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# FASHION AND CLOTHING AS MEANING-MAKING SYSTEMS:
# A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC APPROACH

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**FASHION AND CLOTHING AS MEANING-MAKING SYSTEMS:
A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC APPROACH**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of**

**the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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XU Wenwen

# ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems, from the standpoint of social semiotics. Working with its frameworks, the study defines fashion and clothing systems along the semiotic dimensions of architecture, discusses fashion and clothing within multisemiotic discourse and models the patterns of three metafunctions. To elucidate the complex phenomenon in question, the study also adopts interdisciplinary approach by incorporating a wide knowledge across sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and other subjects.

The contextual inquiry for theory building derives from contemporary Chinese fashion[1], in considering its current position in the global fashion market and strong influences on the academia and industry. Nine emerging designers from Hong Kong and mainland China are selected as case study research. Under the guidance of grounded theory methodology, data are collected through document review, interview and observation. Theory is formulated after the coding process. Analysis of the data reveals a close relationship between meaning and accompanying social context. Such results accordingly demonstrate the nature of this study as social semiotics and suggest a potential means to construe fashion and clothing in terms of social context.

This study contributes to the literature in three particular ways: 1) Theoretically, this study takes semiotic resources as its starting point and deciphers fashion and clothing in a social dimension. As an initiative to theorize real fashion and clothing, the study

has significance for fashion studies, social semiotics and many other domains. 2) Practically, this study develops theory in a practice environment and examines meaning in light of practitioners' viewpoints, through which to gain in-depth understanding of fashion and clothing as a social phenomenon. The theoretical frameworks arising from design practices facilitate a new method for practitioners and the audience to interpret fashion and clothing and enhance their communicative skills. 3) Methodologically, this study integrates grounded theory methodology with case study research for theory building. In the meanwhile, the study extends into fashion and clothing the systemic functional modeling of the "architecture" of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2007a), which sees the organization of fashion and clothing semiotic systems ranging from global to local dimensions. Additionally, this study draws on a "trinocular perspective" to investigate fashion and clothing, namely, "from above", "from below" and "from roundabout" (Matthiessen, 2007b). The triangulation of methodological principles are evidenced to be necessary, which thus give future research insights into fashion and clothing as a semiotic construction for communication.

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Fashion and Clothing in a Social Context

The significance of fashion and clothing as communication in contemporary society is no longer a fresh topic to be answered in this study. A visit to any intellectual or social life would reveal a rich range of disciplinary explorations in fashion communication, covering across sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics, merely some instances among many. They have been budding everywhere since the past era. The emergence of this vast and varied literature indicates the burgeoning influence of fashion communication on contemporary society. As König (1973) notes, "fashion and clothing is not merely a superficial feature of life but is an important regulator and means of expression within the community of men" (p. 17). In Rouse's (1989) words, this coverage obviously has a broad sphere which encompasses "our culture, our socially learned way of life" (p. 18). From this sense, we can interpret that fashion and clothing has become important and productive ways for us to express ourselves and elaborate our relationships with society.

As a key strategy of communication in society, fashion and clothing has demonstrated quite different characteristics that may distinguish it from other social phenomena. One characteristic insight is acknowledged by Sapir (1931), that is, the chief difficulty with interpreting fashion in "its apparent vagaries" is "the lack of exact knowledge of the unconscious symbolisms attaching to forms, colors, textures, postures and other

expressive elements in a given culture" (p. 42). In a similar vein, a related point is expressed by Davis (1992, p. 5), who considers fashion and clothing being able to speak but forming a constructive dialogue with others is difficult because of its distinguishing features such as "context-dependency", "social variability" and "undercoding". This is also supported by McCracken (1988), who considers no observable rules or grammars of clothing are available in the system for helping it to communicate meaning, like speech and writing language. Evans and Thornton (1991) proceed to explain that fashion, as a field of cultural research, has managed "to barricade itself against systematic analysis; it has put up rather a successful fight against meaning" (p. 48). As evident from the discussions, the description of fashion and clothing without exception is accompanied by these words, for instance ambiguous, elusive and variable. With such great amount of complexity and variables to consider, it seems rather difficult for one to capture and define the elusive phenomenon of fashion and clothing, not to mention its hidden meaning. From these points, we can thus consider that fashion has always existed as a challenge to meaning, where meaning is often understood under the influence of various social contexts. Such kind of nature not only reveals the interdependent relationship among fashion, clothing and society but also introduces direct challenges to the academia and industry due to its interdisciplinary nature. Although fashion and clothing can be viewed as an interpreted phenomenon, for the moment no comprehensive theory of fashion and clothing has been recognized to answer specifically the questions in terms of how they make meaning within a social context. Instead, concepts and propositions

regarding fashion and clothing in this aspect have been investigated mainly in the form of parts and fragments or from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. For this reason, further efforts might be necessary to generate useful theoretical strategies for interpreting fashion and clothing and to solve the apparent contradiction across disciplines in the realm.

Based on these inspiring situations, this study sets to offer an interdisciplinary approach for the theorization of meanings within fashion and clothing. Such interdisciplinary perspective encourages us to address the issues of fashion and clothing through a new approach and to understand them by means of knowledge from different disciplines. It appears that this vibrant exchange across disciplinary boundaries would offer a rich and comprehensive description of fashion and clothing and ultimately contribute to a new approach in accessing and interpreting meaning from the fashion phenomenon. This convergence, according to Breward (1998), enables us to "understand cultural phenomena and social relationships that were not accessible through other disciplines, thus enriching our knowledge of an object category (fashion) that has clearly always played a central role in our cultural/social processes" (p. 311).

## 1.2 Research Problems

Thus far, a view of fashion and clothing as communicative artifacts has been followed more than it has been formulated. Partial and fragmentary statements of it are usually

to be found in the writings of many eminent scholars in the field of sociology (e.g. Simmel, 1957; Blumer, 1969), psychology (e.g. Kaiser, 1997; Solomon, 1985), anthropology (e.g. Polhemus & Procter, 1978; Roach & Eicher, 1965), aesthetics (e.g. Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010), semiotics and other related fields (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Hebdige, 1979; McCracken, 1988). Most of these scholars have to address fashion and clothing as a communicative way and discuss their effects under the social frames of reference. However, few of them have presented a systematic statement of fashion and clothing with regard to how it makes meanings, what kind of meanings it can realize, how meanings are transferred through the processes in fashion industry and how meanings serve to reflect social structures as well as investments and circumstances of our time. Barthes (1985) stands out among all scholars in his attempting to reveal the fundamental premises of the approach in fashion system, yet he did little to develop the theoretical frameworks and methodological implications of real clothing for a social study. A notable limitation lies: most studies of fashion communication today are devoted exclusively to Saussure's (1915) semiotic tradition. This theoretical dependence results in a number of problems, one of which is that meanings derived tend to be isolated from the context in which it occurs. It is acknowledged that, however, meanings in fashion and clothing are created by a complex and coherent combination of factors, the ones arising from the society we are living in. Therefore, despite its remarkable deployment among academia across different disciplines, fashion and clothing has been the least developed in realizing systemic and comprehensive explorations,

particularly from the perspective of meaning making. This has consequently opened

up tremendous possibilities for future research which works on the investigation of

meaning in fashion and clothing.


One of the reasons why fashion and clothing have not yet been explored thoroughly

by scholars in the social science disciplines, as Kawamura (2011, p. 1) indicates, is

that we lack "articulated theoretical framework" and "proper methodological

strategies" to study the phenomenon of fashion and clothing. Tseëlon (2001, p. 436)

also expresses a similar attitude towards these two problems, who explains that most

research on fashion neither generated valuable theoretical insights nor provided

effective methods to support the theory. In addition to theoretical and practical

constraints, another thought-provoking issue lies in the discussion of the prospects in

fashion studies. To date, there is still a clear separation between scholars and

practitioners who work in the industry (Kawamura, 2011). Such separation leads

directly to a result that no single theory, no one field of knowledge or no isolated

concept can fully explain the elusive phenomenon of fashion and clothing, and this

has become a heated issue that is frequently discussed among academics in different

disciplines. In order to address this issue, the awareness of the importance in

establishing the linkage between academia and industry needs to be well recognized

in the process of studying fashion and clothing.


With the aforementioned research background, it seems that on the one hand, there is

an urgent need for systematizing and theorizing the knowledge from fashion and clothing to bridge an affinity between academia and industry so that both sides could benefit from the other. On the other hand, there is a clear recognition of constructing theoretical frameworks in addition to methodological strategies for a thorough understanding of the issues that arise within fashion and clothing. Most importantly, in endeavoring to answer the questions of fashion and clothing, we come to recognize that fashion and clothing should be embedded within intellectual movements that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries and incorporate multiple, varied theoretical and methodological foundations. As such, an integrated study, comprised of the evolution of theory, practice and methodology, is necessary in order to study fashion and clothing in a comprehensive, holistic and effective manner.

## 1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

To bridge these research gaps, the aims of this study can be generalized into three perspectives:

- From the theoretical perspective, this study proposes a theoretical framework to model fashion and clothing systematically as meaning-making systems, in particular from the standpoint of social semiotics.

- From the practical perspective, this study discusses the theory in a practice context and explores the meaning potential based on the practitioner's viewpoint to gain an in-depth understanding of fashion and clothing as a social phenomenon.

- From the methodological perspective, this study develops an analytical methodology to investigate fashion and clothing properly for text and context analyses, which enable a group of phenomena to have the meanings they do for members of a society or a culture.

As distinct from traditional approaches, the theoretical principles for this study derive from systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and multimodality. Based on their pioneering works, we strive to define fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems along the semiotic dimensions of architecture, discuss fashion and clothing within a multisemiotic discourse and model the patterns from three metafunctions in fashion and clothing. In line with this social semiotic approach, the study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective by incorporating theories from sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics. The contextual motivation of this study stems from the development of contemporary Chinese fashion. The reason is that since the launch of the Chinese economic reform in 1978, fashion in China has been transformed from stereotypes with traditional Chinese characteristics to new hybridized forms featuring both globalization and localization owing to the process of modernity. Such evolutionary transformations therefore lead to the emergence of abundant meanings and provide rich, comprehensive resources for us to examine their relationships with the social context in which they are generated. Based on these theoretical and contextual backgrounds, the objectives of this study can be summarized as follows:

- To investigate fashion and clothing through multiple contextual approaches

- To define fashion and clothing as semiotic systems in the architecture of language

- To frame fashion and clothing as multisemiotic discourse

- To model patterns of three metafunctions in fashion and clothing

- To explore fashion and clothing in contemporary China

- To situate the findings within the context of contemporary Chinese fashion

Provided with a new introduction to fashion and clothing systems, this study hopes to form a convergence among theoretical, practical and methodological perspectives by offering literature on fashion and clothing studies for which the mystery of fashion and clothing as meaning making could be better accounted; at the same time, to promote cross-disciplinary working in fashion and clothing disciplines and to foster a new, shared understanding for tackling the challenges across disciplines of the future.

**1.4 Research Questions**

This study attempts to address the following questions:

- How do fashion and clothing make meaning?

- What kind of systems do fashion and clothing form in the meaning-making processes?

- What types of meaning can we identify during the processes?

- What semiotic resources are constructed in the processes to allow the realization of different meanings identified in Question 3?

- How do designers manipulate these semiotic resources to communicate their brands?

- What are the social contexts of these designers?

- Are there any relations between their selection of resources and the social contexts where they live?

## 1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This study is organized into seven chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research background that motivates the current study, as well as a brief introduction of the main research focus which includes research aims, objectives and questions.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant theories from different disciplines and introduces a contextual lens with which to decipher the meaning of fashion and clothing. Wherein, the sociological approach to fashion and clothing is initially sketched. Then, the psychological and aesthetic analyses are reviewed. Finally, the studies of semiotics are evaluated. In addition, this chapter explores how these theoretical perspectives structure and strengthen our knowledge in the terrain of fashion and clothing to lay the foundations for understanding basic concepts that arise from fashion phenomenon and illuminating research findings presented throughout the remainder of the study.

Chapter 3 forms the theoretical underpinnings of the entire study, which are based on SFL (Halliday, 1978, Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and its application to multimodal research (O'Toole's, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Iedema, 2001, 2003). After introducing their contributions, this chapter explains how these theories are adopted and developed to investigate the social phenomenon of fashion and clothing as well as compares structuralism and social semiotics in the shaping of fashion and clothing for communication.

Chapter 4 introduces and discusses the core frameworks that underlie this study. To achieve a clear and full interpretation of fashion and clothing, the definitions of key terms under investigation are presented, which is followed by a review of different approaches to fashion and clothing systems. Through comparing and analyzing these definitions and theories, a systemic functional linguistic approach is proposed to theorize fashion and clothing as semiotic systems in the study. Specifically, fashion and clothing can be viewed from a global dimension in terms of the ordered typology of systems, stratification and metafunction, as well as from a local dimension in terms of rank and axis. These two dimensions work together to create linguistic accounts of the architecture in fashion and clothing systems. This chapter further extends the theory and approach to multimodality and explores the role of multimodal discourse in constructing the meaning of fashion and clothing. The implications of using

multimodal research to form a view conducive to fashion and clothing as multisemiotic systems are well recognized in many aspects, including visual and texture semiotic resources and the translation of meaning into the unfolding of social practices.

Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the research methodology utilized in light of its theoretical backgrounds and methodological procedures. An overview of the research, together with grounded theory methodology, is given at the beginning of the chapter, which provides methodological guidance on how to conduct the research. The selected data is then introduced to address research questions and to develop theories. Through critical selection, designers and their creations from a contemporary Chinese fashion setting are adopted as the focus of case study. The techniques of data collection and analysis the present study adopts are finally outlined in this chapter. The discussions of these two sections are based on the principles of grounded theory methodology.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the main theoretical frameworks and analyses through the examination of selected samples from designers in the context of contemporary Chinese fashion. Findings at the level of discourse semantics and grammar are investigated according to the three metafunctions proposed in Chapter 4, namely, ideational (experiential and logical), interpersonal and textual.

Chapter 7 serves as the conclusion of the study. In this chapter, the major findings of the research and its contribution to theory, practice and methodology are summarized. The implications that arise from the study are also proposed in terms of its relation to design practices and education. The limitations of the current study are finally discussed, along with the possible directions for further research.

**CHAPTER 2 APPROACHES TO FASHION AND CLOTHING DISCOURSE**

**2.1 Introduction**

Various disciplines and theoretical perspectives can be utilized to explore different aspects of landscape in fashion and clothing. As discussed in Chapter 1, insights across disciplines in relation to fashion and clothing abound nowadays, particularly in the linkage among sociology, psychology, aesthetics and semiotics. Sociological theories examine how communities use fashion and clothing to mark and maintain identities or motivate human behaviors. Psychological theories look at how people perceive clothing and appearances or understand the relationship between clothing and the world around them. Aesthetic theories specify the way people perceive forms of clothing and their characteristic features and delineate human reactions towards them. Semiotic theories are strongly associated with communication, which makes sense of the messages in fashion and clothing. All these approaches share many theoretical assumptions and key conceptual terms. However, each has a particular trajectory of theory, distinctive sets of interests as well as different means of data collection and analysis.

A precise explanation for the relationship among disciplinary boundaries can be drawn from Merton (1968): "it may be that ultimately all science is one. But for the time being, it proves more useful to take note of the differences between these types and levels of theory, in order that they may be more systematically related" (p. 335).

He (ibid.) especially indicates that the socio-psychological and sociological theories are not separable; instead, they overlap and complement each other. By the same token, the connection between structuralist semiotics and sociology is suggested by important accomplishments in social theory stimulated by Saussure's semiotics (Barthes, 1973; Foucault, 1972). This discussion has been joined by a group of semioticians and social psychologists who also call for a meaningful partnership of clothing across intellect boundaries, for instance, Davis (1982) and Stone (2006). Similarly, several remarkable examples prove that the collaborative relationships offer scholars in the aesthetic realm many opportunities to gain from dialogues with sociological, psychological and semiotic counterparts (Boudieu, 1984; Simmel, 1968; Solomon & Douglas, 1985; Sproles, 1981; Davis, 1992; Eco, 2007).

Kaiser (1997) thus suggests a contextual perspective including symbolic-interactionist (sociology), cognitive (psychology) and cultural (anthropology, semiotics) to promote the study of the multifaceted meanings in fashion and clothing. The starting point of this contextual understanding is discovery, an exploratory process of change and continuity, during which theories need not necessarily contradict one another but rather bring different explanations to the surface. Such a contextual perspective leads to different theoretical perspectives for exploring the contexts through which the social meanings of fashion and clothing can be understood. Therefore, the use of multiple methods is encouraged to demonstrate the truth of fashion phenomenon conclusively. As Kaiser (1983) emphasizes, "a more integrative conceptual

framework for examining dress in this regard can enable researchers to consider how their findings contribute to the interdisciplinary knowledge base in the field" (p. 1). Fashion eludes easy definition and description. Therefore, the multifaceted approaches to studying fashion and clothing should be in accordance with "theoretical triangulation" (Denzin, 1970). Such integration approach is argued likely to capture the diversity of human experience and expression, reflect cultural processes and forms and gain deep and critical understanding of the social significance behind fashion and clothing. On this account, there recognizes a necessity for this study to call for a rapprochement among sociology, psychology, aesthetics and semiotics in the context of fashion and clothing.

## 2.2 Fashion and Clothing as a Sociological Discourse

Fashion and clothing establishes an intimate relationship with sociology. This fact can be found through numerous fashion studies that address social phenomena by incorporating concepts and methods from sociology. To better apply sociological approach for fashion and clothing, a brief look at the ways in which societies are organized should be first taken. This will help to break down the scale of fashion and clothing and use the approach effectively.

There are three different levels of practice in sociology: macro, meso and micro (Collins, 1988; Turner, 2006, 2010a, b, 2012, 2014). The three different levels represent the groupings of societies in terms of their scales. Macrosociology is an

approach to sociology that emphasizes social structures and broader systems. It specifically concerns the analysis of large-scale social systems and long-term patterns and processes. Structural functionalism and conflict theory are examples of macrosociology. By contrast, microsociology concerns everyday social interactions of human and agencies on a small scale, which are formed on the basis of face-to-face interactions. Examples of micro theories include symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy. Mesosociology is situated between macrosociology and microsociology, that is, between large-scale societies and social situations and small-scale individual interactions. It is the study of analyzing concepts like social forces and stratification, including "corporate units (corporations, communities and organizations)" and "categoric units (membership in social categories like class, ethnicity and gender)" (Turner, 2014, Chapter 1). Although these three levels offer different perspectives on social reality, all are necessary in gaining a full understanding of the ways in which a society shapes individuals. Therefore, the sociological construction of fashion discourse in this study is organized according to the three levels of analysis: structural functionalism and conflict theory with a macro perspective as opposed to symbolic interaction and dramaturgy theory with a micro perspective, and fashion-ology with a synthesis of macro and micro perspectives. Table 2.1 presents the comparison among different sociological perspectives based on the literature.

**Table 2.1** Comparison of Sociological Perspectives

| Sociological Paradigm | Level of Analysis | Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Structural Functionalism | Macro | Each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the solidarity and stability of the entire society |
| Conflict Theory | Macro | Social inequalities in terms of how they generate social differences and perpetuate differences in power |
| Symbolic Interactionism | Micro | Individuals in social interactions and communications |
| Dramaturgy | Micro | Individual efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others |
| Fashion-ology | Macro Micro | Fashion as an institutionalized system that produces the concept as well as the phenomenon and practice of fashion |

Following their paradigms, this section combines the strengths of macro and micro orientations in accounting for social interactions to generate an outline for analyzing fashion and clothing within a large context. The macro-micro approaches to sociological theory have been mentioned by several scholars (Collins, 1987, 2000; Dahrendorf, 1958; Kaiser, Nagasawa & Hutton, 1991, 1995; Kawamura, 2005, 2011). Their discussions illustrate the macro-micro continuum contributes to the discovery of unexplored gaps in the body of knowledge. In what follows, the terminologies of sociological resources are reviewed separately for constructing the phenomenon of fashion and facilitating the exchange of meanings in the cyclic processes of fashion. Among them, classical works, for example, of Simmel (1957, 1997) and Blumer (1969a, b), continue to play a central role in the sociological interpretations of fashion and clothing. These systematic and comprehensive reviews provide the concrete basis for the elucidation of social structure in fashion and clothing.

**2.2.1 Structural Functionalism and Conflict Theory: A Macro Orientation to Fashion**

**2.2.1.1 Structural Functionalism**

Structural functionalism, or functionalism, is a sociological and anthropological theory that considers social structure and functions. This theory views society as a complex system of interrelated parts and considers each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the solidarity and stability of the whole society. The functionalist perspective looks at society through a macro-level orientation, with its broad focus on large-scale social patterns and systems. A detailed analogy, advocated by Spencer (1895), presents how social systems operate in a manner akin to living organisms. As he (ibid.) argues, different parts of society, like the organs of body, work together to make the whole system functional and regulated. Therefore, in functionalists' view, society is conceived as a whole made up of subsystems that function interdependently to form stable social systems (Comte, 2009; Spencer, 1895; Durkheim, 2010; Parsons, 1968; Merton, 1968).

Structuralism draws its inspiration from linguistics, especially Saussure's (1915) pioneering work, which forms the ground base of contemporary structuralist thinking. Later, the contributions of prominent scholars, such as Levi-Strauss (1963), Jakobson (1971) and Barthes (1973), also prompt the development of this school of thought. Thus far, structuralist thinking has been extended to a wide range of disciplines, which encompass sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy and art, among

others. Structural functionalism has its origins in the work of Durkheim (2010), who is particularly interested in the structure of societies and the changes in societies. Other sociological foundations for structural functionalism are found in the writings of sociologists, such as Comte (2009), Spencer (1895), Parsons (1968) and Merton (1968). Influential contributions also come from anthropologists, including Malinowski (1922) and Radcliffe-Brown (1964). These structural functionalists adopt different ways to understand the development of societies and social changes across cultures, as well as examine the ways on how societies maintain social equilibrium and cohesion. Their functional approaches provide theoretical explanations for the key processes that happen in society (Turner, 2014).

Durkheim (2008) emphasizes the importance of cultural dynamics through the study of religion as a social phenomenon. This analysis of cultural dynamics has greatly influenced many other theoretical traditions in sociology. Durkheim extends Comte's (2009) and Spencer's (1895) thoughts and brings to functionalism a conceptualization of culture as the requisite of integration in complex social systems. All social and cultural phenomena are therefore functional for the purpose of working together to achieve the stability of an entire society. From this perspective, structural functionalism is often understood in terms of their relationships to a large and overarching system or structure of which the phenomena play functioning parts. In the same vein, the fashion society can be envisioned as a complex system: a set of interconnected parts that together form a whole. Different parts, including production,

distribution and consumption, simultaneously work together in an interdependent way for the maintenance of a society. Each part in the fashion society exists because it has specific functions to perform in contributing to the society as a whole, as well as in creating and sustaining fashion as social phenomena.

Granted the considerable influence of structural functional approach, widespread criticism has been rampant particularly because of its rigidity and inability to account for social change, as has been frequently mentioned (e.g. Dahrendorf, 1958; Giddens, 1979; Turner, 2014). Despite this criticism, structural functionalism continues to exert its influence on the exploration of social processes and the discussion of social issues.

### 2.2.1.2 Conflict Theory

Another sociological paradigm with a macro-level perspective is conflict theory, which looks at society as a competition for limited resources. In contrast with functionalist theory whose focus is on cohesive systems, conflict theory tends to emphasize social inequalities and other problems (see Spencer, 1895; Marx, 2013; Weber, 1978; Simmel, 1904 for detailed discussions).

Conflict theorists appreciate the significance of social issues and personal troubles in the context of power, conflict, threat and inequality. They seek to invigorate such sociological discourses with a form of competition in their inherent inequalities, a critique that distinguishes it from other functionalist theories. Therefore, conflict

theory regards society as being made up of individuals who must compete for valued resources, a situation that is also reflected in social structures and organizations. As a paradigm, conflict theories explain sociological theories that focus on social differentials and inspire other theoretical underpinnings in several fields of sociology. Similar to structural functionalism, conflict theory also suffers from criticisms due to the exclusion of recognizing stability (Dahrendorf, 1958; Giddens, 1979; Rex, 1998). Hence, this approach is complementary to that of structural functionalism which emphasizes equilibrium and solidarity. Important sociologists with this approach include Marx (2013), Weber (1978) and Simmel (1904). They make influential contributions to the development of conflict theory in different directions. Based on their traditions, other sociologists continue to promote conflict theories in a contemporary way, such as Dahrendorf (1958), Coser (1998), Turner (1975) and Collins (1975).

One prominent link of sociological theories to fashion is Simmel's (1957, 1997) essays on fashion, indicating that fashion is a form of social relationship, by means of which people can establish uniformity within each group as well as differentiation from outside the circle. According to his interpretation, people within the fashion processes take on a variety of social roles to emulate the decisions and actions of others. The essential feature of inequalities in conflict theory is applicable to fashion, which is known as "trickle-down theory" of fashion (Veblen, 1970; Simmel, 1957; McCracken, 1985, 1988) or the "class distinction" approach (Davis, 1992). The

trickle-down theory was originally introduced by Veblen (1970) and further developed by Simmel (1957) in fashion. It is regarded as the first fully articulated sociological theory of fashion and has found wide acceptance in the study of fashion and clothing. The trickle-down theory of fashion adoption assumes that fashion begins in the upper stratum of society, through a process of imitation with an end when the line of demarcation is blurred by the lower classes who strives to be identified with a superior status. At the same time, a new fashionable recycling process is generated. Imitation and differentiation as two conflicting principles in society offer motive forces for innovation, which provokes a cycle of change and drives fashion forward in a continual process (McCracken, 1988).

Simmel (1957) argues that the main tendency for each member of a class is towards inclusion rather than exclusion. Imitating others can help ease psychological tensions and conflicts, through which people can affiliate themselves to a group or community. However, McCracken (1985) considers the limitations of Simmel's trickle-down theory and thus rehabilitates it in a way that can be applied to modern fashion. In his statement (ibid.), the theory fails to observe the fact that groups in society buy goods for multiple purposes. This factor makes it insufficient to explicate the trickle-down effect in its broadest spread. Compared with Simmel, his revised theory mainly includes strengths by expanding the theory for modern application and use; attending to the cultural context of fashion innovation and diffusion and defining groups in terms of hierarchical social strata and status differences, such as gender, age and

ethnicity. To summarize, the trickle-down theory analysis has set valuable sociological thoughts for further investigations into fashion. Of particular significance is to highlight the essence of fashion that lies in a process of change, which requires a certain type of society to take place (Blumer, 1969b). This consideration is also the starting point of the current study.

## 2.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism and Dramaturgy Notion: A Micro Orientation to Fashion and Clothing

### 2.2.2.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical approach where individuals attempt to interpret symbols and understand the world they live in through human interactions (Blumer, 1969a). As a major sociological perspective, it is influential in many areas of the discipline, particularly in microsociology and social psychology. The way in which symbolic interactionists view society and human conduct in microsociology is not very different from the one that is employed in a social psychological perspective (Blumer, 1969a; Kaiser, 1997).

The term "symbolic interactionism" was originally formulated by Blumer (1969a). This theory is mainly established on the philosophy of Mead (1962), but it is also influenced by the works of other figures, such as Cooley (1983), Dewey (2002), James (1950), Goffman (1973), Stone (2006), Stone and Farberman (1981) and Davis (1992). One basic concept of this theory is meaning comes from social interaction

(Blumer, 1969a). Three fundamental premises underlie symbolic interactionism (ibid.).

The first premise is that people's interpretation and action towards things are based on

the meanings they give. Here, Blumer (ibid.) refers to "things" as everything people

may notice within their surroundings. This premise is accordingly associated with

Kaiser's (1997) assertion. The second premise is that meanings are directly relevant to

social interactions. According to Kaiser (1997), people need to learn, discover or

develop meanings on their own rather than only being passively received. The third

premise is that meanings are modified through people's continuous interpretation as

they interact with things.

Symbolic interactionism provides a theoretical perspective on studying how

individuals interpret objects and other people in their lives and how this interpretative

process leads to the behaviors in specific situations. The assumptions underlying

symbolic interactionism have profound methodological implications for multiple

human group lives and social action studies. Blumer (1969a) considers such

implications in relation to four central conceptions of symbolic interaction: people,

associations of people, social acts and complex interlinkages of acts that comprise

human society. Under the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the social world

exists on the basis of human interactions. Society is composed of individuals, who are

involved in the interactions with other individuals and groups within large networks.

Social actions, whether individual or collective, are established through a process that

can be interpreted. Such process in society is considered dynamic with the recognition

that social interaction influences the behavior of one another and the attribute of society.

For the same reason, the fashion industry can be interpreted as a symbolic interaction (Davis, 1982; Kaiser, Nagasawa & Hutton, 1991, 1995; Nagasawa, Kaiser & Hutton, 1995, 1996; Solomon, 1983). The fashion circle consists of people, who are prepared to act in the form of individuals or collective through corporate and membership units. The processes of the fashion society are accordingly described as comprising their actions. Respective examples include customers, producers, groups, organization, institutions and more. The interpretation of meanings in the setting of fashion is not merely on the micro level between individuals through face-to-face interaction but also on the meso and macro levels in the corporate units or membership categories of the social order and in the interactional domains of the social system. The complex and unstable social interactions lead to the generation of multiple interpretations towards fashion and clothing.

One related perspective that is extended to fashion and clothing is known as "collective selection" theory developed by Blumer (1969b). He (ibid.) argues that central to fashion is not the members of the ruling elite who control the fashion but instead the fashionable designs themselves, which influence the elite to follow. In other words, collective selection theory sees fashion not generated through class differentiation and emulation but through desire and expression towards the changing

world. In this way, fashion is considered the result of a collective desire, which derives from individual articulation and endorsement towards a certain taste and style at a given moment. According to Blumer (ibid.), the collective behavior of fashion has three ways, a movement ranging from uniformity through consensus about a trend, to detachment from the hold of the past and to actualization of a common sensitivity and taste.

For Blumer (ibid.), Simmel's (1957, 1997) formulation is largely a parochial treatment because it cannot catch the character of fashion as a social happening and fails to account for fashion in a contemporary society. In his view (ibid.), fashion is formed through a continuing process of selection, which is made from an enormous amount of competing models. The tastes of fashion are thus directed by collective unconsciousness of culture from designers and consumers. Blumer's perspective opens multiple ways to challenge the trickle-down approach. The empirical research that display other possible movements include, such as trickle-across (King, 1963) and trickle-up (Blumer, 1969a, b; Polhemus, 1994, 1996) studies, which treat the development of a particular fashion as produced within social classes or from the bottom of society (Crane, 2000; McCracken, 1985). Similarly, Davis (1992) adopts the collective selection approach as a point of departure for his sociological interpretation and suggests the need for viewing fashion industry through the investigation of its underlying mechanisms. Although its unquestioned importance has been noted, collective selection theory suffers from some questions. In McCracken's

(1985) words, it lacks the predictive power of new fashion and also hardly accounts for the relationships between new fashion and old fashion. Davis (1992, p. 120) mentions that the collection selection theory (along with trickle-down one) fails to adequately take into account the influence of social institutions that surround the dissemination of fashion.

Different from structural functional and conflict approaches, symbolic interactionists develop another research orientation, known as interpretive sociology. The interpretive sociology is a theoretical approach that studies society through the meanings people connect with the world they are living in (Macionis, 2017). Weber (1978) lays the foundations of the interpretive sociological approach. He (ibid.) argues the key to sociology is interpretation or "verstehen" (the German word for "understanding"). Therefore, the focus of interpretive sociologists is on the understanding the meaning and action that people create in their everyday life. As Weber (ibid.) states, "we shall speak of 'action' insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior" (p. 4). Interpretive sociological approach makes up for the deficiency in the positivistic sociology pioneered by Durkheim (2013) and encourages sociologists to elucidate social phenomena within a broad scope.

### 2.2.2.2 Dramaturgy

Dramaturgy is another sociological discipline that is often seen as a variant of

symbolic interactionism. It focuses on the study of social interaction with respect to theatrical performance. Goffman (1973), the intellectual founder of dramaturgical theory, uses the metaphor of theater as the frame of reference and explores the self through the interaction between actor and audience. One core premise of dramaturgy is that people are dependent on one another for their identities. In Goffman's (ibid.) notion, life is a stage for activity and individuals are engaged in the activity for performances. Analogous to theatrical performance, Goffman (ibid.) assumes that when an individual appears before others, he attempts to control the impression they may receive by changing or fixing his setting, appearance and manner. At the same time, when the individual presents himself in everyday life, he reveals the information to others consciously and unconsciously. Such presentation of self, or individual's performance, is referred to as "impression management" (ibid.). Goffman (ibid.) argues that any social establishment may be approached from the viewpoint of impression management.

There are several important components with respect to Goffman's (ibid.) the presentation of self. He (ibid.) summarizes these elements under the headings of performance, teams, stages, discrepant roles, communication out of character and impression management. In Goffman's (ibid.) term, performance is all the activity of an individual that occurs before the audience; teams are any set of individuals who cooperate with one another in the same activity; stages or regions refer to the settings where individuals perform the activity; discrepant roles represent the positions

occupied by the individuals who deal with the information in social situations; communication out of character implies that performance expresses the character of the performer and impression management sees the function of the performance through its focus on maintaining the desired impression. Based on Goffman's (ibid.) insights, Kaiser (1997, p. 192) distills four basic elements of the dramaturgical perspective to manipulate appearance management and self-presentation: performance, setting or stage, audience and performer. These elements jointly constitute the social context: the performance occurs by means of social interactions between a performer and the audience in a social situation. Through interaction, the performer expresses a role and creates an impression to others.

In dramaturgical sociology, performance consists of action and appearance. As suggested, the performer must act with expressive responsibility and attempt to convey impressions at the same time. Appearance may be taken as stimuli, which enter into the interaction and function to convey the information. To maintain the performance, each member of a team possesses dramaturgical techniques and exercises them in presenting his own part. Goffman (1973) considers that performance relies upon the coordination of components, namely, setting, performer and audience. For the purposes of clarity, he (ibid.) suggests three crucial roles on the basis of function, information possessed and accessible regions: the performer, audience and outsider. Brief reference has therefore been made to these roles for their contributions to social establishments. In order to illustrate the link between role

(performance) and self (identity), Goffman (1961) defines two concepts of "role embracement" and "role distance". By distancing oneself from the role that he represents, Goffman demonstrates the means of dealing with the divergence between responsibility and performance. In addition, Goffman's (1973) notion of performance marks an attempt to identify the impact of appearance on human behavior.

One central concern for the dramaturgical approach is that activity is produced within specific defined settings. Drawing on the term "behavioral setting" by Wright and Barker (1950), Goffman (1973) distinguishes the settings into the "front region" and "back region". The front region is the setting where individuals give a performance. A component of the front region is "personal front" (p. 24), which is made up of appearance and manner. In the front stage, people attempt to present an idealized self based on prevailing standards or social conventions. The back region is the backstage setting, a place where action occurs related to a performance but is inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the performance. In the backstage, people conduct much work to maintain appearance management. Dramaturgists also describe interactions as being outside or off stage as to whether individuals are involved in the performance. The outside stage is where performers engage with the audience, but a performance different from the one on the front or back stage. The dramaturgical perspective on regions and region behaviors distinguishes and clarifies contexts and provides a way to understand and explain the importance of appearance management across contexts.

Within the dramaturgical approach, the audience constitutes another key factor for the interaction. The audience refers to the group of people who have gathered to watch an actor's performance. According to Goffman (ibid.), the audience of everyday life influences the performer's actions and appearances, thereby suggesting a coincidence among the audience, roles and performance. To sustain the expression, the performer can segregate the audiences through special performances. By scheduling his performances, the performer keeps the audiences separated from one another and allows special and unique services received by different audiences. In doing so, the role performed for each audience is congruent and a desired presentation is achieved. Such a process could be called as "audience segregation". The notion of audience segregation conforms to the division of setting, as Goffman (ibid.) considers that the impression and interpretation resulting from a performance are related to time and space in which the performance occurs and each individual would be influenced by two situational factors. From this perspective, self-presentation needs to be continually adjusted in the presence of others.

Goffman's work (1973) offers a substantial viewpoint to address the concept of the self, which he considers is performed through roles and realized through interaction between the performer and audience. This perspective builds a bridge between appearance and behavior and provides a way of thinking about society through self-presentation in everyday situations. During the discussion, he (ibid.) emphasizes expression or communication as the key component of social interactions.

Expressiveness is dependent on the definition of social situations; hence, the meaning of any interaction is argued to be a variable. In addition to Goffman, the dramaturgical perspective has been developed by other sociologists, including Hochschild (1979, 2012), Clark (2007), among many others.

The dramaturgical theory has often been applied to the studies on fashion and clothing. One illustration of this may be cited from Stone (2006), who applies a symbolic interactionist perspective to analyze the importance of appearance for the self. Through his analysis, Stone greatly contributes to the understanding of appearance as communication and paves the way for further investigation into the self and social transactions. In accordance with Goffman (1973), Stone (ibid.) insists on the meaning of appearance emerging from a negotiated ongoing process between the sender and perceiver. Hence, no fixed or concrete meaning of appearance has been formulated yet. Another example can be found in the work of Kaiser (1997), where she extends the dramaturgical perspective to discuss appearance management and self-presentation. Similar works include that of Snyder (1987). A common feature running through these works is that individuals employ dramaturgical techniques to control the impression. Distinct from dramaturgy, their focus is on the use of appearance as a means for communication and interaction with others.

### 2.2.3 Fashion-ology: A Macro-Micro Perspective Explanation

The term "fashion-ology" is coined by Kawamura (2005) for the sociological

investigation of fashion. In fashion-ology, fashion is viewed as a system of institutions that seeks to generate the concept, the phenomenon and practice of fashion. In addition, it concerns the social process which is utilized to produce the belief (ibid., p. 1). According to Kawamura (2005), the focus of fashion-ology is on the social nature of fashion in its process.

Drawing on the study of Crane (2000), Davis (1992) and Barthes (1985), she (2005) develops a different approach to fashion by considering fashion as an institutionalized system. To be specific, fashion is interpreted as a system that includes institutions, organizations, groups, producers, events and practices, all of which collaborate to inform the production of fashion. By taking French fashion as a prototype and Japanese designers as case studies, she (2004) discusses how fashion system works and how designers challenge the clothing system while remaining within the fashion system. This approach is completely different from the studying of clothing, and she (ibid.) thus emphasizes making a systemic differentiation between fashion and clothing as two separate sociological concepts and systems.

Fashion-ology integrates macro and micro levels of social theories: structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism. Therefore, it focuses on a macro-sociological analysis of the social organization of fashion as well as a micro-interactionism analysis of designers and individuals involved in producing fashion. Unlike other approaches to fashion that focus on styles of clothing,

fashion-ology attempts to take into account the social context in the institutional development of fashion. A structural functional perspective focuses on institutions within fashion system, including the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services which are intimately related; a symbolic interactionism perspective advocates an individualistic view that looks at the processes by which individuals define the world from the inside and at the same time identify their world of objects. In fashion-ology, the two are interdependent and interrelated in the fashion industry.

Kawamura's (2005) analysis in fashion system is highly important. She sees fashion as a representation and a response to academic and practical inquiries. The proposed fashion-ology debunks the myth of fashion as institutional and individual social networks in the world of fashion, thereby giving a clear picture and systematic understanding of the social nature in fashion system. Meanwhile, fashion-ology is a concrete example of macro-micro explanations. Other examples of macro-micro interface in the construction of fashion and clothing meanings are the works of Hamilton (1997) and Kaiser, Nagasawa and Hutton (1991, 1995). However, they develop the connections through different research directions. This integrative approach proves its effectiveness in the comprehensive addressing of fashion as a dynamic phenomenon and highlights the method trend for future research in sociology with the combination of macro and micro.

**2.2.4 Fashion, Modernity and Postmodernity**

Another branch of literature on fashion has emerged, which attempts to explore its communicative abilities and discuss its position in modern and postmodern life. Numerous contemporary theorists have used fashion as an example to highlight specific aspects of their modern theories (e.g. Back, 1985; Barnard, 2002; Baudrillard, 1981; Blumer, 1969b; Entwistle, 2000; Faurschou, 1987; Kawamura, 2005; König, 1973; Breward & Evans, 2005; Wilson, 2003). Although these approaches are discussed differently, they analyze fashion from a point of view that believes fashion as an integral phenomenon to understand the modern world. From their insights, it is clear to extrapolate the importance of modern concepts to the study of fashion.

Modernity, according to Berman (1988, pp. 15-16), is the experience in the dialectics of modernization and modernism. Modernization is the social processes that witness a diverse unity of socioeconomic changes, all driven by the expanding capitalist market. Modernism is a variety of cultural visions and ideas that derive from the unleashing of change. With these visions and ideas, individuals become the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, which are granted the power to change the world and which finally achieve the transformation of themselves. Therefore, the core of modernity can be seen as the experience of the social processes and the cultural visions.

As noted above, industrial revolution and capitalistic progress prompt the development of individuals, self and economy. It is in the development of this context

that fashion is eventually nourished to appear. In this sense, fashion emerges from modern and postmodern societies characterized by social mobility (Baudrillard, 1981), and it develops with the growth of industrial capitalism and market economy. The very way in which fashion constantly changes actually serves to fix the essence of modernity and postmodernity: the desire for change and the drive towards novelty. Fashion not only evolves as the advances in modernity and postmodernity, but also is a mirror to reflect the experience shared by modern individuals. The primary application of modernity and postmodernity theory to the study of fashion comes through the analysis of fashion as part of the experience of modernity. The affinity of fashion to the body of experience proves that fashion permeates and underpins many forms of modern industrial capitalism.

The seminal work of Wilson (2003) attempts to understand fashion as an integral aspect of modernity and postmodernity. Of all those who have written about fashion and modernity, Wilson comes as close as any to describe its "purposive and creative aspects" and capture its "tantalizing and slippery essence" (p. 58). She sees fashion as self-presentation used to defend against traditions and norms and also as perpetual mutability characterized by a restless desire for something new. Therefore, rejection of traditions and creation of novelty comprise two important dimensions of modernity in fashion. In other words, the significance of modernity to fashion lies in its capacity to capture the contradictory and dynamic nature within fashion. In her account, fashion is a response to the experience of modernity, whereas dress is one of the forms

that present the self on the modern social stage. Modern individuals are argued to share an interest in the development of contextual narratives, which establishes a link between one's appearance and identity. As a result, there generates a very close relationship among body, dress, appearance and identity. In addition, the theme of modern art is central to Wilson's analysis of fashion and modernity. She considers that fashion has an affinity with modern art because a great majority of fashion designers are directly inspired by modern art. To sum up, Wilson (ibid.) focuses on the "triple ambiguity" of fashion within modernity (p. 14): first, the ambiguity of capitalism embodied in its wealth and squalor, creativity and waste; second, the contradictions of identity, of the relationship between self and society and third, through the connection between fashion and art. Another interpretation on the issue of fashion and modernity comes from the work of Entwistle (2000). Entwistle (ibid.) critically examines the prevailing literature on fashion from theoretical and empirical perspectives. She seeks to point out two relevant theoretical approaches. One approach focuses on self-presentation, together with the issues of appearance and identity. Works on the construction of identity have been conducted among Bourdieu (1984), Featherstone (2007) and Finkelstein (1991). The other approach is involved in fashion ambivalence. The representative figures in this context include Davis (1992), Finkelstein (1991) and Giddens (1991). Moreover, Entwistle (ibid.) discusses some empirical studies from anthropology and social psychology. In the field of social psychology, Tseëlon (1995) and Soloman (1985) contemplate the ways in which dress motivates interpersonal communication.

The aspect of modernism in fashion can be represented through stylistic development. It is assumed that fashion as a phenomenon of style and as a medium of social change is closely interconnected with both perspectives. Back's (1985) primary concern is to explore the relationship of style to modernism and fashion. He (ibid.) defines three dimensions in the communication of culture: information and redundancy, communicator and audience, as well as communicator and message. In his statement, the way in which creators communicate message forms a certain style pattern. This pattern of communication serves as an indicator for the transmission of art and other cultural experiences, which include social factors, personal expressions and aesthetic considerations. On this account, style is considered a combination of social norms, personal expressions and aesthetic values. Two stylistic movements may link fashion to modernism. The first movement is the separation between representation and communication, and the other movement is the dissolution of the unity of the self. His exploratory analysis strengthens the role of the audience as part in the creating of fashion process, thereby overcoming the distinction between creator and audience. According to his discussion, fashion as an example of modern society is reflected in the variability of styles in dress.

In defining fashion as relating to modernity or modernism, it may be useful, at this point, to distinguish between modernity and postmodernity. Barnard (2002) explains how fashion and clothing are described in terms of modernity and postmodernity. To paraphrase Barnard, a clear distinction exists between modernity and postmodernity.

Through his generalization, modernist objects retain the capacity of symbolic investment, whereas postmodernist objects do not; modernity conceives the objects in terms of production, whereas postmodernity does in terms of consumption and the meaning of objects in modernity originates in the relationship between people, whereas the meaning of postmodern objects appears in the differential relationship to all other objects or signs. In addition, break and differentiation are the guiding themes throughout the theories of postmodernity, which is quite a contrast to modernity. This distinction is generalized based on prevailing theoretical explanations, for instance, Baudrillard (1981), Jameson (1974) and Faurschou (1987).

Jameson (1974, 1985, 1991) begins to relate postmodernism to the cultural logic of late capitalism and accounts for the place of postmodernism within the society of consumption. He (1974) postulates "postindustrial capitalism", considering it as the source of postmodern fragmentation of its cultural values. His conceptualization of postmodernism marks a cultural transformation of products from concrete to abstract and from human labor to consumer market. For Jameson (ibid.), transformation is "a historical break of unexpectedly absolute kind" (p. 105). Faurschou (1987) strives to interpret this in terms of Jameson's concept of postmodernism. In accordance with Wilson (2003), Faurschou (1987) ascribes the emergence of modernity to the rise of individual capitalism. She explains fashion as a commodity is generated in terms of the existing social structure, which concerns the ideology of needs (p. 70). Therefore, a modern object is symbolic investment, and a reliable connection exists between a

product and its meaning (ibid., p. 71). Compared with modern society, postmodern society in her view is a society prompted to satisfy a continual desire "for need, for novelty and for endless difference" (p. 72).

