Mispronouncing haute couture: A teacher's journey through the literacies of fashion

Abstract
ABSTRACT Popular media often characterizes individuals in the world of fashion design as shallow, frivolous, and lacking intellect. Rather, a fashion designer's job encapsulates knowing the technical aspects of designing, as well as the literacies specific to the discipline. In spite of this reality, fashion instruction emphasizes demonstrations at the expense of attention to fashion literacy. Although research in the areas of multiple and disciplinary literacy are prevalent in the current literature, little research on fashion literacy is available. This autoethnography chronicles a fashion educator's journey towards reconceptualizing and integrating literacy instruction and critical thinking into her instruction. The researcher engages in interactive interviews with her fashion students to record how they experienced a literacy rich curriculum. The following research questions were examined: 1. In what ways has my personal development in the world of fashion shaped my identity and practice as a fashion instructor? 2. In what ways has my personal development in the area of literacy shaped my identity and practice as a fashion instructor? 3. In what ways has my development in these two disparate fields informed my teaching in the collegiate fashion classroom? Personal narratives, a reflexive journal, and instructional and personal artifacts were collected as archival data. In addition, semi-structured and informal interviews were conducted with former students. Data was analyzed by using a constant comparative method to construct narratives and writing through inquiry in order to identify emerging themes. The findings indicated that negative perceptions of fashion and fashion students prompted the author to include literacy-rich curriculum. However, the researcher discovered that, in addition to their content areas, fashion students were well-versed in multiple disciplines. Students mentioned they drew inspiration for their designer collections from literacy texts and multi-literacy assignments. Fashion students further mentioned the literacy assignments that were most instructive were those that applied real world knowledge such as researching fabrics and textiles, learning the fashion terminology, and writing paraphrased instructions for their construction notebooks. Students identified the fashion instructor as a literate fashion professional who also helped them to become literate professionals.

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1868: Le Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture was first established as the safeguard of high-fashion. Designers were required to earn the right to label themselves a couture house according to certain specifications. These were later outlined in 1945. 1908: The phrase “haute couture” was used for the first time. 1921: The French press created PAIS (L'Association de Protection des Industries Artistiques Saisonnieres), in a bid to protect individual haute couture designs from piracy. Designs were photographed on a mannequin, front, back and side, and registered as evidence. A dre