

Interdisciplinarity and aesthetic experience in the ecosystem of a fashion classroom

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Abstract

By understanding the classroom as a complex ecosystem and the importance of this look for the research in fashion teaching, the text reports preliminary investigation, data collection and analysis for a dissertation project in the line of Visual Arts Teaching at PPGAV/UDESC, which has as its object of study a class of 4th phase of the Bachelor of Fashion at the State University of Santa Catarina. With a focus on understanding the ecosystem of a Fashion course classroom in Brazil, which has curricular guidelines for Arts and Design, it uses Edgar Morin (2005), Magda Pischetola and Lyana Thégida de Miranda (2022) as theoretical foundations. From the mapping of the data, it reflects on the ecosystem conjunctures of the classroom, composed of issues such as phenomena between subjects and contexts, and by interdisciplinarity, providing the opening of the discussion about the sensitive experience and the dialogical look between teachers and students for the realization of fashion.

Keywords

Autonomy; intricacy; ecosystem; sensitive experience; interdisciplinarity; classroom.

1. Introduction

This article presents the reflections originated in the data collection and in those derived from the meta-analysis of a case study, with a view to the master's thesis, started in the observation of a 4th phase class, second semester of 2023, bachelor's degree course in Fashion at the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC), in Florianópolis/SC – Brazil.

The starting point of the research project is to understand the systemic, dynamic and complex network that a classroom can be, in an undergraduate course that takes advantage of the Curricular Guidelines of Visual Arts and the Curricular Guidelines of Design – since it does not have its own curricular guideline, and what are the imbrications of artistic designs in teaching-learning, in an interdisciplinary setting of higher education.

As a social organization, the classroom experiences the phenomena that imprint identity on the exercise of its pedagogical nature in relationships. The research started from the observation of the demands arising from a problem-based question, initially undertaken in the discipline of History of Contemporary Fashion, and which subsidized works in two other disciplines, Project Methodology and Image Production – occurred simultaneously, as an interdisciplinary requirement proposed by the teachers.

The article is divided into three stages: in the first, a brief explanation of the principles of complexity for the classroom ecosystem; in the second, the presentation of the case study originated in interdisciplinarity, exploration and methods; and in the third, the presentation of the research table and infographic, all theoretically grounded in the course of the text, in addition to the final considerations, where more conclusions are presented.

2. The systemic network where the teacher and the student are inserted

To evolve from the awareness of a systemic network of education, at this point in the research presented, is to seek to understand the ecology of a classroom, to situate the subjects and the environment, as well as the interactions between the subjects and the environment. Situate the whole that is in the part, that is in the whole, to think about how the university's school environment is composed as a social system, open and organized, to then understand how this network is involved in the teaching of the creative, institutionalized and relational process, in the teaching of Fashion.

The adoption of complex thinking in education accompanies the crisis of rationalist thinking, and is placed as a subsidy for overcoming the simplifying paradigm, which dominated Western societies, institutions, thought and science in the twentieth century. Where experience, body and affections become important again, it is an attempt to unite subjects, context and thought for a systemic understanding of reality.

To mark this network and cherish the data, the macroconceptual principles of Edgar Morin's Complex Paradigm were adopted. The *dialogical principle*, to understand in the contradictions of the dualities that are part of the whole, its order and disorder that juxtapose and compose the unity; the *principle of organizational recursion* as a process in which products and effects are at the same time cause and producers of what produces them, so that we are at the same time products and producers; and the *hologrammatic principle*, in the sense that the whole is in the part, where each cell, as in the biological cells of the organism, contains the totality of the genetic information of that organism (Morin, 2015, p. 72-75, our translation).

How to investigate a Fashion classroom, which developed an interdisciplinary work originated in a question-problem about an artistic object? From the ecological and systemic awareness that recognizes the fundamental interdependence between all phenomena, and not the separation between subject, object, and environments of observation (Pischetola and Miranda, 2021, p. 85).

2.1. Exploratory research of a classroom

In this study, to inquire how interdisciplinarity is situated in the teaching practice and its implications in the classroom formed under the principles of Arts and Design, we look at the institutional structures (the Pedagogical Proposal of the Course and the structuring of the Curriculum), and at the teachers and their relationships (in the teaching plans and in the interviews granted via the WhatsApp application after the end of the semester). One of the objectives for the teaching practice is the students, so they were also part of the research through a questionnaire applied on Google Forms, in addition to the interdisciplinary work done by them. Most of the interactions and observations took place at the university, in the classroom, but also outside the university environment, from July to December 2023.

