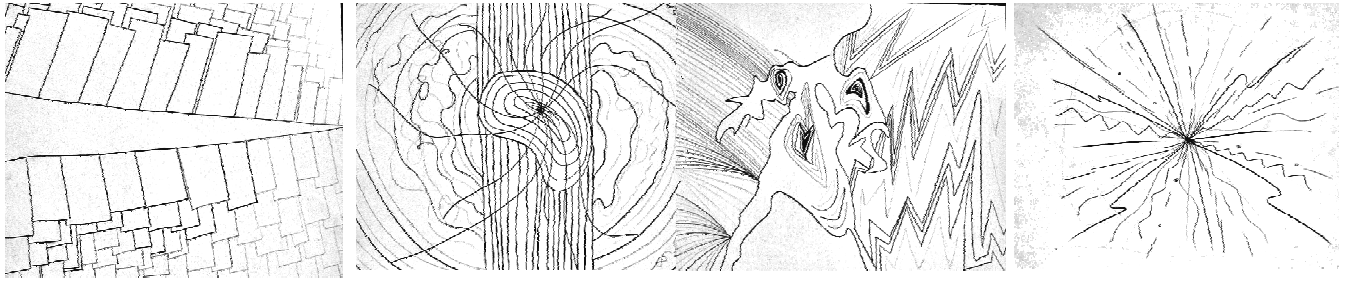


Figure 11. Some drawings of the “themes” of the fairy tales.



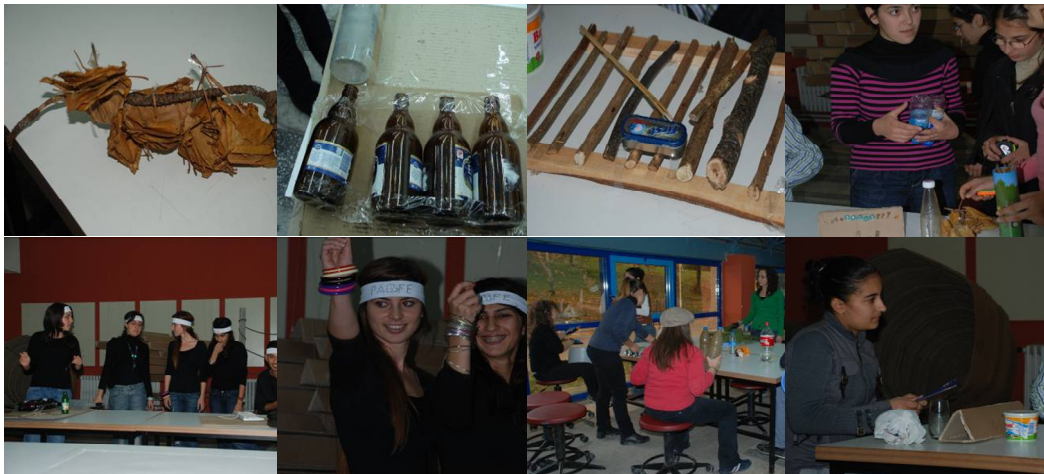
Figure 12. Some three-dimensional dramatizations of the fairy tales.



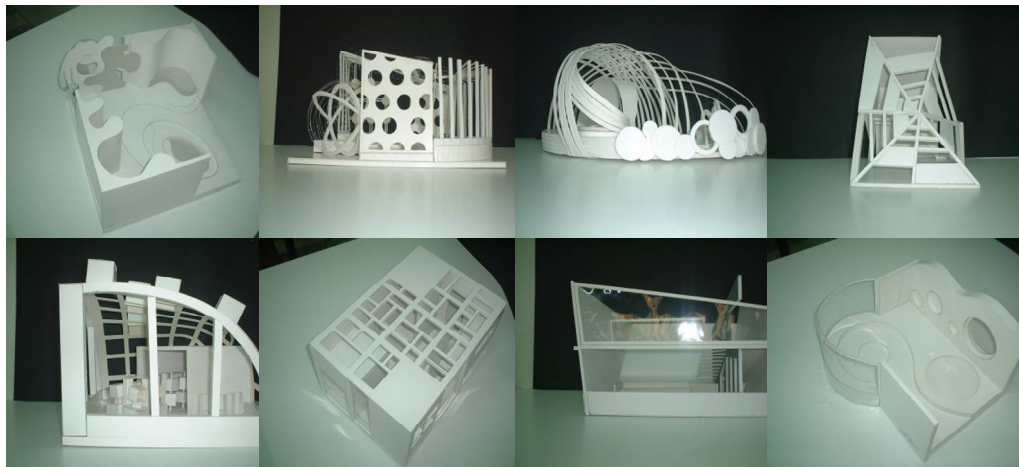
Figure 13. Some expressions of space using body language.



**Figure 14.** Some 1/1, 1/2, 1/5, 1/10, 1/20 scaled models of fairy tale spaces.



**Figure 15.** Some instruments and the musical performances of the fairy tale spaces.



**Figure 16.** Some models of the playrooms.



**Figure 17.** Voting and awarding ceremony.

present their studies to the class and the students are asked to assess the “works” and vote. This gives the opportunity of evaluating and criticizing the studies of other students and thus they have the opportunity of benefiting also from other studies. In addition, the competitions motivate students better and make their studies more entertaining (Figure 17).

This method which is applied in the first semester continued in the second semester with different concepts and subjects such as “design techniques and approaches”, “conceptual design”, “emblems/logos”, “colour” and “presentation techniques”. In this method, which is applied in the first semester of Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Interior Architecture, all of the studies are carried out within “fairy tale” organization, however, it is thought that this organization may change in different years considering main concepts. Different studies with different organizations can be carried out keeping the phase structure.

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