The meaning of the break between modernity and postmodernity is also found in the interpretation of Baudrillard (1981). In postmodernity, Baudrillard (ibid.) argues that the object gathers its meaning not in the concrete relationship between two people but in its differential relations to other signs (p. 66). On this account, he thinks that it is necessary to distinguish the logic of postmodernity or consumption from other logics, which habitually gets entangled with each other. According to Baudrillard (ibid.), three other logics relate to the logic of consumption (also as the logic of sign, difference, status or fashion, in Baudrillard's technical terms). The first *instrument* is a functional logic of use value; it is a logic of practical operations or utility. The second *commodity* is an economic logic of exchange value; it also refers to a logic of equivalence or of market. The third *symbol* is a logic of symbolic exchange; it represents a logic of ambivalence or of gift. These logics provide useful sources for the meaning of modern object. It is asserted that modern object becomes the true object of consumption or a sign only when it is liberated from symbol, instrument and commodity (p. 67). Consequently, Baudrillard declares that the meaning of postmodernity comes from the logic of differences, and postmodern society is conceived as a society of consumption rather than of production.

Both modernity and postmodernity have been an influential factor in culture. Their influences have offered the insightful understanding of individuals in contemporary society. Fashion, by its affinity with transformation and individuality, emerges from the phenomenon of modernity. It discloses a profound social phenomenon with its widespread visibility as well as contributes to the continuous development of society. The study of fashion requires understanding of its interrelationships with modernity and postmodernity. Such understanding needs to place fashion within a broad modern phenomena, where it interacts with other social and cultural phenomena to create a holistic landscape of the modern world. All these changes would carry information and form new patterns of communication that influence social interaction and self-presentation in fashion.

**2.2.5 Fashion and Sociology of Culture**

Fashion is a complex subject in the sociological tradition. Until now, different perspectives of fashion and clothing in the sociological background have been discussed. Most of them analyze fashion institutions and focus on their social relations. However, they fail to pay considerable attention to the social processes of cultural production and consumption in creating values in fashion. The sociology of culture recognizes this importance and understands social institutions, along with cultural symbols. Its interpretation thus provides another viewpoint for the current literature to understand fashion issues.

Numerous fashion histories attempt to find a theoretical explanation for fashion in the study of culture (e.g. Craik, 1994; Crane, 2000; Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Leopold, 1992; McCracken, 1988; Wilson, 2003). This literature seeks to explain fashion as a unique system of clothing, to understand why such a system exist within the fields of sociology of culture and cultural sociology, as well as to treat them as the ways of cultural processes and material products that together shape an individual way of life. This propensity to deal with fashion in the field of culture is evident across the range of classic works by Bourdieu (e.g. 1984, 1992, 1993).

Bourdieu's theories root in Marxist theories of class and conflict and most significantly focus on the issue of the consumption of culture. Bourdieu (1993) interprets culture as a group of symbolic products used by individuals of a society, and it is manifested through a series of structural relations that takes place within the context of the field. According to Bourdieu (ibid.), field is a system of distinctive properties, where its members share fundamental interests and functions based on its own specific logic or rules. The structure of a field is in a state of power relations: agents and institutions struggle for power to defend or improve their positions. Those who are ultimately in power relations monopoly legitimacy; they are inclined towards conversation strategies. By contrast, those who lose the power tend to have subversion strategies in the distribution of the specific capital. Bourdieu (1975) sets out to consider the field of high fashion among different French couture houses. He argues the network of relations between positions by members in the high fashion

implements their struggles for fashion capital of special authority. Dominant and new designers as two opposite sides of the field thus form the power relations. As Bourdieu (ibid.) states, the strategies are also applied to institutions in the field of high fashion characterized by their struggles to attain dominant position.

Implicit in his theory of culture is a general theory, with its attempt to unravel the "general laws of fields" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72). The field of fashion is taken as a subject of study in his sociology of culture. As Bourdieu explains (ibid.), each field functions as part of the sociological framework, and they collaborate with other fields to create understanding of the fields of culture. From this perspective, his discussion of the field of fashion offers valuable insights into the sociology of culture. In addition, Bourdieu puts forwards another influential terms "habitus", which refers to a system of dispositions within individual perception, appreciation and action (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 16). For Bourdieu (1984), habitus is a structure used for organizing practices and perception (p. 170). In this sense, habitus can be seen as a cognitive or mental system of structures, which incorporates external social structures into the internal experience of individuals. According to Bourdieu (ibid.), habitus relates to the positions of individual and collective in society and to the social practices that arise from these positions. Therefore, habitus not only reflects individual attitudes, interests, beliefs, tastes and understanding towards the external world but also represents the social actions performed by individuals and collectives. These two spheres, in Bourdieu's concept, are closely interconnected. That is, the understanding of social

space exists by virtue of the relations between field and habitus. Thus, the need to understand field and habitus is emphasized by Bourdieu in his works.

Rocamora (2002) provides a critical examination of Bourdieu's insights into the field of fashion. In his work, he explores Bourdieu's notions in terms of field, subfield, transubstantiation, distinction and pretension. First, Bourdieu and Johnson (1993, p. 53) argue that the field of cultural production is structured by two fundamental subfields, namely, large-scale production and restricted production. This dualistic structure of the field is expressed in the form of opposing economies, scales and audiences. Large-scale production aims to cater for mass public (mass fashion), whereas restricted production for a limited audience (high fashion). In contrast to the quest for "worldly success" by large-scale production, restricted production seeks a "spiritual consecration" (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993, p. 101). Bourdieu's discussion mainly focuses on high fashion. Second, the sociology of culture involves not only the material production but also the symbolic production of work. Thus, the creation of fashion culture is a process of transubstantiation (Bourdieu, 1975). To interpret production, one has to consider the producers of the works in its materiality and the producers of meaning and value of the works - the whole set of agents within institutions whose combined efforts define and produce the works (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993, p. 37). In short, Bourdieu understand works as a manifestation of the whole field, in which all the components of the field, structurally or functionally, are considered. Third, Bourdieu (1975, 1984, & Johnson, 1993) distinguishes the dialectic

of distinction (bourgeois consumption) and pretension (petit-bourgeois consumption) as a means of maintaining or bridging social positions and distinctive properties. Through this distinction, he characterizes a form of competitive power between the dominant and subordinate classes. It is within the power from the social hierarchy that patterns of consumption and production for fashion have emerged. Thus, in Bourdieu's account, there is an interactive homology between consumption and production (1993, 1975).

Bourdieu's sociology of culture endeavors to construct a theoretical model of the cultural field which positions works of art within the social conditions of their production, communication and consumption. At the core of Bourdieu's interpretation is the logic of practice which stresses that body and practices should be situated in the social world for examination. In this way, Bourdieu incorporates agents and institutions in the process of cultural production and theorizes the structure of the cultural field as well as its position. His ideas in the sociology of culture need to be emphasized, as his works are argued to have made a profound effect on the current development of world sociology. However, Bourdieu' sociological theory presents a few problems. Rocamora (2002) points out that it is a "partial analysis" based on two aspects (p. 359). Bourdieu's analysis ignores the materiality of culture, and it also fails to account for the significance of mass fashion in the structuring of the field of fashion.

Kawamura (2005) goes further than Bourdieu, arguing that fashion is conceived as both a cultural practice and symbolic product. She posits the view that fashion culture is produced materially and symbolically through a set of organizations, individuals and activities. The subject of Kawamura is to discover how products circulate and how they make sense in the context of different production and consumption relationships. She particularly points out that fashion exists in a social context, and its interpretation involves the organizational settings in which fashion is produced. This fundamental principle is shared by sociology of fashion and sociology of culture, known as "the production of culture perspective" (Peterson, 1976; Peterson & Anand, 2004). Peterson (ibid.) and Becker (1982) further explain the production of culture is associated with the institutions of fashion and their social relations in the process of production. Such a perspective emphasizes that the values of culture are shaped by social systems within which they are created, distributed and consumed. Concurrently, they are coordinated around the notion of "product image" (Ryan & Peterson, 1982). A distinct feature in Kawamura's analysis (2005) is the stratified dimensions of producers in the system of fashion. Unlike Bourdieu's cultural stratification by tastes, Kawamura (2004, 2005) concentrates on the stratification according to the occupation of designers in Paris. Both Bourdieu and Kawamura put forward a cultural approach for analyzing fashion in a social context. They point to the need for systems in the analysis of fashion production, asserting that the ideas and values of works are formed within collective practices.

Another attempt to understand the nature of fashion and its impact on the sociology of culture is noted by Crane and Bovone (2006), namely, material culture. In their account, fashion and clothing are in the form of material culture; they create and attribute symbolic values to material goods. Within this literature, fashion is conceptualized as an example of a broad phenomenon, where the sociology of fashion is linked to the sociology of consumption and to the history and sociology of cultural production. Fashion phenomenon is closely associated with different levels of social organization. Hence, they develop an integrated approach to the study of fashion and clothing as material culture. According to Crane and Bovone (ibid.), five processes can lead to the creation and attribution of symbolic value (pp. 321-324): 1) meaning-making processes through text; 2) cultural production systems through collective activities within culture societies; 3) communication processes through specific techniques in the media; 4) consumption processes through consumers and their responses and 5) cross-cultural comparisons through the material culture in different countries and regions. The account of Crane and Bovone provides invaluable insights into the study of fashionable clothing as a form of material culture by examining symbolic values and the ways in which they are attributed to fashion and clothing. Moreover, their account contributes to the sociology of culture as well as cross-cultural studies by relating fashion to a wide field of cultural goods and comparing the goods across different contexts in societies.

## 2.3 Fashion and Clothing as a Psychological Discourse

As introduced in Section 2.2, the sociological approach focuses on the construction of fashion and clothing as a social phenomenon, which seeks to explain fashion as a unique system of clothing and to understand the social problems behind fashion phenomenon. This literature provides theoretical descriptions for fashion and clothing in a social context and exerts a strong influence on explaining fashion and clothing through other approaches. However, from previous discussions, it can be observed that sociologists scarcely attempt to understand the processes or mechanisms in social phenomena. Such sociological conceptions thus fail to recognize the effects of social phenomena on individuals. As Blumer (1969a, p. 83) mentions, sociologists seldom regard human societies as formed by individuals who have the sense of self. Instead, they consider human beings as the organisms of organization in response to social forces. It is assumed that psychological studies can help to explain these social phenomena which engross sociologists. By contrast, attention to sociological mechanisms seems necessary for psychologists to adequately explain psychological phenomena. Correspondingly, sociology needs to incorporate and integrate psychological theories and research. Such theoretical convergence can effectively strengthen mutual understanding in terms of reasoning, findings and message, reciprocally inspire scholars by introducing distinctive theories and finally benefit from the collaboration. In this section, the studies of fashion and clothing on the basis of psychology are briefly introduced.

### 2.3.1 Psychological Studies of Fashion and Clothing

Fashion is viewed as a complex social activity because of its universality and rapidity, influence upon the behavior of individuals, and close relationship to the social and cultural life. To comprehend the nature of fashion and the significance of the problems to which it leads, psychologists seek to examine the causes and characteristics of fashion, clothing and personal adornment. Such scholars include Barnard (2002), Davis (1992), Dunlap (1928), Flügel (1930), Hurlock (1984), Silverman (1986) and Westermarck (2007). Among them, the pioneering work of Flügel (1930) forms the base of psychological literature. Westermarck (2007) develops the psychological aspect of clothing from the world history of human marriage. Dunlap (1928) summarizes various theories as to the origins of clothing, under the headings of modesty, immodesty, adornment and protection. Hurlock (1984) further postulates the psychology of dress in terms of functions through the analysis of fashion and its motive. All of their works are about explaining the origins in the use of clothing. As Dunlap (1928) comments, a particular connection exists between clothing and psychology. To elucidate psychological problems, one needs to understand the origins of clothing. Based on their works, other scholars like Barnard (2002), Davis (1992), Roach and Eicher (1965) continue to discuss the functions of clothing with emphasis on communication. From their discussions, the main concern in the psychology of fashion and clothing is to construe people's choice of clothing and its effects on their thoughts and emotions as well as on other people in terms of psychological processes.

Despite the significant contributions to many of its branches, it is still true that "little serious effort has been made" and "attention has centered merely upon specific manifestations", as Hurlock (1984) observes. One of the problems of psychological perspectives to the study of fashion and clothing is the uncertainty of its field. Moreover, the psychological approach ignores the role of sociological processes in fashion phenomena as well as the influences of social context and structures on individual behaviors. While theoretical bases on the nature of fashion and clothing are developed, a general theory of fashion under psychological areas has not been completely established to explain the key psychological phenomena sufficiently in this field. A social psychology perspective has thus formed another major school of thought to approach fashion and clothing. Social psychology of fashion and clothing aims to incorporate sociological theories to clarify fashion phenomena and study fashion and clothing within their large contexts. Compared with psychologists, social psychologists place more emphasis on clothes as a form of communication and tend to adopt an integrative method in explaining the issues. The two characteristics accordingly become unique contributions of social psychology to fashion and clothing.

Several social psychologists propel the study of fashion and clothing in this area. They include Back (1985), Cash (1985), Horn and Gurel (1981), Kaiser (1983, 1997), Kaiser, Nagasawa and Hutton (1991, 1995), Nagasawa, Kaiser and Hutton (1989, 1995, 1996), Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992), Rosencranz (1972), Ryan (1966),

Solomon (1985) and Tseëlon (1995). Solomon (1985) devotes to social psychology by examining fashion as a social process and understanding the role of social forces in its creation, implementation and utilization. This theoretical compilation explores fashion from an interdisciplinary perspective and develops existing literature in the psychological area. Kaiser (1983, 1997) provides a comprehensive introduction to the social psychology of clothing through the synthesis of symbolic-interactionist and cognitive perspectives. Her research primarily addresses the social meanings of appearances in their multifaceted contexts. As an essential resource, this work helps to understand how the interaction between clothing and social context shapes people's perception of reality. Following Kaiser, a series of works by Nagasawa, Kaiser and Hutton (1989, 1995, 1996) employ the same theoretical synthesis to construct the abstractions about fashion process for the purpose of theory development. Back (1985) investigates fashion and the social psychology of cultural products as part of communication process. He accentuates (ibid.) that modernism is a factor in culture which shapes and influences individual understanding about the emergence of fashion, whereas fashion indicates social stabilization that occurs during the modernist movement. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) formulate a conceptual perspective for understanding dress and identity from a social aspect. Their explanation including body supplements and modifications contributes a lot to the subsequent research. They also suggest that dress should be given priority over language in the communicating of identity. Such social psychological studies attempt to develop the frameworks of fashion and clothing from different perspectives. Their approaches are

therefore of great importance to the later study of fashion and clothing.

**2.3.2 Kaiser's (1997) Contextual Viewpoint on the Social Psychology of Clothing**

The social psychology of clothing, according to Kaiser (1997), focuses on various ways that people use to modify the appearance and social-psychological forces that underlie the modifying processes (p. 4). Put simply, this approach is designed to understand the relations between clothing and individuals. Therefore, it mainly investigates the meanings of clothing and appearance for individuals, how these meanings change, and how people rely on meanings to orient their thinking. In this sense, the social psychology of clothing is not only concerned with what clothes mean but also with the processes by which people come to associate clothing and appearance with certain meanings and the social consequences of these meanings. All these factors in Kaiser's (ibid.) interpretation lead to the social meanings of clothing within their large contexts.

Kaiser (ibid.) proposes a contextual approach to understand the social meanings of clothing. This contextual approach is formed by three theoretical perspectives, namely, cognitive, symbolic-interactionism and cultural. The social psychology of clothing draws primarily from a synthesis of symbolic interactionism (sociological social psychology) and cognitive (cognitive social psychology) perspectives (Kaiser, 1983). This integrated viewpoint aims to suggest an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approach for studying clothing and appearance as forms of

communication. All perspectives address the meaning in diverse ways, but share common concerns for perceivers' evaluations of other persons and situations. In doing so, each brings a distinct focus or point of view to the whole understanding of clothing in a contextual social psychology.

A major assumption underlying the contextual approach, as Kaiser (1983, p. 1) states, is the interdependent processes of communication and social perception. Clothing should be considered in terms of its value through communication recommended by symbolic interactionists and through social perceptions supported by cognitive social psychologists. Kaiser (ibid.) contends that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive; instead, they should be viewed as complementary to one another. The main differences between interactionist and cognitive approaches lie in viewpoints and methodological strategies. Symbolic interactionists stress the role of clothing in social communication from the viewpoints of wearers and perceivers, whereas cognitive theorists give primary emphasis on thought processes in perceivers. Symbolic interactionism provides abstract theorization and qualitative basis for the study of clothing, whereas cognitive social psychology devotes itself to concrete hypotheses and quantitative methodologies. This integrative approach to the social-psychological aspects of clothing is argued to provide rigorous theoretical and methodological orientations and enhance the interpretation of clothing as a symbolic representation of the self and as a medium for understanding others.

Contextual social psychology has significantly contributed to the meaning of clothing through studies not only within but also across contexts. It treats the meaning of clothing and appearance as embedded and understood in terms of a large social context, which takes place within a cultural or historical context. Moreover, it demonstrates that the interpretations of clothing vary along contextual lines (Damhorst, 1985). Damhorst's (1989) model of the clothing sign system accounts for culture as a larger context and provides within this context a look at the perceptual and material elements that compose the structure of garments and their relation to other garments and accessories. This model also positions clothing within the context of appearance, culture and social situations. Then, "contextualizing" in social psychology enables people to see changes in the meaning of clothing in a dynamic situation between cultural and historical contexts, as well as between individuals and their contexts. It is the situational aspects of meaning assigned to clothing which characterize cultural patterns and human societies. An understanding of these connections and transitions related to contexts results in a full understanding of how clothing has meanings for people. Another contribution of contextual social psychology is the use of multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives across disciplines to study clothing and appearance. The three perspectives under the rubric of contextual perspective focus on different levels of analysis from both macro and micro. By considering them jointly, the way clothing is viewed and used via different aspects of human behaviors may emerge from a wide scope so that a holistic and comprehensive landscape for cultural meanings would be surfaced.

**Figure 2.1** Damhorst's (1989) Contextual Model of Clothing Sign System
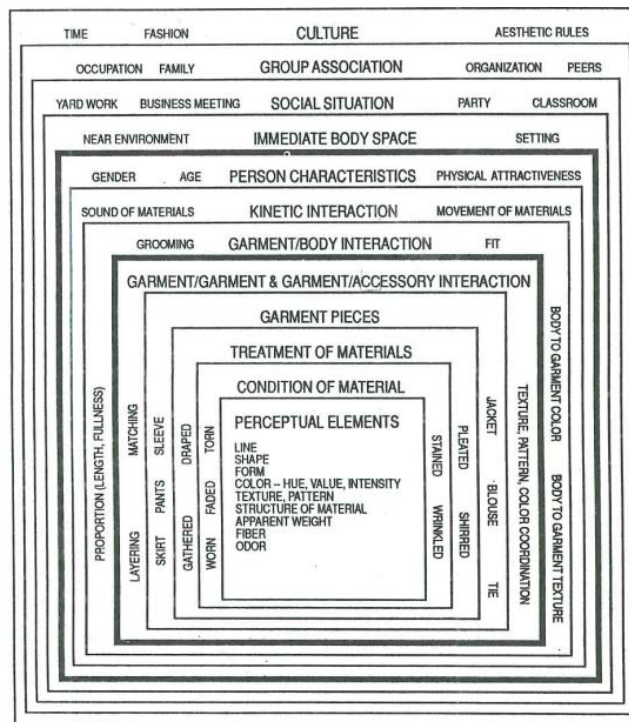


## 2.4 Fashion and Clothing as an Aesthetic Discourse

This section establishes fashion as a domain of aesthetic inquiry by investigating relevant theories and methods of aesthetics. The aim of this study is to offer a new perspective on the interpretation of fashion and clothing. Thus, the following review of the literature sheds light on this aspect from an aesthetic domain and provides a basis for theoretical and methodological approaches to the study.

Aesthetics has established close connections with various disciplines, including sociology (e.g. Boudieu, 1984; Entwistle, 2002; Simmel, 1968), psychology (e.g. Kaiser, 1997; Rudd & Lennon, 2001; Sproles, 1985) and semiotics (e.g. Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). Understanding fashion in the aesthetic domain requires a

consideration of complex, socially constructed categories of experience. Therefore, the diversity of theories should be identified in light of the phenomena to be thoroughly explained.

After a brief review of aesthetics in the field of fashion, this section examines the literature that is closely related to this study. Davis' (1996) theoretical and methodological perspective is useful for the examination of visual design towards texts but not practices, which runs through much of the literature on fashion. Delong's (1998) aesthetic response links forms of dress to body, audience and context. Her work sets out concepts applicable for the study of dress as a situated bodily practice. This complex interplay delineates the understanding of fashion into a practical negotiation between dress, audience and context. Aesthetic experience involves not only the perception of sensory modalities but also the interaction among different modalities (Fiore, Moreno & Kimle, 1996). Fiore's (2010) multisensory concept of aesthetics for the merchandising and design environments is accordingly discussed in this section. Similar to contextual aesthetics (Berleant, 1970; Abbs, 1992), they put dress within a large scope, giving attention on how dress is perceived through the interaction with body, creator or audience. In addition, contextual factors are particularly emphasized during the discussion of perceiving fashion and clothing.

**2.4.1 Brief Introduction to Aesthetics and Fashion**

**2.4.1.1. Definition of Aesthetics**

Before discussing the domain of aesthetic inquiry in fashion, it is necessary to briefly explain the definition of aesthetics. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of beauty and art for its creation and appreciation. Williams (1976, pp. 31-32) examines the historical development of aesthetics in its meanings and uses. Under his examination, aesthetics originated from the Greek in the early 19th century, with the definition of "sense perception" by Baumgarten in his work *Aesthetica*. Baumgarten acknowledged beauty as phenomenal perfection, with its emphasis on apprehension through the physical senses. In Kant, aesthetics was also regarded as a sensuous phenomenon, but the scope of aesthetics was broadened to include "the conditions of sensuous perception". Another definition of aesthetics came from Lewes, who considered it the "abstract science of feeling". During this period, aesthetics was regularly associated with fine arts. Moreover, subjective sense activity achieved a dominant position in the human creativity of art. By the late 19th century, aesthetics started to be referred to as "taste" and "criticism" by Coleridge, Hamilton, Arnold and others because it frequently related to a derogatory sense. Since this period, aesthetics has moved its development into new directions, that is, the study of aesthetic judgments and consumer culture. Williams (ibid., p. 32) summarizes from this history that aesthetics specializes in art, visual appearance and beauty. It formulates a number of meanings that are derived from spontaneous subjective sense-activity towards art and beauty rather than from the coordinated responses obtained via social or cultural

context. Aesthetics is often construed as both fine arts and applied arts. Fine arts refer to visual arts including painting, music, sculpture and architecture, whereas applied arts are mainly associated with the design of everyday objects, with utilitarian as well as aesthetic considerations. Fashion is included in the area of applied arts.

## 2.4.1.2 Relationship Between Fashion and Art

The relationship between fashion and art has always been discussed. A great amount of evidence from research and industry suggests close connections and overlaps between fashion and art (e.g. Craik, 2009; Holland, 1978; Miller, 2007; Troy, 2003; Wilson, 2003). Although the aesthetic literature in fashion has been evolving for years, fashion remains easily overlooked by the aesthetic domain (Sproles, 1985). The lack of research on the aesthetics of fashion accordingly raises many controversial questions. Among them, there have been key debates as to whether fashion is a form of art.

One significant way to explore the crossovers of fashion and art is to consider fashion as part of art. As Hollander (1978) declares, "dress is a form of visual art, a creation of images with the visible self as its medium" (p. 311). Based on Hollander's notion, Wilson (2003) defines fashion as "a cultural phenomenon, as an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society" (p. 9). According to Sproles (1985), fashion is "aesthetic products and any theory of fashion will necessarily include aesthetic components" (p. 63). Similarly, Craik (2009) expresses

fashion as "a form of aesthetics or creative practice that links everyday apparel habits with consumer behavior and performance of self" (p. 189). The origins of the discussions can also be found across Troy (2003), Mackrell (2005), English (2007), McRobbie (1999), Steele (1998) and other contemporary scholars. They treat fashion as a domain of aesthetic inquiry and deal with the crossovers of fashion and art in numerous ways. From their perspectives, fashion needs to be acknowledged as an artistic form and aesthetic realm with its own theories and expressions.

Another way of viewing fashion and art is to protest against fashion as a component of aesthetic domain. They insist on fashion and art working as two different terms and suppose that fashion should be separated from art. Kim (1998) gives some examples from fashion experts through the analysis of art magazines. Similar interpretations are also identified in the interviews of some fashion designers. For example, Kawakubo and Miyake remark that fashion design is not art and they are not artists. From their conversations, these scholars or practitioners seek to maintain a distinction between fashion and art through their understanding of these two realms. Following the preceding considerations, Miller (2007) suggests addressing clothes from two viewpoints, namely, functional aspects and aesthetic dimension. She believes both utilitarian and aesthetics are helpful to evaluate clothes.

Müller (2000) points out that the relationship between fashion and art give rise to a number of new perspectives. These perspectives include reassessing the meaning of

life, revisiting the fashion system, creating a spiritual dimension and using clothing as an artistic expression. However, problems also emerge from the existing literature. For example, all of this aesthetic literature bears directly on the parallels between fashion and other aesthetic forms (Craik, 2009). Accordingly, the discussion in this regard have only received scattered examination and suffered from a dearth of systemic theorization (Craik, 2009; Geczy & Karaminas, 2012).

### 2.4.1.3 Application of Aesthetic Expertise to Fashion

Aesthetics has been applied to fashion through different directions. Sproles (1979) suggests three ways to characterize the aesthetics of fashion. They are style, design elements and the interaction between style and the consumer's physical characteristics of body type and complexion. Moreover, Sproles (1981) introduces and conceptualizes these three basic models in the theory on the relationship between aesthetics and fashion: the art movement, ideals of beauty, aesthetic perception and learning.

From this purpose, the application of aesthetic theories and methods to fashion can be construed from two prominent directions, that is, aesthetic judgments and consumer culture. Aesthetic judgment is the ability to discriminate beauty through the perception of fashion at a sensory level. It insists on understanding fashion as a sensory pleasure and examines people's affective response to an object or phenomenon. In doing so, attention is focused on the judgments of aesthetical values.

Relevant literature can be found in the works of Craik (2009), Davis (1996), Delong (1998), Eicher and Evenson (2015), Entwistle (2000), Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) and Wilson (2003). Consumer culture primarily concerns how aesthetics influences and motivates consumers' behavior. It focuses on the relationships of consumers to aesthetics and function, examining how consumers respond to the aesthetic attributes of fashion design. The literature which takes account of consumer experience includes aesthetic economy of fashion (Postrel, 2002; Entwistle, 2002), merchandising and design environments (Fiore, 2010), consumer behavior (Chattaraman & Rudd, 2006; Eckman, 1997, Eckman & Wagner, 1995; Holbrook, 1999; Morganosky, 1987; Sproles, 1979, 1981) and aesthetic experience (Fiore, Moreno, & Kimle, 1996a, b, c). Despite this wealth of literature, there are still many things unexplained or little examined. As discussed in the previous section, the ambivalence towards fashion remains existent and a systemic analysis of aesthetics in the field of fashion is needed.

### 2.4.1.4 Contextual Inquiry into Aesthetic Domain

Different from the prevailing thoughts, Berleant (1970) develops a distinct way of understanding the arts, which he refers to as "the aesthetic field". It is an approach that considers the notion of inclusiveness and context within every aesthetic occasion. He (ibid.) defines the aesthetic field as the context through which people experience art objects and recognizes the context as a situation that integrates all objects, activities and experiences in question (p. 50). Such inclusive setting offers an accurate

description of art, by means of which relevant questions can be addressed effectively. The four separate elements in the aesthetic field (Berleant, 1970) are art object, perceiver, artist and performer. The art object is the physical object or the event through which aesthetic experience is realized. As the central focus of the aesthetic field, it delivers a concrete stimulus for the generation of experience. In addition to the practice of artists, Berleant suggests the participation of perceiver as a crucial aspect of aesthetic experience. Hence, the role of perceiver is emphasized in the aesthetic field. Artistic creation is more than producing art objects; it also involves the creation of conditions for aesthetic experience. From the producer and perceiver's perspectives, the artist provides a wide variety of activities that result in aesthetic perception. The artist thus becomes a participant in the aesthetic field. To Berleant, the aspect of the performing activity contributes in other ways to the aesthetic experience. As integral part of experience, the performer forms another essential constituent of the aesthetic field. Berleant believes that the aesthetic field exists as a unity, in which its members including art object, perceiver, artist and performer interdependently connect to each other with varying degrees of functions.

In addition to these various elements, Berleant (ibid.) proceeds to explore the factors that may influence the aesthetic field. These include biological, psychological, material, technological, historical, social and cultural factors. He considers that aesthetic experience comes from an integrated analysis in which all these elements and factors play a role in understanding and explaining the aesthetic field (see Figure

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2.2). This description of the aesthetic field in Berleant's (ibid.) concept is called "aesthetic transaction" (p. 83). Transactional experience occurs in an environment which involves artistic perceiver and perceptual aesthetic object. Such occurrence of aesthetic transaction promotes the interrelation of all the elements and factors and ensures the perceptual integrity of the aesthetic field.

**Figure 2.2** The Aesthetic Field (Berleant, 1970, p. 53)
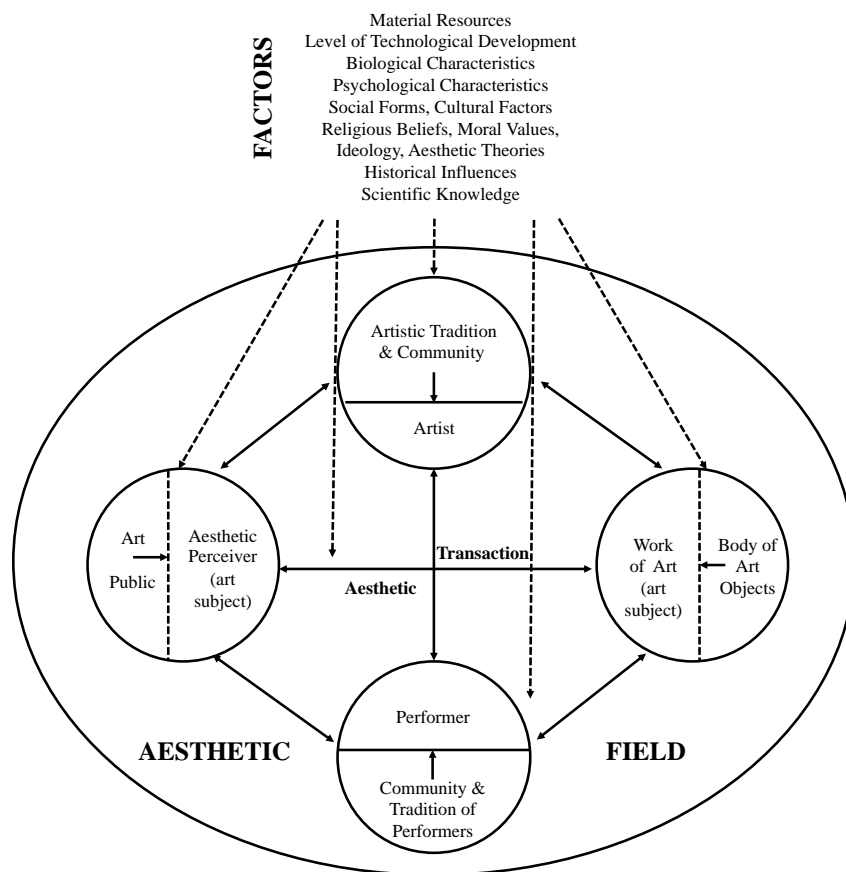


Berleant (ibid.) accounts for dualism between aesthetic and cognitive modes in addressing aesthetic experience. As Berleant (ibid.) observes, dualism functions to avoid inappropriate reduction of multiple experiences to one particular mode (p. 106). Such an approach provides the basis for a matrix definition of aesthetic experience

and thus suggests directions for the investigation of specific critical examinations and theoretical generalizations. He also examines the criticism's relationship to the aesthetic field (Figure 2.3). In contrast to the perceiver, the critic engages in a cognitive process, which requires a critical attitude to reflect on the transactional experience of the field. What the critic concerns is to express an opinion about the value of an artistic object. From this point, Berleant's aesthetic theory can be viewed as a critical reflection upon aesthetic experience, deriving from the combination of aesthetic value with a philosophy of criticism.

**Figure 2.3** Relationship of Criticism to the Aesthetic Field (Berleant, 1970, p. 148)
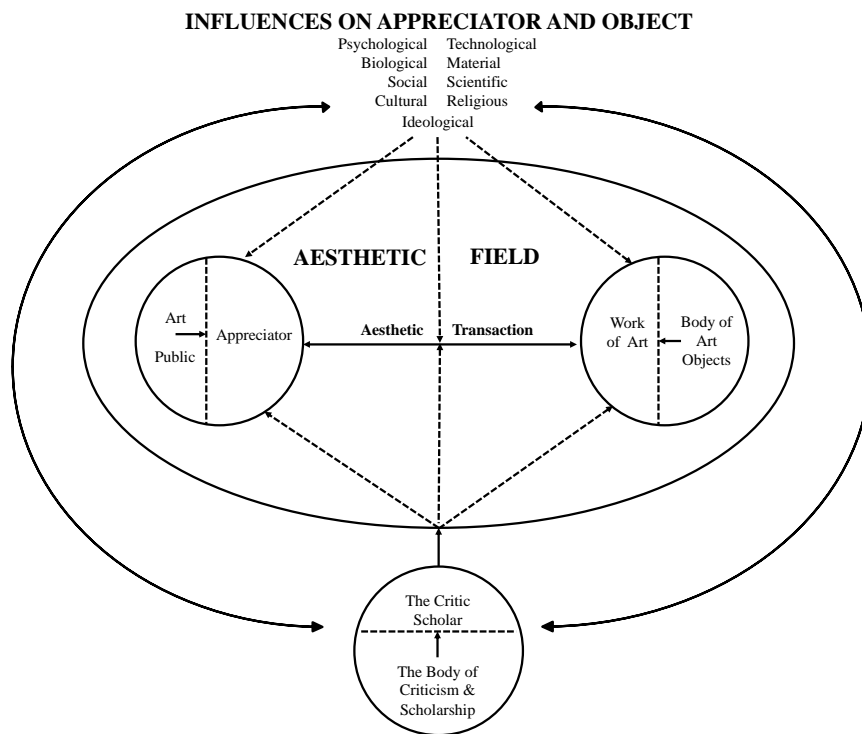


Another investigation of aesthetic field is conducted by Abbs (1992), who discusses the concept under the background of artistic education. In his definition, aesthetic field is a complex web of energy where its parts are developed in a reciprocal

relationship (p. 248). The concept of aesthetic field by Abbs (ibid.) is diagrammatically portrayed in Figure 2.4. Abbs (ibid.) considers the aesthetic field as a cyclical journey which can be broken into four essential elements, namely, making, presenting, responding and evaluating. These four elements form a pattern of relationships into the whole as parts are not self-contained but gather their meaning through interaction with all the other parts. Each element therefore can act as a starting point, and there is no particular sequence within. In addition, Abbs (ibid.) points out that each element is merely a part of a greater whole, and its meaning derives not from itself but from its intrinsic relationship to that totality. Thus, it is important to discern the whole complex interaction of the field and to use that knowledge for the organization of work.

**Figure 2.4** Diagrammatic Representation of the Aesthetic Field (Abbs, 1992, p. 248)
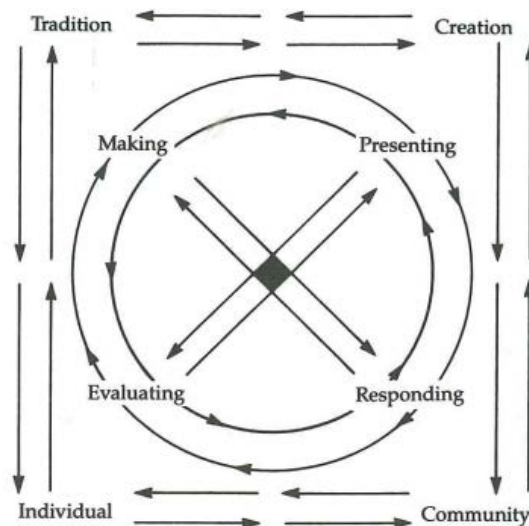


By examining the features of aesthetic domain, this literature offers a set of descriptive approaches to interpreting aesthetics and relating them to a given culture.

In comparison with Berleant, Abbs' model focuses more on the energy in a reciprocal flow and the continuity of dynamic processes in the aesthetic field. Although they adopt different terminologies, their discussions share common features in terms of theoretical construction. Based on Berleant and Abbs, aesthetic domain should refer not to a series of art object but to a highly complex field linking the discrete object to the people who perceive it, the artist to the audience and both the artist and audience to all inherited culture. Hence, the discrete object should not be conceptually separated from the complex field in which it operates. From their perspectives, understanding aesthetics requires viewing the whole operating system which refers to indissoluble and interrelated components, not to discrete objects.

To sum up, the aesthetic field has two characteristics. The first is the notion of "aesthetic engagement" (Berleant, 1970, p. 6). Aesthetic engagement emphasizes the perceptual involvement that challenges traditional aesthetic concepts and extends the range of appreciation into wide domains. Therefore, the aesthetic field gives a complete description of artworks by incorporating the functions of art object, perceiver, artist and performer into the aesthetic field. The second new direction to which it points is the environment. The environment is not only closely interrelated with one another but also deeply influenced by other factors such as from society, history, culture and technology. These two characteristics accordingly become guiding concepts in the later exploration of fashion and clothing during meaning making.

**2.4.2 Davis (1996): Visual Design in Dress**

In her widely influential book, Davis (1996) provides a general theoretical account of how people experience and understand visual design in dress. She views clothing as one example of design products which is created through the same fundamental design process. Thus, she argues that this framework can be applied to all designed and used products in daily life.

Davis (ibid.) stretches the concept of design as process and as product. Design as process involves the steps in planning and creating everything. Design as product is described in two major categories, namely, sensory and behavioral. Sensory design includes products perceived through the physical senses and is thus classified into visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory. Clothing as a sensory design product is most often experienced as visual and tactile design. Behavioral design refers to the patterns or ways in terms of actions or events. It is evident in every area of human endeavor at large-scale level, as "macro-design"; at moderate level, as "mid-range design" or at small-scale, as "micro-design". The process of clothing as a behavior design product, including production, distribution, consumption and use, occurs at all three levels. Through this interpretation, clothing involves both sensory and behavioral design: it may be perceived through the senses and interpreted through behavior. To increase originality and creativity, Davis (ibid.) calls for "cross-sensory interpretation" which encourages oneself to access a wide range of experiences and translate them into other forms of expression. Her explication of design provides a

contextual perspective for this study which focuses on the visual aspects of fashion and clothing.

After the general theoretical discussion, Davis (ibid.) narrows down the view of design into three basic aspects. They are functional, structural and decorative design. Functional design deals with the physiological and performance roles of a garment; structural design addresses the configuration of a garment and the way it is assembled to meet its purposes; decorative design is about the aesthetic aspects relating to a garment's appearance. Davis (ibid.) acknowledges that a well-designed garment needs to successfully incorporate part of these three aspects, in which each aspect fulfills its purpose and interacts with the others.

In her design framework, Davis (ibid.) also shows the influence of visual impressions on social acceptability and discusses the use of optical illusions in dress to control appearance and increase cultural acceptability. These illusions use the elements and principles of visual design to create culturally desirable effects that will enhance personal acceptability and garment performance. Davis (ibid.) examines each element according to conceptual definition, its aspects and their variations, potential and limitations, physical and psychological effects and manner of application to dress. The elements, in her interpretation, are space, line, shape and form, light, color, texture and pattern. Figure 2.5 summarises Davis' visual design elements in dress. In addition to element, she describes the principles as linear, highlighting and synthesizing for the

manipulation of elements into specific visual illusion and effects. Each principle is organized based on conceptual definition, physical and psychological effects, elements to which it applies, relationship to other principles, and structural and decorative manner of its application to dress. Although each is distinct in theory, all of them interact with one another to create the appreciation of dress. Finally, she explores the elements and principles of clothing in social and cultural contexts. Her application suggests the ways to create the desired illusions and effects for specific figure areas and moods and demonstrates the versatility and universality of the elements and principles around the world.

**Figure 2.5** Visual Design Elements in Dress (Davis, 1996)
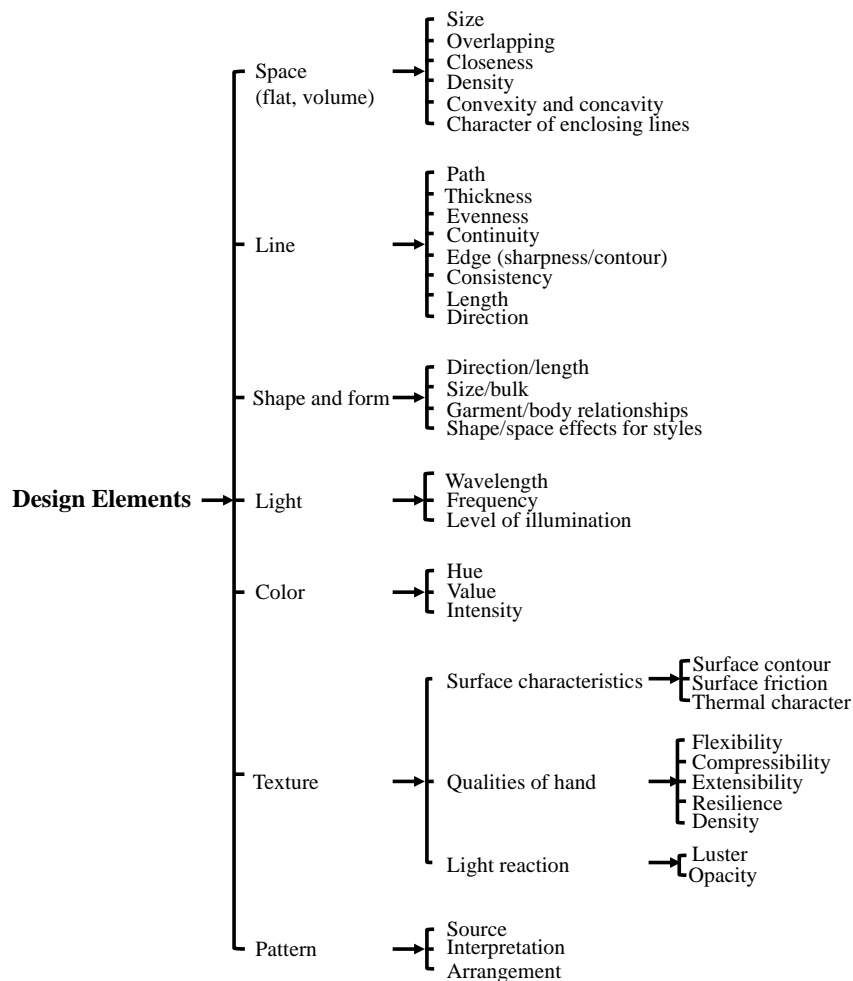
Davis' (ibid.) notions of visual design in dress help clarify the nature which clothing should have and provide a framework to understand the creation of clothing and its similarities to other products in people's lives. Her framework is significant for the present discussion of fashion and clothing as a semiotic study for meaning making. Drawing upon Davis' (ibid.) theory, frameworks of multiple semiotics towards fashion and clothing are developed and mapped onto the interpretation of fashion and clothing within a contemporary Chinese context.

### 2.4.3 Delong (1998): Aesthetic Response

Delong's framework for visual analysis of dress (1998) is based on the need to adopt a professional viewpoint and understand the aesthetic responses of the audience. Her framework intends to explore the assumptions and meanings of the perception. In her work, professional relevance includes applications for the design, manufacture and merchandising of apparel. Compared with Davis's discussion, Delong's framework takes into consideration the significant role of body and context in the understanding of clothing. Moreover, her work is concerned about professional application in the fashion industry.

In Delong's (1998) terms, aesthetics is defined as understanding perception of forms of dress, their characteristic features and reactions to them. This understanding includes people's relationship to the entire form and its meanings, the characteristics of the audience, and the context including both immediate viewing circumstance and

specific cultural milieu. Aesthetic response (Delong, 1998) refers to the evaluation of

a person towards dress, which arises from experiences stimulated by looking. It

belongs to personal expression, which involves people's selections and thus represents

their tastes and preferences. Aesthetic response also includes a shared or collective

expression of groups to which people belong. Many factors, such as personalities,

experiences and culture, can influence aesthetic response. According to Delong (ibid.),

aesthetic response should be approached through dynamic interactions across form,

viewer and contexts. Figure 2.6 illustrates the interactional viewing process of

aesthetic response.

**Figure 2.6** Delong's (1998) Aesthetic Response
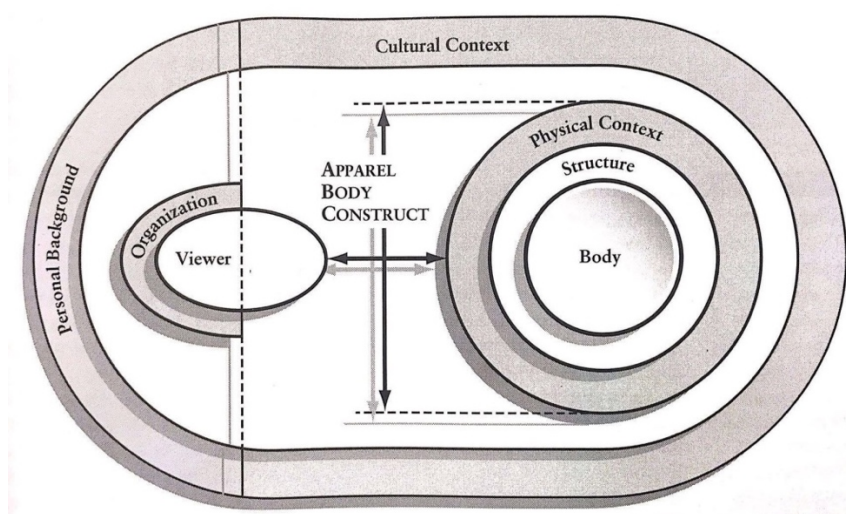


In this viewing process, the form is involved in details of clothing, the body and

interrelationships between clothing and body. The form is defined by the interaction

of lines, shapes, textures and colors. Style is the distinctive manner of expression

regarding the organization of part. Viewer is considered either the wearer or observer

of the form. Individual viewer's preference and traits, whether stable or momentary, can affect the viewer's perception and behavior. Context relates to the physical and the cultural contexts of the viewer. Delong (ibid.) argues that the understanding of dress requires the viewer looking at the entirety of the "apparel-body-construct" (ABC). It is a term posited by Delong (ibid.) to stress the importance of the interaction of the viewer with the form. In Delong's word, perceiving this construct should consider the relationships within the clothing in addition to those of the clothing to the body and to physical and cultural contexts.