The field exploration began with the observation of the History of Contemporary Fashion class, which took place in July-December 2023. In the teaching plan, information about the learning methodologies was detailed, and in the case in question, the problem question, which grounded the general theme of the interdisciplinary proposal from the artistic appreciation of sculptures at Ilse Teske Park, in Brusque/SC, which was visited by the students on a trip subsidized by the University. The question was the following: "how does a work of art express and invite us to think about the author's regional culture in its aesthetic, artistic and historical dimension, as well as how it relates to the economy and fashion culture of the region of origin?" (Sant'Anna, 2016, p. 2, our translation).

Attention to documents is part of the search for historical knowledge, typical of the social sciences, where provisionality, dynamism and specificity are essential characteristics. It means that human societies and their social formations "live in the present, marked by the past and projected into the future" (Minayo, 2002, p. 13). The documentary study of this research covers the teaching plans of the disciplines of

History of Contemporary Fashion, Project Methodology and Image Production, the Curriculum and the Pedagogical Proposal of the Course (PPC).

The first moments of the reading unfold and understand some curricular dynamics of the Course, such as its nature eminently focused on the design and the views on creativity to train fashion professionals through aesthetic and artistic experience. Thus, the review of the initial data required a humanistic view: "the idea that knowledge of social reality requires the activities of interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon and values the social actors who give meaning to social phenomena in a varied way" (Teixeira, 2003, p. 184, our translation).

To understand this rich classroom scenario of a bachelor's degree in Fashion, it was necessary to be able to deal with different areas of knowledge: initially to understand the experience of the arts that was given by the appreciation of the artistic object (a sculpture was chosen by each team of students), appreciation that was necessary in the three disciplines where they were worked; the research on the artistic object, the artist and the sociological aspects of the artist's region of origin, including the implications of fashion, which required reflections and analyses by the students in the original discipline (History of Contemporary Fashion) and which would subsidize the fashion collection project (in Project Methodology) with several panels, sketches, practical and technical tests, and the production of a conceptual editorial (in Image Production), which consisted of the planning of a photographic editorial with agency models, choice, and planning of looks, casting management, photographer, and location.

2.2. Visual exploration from mind maps and tables

In January 2024, already more aware of who/what my data were, and with more readings done, I started organizing them in a large table called meta-analysis of primary data – 2024.1: systematic review, to integrate data, results, observations, and theory. This table has broken down the elements from the following perspective: Origin of the data, Totality of the data, Treatment, Possible theoretical interpretations, Connections with other data and Observations. It totaled 5 pages. The visual and systematic aid of the table facilitated the global understanding and allowed to be selected, from this broader view, what really stood out according to the theoretical approach. However, because it is a vertically chained table (data arranged one above the other), I missed a more horizontal, open and linear distribution, in a timeline, of the data that emerged from the initial moment. Another, leaner flowchart was developed in February 2024. It starts with the "Formulation of the problem part 1", and lays out the path from the data to the final result, which are the "Interdisciplinary works" of the students carried out within the scope of the disciplines.

For 4 months, from July to December, I followed 1 class of the History of Contemporary Fashion discipline per week, in view of the teaching internship. During this time, I was introduced by the professor of the discipline, also my master's advisor and internship supervisor, to the interdisciplinary project that was underway in the 4th

phase. Given the interdisciplinary, projectual and artistic nature of the problem question operated in the course, I chose to revise my research project, towards the case study presented. For this I got in touch with the other teachers of the disciplines involved, and was able to follow some classes and participate in the processes as well. Juarez da Silva Thiesen postulates that, regardless of the definition that each author assumes in his literature, "interdisciplinarity is always situated in the field where the possibility of overcoming the fragmentation of the sciences and the knowledge produced by them is considered" (Thiesen, 2008, 547).

An exercise of interpretation on the documentary data was to make use of comparative tables. Here I bring the example of one of the tables originated in the data review, where I relate the number of hours of classes that addressed interdisciplinarity and the percentage of the final grade related to interdisciplinary works, as a thought that gives rise to a quantifiable view and that allows the interpretation and qualitative and multidimensional approach of the phenomenon. "It is necessary to find the path of a multidimensional thinking that is logical, integrates and develops formalization and quantification, but is not restricted to that. Anthropolocial reality is multidimensional" (Morin, 2005, p. 189). From mathematical logic, there is a validation of the proposed interdisciplinary work, which appears in how much time within the disciplines is allocated to the interdisciplinary exercise, or in how much grade this exercise gives to the students. This grade remains disciplinary, despite the fact that the work is multidisciplinary and requires multidisciplinary practices from students, and remains under the discretion of professors, the only ones in the semester who showed interest in the practice of working together.