Delong (ibid.) considers that all the ABCs are made up of form structure and meaning, which derive from their features and relationships. Therefore, form and meaning constitute vital information for understanding aesthetic response. To understand aesthetic response, Delong (ibid.) proposes a four-step method of observation, differentiation, interpretation and evaluation; examines space, body, materials and other visual elements and discusses the organization of the ABC, i.e. interplay between the viewer and form. She concludes that the interpretation of the ABC depends on the form, viewer, context and their relationships before the final presentation of evaluation within the aesthetic framework.

Delong's aesthetic theory strengthens the awareness concerning the importance of aesthetic response and encourages certain practices, such as the viewing reference of the ABC. Through response to the ABC, her framework develops a sophisticated

evaluation that is essential for apparel professionals and offers a process for learning

and understanding the aesthetic views of culture and their relevance to the market.

Considering the increased demand for aesthetic expertise in the global market,

Delong's theory provides the foundation for those preparing for professional

knowledge within this industry as well as contributes to the development of the

theoretical framework of this study.


**2.4.4 Fiore (2010): Aesthetics for Merchandising and Design**

Fiore (2010) offers a comprehensive understanding of aesthetics with its focus on the

concepts of aesthetics and their effects on product value and consumer behavior. Her

work recognizes the importance of aesthetic appeal in consumers and bridges the gap

between the study of aesthetics and its application in the merchandising and design

environments. In this work, Fiore (ibid.) provides a broad definition of aesthetic

experience, which can be applicable beyond apparel. For her, aesthetic experience is

the selection or appreciation of product or environmental qualities to produce pleasure

or satisfaction (p. 4). She stresses the importance of aesthetic experience to consumers

and posits that merchandising and design professionals must understand the aesthetic

experience of the product and environment.


Fiore (ibid.) further elaborates on the definitions of formal, expressive and symbolic

qualities. Formal qualities refer to the structural or compositional features, which can

be directly perceived. In the product, they include color, texture, line, shape, balance,

rhythm and proportion, whereas in the consumer environment, they specify color, texture, tempo of music and pleasant scents that attract consumers. Expressive qualities are utilized to express or evoke emotions. Two forms of expression are evident: one is inherent in the form that results from formal qualities and the other arises from learned responses that are shared by a group. Symbolic qualities represent the meaning for communication. Fiore (ibid.) states that pleasure is derived from creating or imaging one's representation of the world as well as from understanding the ideas of others. Therefore, products, environments and subjective images of consumers can contribute to symbolic meaning that finally fosters aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience, in Fiore's (ibid.) notion, involves more than pleasure from formal qualities; it also involves feelings evoked and messages communicated. Thus, when creating an aesthetic experience, one has to attend to the interactions among form, expression and meaning.

Four basic premises of her notion are identified throughout the book. First, the central concern of Fiore's theory is that aesthetics is a multisensory experience, to which all the senses contribute - sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste and kinesthetics. In terms of product, aesthetics is the result of the interaction between the product and consumer's body with multisensory properties experienced during the appreciation. The consumer environment, including fashion shows, store settings and websites, is also a multisensory setting that interacts with the product and contributes to the aesthetic experience. Hence, a discussion of the visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory and kinetic

elements of design is presented. In addition, the book demonstrates the manner in which these sensory stimuli contribute to positive brand experience for the consumer. Similar to Fiore's theory, the multisensory approach also forms the basis for this study. Thus, this approach to aesthetic experience significantly informs the theorization of multisemiotic construction for the interpretation of fashion and clothing in this study. Complementary to Fiore's focus on all sensory information, the frameworks in this study are proposed to investigate how product and consumer environment are designed to represent meaning, elicit engagement with the appreciators and how they relate to one another as well as to social qualities.

Second, the importance of the elements and principles of design is emphasized in the formation of the branding decisions by merchandising and design professionals. To build an integrated brand identity, Fiore (ibid.) proposes the aesthetic aspects of "5Ps", namely, product, people, property, product presentation and promotional activities, and examines how to create or understand branding through the 5Ps. According to Fiore (ibid.), the elements and principles of design associated with 5Ps have formal, expressive and symbolic qualities in the construction of the brand image. The benefits derived from the 5Ps are categorized as aesthetic and instrumental (utilitarian). Figure 2.7 depicts the perceived value derived from the 5Ps. Fiore argues that merchandising and design professionals must coordinate these qualities to create a unified image for a brand. To achieve the desired level of complexity and enhance consumer response, the Gestalt principles of perception and traditional principles of design should be

applied during the creation of the 5Ps.

**Figure 2.7** Perceived Value Derived from the 5Ps (Fiore, 2010, p. 73)

Value Derived from 5Ps →

— Aesthetic Benefits →

**Formal quality-based benefits**
- Sensual pleasure
- Beauty

**Expressive quality-based benefits**
- Aroused emotion
- Creative expression

**Symbolic quality-based benefits**
- Identity
- Alternative existence
- Cognitive challenge

— Utilitarian Benefits →

**Formal quality-based benefits**
- Physical comfort
- Protection and safety
- Quality
- Efficiency
- Sexual attractiveness

**Expressive quality-based benefits**
- Elevated emotion
- Reflected emotion
- Spiritual ecstasy

**Symbolic quality-based benefits**
- Self-acceptance
- Status
- Social-acceptance/affiliation
- Quest for knowledge
- Spiritual protection

Third, aesthetic evaluation or preference is related to the sociocultural context. The sociocultural context shapes one's aesthetic preference, which in turn demonstrates the sociocultural context through the qualities of the 5Ps. In Fiore's (ibid.) word, the 5Ps reflect and reinforce the sociocultural context (p. 102). Therefore, it's important for merchandising and design professionals to recognize the fact that aesthetic evaluation or preference is influenced by cultural, demographic and psychological characteristics that may vary with the background. Finally, multiple approaches in relation to aesthetic aspects are adopted to elucidate relevant problems. These include

information from research and industry and from interdisciplinary contributions of anthropology, art and design, marketing, philosophy, psychology, textiles and clothing.

The four aspects shape the foundation of Fiore's aesthetic experience and inspire the current study to investigate fashion and clothing through different approaches for a systematic analysis of multimodal meaning-making resources in fashion and clothing systems. Following her insightful work, this study comes to an understanding of aesthetic experience by considering how this experience contributes to brand identity and perceived value and how it is affected by sociocultural context.

## 2.5 Fashion and Clothing as a Semiotic Discourse

The discussion has thus far examined the main terminologies concerning the explanations of fashion and clothing from sociology, psychology and aesthetics. As indicated above, all forms of social activities stem from the human propensity to communicate through signs and symbols. The notion that humans share a fundamental need to communicate has been widely accepted as the dominant explanatory framework among theorists of fashion, such as Barnard (2002), Barthes (1985), Davis (1992), Lurie (2000), Rouse (1989) and Wilson (2003). It follows the fact that fashion and clothing are communicative because they bear meaning in a certain way. One clearly discernible approach to the meaningful aspect of fashion and clothing emerges from structuralism and semiotics, as do a great amount of works that explore the

communicative aspects of fashion and clothing.

Semiotics has come into use as a term for a distinctive approach to the study of signs and their meaning. It is related to linguistics, but language is considered as only one of many semiotic systems. A vast and various scope of topics in the realm of semiotics range across interdisciplinary territories, such as art, culture, communication, anthropology, psychology and philosophy. Many sign systems like music, film and architecture may be treated within the semiotic perspective. There have been different approaches to the study of semiotics. Scholars who use the approach and contribute to its intellectual foundations are numerous, including notable figures such as Saussure, Pierce, Eco, Greimas, Hjelmslev and Morris. Recently, one branch under the name of "social semiotic" (Halliday, 1978; Hodge & Kress, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005) has emerged to investigate human signifying practices in social and cultural circumstances and intend to explain meaning making as a social practice. Despite significant differences in the thought processes of these scholars, a great similarity exists in the general way in which they view and study human communication. The common concepts of early semiotic studies are greatly influenced by Saussure's structural linguistics. Subsequently, current trends in the study of fashion and clothing are dominantly built around the strand of his semiotic tradition. Among them, Barthes' (1973, 1977, 1985, 2012) fashion theories and Lurie's (2000) discussion on clothing have laid influential foundations for the following fashion and clothing studies. Given their dominance in the development of semiotics, the next section focuses mainly on

Saussure's theoretical tradition and its important applications in fashion and clothing discourse.

### 2.5.1 Saussure's Semiotic Tradition

### 2.5.1.1 Saussure (1915): Structural Semiotics

Semiotics was initially derived from the linguistic theory of Saussure. In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure (1915) gives the definition of semiology. In his interpretation (ibid., p. 16), semiology or semiotics refers to the general science of signs within society and to any system of signification. For Saussure (ibid.), the sign is a meaningful physical object, which consists of two components: a signifier and signified. The signifier is defined as a physical existence of the sign, whereas the signified is the meaning or mental concept to which the signifier refers. The relationship between the signifier and signified, on Saussure's account, is arbitrary. Because of this, there is no natural connection between these two components, and the relationship is not a matter of individual choice (Saussure, 1915, pp. 67 - 70).

One major contribution of Saussure to the history of semiotics is his consideration of sign phenomena as system. In his argument, language is a system of signs and social phenomenon. He calls this linguistic system as langue (language), which is opposed to parole (speech). According to Saussure, parole denotes the concrete utterances of the use of langue; it is speech acts used by individuals within a social sign system. By contrast, langue means the abstract and systematic rules and conventions of a sign

system; it is manifested through the study of parole. Apart from the signifier and signified, Saussure mentions two other systematic relationships: synchrony and diachrony, as well as syntagm and paradigm. To separate language structures from their historical evolution, Saussure introduces a distinction between synchrony and diachrony. Synchronic approach analyzes a sign system at a specific point of time without considering its history. Diachronic analysis instead focuses on the development and evolution of a sign system through its history. Semiotics is characterized by its attention to structural analysis; hence, Saussure further theorizes two dualistic forms of relations between syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Syntagmatic relation refers to a combination based on grammatical sequence, whereas paradigmatic relation, which Saussure calls associative relation, is a connection of functional contrasts that involves differentiation. Saussure asserts that meaning arises from the relations of differences. Thus, the value of a sign is dependent on paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. The two relations are described in terms of axes, where syntagm lies along the horizontal axis and paradigm along the vertical axis. Based on these discussions, Figure 2.8 summarises Saussure's semiotic scheme.

**Figure 2.8** Saussure's Semiotic System (adapted from Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 17)
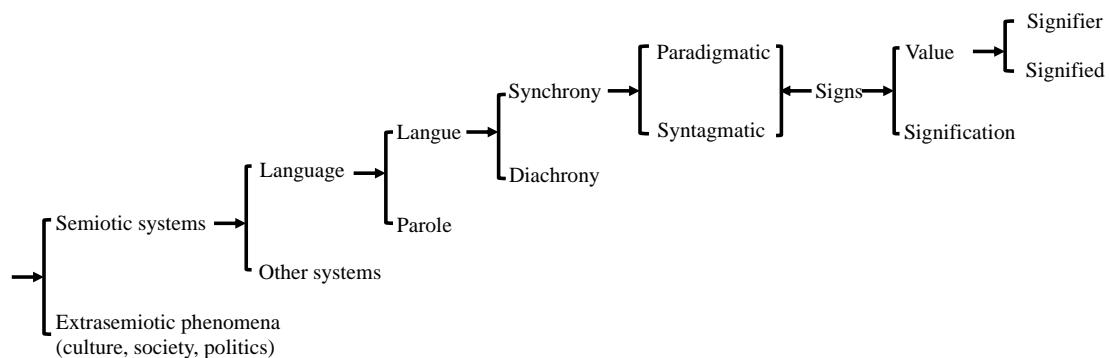
**2.5.1.2 Hjelmslev (1961): Glossematics**

Following Saussure's semiotic tradition, the linguistic sign model is subsequently developed by other scholars. Among them, Hjelmslev (1961) extends Saussure's ideas into his glossematics and systematically elaborates the concept of structural semantics. He (ibid.) redefines the two-sided planes of Saussure's sign model, i.e. signifier and signified, as expression and content. Each plane of the two sides is further stratified into semiotic form and substance. This definition accordingly establishes the four strata of a sign: expression form, expression substance, content form and content substance (Figure 2.9). In Hjelmslev's view, each stratum of a sign serves a function and exists in a parallel, dependent and solidary relationship to others. He emphasizes that substance has no independent existence but comes into being through form. Besides, Hjelmslev proposes a descriptive procedure of analysis that starts from the whole text and ends with various levels of components. He refers to this progressive top-down approach as deductive analysis. Another characteristic of Hjelmslev's model is his definition regarding the dichotomy of denotative and connotative semiotics. Based on this suggestion, connotative semiotics is one whose expression plane is a semiotics. It is in marked contrast to denotative semiotics wherein neither expression plane nor content plane is described as a semiotics. In this sense, connotative semiotics extends denotative semiotics through denotative form and substance (Figure 2.10).

Hjelmslev's discussion of glossematics is regarded as one of the most original and

important contributions to the development of semiotics. Various schools of semiotics have adopted the conceptions initiated by Hjelmslev to examine linguistic and non-linguistic modes of communication. For example, Barthes (1973, 1977, 1985, 2012) builds on useful insights from Hjelmslev's glossematics theory and applies it to diverse sign systems. Halliday (1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) follows Hjelmslev's notions, mainly paradigmatic relations and stratification of the content and expression planes, to develop SFL theories.

**Figure 2.9** Hjelmslev's (1961) Stratified Sign Model

|  | **Form** | **Substance** |
|---|---|---|
| **Content** | Content Form | Content Substance |
| **Expression** | Expression Form | Expression Substance |

### 2.5.1.3 Barthes (1973, 1977, 1985, 2012): Semiotic Theories

One of Saussure's influential followers in semiotics is Barthes. As another leading structuralist, Barthes is recognized for his contribution to the text semiotics of myth, literature, narrative and culture and also to semiotics in a broad range of visual communication. In Saussure's semiotic tradition, he further develops the systematic model of signification, which Barthes (1973) conceives as "a process" for connecting the signifier and signified to produce a sign (p. 48). Drawing on Hjelmslev's notion, Barthes (1973, 1977, 1985, 2012) further identifies two orders of signification, namely, denotation and connotation. Denotation is widely described as the literal

meaning of a sign, which is universally recognized and produced without the intervention of a code. Connotation, on the contrary, refers to associative meanings which are conventionalized and changeable. It needs to be dependent on the intervention of codes. From this sense, meanings at the connotative level go beyond the ones at the denotative level in that they are activated by context-dependent conventions or codes. In Barthes' conception, the first order of signification is denotation. At this level, a sign as a system consists of an expression (or signifier) in relation to a content (or signified). Connotation is the second order of signification, in which the first system (signifier and signified) becomes the expression or a signifier of the second system. Within this mechanism, connotation becomes a sign established on the basis of denotation. Barthes represents these relations in his model of a staggered system (Figure 2.10).

**Figure 2.10** Barthes' Model of Connotation and Denotation (Nöth, 1990, p. 311)
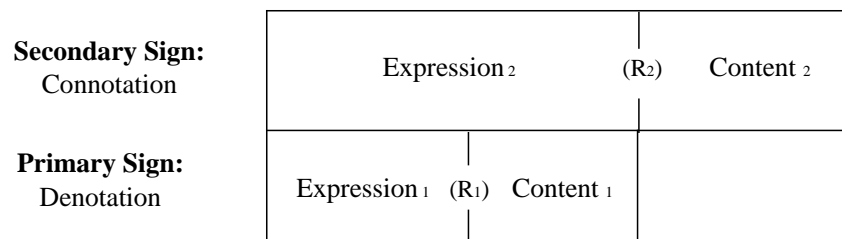


As stated, the system of connotation is dependent on background knowledge for its existence. That is, when the audience engages with a sign, their interpretations are actually the result of the social and cultural background that they introduce to integrate the levels of the signifier and signified. Barthes (2012) argues that such integration of the levels to create ideology forms a third order of signification. This

relation of a sign system to the conditions of existence is what Barthes (ibid.) refers to as myth. For Barthes, myth focuses on the semiotic phenomena and reflects the dominant ideologies of a particular time. Any item within culture can be a myth, which articulates the relationships between all the dimensions of a sign system and helps people make sense of their experiences in a culture. Consequently, the significance of context and ideology is particularly emphasized in myth. As a departure from Saussure's semiotic tradition, Barthes (2012) asserts that the very principle of myth is nature. Myth functions to naturalize the dominant ideologies, through which to ensure that they truly reflect the original condition of things and render them fully accessible to the audience. From this purpose, we may align myth with objectivity, truth and accuracy which are clearly reflected in the discourse of social and cultural circumstances (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

In Barthes' definition of myth, each sign has three orders of signification (Figure 2.11). Denotation is the first order of signification, where a sign comprises a signifier and signified. This level describes the connections between an object (signifier) and its linguistic representation (signified). The second order of signification is connotation. At this level, a denotative sign includes the signifier and signified as a signifier and signified attached to it for interpretation. The connotative level represents expressive values that are often associated with a sign. Myth forms the third order of signification, whose interpretation is heavily dependent on denotation and connotation. The signified in myth exists by means of the signifier, a sign realized through

language. The mythological level provides ideological manifestations of the world. An example to illustrate the concept of myth in the three orders of signification is leather jacket. At the denotative level, it is a military uniform and later become street wear. At the connotative level, it often relates to not only the qualities of youth, rebellion and power but also to the qualities of youth culture embedded in such as greaser, punk, rave and goth. At a mythological level, this sign is interpreted as activating the myth of youth culture: one that produces spirits in the form of garments which it constructs and the dreams, attitudes, values or behaviors that can crush them - all with a view about lifestyle.

**Figure 2.11** Barthes' Model of Myth (Barthes, 2012, p. 124)
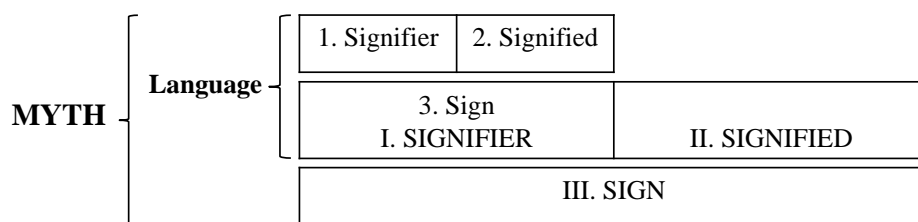


In addition, Barthes (1973) proposes a program for systematic research on non-linguistic semiotic systems: garment, food, car, furniture and architecture. In accordance with the principles of Saussure's structuralism and semiotics, he discusses the garment system based on two notions, namely, system and syntagma, langue and parole. Using Barthes' terminology, system refers to the paradigmatic axis of analysis, which is opposed to syntagmatic relationships. For garment, system is the set of garment pieces, parts and details which cannot be worn at the same time due to the same functions they fulfill. However, their variations lead to changes in meaning of

clothing (ibid., p. 63). By contrast, syntagm is described as the juxtaposition of different garment pieces, parts and details into the same style of clothing (ibid., p. 63). One dominant limitation in Barthes' system is that the rules for the combination of these elements are not mentioned. Figure 2.12 shows the syntagmatic and systematic relationships in the garment system. In analogy to Saussure's dichotomy of langue and parole, language (langue) in the garment system is formed through variations in the oppositions of garment pieces, parts and details and through the rules that govern the association of elements among themselves. Speech (parole) consists of all phenomena with respect to individual ways of wearing the garment (ibid., p. 27).

**Figure 2.12** The Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relationships in Garment System
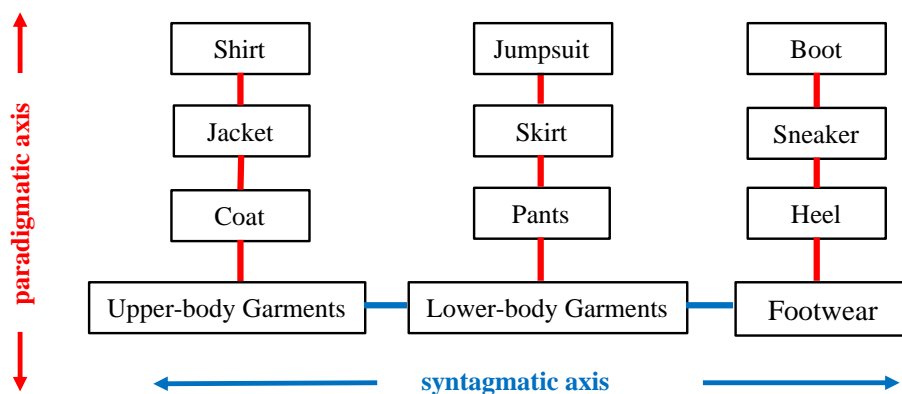


Saussure's semiotic tradition has become a dominant framework for considering fashion. The theoretical development of Saussure's semiotics in Section 2.5 is demonstrated as follows.

**Figure 2.13** Development of Saussure's Semiotic Tradition
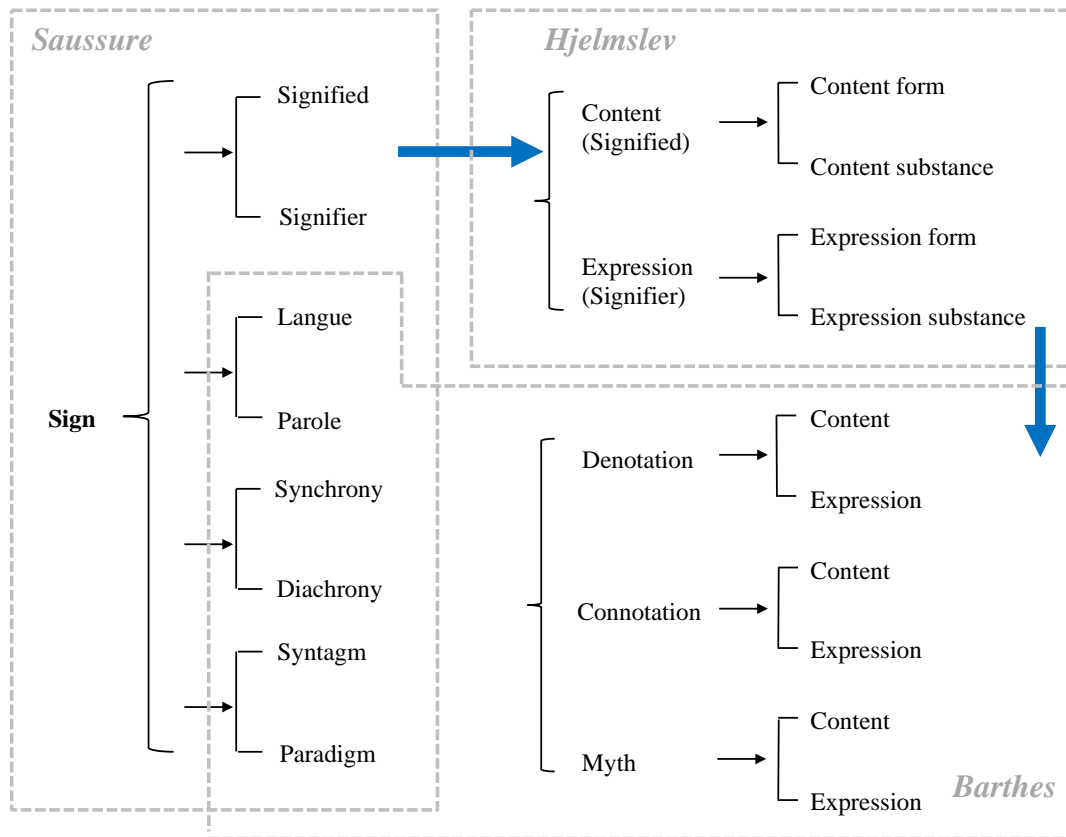


**2.5.2 Barthes (1985): The Fashion System**

Saussure's structural linguistics has exerted a strong influence on the study of fashion and clothing and development of theories in the humanities throughout the last century. The first attempt to link the principles of linguistics to clothing is made by Bogatyrev (1971) via a study of folk clothing in Eastern Europe. However, it is Barthes (1973, 1977, 1985, 2006, 2012) that eventually prompts the progress of fashion and clothing theories in an influential way through his analysis of fashion system and other relevant works on the realm.

For Barthes (1985), fashion is a system like language that is able to generate meaning

through its combinational structure. Following the principles of linguistics, Barthes (ibid.) examines fashion and the act of dressing and illustrates vestimentary linguistic code along with its rhetorical system. Through a structural analysis of women's clothing description in 1960s French magazines, he tries to establish the role of fashion magazines and explain how they contribute to the production of fashion signs. In *The Fashion System* (1985), Barthes clarifies a structural or semiotic approach to the analysis of clothing. He (ibid.) proposes three different structures for any item of clothing: 1) *technological* or real clothing, 2) *iconic* or photographic depiction of the real clothing and 3) *verbal* or written descriptions about the real clothing. He insists that the technological structure does not communicate meaning, but rather the iconic and verbal structures reveal the real clothing. Furthermore, Barthes gives first priority to the verbal structure, as he explains that the system of real clothing is not immediate signs but the discourse of fashion that assigns social meanings to clothing.

Barthes distinguishes four simultaneous levels of the written clothing system, which he calls "geology of the sign" (Figure 2.14). The first level is the real vestimentary code. The integration of signifier and signified establishes the first level sign, which he refers to as the "pseudo reality of fashion". Superimposed on the first level is the written vestimentary code or the second level. The relation between these two levels corresponds to the principle of language. That is, the signified of the second level is constituted by the sign of the first level, which is reversed in connotative semiotics. The connotation or expressive value of fashion makes up the third level. At this level,

the sign of written fashion statement on the second level becomes the signifier of the third system, whose signified is fashion. This is followed by the rhetorical system which constitutes a fourth level, where the phraseology of the fashion statement combining the signifier and signified of the third level becomes a signifier, and representation of the world becomes signified. The first two are considered as the level of denotation, whereas the last two as the level of connotation. Connotation is assumed to form the levels of analysis for the fashion system. Therefore, Barthes (ibid.) prioritizes the connotative message of fashion by explaining that fashion is a semantic system with the sole purpose of destroying meaning (p. 287).

**Figure 2.14** Barthes' Geology of Fashion System (van Leeuwen, 1983)

| 4. Rhetorical System | **Signifier** Phraseology of the Fashion Statement | | | **Signified** Representation of the World |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Fashion Value | **Signifier** The Fashion Statement below | | **Signified** Fashion | |
| 2. Written Vest. Code | **Signifier** Written Statement | **Signified** Proposition below | | |
| 1. Real Vest. Code | | **Signifier** Garment | **Signified** The World | |

Barthes' fashion theories have heuristic value and substantial contributions to the study of fashion and clothing. Based on his assumptions, there arise certain doubts which require further elucidation. These doubts are mainly around the question as to whether clothing can be represented by fashion descriptions or whether it can be compared to language. Some criticisms of the theory were cast by many scholars in no uncertain terms (Barnard, 2002; Davis, 1992; Enninger, 1985; Entwistle, 2000; Finkelstein, 1991; Kaiser, 1997; Karamura, 2005; McCracken, 1988; Nöth, 1990;

Rouse, 1989; Svendsen, 2006, to name a few). They argue that the relevance of Barthes' analysis remains confined to a rigid structural parallel with no further contributions to real fashion and clothing. Through their discussions, it seems partial to ignore the characteristics of real clothing and contentious to place written clothing always before real fashion. A distinguishing feature in decoding fashion and clothing has been widely recognized by scholars: clothing as an independent semiotic system features its distinct system, structure and expressive resources. Metaphorical reference hardly exhaustively distinguishes the phenomena between clothing and language as expressive media. In other words, neither clothing (whether real or image) nor written clothing is unable to exhaust the experiences of each other. They only share part of characteristics each owns, with the result that it is impossible for them to entirely replace or constitute each other. This means that it is problematic to draw the conclusion that written clothing can represent the true meanings of fashion while irrespective of real clothing. In addition, the codes of clothing are ambiguous and heavily context-dependent (Davis, 1992; Enninger, 1985; McCracken, 1988). There are no fixed rules of combination produced by the clothing code for the manipulation of paradigmatic relations to semiotic effects. That is, the combination of clothing elements varies tremendously depending on many contextual factors. From these points of view, clothing needs to be treated as an independent semiotic entity, which cannot all be done through linguistic representations. The exploration of fashion and clothing should be situated within a large context to discuss, not only in its immediate physical context but also in wide social and cultural contexts.

### 2.5.3 Lurie (2000): The Language of Clothes

Barthes provides a respected foundation for fashion studies and one remains influential nowadays. Many scholars have drawn on his analytical approach to reading fashion, clothing and image. The influence of his approach can be found in a strand of research that aims to decode the meaning of fashion and clothing. Lurie is one of the representative figures among them.

In *The Language of Clothes* (2000), Lurie draws a direct analogy between clothing and language. In her opinion, clothing is a language and should have its distinct vocabulary and grammar. On this account, she treats clothing as a sign system that could be, in certain manner, analogous to spoken or written language. In addition, she (ibid., p. 4) proposes that dress reflects different languages, with each having distinctive grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Within every language of clothes are different dialects and accents. In addition, each individual has his stock of words and employs personal variations of tone and meaning. A similar discussion of "speaking through clothes" has been mentioned by Eco (2007). He assumes that clothes can be used to fulfill the same sorts of things as spoken language. Both Lurie's and Eco' metaphors suggest that clothing items are organized into ensembles in much the same way as words into sentences. However, neither Lurie nor Eco provides a clear and comprehensive exploration of their communicative approaches.

Apart from Lurie and Eco, other scholars apply structural semiotic analysis to fashion

and clothing. Scholars, such as Barnard (2002), Davis (1992), Hebdige (1979) and Hollander (1978), address fashion and clothing as a communicative system. Greimas (1970), Lévi-Strauss (1983) and Bogatyrev (1971) take over certain concepts originally developed in the sphere of structural linguistics and seek to apply them to phenomena like myths and fashion. In their insightful discussions, attention has been concentrated on a less complex semiotic study to view an edifice of meaning in fashion and clothing. None of them venture to approach a detailed description of fashion and clothing as a system and discuss fashion and clothing varieties in a social and cultural context.

Thus far, many efforts have been made to understand fashion and clothing as a form of communication with each approaching it in a slightly different way. It is evident that attempts over the last years to invoke fashion and clothing semiotics have mainly been confined to Saussure's semiotic tradition. There are some limitations on Saussure's structural semiotics (for a detailed discussion, see Section 3.4). A major problem, as Barnard (2002) simply states, is that the early structural semiotic models fail to deal with matters of ideology. Therefore, adding such context to the analytic tools of semiotics is necessary to provide a complete account of fashion and clothing phenomenon. More importantly, a key question immediately arises as to whether fashion and clothing may be treated as, to a certain extent, analogous to spoken or written language. This is a metaphorical view of clothing and language and it undoubtedly leads to a mechanistic account of meaning in fashion and clothing. Many

scholars (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Davis, 1992; Enninger, 1985; Entwistle, 2000; McCracken, 1988) have disputed the idea that clothing is a communication system comparable to language. It has been pointed out that any existing resources until now cannot sufficiently deal with the complicated phenomenon involved in fashion and clothing. Accordingly, they leave the door open for modification of semiotic concepts as required for later study of fashion and clothing.

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter reviews the different approaches to fashion and clothing discourse. As illustrated above, the importance of studying fashion and clothing as a target for discourse is well established in a number of disciplines. Scholars increasingly recognize the necessity of fashion communication, not only in traditional research fields but also in its interrelationship with other fields. Wilson (2003, p. 247) argues that the ambivalence of fashion obscures the relationship among art, psychology and sociology. To illuminate the hidden message within its purposes, one should combine the knowledge of sociology, psychology and aesthetics towards interdisciplinary collaboration.

According to **sociological** approach, fashion is a component of society as a whole. On the macro level, structural functionalists consider fashion as an independent system with various parts functional for its survival, whereas conflict theories emphasize change and social inequalities underlying the social stability of the fashion industry.

On the micro level, symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy explain how fashion and clothing contribute to communication through face-to-face interaction and draw the connections across disciplinary categories. Distinct from established theories, fashion-ology initiated by Kawamura brings in a new perspective through the integration of the macro and micro levels to understand the fashion industry. For **psychologists**, the meanings of fashion and clothing develop as a result of situations and interaction between various individuals. The uniqueness of social psychology is to adopt a contextual approach to fashion and clothing and study their meanings within a large context. **Aesthetics** offers a different perspective to view fashion and clothing. In the aesthetic domain, fashion and clothing is understood by considering complex, socially constructed categories of experience. From a **semiotic** viewpoint, fashion and clothing is similar to a language, which communicates meaning in systems. Structural semiotics approaches fashion and clothing from a mechanistic point of view and emphasizes the language of clothing with grammar, syntax and vocabulary. However, this metaphorical approach has been disputed by several scholars due to its theoretical limitations. Although the above-mentioned approaches comprise a "contextual" (Kaiser, 1997) lens to decipher the meaning of fashion and clothing, the focuses of sociology, psychology, aesthetics and semiotics are entirely different in the present case. The sociology of fashion attempts to address social actions and concern them with social situations and systems. The psychology of fashion focuses on the relationships between clothing and individuals in social situations. Aesthetics describes the experience through the negotiation of meaning

among object, creator, audience, performer and context. Semiotics is directed towards fashion and clothing through a set of representational image as well as a series of complex practices in the fashion industry. Inspired by Kaiser (ibid., pp. 56-60), Table 2.2 offers a summary of the existing literature reviewed in this chapter.

Based on these insightful theoretical foundations, this study adds to a new view of semiotic approach to fashion and clothing systems as well as contributes to a new understanding of fashion and clothing phenomenon. Specifically, this study aims to develop theoretical frameworks for relating fashion and clothing to semiotic research and recognizing how fashion practices can help expand existing reflections on academic research. Meanwhile, this study seeks to offer perspectives that are complementary to those developed in sociological, psychological and aesthetic theories, as well as semiotic and other cultural studies in relation to fashion and clothing. By doing so, the study may offer insights into the manner in which fashion and clothing is employed to construe particular meanings and establish the relationship between them and the social contexts of their production and reception. Thus far, fashion and clothing have suffered from a lack of comprehensive and systematic analysis, especially in meaning-making perspective. The systemic functional theories of Halliday (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) provide an interdisciplinary forum for the rigorous analysis of fashion and clothing. Its theoretical principles and wide applicability towards various semiotics are further discussed in the following sections.

**Table 2.2** Comparison of Four Approaches to Fashion and Clothing Discourse

| Approach | | Point of View | Production Process | Relation to Context | Contribution to Understanding | Change in Meaning | Level of Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sociology** | **Structural Functionalism** (Macro) | Interrelated parts of society including functional individuals and social groups | A component of society with various parts functionally necessary for survival | Meaning arising from social collaboration for a stable and cohesive system | Each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of society as a whole | Social dysfunction of its constituent elements | Social organization |
| | **Conflict Theory** (Macro) | Individuals initiating a trend and individuals following the trend | Change and social inequalities underlying the apparently stable social arrangements of the fashion industry | Meaning in social dynamics and reconstructions | Social inequalities in terms of how they contribute to social differences and perpetuate differences in power | Social change | Social processes |
| | **Symbolic Interactionism** (Micro) | Interacting individuals | Socially constructed through individual joint actions | Meaning grounded in social context and studied in everyday life | Processes by which meanings of appearance are socially constructed and reconstructed as humans fit their interpretations and lines of action together | Processes of interpretation and reinterpretation by different individuals | Self Social processes |
| | **Dramaturgy** (Micro) | Interacting individuals (performer, audience) | Social interaction among performer, audience and stage | Meaning relevant to social context and to everyday situations | The influence of impression management on social establishment | Variations in elements comprising the presentation of self | Self Social processes |
| | **Fashion-ology** (Meso) | Fashion system consisting of functional individuals and social groups & Interacting individuals | Integration of different levels of processes into fashion system | Meaning emphasizes social stability and dynamics (macro), meanwhile it relates to social interplay between various individuals | Fashion as an institutionalized system that produces the concept as well as the phenomenon and practice of fashion | The coordination of components from different levels in fashion system | Social organization Self Social processes |

| Discipline | | | (micro) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Modernity & Postmodernity** | | Modern individuals | Contradictions between individualism and tradition; the dynamics of social change | Meaning involved in a wide range of interrelated historical processes and cultural phenomena | Fashion as a form to present self in the modern society | Socioeconomic changes & Individual transformations | Social processes Cultural practices |
| **Sociology of Culture** | | Members of a society | Cultural practices and material products in the processes of cultural production and consumption | Culture situated within the broad context of social conditions | Fashion as a set of symbolic codes used by members of a society and manifested through structural relations | Cultural and fashion changes, influenced in part by unresolved ambivalence about the social order | Cultural practices (including linkages to social relations) |
| **Psychology** | Perceivers | Perceivers use their cognitive structures to interpret | Perceivers explain social outcomes in terms of individual traits or context | Individual thought processes used to store and retrieve information as appropriate to perceive and understand appearances | When perceivers' cognitive structures do not adequately explain social realities | Individual, implications for interpersonal relations |
| **Aesthetics** | Individuals involved in sensory perception (creator, appreciator) | Negotiation among object, body, creator, appreciator and context | Categories of aesthetic experience are socially constructed | Experience from creating one's own representation of the world as well as from understanding the ideas of others | Conditions of sensuous perception change | Subjective, sensory, emotional values |
| **Semiotics** | Individuals sharing a common culture | Cultural representation of social relations and ideology | Culture as a large context in which messages are perpetuated across historical contexts, whereas other messages change along with fashion | Study of clothes as cultural objects, composing part of a system by which culture sends messages to itself | Cultural and fashion change, influenced in part by unresolved ambivalence about the social order | Cultural practices (including linkages to social relations) |

# CHAPTER 3 SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL (SOCIAL SEMIOTIC) APPROACH TO MULTISEMIOTICS

## 3.1 Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a developing interest in the analysis of communication modes besides language. The development relating linguistic theories to other semiotics resources began with Prague School during the 1930s and 1940s and with the Paris School during the 1960s and 1970s (Nöth, 1990; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). More recently, it has been widely expanded under the framework of SFL. SFL is derived from Halliday and further developed by other linguists, such as Hasan, Matthiessen and Martin. It is a theory for viewing language as a socially based semiotic system. One of its distinctive underpinnings is that all semiotic activities are socially constructed, and meaning is generated in terms of its relationship to society. This theory emerges from the study of spoken and written language and of the context in which language is interpreted. By functional, SFL focuses not on the form of language but on its functions performed in context. By systemic, SFL explicates meaning by theorizing systems as representations of choices available for language users.

Multimodality is the study of how diverse semiotic resources combine to make meaning within a culture, which draws on the principles of systemic functional theory. This theoretical base distinguishes multimodality from other approaches to semiotics

and is generalized as "social semiotics" (Nöth, 1990; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). As a newly emerging field in discourse studies, multimodality has thrived since the 1990s. Nowadays, it has grown from a linguistic branch towards an interdisciplinary field that includes knowledge from different disciplines. Therefore, multimodality is considered not a theory but "a field of application" (Jewitt, 2014, p. 2). The recognition that all types of communication are multimodal can have influential implications for applied linguistics and contribute to the interpretation of semiotic products or events.

This study is a social semiotic exploration of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. The theoretical methodology is originally inspired by systemic functional theories postulated by Halliday. Before beginning its exploratory journey, this study accounts for the origin and the direction of its methodological inquiry. Therefore, this chapter reviews the main theoretical foundations underpinning the analysis, which includes SFL (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2007a, b; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and its application to the multimodal research (O'Toole's, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Iedema, 2001, 2003).

## 3.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Halliday's (1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) social semiotic theory of language

known as SFL is located within the theoretical realm of "sociosemiotics" defined by

Nöth (1990, p. 6). In SFL, language is a component of the whole social system.

Halliday (1978) confirms that a dialectic relation exists between language and social

system: language construes the social system, in turn language is construed by the

social system. It is this dialectic interpretation that gives rise to "language as social

semiotic" (ibid.).

Within Halliday's conceptual framework (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen,

2014), SFL has certain characteristics. First, it is a systemic theory in which language

is viewed not as a set of rules, but as resources for making meaning. Second, it is a

stratified semiotic system, with the strata articulated by the process of realization and

extended beyond language to social context. Third, it is a functional theory, assigning

equal value to three general functions of language in social activity: ideational,

interpersonal and textual and representing all three social functions simultaneously in

system and structure. Fourth, it is a socially motivated semiotic system. These

theoretical principles work as key guidance for the analysis of fashion semiotic theory

in this study and are thus elaborated separately below.

### 3.2.1 The Stratification of Text and Context [2]

The fundamental concern of SFL is the organization of language in relation to its use.

In SFL, Halliday (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

develops a view that the way of understanding language lies in the study of text and

context. Therefore, an intrinsic and extrinsic theory of language functions is pursued by modeling language and social context as semiotic systems (Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Among them, the intrinsic theory of language function is projected onto social context which constitutes the extrinsic theory of language use. Based on this model, language is organized into tri-stratified coding system as semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology (graphology), in addition to phonetics as its most basic level (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Context is interpreted as a stratum located above language. In accordance with Malinowski (1922) and Firth (1968), context is also treated as a stratified system comprising two strata: contexts of situation and culture via the components of register and genre. Context of situation refers to the immediate social environment of a text. It is encapsulated in the text through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Context of culture refers to a large cultural background which needs to be considered in the interpretation of meaning. In Martin's (1992) stratified system, a further stratum ideology exists which is realized through genre. Ideology functions to interplay with text and serves as the source for creating meaning (ibid.). The stratified model of language and its semiotic context is outlined in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1** The Stratification of Text and Context

Context: ideology

Context: genre

Context: register

Content: semantics

Content: lexicogrammar

**Expression:**
phonology

**Expression:**
phonetics
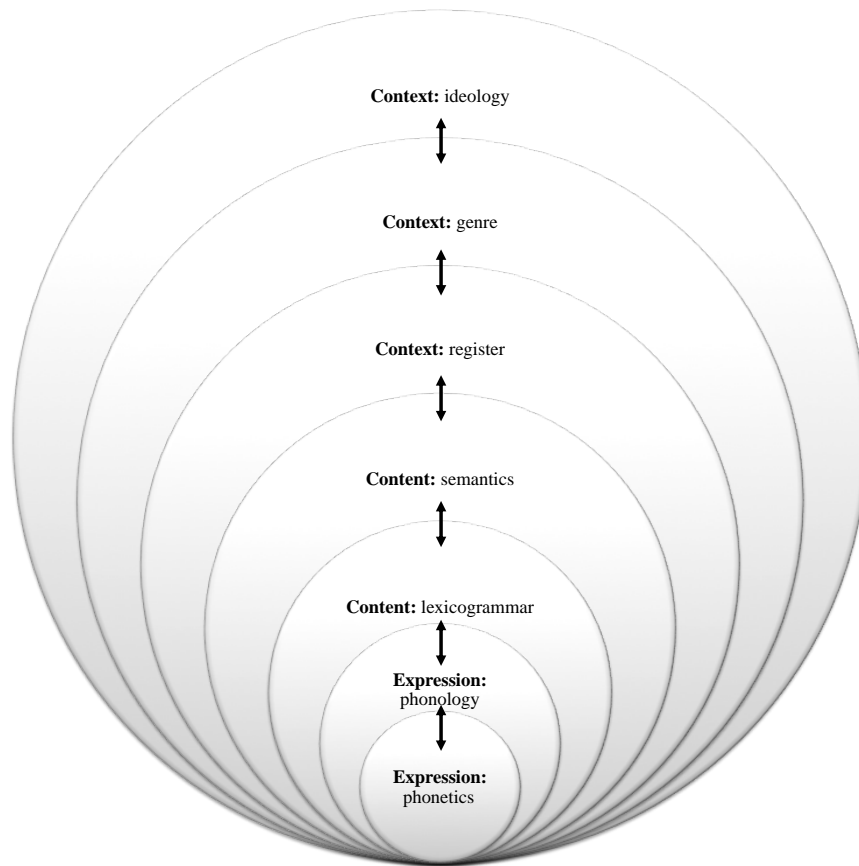
The strata defined by SFL constitute a substantial component in the formulation of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems. This study follows the notions proposed by Hjelmslev (1961), Halliday (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and Lemke (1984, 1995). Through these stratified notions, a close relationship is built between the intrinsic organization of clothing and extrinsic organization of social context. In addition, Matthiessen (2007b) comments that stratification can further define three perspectives in the analysis of multimodality, including "from above" ("from the context plane"), "from below" ("from the expression plane") and "from roundabout" ("from the content plane"). Such different perspectives provide a comprehensive

account of the way in which meaning configures as text and context and bring valuable insights into deciphering fashion and clothing as symbolic product and social practice.

### 3.2.1.1 The Strata of Text

Systemic functional approach to stratification derives from the work of Hjelmslev (1961), who argues that language is stratified into two planes: the content and expression planes (Section 2.5.1.2). The stratified nature of language is widely adopted in linguistics but takes on a particular role within SFL (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Drawing on Hjelmslev's (1961) insight, Halliday (1978) develops this stratification and distinguishes the content plane into two strata, lexicogrammar and semantics. Accordingly, language is organized into three strata: semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology (graphology). These three strata take place within the content and expression planes. For Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), there is the stratum of phonetics (graphetics) at the lower level of the expression plane, and therefore language is treated as four strata: semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology (graphology) and phonetics (graphetics).

The expression plane deals with the organization of human articulatory potential in spoken language (phonology) or writing potential in written language (graphology). Within the content plane, between semantics and phonology (graphology) is lexicogrammar referring to the combination of grammar and vocabulary; it concerns

meaningful resources in the system of wordings. Semantics focuses on meaning potential manifested through language. From the standpoint of sociolinguistics, it is a set of context-based semantic descriptions, each one characterizing the meaning potential with a given situation (Halliday, 1975, p. 186). Three components - ideational, interpersonal and textual - comprise systemic semantics. Besides, semantics also refers to the resources for integrating semantic units and unit complexes into cohesive texts (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), and this term is further defined as discourse semantics by Martin (1992). For Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005), discourse semantics extends Halliday's semantics to incorporate the analysis of meaning in text and investigate its relation with the context in which it is embedded. The interpretation of discourse is functionally diversified, with each metafunction modeled through distinct semantic systems. They are organized as the resources for making meaning as text and explored under the headings of ideation (construing experience), conjunction (logical connections), negotiation (interacting in dialogue), appraisal (negotiating attitudes) and identification (tracking participants) (ibid.).