	Discipline 1 4 credits – 72h/ classroom	Discipline 2 3 credits – 54h/ classroom	Discipline 3 3 credits – 54h/ classroom
Number of interdisciplinary classes per subject/total	9/18 lessons	9/18 lessons	6/18 lessons
Total % of the final grade in interdisciplinary work	60%	40%	30%

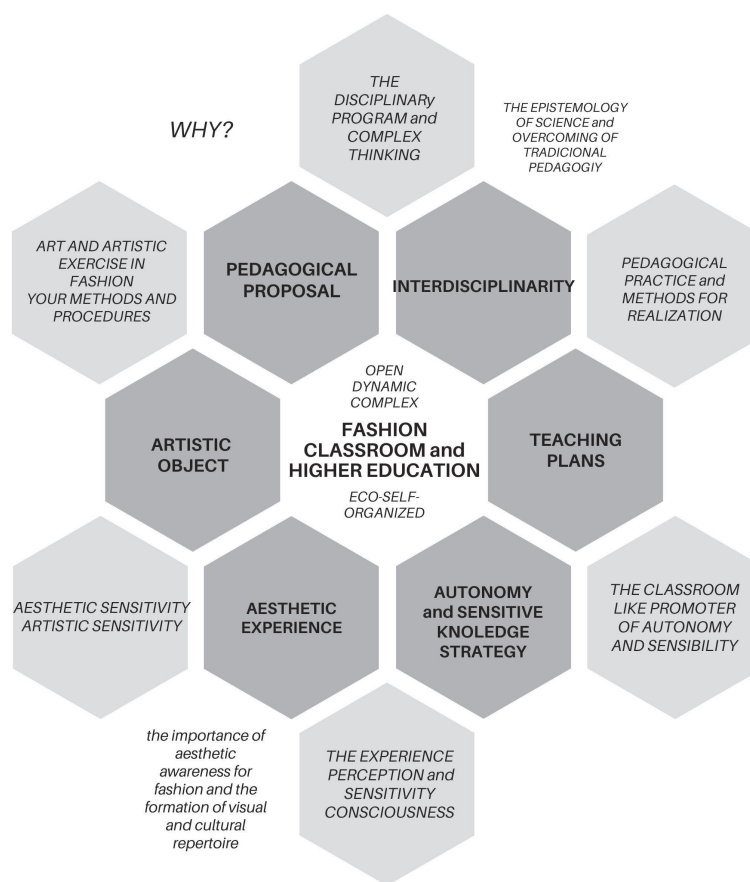
Table 1
Percentage ratio of time and grade allocated to interdisciplinarity by discipline involve (Author table, 2024).

Edgar Morin (2010) emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinarity as a fundamental principle for education. He criticizes the fragmentation of knowledge, where each discipline operates in isolation, which makes it difficult to have an integrated view of contemporary problems and challenges. For him, this compartmentalized approach limits the ability to understand and the depth of knowledge, as it prevents the learner from seeing the connections and interdependencies that exist between different types of knowledge. Interdisciplinarity, in Morin's view, is essential for the development of a "well-rounded head" – a mind that can understand the context, integrating information from different areas and thinking in a complex way. He argues that education should promote the connection between natural, human and social sciences, allowing students to understand phenomena in a broad and contextualized way. This does not mean denying the value of each area of knowledge, but rather

seeking an education that encourages the construction of knowledge that considers the interactions and relationships between disciplines.

To go beyond the initial linear view of what was collected as primary data, and assuming the ecological system as the unifying point of this study, heuristic proposition infographics were designed around a common denominator, the classroom, as can be seen in the Figure 1 below. The initial data was derived in descriptors, not excluding the initial moment, but amplifying it, just as comparative tables do. They allow them to be related and composed in new moments, telling new details about the research.

Figure 1
Ecosystem infographic
of a fashion classroom
(Author image, 2024).