The relationships between the strata are theorized in terms of realization (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) or metaredundancy (Lemke, 1984, 1995). This conception of multi-stratal relationships is modeled in SFL, by which patterns at one level of abstraction are placed in correspondence with patterns at other levels. That is, patterns at one level are metaredound with the patterns at higher strata. This relation

occurs at every stratum: between context and semantics, between semantics and lexicogrammar, as well as between lexicogrammar and phonology. Thus, social context is a pattern of language patterns, semantics is a pattern of lexicogrammar patterns, just as lexicogrammar is a pattern of phonology patterns. Such relation entails the dialectic view between language and society that language creates and is created by the social reality of context.

### 3.2.1.2 The Strata of Context

Extending Halliday's single-stratum model of context, Martin (1992) divides the context into two independent semiotic planes: register and genre. Inspired by Hjelmslev's (1961) semiotic articulation, Martin (1992) proposes that context is connotative semiotics where language functions as its expression plane. From this perspective, language constitutes the expression form of register (context of situation) which in turn becomes the expression form of genre (context of culture). The strata in context, by the same token, are related through realization.

Register is a central concept in Halliday's model of language. It refers to a functional variety of language, which is determined by the type of situation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 29). There are three variables in the semiotic structure of situation, which are field, tenor and mode (for detailed discussions, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 33). For Halliday (ibid.), register is at the semantic level of the linguistic system. Thus, as the features of context of situation, field, mode and tenor

systematically correspond with the functional components of semantics. Field is concerned with experiential meaning, tenor resonates with interpersonal meaning and mode is realized by textual meaning. In Martin's (1992) term, register pertains to the semiotic system involving the contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode (p. 502). His notion of register is extended as a connotative semiotic system within context. In addition to register, Martin (1992) further explores an abstract stratum of genre, which is defined as a staged and purposeful social process. Genre is realized by register, whose realization is related to language functions (Martin, 1992, p. 505). This notion is different from the traditional term - a functional variation of register - construed by many systemic functional theorists (e.g. Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Combined together, genre and register constitute a complementarily stratified perspective on the social context of language. At the highest level of abstraction is ideology, which is realized through language functions, register and genre. Ideology focuses on the distribution of discursive resources in a culture and the divergent ways in which social subjects construe social occasions (Martin, 1999).

### 3.2.2 Metafunction

SFL is initially constructed by Halliday, who argues that "language is a system for creating meaning" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 511). Inherited from Firth, Halliday (1966) develops the systemic theory through shifting its focus from the balance between paradigm and syntagm to paradigm. This approach to paradigmatic systems emphasizes linguistic description and transforms systems into system

networks. In this situation, text is interpreted through the process of selection from system networks or interrelated sets of options. One consequence of prioritizing paradigmatic organization is the emergence of the metafunctions of language. In developing the description of grammar, Halliday finds several interdependent systems clustered in language systems which form the basic foundation of his metafunctional theory. Such a theory is distinct from other functional approaches, especially Malinowski's and Prague School's functionalism. The major contribution of Halliday's metafunctions lies in modeling language in terms of intrinsic organization and extrinsic contextual uses as well as investigating metafunctions based on systems and structures (Matthiessen, 2007a).

Seen from a sociolinguist viewpoint, according to Halliday (1973, 1975, 1978), three phases feature language development in the mother tongue. Phase I is the phase of protolanguage, during which phase the child learns how to mean. Phase II is the transition from the protolanguage system to that of the adult language. Phase III is the learning of the adult language. The first phase is organized into certain basic functions of language, each one having mutually exclusive meaning potential that is directly related to context of use. The suggested set of microfunctions from Phase I encompasses "instrumental" which is used to satisfy material needs, "regulatory" to control the behaviors of others, "interactional" which serves to establish and maintain contact with others, "personal" in which language is used to express individuality and self-awareness, "heuristic" where language attempts to investigate reality and explore

the environment, "imaginative" relating language to a world of one's own and "informative" for communicating information and expressing propositions. The informative function is added to Phase II or the transitional phase. At this phase, microfunctions are generalized into two macrofunctions in the move from protolanguage to adult language. One is the mathetic macrofunction for learning, and the other is the pragmatic macrofunction for doing. These macrofunctions of Phase II are gradually transformed into the metafunctions of Phase III.

In Halliday's pioneering view (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 53), human language constitutes three kinds of meaning which he identifies as three metafunctions of language and uses the terms ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The ideational metafunction can be further broken into two components, experiential and logical. These metafunctions are interwoven with each other and operate simultaneously to create meaning in a coherent context. Any piece of discourse can be considered from the three angles and organized into different patterns of meaning serving these metafunctions. The ideational metafunction refers to construing human experience. Within this metafunction, the experiential is a representation of composite phenomena in the real world, and the logical is the construal of experience by its fundamental logical relations (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, pp. 19, 21). The interpersonal metafunction including interactive and personal concerns enacting personal and social relationships with other people. The textual metafunction relates to the construction of the text. The

motif of this metafunction is to build up sequence of discourse, organize the discursive flow and create cohesion and continuity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30-31).

As illustrated in Section 3.2.1, these three metafunctions in the semantics are realized by the stratum of lexicogrammar, but at the same time they serve as language functions at the expression plane of register. It is argued that the three metafunctions are systematically coded into the content plane from the perspectives of system and structure (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Matthiessen, 2007a). That is, they are modeled along the paradigmatic axis as sets of features or systems, which are options connected into discrete networks. The feature selections from systems are realized by structures, along the syntagmatic axis. In the grammar of English clause, the experiential function is organized by the system of TRANSTIVITY, the logical function by INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS, the interpersonal function by MOOD and the textual function by THEME. Halliday (1979) also points out that each metafunction can engender a distinct syntagmatic mode of expression (e.g. process + participants + circumstances in the experientially organized clause).

The notion of metafunctions and their structural patterns is pivotal for the detailed examination of semiotic functions in fashion and clothing. Such conception inspires discussions about the basic functions of clothing in relation to social environment and

provides a theoretical basis for the systematic sketch of semiotic resources in fashion and clothing. Drawing on this interpretation of language, an attempt to understand clothing particularly in relation to its functions is introduced in terms of semiotic construction and pattern. A theoretical account for fashion and clothing systems is specifically elaborated in the following sections (Sections 4.4.3, 4.4.4 and 4.5.2).

### 3.2.3 Semiotics as Socially Constructed System

One of the key characteristics in SFL is to consider the significant role of social dimension in the meaning-making process. Halliday (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) believes that linguistic phenomenon is a social kind because social functions determine what language is like and how it has evolved. In his interpretation (ibid., p. 4), the term "social" has two aspects. One is synonymous with culture when used in social system. Therefore, "social semiotic" refers to a social system (or a culture) as a set of semiotic systems, that is, a set of systems of meaning. Halliday (ibid.) emphasizes that language is one of the many social systems for meaning which work with others to define human culture. For that reason, we can assume there are various semiotic systems within a culture. They make meanings through complex social interactions. The other refers to social structure as one of the social systems. In SFL, language is connected with one dimension of human experience, through which to one social structure of society (ibid.). It is precisely social distinction that opens further possibilities to construe meanings from several different directions. The great importance of social role in semiosis has been most explicitly featured in Halliday's

discussions (e.g. Halliday, 1973, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

From the SFL standpoint, fashion and clothing can be considered a sort of semiotic system which is socially constructed. Fashion is a social process. The environment in which fashion takes place is a wide range of social institutions in concrete forms (including various fashion organizations with their clear social structures) or in abstract sense (including fashion and design processes conceived as the components of society). During the complex and obscure course, fashion is manifested in the form of product, concept, practice and system in society. On this account, meaning of fashion and clothing is argued to derive from different social activities, for example, through the expressions of modernity to which designers are responsive by means of material product; through the interrelationships between varied branches operating within the fashion system moving from production via distribution to consumption; through other channels, such as the actions of individuals on their bodies. These social activities are described in the value systems and ideology of culture. Thus, when speaking of fashion and clothing, we simultaneously indicate fashion and clothing within a social context.

## 3.3 Systemic Functional Research on Multimodality

Systemic functional theory was originally developed in relation to language, but it has also been applied to other semiotic systems recently. The seminal works in applying

systemic functional theory to the analysis of visual images are initially undertaken by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and O'Toole (2011). Then, it is extended to diverse semiotic systems by scholars across a broad domain and with different approaches. The multidimensional inquiries into multimodality fully demonstrate the exhaustiveness of SFL involving theory and descriptions as appliable linguistics on the one hand, and suggest a way of combining theory and application to solve practical problems that arise from society on the other hand. More importantly, the possibilities of culture in which they occur is explored through defining various semiotic systems in their own theories and methodologies, comparing their commons and differentials as well as relating them to a large scope of social context. In this sense, systemic functional theory and its application to multimodality have implications for theory, practice and methodology.

This section addresses the issues of multimodality in relation to these three perspectives. The major concerns of multimodality about its theoretical and methodological underpinnings are discussed first, which include definitions, approaches, implications and future advancements. After that, the influential multimodal analyses closely relevant to this study are presented in terms of semiotic resources and resemiotization. Systemic functional and structural theories of the visual are compared at the end of the section.

**3.3.1 General Overview of Multimodality as a Field of Study**

This section aims to illuminate the term multimodality and to identify connections with the phenomenon investigated. By examining a range of research on multimodality, the section describes the main development of multimodality currently available and examines its roles and implications in interdisciplinary studies with respect to the following perspectives.

**3.3.1.1 Definition of Multimodality**

Multimodality, also referred to as multimodal discourse analysis, is an emerging paradigm developed from the late 1980s and has been established within social science research since the late 1990s. The term multimodality has a proliferation of definitions in this relatively new field of study. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) define multimodality as, "[t]he use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (p. 20). Iedema (2003) declares that multimodality is a technical term "aiming to highlight that the meaning work we do at all times exploits various semiotics" (p. 39). According to van Leeuwen (2005), multimodality means "the combination of different semiotic modes in a communicative artifact or event" (p. 281). In Baldry and Thibault's conception (2006, p. 21), multimodality refers to "the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both co-deployed and co-contextualized in the making of a text-specific meaning". These definitions of multimodality depict the features of multimodal discourse from different perspectives. Put simply, multimodality concerns the integration of multiple

semiotic resources for making meaning within a social context. Under the multimodal

perspective, meaning is shaped not only through one semiotic resource but also

through its collaboration with different semiotic resources. Therefore, the interaction

between modes or resources forms the primary concern in the study of multimodality.

Besides, multimodality also involves manipulating multimodal resources in the social

background of the design process (e.g. van Leeuwen, 2008) and resemioticization

(Iedema, 2001, 2003) which focuses on multimodal phenomena in the unfolding of

social practices.

Multimodality is relevant to theory, perspective, inquiry field or methodological

application (Jewitt, 2014; Kress, 2014; O'Halloran & Smith, 2011). Halliday's (1978;

Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) systemic functional theory and linguistic view of

language as "social semiotic" (Halliday, 1978) provides a theoretical basis for

multimodality. Following their insights, multimodality extends the social

interpretation of language to a broad range of semiotic resources and is applied to a

wide coverage of disciplines. The recent interest in multimodality, according to Jewitt

(2014), O'Halloran (2011) and O'Halloran and Smith (2011), is partly generated by

the rapid development of technologies, the other being the need for human discourse

practices and interdisciplinary research. The key factor is that speech and writing no

longer suffice in adequately understanding representation and communication in

various fields. Thus, the complex ways in which language interacts with other

semiotic resources is urgently required to interpret meaning. In addition, research

across disciplines becomes a focus for the future development to solve similar problems. As an innovative approach, multimodality has significant contributions to many aspects in terms of theoretical, methodological and interdisciplinary domains.

### 3.3.1.2 Approaches to Multimodality

Jewitt (2014) and O'Halloran (2011) classify the development of multimodality into several particular perspectives: social semiotic multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; van Leeuwen, 1999, 2005), systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Toole, 2011; Baldry & Thibault, 2006; O'Halloran, 2004, 2005), multimodal interactional analysis (Norris, 2004; Norris & Jones, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 2004), multimodal metaphor (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009) and critical discourse analysis (Machin, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2008). The first three are considered the main approaches within multimodality. This study is related to social semiotic and systemic functional multimodal approaches, thus the two are included in this section.

The systemic functional approach to multimodal discourse analysis concerns theory and practice which are used to analyze meaning from the combination of various semiotic resources (O'Halloran, 2008, p. 443). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and O'Toole (2011) lay the groundwork for multimodal research. They draw upon Halliday's (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) social semiotic theories of language to model the meaning potential of visual modes as sets of interrelated systems and structures. Specifically, Halliday's (1978; Halliday &

Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) concepts, including metafunction, stratification, instantiation and rank, are manifested in these foundational works. The work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is associated with a social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis, whereas the work of O'Toole (2011) is linked with a systemic functional multimodal approach to discourse analysis. The two approaches differ in many aspects, covering history, direction, context, mode and agent (Jewitt, 2014, p. 32). Their differences are articulated in Jewitt's (2014) review, as outlined in Table 3.1. O'Halloran (2011, p. 4) also compares them and redefines Jewitt's "social semiotic multimodality" and "multimodal discourse analysis" as (top-down) contextual and (bottom-up) grammatical approaches respectively.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) develop a (top-down) contextual approach, which describes available choices and visual semiotic resources as meaning potential and articulates how they can be used to communicate ideologies and discourses. O'Toole (2011) adopts a (bottom-up) grammatical approach to model semiotic frameworks of displayed art (paintings, sculpture and architecture) based on Halliday's systemic functional model. Each approach offers a particular starting point and pathway into multimodal studies, and their approaches form complementary perspectives on the study of multimodality (Jewitt, 2014; O'Halloran, 2011). Building on their insights, subsequent studies continue multimodal research and bring it into new domains.

**Table 3.1** Comparison Between Social Semiotic Multimodality and Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis

| Approach | Social Semiotic Multimodality | Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **History** | **Marx and Soviet Psychology** (Bakhtin, Voloshinov) <br><br> **SFL** (Halliday) <br> Social semiotics <br> Choice from system <br> Metafunction <br><br> **Semiotics** (Barthes) <br><br> **Interactional Sociology** (Goffman, Hall, Bateson) <br><br> **Art History** <br><br> **Iconography** <br><br> **Discourse** (Foucault, Bernstien) | **SFL** (Halliday) <br> Stratification <br> Metafunction <br> Instantiation <br> Rank <br> Clause <br> Phase |
| **Direction** | Social semiotic perspective, including ideologies and discourses | Semiotic resources <br> & <br> Integration of semiotic resources (intersemiotic relations) |
| **Context** | People's situated context articulated through the interest at the moment of sign-making | Contexts of situation and culture |
| **Mode (System)** | Social semiotic resources across a range of modes which is related to personal interests within the social context (System as a resource with regularity and dynamic character) | Diverse semiotic resources in sets of metafunctional-based systems, stratum and rank (System as a set of choices, levels and organizational principles) |
| **Agent** | Sign-maker <br> & <br> Meaning-making process | Multimodal phenomenon |

## 3.3.1.3 Implications of Multimodality in Different Fields

Kress, van Leeuwen (2006) and O' Toole (2011) open up the discussion of visual images and arts within multimodal studies. Following them, several detailed studies are undertaken to describe and theorize semiotic resources, organizing their principles and cultural preferences. In general, there are three interrelated areas in multimodal research, deriving from Halliday's systemic functional theories.

The first seeks to develop the analysis of metafunctional organizations and/or meaning-making semiotic resources. Recent research that draws on such aspect to explore non-linguistic semiotic resources includes music and sound (van Leeuwen, 1999), color (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2011), gesture and movement (Martinec, 2000; Norris, 2004; Hood, 2011), mathematics symbolism (O'Halloran, 2005), tactile communication (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011), film (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Bateman & Schmidt, 2011; O'Halloran, 2004; Tseng, 2013), fashion and clothing (Owyong, 2009; Tan & Owyong, 2009; Podlasov & O'Halloran, 2014), advertisement (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Cheong, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Thibault, 2000; van Leeuwen, 2005), comic strip (Bateman & Veloso, 2013; Kaindl, 2005; Lim, 2007; Veloso & Bateman, 2013), multimodal literacy (Jewitt, 2006, 2008; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2003; Unsworth, 2001, 2006, 2008), print text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Lemke, 1998; Royce, 1998, 1999, 2007; Thibault, 2000; Cheong, 2004; Lim, 2004; O'Halloran, 2004; van Leeuwen, 2005; Economou, 2006), architecture and/or three-dimensional space (O'Toole, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Stenglin, 2004).

In addition, when two or more semiotic modes co-articulate, they can multiply meaning and generate a semiotic synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts. The second type of research thus conceptualizes semiotic resources and analyzes the integration of semiotic resources in multimodal objects and events. Such interaction

between modes is referred to as intersemiotic relations. The research in this aspect includes Baldry and Thibault (2006), Lemke (1998), Lim (2004, 2011), Matthiessen (2009), Royce (1998, 1999, 2007), O'Halloran (2005) and Tseng (2013). The third type of multimodal studies focuses on developing the method of analyzing multimodal transcription and text. Profitable research results on multimodal transcription have been achieved by Baldry and Thibault (2006), Norris (2002) and Thibault (2000).

### 3.3.1.4 Multimodality in Future Research

The emergence of multimodal phenomena, as O'Halloran and Smith (2011) summarize, is characterized by two distinct senses: the mapping of a domain of enquiry and the exploration of theoretical and methodological issues. As a domain of enquiry, multimodality focuses on the modeling of semiotic resources, on the ways in which they are integrated in multimodal artifacts and events, and on the resemiotization of multimodal phenomena in the unfolding of social practices. In doing so, multimodality not only draws on the concepts and methods from linguistic theories but also takes its inspiration from other relevant disciplines. Multimodal phenomenon is described as "inherently an interdisciplinary exercise" which involves different domains of knowledge (Machin, 2007, p. x). A core methodological strength of multimodality is its applicability to a broad range of texts, interactions and contexts (Jewitt, 2014). The scope and relevance of multimodality in a wide range of resources and communicational contexts have been discussed earlier. As generally argued, the

current approaches have several limitations. For example, Jewitt (2014) and van Leeuwen (2015) point out that the methods and multidisciplinarities used in multimodal analysis need refinement given the development of society, which heralds a change in knowledge and accordingly has a significant influence on the communicational landscape. Under these sorts of conditions, additional research theories and contexts are required for further theoretical and methodological development. The progress of theories, descriptions and methodologies would ensure robustness and innovation in the study of multimodality. In addition, multimodal studies encourage engagement with various disciplines to address the same object of study in the future research. In this way, the theoretical and methodological synergies and approaches to the evaluation of their applicability could also help promote existing multimodal theories and concepts. To sum up, three areas in the future development and attention of multimodality are explicitly depicted by Jewitt (2014, pp. 450-455): theoretical development, methodological attention oriented towards digital technologies and identifying new domains to make multimodality visible. These areas serve as useful guides for extending multimodality and providing a starting point to address the issues arising from the development of multimodality.

### 3.3.2 Systemic Functional Grammar for Visual Semiotics

The adaptation of systemic functional grammar towards visual texts becomes possible because, as discussed, Halliday's conceptualization has proven to be the most fruitful connection with multimodality on the basis of his principles, such as metafunction,

stratification and instantiation (Iedema, 2003). For O'Toole (2011) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), every piece of communication has three primary functions to serve representational and communicational requirements. Therefore, they consider visual communication, like all semiotic resources, fulfills three metafunctions: ideational, the representation of the experiential world; interpersonal, the interaction between the producer, viewer and object represented and textual, the compositional arrangements of the available visual resources (O'Toole, 2011, p. 10; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 42-43). In the following sections, the descriptive frameworks proposed by O'Toole (2011) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are reviewed for the visual analysis of fashion and clothing. Given that semiotic resources have different properties, such resources are postulated under various functional labels by scholars. In addition, Halliday's conceptualization of stratification in terms of text and context provides valuable tools for visual analysis from both micro and macro perspectives.

### 3.3.2.1 O'Toole (2011): The Language of Displayed Art

Paintings, sculptures and architecture are typically close to the presentation of clothing. Hence, this section reviews these three frameworks combined in O'Toole's discussions about the language of displayed art, in terms of their applicability to fashion and clothing. Viewed from the SFL perspective, they function very differently from one another in the way they interact with the viewer, in how they represent experience and how they internally form a coherent whole and externally relate to their physical, social and cultural contexts. The set of publications by O'Toole (1990,

1995, 2011) have both theoretical and practical implications for the epistemological, psychological, social, art-historical, aesthetic and pedagogical theories of art. It also shows another significant lacuna for the functional interpretation of visual communication. As O'Toole (1995) states, "Halliday's Systemic-Functional linguistics offers a powerful and flexible model for the study of other semiotic codes besides natural language, and its universality may be of particular value in evolving discourses about art" (p. 159).

O'Toole (ibid.) approaches the functional description of displayed art and the systems they realize from a SFL perspective. This is based on his contention (2011, p. 10) that semiotics can assist people in search for a language through which their perceptions of a work of art can be shared. For this reason, O'Toole (1990, 1995, 2011) argues that the semiotic codes of the visual arts also involve three functional dimensions of meaning, and they are realized through systems of choices which are in turn realized through syntactic configurations. For painting and sculpture, he labels the functions as representational, modal and compositional. In analyzing works of architecture, where practical function is dominant (as with language), he preserves Halliday's functional labels of experiential, interpersonal and textual, with practical function included under experiential. His theoretical principles are analogous to Halliday's grammatical rank scale consisting of hierarchy linguistic units and the realizational relationship between levels of meaning. It should be stressed that each of the choices in the framework represents a system, a set of systemic options; they are not simply labeled as formal

rules to be applied or not, but as resources of meaning.

Following these principles, the semiotics of painting is valued and structured at different levels across Picture (the whole work), Episode (parts of a story), Figure (animals, humans and inanimate objects) and Member (parts of the figures). Wherein, Picture is composed of Episode, which in turn consists of Figure and further of member. The relationship of these levels in painting is realization, which corresponds with that of language. The overall framework describing these levels and their constituent systems can potentially be extended to any artistic work (O'Toole, 2011, p. 24). The semiotics of sculpture incorporates on its horizontal axis a different rank scale of units: Work (the whole work), Figure (animals, humans and inanimate objects) and Member (parts of the figures). The framework concentrates on the system of sculpture represented by the table in his work (ibid., p. 34). These levels are also realized through the scale of realization. Then, O'Toole proposes hierarchy units for architecture (ibid., p. 65): Building, Floor, Room and Element. In his interpretation (ibid., p. 64), people's experience of the world is realized through systems of features and relationships at each rank of the units. O'Toole (1995, p. 165) stresses that the mechanism designed for the semiotic analysis of displayed art is not used to constrain the interpretation of one work's meaning; rather, it should be treated as a schematic model of the semiotic space arising from the work through which to negotiate people's perceptions and conceptions. He (1995, p. 166) also emphasizes the priority of modal function in the functional semiotics of art, which he suggests should precede

representational and textual functions because of its advantages in the initial engagement with the viewers.

O'Toole's universal model of systems reveals how the systemic options drawn upon and combined can be realized in a single text. He (1990, 1995, 2011) argues that as a textual semiotics or an analytical method, the model should not be confined to the purely immanent study of an isolated text. Instead, it should be situated in or related to other generalized discourses about art, thereby providing a descriptive base and theoretical ground for numerous artistic areas in urgent need. One significant strength of his framework is the attempt to incorporate Halliday's concept of register to illuminate the shades of three broad areas of meaning in social context. This incorporation also introduces a new dimension of meaning involved in the negotiation between the social context (context of situation and context of culture) and text (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). As O'Toole (1995, p. 175) acknowledges, any text can realize the social semiotics out of which it has grown and make contributions to that social semiotics. Therefore, any text has the potential to consolidate, challenge, destabilize or subvert social semiotics.

One distinct feature of O'Toole's frameworks lies in his adoption of Halliday's notion of rank scale for outlining the meanings embedded in different semiotic entities and of register for indicating that any visual text should be interpreted in relation to its social context. It is this attempt to relate a visual art work to aspects of its contexts that

forms direct relevance to the current study. Because of this, his frameworks are utilized for the interpretation and analysis of the ways in which variations in fashion and clothing are socially functional.

**3.3.2.2 Kress and van Leeuwen (2006): The Grammar of Visual Design**

Extending Halliday's (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) social semiotic approach to language, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) redefine three metafunctions in the grammar of visual design as representational, interactive and compositional. Similar to O'Toole, their visual discussion is also influential for the construction of fashion and clothing semiotics. Therefore, their framework needs to be examined separately as follows.

Representational meaning can be further divided into narrative and conceptual structures. Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid., p. 59) view narrative pattern as "unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements". Four types of narrative representation involve participants: action, reactional, speech and mental processes. The four processes are thus regarded as agentive processes, in contrast to the non-agentive process of conversion (ibid., pp. 63-68). Concept patterns present participants according to "their class, structure or meaning", namely, "their generalized, stable and timeless essence" (ibid., p. 59). It consists of three kinds of representation: classificational, analytical and symbolic processes (ibid., pp. 79-106). In classificational process (ibid., pp. 79-87), participants are related through taxonomy.

There are two types of participants: subordinates and superordinate. The taxonomy can be covert or overt, with the presence or absence of a superordinate. Analytical process represents participants in relation to one another through a part-whole structure (ibid., pp. 87-104). Two kinds of participants are involved in an analytical process: Carrier (the whole) and Possessive Attributes (the parts). Symbolic process explicates the exact meaning or identity of a participant. It comprises two kinds of symbolic processes, symbolic attributive and symbolic suggestive. The former has two participants: the carrier and the attribute. Through constructing their relation, the meaning or identity is established (ibid., p. 105). The symbolic meaning in the latter is established only by the carrier. The second metafunction by Kress and van Leeuwen entails the interaction between the producers, the represented participants and the viewer of the image in visual communication. Four aspects contribute to the realization of interactive meaning: contact, distance, attitude and modality (ibid., pp. 116-174). Compositional meaning constitutes another dimension of analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid., p. 176) define it as the integration of representational and interactive elements into a meaningful whole. This dimension has three interrelated components: information value, salience and framing (ibid., p. 177). Figure 3.2 provides a detailed framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar.

**Figure 3.2** The Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)
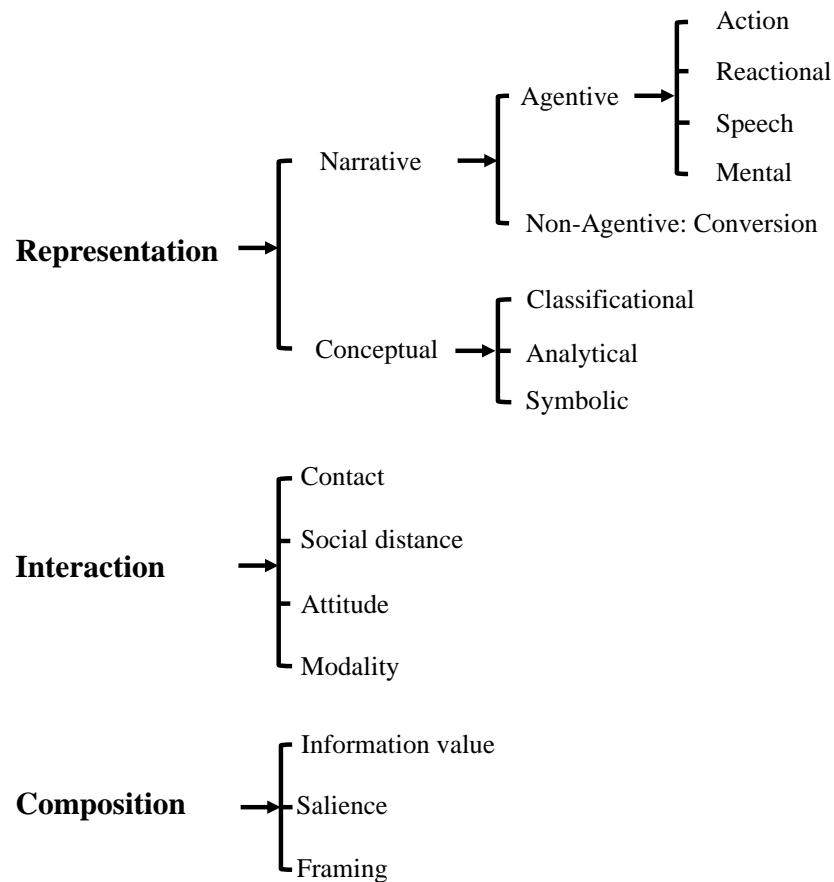


### 3.3.3 Systemic Functional Discussions for Tactile Semiotics

Tactile communication has been described as one of the most primitive forms of communication. Its semiotic importance ranges across a broad scope of disciplines, including anthropology, proxemics, zoology, semiotics and social psychology. Under the semiotic perspective, touching is often regarded as a sort of surrogate speech. However, the issue remains disputed about whether touching can be a sign or a code for the purpose of communication (Nöth, 1990, p. 407). The past decades witnessed a rapid rise in the popularity of studies addressing every human sense (verbal and visual in particular) as well as the correlation of different semiotics in human and media

communication. Despite this growing trend, very little research has investigated the topic from the viewpoint of touch. Multimodality under the frame of social semiotics moves beyond existing disciplinary tools and strives to encompass all the semiotic modes which a community has developed. The move thus provides more possibilities for all the available modes for generating and shaping meaning, especially for the development of touch.

### 3.3.3.1 Bezemer and Kress (2014): Touch as a Meaning-Making Resource

With a social semiotic approach (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005), Bezemer and Kress (2014) explore the ways in which touch is used as a meaning-making resource and discover the multiple meanings of touch in different social practices. From the social semiotic view, touch is not treated as a sense; instead, it focuses on the semiosis used for communication. Therefore, they start with the idea of how touch makes meaning in society. By interpretation, Bezemer and Kress (ibid., p. 78) relates to touch in two perspectives: touch as a resource for "inward" and for "outward" meaning making. The former perspective involves the person touching, which indicates that all kinds of touch have meaning to more than one person. The latter perspective entails communicational or representational touching, which recognizes touch as instances for managing a specific other or group of others. "Inward" meaning making further splits into two forms of touching: implicit and explicit. Implicit touching (touch$^{im}$) is touching when people touch tools or materials they routinely act with and on. Explicit touching (touch$^{ex}$) is touching to explore the

world by various means, such as surface, temperature, structure and texture. Both implicit and explicit touching are considered to have meaning potential, although communication is not necessarily the real issue in every circumstance. For "outward" meaning making, they propose a tri-functional conceptualization of meaning inspired by Halliday's insights. In this respect, touch is described not just as semiotic mode, but being extended to address semiotic functions in terms of interpersonal, ideational and textual meanings (Bezemer & Kress, 2014, p. 79).

In accordance with other semiotics functioning as claimed by Halliday (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), touch has three general functions: 1) touch functions interpersonally when it is designed for one or more specific others, and someone is addressed; 2) touch also has an ideational function when it communicates something and 3) touch is coherent with signs made in the same and other modes in forming a complete semiotic entity, which is the (inter)textual function (Bezemer & Kress, 2014, p. 79). In the meantime, they (ibid., p. 82) suggest a fourth criterion for tactile communication: when two or more participants are involved, touch often relies on a dual materiality of the visual and tactile. This criterion also shows another meaning potential mode in tactile communication: language for describing touch[ex], either spoken or written, or other modes embodied in language. Each of these materialities, regardless of the communicative form they embody (verbal, tactile or visual), has distinctly different potential. They operate together in the creation of meaning for a modal ensemble, a semiotic entity which consists of two or more modes. This

characteristic directly responds to the nature of multimodality.

Concise though the talk on touch suggested by Bezemer and Kress is, it precisely demonstrates the powerful applicability and intellectual influences of Halliday's SFL. Thus, their tactile theories as a part of social semiotics emphasize evolution and development as characteristics of multimodality and signal a paradigmatic shift from the study of language to the study of multiple semiotic resources. Their pioneering analysis on touch introduces a systematic foundation for the development of tactile semiotics in social contexts. The valuable contribution of their discussion towards the overall multimodal research, as they have already mentioned, is to address the problems of how touch could construe and communicate meanings and how touch as a semiotic mode fulfills the semiotic functions of a society in its full detail and complexity.

**3.3.1.2 Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011): The Semiotics of Texture**

Despite the rising importance of touch across a wide range of semiotic practice, texture has not received adequate attention from scholars. Most literature within semiotics has focused on tactile communication rather than texture, on whether touch can function as a sign, and on its resemblance to language and ability to substitute for language. Furthermore, studies on tactile, visual and aural textures have generally been addressed in isolation or been treated as indistinguishable from one another. The main problem in the development of semiotic research on texture is identified by

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p. 66), namely, we tend to overlook the communicative dimensions of media and material resources in production and interpretation. Based on these existing issues, Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) seek to explore texture as a semiotic resource by developing parameters for the description of tactile and visual surface textures and comparing their meaning potential. They particularly focus on the way texture is presented in PowerPoint's design.

Texture, as Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) assume, is the synaesthetic interaction of tactile, visual and aural dimensions. Its semiotic potential can be fully manifested through Halliday's insights: texture has three main types of meaning relation under the labels of experiential, interpersonal and textural metafunctions. Within social semiotic research, most discussions about tactile and visual textures concentrate on textual ("the creating of continuity") and interpersonal ("ambience") aspects (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 545). Such contribution could be found in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), O'Toole (2011), Painter (2008) and Stenglin (2004, 2008). In contrast to these studies, Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) adopt a bottom-up perspective and analyze semiotic resources at the level of expression. In their definition, texture has two types of experiential meaning potential (ibid., pp. 546-547). Both of them are based on the connection between production and meaning, the conceptualization proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001). The first type is "provenance" - meaning relates to the place which the signifier originally comes from (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 10-11). The second type is experience - meaning

derives from personal experience of texture (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, pp. 72-78). Both provenance and experience qualities can produce positive or negative interpretations according to a specific context.

In tactile texture, Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) identify six primary qualities to describe tactile surface texture (Figure 3.3). These qualities including change, consistency and composite qualities are modeled as clines. According to Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011, p. 549), many distinct features are found in these qualities. For example, they can work together to define textures, distinguish textures from one another, and they also have meaning potential. Their meanings occur as a result of three interrelated dimensions: the inherent qualities they represent, their co-articulation with visual and aural qualities, and the context in which they are addressed. In visual texture, their focus is on the techniques for representing either the texture of specific objects or composite texture qualities (ibid., p. 553). Accordingly, visual surface texture can be distinguished into three categories: material, associated and symbolic qualities. It is worth noting that not all visual textures have their tactile equivalents, as some may be purely tactile or purely visual. Those shared textures can be employed to evoke tactile sensations and associated meanings to different extent (ibid., p. 554). Their representation is a first step towards articulating and consequently being able to more fully exploit the meaning potential of texture as a synaesthetic semiotic resource.

**Figure 3.3** System Network of Primary Qualities of Tactile Surface Texture
(Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 549)
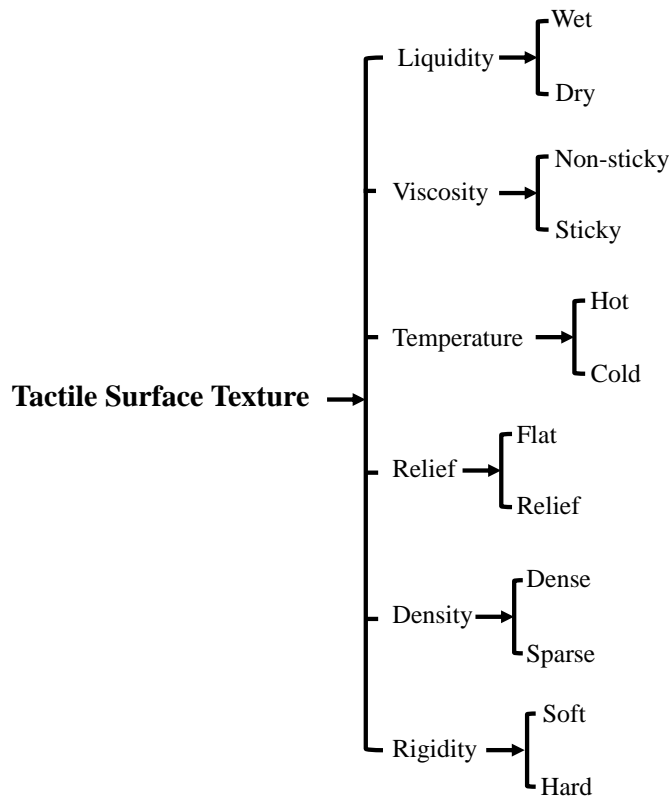


Altogether their seminal discussion examines certain aspects of how touch communicates in social environment and highlights for the first time several key characteristics that tactile semiotics should have. They regard touch or texture as a resource for making meaning that functions alongside other semiotics (such as verbal and visual) and research in terms of the affordances it offers and the possibilities it places on communication. Their discussion also contributes to the investigation of multimodality due to their exploration of the correlation between the meaning-making potential of materialization in different media. Through their studies, some output could be drawn upon from multiple perspectives for the present research, including their theoretical constructions and applications involved in touch and texture. In

particular, starting from the social semiotic viewpoint, those findings are highly relevant to the study of semiotics in fashion and clothing and set the foundation for the subsequent exploration on fashion and clothing semiotic systems.

### 3.3.4 Resemiotization

Resemiotization is another complementary aspect of multimodal phenomena, which treats the transformative process as a means of meaning making. Unlike multimodal analysis oriented towards the multisemiotic complexity of textual representations, resemiotization emphasizes the importance of social dynamics in the shaping of multimodal meanings. Iedema (2001) extends Jakobson's (1971) concept of "intersemioticity" into resemioization and characterizes resemiotization as the translation of meaning from context to context or from practice to practice (Iedema, 2003, p. 41). Central to Iedema's account is the function of material reality for communication (2001, p. 24), that is, how materiality serves to reflect the social reality of context. Through this way, resemiotization contributes to its shift of analytical emphasis from the semiotic resources in discourse towards the interplay of social practices (Iedema, 2003, p. 50).

For Iedema (2001, 2003), resemioization as a dynamic process is divided into two branches: materiality and history of representation. In terms of multisemiotic representation, resemiotization seeks to trace the transition of multisemiotics. Taking the Apple™ manual as an example, Iedema illustrates the transposition between

different semiotic representations (linguistic and visual). Such transposition is not an equivalent shift in ideational semantics, but a reconfiguration of different domains into a semiotic complexity. In terms of social practice, three resemiotizing processes are described in Iedema's conceptualization: 1) textual recontextualizations, or the distancing of meaning from its origin to each context it involves and to the construction of social reality across a range of realizations and practices; 2) the shift of meaning across semiotic modes, or the translation of meaning into intersemiotic shifts and 3) the (re)organization of social space, whereby meaning is able to construct new realities. As Iedema (ibid.) points out, resemiotization is not only restricted to addressing the reification of meanings in the form of semiotic constructs but also inclined to creating sharing patterns with other social phenomena. Overall, resemiotization has several distinct characteristics (Iedema, 2003, pp. 48-50): 1) representation unfolding through place and time; 2) representation as a multimodal construct; 3) representation manifested in social practices which move through a content history (the design process) and also at the level of expression (the material logic); 4) resemiotization introducing the meaning-maker's perspective, which occurs within the unfolding of social processes and material logics of representation.

Fashion and clothing concern a range of semiotic constructs and social practices, which revolves around production, distribution and consumption. Iedema's (2001, 2003) notion of resemiotization can be extended to describe fashion and clothing as a dynamic multimodal phenomenon. From this perspective, the concepts with reference

to translations between different semiotic systems and their materialities can be applied to explain fashion and clothing as both multisemiotic constructs and social practices. Such translations feature the complex, multimodal nature of representations within the practices on the one hand, whilst foregrounding the unfolding of meaning making across practices on the basis of its material realizations on the other hand. Through this socially situated perspective, meaning in fashion and clothing develops from the representation of material dimension into that of the material and historicized dimensions, that is, as a social dynamic view.

## 3.4 Structuralism and Social Semiotics

Thus far, the literature on social and structural semiotics has been reviewed, as regards the ways in which they extend to different semiotic resources. In proposing fashion and clothing as socially situated meaning making (realizations and processes), the current study aims to establish the theoretical resources for such an investigation from the viewpoint of social semiotics. Therefore, this work focuses on the contribution of these theories to the semiotic construction of fashion and clothing. Numerous confusions have been inherited from the semiotic traditions of Saussure, Hjelmslev and Barthes to which many semioticians devote themselves (e.g. Bateman, 2011, 2013; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Machin, 2014). This is precisely where Halliday's interpretation of social semiotic system provides a more powerful and appropriate foundation for future research. One significant chasm between these two approaches lies: the structural notion of semiotics is conceived as the systems of rules (syntax and

grammar), whereas social semiotic analysis considers the systems of resources available as its starting point. The differences between structuralism and social semiotics can be further explicated through the description of semiotic system by systemic functional linguists.

Semiotic system, according to SFL, involves two kinds of systems: primary and higher-order semiotic systems (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010, p. 160; pp. 194-195). All these semiotic systems are organized into two basic planes, the content and expression planes. The semiotic systems theorized in SFL are referred to as higher-order semiotic systems. Higher-order semiotic systems are claimed to develop out of primary semiotic systems, which involves both the content and expression planes. The main characteristic of higher-order semiotic systems lies in their exhaustiveness, which covers a wide range of semiotic systems in society. In addition, higher-order semiotic systems include the three simultaneous metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) and interconnected multistrata (the content plane stratified into semantics and lexicogrammar and the expression plane stratified into phonology and phonetics, or graphology and graphetics). The strata within each plane stand in a natural rather than a conventional relationship.

The conception of primary semiotic systems originates from Hjelmslev's (1961) model of language and is well known as Saussure's (1915) distinction between the signified and signifier. In contrast to their higher-order counterparts, primary semiotic

systems range across the simplest semiotic systems, with their stratified planes into content and expression. No further internal stratification was involved in either of these planes. Moreover, they are not metafunctional but microfunctional in organization: their meaning potential is associated with different contexts of use, with only one of these microfunctions making sense at any given time. Such microfunctions involved in language development are instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic and imaginative (Halliday, 1975). In primary semiotic systems, the content and expression planes are organized along the axis, with paradigm and syntagm positioned separately. However, in higher-order semiotic systems, the content and expression planes are characterized in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic organizations, that is, both are organized into hierarchies of units. The orders of semiotic systems are presented in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4** Orders of Semiotic Systems
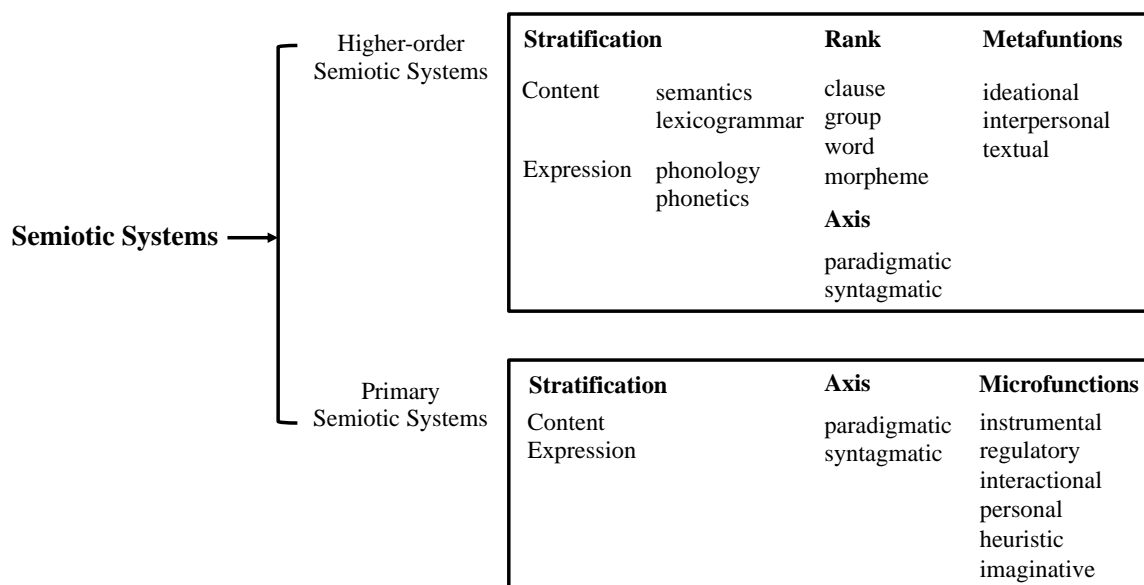
Under the accounts of higher-order conception, semiotic system is characterized in terms of stratification and metafunctions wherein semiotic resources are thus suggested to include multistrata and multifunctions. In this situation, meaning is conceived as a combination of representing the intention of the meaning-making producer, engaging with the audience, as well as relating internally to the elements in compositions and externally to the context in which they are embedded. Semiotic resources are stratified into different strata along the hierarchy, each of which is organized internally according to rank and axis. Behind these mechanisms, both social processes and materiality are underscored, two of which are considerably important to the articulation of meaning and particularly relevant to the analysis of different semiotic resources, or to fashion and clothing semiotics in this study. In addition, each semiotics has its distinct properties and is thus considered as separate existence for meaning making (cf. Barnard, 2002; Enninger, 1985; Iedema, 2003; McCracken, 1988; O'Toole, 1995). Hence, it is problematic for structural semioticians to create a close homology between the semiotic systems of language and other semiotic resources, as no regulative rules or grammar may be present in such systems. The traditional form of semiotic analysis also fails to serve encoding and decoding non-linguistic semiotic resources across different semiotic dimensions (Bateman, 2011, 2013; Machin, 2014). Most importantly, it ignores the contextual aspect as intrinsic to semiotics for communication (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The social semiotic approach complements earlier accounts of semiotic systems, in proposing to describe and understand a variety of semiotic resources in concrete situations and interpreting semiotic systems

as part of social systems. Therefore, it could offer a strong theorizing model for facilitating a more systematic way to analyze communication across different semiotic resources.

## 3.5 Summary

This chapter focuses on a social approach for the study of semiotics. Through previous discussions, this research identifies key aspects of the works within SFL and multimodality. The SFL is proven to offer a powerful and effective foundation for interpreting multimodal phenomena, which includes theoretical and methodological reach as well as its wide applicability in a variety of domains. As explicitly acknowledged, communication is inherently multimodal and the literacy is not confined to language but is a complex orchestration of different semiotic resources. Systemic functional-based multimodality introduces and develops this concept as its theoretical framework for analyzing and describing different meaning-making resources which people use to represent and communicate, and for examining how these semiotic resources are organized to make meaning within a culture. As an interdisciplinary approach, multimodality has been studied within a broad range of disciplines. Although the theoretical basis of multimodality has been strengthened, the development of multimodality is still ongoing and much work remains to be done. To solve such problems, the implementation of different theoretical perspectives and collaboration with diverse disciplines is a critical step towards understanding the increasingly complex and dynamic semiotic world in which people live. By drawing

on the insights from these theoretical foundations, the semiotic construction of fashion

and clothing is developed in the following chapters.

# CHAPTER 4 THE ARCHITECTURE[3] OF FASHION AND CLOTHING SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS ACCORDING TO SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL THEORY AND MULTIMODALITY

## 4.1 Introduction

It is observed at the beginning of this study that recent decades have witnessed a remarkable outpouring of work on fashion as communication. Such wealth of literature proves that studying fashion and clothing in meaning is a thriving academic endeavour. However, none of them has thus far systematically attended to fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems, which consequently inspires us to make this an operative assumption. It may be appropriate to ask at the moment: when this meaning emerges, what it indicates, by what means it is delivered and where it rests. All of these processes pertain to a primary theme running throughout this study, that is, a social construction of meaning within its complex and multifaceted context. Based on these inquiries, we start to consider fashion in its conceptual relatives, its relationships to society and culture as well as a range of terms relevant for a sociological statement on the development of fashion and clothing theories. As reviewed in Chapter 2, one proper place to investigate fashion is the social system because fashion is part of society. This starting point is also applicable to clothing, wherein we conceive its system organized as a whole with patterned interrelationships among individuals, groups and institutions. This brief comparison of fashion and clothing with social system illustrates the tendency for its meaning realized through multisemiotic systems

to diversified material manifestations inherent in society. This perspective thus embodies the nature of social semiotics detailed in previous chapter.

To better illustrate the organization of fashion and clothing systems and explore the ways of how they create meaning, this chapter proposes the notion of architecture which moves from a comprehensive overview of fashion and clothing in context towards detailed regions identified from the overview. The theoretical basis is systemic functional modeling of the architecture in language introduced by Halliday (1961) and developed by Matthiessen (2007a). The key dimensions in this model include both global - the ordered typology of systems, stratification, metafunction and instantiation and local - the hierarchies of rank and axis. Matthiessen (2007b) emphasizes the significance of these interlocking semiotic dimensions in interpreting multimodal discourse. It is noted that many other semiotic systems have been modeled in terms of the multidimensional semiotic space (Section 3.3.1.3). Guided by this model, the chapter builds the architecture of fashion and clothing systems from global and local dimensions. In addition, this chapter discusses the multisemiotic nature of fashion and clothing as meaningful systems and presents visual, textural and resemiotizational frameworks. The exploration is developed according to the theories of multimodality (O'Toole, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Iedema, 2001, 2003). One of the underlying assumptions is that additional semiotic activities in fashion and clothing systems are made visible with SFL and multimodality so that many aspects of meaning potential

could be crystallized under the investigation.

## 4.2 Fashion System and Clothing System

Before further outlining fashion and clothing systems as dimensional architecture, it is necessary to disentangle the complexity around the concepts of fashion and clothing and unveil their dynamic processes for meaning making. The two conceptions are critical in explaining fashion as a specific form of clothing and guiding the research into the development of their semiotic systems. Therefore, this section sets out some of the major themes and preoccupations that have captured the attention of scholars working across a range of disciplines.

### 4.2.1 Defining Key Terms

### 4.2.1.1 Definition of Fashion and Clothing

The concept of fashion has been widely recognized to possess varying forms of meaning throughout history. Numerous fashion theories attempt to determine a clear and exact definition of fashion so as to clarify the processes underlying this nebulous phenomenon. However, the natural propensity of fashion to change in different social structures makes it difficult to find a precise term. As a consequence, definitions of fashion abound among academics and intellectuals.

The ambiguities and inconsistencies of fashion are identified by Simmel (1957, 1997) in his sociological essays on fashion. He (1997) points out that fashion is a particular

type of social forms, through which people attempt to establish social equalization and express individual desire for differentiation and variation (p. 189). His concept accurately depicts the universal and dynamic nature of the fashion phenomenon. That is, fashion emerges from recycling, where stable and conservative social customs are continuously challenged by innovative and creative aesthetic and behavioral forms. In Simmel's (ibid.) logic, fashion can be applied to any object, behavior or way of thinking: there is fashion in clothing, in social forms and aesthetic judgments, also in the entire style of human expression (Simmel, 1957, p. 545). However, fashion as Simmel (1957, 1997) argues concerns intrinsically any field of social action in duality, which is manifested through the contrast between individualism and collectivism.

According to Sapir (1931), the essence of fashion is "a variation", which serves as "a departure from the immediately preceding mode" (p. 41). The changes of fashion are ascribed to the influences of social and cultural ideals; expressiveness is thus emphasized to largely discover the phenomenon of fashion (ibid.). Given this finding, he (ibid.) links fashion closely with psychology by "the ego" (p. 45) and explains that no other symbols exist as close to the body as dress and adornment being psychological equivalent of the ego. For Sapir (ibid.), the true meaning of fashion is not related to dress or ornament but to its associated symbolism. This thought is also advocated by Rouse (1989), who expresses fashion is likely to be "an attribute with which some styles are endowed" (p. 69). Therefore, "functional irrelevance", together with "symbolic significance", may become the intrinsic value of all fashion characters

(Sapir, 1931, p. 45). Likewise, Hurlock (1984) considers fashion as "a series of recurring changes", which arise from a group of individual choices. Similar to other scholars, utility is not the key element that determines the changes in fashion (p. 4).

Following Simmel's and Sapir's classics, other scholars seek to define fashion from different angles. Svenden (2006, p. 12) distinguishes two main categories in the understanding of fashion. In his interpretation, fashion is referred to as clothing and also as a general mechanism, logic or ideology that can be extended into many different areas. Kaiser (1997, p. 4) sees fashion as either a dynamic social process, "by which new styles are created, introduced and popularly accepted by a consuming public" or an object, "a style accepted by a large group of people at a particular time". Another aspect framing important factors of fashion comes from Kawamura (2005). She separately elucidates fashion and clothing, emphasizing fashion as a concept and clothing-fashion as a practice or phenomenon. In Kawamura's notion, clothing should not be equivalent to fashion because fashion is a symbolic product rather than a material product, which itself has no content substance (ibid., p. 2). In the same way, Barnard's study (2002) differentiates fashion from clothing through his discussions on respective definitions, functions and meanings. However, his work also demonstrates that fashion and clothing are simultaneously visible: the two are in close relations to each other and accordingly their terms are used interchangeably.

By contrast, others connect fashion exclusively to the realm of clothing: they argue

that fashion refers to a particular system of clothing, which is historically and geographically specific to Western modernity. For example, Hollander (1978) defines fashion as the entire spectrum of desirable clothing styles at any given time, and this includes all available forms of items in both fashion and antifashion (p. 350). Wilson (2003, p. 3) also argues that fashion is dress, which is characterized by "rapid and continual changing" in its style. One significant feature in Wilson's account is to link the concept of fashion to the emergence and development of Western modernity. In her conceptualization, no clothing exists outside fashion in modern Western societies. Entwistle (2000) accords fashion in a similar way with a system of dress found in modernity. From her perspective (ibid., p. 1), fashion draws attention to the bodies within the fashion system, concerning itself in terms of how it is produced, promoted and dressed and what messages it can articulate.

Another way to define fashion derives from the unconscious system of meaning. As suggested by Solomon (1985), fashion is "the systematic encryption, transmission, and interpretation of social meaning" (p. 1). One person may perceive the degree of concreteness or abstraction represented in a specific way: Davis (1992) argues that any definition of fashion in an attempt to grasp distinguishing features must take into account the element of change (p. 14). Therefore, he (ibid.) defines fashion as an "alteration" in the form of visual code, by the aid of which people draw extensive and varied meanings from the clothes they wear (p. 14). Barthes (1985) discusses fashion as a cultural system of meanings, whereas clothing as the material basis of fashion

provides it with a visible form. It is obvious, however, that not all clothes can be included under the frame of fashion. In this sense, not all clothes can function as the material embodiment to elicit meanings within such a system.

Based on the above definitions, we can summarize some characteristics which constitute the commonly accepted definition of fashion: 1) Fashion is an intangible object. 2) Fashion is manifested in the tangible forms, such as clothing, idea and practice. 3) Fashion concerns change and novelty, its formation largely depending on the prevailing social and cultural ideals. 4) Fashion is a collective activity, which is adopted by a group of people at a particular time and place in contrast to individual choices. 5) Fashion emerges within a particular society and is always a manifestation of its epoch. 6) Fashion is closely linked to personal expression. 7) Fashion affects almost every phase of life: fashions occur in the realms of architecture, manners, automobiles, food and so forth. In this study, we may try to make a provisional description of fashion. Fashion most frequently refers to a highly visible system of clothing found in societies. It functions in a distinctive way and serves as part of social system that is institutionally produced, distributed and consumed within a given society at a certain time and place (cf. Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2004, 2005). In other words, fashion or clothing fashion can be understood on the basis of two perspectives, namely, as product and as practice that produces such kind of product.

For clarity, clothing needs to be further distinguished from other relevant terms

because these words with separate definitions and functions are not interchangeable in fashion theories. In this study, clothing applies to "any tangible or material object connected to the human body" (Kaiser, 1997, p. 4). This definition includes such items as jacket, coat, pants, skirt, dress and other related body coverings. For the purpose of our discussion, clothing also encompasses material items often classified as accessories - headgear, shoes, neckwear, gloves, jewelry and the like. In addition, there are some clothing-related concepts, for instance, dress, appearance and costume, which are also associated with fashion communication but adopt different points of view (see Kaiser, 1997 for a detailed comparison). No details of these concepts are provided at this point as they are not used in this study.

### 4.2.1.2 Definition of Fashion System and Clothing System

To grasp the fundamentals of fashion and clothing means looking at visible elements included in clothing, its stylistic formulations, the systems by which it operates and the geographical, historical and social environments of its activities. As König (1973) indicates, "although the contents of fashion are always a manifestation of their epoch and pass with it, its structural form as a special kind of the previously described controlled behavior incorporates certain constants which decide initially what fashion is" (p. 76). Fashion has been deeply rooted in history as a system of clothing that operates beyond utilitarian functions and serves as a marker of social or cultural phenomenon. The reminiscence has dated back to as far as the late 16th century (Breward, 1995). Most often, fashion is associated with the culture of existing works

such as architecture, art, literature, music and film. Their models provide precisely what fashion has been looking for.

Wilson (2003) argues that fashion system refers not only to the production of material garments but also to the production of discourse and aesthetic ideas, which serve to structure the garments. The positions of Rouse (1989) and Entwistle (2000) lie very close to this opinion: to see fashion as a departure from discourse and ideas is to present clothes as meaningful construction. Kawamura (2004, 2005) shares a similar attitude towards fashion system, by considering it symbolic existence manifested through clothing manufacturing system. For them, clothing is used as a means of expressing such abstractions. What fashion producers have contributed to may be clear - clothes that serve to capture the zeitgeist and the creativity of a given moment. Every collection, they may start with abstract ideas and then a progression of practices, both of which are inextricably linked. Their actions are perceived as the deconstruction of fashion that signifies a collapse of symbolic hierarchies. But here, we agree with Kawamura's (2004) argument that they may have deconstructed the system of clothing and redefined that of fashion. For example, Kawamura (2004) believes Japanese designers challenged the clothing system but not the fashion system. In this sense, some distinctions may be found between fashion and clothing systems.

In defining fashion system, we note earlier that the basic requirements for its existence are a system that produces new styles of clothing and attempts to make them

desirable to the public. It is also characterized by a group of interacting bodies who function in a particular type of society. According to sociological interpretation (Section 2.2), fashion system constitutes part of a large social system. Its concept embraces an entire scope of the industry ranging across production, distribution and consumption and also encompasses a variety of individuals within the system including producers and consumers (cf. Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2004, 2005; Roach, Musa & Hollander, 1980; Wilson, 2003). The fashion system plays a crucial role in the exploration of fashion phenomenon. It unfolds the processes of how fashion is designed, produced, disseminated and consumed within large social, economic and cultural phenomena.

In contrast to fashion system, clothing system, we attempt to define, in the broad sense refers to a system for manufacturing clothes. In the narrow sense, it includes a set of interrelated material items connected to the human body. Each one in a set pertains to the system of values consisting of a certain number of counterparts, which allow one to change and have differential and correlative values in relation to other combining items. The sets of items are categorized as distinct styles and functions which serve in different occasions. The combining aspect holds great importance in the clothing system because it implies that the clothing of the same style is constituted by the juxtaposition of different items rather than the recurrence of items with an identical function. The association of items is based on the rules which largely depend on personal attributes and also social and cultural environments. We can understand in

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ordinary activities, the clothing system comes from an individual selection and realization. It is shaped in the combination owing to the fact that an individual uses clothing code in an attempt to construct and articulate information and social mechanism, which enables him to externalize the combination. However, when an item of clothing follows a formalized style and becomes a fashionable object, this clothing system should be in turn treated as a collective activity. That is the social process whereby clothing is triggered by fashion initiators, created by everyone involved in the production, distribution and consumption of fashion and finally adopted by part of the group. The prominent difference between the two, in Kawamura (2004b, p. 195) words, is that "the fashion system promotes a very small proportion of those clothes as 'timely,' that is, fashionable". Thus, the clothing system is a blend of fashion and taste, the reconciliation between collective and individual.

From a fashion-ological perspective, Kawamura (2005) emphasizes the process of fashion, with her argument that no visual materials are required to explain fashion because it does not concern clothing. She (ibid.) also insists that no content substance exists by/in fashion. This is very different from the starting point of our study: we believe there is a close connection between fashion and clothing in meaning-making processes. That is, the term fashion itself has no content; it is an intangible or immaterial object. However, when combined with a material form, such as clothing, fashion can make sense; it becomes a symbolic product. Although fashion is commonly attached to a system of institutions, it would be misleading to think of it

only in this regard. As Kawamura (2005) suggests, fashion is the invisible elements manifested by means of clothing. Fashion and clothing are therefore involved in a reciprocal relation for the purpose of comprehensiveness. On the one hand, fashion possibly starts from clothing: historically, clothing phenomena constantly precede fashion phenomena and genetically, fashion is constituted in parts of individual styles of clothing through a series of social processes. On the other hand, understanding fashion requires understanding the relationships among different angles of expertise operating within the fashion system, various extensions into acknowledging fashion and clothing systems. Moreover, a range of phenomena exist beyond clothing, which can also be in the domain of fashion. As such, fashion has a far wider scope than clothes. A comprehensive look at fashion expands to encompass a broad range of themes on clothing and provides deeper forces and more comprehensive interpretations than those revealed by its immediate fact. In sum, fashion and clothing is a genuinely meshed one. This relationship is discussed in detail in the later sections about their contributions as a process of communication.

## 4.2.2 Different Approaches to Fashion and Clothing Systems

Numerous approaches strive to find theoretical explorations of fashion system. It is clear that scholars are interested in different viewpoints when aiming to understand fashion system. Through their interpretations, no clear-cut line exists to separate fashion system from clothing manufacturing system. Some assume that fashion and clothing systems integrate together and thus examine the two in a vague manner.

Barthes (1985) and Lurie (2000) regard fashion and clothing as a language system and they are therefore systematically organized like one. This perspective stresses fashion as language having its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Their explanations have attracted considerable criticism from academia, as discussed earlier (Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3). Based on these discussions, we consider that it is controversial to analyze fashion and clothing as a linguistic form. Although clothing is clearly unsuitable for such classification, their approaches still provide the metaphorical methods to interpret fashion and clothing as comparable to other visual forms

Leopold (1992) defines fashion system as "the inter-relationship between highly fragmented forms of production and equally diverse and often volatile patterns of demand" (p. 101). In her definition (ibid.), fashion system incorporates dual concepts: "a cultural phenomenon" and "an aspect of manufacturing with the accent on production technology". She interprets the evolution of fashion as a consequence of the specific historical development of clothing production and as a response to a particular set of constraints on the development.

Roach et al. (1980) integrate fashion system into continuous fashion change. According to them, fashion system is segmented into two, simple and intricate. Simple fashion system concerns the changing types of scars for beautification from generation to generation. In this system, scar designs and techniques are developed on the basis of personal contact. Intricate fashion system refers to the industries in many

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fashion cities, involving numerous people within different sections. Based on their conception, fashion system is characterized as an interrelated network of people, which includes those initiating the changes in dresses and those following the changes. Both of them must be able to communicate with each other.

Craik (1994) recasts the phenomenon of fashion. In her opinion, fashion is neither associated with modern Western high fashion which is only a specific variant of fashion, nor confined to a particular economic or cultural organization. Instead, fashion is the product of the collaboration from all fashion systems across both Western and non-Western cultures. By displacing the dictatorial regime in Western fashion, her argument attempts to conceive fashion as "a cultural technology that is purpose-built for specific locations" (ibid., p. xi), which portrays revised fashion system particularly with reference to dress and decoration.

Kawamura (2004, 2005) deems fashion as an institutionalized system. Unlike other interpretations of fashion, she treats fashion as an abstract meaning system embedded in the forms of clothing. Working within the production-oriented approach, she views fashion system as a network of interlocking institutions, involving design, production, diffusion and consumption. These institutions form a holistic system in the sense that their network is based on highly routinized interaction. Similarly, Davis (1992) also distinguishes between fashion and clothing systems and points out many practices arising from the complex institutions within fashion system.

Entwistle (2000) put forward the system of dress with focus on the connections among fashion, dress and body. Her approach to dress adopts the framework of situated practice, which she considers the result of complex social forces and individual negotiations in daily life. In addition, she argues that fashion system is the relationship between the manufacturing, marketing, distributing and consuming of clothing, which depends on various social structures. From this perspective, dress needs to be understood on the basis of fashion system covering both experiences and practices.

Eicher and Evenson (2015) present a classification system for the study of dress in different societies and cultures. The classification system is based on the definition of dress as the assemblage of body modifications and supplements. They emphasize the role of society and culture in studying dress. In their terms, dress is a product and also a process. From a product aspect, items of dress are "a result of human creativity and technology"; from a process aspect, dressing involves actions which "modify and supplement the body", with the aims of meeting physical needs and social and cultural expectations (ibid., p. 4). Dressing the body through these means forms a total sensory system of communication that simultaneously connects an individual with others.

This study treats fashion system as a meaning-making system, the discussion of which is particularly incorporated into social and cultural contexts. This exploration of fashion system is very different from Saussure's semiotic tradition in terms of fashion

and clothing studies: Barthes' interpretation of fashion system or Lurie's mechanical analogy to language. As earlier noted, a mass of problems have occurred in these theoretical foundations. Clothing in this study is distinctively interpreted not as sets of formal rules but as semiotic resources available for social communication, echoing Halliday's (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) interpretation of language as social semiotic. Moreover, this study distinguishes fashion and clothing systems as two interdependent and interconnected systems in the process of creating meaning. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the meaning of fashion is manifested through a material form - clothing in this study, whilst the meaning of clothing is negotiated and transformed through a series of social processes, including production, distribution and consumption. Through such classification, fashion and clothing systems relate themselves to their material environments (immediate physical and larger social, cultural and historical contexts) as well as to the interactions with different individuals in the systems. From this, clothing as semiotic resources is combinatorially deployed and materially instantiated in time and space via distinct stages in the fashion system. Therefore, we consider the meaning of fashion and clothing mainly comes from three essential ways: 1) the "grammar" of clothing realized through the manipulation of multisemiotic resources; 2) a system of interlocking institutions, organizations, groups, practices, individuals and events that are brought together to produce the social phenomenon grouped under the rubric of fashion and 3) social interactions among fashion, clothing and society. In other words, the study aims to interpret fashion and clothing as both material realizations and

social processes. The two as complementary ways in multimodality are integrated to make sense, through which a holistic landscape of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems may be depicted.

## 4.3 Systemic Functional Linguistic Approach to Fashion and Clothing Systems

Fashion and clothing as communication has been generally recognized to be associated with semiotic theory, which treats fashion and clothing as sign and symbol in the creation of meaning. Numerous existing accounts attempt to explain the direct application of such dominant linguistic theory to fashion and clothing. Examples of this respect have been discussed in the previous chapter (Sections 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 2.5.3). Within the literature, fashion and clothing, as a distinctive system of sign, has its own system, structure and expression and shares some features with language. Therefore, it can only be metaphorically compared with language: the fixed rules of language, without parallel in fashion and clothing systems, are unable to exactly describe fashion and clothing through linguistic terms. From this perspective, the structuralist models and its methods inspired by Saussure are no longer considered reliable and suitable theoretical founding for adequately capturing and interpreting the semiotic phenomenon behind fashion and clothing. An account of new theoretical input is accordingly necessary to solve the problems arising from the existing theories and methodologies and to put forward the directions, which can be extended to consider various semiotic systems and hence fashion and clothing. In the last couple of years, SFL forms another influential strand of linguistic theory to explore semiotic

systems, particularly within social studies. The main focus of SFL is on meaning and on how language is organized for meaning making. The differences between structuralism and systemic functional approach (social semiotics) have been analyzed and compared in Section 3.4. This theory contributes to both language and multimodality that have emerged as one unified field across different semiotic presentations. Beginning with the pioneering works of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and O'Toole (2011), systemic functional researchers have shown the extensive expansion of this general theory of language into a number of different semiotic systems. SFL is thus thought of as a theory with more fruitful contributions than other semiotic theories for fashion and clothing. This study borrows from the systemic functional theories of Halliday and his colleagues and attempts to establish the frameworks in terms of fashion and clothing. It follows that fashion and clothing is a set of purposive semiotic choices made by its producers, which realize meaning through a multidimensional semiotic space. Before further characterization of the assumption, this section aims to present a fundamental introduction responsible for a critical evaluation of the framework the study construes. For this purpose, it needs to be read in the context of the study oriented to fashion and clothing and concomitantly considering the relations between language, fashion and clothing. The introduction therefore can be described in two broad directions as follows: to approach fashion and clothing as social semiotics and to model the organization of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems.

**4.3.1 SFL as a Theoretical Foundation for Fashion and Clothing Systems**

From the start, the study is pursued within the works of SFL, which deconstruct texts to draw attention to the semiotic systems they instantiate. The aim is to look at the meanings we use language or other semiotic resources to make. There are a number of potential to which the analyses presented in SFL can be put. Generally, they have evolved in two main contexts: as a means of exploring the relation between language and context and as one foundation for the development of "appliable linguistics" (Matthiessen, 2012, 2014). This evolution has been engaged with several areas to focus on the family, education, administration, the media and healthcare (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 33). SFL as appliable linguistics provides a way to combine theory and application together and relate them in a complementary relation (Matthiessen, 2012, 2014). One key characteristic that forms SFL is its "permeable" capability to dialogue with different disciplines in solving the problems that arise from the communities worldwide (Matthiessen, 2012).

Fashion is regarded as a phenomenon that encroaches on all different areas in the realm of society and culture, and clothing is only one among many material inquiries into the nature of fashion. In defining the above terms, we separate fashion and clothing into two systems based on their semiotic constructs (Section 4.2.1). Fashion is recognized as a system of clothing, which covers the fashion industry and all the individuals involved; clothing is deemed as a system of clothing manufactures and a system of material items attached to the human body. From these definitions, the

meaning by reference to fashion and clothing derives from two main directions. One concerns the multimodal nature of clothing as a semiotic construct, which deals with its semiotic complexity and the ways that it is configured in practice. The other entails the unfolding of meaning making across social practices in the fashion industry, which relates to its material consequences. There is a general agreement that the theoretical literature in structuralism is not feasible to the analysis of fashion and clothing as complex semiotic systems, with its reason having been illustrated before. In contrast to structuralism, SFL sees meaning as social products formed in a society or a culture and realized through social processes. This viewpoint offers SFL a very distinctive position, with profound implications that language is one component of the social semiotic systems (Halliday, 1978). Its organization as a three-level coding system enables it to serve as a vehicle and metaphor for many other semiotic resources (Halliday, 2003). This distinctive feature produces different stratal views to look at fashion and clothing as a multisemiotic representation. In addition, SFL is presented in terms of the "dimensional architecture" (Matthiessen, 2007a), which opens up potential possibilities to explore the organization of fashion and clothing as multisemiotic constructs and social practices. Through SFL, two directions in terms of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems can be comprehensively accounted for, both globally and locally. Therefore, SFL becomes another strand of thought to approach fashion and clothing as semiotic systems.

The systemic functional approach informed by Halliday is influential in the

exploration of fashion and clothing for numerous reasons. Firstly, according to SFL, language is conceptualized as **resource** for meaning making. This perspective emphasizes language as a network of interrelationships, which is utilized to explain the connection among these relationships and use language as resources for specifying grammatical structures. Similar to language, clothing can be viewed as embodying the pattern of choices made by its producers to create meanings for others to receive and respond. The process of making selections against other possible choices in the background of fashion and clothing is manifested in the form of the collective (e.g. Blumer, 1969b; Davis, 1992) and the individual (e.g. Simmel, 1957, 1997; Delong, 1998). From this respect, clothing is not a code or a system of rules suggested by structuralists, which operates akin to language with grammar and vocabulary. Such analogies are problematic because clothing and language, as two different semiotic systems, have their distinctive properties and thus cannot be described by similar forms. The systemic functional approach provides a resource perspective, which allows us to examine and manipulate different clothing texts and makes choices from options in each particular semiotic system for the purpose of constructing meaning.

Secondly, SFL assumes that the selections of meaningful choices are related to the **context** in which they are situated. That is, it is dependent on a particular social environment in which they actually operate. In linguistic term, the context can be understood in relation to culture. With respect to fashion and clothing, the context has various interpretations in different theoretical realms, covering the disciplines, such as

sociology, psychology, aesthetics and semiotics. Table 2.2 summarises the relation of meaning to context proposed by different approaches. They are observed to adopt different contextual perspectives when dealing with the issues of fashion and clothing. From their discussions, the context can be generalized into two: immediate physical environment and accompanying sociocultural context. Such generalization is in accordance with the stratification of SFL in context, namely, situation and culture (Section 3.2.1). The key explanation for how fashion and clothing has developed into the way as it is, lies in its wide cultural and historical contexts or the context of culture as SFL suggests. This is very similar to the understanding of language. From this respect, fashion and clothing instantiates the choices made by its producers, which can be regarded as a result arising from both the contexts of situation and culture. For SFL, a dialectic relation exists between text and context that can be extended to this background: fashion and clothing are created by the contexts of situation and culture; at the same time, they also construe these contexts in which they occur. Such contextual interpretation forms the basis of fashion and clothing as a social semiotic construct.

Thirdly, fashion and clothing involve **different material affordances**, which tend to be seen in verbal, visual, tactile, aural, olfactory and kinetic forms. The inherent nature behind this phenomenon is that meaning attached to fashion and clothing is given not merely to one semiotic resource but to different semiotic resources. These semiotic resources or systems are organized together to produce an integrated flow of

meaning within a social context in which they operate. As such, there lies in the integration and diversification with semiotic systems involved in its formation (Matthiessen, 2009), all of which are necessary for fashion and clothing to recognize its meaning. Halliday's functional approach to language makes it possible to explore multimodality and multisemiotic systems within fashion and clothing. As a theory of language in general, systemic functional descriptions have produced two ways to see semiotic systems: its holistic conception of social semiotics and its comprehensive approach to describing the systems of language, which starts from the functions of linguistic forms. Various consequent attempts have been made to explicate the semiotic complexity of different particular representations, together with the origin and dynamic emergence of those representations across different disciplines. In this sense, SFL can become the overarching pattern for fashion and clothing as a semiotic phenomenon, which strives to investigate its affordances in terms of multimodality and multisemiosis.

Halliday's systemic functional documents outline the theory of language, which realizes the theoretical frameworks of fashion and clothing developed in this study. The approach to SFL has numerous properties. As Matthiessen (2012, 2014; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009) put it, SFL is a general theory which is designed to be **appliable** to a wide range of contexts, including language and other semiotic systems. According to the model of its research development, SFL is also related to a **holistic** theory of language in context, in which language as a system operates together with

other systems. The analysis in SFL can be thus viewed as **comprehensive** descriptions of language systems that incorporate all the language in context rather than certain fragments. In addition, SFL produces a description of the **context** when we conduct discourse analysis. Accordingly, it builds a relation of context to the analysis and then to the analytical choices being made. Following these points, a social semiotic approach to fashion and clothing is constructed to the extent that it can draw on a holistic, comprehensive, semantically oriented linguistic theory which interfaces with contextual considerations. During the process, the architecture of language, developed by Halliday (1961) and Matthiessen (2007a, b), provides a theoretical guiding map along which the organization by reference to fashion and clothing semiotic systems are established.

## 4.3.2 The Architecture of Language Inspired by SFL

The concept of "architecture" is characterized as the organization of language and other semiotic systems (Matthiessen, 2007a, p. 505). In SFL, it is an overview map to guide the research on language and other semiotic systems in context. From the architectural perspective, the systems of language and other semiotics develop by starting from a general description of language and other semiotics in context towards highly specific and detailed regions identified from the description. For this reason, the systems of language and other semiotics in context could have been described comprehensively (see Matthiessen, 2007a, b). The architecture of language and other semiotic systems can be explicated in two broad aspects as follows.

The approach to SFL is holistic in its orientation, which considers language and other semiotic systems in context based on systemic thinking. In this sense, language and other semiotics as a system are approached in relation to systems of different kinds in an ordered typology (Halliday, 1996, 2005; Matthiessen, 2007a, 2009; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009). Therefore, language and other semiotic systems can be interpreted within different phenomenal realms of increasing complexity, namely, physical, biological, social and semiotic systems. In this analysis, each higher-order system is composed mainly of the lower-order system located immediately below. Hence, language and other semiotic systems are also social, biological and physical systems. This perspective emphasizes the organization of different systems in the defining of semiotic phenomena. In addition, SFL argues that language and other semiotic systems are developed along a set of interlocking semiotic dimensions (Matthiessen, 2007a, b; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). Two approaches are available when considering the system of dimension, that is, global and local organizations. The global dimension concerns the hierarchy of stratification, the spectrum of metafunction and the cline of instantiation, whereas the local dimension focuses on the hierarchies of axis and rank, which are manifested within the strata defined by the stratification. The semiotic dimensions can intersect to produce the multidimensional space of semiotic systems and contribute to a multifaceted view of language and other semiotic systems in context. According to SFL, Figure 4.1 illustrates the systemic functional modeling of the architecture of language.

**Figure 4.1** Systemic Functional Model of the Architecture of Language
(adapted from Matthiessen, 2007a, p. 549)
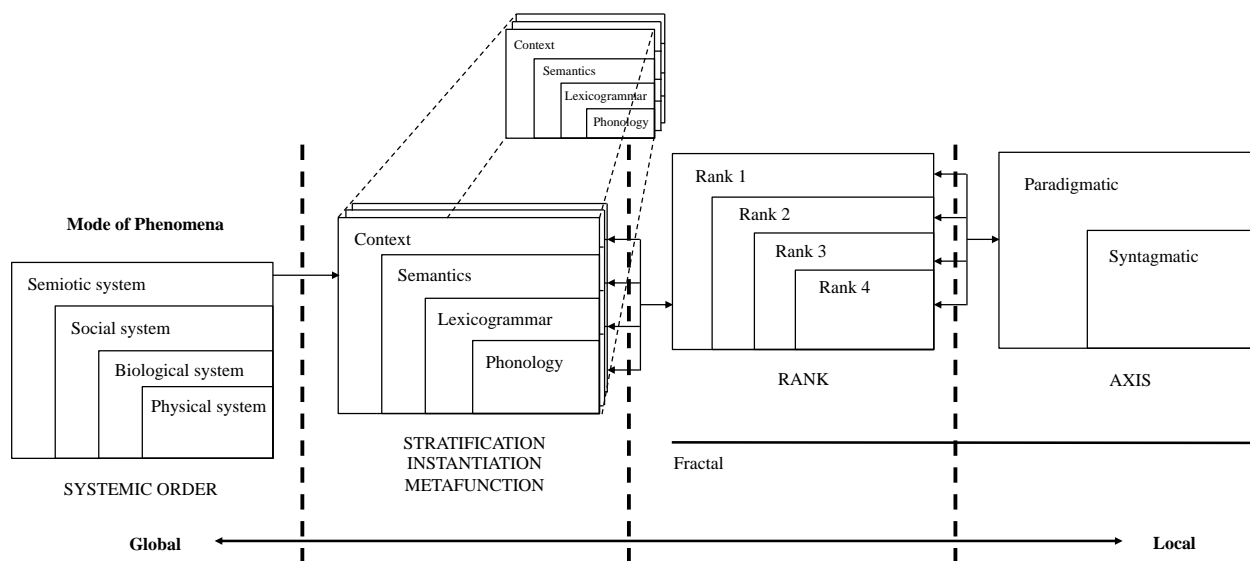


As argued earlier, the organization of fashion and clothing semiotic systems being developed here is also an architectural one. Its theoretical model centers round the works of Halliday and his colleagues (e.g. Halliday, 1961; Matthiessen, 2007a, b) in terms of the ordered typology of systems and the system of dimension. The main advantages of this architecture are as follows: it allows us to explore the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing in context with a holistic view and offer comprehensive accounts of fashion and clothing from numerous semiotic dimensions. Semiotics has always been thought of as a theoretical perspective that can provide important insights into human communication and behavior. However, it is currently insufficient to offer a solid foundation for developing fashion and clothing knowledge. If scholars advocate a holistic approach to understanding fashion phenomenon, then, research perspectives used in fashion and clothing ought to incorporate all relevant domains, including physical, biological, social and semiotic. Such a holistic approach

views the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing as part of one integrated, complex and dynamic system. Within this holistic approach, the physical and biological characteristics of fashion and clothing are considered along with ongoing processes of interaction between the social and semiotic spheres. In addition, the multidimensional view from global to local provides significant frameworks to describe fashion and clothing. It further ensures that fashion and clothing are treated as a comprehensive system rather than only a fragmentary one. It may claim that the expansion of architectural approach initiated by Halliday and his colleagues could increase the usefulness of this theoretical exploration for fashion and clothing in the study.

## 4.4 Fashion and Clothing Systems in the Architecture of Language

In formulating the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing, this section refers to the above described theories and postulates an analytical framework for a systemic exploration of fashion and clothing as semiotic construct. According to the architecture of language defined in SFL, this section attempts to look at fashion and clothing from the perspectives of phenomenal realm and multidimensionality, that is, the ordered typology of systems, stratification, metafunction, rank and axis respectively. These perspectives are elaborated and developed in terms of their relevance to fashion and clothing throughout the following sections. Such a multifaceted view helps address the complexities of semiotic nature in fashion and clothing and contributes to a holistic interpretation in this context.

**4.4.1 Fashion and Clothing in the Ordered Typology of Systems**

The ordered typology of systems is originally proposed by Halliday and further developed by him and Matthiessen (Halliday, 1996, 2005; Matthiessen, 2007a, 2009; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). In this typology, systems operating in different phenomenal realms are ordered in terms of complexity, starting in scale from physical systems via biological systems, to social systems and then to semiotic systems (see Figure 4.2). According to their interpretation (ibid.), each higher-order system incorporates the properties of the immediate lower-order system, but with some new characteristic property added. Therefore, **biological systems** (2nd order) are **physical systems** (1st order) with the added property of "life". They can be observed as physical systems that can self-replicate, with individuation and evolution as the dominant mode of cosmogenesis. **Social systems** (3rd order) are biological systems with the added property of "value" (or social order). At this level, biological systems are organized into social groups with clear social division of labor and social individuals playing different roles in networks among social groups. **Semiotic systems** (4th order) are social systems (also biological and physical systems) with the added property of "meaning". As with social systems, they are organized in terms of semiotic strata; thus, they can carry or create meaning into different functional strands. Semiotic systems are not only confined to the systems directly associated with the human body but also extended to the ones ultimately created by bodies. Therefore, language and other systems are conceived as semiotic systems. Based on their complexity, semiotic systems can be further divided into primary and

higher-order semiotic systems: primary semiotic systems only carry meaning, but higher-order semiotic systems also create meaning (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010, pp. 153-155).

**Figure 4.2** The Ordered Typology of Systems
(Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010, p. 152)
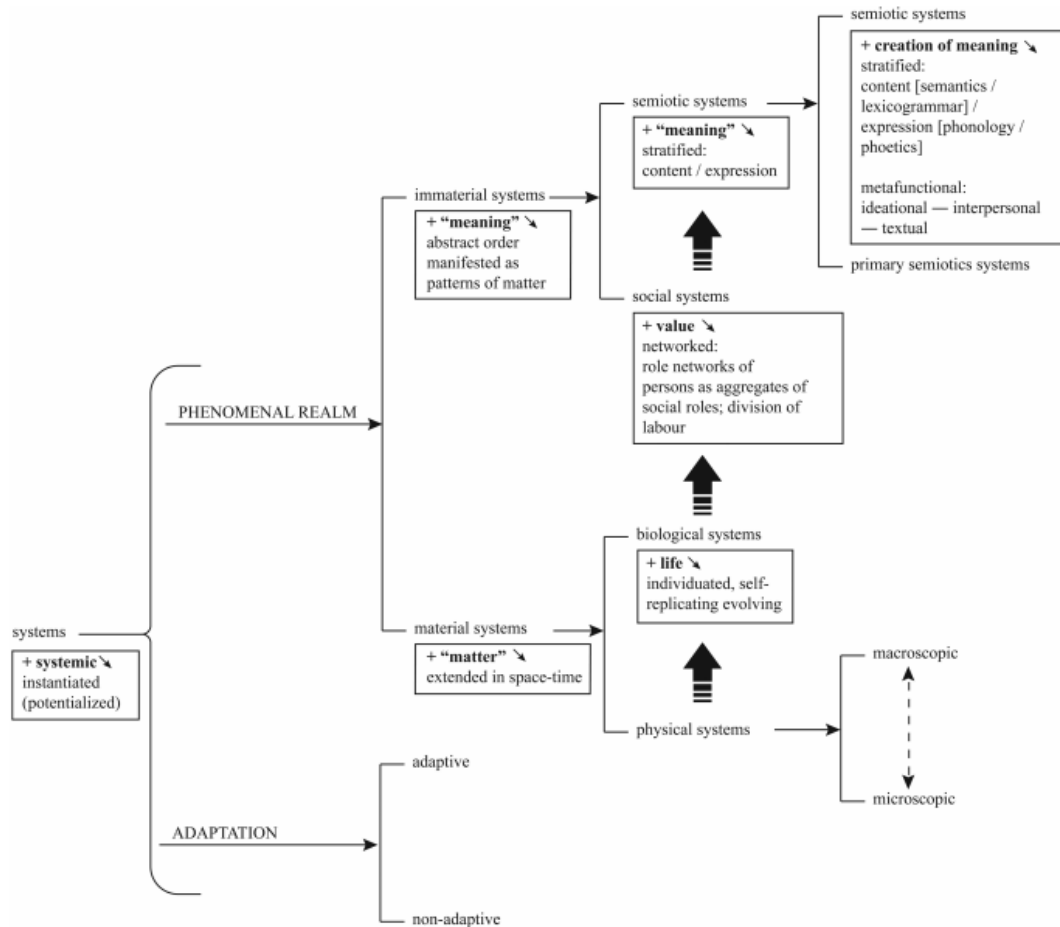
In Matthiessen's (2009, p. 14) unifying conception, physical and biological systems (the lower-orders of system) can together be regarded as material systems: "systems of matter", whereas social and semiotic systems (the higher-orders of system) as immaterial systems: "socio-semiotic systems" or "systems of value and meaning". This view is in close correspondence with Halliday's (2005) discussion about matter

and meaning as the constitution of human experience. As such, there is a continuum between systems of matter and that of meaning: socio-semiotic systems, manifested in the form of materials, evolve from the systems of matter; their material manifestations in physical and biological organization may find the same meaning in socio-semiotic systems. In the typology of systems, meaning is distinct from but independent on the material realm. Halliday (ibid., p. 201) describes the relation between the two realms as "interpenetrate", which Matthiessen further considers as "co-evolve" (2007a, p. 547) and "coordinate and integrate" (2009, p. 14) respectively. Such unified perspective helps to investigate the phenomena in its smaller chunks and also proposes to study the relationship between the phenomena and human societies.

Using this method of analysis, language and other semiotic systems are seen as operating within the systems of all four orders, each of which has complex composition and requires considerable investigations. This offers a wide range of possibilities for us to explore through conducting the analysis of four ordered systems. We can thus interpret language and other semiotic systems are also social, biological and physical. On this occasion, fashion and clothing semiotic systems can be viewed in terms of this holistic framework. We argue the four ordered systems are necessary in the understanding of fashion and clothing systems: both immaterial (social and semiotic nature) and material systems (physical and biological organization) should be emphasized to elucidate the complex phenomenon in fashion and clothing. This systematic combination means that fashion and clothing as social semiosis can be

addressed from the collaborative perspectives of four conceptual domains. In addition,

clothing at the expression plane can be demonstrated as "multimateriality"

(Matthiessen, 2009, p. 14) which falls into the lower-order systems of matter. This

"multimateriality" that implies diversified material manifestations reflects the

multisemiotic nature of clothing. A further theorization of fashion and clothing in the

ordered typology of systems can be summarized in Table 4.1, where fashion and

clothing serves as a coalescence of four interrelated systems - semiotic, social,

biological and physical.

**Table 4.1** Fashion and Clothing in the Ordered Typology of Systems

| Order of System | | Form of System |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | Physical systems | • Raw materials and material products in relation to clothing<br>• The physical environment in which activities take place |
| 2nd | Biological systems | • Dressed individuals and participants in fashion system as organism<br>• Clothing as quasi-biologically evolved "organism" |
| 3rd | Social systems | • Fashion<br>The fashion industry and its components, including design, production, distribution and consumption<br>Participants involved assuming different roles in a range of social networks<br>• Clothing<br>Shared patterns of clothes<br>Individual appearance management |
| 4th | Semiotic systems | • Fashion and clothing as multisemiotic systems in terms of global and local dimensions, including stratification, metafunctions, instantiation, rank and axis<br>• Individuals as participants in the fashion industry with semiotic roles operating in a range of communication networks |

In the first-order system, clothing is manifested **physically** as raw materials and

material products, which take place in a **physical environment**. In the second-order

system, both dressed individuals and participants in fashion system are viewed as **biological** organism. Participants include a chain of individuals involved in the fashion industry: designers, stylists, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, publicists, advertisers, photographers, customers and so on. The biological nature of individuals relates closely to how clothing functions as a physical existence in a physical environment, and their psychological qualities also lead us to consider the communicative functions of clothing. At the same time, clothing may be a **quasi-biologically** evolved "organism". There is one potential regarding clothes in the process of development. Flügel (1930) draws attention to the evolution of clothes, which he finds a counterpart raised by Sir George Darwin, a son of Charles Darwin. In the Darwinist initial view (1872), a strong analogy exists between the development of living forms and clothes. Drawing on the concepts of biological science, Flügel (1930) reaches a conclusion that "a single individual garment corresponds to a single individual organism, while the corresponding type of garment corresponds to the species" (p. 168). Similarly, it may be possible for clothes to have the effects of heredity, and "natural selection" is also applied to the evolution of clothes. With respect to this assumption, a detailed characterization of the discussion is beyond the limits of the present study. All such activities involving social beings and clothing are grounded in biological processes, as Thibault (2004) suggests that "social semiosis, or meaning-making is to be explained in terms which are consistent with what we understand about the biological basis of semiosis" (p. 24). In the third-order system, fashion and clothing is a **social** system. From the macro level, the fashion industry is

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composed of several wholly separate but interchangeable branches, each with its own pattern of development moving across design, production, distribution and consumption. The fashion industry is also a social collective made up by a great many individuals assuming different roles in a range of social networks. From the micro level, clothing is not a random or total individual affair; it is a social activity. One of the distinctive features of human clothing is that groups of people share particular patterns of clothes. The overall pattern of clothes is a consequence of the society wherein people live - in much the same way as language we speak. The way what and how we wear actually reflects human social behavior. In addition, individual appearance management involving personal responses towards clothing arrangement in society is considered a component of clothing analysis at the micro level, which takes place in social system. In the fourth-order system, we treat fashion and clothing as a **semiotic** system. For social semioticians, meaning comes from multiple semiotic resources through interacting with a large context. Fashion and clothing are regarded as multisemiotic systems. Different semiotic resources, involving verbal, visual, tactile, aural, olfactory and kinetic, operate together to create meaning in a multisemiotic system. Moreover, they are functionally integrated within the context they operate in (Matthiessen, 2009, p. 12). These semiotic systems are modeled along semiotic dimensions ranging from global to local, which include the hierarchy of stratification, the spectrum of metafunctions, instantiation, rank and axis. During semiotic processes, individuals as participants in the fashion industry are involved. They create, transmit and interpret meaning and thus play semiotic roles within a

range of communication networks.

The central concern of this study is to interpret fashion and clothing in the fourth-order system. The ordered typology of systems encapsulates semiotic system as the locus, where meaning is made through the operation of social semiotics at the critical interfacing of the socio-semiotic with the material - the content plane with the social and semiotic environments; the expression plane with the biological and physical resources. It is important to emphasize that we need to understand both immaterial systems - the social semiotic, the discursive nature of meaning making, and material systems - the physical biological, the realm in which all activities are manifested. They are intrinsically inseparable, thereby giving equal weight to both realms. The current study distinguishes fashion and clothing as two independent and interrelated systems: fashion as an institutionalized system and clothing as a multisemiotic system. They lie in different ordered systems, namely, fashion within the higher-order immaterial systems and clothing within both higher-order and lower-order systems. Clothing is the raw material from which fashion as an immaterial object, that is, meaning and value is formed. To comprehensively explore fashion and clothing, we should draw on the four-order systems of fashion and clothing. This is because the partial system of analysis may lead to the fragmentation of knowledge and fail to explain the systemic properties of fashion and clothing. As Halliday (2003) articulates, meaning is "socially constructed, biologically activated and exchanged through physical channel" (p. 2).

The ordered typology of systems sketched very briefly above is a holistic approach taken in SFL, with its emphasis on comprehensive accounts. The methodology and mode of theorizing it adopts is recognized as systems thinking, which facilitates the exploration of language and other semiotic systems. This scientific approach provides powerful theoretical tools for the development of fashion and clothing systems in this study. As noted earlier, it makes possible a comprehensive analysis of fashion and clothing systems, which ranges across all its manifestations within different orders of system.