In this infographic (Figure 1), there is the transit between subjects and contexts. The first condition was to face the classroom as an open cell where the cohabitation of subjects existed, deriving the dialogical relationship between teachers, students and contexts, thoughts and objects of study, in order to then understand how to consider the dimensions of the elements that derive from it. The design of the infographic was chosen in order to show the absence of barriers. "There are no more correct looks than others. Everyone involved in the educational process, especially teachers and students, is at the same starting point, that is, to perceive the world" (Sant'Anna et al., 2022, p. 13, our translation). The classroom is a blank sheet of paper and ink is poured on it, whether in the writing of the Teaching Plan or in the line of daily life of

the relationships in which consciousness is elaborated. Those who spill this ink are teachers and students, under the aegis of pedagogical plans and teaching plans. In this sense, Francez and Sant'Anna (2022) ponder:

Thus, when in his teaching practice the teacher focuses only on the didactic content, he is following the program. But both the teacher in his complexity and the dynamics of the classroom in its plurality do not fit into the treatment of these contents, because they start from a closed, deterministic, programmed place. In this sense, it is necessary to instigate the development of sensitive knowledge, those that go beyond the established program, this knowledge that leaks, overflows the aesthetic experience that comes from life in collectivity.

At the end of the mental mapping, autonomy and sensitive knowledge, which did not seem central, emerge as elements that make up the fashion classroom in an important, and perhaps even indispensable, way. By choosing complexity to think about the classroom, we also chose to understand the ethics of autonomy in Paulo Freire (2002). This theoretical-practical exercise understands that "respect for the autonomy and dignity of each one is an ethical imperative and not a favor that we may or may not grant to each other" (Freire, 2002, p. 31). In this sense, in the face of so many possibilities of knowledge, we are incomplete beings, and the classroom is also unfinished and in constant formation. This requires an ethical posture capable of being comprehensive in its movements because they exist, contrary to the programmatic primers, which do not leave room for differences.

Autonomy and sensitive knowledge comprise the dialogical relationships between subjects for fashion: "in the face of someone's experiences and knowledge that are added to others, no perception is disallowed" (Sant'Anna et Al, 2022, p. 13, our translation). Thinking about autonomy can mean thinking about solutions to curricular issues in the postmodern scenario. Thinking about the strategy of sensitive knowledge for fashion can help to think of ways to face disciplinary differences towards transdisciplinary thinking. There is no programmatic or correct path, but a sensitive path that recognizes the autonomy of students promoted by the autonomy of teachers, by thinking of sensitivity as a resource to stimulate awareness about the world.

3. Final notes

During the months of investigation, people (students and teachers) related to each other dialogically in the classroom. Although this is the initial cut of the proposed dissertation research, it is also essentialist, and seeks to understand which aspects of the case study are central and orbital.

At first, as a research in teaching, the need to think about epistemology and to perceive the pedagogical practice that the fashion course engenders, on the part of teachers and students, was amplified. The first orbital location was to recognize the fashion classroom, an area of knowledge embraced by the contemporary and based on postmodern mechanisms that is frontally faced with the difficulties of a

disciplinary and traditional teaching mentality. In the Bachelor of Fashion/UDESC I found a curriculum that embraces the complexity of fashion and stimulates interdisciplinary thinking, presenting concepts to train design and creative professionals, and goes further, also working with sensitive and aesthetic concepts.

In addition to the curricular epistemological alignment, addressed to subsidize the different concepts of arts and design within fashion, there was interest on the part of the teachers in working together (starting from them the initiative of the work involving the 3 disciplines at the beginning of the semester), validating in their disciplines the interdisciplinary work, with grades and class time made available for this. Although they did not work together – each discipline applied interdisciplinary work in a disciplinary way and scored the works in a disciplinary way as well – it cannot be denied that there was a movement towards the multidisciplinary required by fashion, an important initiative for the renewal of thought, both pedagogical and fashion, but it remained incomplete.

In addition, questions arose about the disciplinary and inter/transdisciplinary program. The observed class exercised multiple skills as demands arose, and did not follow an absolute programmatic guide, making the relationship between autonomy and interdisciplinarity prevail here through the strategy of sensitive knowledge. Teachers capable of dealing with crossings, students capable of dealing with crossings, both capable of seeing, absorbing, exercising and going through the multiple issues that arise without losing aesthetics. There is a need for fashion subjects to cultivate the understanding that fashion is crossed and crossed, by major disciplinary nuclei, Arts and Design. In order to arrive at fashion products – whether it is a photo or an outfit – these students were summoned to interdisciplinary practices, conjuring up in these practices varied sources of visual information, cultural repertoire, analytical and reflective skills, etc., in projects that are creative and procedural, not always in an ideal way, but still everyone is called to participate in this epistemological renewal of teaching in practice.

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