### 4.4.2 The Stratification of Fashion and Clothing Semiotic Systems

One of the fundamental dimensions defined in SFL is stratification, which serves to model the organization of language and other semiotic systems. In Section 3.2.1, the literature review on stratification revealed several salient issues. Firstly, in terms of intrinsic theory referring to language function, Halliday (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) proposes establishing a stratified semiotic system, which involves four levels of abstraction: semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology (graphology) and phonetics (graphetics). The former two levels occur within the content plane, which deals with the meaning potential of language. At the stratum of semantics, the functions of language in human lives are examined based on its relation to the construal of people's experience, to the enactment of social processes and to the organization of information. At the stratum of lexicogrammar, meaning is construed as wording. The latter two levels constitute the expression plane,

which is concerned about the material organization of language. At these two strata, phonemes are organized into syllables (spoken language) or letters into sentences (written language). Secondly, in terms of extrinsic theory relating to social context, Martin (1992) theorizes three strata: register, genre and ideology. Within the stratum of register, the diversification of metafunctions is interlinked to that of context. Taken together, register and genre form the context of situation and the context of culture. Thirdly, realization is the key concept for describing the way that these strata are related to one another within a semiotic system.

The stratification is further developed by examining the semiotic resources beyond language. In a similar fashion, the notion of strata is revisited in relation to the semiotic nature of the discourse under investigation. In exploring a systemic functional account of artistic semiotics, O'Toole (1990, 1995, 2011) incorporates Halliday's semiotic theory into the forms of visual arts, proposing to illustrate the range of systemic choices available in terms of rank scale and metafunction. His framework recognizes the organization of works in context as ordered series of levels or strata – context, including the interpretation of register and visual systems, involving the content and expression planes. The hierarchy of stratification is not a dominant practice in his accounts to which the mode of analysis he proposes simply offers a sketchy alternative. Consequently, no further elaboration in this dimension is provided in his analysis. In the development of the synergy achieved by visual and verbal semiotics in page-based text, Royce (1999) produces a systemic description of

intersemiotic relations, thereby helping to formulate a stratified model in terms of visual communication. He (ibid.) follows up the systemic functional model and establishes the visual as a complex semiotic system composed of multiple levels or strata. In his proposal, two general dimensions exist in relation to visual semiosis: extra visual levels - context of culture, context of situation and visual levels - semantics (meaning), visual grammar (visual design) and representational symbology (display elements). These dimensions are related by realization and incorporate the range from meaning in context to the manifestation of meaning in the visual system of page-based text.

The major concern of this section is to extend the organization of language into that of fashion and clothing in order to investigate the systemic nature of fashion and clothing semiotics. In what follows, Halliday's SFL model with respect to the hierarchy of stratification (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005; Lemke, 1984, 1995) and Royce's (1999) analytical framework of visual semiosis are employed to examine the organizational nature of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems. This stratified hierarchy, according to SFL, is designed to model the organization of fashion and clothing in relation to context along a number of ordered subsystems. Based on this interpretation, various levels or strata of meanings in fashion and clothing are produced from a number of different angles as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3** The Stratification of Clothing as Semiotic System
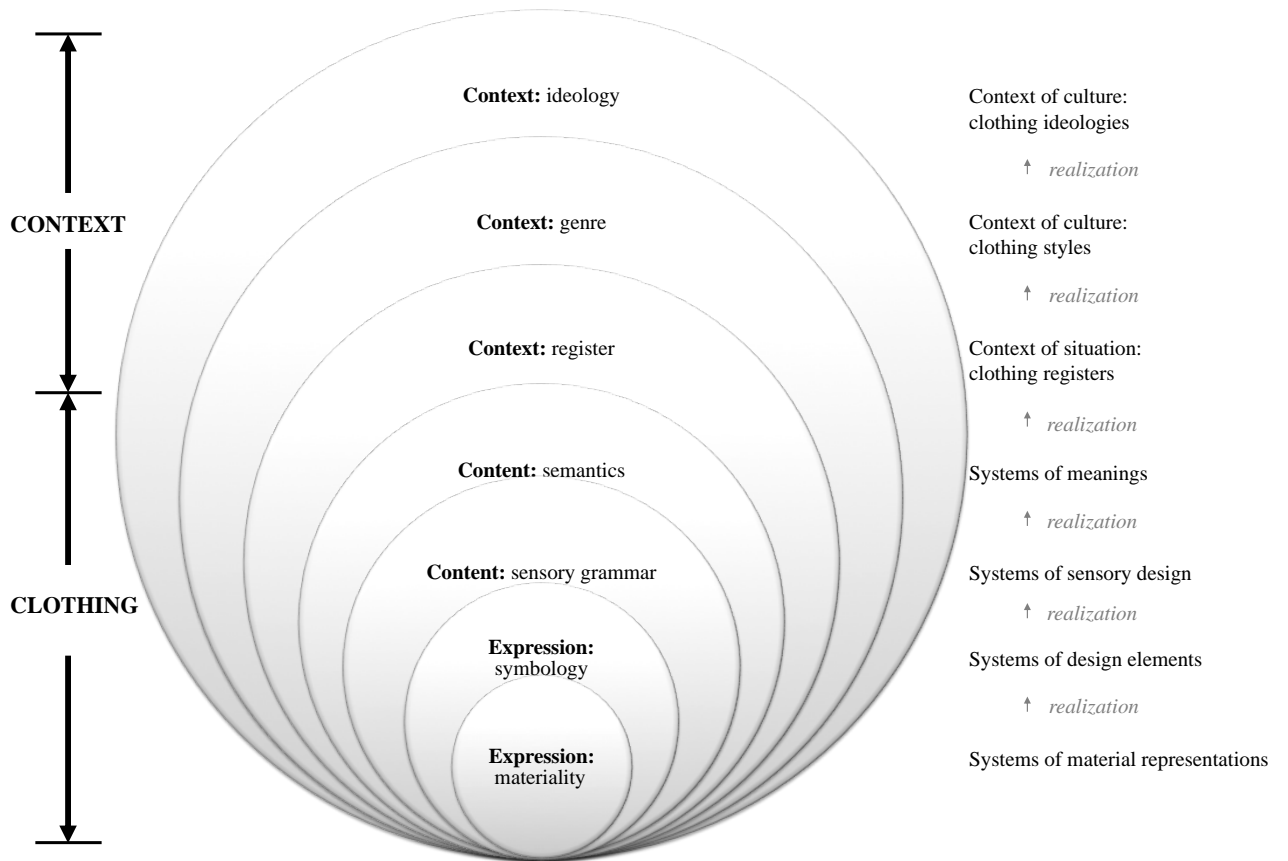


Stratification in systemic functional document provides a stratified model with two broad orders of semiotic organization in fashion and clothing: clothing and context. To be more accurate, it is the interface between any instance of clothing and the context in which it occurs. It becomes apparent in this discussion that the study of fashion and clothing needs to take into account the meaning arising from both the multisemiotic nature of representation and the social dynamics that shape such multimodal construct as they emerge. For this reason, context is recognized to have huge significance for the interpretation of clothing. In this sense, alongside the theory of clothing, theory of context in which clothing plays certain parts in a particular context has to be incorporated into the analysis of fashion and clothing. The notion of

stratification in linguistic systems where meaning is made across stretches of language and context are therefore extended to include the meaning of fashion and clothing, which derives from both multimodal components of the text and contextual interactions accompanying the unfolding of text. At this point, the organization of clothing and context can be proposed, in which a close relation exists between these two, in some way analogous to the view of language (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Hjelmslev, 1961). In the concept of stratification developed by Martin (1992), clothing and context are articulated by the process of realization. That is, the context of a text (any instance of clothing) as a semiotic system is manifested in the form of clothing. Following the theories of SFL (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992) and Royce (1999), the strata in the organization of clothing can be further modeled into a number of subsystems, which range from semantics, sensory grammar, symbology and materiality according to the degree of symbolic abstraction. Context above the stratum of clothing is stratified into a number of strata, which encompass ideology, genre and register. This organization of clothing and context as an integration of several different perspectives aims to provide a comprehensive account of the ways in which meanings configure as both text and context and to ensure that the analysis and interpretation of clothing in context in terms of semiotic system are thoroughly and adequately sketched.

Seen from the perspective of clothing on the one hand, there are two separate planes: content (semantics, sensory grammar) and expression (symbology, materiality) in

terms similar to those developed by Halliday. In presenting the text of clothing, we adopt different terminologies where clothing is treated as the underlying principle of multisemiotic organization. The introduction of terminological changes to clothing gives references to the relevant works that document these terms. The content is differentiated into two, semantics and sensory grammar. **Sensory grammar**, characterized as the systems of multisensory design, refers to the ways that the systems of design elements at the level of symbology are put together to form recognizable structures in clothing. Design principles and Gestalt theories work as the guideline or method for manipulating design elements to create a specific visual effect (c.f. Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). The organization of these systems aims to produce unified, coherent sensory phenomena for the audience to make sense of their experience within a particular situation. Therefore, sensory grammar, similar to the lexicogrammar in SFL model, is a means of simultaneously projecting three metafunctional meanings which take place at the level of semantics. From this perspective, sensory grammar can be viewed as "syntax" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), relating to the ways of representing social reality (through TRANSITIVITY system, INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS), of enacting social interactions (through MODALITY system) and of organizing the message (through THEME and COHESION systems). Its realization occurs by using the manipulation of design elements outlined in symbology. Thus far, clothing is known as a complex semiotic system involving a comprehensive description of semiotic resources across visual, tactile, aural, olfactory, kinetic and verbal. Hence,

sensory grammar inspired by Royce's (1999) term in visuals serves to fulfill various structures of these semiotic resources. The model of **semantics** concerning systems of meanings is in tune with SFL's metafunctional principle of language. Based on this principle, social interpretation of fashion and clothing is linked with the categorization of happenings, things and circumstances in the real world, of the relationships between the addresser and addressee and of the organization of clothing into a meaningful message. The three metafunctions are realized through the systems of sensory design, and these systems are realized as particular forms, which are themselves realized by various arrangements of design elements. In analyzing fashion and clothing, we also introduce the theory of discourse semantics by Martin (1992) who proposes to investigate the resources in the analysis of meaning in both text and context. The metafunctional organization of meaning in fashion and clothing, under his theory (Martin & Rose, 2007), accordingly expands into the discourse systems of IDEATION (construing experience), CONJUNCTION (logical connections), NEGOTIATION (interacting in social practices), APPRAISAL (negotiating attitudes) and IDENTIFICATION (tracking participants).

At the expression plane, different terminologies are carried out in considering clothing as a multisemiotic representation. At the base of the expression level is **materiality**, systems of material representations, which concerns various physical resources for the materialization of clothing as a semiotic construct. In the context of fashion and clothing, the resources for such materialization are often embodied in the form of

fabrics and materials, together with other material manifestations, such as language, image, sound and music. On top of the materiality is the level of **symbology**, which specially refers to the manipulation of design elements into signs and symbols for the purpose of communication. Symbology is derived from a classification by Royce (1999), a term being used in the communication of page-based visual semiosis. Such design elements in fashion and clothing include space, line, shape and form, color, texture and pattern (c.f. Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). They are realized by the systems of material representations. Here, each instance of clothing is assumed to consist of a range of choices from the systems of design elements, which are available for producers to choose and use. In analogy with language, each item is an instance of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems. Through the choices they make, designers organize these design elements to produce planned effects and to deliver particular meanings. Therefore, fashion and clothing, like the linguistic system, is dependent on a set of conventions defined by a particular context. That is, the selections they make are situated within a social context in which they need to be interpreted by and shared with members of a society. The context for this meaning potential, in Halliday's (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985) coinage, is the context of culture - a larger cultural background of fashion and clothing and the context of situation - the environment of clothing. Both of these form the basic contextual framework for the adequate understanding of fashion and clothing.

Seen from the perspective of context on the other hand, the stratification of contextual

plane in fashion and clothing is similar to that of language. In this situation, context can be interpreted as three-ordered strata according to the proposal of Martin (1992). Hence, register, genre and ideology are articulated here. The notion of clothing **register**, to what Halliday (1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985) refers to as a context of use, is initially elaborated and developed by Enninger (1985). In that sense, clothing registers are interpreted as the appropriateness of clothing for certain occasions of use and they can be distinguished into several categories of ritual encounters, ceremonial situations, occupational contexts, recreational contexts and off-stage contexts in regard to interactional contexts. In Enninger's (ibid.) elaboration, register is perceived as interactional domains and in this way it relates to the social action system. As a result, it is different from the concept of clothing register proposed in this study, which is interpreted as reflecting the diversification of metafunctions - field (experiential), tenor (interpersonal) and mode (textual). Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 33), field refers to the semiotics of social action, which covers the activity and the domain of experience brought into existence by fashion and clothing. Tenor is concerned with the role relationships enacted through fashion and clothing systems. It mediates these social relationships in terms of several dimensions referred to as role, status, contact, affect and value. Mode as symbolic organization relates to the role played by clothing in realizing the situation. It includes the division of labor, rhetorical mode, turn, medium and channel. These three features constitute the context of situation in clothing, through which meaning is interpreted. A further stratum realized by register is **genre**, which is characterized as clothing styles. This

level is used in the field of fashion and clothing to describe distinctive characteristics or ways of expression that distinguish one item of clothing from one another (Craik, 2009; Kaiser, 1997). The style of fashion and clothing in principle can be generalized into two subcategories of subculture and aesthetics, according to the interpretation of fashion theories (e.g. Angus, Baudis & Woodcock, 2015; Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Kennedy, Stoehrer & Calderin, 2013; Tortora & Eubank, 2010). Following the level of genre, there is **ideology** realized by genre, register and further clothing. This level of clothing ideologies is to model culture as a whole and to generalize meaning potential across participants within a particular culture (Martin, 1992). Ideology, in Martin's (ibid., p. 575) concern, is deemed as a product of unequal distribution of meaning potential that forces a culture to change and innovate. Depending on specific situations, the notion of ideology can be investigated in various ways. From a social semiotic viewpoint (ibid.), these discourses of ideology can be articulated in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and generation. In fashion and clothing, ideology seems to be oriented towards divergent dimensions in the fabrication of meaning as an inherent feature of a particular group or society. Such variable realization in the case indicates to some extent that all texts are viewed as producing voices, which leads to the fact that discursive power is distributed unevenly. It is this dynamic inclusiveness that finally resolves the issue of semiotic tension in society. Therefore, for Martin (1992), ideology is not just a system of coding orientations as illustrated above, which makes meaning available through different coding; it is also a semiotic process, which results in the evolution of meaning potential. As Martin (ibid.)

emphasizes, ideology at this stage is still a provisional network of oppositions; subsequently, it has to be interpreted as manifested in context. Only analysis can relate it systematically to meanings that develop from different levels of register and genre.

Another important characterization needs to be made, which concerns the defining of fashion as a semiotic system. As explained earlier, fashion is a symbolic product which exists only in the form of material products. In the meanwhile, it is a social process whose generation is substantially influenced by a social environment (see Section 4.2.1). For this reason, the semiotic system of fashion needs to be separated from that of clothing and accordingly incorporates the two at once, clothing which serves as its material form and the social context in which it operates. In this sense, fashion semiotic system from a local perspective, as opposed to an overall perspective of social practices in the fashion industry, can be generalized as the realization through both the clothing and context planes as presented in Figure 4.4. It is in line with the semiotic description held by Hjelmslev (1961), Martin (1992) and Matthiessen (2009): the stratification of (multi)semiotic systems is composed of connotative and denotative semiotic systems. That is, context is treated as connotative system and language (or clothing) as denotative system covering both content and expression planes, each of which is further stratified into different levels of organization. At this point, it is similar to Barthes' (2012) interpretation of myth that investigates semiotic phenomena and understands ideology in the combination of

connotation and denotation (see Section 2.5.1.3). Barthes (ibid.) describes fashion as a variation of myth that can be structured into three orders of signification. However, two main limitations exist in his model: first, he does not attempt to explain the semiotic system of context and second, he does not differentiate the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing. Therefore, Barthes' interpretation is inherently different from the stratification of fashion and clothing proposed in this study. In addition, the geology of fashion system by Barthes (1985) is involved in constructing levels for the analysis of fashion and clothing systems. As displayed in Section 2.5.2, his manufacture gives priority to written clothing system and considers its significance to the exploration of fashion system. It is very distinct from here that concerns new directions in considering the multimodal nature of fashion and clothing as its starting point. This staring point would elucidate the ways that fashion and clothing produces the edifice of meanings in the context.

**Figure 4.4** The Stratification of Fashion as Semiotic System
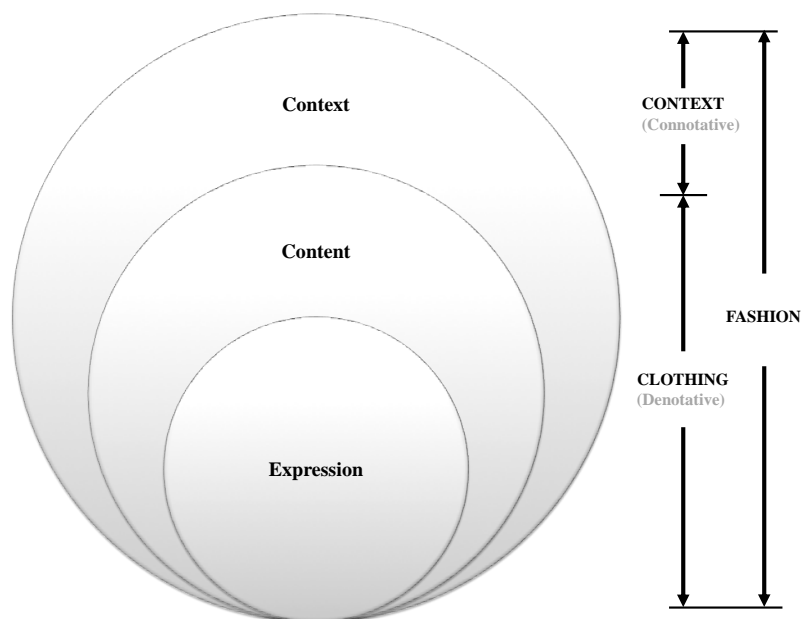
To sum up, the stratification of fashion, clothing and context developed here is a multidimensional semiotic space, which involves in the description of stratum and plane along a number of levels. Analogous to language, the semiotic dimension of these levels is defined in terms of realization (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) or metaredundancy (Lemke, 1984, 1995). Most of them are related to metafunctional diversity and thus, they can be addressed in a simultaneous way. Besides, trinocular views on fashion and clothing are defined in terms of the semiotic dimension of stratification. This notion is developed from the work of Matthiessen (2007b, pp. 3-4) to deal with multimodality. The three views are "from above" - from the perspective of context, in which different expressive modalities are coordinated and integrated together to create meanings; "from below" - from the perspective of expression plane, which is concerned about the ways that different expressive resources are manipulated to construe content systems and "from roundabout" - from the perspective of content plane, where meaning-making resources of different semiotic systems are modeled to produce a synthesis of systems between the above and below. At the same time, a perspective of "synoptic" and "dynamic" (Martin, 1992) is introduced, in which fashion and clothing is treated as both system and process. Stratification can be considered a place to start the exploration of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems because these semiotic systems are inherently stratified organization ones. Any instance of clothing is argued to be possibly interpreted along the theoretical dimensions and analyzed in relation to three complementary perspectives. Within the stratification, the multiplicity of meaning can be recognized

through the delicacy of the networks on different levels from which clothing is derived.

### 4.4.3 Functionality in Fashion and Clothing

Functionalism is another important dimension for studying fashion communication, its semiotic systems and structures. The principle of function was first formulated as its special contribution of a part to a whole in various sciences; a term is constantly associated with instrumentality, utility or finality. It was later extended to other levels of analysis from the structure to the pragmatics or use. The general notion of function in semiotics has been investigated by Nöth (1990). In his exhaustive review, there are two concepts of semiotic functions: structural functions and functions of use or pragmatic functions. Structural functions are described as functions within language, whereas pragmatic functions as the use of language for communication. Therefore, pragmatic functions are often designated as communicative functions. Both structural and pragmatic or communicative functions are classified under the technical umbrella of "functional semiotics" (ibid.).

As a proponent of functional semiotics, systemic functional theories extend the principle of functions in language into two directions relating to the organization of language throughout the system. One is extrinsic functionality for the use of language, and the other is intrinsic functionality for the organization within language. The latter is a fundamental principle of language in SFL, which includes two related functions.

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The first looks to the organization of language as a whole - through its different phases of development, to which three corresponding functions of language are correlated ranging from microfunction via macrofunction to metafunction (cf. Section 3.2.2). These three kinds of functions constitute the spectrum of different modes of meaning. The second differentiates the local organization of language in its semiotic structures, which is also referred to as structural functions (for further discussions of functional semiotics in SFL, see Halliday, 1973, 1975, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010).

Drawing on SFL and functional semiotics, this section sets to investigate the functionality in reference to fashion and clothing. The investigation mainly comes from two sets of distinct but interrelated perspectives: intrinsic functionality and extrinsic functionality; structural functions and pragmatic or communicative functions. Based on such theoretical functions, the following discussion delves into functions in fashion and clothing as well as its function system.

### 4.4.3.1 Functions in Fashion and Clothing

André Courrèges states that "the functional must be the soul of a dress…aesthetics is the envelope" (Pascal, 2008). Such an emphasis on the function of clothing hardly comes as a surprise, for many explorations have been conducted with different perspectives on the function of clothing. As for the reasons why people wear clothes, several theoretical explanations from anthropology and psychology have been

developed to address this question (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Dunlap, 1928; Flügel, 1930; Hurlock, 1984; Rouse, 1989; Westermarck, 2007). In spite of different arguments they hold towards the initial motives for wearing clothing, there is a general agreement among almost all who have focused on the functions that clothes serve. The four fundamental functions of clothing they have accepted are frequently acknowledged as protection, modesty, immodesty and adornment.

The most obvious form of **protection** afforded by clothes, according to their accounts (ibid.), is that against physical dangers and inconvenience. Clothes protect humans against the weather, enemies (both human and animal) or accidents incidental to dangerous occupations or sports. Another aspect of protective functions of clothing is psychological protection. The psychological principle involves the influences of magic and moral danger. Flügel (1930) points out that clothing envelops and protects the body akin to a mother's womb. The **modesty** function assumes that the intent and purpose of clothing in the beginning is to cover or conceal their private parts. The arguments of modesty are based on the idea that morality relies on modesty, which is achieved through the concealment of the human body. The opposite theory about the function of clothing has also been put forward. Proponents of this explanation believe that the motivation of wearing clothing stems from **immodesty** or sexual attraction. They argue that people wear clothes in order to attract others to the body rather than to conceal it. The final explanation with reference to wearing clothes is the **adornment** function. The adornment arguments tend to stress the nature of decoration

within clothing as well as other forms of appearance, all of which are designed to attract, display or aesthetically express. It is important to note that the four theories emerging from earlier theories set the stage to understand early academic writings on the social nature of clothing. From a theory-building perspective, the literature briefly reviewed above suffers from certain obvious shortcomings, particularly in the research on clothing as communication. Despite the shortcomings of these earliest theories, they continue providing intellectual ingredients and insightful opportunities for critical thinking on clothing.

Based on earlier theories, Roach et al. (1980) classify the basic functions of dress into two domains, namely, a physical environment and a means of communication. As a physical environment, dress is organized into two environments: one is a micro environment interactively linked to the body; the other comes from the interaction between the body and a macro environment, including the components from biology, physics and the supernatural. As a means of communication, dress is utilized to deliver several types of personal information, which includes such as identity, belief, mood, expertise and knowledge. In addition to the two functions of dress, they point out that dress affects individual human beings, society and culture in terms of maintenance, survival and change. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) also provides two functions of dress: as a modifier of body processes and as a medium for communication in a manner similar to that classified by Roach et al. (1980). In their discussion (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992), body modifications and supplements

alter body processes and communicate how dress relates to identity.

Similarly drawing on the basic functions of clothing, Barnard (2002) distinguishes between the material functions of fashion and clothing and their cultural functions. According to Barnard (ibid.), material functions are directed towards protection, modesty and immodesty, whereas cultural functions are associated with communication. Material functions are utilised to communicate a position in a cultural and social order of both insider and outsider (ibid., p. 60). Cultural or communicative functions are built on the structure of "the language of personal adornment" defined by Roach and Eicher (1979) from an anthropological perspective. Roach and Eicher (ibid.) identify ten functions in the communication of personal adornment: individualistic expression, social worth or status, definition of social role, economic worth or status, political symbol, magico-religious condition, social rituals and recreation. By contrast, Barnard (2002) excludes "belief, custom and values" and "sexual symbol" from the functions of clothing and identifies eight functions which clothing may be used to communicate. In accord with Barnard, Roach and Eicher, Rouse (1989) also treats communication as an element function of clothing. Another important figure to look at fashion and clothing in terms of communicative functions is Holman (1981), who provides the taxonomy on the functions of apparel from a social-psychological standpoint. The functions of apparel from Holman's (1981) viewpoint can be separately summarized as parasomatic (camouflage and display), utilitarian, aesthetic, mnemonic, emblematic and illustrative. Compared with other

scholars, Tortora and Eubank (2010) stress clothing as a means of social communication and examine its functions throughout history. As they argue, social functions clothing performs include gender, age, status, group membership, ceremonial use and sexual attractiveness.

As with all such distinctions, there is a similarity among them: functioning of clothing seems to be embedded in hypothetical but plausible reactions to aspects of clothes or dress as a separation between one function and another function. Therefore, each instructs us, according to the interpretation of audience, about the functions of clothing and dress - about how clothing and dress serve human beings. However, as Barnard (2002) clarifies, a flaw exists here to separate one function division from another in that none alone can offer a comprehensive explanation for the functions fashion and clothing serve. For example, the material functions are also thought to fulfill a cultural function, which is intended to construct and communicate cultural identity (ibid., p. 49). Roach et al. (1980) also contemplate that the function of physical environment does not preclude the one of communication. In their statement, the functions or combinations of functions clothing performs vary considerably according to time, place and occasion. Kaiser (1997) concludes that clothing actually serves different purposes for individuals, the importance of which depends on the specific social situations people dress for. Holman (1981) notes that while each function of apparel is treated separately, such process is a simplification in an attempt to illustrate. The fact is one item of apparel is regarded as a simultaneous result of

multiple functions. To deal with this inquiry, he posits various research questions relating to the interactions of functions. Moreover, these questions are suggested by a consideration of the integration of functions. In agreement with Holman, Davis (1996) proposes the significance of interactive functions for a garment particular in clothing design. Thus, there is a clear need for future research to invite an attempt to the "multiplicity of functions" (Holman, 1981) served by clothing. Some questions immediately arise from here, including how these discrete functions integrate into such a generalized and abstracted one and how clothing fulfills the multiplicity of functions. Another common feature in their interpretations is they look at clothing from the outside and interpret different ways in which people use clothing. In all interpretations concerning the functions of clothing, we can find the concept of functions is simply synonymous with that of use or communication. A quite similar discussion is associated with the functions of language. We agree on the notion mentioned by SFL (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) that the function discussed in a traditional way only refers to purpose or way of use, which has no contribution to the analysis (of language itself). Here, we may interpret it for clothing or dress. Apart from communicative functions, there lies in another key function performed by clothing that is closely connected with structure. Davis (1996, pp. 15-31) clearly separates it from (instrumental) function and decoration. In her definition, structure depends largely on the manipulation of visual and textural design elements, considers how they relate to each other and to the body, and determines how a garment fits and allows for performance. Therefore, structural function needs to

consider both a garment's instrumentality and the structure of human body. In Delong (1998)'s classification, three sources of visual structuring are involved in every ABC. They are characterized as layout structuring, which relates to the three-dimensional variation of materials manipulated on the body; surface structuring, which refers to variations of two-dimensional surface owing to dying, printing or weaving and light-and-shadow structuring which is concerned about light and shadow effects as dress interacts with the varying illumination from the environment (ibid., pp. 139-163). These three structuring contribute to their effects, interact with one another and eventually influence the audience on their awareness of apparel.

To extricate the functions of clothing or dress for purposes of analysis, we suggest classifying functions within broad categories on the theoretical basis of functional semiotics (Nöth, 1990) and SFL (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010), which interprets function not just as the variations in the use of clothing but as its intrinsic use to the organization of clothing itself, and particularly to the organization of the semantic system. This approach to functions in SFL is considered the fundamental characteristic of language, which forms the basis for the evolutionary change in the semantic system (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). By analogy, we propose a developmental framework concerning the functions of clothing. The organization of the functional framework around the clothing system in this study is a significant difference from other functional approaches. The proposed framework is inspired by Halliday (1973, 1975) and Matthiessen (2004) in

their exploration of the functions in the development of language as well as function structure by Matthiessen, Teruya and Lam (2010). As far as SFL is concerned, function in this study refers to the property of multiple purposes as a whole instead of the one of discrete purpose, such as instrumental or structural functions clothing serves to fulfill a need on the part of the wearer.

### 4.4.3.2 Function System in Fashion and Clothing

For their interpretations (Halliday, 1973, 1975; Matthiessen, 2004; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010), there is an important link between two senses of functions: "functions in structure" and "functions of language". Functions in structure relate to the internal organization of language; functions of language explain the organization of language in terms of modes of meaning, which evolve three phases from microfunction via macrofunction to metafunction. The latter is the starting point in specifically considering the functions of clothing. At this point, the attempt to understand the functions of clothing leads directly into two directions about structure as a whole and the spectrum of different modes of meaning. Before approaching the functional structure in clothing, we need to first reconstruct the functions of clothing in terms of modes of meaning. Here, we suggest a tentative framework for a functional account of the development of clothing. In a similar fashion, the functions of clothing can be divided into three phases as it evolves. Phase I, initial functions with respect to psychological response to clothing are microfunctions. The microfunctional phase includes basic and advanced functions. In Phase II, the

microfunctions are generalized into two macrofunctions: the mathetic, one function for symbolic learning and the pragmatic, one for doing. These macrofunctions are further conceptualized into more abstract functional systems at Phase III. It is noted that three simultaneous metafunctions occur during this phase, including ideational, interpersonal and textual which are associated with one another. They form a complementary relation, which differs from microfunctions and macrofunctions as the existence of mutually exclusivity.

The first phase is microfunctions. Several attempts have been made to catalogue the different functions of clothing and to chart the development in terms of the increased range of these functions to be found in the growing variety of clothing repertoire. The origins of clothing can be ascribed to basic functions in Phase I system as illustrated before: protection, modesty, immodesty and adornment. The essential motivation behind these functions is psychological explanations for understanding the origins. We assume that the wearing of clothes is not merely a psychological issue, and basic functions have seemed to be a plausible speculation in explaining how the clothes come into existence. As it evolves into a complicated social activity, the theories as to basic functions actually no longer meet the requirements of clothing as socially constructed semiotics. That means they are neither unable to distinguish one meaning from another nor to recognize the variations in meaning. There remain other purposes that have entered into its further development. Such functions, including imaginative or aesthetic in clothes, actually give few basic functions. This is because clothing

itself is not merely a symbolic product but embodies certain socialization and cultural phenomena. To exactly catch the features of clothing, we add many other elements to basic functions based on the earlier observations relating to the use of clothing. For distinction, we organize the term "microfunction" into two subsystems: basic and advanced functions respectively. Advanced functions include basic functions and extend them along the functional line. Following SFL's tradition, we propose advanced functions as follows: instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, informative and aesthetic. The taxonomy of microfunctions in clothing is documented below.

**Table 4.2** Advanced Functions of Clothing

| Function | Example | Correspondence to Earlier Theories |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrumental**<br>Clothing is utilized to realize certain purposes or tasks. | Clothing as human needs<br>General needs: movement, protection, environment, health, safety, etc.<br>Special needs: occupation, sports, children, pregnancy, the elderly, the handicapped, etc. | Barnard (2002)<br>Davis (1996)<br>Dunlap (1928)<br>Flügel (1930)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Hurlock (1984)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992)<br>Westermarck (2007) |
| **Regulatory**<br>Clothing is utilized to conform to or agree with some given standards or authority. | Clothing to control human behaviors: uniforms | Barnard (2002)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992) |
| **Interactional**<br>Clothing is utilized to interact with individuals and situations. | Clothing to maintain social relationships<br>Micro level: individuals, environment<br>Meso level: group, organization<br>Macro level: society, culture | Barnard (2002)<br>Davis (1996)<br>Dunlap (1928)<br>Flügel (1930)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Hurlock (1984) |

| | | Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach et al. (1980)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992)<br>Westermarck (2007) |
|---|---|---|
| **Personal**<br>Clothing is utilized to express personality and ideology. | Clothing as personal expression<br>Inward: self<br>Outward: affect<br>(participation/withdrawal) | Barnard (2002)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach et al. (1980)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992) |
| **Heuristic**<br>Clothing is utilized to explore being, environment, society and their interrelationships. | Clothing as a material form to deconstruct and reconstruct of social phenomena, such as politics, technology and art | Barnard (2002)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach et al. (1980)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992) |
| **Imaginative**<br>Clothing is utilized to create, explore and entertain. | Clothing as a product of imagination: fantasy dress, street subculture, etc. | Barnard (2002)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992) |
| **Informative**<br>Clothing is utilized to communicate information and express propositions. | Clothing as a medium to manifest events, ideals, groups, attitudes, technologies, social and economic status, etc. | Barnard (2002)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach et al. (1980)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992) |
| **Aesthetic**<br>Clothing is utilized to appreciate and understand beauty. | Clothing as a form of artistic expression | Barnard (2002)<br>Davis (1996)<br>Dunlap (1928)<br>Flügel (1930)<br>Holman (1981)<br>Hurlock (1984)<br>Roach & Eicher (1979)<br>Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992)<br>Westermarck (2007) |

Microfunction, however, poses fundamental limitations. As discussed in the previous

section, it is impossible to indicate more than one function that clothing serves at once.

The same is true for meaning. To explicate different simultaneous meanings within

clothing, an intermediate level of abstract coding between meaning and expression is required to integrate them into one single structure. Accordingly, the second phase, transitional, emerges from Phase I. During this phase, two macrofunctions are involved. In language development, the two opposing macrofunctions are referred to as the mathetic and pragmatic respectively. That is, the transition exists in the dichotomy between utterance as action (doing) and as reflection (understanding) (Halliday, 1993, p. 100). As illustrated, fulfilling the clothing function is not simply a division of one kind among many discrete functions; it is an integration of functional systems, a continuing evolution that is inherently a semiotic process. To demonstrate the simultaneously multiple purposes clothing serves, there exists the necessity of transforming such discrete functions into abstract, correlated multifunctional systems. Similar to language, clothing functions as a main form of human experience, which comes as close to the human body as language in origin. Its appearance represents the manner in which human beings view the world. The social reality (or a culture) shaped by human thoughts and ideas in the process is a projection of meanings - a semiotic construct. From this perspective, clothing, as a component of human semiotics that constitutes a culture, might be understood to emphasize doing (pragmatic) and understanding (mathetic) simultaneously. In other words, clothing is not merely involved in perception but also in behavior, a close relation of experience and behavior. Therefore, the functions of clothing in Phase II are actually served by two parts: the mathetic and pragmatic macrofunctions, which are directly considered as symbolic learning and doing. These macrofunctions are produced as

generalizations about the microfunctions at Phase I. Through the reflection of social reality (or a culture) performed by human beings, clothing serves as a means of social actions. As distinct from language, we develop the mathetic macrofunction from learning into symbolic learning for the discussion of fashion and clothing as a distinctive system of semiotics. Symbolic learning, as proposed, is a term frequently involving in symbolic interaction theory which describes the integrated, cumulative and evaluated nature of experience (Rose, 2013). The explanation of symbolic learning can be found in the study of aesthetic perception and learning, particularly in the study of imagery. Here, we apply it to elaborate on a fashion and clothing-based theory of learning.

In the course of the transition, clothing through which we attempt to "speak" performs two things at once: represent the world of reality and fulfill some kind of social action in the world. That is, clothing incorporates two utterances at the same time, a mapping of doing (interpersonal metafunction) and understanding (ideational metafunction). In Halliday's (1993) terminology, interpersonal is a principle of action, whereby clothing is used to enact interpersonal relationships and ideational denotes a principle of reflection, whereby clothing is used to construe human experience. At this level, the macrofunctions have been transformed into the metafunctions of Phase III, which occurs simultaneously in any utterance. That means the single macrofunctional principle clothing serves disappears. Instead, the utterances constructed by human beings begin to involve a combination of mathetic and pragmatic components. During

this phase, clothing has evolved to serve highly generalized functions, that is, metafunctions which simultaneously involves the ideational and interpersonal. Hence, meaning consists in both action and reflection. In addition, there is a third metafunction, the textual, which is the semiotic resource for creating the discourse of clothing. The textual works simultaneously with the other two and constructs the semiotic resources for action and reflection as an integrated mode of activity. The metafunctional principle derived from SFL defines a multidimensional semantic space for fashion and clothing and entails fashion and clothing meaning more than one thing at a time. The application of metafunctions into fashion and clothing is described in the next section.

As stated earlier, the function of clothing is divided into two categories, communicative (overall organization) and structural (local organization). Now, we turn to another sense of function in clothing: functions in structure. The structural function of clothing refers to the purposes of fit and performance (Section 4.4.3.1). Together with communicative functions, they constitute a whole organization for intrinsic functionality in fashion and clothing, which is manifested through the system. In SFL conception, a second component of functionality, extrinsic, is apparent together with the intrinsic one. Extrinsic functionality is associated with functions of extrinsic use in clothing. In this study, the functions of fashion and clothing expand the counterpart of language in SFL (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010, p. 103) and form a distinct functional system, which is summarized in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5** Function System in Fashion and Clothing
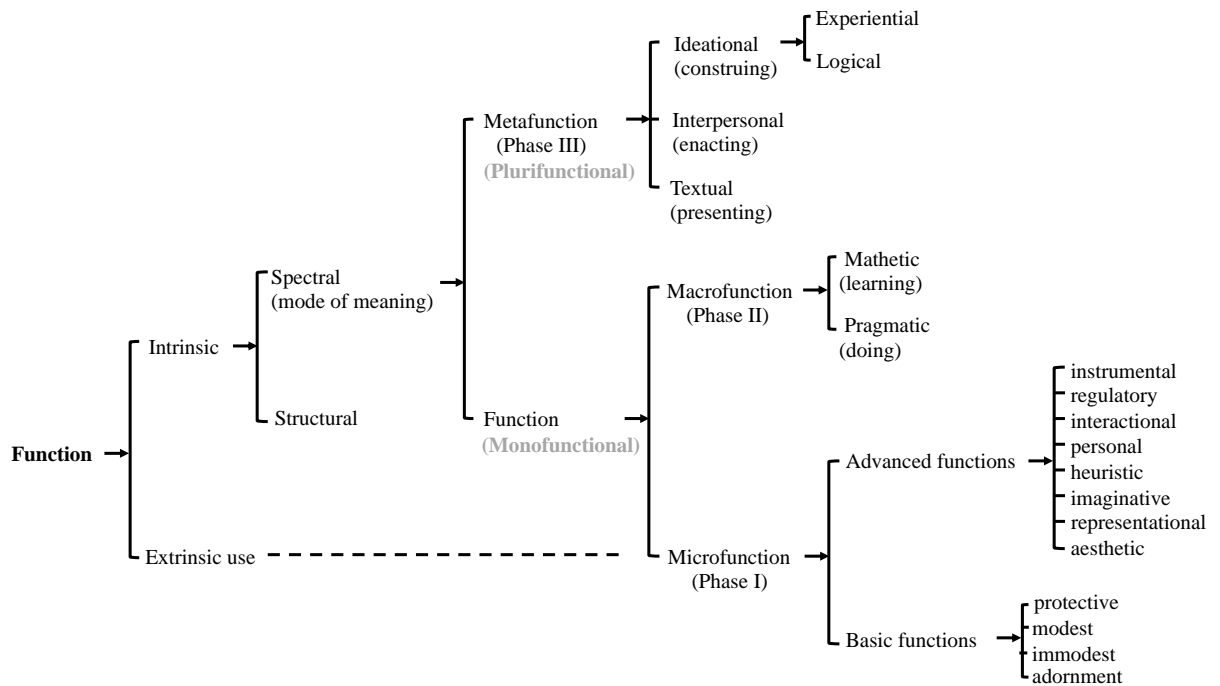


## 4.4.3.3 A Metafunctional View

The key to SFL is the metafunctional principle. Three sources of metafunctions exist in SFL: ideational, which involves the construal of experience; interpersonal, which results from social interactions and expression of attitudes or emotions and textual, which occurs in the organization of the text into a meaningful message (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In Halliday's (ibid.) conception, any semiotic text in whatever medium simultaneously involves the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions, and they are realized through systems of choices across all three functions. The definition concerning these three metafunctions is glossed in detail in Section 3.2.2.

There is a close correspondence between "multifunctions" in language postulated by

Halliday and Hasan (1985) and "multiplicity of functions" in clothing suggested by Holman (1981) and supported by Barnard (2002), Davis (1996), Kaiser (1997) and Roach et al. (1980). From the framework previously proposed, we can recognize that clothing, similar to language, is multifunctional. The functions may be independent, but they interact with one another at once. Each item of clothing in fact performs multiple functions as an examination of the examples in Figure 4.5. What may be introduced from this perspective are questions relating to the interactions of functions, which have been discussed in previous sections. Based on Halliday's metafunctional theory, we set out to demonstrate that fashion and clothing can always and simultaneously fulfill three broad communicative functions or metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Specific resources at the stratum of lexicogrammatical system or sensory grammar system can be related to each of these three metafunctions.

The development of systemic functional theories seldom occurs in the field of fashion and clothing possibly owing to little overlap between fashion and linguistics. Although clothing differs from language in its means of expression or the types of meaning, a systemic functional approach makes it possible to specify its distinctive semiotic processes and practices. Owyong (2009) first tries to build a relationship between clothing semiotics and systemic functional theories. She (ibid.) starts this train of thought by positing three simultaneous clothing functions: representational, modal and compositional, which are related to the communicative potential of

clothing. These three functions integrate to constitute clothing as a multifunctional construct. The study of Owyong lays the initial foundation on clothing as a semiotic system in the context of SFL. However, her study has certain limitations. The first, she treats clothing as a symbolic product by analyzing its visual semiotic resources across different printed media and periods. Clothing is multimodal in nature and hence, her study loses the essential features of other semiotic resources, such as verbal, tactile, aural and kinetics, in the construction of clothing as a multimodal landscape. More importantly, her study ignores another significant component of meaning - social practices - in its contribution to clothing as a socially constructed semiotics. It is the context, in which clothing unfolds and is interpreted, that finally makes sense of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. The second, she draws a broad sketch of clothing semiotics with the aim of examining clothes as a critical semiotic resource and discussing them in the social construction of power relations. From this sense, her study is only a partial analysis, which is impossible to demonstrate the property of clothing as a whole and explain its complex social attributes within a wide context. The third, the functional framework she proposed is merely applied to printed texts not to real clothing in other contexts, which involves individuals, environment, society and their interrelationships. What is distinct in this study is that we seek to situate real clothing within a social practice field and stress the multimodal nature of clothing in its meaning-making processes. Therefore, we regard the representation of clothing as both a symbolic product and social processes. Meanwhile, we adopt multidimensional perspectives to interpret fashion and clothing in order to develop a

systemic theory and an analytical methodology. Such an account overcomes the tendency to overgeneralize and simplify fashion and clothing, which leads to the neglect of the complexity of fashion phenomenon, and permits a comprehensive, systematic and holistic description of fashion and clothing as socially constructed semiotic systems.

The metafunctions have been renamed based on their functions within different semiotic systems. As far as visual communication is concerned, Halliday's metafunctional principle has been extended into varying manifestations (see Section 3.3.1.3). In the analysis of visual images by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), these are representation, interaction and composition. In the description of displayed art by O'Toole (2011), these are representational/experiential, modal/interpersonal and compositional/textual. As far as tactile communication is concerned, Halliday's metafunctional theory has been organized through the definition of touch as a meaningful resource by Bezemer and Kress (2014) and through the construction of texture as semiotics by Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011). The metafunctions under their investigations are labeled as ideational, interpersonal and textual. It is our contention that fashion and clothing, like other visual arts (e.g. painting, architectural design and sculpture), is structured to simultaneously fulfil three kinds of functions. It represents some aspects of people's experience of the world, the **ideational** function. Two components construe the experience within the ideational function, one concerning the configurations of phenomena of the world (experiential) and the other

concerning the construal of logical relations (logical). It manifests certain features of the relationships between the producer and audience (interactive), as well as the attitude or emotion of a producer towards the experiential content (personal), the **interpersonal** function. It has the structural characteristics of a coherent text with reference to the appropriate style, internally in terms of textual organization and externally in terms of the relationship with environment in which it occurs, the **textual** function. One variation on the theme of clothing and functions comes from the work of Kaiser (1997). In a similar vein, she (1997, p. vii) organizes the social meanings of clothing into three processes: 1) "how we shape and represent our identities as we manage appearances", in the ideational metafunction, 2) "how we interact with other people in groups or communities", in the interpersonal metafunction and 3) "how we are influenced by, and contribute to, the cultures and times in which we live", in the textual metafunction. In that sense, fashion and clothing simultaneously accomplishes three social-based communicative functions in their multifaced contexts. The extending of SFL into fashion and clothing as well as other semiotic realization is summarized in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3** Metafunctional Views of Visual and Tactile Communication

| SFL (Halliday) | The Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen) | Language of Displayed Art (O'Toole) | Touch (Bezemer & Kress) Texture (Djonov & van Leeuwen) | Proposed Fashion and Clothing Semiotics |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ideational | Representational | Representational Experiential | Ideational | Ideational |

| Interpersonal | Interactive | Modal Interpersonal | Interpersonal | Interpersonal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Textual | Compositional | Compositional Textual | Textual | Textual |

These strands of meaning, in Halliday's description (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 23), are woven together into the fabric of the discourse. In order to understand them, we need to look at the whole thing simultaneously from different angles instead of looking separately at its different fragments because each perspective makes valuable contributions towards the total interpretation. Such semantic complexity, which allows ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings to be incorporated into units, is possible because clothing can be described as a semiotic system which involves sets of choices or oppositions. The distinctive characteristic of semiotic system is that each choice has its meanings, which are made against a background of other potential choices. This purposive selection process is also applied to the principles of fashion design in which choices are made to fulfill specific communicative functions. It is evident that clothing itself has gone beyond its survival and acquired semiotic value in our culture. That is, the choices of clothing we make are invested with meanings. These meaningful selections, no matter what medium of expression they use, are activated by the context in which they are situated. What we see with clothing is that what begun as physical existence has been developed via biological resource and social order into a complex semiotic system (Section 4.4.1). Behind this phenomenon lies a proposed explanation about how we use clothing and how clothing is (or should be) structured for use. Such a semiotic interpretation of the system of clothing enables

us to take into account different choices in connection with their context of use and treat clothing as a resource which we opt to make meaning in the context. As Halliday (e.g. 1978, Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) argues, in any natural language (or any semiotic mode), the choices available for expressing these functions are systemic. That is, particular lexicogrammatical systems, which may be interpreted as sensory systems in this context, offer sets of choices for articulating one or other function. Analogous to the rank scale of linguistic units by Halliday (ibid.), every choice in clothing - ensemble, garment, component, element, accessory - is the realization of a systemic choice relating to the social functioning of the utterance. In exploring the systemic functional model of clothing, in answering the questions as regards what types of meanings in clothing and how clothing is organized to make meanings, we also obtain a set of techniques for theorizing and describing different aspects of clothing as well as fashion systems.

Halliday's systemic functional semiotics provides a comprehensive account of language and the systems which it realizes. The central concern about his theories is the principles of function. His emphasis on function ensures that different functional perspectives in the system that contributes towards the whole interpretation are adequately accounted for. It is thus considered to be the only semiotic theory available that could integrate and explain the relations of these three primary concerns as contemporary semiotics (O'Toole, 1990). There exists a close connection between clothing and these three functions. The ideational function involves the representation

of experience in the real world and the construal of logical relations that emerge from the experience. This function is an essential component of fashion and clothing as communicative artifacts that shape and represent identities and affect the manner in which clothing appears to the audience. Moreover, one of the three metafunctions is the interpersonal function. Hence, the interaction between the addresser and addressee has to be considered in the analysis. His exploration establishes a direct rapport between the designer and audience, to be viewed more as in fashion and clothing. The textual function eventually influences the construction of information including the coherent organization of clothing and its relation to the situational environment. Therefore, the metafunctional view formulated in SFL is a significant move to consider fashion and clothing as semiotic construct and advance the investigation with the question of how fashion and clothing make meanings in its social contexts.

### 4.4.4 Rank and Axis in Fashion and Clothing

In addition to the global dimension described above, another local form of organization is involved in fashion and clothing semiotic systems: rank and axis. The hierarchy of axis is concerned about the relationship between paradigmatic system and syntagmatic structure, whilst the notion of rank, as defined in systemic theory, is the compositional hierarchies of language and other semiotic systems which are ordered from largest to smallest within a given stratum (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen 2007a; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). These two internal dimensions of organization also account for the production or alternation of meaning

in fashion and clothing. The conceptualization of axis has been illustrated in terms of paradigm and syntagm by early structuralists (e.g. Barthes, 1973; Barnard, 2002) to see how the axis model works in the analysis of fashion and clothing (see Sections 2.5.1.1 and 2.5.1.3). This involves the claim that these semiotic sequences and choices in fashion and clothing are the outcome of ongoing selection by designers in specific contexts for particular communicative purposes. In a similar manner, the account of rank scale found in systemic theory is also relevant to the understanding of fashion and clothing. According to the principle of rank, clothing is internally organized in terms of composition. We are thus proposing for the "grammar" of clothing: ensemble (a set of clothes), garment (garment pieces), component (garment parts and details), element (design elements) and accessory. Differently, we add another rank of accessory below the rank scale in considering the structural rules of clothing. In the clothing system, a garment part or detail consists of a whole number of design elements, a garment piece of a whole number of garment parts and details, and an ensemble of a whole number of garment pieces. It is noted that each rank may also be explained in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic differences. For this point, Barnard (2002) gives a description that is frequently found in fashion design, where he takes for example Comme des Garçons shirts and other design elements of colors and textures. That is, each rank (e.g. jackets) has a paradigmatic set, which may replace or be replaced by the components of the same function (jackets in different styles); but at the same time, it has to be syntagmatically combined with the components of different functions (pants, skirt and dress in different styles) into a

whole ensemble. In this respect, the combination of jackets or syntagmatic structure is selected from the paradigm of jackets or systemic choices. The variations of choices made in system and structure are considered to generate or alter the meaning of fashion and clothing. It can be therefore claimed in the same way with language that fashion and clothing is also resources for making meaning, where meaning exists and forms in systematic patterns of choices.

## 4.5 Fashion and Clothing as Multisemiotic Systems

This section develops a multimodal approach to meaning making in fashion and clothing, with its particular focus on the theory of different semiotic resources or multisemiotic. As reviewed in Section 4.4, the organization of fashion and clothing semiotic systems is analogous to that of language in the form of architecture. To summarize, the systemic functional theories provide powerful theoretical models for a holistic and comprehensive semiotic study of fashion and clothing. On the one hand, systemic functional theories make it possible to bring together global organization in terms of the ordered typology of systems, stratification, metafunction and local organization in terms of rank and axis into a coherent landscape. On the other hand, the fundamental principles of SFL provide an analytical point of view to address the complexity of semiotic resources in fashion and clothing and discover the dynamic processes of meaning making that accompanies fashion and clothing.

As shown in Chapter 2, the study of fashion and clothing is interdisciplinary and

derives its knowledge base from different fields, including such as the theories of sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetic and semiotics. To fulfill the purpose of this study, we suggest an integrative approach in that various bodies of literature are required for the interpretation of fashion and clothing. Such an account bridges the gap among different pertinent disciplines and views fashion and clothing in such a manner that one can consider it from additional facets. The section unravels how these theoretical literature maps out the features of fashion and clothing and provides effective methods for examining fashion and clothing in their meaning-making processes. This section is divided into two main parts according to the two complementary perspectives of multimodality and resemiotization on fashion communication and analysis. The first part develops the multimodal systems of fashion and clothing. Building on the frameworks reviewed in Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, it illustrates the multimodal discourse analysis in clothing and sets out its main descriptive and analytical parameters mainly in terms of visual and tactile semiotic resources. The second part of this section then highlights the contextualization of fashion and clothing as a multisemiotic practice and explains the realization of the multisemiotic systems in fashion and clothing through the unfolding of dynamic social processes.

## 4.5.1 Multisemiotic Description of Fashion and Clothing

Before developing the systems, one underlying concept of fashion and clothing in relation to multimodal phenomena needs to be elucidated. That is, the features to be

incorporated in the systems are multimodal and multisemiotic. As such, the definition

of fashion and clothing as multimodal artifacts simultaneously includes these two

terms. Therefore, they are emphasized in this section to account for the meaning

arising from multiple semiotic resources that are deployed across sensory modalities.

For the purpose of clarity, multimodal refers to the interaction of more than one

semiotic modality by which discourses make meaning, whereas multisemiotic refers

to the integration of different semiotic resources in the construction of meaning.

There are various interpretations towards the terminologies of mode and semiotic

resource. For example, Jewitt (2006, p. 17) asserts that mode is "an organized set of

resources for making meaning", which is regularly used in the social life of a

particular community and shared within a culture. Kress (2014, p. 60) provides the

basic definition of mode as "a socially shaped and culturally given resource for

making meaning". Bateman (2011, p. 19) redefines the notion of semiotic mode in

terms of "decomposability", in which mode is articulated through a configuration of

material substrate and used by members of a particular community for the

communicating of meaning. O'Halloran (2011, p. 121) examines semiotic resource or

mode across sensory modalities, that is, "visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory,

kinesthetic". Lim (2011, pp. 31, 34) draws a clear distinction between mode and

semiotic resource: mode represents sensory modalities, which are used to experience

the world and semiotic resource implies a resource for making meaning and the nature

of the resource, which is described through the planes of content and expression as

well as the systems within each plane. It could be argued that they have a lot in common theoretical assumptions and conceptual terms, whereas each has a particular focus of attention, which thus leads to variations in the definition of multimodality. Their interpretations reflect the fact that the terms mode, modality and semiotic resource have a wide range of uses in multimodal studies, typically in a manner that can be exchanged.

The general assumption concerning modes and semiotic resources made here follows the above-mentioned definitions, in particular Bateman's (2011), O'Halloran's (2011) and Lim's (2011) approaches to multimodality in which mode and resource are considered in terms of channels dependence or sensory modalities and self-evident modalities or semiotic resources. This distinction is related to the fact that first, clothing is a complex semiotic mode, which evolves as a combination of multiple semiotic modal contributions; second, the concepts of fashion and clothing are related to two separate but interconnected semiotic systems. Therefore, they involve a variety of semiotic resources as the articulation for meaning making. Based on previous discussions, some points are to be drawn concerning fashion and clothing as social semiotics:

- Clothing is a **semiotic mode**, which inherently incorporates the sensory modalities of visual, tactile, kinetic, aural and olfactory into multimodal phenomena. Either items of clothing or clothing as a process is involved in all sensory experiences (e.g. Delong, 1998; Eicher & Evenson, 2015; Fiore, 1993, 1996, 2010; Holman,

1981). Foremost, it follows Bateman's (2011) conceptualization about the ability of a single material foundation to construct distinct semiotic modes. In this aspect, multiple semiotic modes develop based on the originating semiotic mode of clothing. For example, texture varies from fabrics, surface design and layout structure and can be made to carry distinct semiotic modes, which include visual, tactile, aural, kinetic and olfactory. The materiality in different modes is articulated simultaneously in diverse ways: they are related to the original one but at the same time work independently of one another.

- Fashion and clothing includes not a single semiotic resource rather an array of more than one semiotic resource, that is, **multisemiotic resources**. Image, language, gesture, music, sound and other modes of cultural behavior in the social dynamics of fashion and clothing systems are examples of semiotic resource for representation and communication of fashion and clothing.

- Each mode and resource in fashion and clothing have different potential for **meaning making** by nature. The meaning is usually ascribed to individual selection of semiotic modes and resources that are made available to them within a particular context to realize specific social meaning.

- Fashion and clothing is considered as multimodal and multisemiotic constructions. An inherent feature of the **multimodal** phenomenon in fashion and clothing is that different and diverse semiotic modes and resources are combined and integrated for communicative purposes. These semiotic modes or resources formulate intersemiotic relations.

- Following Halliday (1978, p. 123), fashion and clothing as social semiotics is "a system of meanings that constitute the 'reality' of the culture". For this reason, the articulation of fashion and clothing as mode and semiotic resources is interpretable in particular **contexts**.

- Different semiotic systems within the context of fashion and clothing operate together in the carrying or creating of meaning so that they form **multisemiotic systems**, as Matthiessen (2009) suggests.

- Fashion and clothing are **two distinct semiotic systems** and therefore they can be defined individually or in combination in the multimodal domain. It should be noted at this point that the materiality formed by fashion and clothing is diversified: clothing is articulated in the material forms of sensory modalities, among which the physical substances of fabric and material are considered as a major way for meaning making, whereas fashion in this study is materialized by means of clothing and other semiotic resources which emerge from dynamic social practices as well. From this perspective, we may interpret that fashion and clothing as social semiotics is possible through a variety of material realization. This is in accordance with the definition of medium by O'Halloran (2011, p. 121), which refers to "the means through which the multimodal phenomena materialize (e.g. newspaper, television, computer or material object and event)".

As apparent from the above points, fashion and clothing is not only just semiotic but also should be more accurately described as multisemiotic. A fundamental conceptual

premise in the study of meaning making within fashion and clothing is to investigate a range of semiotic resources and explore the interplay among semiotic resources in the orchestration of meanings made. In discussing how various meaning-making resources are coordinated and integrated for semiotic purposes, multimodal theorists propose the concept of intersemiosis which focuses on the relations and shifts across various semiotic resources (see Section 3.3.1). A clear acknowledgement arises from their discussions that semiotic resources are "not simply juxtaposed as separate modes of meaning-making but are combined and integrated to form a complex whole which cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of the mere sum of its separate parts" (Baldry & Thibault, 2006, p. 18). The meaning of fashion and clothing, as they illustrated (ibid., p. 83), emerges from a composite of information from various semiotic sources instead of mere addition of one to another. As a result, we may recognize the necessity to invite a close investigation towards the theoretical modeling of semiotic resources and their interactions for a holistic social-multisemiotic interpretation of fashion and clothing. To describe the multisemiotic nature of fashion and clothing, Figure 4.6 displays relevant semiotic resources in terms of meaning making within a multimodal environment.

**Figure 4.6** Multimodal Construction of Fashion and Clothing as Social Semiotics

MULTIMODAL

MODE OF MEANING

Visual Design

Elements of visual meaning constitute:
• Ensemble
• Garment
• Component
• Element
• Accessory
• Etc.

Elements of linguistic meaning constitute:
• Slogan
• Individual interaction
• Interview
• Social media
• Customer service
• Etc.

Linguistic Design

Tactile Design

Elements of tactile meaning constitute:
• Fabric
• Material
• Etc.

**DESIGN ELEMENTS**

Elements of aural meaning constitute:
• Sound
• Music
• Etc.

Aural Design

Elements of olfactory meaning constitute:
• Scent
• Fragrance
• Etc.

Elements of kinetic meaning constitute:
• Fabric
• Material
• Body movement
• Etc.

Olfactory Design

Kinetic Design

*The integrated meaning making systems of fashion and clothing*

In considering how the mechanism of semiotic resources contributes to a multimodal formation, further questions are raised: How are the semiotic resources structured to make meaning? What are the relations between semiotic resources in their creation of meaning? From this position, O'Halloran (2005, p. 11) postulates two principles in the organization of semiotic resources: intrasemiosis to address the grammars and functions of each resource and intersemiosis to consider the meaning as a resultant product of intersemiotic relations. These principles constitute two analytical means

for multimodal research, namely, text as discourse and across semiotic processes. In fashion and clothing, intrasemiotic takes place within discourse dimensions where different semiotics are arranged in such a manner that they could make sense to others, whereas intersemiotic takes place within the static analysis of discourse and the dynamic unfolding of social processes or "resemiotization", a term borrowed from Iedema's (2001, 2003). It has to be stressed that such analytical accounts involve function and grammar systems and semiotic processes, through which fashion and clothing operates to construct the world. Furthermore, in establishing the theoretical frameworks, it is important to point out that each semiotic resource is considered to be organized according to unique grammatical and functional systems through which meaning is realized. This feature of organization means that it offers a range of choices from available grammatical systems in each semiotic resource, and these choices are functionally coordinated and integrated to create meaning in context.

The major theoretical inquiry of this study is to examine what types of meaning is formed and how meaning is constructed by various semiotic resources in the realm of fashion and clothing. Therefore, the functional semantics with which fashion and clothing is primarily concerned may be appreciated. This is achieved through continually comparing the functions between fashion and clothing with language and other semiotic systems, which has been conducted in Section 4.4.3. For the purpose of this study, we focus on the aspects of the multimodal nature of semiotic constructs and dynamic emergence of those constructs in social practices. The two respects are

investigated in detail in the following sections.

**4.5.2 Systemic Functional Organization of Fashion and Clothing Semiotics**

Fashion and clothing entails multimodal design. To understand fashion and clothing, it is necessary to first consider the types of semiotic resources that constitute fashion and clothing and the patterns of meaning drawn from the design process for emergence, interpretation and dissemination. According to SFL, the systemic modeling of semiotic resources and its patterns for meaning is built around the notion of system. Consequently, this section aims to develop paradigmatic systems for mapping out the available resources in fashion and clothing. It is hoped that through this way, we can find the semiotic choices used by producers in specific contexts for communicative purposes. Accordingly, patterns of meaning potential are identified. To achieve these aims, this section draws on different theories from relevant perspectives which cover various areas, such as knowledge of anthropology, aesthetics, design, textiles and psychology. Such theoretical guidelines are considered to promote a comprehensive and grounded understanding of fashion and clothing. Because visual and texture resources form the main features of fashion and clothing, these two are elucidated throughout the sections.

**4.5.2.1 Visual Systemic Functional Framework**

Visual semiotics is a key component in the social interpretation of fashion and clothing. Thus far, it has been examined by a variety of literature from different

theoretical distances. Section 2.5 offers a summary of the existing literature on fashion and clothing as semiotics, concerning itself with the ways in which they have been conceived for communication. However, in proposing such a statement, as argued in Section 2.5, there is a tendency to simply read fashion and clothing at a two dialectic position, which is influenced by Saussure's guiding principles. The limitations of using the rules of language to create those of fashion and clothing are recognized in previous investigations. This study differs significantly, which finds its theoretical base from Halliday's social semiotics. Section 3 delineates the major differences between Saussure's structural tradition and social semiotic approach, which occur in theoretical realms, such as stratification, rank, axis and functions that clothing performs. From Halliday's perspective, each discourse is concerned with its realization of three metafunctional meanings. These meanings arising from choices through grammatical systems are negotiated within the social and cultural context in which these choices are made. Such an interpretation formulates the basic tenet of Halliday's approach to social semiotics. In other words, Halliday's insights into the semiotic complexity of meaning generated by choices from the system networks provide a starting point for considering fashion and clothing as a multisemiotic discourse. This view has been extended to include other semiotic resources, as indicated in Section 3.3.1.3. Among them, two issues of visual semiotics are beneficial to the development of the visual framework in fashion and clothing: O'Toole (2011) seeks to explain displayed art as a specific form of discourse, whose frameworks are closer to Halliday's systemic functional tradition by following

metafuntional principles and the rank scale; Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) draw attention to the manner in which choices from the resources of visual images articulate ideologies and discourses. The comparison between these two approaches is examined in Section 3.3.1.2. In answering how visual semiotics can be constructed for communication, it is worthwhile to consider fashion and clothing from two meaningful dimensions: the micro level of material objects through individual experience and the macro level of social processes in the fashion industry. Various responses to this distinction are available (e.g. Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Leopold, 1992; McCracken, 1987; Sproles, 1974). This section is primarily concerned with detailing the way in which clothing is deemed as a social product. It therefore focuses on the aspects of exploring clothing as a visually constituted object and examines how social semiotic approach contributes to the understanding of fashion and clothing, in particular from a visual perspective. Besides, other theories are also involved in this section, for instance, aesthetics, anthropology and psychology. Hence, there is a need for synthesizing the concepts from relevant disciplines in a way that can promote an integrated approach to the study of fashion and clothing.

In the same manner, visual semiotics with reference to fashion and clothing is theorized according to the functions that language and other semiotic resources are required to serve, that is, to be categorized in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textural metafunctions. These definitions are quite distinct from the ones proposed by Owyong (2009), the reasons of which are explained in Section 4.4.3.3. The

metafunctional meanings, according to SFL, are also realized through a configuration of choices from the visual semiotic resources in fashion and clothing. In addition, the notions of rank and axis are brought into account in this literature to precisely delineate the internal organization within the system of clothing. Section 4.4.4 gives a brief explanation for these two terminologies. With respect to rank, clothing is described according to the compositional principle and therefore can be ordered along the hierarchical categories of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. That is, an ensemble consists of garments, a garment of components and a component of elements. With respect to axis, clothing is differentiated into two dualistic types of relations: paradigm and syntagm. Following these rules, items of clothing can be combined with one another through grammatical sequence. At same time, they can also replace or be replaced by one another through differential choices. Such a classification intends to not only show the manner in which clothing can be organized in terms of structure, which corresponds to the interpretations by Saussure (1915) and Barthes (1973), but also point out the direction for future analysis of clothing, which is based on the need to understand clothing in terms of system in line with social semiotic concerns by Halliday (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). To generalize, the visual framework proposed in this section is inspired by Halliday's accounts of language and other semiotic resources as social semiotics, which consists of metafunction, rank and axis.

There is a general consensus among a number of fashion theorists regarding the

definition of clothing as a system characterized by visual resources (e.g. Angus et al., 2015; Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Fiore, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2013; Tortora & Eubank, 2010). Such encyclopedic reference in relation to fashion aesthetics, design, textiles and history includes much different but comprehensive information, which constitute the styles and components of clothing. This insightful knowledge provides intellectual nourishment for this study, from which the framework of visual semiotics in clothing is adequately accounted for. As introduced, a rank scale exists in the grammar of every clothing, which can be represented as ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. To communicate effectively, the terms used throughout the framework are explained in accordance with the proposed rank scale, moving from the top as a whole then to individual constituent components. Analysis of visual semiotics in clothing begins with the rank of **Ensemble** that looks at a set of clothes. At this rank, clothing may be described in terms of three sources of visual structure - layout, surface and light (and shadow) – as derived from the underlying conception by Delong (1998). The three structuring sources interact with one another and influence the manner in which people perceive clothing. Therefore, they are used as a guiding tool for helping people consider how a garment appears to their eyes. Through these structures, we can examine the three-dimensional manipulation of garments on the body (layout structure), two-dimensional surface of fabrics and materials (surface structure), and light and shadow effects on the garments (light structure). In any case, it is useful to consider how each responds in creating its respective visual effects and how each

interacts with others in allowing the maximum viewing effects from the ensemble. In developing the definition of clothing, several researchers in the field of fashion communication have classified clothing into various types according to function, structure and decoration (Davis, 1996). For instance, Angus et al. (2015) propose essential components that make up a complete outfit, which includes jacket, coat, shirt, top, pants, skirt, dress, undergarment and accessories. These components, except for accessories, are grouped into a category of garment and therefore treated as units of one rank. At the rank of **Garment**, we may distinguish garment pieces into three basic categories of upper body, lower body and one piece, similar to those adopted by Owyong (2009). Within each category, further subcategories displaying stylistic features that are usable in garment pieces provide visual variations as well as the basis for clothing design. For example, in upper body, garments include various styles of jacket, coat, waistcoat, shirt, top and knitwear; in lower body, styles of pants, skirt and in one piece, styles of dress and suit. In analyzing fashion and clothing, garment parts and details that influence visual effects are also included at the rank of **Component** immediately below the rank of Garment. At Component, parts and details are characterized by various styles associated with historical and contemporary designs. In terms of parts, there exist different styles of shoulder, neckline, collar, lapel, bodice, sleeve, cuff, pocket and waist. In terms of details, there emerge different styles of draping, trimming, embellishment, treatment, dart, seam, pleat, decorative stitching, edge finish, hem, neckline, waistline, fastener, opening, stitches, panel, etc. Although details are important in fashion and clothing, they are too numerous and dynamic to

be totally covered in this study. A similar approach for garment parts and details is adopted by Angus et al. (2015) and Davis (1996). Within Component, parts and details are also regarded in relation to the structures of layout, surface and light. Parts such as collar, lapel, bodice and sleeve and details such as draping, dart, seam and pleat all create three-dimensional results. Other details including trimming, embellishment and treatment also contribute to the two-dimensional surface of fabrics and materials. These structural styles correlate precisely with one another to such a degree that they become interplayed combinations which reinforce the viewing effects. Such dimensional relationships allow to visualize all-around garment parts and details simultaneously and influence the way in which people use and relate them. One further unit of internal composition that functions to realize garment parts and details is design elements, which we label as Element. At the rank of **Element**, people engage with design elements through the aesthetic interpretations of Davis (1996), Delong (1998) and Fiore (2010) - these accounts are necessary in that they provide important theoretical sources, which also have a bearing on how they function in the field of visual semiotics. Compared with other theorists, Davis (1996) discusses design elements from comprehensive dimensions in terms of their aspects, variations, concepts, vocabulary, potentials, limitations, effects and application. Her introduction to dress is seen as an example of all products created through the design process. As such, it fits in with the framework of visual semiotics in this study. According to Davis (ibid.), the elements of visual design can be defined as organization of space, line, shape and form, light, color, texture and pattern. Each element has its unique and

fundamental characters, effects and variations. The qualities and variations in these design elements may contribute to the visual effects of design as a whole. Space including flat and volume may vary greatly in dimension, enclosure, empty/filled and position. Line may be described by its relative path, thickness, evenness, continuity, edge, consistency, length and direction. Shape and form find their changes among relative dimensions, size, contour and density. Color depends on three dimensions, namely, hue, value and intensity. Texture differs from one another through determinants, surface characteristics, hand qualities and light reactions. Pattern is a composite of source, interpretation and arrangement. Although each element exists as an individual, they are not always mutually exclusive: they are influenced by others in combination. As Davis (ibid.) points out, understanding design elements not only relies on individual potential but also on their interactions as well as the organization of individuals into their possible combinations. Such a manipulative way of design elements is exactly in agreement with the three metafunctional meanings we propose in the construction of visual semiotics in fashion and clothing. In this situation, we may adapt them into representational, interactive and compositional metafunctions. Design elements are conceived as basic components from which a visual design is formed. To use them effectively in clothing, there arises a general need for the design process to recognize the knowledge and understand the nature of these elements. **Accessory** is located within the lowest rank of visual semiotics in clothing. Carried, worn, detachable and body adornment are listed as the main components at the rank of Accessory based on previous works (e.g. Angus et al., 2015; Tortora & Eubank,

2010; Eicher & Evenson, 2015; Roach et al., 1980). Each further covers many different categories, for example, handbags, fans or umbrella in carried accessories; glasses, shoes or jewelry in worn accessories and lapel, pin or badge in detachable accessories. As accessories are seamlessly woven into ensemble, they become an integral part of fashion and clothing and are included in this study. After a discussion of the terms used in the framework, the visual semiotics in clothing is summarized and presented in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7** Classification of Clothing Visual Semiotics
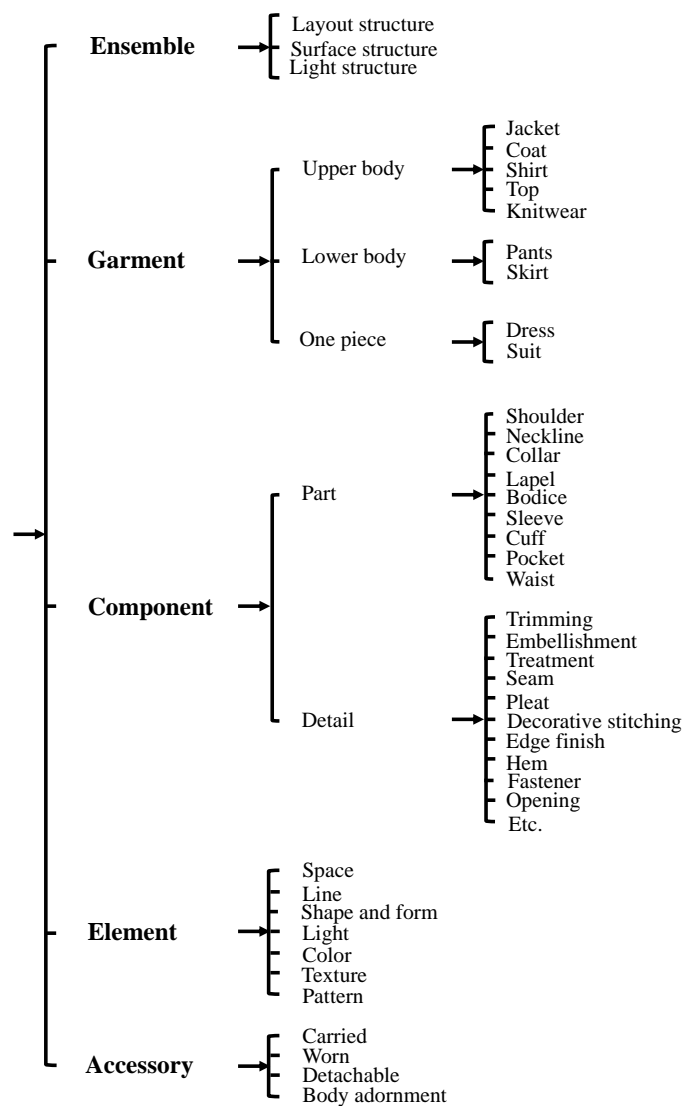
This framework provides a summary of visual resources in fashion and clothing design. In doing so, it explores the literature on social semiotics and visual design in fashion and clothing, although the former is considered in rather more detail. This means that the study addresses the interconnections between the literature on design and communication to a certain extent: visual design deals specifically with the literature on resources usable through the fundamental design process, whereas social semiotics focuses on the meaning of fashion and clothing and their use. The starting point for this framework is visual resources from which we consider meaning is made. The reason for this lies in a social semiotic approach to the works, which has grown exponentially since the 1980s in comparison to the literature on Saussure's structuralism. It is therefore argued that a full semiotic account of fashion and clothing needs to acknowledge the connections between visual resources and their meanings, considering the relationship across different constituents of clothing and among different agencies, institutions, individuals and practices. However, little attempt has been made by pertinent theories thus far to bridge the gulf between fashion visual design and social semiotics. For this reason, the visual framework of fashion and clothing semiotics is established and certain reflections regarding this framework should be further illustrated at this point.

In the first place, each component of this framework is organized through different means, which depends on the type of fabric or material used, the manner in which the fabric or material is cut and tailored, how it is trimmed or embellished and how the

components are brought together. All of these aspects can be viewed as choices which are made by producers, but they operate under the influence of the prevailing social and cultural contexts. It is widely adopted that styles and components form basic but versatile vocabulary in speaking out the language of fashion and clothing. From this position, meaning is made through choices from the resources of visual design in clothing and understood in relation to the social and cultural contexts in which they take place. Second, although each component may be discussed in isolation to enhance understanding, it is important to recognize that all of them operate simultaneously in forming a holistic viewing effect of fashion and clothing. Therefore, choice needs to consider how each individual works and combines with one another. Meanwhile, interpretation should take into account the meaning from both each individual and its combination with others. Through the juxtaposition of components, together with traditional tailoring techniques and contemporary innovations, new ways of clothing the body emerge and a new language of clothing can be generated. This means of combining and manipulating components from different styles also indicates a designer's signature because designers maintain a close association with various styles, choice and arrangement of components. For example, Coco Chanel and the iconic cardigan suit, Christian Dior and the New Look, Cristóbal Balenciaga and the black lace flamenco flounces, John Galliano and the dramatic bias-cut gown, Yves Saint Laurent and the Le Smoking tuxedo suit and Alexander McQueen and the provocative bumsters. Third, each component is manipulated according to the principles of design and the theories of Gestalt in order to create specific visual effects.

There have been several explorations around the two fundamental aspects in reference to fashion and clothing, such as Davis (1996), Delong (1998) and Fiore (2010). In general, design principles are concerned about the arrangement of design units into a cohesive entity, which occurs within the level of composition. Such principles of design include repetition, parallelism, sequence, alternation, gradation, transition, radiation, rhythm, concentricity, contrast, emphasis, proportion, scale, balance, harmony and unity (Davis, 1996). The Gestalt theories arising from psychology refer to the perception organization of visual information for the creation of a unified whole, which relates to the operation of brain. Gestalt's notion follows the basic laws of such as proximity, similarity, closure, continuation, past experience, figure and ground, based on its application to fashion and clothing (Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). It is argued that the two types of principles work simultaneously to achieve desired visual results in clothing. Because they provide a sufficient variety of visual effects for their meaning potential, the principles of design and Gestalt are widely accepted as essential sources of meaning making in fashion and clothing. The final point is that in proposing the visual framework of fashion and clothing, the types of functions and semiotic resources are addressed. Nevertheless, a problem may arise from the discussion of the framework, regarding the way in which semiotic resources realize the functions they serve. Later chapters elucidate the answer to this inquiry.

**4.5.2.2 Texture Systemic Functional Framework**

Touch is well recognized as another significant semiotic mode for meaning making in fashion and clothing. Given its privilege in academia, tactile communication as a subject of study has attracted much interest from disparate disciplinary orientations, specifically in the field of semiotics. Within the decades, it has been systemized from a theoretical perspective of social semiotics. Thus far, differing but interrelated assumptions have been made about meaning in relation to the semiotics of touch. As evident in previous discussions, the development of research into touch as a communicative mode is still at a rudimentary stage. The fundamental problems concerning its definition and nature remain problematic with several issues to be addressed from various perspectives. The starting point of this study is a social semiotic one. Hence, systemic functional approaches to tactile communication have been proposed and reviewed in Section 3.3.3, for example in the form of Bezemer and Kress's (2014) touch as a meaning-making resource and Djonov and van Leeuwen's (2011) texture as semiotics. It is important to integrate texture into the discussion of fashion communication because in fashion and clothing, texture functions as a medium or a material substance from which clothing is made. It covers a variety of sensory modalities, which may be interpreted as visual, tactile, aural, kinetic and olfactory. From this position, the systemic functional framework for texture adopted in this study is justified by the fact that texture is characterized as a semiotic resource, which evolves out of different semiotic modalities. In addition, texture as a communicative mode advances further because it is also involved in the contributions

from theories in other fields, such as anthropology, psychology and aesthetics. Therefore, in the proposal of frameworks, we should take into consideration varying theoretical angles to fully construe the meaning of texture and obtain a comprehensive view of texture in fashion and clothing. Based on the literature, this section illustrates the range of systemic choices that are available in texture and demonstrates how these models operate in the analysis of fashion and clothing with reference to SFL, multimodality, aesthetics and other theories.

There have been many efforts to construct the definition of texture for fashion and clothing (e.g. Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Fiore, 2010). Most of them agree that texture emerges within a hybrid of research areas, such as textile, aesthetic, design, psychological and semiotic studies. One recurring theme is that texture develops as a means by which surface or substance is perceived to feel and see and used for the production and organization of clothing. Texture, they argue, is one of the fundamental elements adopted by the designer and audience to convey meaning and emotion. From this perspective, texture is frequently defined in terms of varieties, characteristic features, relationship to the entire form and meanings, and reactions from audience. In a general sense, texture is found as a two-dimensional and three-dimensional design element, which has distinguishable tactile and visual properties.

As argued by Davis (1996), texture could be analyzed into three major categories,

namely, tactile texture, visual texture and textural light reactions. Within each category are a variable range of properties relating to hand, surface and light reaction. These properties operate along a continuum that ranges from low to high. Tactile texture refers to the tangible structure of a surface or substance, which includes the qualities of flexibility, compressibility, extensibility, resilience and density. Visual texture describes the visible structure of a surface or substance, which depends on the qualities of surface contour, surface friction and thermal character. Textural light reaction denotes the manner in which texture can react to light, concerning itself with luster and opacity. It is indicated that the feel of texture develops out of experience, which immediately and simultaneously involves the perception of these three categories - individually or in combination. Davis (ibid.) argues that the meaning potential of texture in clothing emerges from psychological effects that are produced through a combination of tactile, visual and audible varieties. In comparison to Davis (1996), Delong (1998) focuses only on visual texture within the ABC. One distinctive feature of her study is that she attempts to introduce aesthetic responses of the audience into the analysis. The meaning of surface texture is thus derived from surface qualities and variations, as well as the context in which it occurs and is interpreted. To generate preferred visual effects, she identifies three interactive structures for manipulating fabrics or materials in the ABC. These structures, according to her (ibid., p. 140), are layout structuring that focuses on the three-dimensional variations, surface structuring that involves changes in the two-dimensional surface and light-and-shadow structuring that results from the

variations in illumination of the environment. The definition of texture varies greatly in Fiore's (2010) understanding. As she (ibid.) positions it, texture is found on a macro scale across consumer environment and also on a micro scale within clothing as product. In this situation, meaning is associated with its formal and expressive qualities and works in close collaboration with products, environments and consumers.

The main theoretical basis for the investigation of texture in this study is aesthetic and psychological theories, which considers that texture is one element in fashion and clothing design. In addition, social semiotic theories provide influential contributions for modeling texture as a resource for meaning making. First, according to Halliday (1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), any semiotic utterance simultaneously involves three kinds of functions, which are realized through the systems of ideational, interpersonal and textual choices at the lexicogrammatical and semantic levels. In this way, we extend the general description to texture by recognizing and taking it as given all the three semiotic metafunctions - experiential, interpersonal and textual. The grammatical resources of texture are thus described in relation to each of the three metafunctions. This assumption about meaningful features in texture operates along the same line with the above-mentioned literature and with Djonov and van Leeuwen's (2011) theorization of texture as semiotics. Second, within the social semiotic framework, texture is defined as a semiotic system that is characterized by a variety of resources. Therefore, texture is also a systemic one that its semiotic

resources and meaning potential are based on the development of paradigmatic systems. In this section, we propose a systemic framework which is used to briefly describe surface texture in terms of fashion and clothing. Due to their diversity and complexity, it is useful to separate textures into categories. In addition to visual and tactile textures, we incorporate two additional categories, aural and kinetic, into the discussion of texture in clothing. Consequently, texture can be organized in terms of visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures respectively. Through analysis of its component parts, the relationship between texture and meaning is considered to be understood.

Similar to Davis (1996), clothing texture also relates to the properties of hand, surface and light reaction. In this manner, we can identify the visual texture of clothing in terms of surface contour, surface friction, thermal character, luster and opacity. For the sake of convenience, the two categories of surface and light reaction have been treated as one in this description of visual texture in clothing. At the same time, other necessary elements, such as density, consistency proposed by Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) and regularity, are introduced into the framework of texture when considering the distinctive features of clothing. In a similar vein, we can also formulate the definition of tactile texture of clothing in terms of flexibility, compressibility, extensibility, resilience and density. Other tactile surface features in relation to clothing cover liquidity, temperature, relief (ibid.), durability, consistency and regularity, which are described in articulating the tactile sensation of clothing. In

addition, other two properties - aural and kinetic - play a fundamental role in the creation of texture in clothing and in the projection of meaningful attributes for clothing. Aural texture refers to the qualities of sound that is produced by a particular texture, for instance, a rustle of fabrics, a swish of skirt or the chatter of accessories. It is different from the description of texture in music, which concerns a final impression created by the interaction of different parts in a piece of music. The qualities of aural sensation in texture can be generally distinguished according to loudness, roughness, pitch range and roughness. Kinetic sensation is a noticeable feature in the texture of clothing, which is associated with the qualities produced by movement. Types of movement can be analyzed and determined using one of these descriptions through the labeling of flow, direction and force. It is noted that kinetic experience is consistently accompanied by the movement of human body (Delong, 1998). Therefore, the manner in which how clothing moves or hangs with the body is also a factor that influences the kinetic interpretation of materials as well as the viewing perception of materials. By distinguishing different qualities of texture, the potential interaction among visual, tactile, aural and kinetic can be found. This interpretation accordingly assumes that texture does not consist of one quality, but an association of qualities which finally affects how we perceive texture. Based on the above descriptions, Figure 4.8 shows the resultant system networks of texture surface qualities with a particular focus on clothing.

**Figure 4.8** System Networks for Description of Texture
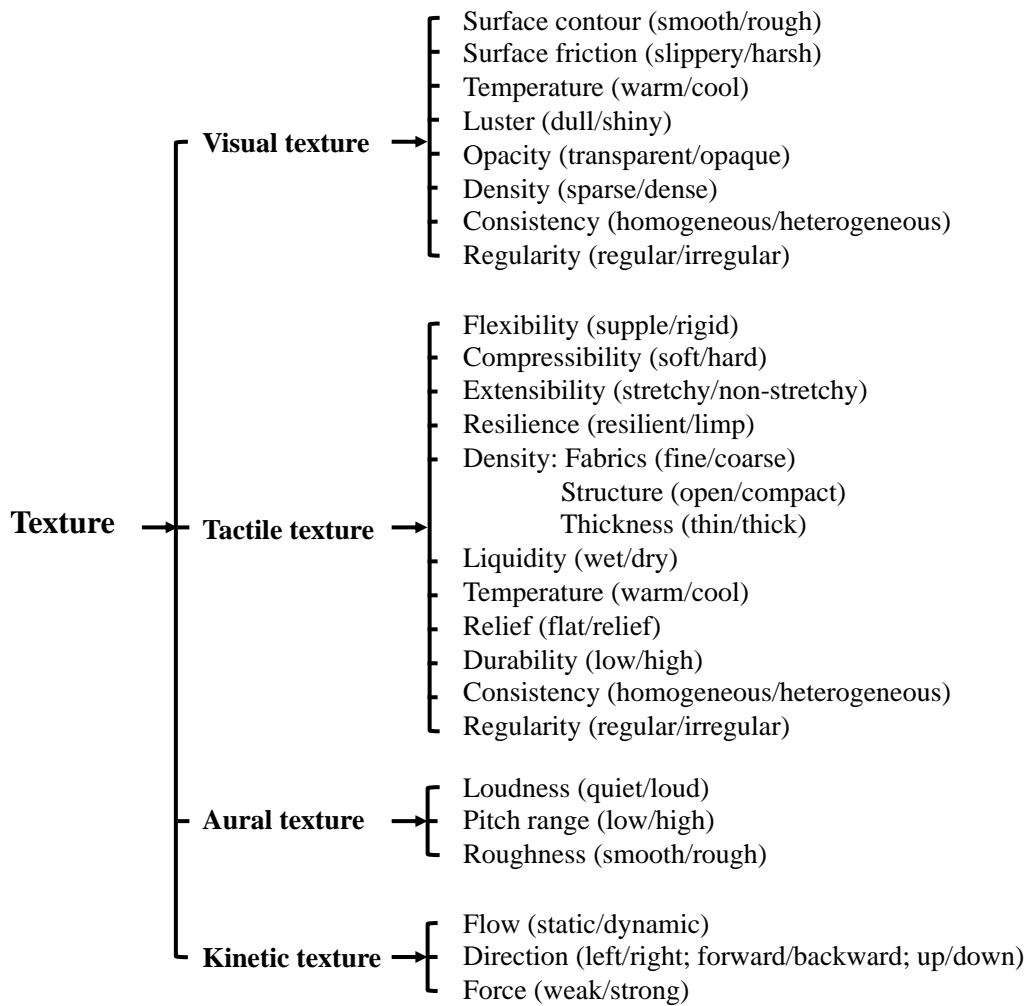


Certain points can be gleaned from the proposed system of texture, which warrant further explanation. Firstly, qualities within each category of texture can be perceived to various extent. Therefore, they are modeled according to the principle of degree. In other words, each property is ordered along the degree from low to high, which are displayed through parentheses in Figure 4.8. Secondly, each of these qualities has its characteristic features that differentiate textures from one another. These features are frequently associated with particular meaning potential. It is considered that the meaning of texture comes from three simultaneous aspects (Djonov & van Leeuwen,

2011, p. 549): the inherent qualities they represent, the interaction with other textural qualities, and the context in which they operate. Therefore, these properties are integrated in the articulation of texture in clothing. Thirdly, it is crucial to recognize the interaction among layout, surface, and light-and-shadow structuring (Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010) in the visual interpretation for texture. Fourthly, according to Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011, p. 553), visual texture is composed of three representable qualities: material, associated and symbolic. A similar interpretation is made by Fiore (2010), who argues that formal, expressive and symbolic qualities co-define the aesthetic experience. In this study, we consider that the visual and tactile textures of clothing also fulfill these three qualities as suggested by Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) and Fiore (2010). For clarity, we adopt the semiotic terminologies proposed by Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011), that is, "material" in relation to experience, "associated" in relation to provenance and "symbolic" in relation to conventions. Finally, texture can be depicted as the product of "synaesthetic" (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011) because, as a semiotic resource, it operates across different communicative modes in the creation of meaning. For this reason, the integration of different aesthetic cues needs to be drawn on to fully interpret the texture of clothing.

### 4.5.3 The (Re)contextualization of Fashion and Clothing in Design Process

One of the great characteristics in fashion and clothing, as previous sections demonstrate, is the incorporation of specific affordances from multimodal features. In this manner, fashion and clothing may be interpreted as various combinations of

sensory modalities such as visual, tactile, kinetic, aural and olfactory, or semiotic resources such as image, music, sound and language. This feature denotes that the sensory grammar of each mode or resource should take into account their relations with one another. Meaning is thus viewed as the choices made by individuals that emerge from the functional integration of all participating semiotic modes and resources. In addition, there emerges another salient feature that works in collaboration with fashion and clothing. Specially, social semiotics focuses on the way that multimodal representation shifts between different resources and across different contexts or "resemiotization", a term derived from Iedema (2001, 2003). The underlying assumption behind this feature is that meaning is translated from one domain to another with the unfolding of social practices. For this reason, resemiotization in Iedema's discussions is typically deemed as a form of recontexualization, and meaning is not seen originating from individual objects rather towards their flows in a long stream of events.

As fashion theorists (e.g. Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Leopold, 1992; McCracken, 1987; Sproles, 1974) point out, fashion is generally understood in relation to two dimensions: object and process. Fashion object refers to the material product associated with fashion, which is typically embodied in the form of clothing and personal adornment. Fashion process relates to the social phenomenon within the fashion industry, which covers production, marketing, dissemination and consumption. It is through the fashion processes that a material item ultimately becomes a

fashionable object. Due to the nature of fashion and clothing, we consider that meaning in fashion and clothing systems also constitutes transformative dynamics of processes, which result in socially recognized and practically meaningful objects. Therefore, this study is not primarily concerned with the multimodal nature of semiotic construct itself by inquiring into its semiotic complexity within designed objects, but also with the social unfolding of the design process by inquiring into the means in which multimodal content is put into textual representations across practices. The dual concepts operate with rather different modes in terms of communication. A distinction has been made in Section 4.5.1, where the object focuses on the sensory modalities inherent to the characteristics of clothing and the process on semiotic resources arising from the flow of object in sequential events of the industry. In addition, the object is developed based on individual sensory experience, whereas the process is illustrated by incorporating the views from various perspectives simultaneously offered in the industry, for example, developers, gatekeepers, promoters and consumers. The similarity between the two is that: on the one hand, meaning arises from different semiotic modes and resources together with their combinations or integration; on the other hand, meaning represents specific choices from the available grammatical systems in each of the resources. These choices made by the individuals in specific contexts construct a particular view of reality. Thus far, fashion as an object has been generally described from its multimodal complexity and intricacy of particular representations, that is, from visual and tactile. In what follows, we focus on the origin and dynamic emergence of these multimodal representations. It

is upon the basis of the two complementary and inherent views on socially situated, multisemiotic discourse that meaning comes to be made from fashion and clothing, and scientific knowledge in the context is finally reformulated. The investigation utilizes "resemiotization" (Iedema, 2001, 2003) as its point of conceptual departure and extends its reference to fashion and clothing as both semiotic systems and their materialities. In other words, using resemiotization theory to demonstrate the importance of a dynamic view on the design process across place and time seems to lead to its further exploration. The exploration takes two forms in particular: one foregrounds fashion and clothing as social practices; the other foregrounds fashion and clothing as multisemiotic representations, all pointing to the ways in which meaning making shifts across different contexts and practices. The following discussion addresses these multimodal phenomena with regard to fashion and clothing.

In the first place, we view fashion and clothing from the macro level of content, in terms of social production processes, answering which material procedures produce fashion and clothing. The unique characteristic in fashion and clothing lies in its dynamic process by which people often depict fashion as being a socially organized system. This inherent nature of fashion as an institutional system is reflected in the literature, which argues that fashion consists of several individual branches, each with its own pattern of development (e.g. Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Leopold, 1992; Sproles, 1985; Wilson, 2003). In their analyses of fashion in society,

they examine how social practices including production, dissemination and consumption operate in conjunction with one another to produce a sociological account of fashion. These practices are considered as the determining forces in the creation of fashion system, which unfolds how fashion is produced, disseminated and consumed within larger social and cultural systems. It is apparent from this perspective that fashion exists beyond an abstract force or object towards practices through the joint actions of individuals within various branches in the fashion industry. The interactions between individuals set in temporal and spatial relations are a major feature of processes that take place in fashion design. Designers, manufacturers, retailers and consumers are key players and perform their roles in the progress of a particular fashion system. At each stage, choices are made by these individuals in particular contexts for specific purposes. All these agents point to a question of how fashion obtains material realizations in the complexity of its design, manufacture and distribution. The searching for meaning in fashion therefore has to consider the influential roles that are played by a number of agencies, institutions, individuals and practices, thereby suggesting a close link between meaning and social practices. In this sense, fashion needs to be understood and interpreted from the perspective of the dynamic process that cuts across social and cultural practices, the ones not separated from one another because they exist in an interrelated manner.

In addition, this emphasis is also an important component in the practice of fashion, where constant reference and transformation of its history and aesthetic language are

extravagantly displayed, often in the design settings (e.g. Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Kennedy et al., 2013). Although the system constantly changes to meet the needs of the industry, all share a similar interpretation in the principles of creating a collection. For example, Fashionary International Ltd. (2016) provides a clear and detailed visual guide to the process of fashion design. In this description, fashion design encapsulates a range of realizations and practices covering from planning via development to presentation. Within each category are many subcategories that record specific activities and communities with which designers are actively engaged during the design process. Through cycles of development, production, distribution and promotion, a concept is transformed to finished garments, and items of clothing become potential fashion objects. It is claimed that the process for the development of designed objects is actually a selection course: designers make decisions from a broad repertoire of choices for their practice. The selection of resources, combined with techniques and innovations, set a strategy in motion for the creation of the object. On this account of communication, meaning is constructed and negotiated through the dynamic transfer and transformation of the designed object ranging across a wide array of processes in the fashion system. Consequently, meaning is not only something sent from the context in which it is embedded - contextualization, but also something that allows another context to be infused - recontextualization. In other words, meaning is the product between items of clothing and the social interactions that create them.

Such literature, for its part, focuses on the development of organization in the fashion industry and on the role played by various individuals involved. Though the literature has incorporated communicative dimensions into fashion, it is primarily viewed as a component of social production that is created by the process of fashion or fashion design. The specific pattern of meaning that has emerged in the production of fashion and its relations with a unique configuration of choices from semiotic resources have not been addressed. There is a general tendency to ignore and neglect the socially situated meaning-making processes in the discussions of fashion as a communicative artifact. Thus, this study focuses on the social nature of fashion and clothing in its production of meaning making. Against this background, we can track the steps of designers, which lead the course from development via production towards distribution through an organizational procedure and finally display as the consequence of presentation. It has been argued recontexualization, from the point of creation to the ways in which people produce and eventually present, constitutes and develops their social products (Iedema, 2001, 2003; Sproles, 1985). In the perspective taken here, a designed object is progressively recontextualized from one practice to another to the point where it becomes a social category - a potential fashion object. Through the process of these textual recontextualizations, meaningful constructs of fashion and clothing are ultimately generated, with each step attaching new institutional significance to its origin of sequence.

Second, we view fashion and clothing from the micro level of expression, in terms of

the multisemiotic nature of representations, exploring how material substances serve to realize such social dynamics. In this aspect, fashion and clothing is manifested and elaborated by a range of semiotic resources according to a resemiotizing logic of meaning making (Iedema, 2001, 2003). The fashion industry is widely acknowledged to concern a range of processes that revolve around the uses of various semiotic resources. For example, there are a large amount of still and moving images which we may find across nearly the entire design process, beginning from product planning, via concept and product development, then to line adoption and technical design activities and to final presentation (e.g. Barnard, 2014). There emerge abundant uses of language when we are engaged with social activities and events in relation to fashion, such as listening, talking, reading, writing or other ways of communication (e.g. Barthes, 1985). There also involve aural and olfactory elements during the development of fashion design. Aural stimuli may derive from product sounds, personal experiences of music and movies or social activities of advertisements, stores and fashion shows. Olfactory stimuli may develop from the scent and fragrance offered by products and environments (e.g. Fiore, 2010). Fashion and clothing depends heavily on fabrics and materials. Hence, touch-oriented elements that contribute to products and environments are essential in building the construction of fashion and clothing at different stages (e.g. Davis, 1996; Fiore, 2010). In addition, there are also other integral elements that constitute meaningful resources in fashion and clothing, such as kinetics (e.g. Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010) and other experiences of practices. These semiotic resources organized as a unified whole unfold through

time and space and contribute to the overall appreciation and interpretation of the design and merchandize (e.g. Davis, 1996; Fiore, 2010). At the same time as explaining these resources, resemiotization enables us to consider how to display themselves as semiotic constructs through the purposeful selections from producers. This perspective is important for describing and understanding fashion and clothing as a multimodal construct, which embodies not only one perceived semiotics but also all semiotic entities in motion.

It is important to consider the dynamic mechanism of change from the perspectives of how these material resources are progressively, institutionally resemiotized and how meaning is woven into a recontextualization of semiotic resources. Under such consideration, we apply and extend Iedema's (2001, 2003) notion of resemiotization to fashion, that is, viewing fashion from the unfolding of social processes and logics of representation. Due to the complexity of fashion processes, this study narrows down its focus on investigating the social construction of fashion mainly from a meaning maker's or designer's perspective. We assume that from this socially situated point, resources are selected and orchestrated in particular contexts to realize specific social meaning. In doing so, it contributes to a truthful or adequate description, which renders a real context for the social production and articulation of meaning in fashion and clothing. Such positioning of the sign maker at the center of the analysis, as Iedema (ibid.) emphasizes, in fact attempts to seek a balance between an objective view on the representations from the analysts and one that underscores social and

historical dimensions in the exploration of the complex processes which constitute and surround personal interests.

In exemplifying this, we talk about fashioning a fashionable object. The principles of creating a product follow an organizational progress: influenced by inspirations around us, we then draw it, write about it, design it, produce it, then present it and finally consume it. This discussion suggests that in order to understand fashion, it is necessary to define and recognize fashion as a product of a chain of activities. It is this chained interplay between the material and socio-historical dimensions of representation that constructs a logic of resemiotization for making meaning. Resemiotization in terms of fashion and clothing is not just embodied in the transposition of sensory modalities across practices, such as visual, tactile, kinetic, aural and olfactory, but also in that of semiotic resources from the physical environment, such as image, language, gesture, music and sound. Therefore, fashion design is indeed a recontextualization of various sensory modalities, semiotic resources, social practices and perceptual experiences. Within each step, the process shifts its focus from preceding social practice that constructs it towards the next, which enables to produce a significant increase in semiotic representations.

At the inception of the design phase, when designers conceive a new collection, they may often start with abstract inspirations and ideas. These inspirations and ideas can be drawn from literature, the arts, nature, cultures, city, memory, current events, scent

and everywhere. Designers organize the visual documentation of these sources so that they coalesce into one central theme throughout the collection. Their arrangements establish unique connections from which emerges a variety of design elements that they prepare for use. Following this step, designers start to sketch, refine the theme of a collection and create ensembles one by one. After the design stage, a prototype of the design needs to be created in order to manufacture expected products. This process involves a series of construction activities, which includes the review and evaluation of style, fabric, fitting and assembly methods (cf. Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Kennedy et al., 2013). The samples made at this stage ultimately allow for a complete expression of designers' vision. Then, it is followed by production. During the manufacturing process, a design moves to the actual product that is available for customer purchase. Numerous considerations exist in the production of garments, for example, cost, productivity, technologies, ethics, cultural differences and delivery system (Kennedy et al., 2013). These choices also become the factors that affect the delivery of message to the audience. Presentation is the final step in the development of products. At this stage, designers deliver their products to the audience in a manner that needs to be consistent with the brand. Various channels are available for display, distribution and communication, such as release, marketing, visual merchandising, labels, packaging and customer services. The activities provide designers with a means to deliver their messages. Every choice made in the activities is crucial to the successful transmission of ideas and products. In addition to the designer and audience, other participants are involved in the process, which influences our

perception of product and transmission of message. These participants may include fashion icons, editors, bloggers, models and stylists.

From the entire development of the process, we may argue that inspirations and ideas formulate the original resources from which other resources rematerialize in a particular sequence: for instance, there may be the shift from writing to talk, from talk to image, from image to design; there also may be the shift from music to image, from image to writing, from writing to design forms. In this description, semiotic resources are considered to be linked on the basis of a resemiotizing process, that is, a transformation from one kind of discourse into another. An important point to note is that meaning translated from one semiotic to another is different in each resemiotization. This is due to the fact that each semiotics has its own material affordances and principle of organization, which are neither replaced nor totally expressed by other semiotic constructs. What they form during the transformative processes is a semiotic metaphor, based on the similarity between the original and target resources (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In this case, when producers have inspirations, they need to develop these abstract ideas or inspirations into concrete design forms. During the design process, they may use visual metaphor to express direct similarity between these ideas and intended garments; they may also utilize linguistic metaphor, both written and verbal, to create a link between two different forms of communication. The metaphorical representations may come from other entities, such as music, sound, fragrance, gesture and other domains of experience.

Through this way of expression, producers try to portray another conceptual domain and intend to transmit underlying messages to the audience. What should be considered is that semiotic resources are not taken separately, but as a whole throughout the process. Thus, there is also a multimodal metaphor, which takes place in the transition between different semiotic resources, such as language and image (Forceville, 1996; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). For this reason, the meaning they intend to construct is not simply adding from separate entities, but the semiotic complexity seamlessly and synergistically integrated by different semiotic resources which allow them to produce new possibilities of meaning in different contexts, a point as interpreted in previous sections. Accordingly, an issue emerges from the connection or combination of different semiotics about the patterns of relations as well as their relations with context.

One pivotal principle that informs the relational and contextual nature of the design process is the notion of "metaredundancy" (Lemke, 1984, 1995). As Section 3.2.1.1 introduces, metaredundancy is utilized to explore the relationship between levels, considering the patterns at one level metaredounding with the patterns at the next level. For instance, genre is regarded as a pattern of register patterns, which is in turn a pattern of linguistic patterns. In other words, context serves as a pattern of language (and other semiotic resources) patterns. This patterned nature can also be described according to the principle of "redundancy", which refers to the relationship between two connected or combinative things (Thibault, 2004). Consider, for example, the

co-occurrence of fragrance and image. To paraphrase Thibault (ibid.), different semiotic resources combine to form a patterned relation in which they redound with each other, and the combination they constitute depends on the context in which they participate. Therefore, context is in a redundant relation with the combination of different semiotic resources or metaredundancy. In this metaredundant relation of the context, a particular combination of semiotic resources realizes its meaning. Such reiteration of specific meaning across semiotic resources and social context also applies to fashion and clothing. To establish and maintain a cohesive brand identity, a need for metacommunication arises in the development of fashion design: between semiotic resources and across social processes. Following the principle of metaredundancy, these relations are involved in a logic of contextualization. For example, in constructing a collection, all semiotic resources are chosen by producers in a redundant relation along the lines discussed above. Visual elements are redundant with tactile elements, as tactile elements are with kinetic ones. It is not only repeated visually, tactilely, aurally, kinetically or linguistically but also points to a cohesive theme that centers round the whole collection. Thus, the semiotic resources are redundant with the central theme. At the same time, the central theme is redundant with the semiotic choices made by producers from a grammatical system that constitutes an ensemble. This is also true for metaredundant relations: the redundancy of all semiotic resources is metaredundant with the context in which they participate in, and context is metaredundant with the semiotic resources that it realizes. Contextualization in fashion can be interpreted in various ways across disciplines (see

Table 2.2). For this reason, the meaning of semiotic resources is dependent on different contextual relations. From a social semiotic perspective, the levels of register, genre and ideology provide the context in which these semiotic resources are interpreted. In the meanwhile, they are articulated through the patterned combination of relations on the level of multisemiotic resources. There is a metaredundancy that ideology rebounds not with genre, but with the redundancy of register and multisemiotic resources. The principle of metaredundancy is also reflected through the progress of design practices, with each step recontextualizing the preceding situation that it posits as its origin. This would suggest that meaning is generated from particular events through the sequential processes: beginning from the stage of development, meaning is reconfigured at the stage of production, which is in turn reconfigured at the stage of distribution then reconfigured at the presentation stage. Within each step, different contextualizing relations are added to the original statements, indicating that meaning can vary according to the situational contexts in which they are involved in and interpreted.

In summary, fashion and clothing articulates meaning in society not only from objects but also through the sequence of social practices and the multisemiotic resources chosen to realize these practices. Such recontextualizing or resemoitizing interpretation advances a complementary viewpoint to investigate fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems and offers the audience a map for making sense of the material procedures available at any fashion system. By setting out a map in

this manner, we not only establish a connection between fashion and theoretical realms but also frame fashion and clothing systems within specific institutional contexts. (Re)contextualization is therefore a viable approach to the analysis of fashion and clothing, in which fashion connects with the actual object made available for purchase and with the organizational processes in society. With this approach, meaning is translated from one context to another and from one practice to another. As suggested, the principles of redundancy and metaredundancy provide theoretical reference to the contextualizing relations of a meaningful system. Based on the previous description, Figure 4.9 shows the flow of the design process in relation to recontextualization. Although this is a simplified one, it captures the features that occur during the design process, that is, from planning through production to presentation. Therefore, it works as a framework of reference for discussions in the next chapters.

**Figure 4.9** The Recontextualization in Fashion Design Process

| Stage in Design Process | Activity | People Involved | Resource Involved |
|---|---|---|---|
| **INFORMATION PROCESSING** | | | |
| Inspiration | Identification of the concept to present | Designers | |
| Research analysis | Infusion of information into concept / Discovery of related elements | Designers | Sensory modalities Various semiotic resources |
| Information mapping | Transfer of related elements to clothing | Designers | |
| **CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT** | | | |
| Elements development | Identification of design elements | Designers | Sensory modalities Various semiotic resources |
| Line/collection arrangement | Development of line/collection | Designers | |
| **DESIGN ACTIVITIES** | | | |
| Sketches | Application of design elements onto clothes | Designers | |
| Sampling | Evaluation of products | Designers, patternmakers, cutters, tailors, etc. | |
| Communication | Presentation of concepts and aesthetic ideas | Designers, patternmakers, cutters, tailors, etc. | Sensory modalities Various semiotic resources |
| Fitting | Examination of samples / Confirmation of final decisions about design | Designers, tailors, models, photographers, etc. | |
| Manufacture | Production of clothes | Main producers | |
| **PRESENTATION ACTIVITIES** | | | |
| Release | Presentation of collection and style | Main producers, audience, etc. | |
| Marketing | Distribution of products to customers | Main producers, audience, etc. | Sensory modalities Various semiotic resources |
| Visual Merchandising | Display of goods-and-services to customers | Main producers, audience, etc. | |
| Customer Service | Service provision to customers | Merchandisers, customers, etc. | |

*Note.* Arrow direction refers to the delivery of meaning in the design process.

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter sets up a theoretical framework for examining the organization of fashion and clothing systems from a semiotic perspective. Such an approach requires acknowledging fashion and clothing as the outcome of social forces and individual actions and as two social entities for meaning making. As a theoretical and methodological perspective, systemic functional theories and multimodal works contribute to the social interpretation of fashion and clothing, combined with the literature from other relevant disciplines. To appreciate the nature of semiotic constructs found in fashion and clothing, one need to understand the types of systems that are made and the means through which these systems are achieved. For this reason, the systemic functional modeling for the systems of fashion and clothing is illustrated in the chapter. After the architecture of fashion and clothing systems, the description of fashion and clothing in terms of its multisemiotic realizations is discussed. In doing so, this section focuses its attention on fashion and clothing as semiotic systems between the two: one as an object that is realized through the choices of semiotic resources, and one as a social process that is formulated with the development of social practices. The strength of these accounts is that they do not view fashion and clothing as a set of rules. Instead, they interpret fashion and clothing within a sociocultural context and yield a theory more applicable than Saussure's structuralism and Barthes' models, which treats fashion and clothing as particular types of semiotic choices made from the available grammatical systems. As such, it enables an account of fashion and clothing which does not fall into metaphorical

reference and assumes that fashion and clothing is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture. Through these descriptions, the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing as shown above can be comprehensively explained, and its multisemiotic nature well demonstrated. In conclusion, Figure 4.10 displays a semiotic landscape of fashion and clothing systems that is developed from the proposal of frameworks in the chapter. The significance of this landscape is that it navigates a way through which fashion and clothing are both embodied in its situated practices and in the meaning-making semiotic processes. It is from this integrative framework that the remainder of the study starts the journey.

**Figure 4.10** Proposed Theoretical Framework of Fashion and Clothing as Semiotic Systems

Proposed Theoretical Framework

The *architecture* of fashion and clothing systems

DIMENSION

GLOBAL

Fashion and clothing in the ordered typology of systems

PHENOMENAL REALM

immaterial

material

semiotic systems → higher-order → stratification, metafunction, rank

social systems

primary

*Fashion System*

biological systems

physical systems

*Clothing System*

The stratification of fashion and clothing semiotic systems

context

context of culture → ideology, genre

context of situation → register

clothing

content → semantics, sensory grammar

expression → symbology, materiality

Metafunctions in fashion and clothing

ideational → experiential, logical

interpersonal

textual

LOCAL

Axis

paradigmatic (system)

syntagmatic (structure)

Rank

ensemble
garment
component
element
accessory

Shirt, Jumpsuit, Boot
Jacket, Skirt, Sneaker
Coat, Pants, Heel
Upper-body Garments, Lower-body Garments, Footwear

paradigmatic axis

syntagmatic axis

*Clothing System*

Fashion and clothing as *multisemiotic* systems

Visual systemic functional grammar

Tactile systemic functional grammar → texture (touch [ex])

The (re)contextualization of fashion and clothing

Macro: fashion and clothing as process

Micro: fashion and clothing as product

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# CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduces and develops the concept of "architecture" as a framework for developing fashion and clothing as semiotic systems. This framework insists on understanding fashion and clothing as a product of social processes and examining the way in which fashion and clothing is translated within a sociocultural context. Such analyses of fashion and clothing demonstrate the urgency to explain fashion as a specific form of clothing that occurs in situated practices. Meanwhile, the analyses suggest the need to investigate individuals in the practical industry for the construal of fashion and clothing. Through these analyses, we can concentrate on fashion and clothing from two aspects: the macro level of the fashion industry and the micro level of the individual experience. The chapter above offers an overarching construction of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems, concerning itself with the ways in which they have been conceived from the existing literature. However, in defining fashion and clothing as social semiotic systems, the study aims to establish a framework for practical analysis. For this reason, the ways in which fashion and clothing has been thought of, discussed, produced and presented in a real context also needs to be included in the construction of a theory.

To realize this, the following chapter sets out to explore designers particularly with a Chinese background and detail the research methods utilized for investigating these

designers. In order to address the research problems, the study proposes to employ a qualitative and multi-method approach. This approach encompasses the methods of document analysis, case study, semi-structured interview and nonparticipant observation, adhering to the principles of the grounded theory methodology. Drawing from a range of case studies in contemporary Chinese fashion, the section is primarily concerned with describing the possible processes in which these qualitative methods can be adapted to the study of fashion and clothing as a message-generating conveyor. Accordingly, these theories are reviewed and discussed to examine the productivity as they are extended to fashion and clothing phenomenon. Following this, the specific approach to data collection and analysis undertaken is elaborated in the chapter. The elaboration is sequenced in the respective sections, according to the procedures described. In proposing the bodies of literature from the methodological perspective, this chapter intends to show the ways in which they can be considered in this study and to point the direction for a potential analysis of fashion and clothing as semiotic constructs.

## 5.2 Research Design

This study focuses on the creation of fashion and clothing as meaningful systems from a social semiotic perspective. The aim of the study is to examine the potential semiotic resources that may result in meaningful processes and analyze how they contribute themselves to the context in which they participate in and are interpreted. Previous chapters introduced related studies and theories for fashion and clothing in a

social context. Based on these significant insights, theoretical frameworks about fashion and clothing as semiotic systems were outlined. Yet, as argued, certain confusion arise with respect to empirical reality described in the literature. It is thought to be an intimate connection between the two, which permits and supports the proposal of a reliable and valid theory. Therefore, the empirical reality relevant needs to be further developed in an effort to illuminate the phenomenon related to fashion and clothing.

To account for the phenomenon under investigation, the study synthesizes the work on qualitative methods by choosing case study research and grounded theory methodology to gather empirical data and build the theory. First, the research is an attempt to position a theory from the design of case study (Yin, 2014). Yin (ibid.) defines case study as a research method and sketches the specific techniques in conducting this type of research. His approach to case study emphasizes investigating and understanding the contemporary phenomenon within its actual context. Such a diverse, detailed set of case studies in the process of theory building can reveal rich information on the investigated data and ensure that the researcher looks at the data from various perspectives, within or across cases. The hypotheses and theories are therefore built around the constructs found in the case analysis, combined with a reflection of similar and conflicting literature. Examples of case studies abound in many existing studies across disciplines. For example, Fernie, Moore and Lawrie (1998) examine and compare fashion designer retailing within London and New York;

Kawamura (2004) legitimates Japanese fashion designers in the French fashion system and Tsui (2015) focuses on Chinese fashion designers in the context of education from a historical perspective.

This research aims at developing the theory, and thus theoretical sampling is necessary for the study. In this situation, data most relevant to theory development are sampled on the basis of theoretical reasons. After a critical examination, data from Chinese fashion settings are selected for a detailed analysis, which contain designers and their works from Hong Kong and mainland China. According to regulated criteria, nine designers are chosen to show their complexity, including the interrelations of the phases in design process, signature style and characteristics. Each case serves as a distinct sample that stands on its own as an analytic unit, and theory is accordingly built based on induction and replication logic. To explore different research methods and develop research protocols, a pilot study was conducted before the main survey. The first pilot study utilized a combination of data collection methods, such as document review, interview and observation to establish the issues to be addressed in a full-scale study. After receiving feedback from the pilot study, the researcher identified practical problems and prepared a revised version for subsequent research procedures.

Second, the research design follows the roadmap of grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (1990). Their guiding ideas make

influential contributions to the later literature in grounded theory building. Featured by its distinctive procedures for data collection and analysis, grounded theory is considered one of the most useful research methodologies in the development of theory building. Its theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches offer a solid basis for guiding the process of building a theory and addressing research questions in a wide range of unexplored research areas. Moreover, its suitability in the research of social sciences has been well identified and proven by previous studies.

This roadmap begins with the review of literature and describes that after the selection of data and crafting of the research protocols, multiple sets of data in the field need to be collected with flexibility and openness. To "triangulate" evidence (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2014) and enhance the reliability and validity of theory, the study considers multiple sources of data and incorporates four main methods of data collection: document examination in relation to the phenomenon in question; in-depth and semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of fashion designers in contemporary China; observations during interviews to view the examined subjects from a non-participant's perspective and case studies involving the selection of interviewed designers and their works. The interviews and observations are executed respectively on the basis of a prearranged interview guide and observation checklists covering the main topics related to the phenomenon. Multiple methods are included in the literature to foster divergent perspectives and further ground the research in reality. Document review gains insights into the studied phenomenon and establishes a

starting point from which research gap and initial research questions are formed. Interviews are designed to form a detailed picture of the participants' experience and understanding of the phenomenon observed. The results from observations are utilized to corroborate or offer a complementary view of the research phenomenon. Case studies elicit rich empirical information on particular instances of the phenomenon that typically comes from various data sources. After data collection, all the events or happenings are arranged chronologically for the next procedure of data analysis.

In line with the roadmap, the theoretical framework and data collection and analysis are developed through a parallel but interactive process. That means the data are first analyzed as separate identities and then systematically compared on emergent theoretical constructs. The structure of the constructs used during data analysis is combined to elicit the emergence of the complete theory. Under this context, the theory is not constructed prior to the beginning of the research but discovered, developed and constantly verified through a systematic case selection, data gathering and analysis. To produce a systematic representation of the studied phenomenon, data are subjected to the grounded theory-inspired coding - open, axial and selective - through identifying categories derived from the same analytical process for comparison. The findings are described for each central construct of an overall framework. The same procedure repeatedly continues until the finished theory emerges, during which point theoretical saturation is achieved. The final stage of the

study is literature comparison. At this stage, the researcher compares the emerged theory with the extant literature for similarities and differences to enhance the validity of the theory. For clarity, the analytic phases of grounded theory building by Pandit (1996) is listed in Table 5.1, which serve as the frame of reference to ascertain the implementation of grounded theory. The principle objective of the template is to illustrate how the grounded theory approach is applied to this study and demonstrate how theoretical framework is generated from the operational procedures.

**Table 5.1** The Process of Building Grounded Theory (Pandit, 1996)

| PHASE | | ACTIVITY | RATIONALE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **RESEARCH DESIGN PHASE** | | | |
| Step 1 | Review technical literature | Definition of research question | Focuses efforts |
| | | Definition of a priori construct | Constrains irrelevant variation and sharpens external validity |
| Step 2 | Select cases | Theoretical, not random sampling | Focuses efforts on theoretically useful cases |
| **DATA COLLECTION PHASE** | | | |
| Step 3 | Develop rigorous data collection protocol | Creation of case study database | Increases reliability and construct validity |
| | | Employment of multiple data collection methods | Strengthens grounding of theory by triangulation of evidence Enhances internal validity |
| | | Qualitative and quantitative data | Synergistic view of evidence |
| Step 4 | Enter the field | Overlap between data collection and analysis | Speeds analysis and reveals helpful adjustments to data collection |
| | | Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods | Allows investigators to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case features |
| **DATA ORDERING PHASE** | | | |
| Step 5 | Organize data | Arraying of events chronologically | Facilitates easier data analysis Allows examination of processes |
| **DATA ANALYSIS PHASE** | | | |
| Step 6 | Analyze data relating to the first case | Use of open coding | Develops concepts, categories and properties |
| | | Use of axial coding | Develops connections between a category and its sub-categories |
| | | Use of selective coding | Integrates categories to build theoretical framework |
| | | | All forms of coding enhance internal validity |
| Step 7 | Theoretical sampling | Literal and theoretical replication across cases (go to step 2 until theoretical saturation) | Confirms, extends and sharpens theoretical framework |
| Step 8 | Reach closure | Theoretical saturation when possible | Ends process when marginal improvement becomes small |
| **LITERATURE COMPARISON PHASE** | | | |
| Step 9 | Compare emergent theory with extant literature | Comparisons with conflicting frameworks | Improves construct definitions and therefore internal validity |
| | | Comparisons with similar frameworks | Improves external validity by establishing the domain to which the study's findings can be generalized |

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## 5.3 Grounded Theory Methodology

Originated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that aims at constructing a theory grounded in data (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015; Charmaz, 2006, etc. for detailed discussions). The inception of grounded theory arises from a need to create a systematic approach for generating theories from data. In their seminal texts, Glaser, Strauss and Corbin introduce the general principles of grounded theory, which encompass its historical background, methodological influences as well as criteria and procedures essential to grounded theory. According to their insightful discussions, grounded theory is developed for researchers of social science to study and conceptualize social processes within particular contexts. From this perspective, the emerging theories are to discover and explain social processes as well as their consequences. Therefore, the resulting theory is considered a new way of understanding the social situations from which the theory is generated.

Grounded theory derives its theoretical explorations from pragmatism philosophy (Dewey, 2002; Mead, 1962) and symbolic interactionism sociology (Blumer, 1969a). The general nature of understanding adopted by pragmatism and symbolic interactionism is argued to serve as a starting point from which grounded theory methodology is explicated. Among them, the discussion of symbolic interactionism in fashion and clothing has been established in Chapter 2. Both pragmatism and

symbolic interactionism permit human reality as socially and symbolically constructed and emphasize the role of human beings in the creation of objective and meaningful reality. In addition, all scholars argue that formulating a theory prior to the actual research is risky and contentious. Instead, they consider that theory emerges from the research process and is achieved through the interaction of the participants. These intellectual insights have contributed to the ensuing development of grounded theory approach. Following their theoretical and methodological notions, grounded theorists form a social constructionist view of reality to discover the world as seen through the participants and through the basic social processes or structures that organize that world. Such theoretical beliefs are fully reflected in the process of grounded theory research, particularly in its data collection strategies, taking observation, questionnaire and interview for instance.

Thus, unlike other forms of qualitative research, grounded theory research has its distinctive characteristics (e.g. Corbin & Strauss, 2015). To begin with, Glaser (1978) considers that what differentiates grounded theory research from most other research is that it is explicitly emerged and therefore it does not closely focus on the phenomena. Such distinction is one of the reasons why grounded theory research is generally useful in the conceptual development phase of theory building. Secondly, grounded theory emerges from the questions on people pertaining to a particular context. The exact nature of these processes is social psychology or social structure. To define and clarify pertinent processes and their consequences, researchers need to

involve in a complete cycle for interpretative inquiries. Thirdly, the collection and analysis of data are closely interrelated in grounded theory studies. This continuous interaction makes theory possibly evolved from data. In grounded theory, the analysis starts from the collection of the very first data. The resultant concepts relating to the initial analysis are depicted as a key component, which is used to form a basis for the collection of subsequent data. The process of data collection followed by analysis continues in an ongoing cycle and ends when theoretical saturation has been achieved. At this point, no emerging categories or modification of categories can be recognized. It is throughout the circulating process that a fully integrated grounded theory has been constructed. In addition, grounded theory is generated on the basis of the analytical research process. The concepts out of which the theory emerges are derived from data during the procedure of analysis, which are not generated as a priori.

One striking feature of this analytic approach is "constant comparative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is an inductive process of comparison through which data are analyzed. According to Glazer (2017), the elements of theory developed through a comparison of analysis include "conceptual categories", "their conceptual properties", together with "hypotheses about relationships among the categories and their properties". When making constant comparisons, data are initially broken down into small pieces, with each individual compared for similarities and differences. Among them, data that are similar or interrelated in concept are clustered together under the same conceptual label. Then, these concepts are further clustered together,

and the categories are formulated. Each category has its own properties and dimensions. In doing so, different categories are eventually generated. These categories are linked around a major theme of the study, which leads to the generation of a core category. The core category integrates categories drawn from the different categories, hence forming the structure of the theory with other categories. This constant comparative analysis permits all instances of variation resulting from categories, through which theories and underpinnings are generated. In such a way, the constant comparison analysis can identify the full complexity and diversity of data and ensure the final theorization of research grounded in the participants' experiences.

Many adaptions have occurred in the development of grounded theory since its inception in 1967. In general, grounded theory can be divided into three versions: Glaser's (1978, 1992) classic version, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) evolved version, and Charmaz's (2006, 2008; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) social constructivist version. Although they are all referred to as "grounded theory", they hold differing views in researchers' ontological and epistemological respects. The first and second perspectives lay a solid foundation for conducting grounded theory research and influence later strands of grounded theory. By contrast, social constructionist approach is a recent development, which maintains many characteristics and beliefs embraced by Glaser, Strauss and Corbin. The major differences between constructionist and the first two lie in the fact that constructivist grounded theory pay extra attention to the role of both researcher and participants in shaping the research

process and ultimately the findings, as well as the interplay between researcher and data in the development of theory. Therefore, constructivists contend that theory emerges as a product of social interactions among researcher, participants and reality as opposed to the discovery of mere data. The ultimate objective of the social constructivist version, as Charmaz (ibid.) emphasizes, seeks to gain an interpretation towards the investigated phenomenon that can account for the contextual reality. In light of this, issues which offer insights into the way in which new theories are developed, such as reflexivity, the context, pre-existing knowledge and literature, are highly engaged with the constructivist approach. As such, the principle of constructivist method advocates adopting the combination of both deduction and induction in the analytic process.

This study follows two of these versions: Strauss and Corbin (1990)'s version and Charmaz's (2006) constructivist version. We focus on two of these landmarks because they possibly comprise the most influential developments of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) diverge from the original text, evolve grounded theory into current substantive contexts and position the theory at a practical level. Charmaz (2006, 2008; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) propose and consolidate a constructivist version of grounded theory that interprets beliefs within actual contexts. As Charmaz (1995, p. 30) explains, the former approach views the phenomenon "from the outside in", whereas the latter "from the inside out". Grounded theory provides a systematic research method for researchers to study human experience and to identify social

processes and their consequences for participants. It is assumed that data generated from participants' individual experiences may result in relevant and plausible theory, which can then be used to understand social realities. The combination of two different but complementary perspectives offers a useful tool for the researcher to capture the richness and diversity of participants' experience and to explicate its quality within a wide context of social processes and their consequences. This synergy work is required for the current study to achieve a full understanding of the phenomenon investigated.

To date, grounded theory has been adopted to investigate a number of rather different theories, particularly across fashion and clothing. Such research studies show further elaborations towards this general methodology, which can be described as follows: Yueh (1998) examines Taiwan's female consumers and their implications in the fashion market through the integration of multiple disciplinary approaches. Brantley (1999) evaluates the subcultural meanings in terms of hip-hop clothing worn by Afro-American adult male during the 1990s. Sinha (2000) generalizes the fashion design processes of womenswear industry in the U.K. based on a comparative analysis. Au (2003) undertakes a comparative study to generate grounded design theories originating in contemporary fashion designers within Europe and Japan. It is certainly clear that grounded theory has formed influential methodological foundations for these studies, but the evidence until now suggests that while the kinds of grounded theory-inspired research found in fashion and clothing are quite varied,

the realizations of theories tend to follow certain regular procedures. Hence, it may be helpful to summarize the principles and practices of grounded theory and meanwhile to posit new possibilities for the advance in its methodology as well as operations to other research fields, fashion and clothing in this situation. Compared with existing literature, the distinction of this study is to extend grounded theory into semiotic analysis and discover its potential within a brand new social context as displayed in the following section.

## 5.4 Introduction to Selected Samples

### 5.4.1 Case Study Research for Theory Building

For the purpose of this study, the research on case study is chosen as the basis from which to build the theory of fashion and clothing. Theory derived from case studies is a research approach, which involves the use of (more than) one case(s) to produce relevant theoretical constructions, propositions and theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Considerable literature has discussed the process of constructing theories through case studies (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) specifies the design of case study research; Eisenhardt (1989) introduces the process on how to derive theory inductively from case study; Glaser and Strauss (1967), together with Corbin and Strauss (1990), describe a comparative method to develop grounded theory with case study strategy and recent literature, such as Dooley (2002), emphasizes the role of case study research in conducting the research relative to theory building. A major explanation as to why researchers should choose case studies

to build theory has been articulated by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). They consider that such approach emphasizes both empirical data and theory developing, thereby building a bridge between inductive and deductive research. Moreover, they argue that this approach may make a valuable contribution towards generating further accurate and testable theories (ibid.). As a result, it can be used as a complement to a process of deduction.

In case study research, data collected from a case merely represents one of the many possible forms of inquiry for inductive theory building. Other forms of data may come from participant observation, document analysis, in-depth interviews and field notes. Yin (2014) defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). According to these characteristics, case study method involves systematically gathering information about particular situations and characterizes rich, detailed, in-depth and multisided information on a particular phenomenon. As such, this strategy provides an effective method for the researcher to understand the operation of the subject being studied. Therefore, it works as a particularly suitable methodological approach to guide and build the theory of this study within a single social phenomenon. By concentrating on some representative data, it can shed light on the construction of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems, albeit partially. Nonetheless, it can be seen as part of a larger set of parallel instances, as an instance of a broader phenomenon for the future development of theoretical underpinnings.

One considerable difficulty in developing theory from cases is case selection. The cases that are appropriate for theory building are selected through theoretical sampling. Such a purposive sampling approach, based on Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), has the potential to gain a clear recognition of theoretical constructs, their relationships and the logic of the phenomenon studied. It eventually forms a strong basis to build a theory. Because of this, the selection of representative data from the fashion industry is of utmost significance throughout the study. In order to fulfill the process of theory building, it is necessary to identify a scope of data which may fully develop and demonstrate the theory. After a careful selection, the study attempts to employ contemporary Chinese fashion designers and their creations as the focal research phenomenon. The way to choose contemporary Chinese fashion as a case study sample comes from many aspects. First, Chinese fashion has rapidly developed into one of the most influential and promising fashion countries over the past three decades. Moreover, it is currently ranked on the top list in the worldwide market. As the evolution of contemporary Chinese fashion unfolds, Chinese designers start to emerge on the world stage and actively seek to gain global attention. Until now, a few of them have received international reputation and established their distinctive roles worldwide. Therefore, they may take a potentially important position in the future of global fashion market. Secondly, Chinese fashion is characterized by a complex and conflicting hybrid of modern fashion and Chinese traditions (Tsui, 2013; Welters & Mead, 2012; Wu, 2012). While it has strong influences of modern day, Chinese fashion today largely remains a mystery to most people in both the West and within

China. Thirdly, the existing research into Chinese fashion has been relatively little owing to its complexity and newness. Understanding modern China and its fashion is still a serious challenge not only for the international fashion market but also for those in the field of fashion studies. Finally, Chinese fashion is relatively easily accessible to the current study. Given the significance of Chinese fashion in the worldwide fashion industry, most designers and their clothing samples in this study are of contemporary China. In addition, the ineradicable effects of sociocultural and historic influences are included to demonstrate the fundamental nature and rapid development of Chinese fashion industry. More importantly, diachronic and synchronic analytical views are considered in choosing representative designers and their clothing to better illustrate the theoretical and conceptual frameworks proposed in the study.

### 5.4.2 Contemporary Chinese Fashion as Case Study Focus

Since the end of the Qing dynasty, when the outbreak of the Revolution in 1911 destroyed the Qing regime and established the Republic of China, China has undergone three major transitional phases in culture, marked by a rejection of an established cultural system and the adoption of a new one on the basis of a modern Western system (Tsui, 2009; Wu, 2009). In the course of this adoption and adaption, Chinese fashion experienced various levels of transformation. As a direct consequence, a cultural dialectic was formed between China and the West, which achieved a growing recognition of pattern in mutual influence and change. These transitional phases and cultural dialectic China has engendered set a solid foundation

for the development of contemporary Chinese fashion.

The first of these phases, according to Chinese fashion scholars (e.g. Bao, 2008; Tsui, 2009), began with the revolutionary period of the Republic (1911-1949). During this period, the May Fourth movement recommended the introduction of modern Western cultural ideals to advance a new culture for China. The May Fourth movement simultaneously signaled a gradual disintegration of traditional Chinese culture and opened up the way for the ultimate acceptance of Western style in contemporary Chinese fashion. The openness of China to Western countries and the constant revolutionary changes promoted a modern lifestyle of the Chinese people and profoundly influenced the evolution of Chinese clothing. At this point, Shanghai gradually became the earliest Chinese fashion center. The second phase occurred with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and continued through the Cultural Revolution, a period which underwent a dramatic transformation of social conditions in China (ibid.). This period witnessed the establishment of new cultural ideology and the development of a new model for fashion, namely, Maoist nationalism. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, everything concerning fashion was suppressed in China. Mao suits and military uniforms therefore became essential wear for Chinese people on a daily basis. The third transition began in the late 1970s, when China has undergone a liberalization of economics and culture since the Cultural Revolution (ibid.). The massive and radical transformation at this phase has directly led to the rebirth of Chinese market economy, the revival of Chinese fashion industry,

and the revitalization of contemporary Chinese society. From then on, China reopened its doors to the West, with the information from contemporary Western society and culture coming flooding into all over the country. There was a wide disillusionment with the existing cultural values and concepts after the revival of communication with contemporary Western society. Similar to the occurrence in the first transition, the world of Chinese fashion during this period has been attempting to break up cultural circumscription and rebuild a new reality for China. The following three decades witnessed the emergence and development of contemporary Chinese fashion. With a fast and thriving expansion of community and market (both international and local), Chinese fashion has started to take on a brand new look (Wu, 2012). According to fashion scholars (e.g. Bao, 2008; Tsui, 2009; Wu, 2012), the end of the 1970s could be described as the starting point for the development of Chinese fashion system, which is typically designated as post-Mao era. Consequently, contemporary Chinese fashion is generally understood to begin within the post-Mao era, the period since the end of the Cultural Revolution and China's subsequent turn to a market economy. Ferrero-Regis and Lindgren (2012) show that contemporary Chinese fashion fully incorporates the designs from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora.

Given its inextricably cultural hybridity, interpreting contemporary Chinese fashion is a serious challenge. The complexities and ambivalences are reflected in a variety of transitional phases that Chinese fashion has experienced. Since its inception,

contemporary Chinese fashion has suffered from the huge impact of various cultures, whilst it has incorporated many traits of indigenous Chinese cultural thoughts and practices, subtle or explicit. The integration of these differing cultures contributes to the uniqueness of contemporary Chinese fashion. The Chinese fashion has currently demonstrated the forces of conflict, interweaving and mutual transformation that derive from the negotiation of Chinese traditions, revolutionary realism and contemporary Western culture. This phenomenon came into existence at the end of the 1970s and continues to play a dominant role within the creative process of Chinese fashion. For such a reason, Chinese fashion is neither a continuation of traditional cultural enlightenment nor a rearrangement of contemporary Western fashion. Instead, as a vital outlet for Chinese society, it is a new integration of myriad influences, one step towards cultural globalization. Therefore, Chinese contemporary fashion can be explicated not only as a clear signal of China's entry into globalized modernity but also as a target for the localized reconstruction of its cultural identity. As Zhao (2013) writes, "fashion is not just a means to a rags-to-riches style modernization, but also a medium through which a Chinese notion of modernity is articulated and contested" (p. 11). It can be argued that a close examination of Chinese fashion would pave a brand new way of looking at, discussing and thinking about modern Chinese society and culture.

This trend is reinforced by recent inquiries into the influences of Chinese fashion. Thanks to its unprecedented economic and cultural changes, contemporary Chinese

fashion is increasingly gaining attention in academic research. There are some

scholars who have contributed to the history and contemporary practice of fashion

design in China (e.g. Finnane, 2008; Steele & Major, 1999; Tsui, 2009; Wu, 2009;

Zhao, 2013). Considering that it is a newly emerging field, the research is relatively

limited. Among them, *China Chic* (Steele & Major, 1999) is regarded as the first book

to discuss the development of Chinese dresses from the imperial era to modern China.

In this publication*,* Steele and Major (ibid.) examine the evolution of Chinese dresses

in the context of political, economic and cultural history and also consider its impact

on fashion in the West. Through constant juxtaposition and contextualization, it

affords a new understanding of the mutual influence and interplay of Chinese and

Western fashions over the past hundred years. Finnane (2008) presents an overview of

Chinese male and female clothing since the seventeenth century. Situating fashion in

historical contexts, her research plays a dominant role in the understanding of Chinese

fashion and makes a solid contribution to the broadening of Western scholarly scope

and methodological attitudes. Wu (2009) conducts a comprehensive survey about

modern Chinese fashion since the start of the post-Mao era. Her research mainly

focuses on the ways in which fashion mirrors and shapes social and cultural changes.

Tsui (2009) documents the evolution of fashion designers in modern China. Based on

in-depth interviews with designers, she introduces three generations of designers in

the Chinese fashion industry and discusses their formation and development over the

last thirty years through her meticulous and grounded examination. Zhao (2013)

initiates an ethnographic approach to record the Chinese fashion industry from 1978

to the present day. His analysis depicts textile and clothing industry in China and offers new insights into contemporary Chinese fashion from the perspective of the cultural economy. Such above achievements provide both valuable academic resources and rich practical information for the understanding of Chinese fashion and its design. Therefore, they navigate the way for next studies through their roads in the field.

### 5.4.3 The Emergence of Contemporary Chinese Fashion Designers

The dramatic booming of Chinese fashion exerts a profound influence on those who participate in the industry. As a group of creative people who work in one of the most economically promising countries, Chinese designers are riding the waves on the international fashion scene right now. Just taking a glance at what they have created, you will find there is a vast difference in their styles which ranges from the traditional to the modern. However, it is an indisputable fact that most of them draw inspiration from distinct Chinese philosophies, materials or traditions and then reinterpret them in a contemporary way. To construe the emergence of Chinese fashion designers in the global industry, we need to grasp the development of Chinese fashion designers.

Ferrero-Regis and Lindgren (2012) describe three collections of Chinese fashion designers in the global fashion market. The first is composed of immigrant designers. As they record, these designers come from the families who have lived overseas since the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The representative designers in this group include

Alexander Wang, Anna Sui, Jason Wu, Philip Lim and Vera Wang. The second group refers to the designers from mainland China. In their classification, the third group is mainly formed by Hong Kong and other place-based designers. According to Tsui (2009), the second group can be further divided into three generations. In her document, the three generations of designers can be summarized as follows: 1) "The pioneers" are the first generation who took an active part in Chinese fashion in the 1980s. These designers pertain to those born around the 1950s and 1960s, that is, during the Cultural Revolution. At this phase, Chinese fashion was absolutely forbidden to contact with the world. 2) "The practitioners" specify the second generation who emerged as a leading figure of the industry in the 1990s. They relate to the designers born in the 1970s, who are still struggling to propel the integration of China with the global fashion industry. 3) "The prospects" represent the third generation who has begun thriving in the field since the 2000s. This group of designers was usually born after the 1980s. At the moment, they are growing to become an emerging force for fashion in China.

Tsui (ibid.) discusses the characteristics from the first to the third generation and explores the formation and the development of these designers within a political and economic context. The differences of the three generations are reflected in various areas, including educational background, design style, marketing orientation and career development, among others. As Tsui (2010, 2013) observes, those born before the 1980s are characterized by adopting a rigorous and stereotyped approach to their

presentation of what Chinese is, whereas those born after the 1980s are inclined to deconstruct and redefine the conception of Chinese culture through their creativity and originality. This new generation of Chinese designers is often referred to as emerging designers. Different from their precursors, designers of the new generation have distinctive characteristics. For example, almost all the emerging designers received their education overseas, and some of them are graduates from Central Saint Martin College; they are neither restrained by the old ways of thinking nor blindly affected by modern Western views. There is an abundance of cultural possibilities in their design features; most of them have established their own labels and fulfilled the orders from domestic and international markets; they started their businesses around the 2000s. Thus far, they have demonstrated the impact on both the domestic and global scenes. A few of them have successfully presented their collections in the fashion weeks of the top four fashion capitals: London (e.g. Huishan Zhang, Kay Kwok, Xander Zhou, Xiao Li), Paris (e.g. Masha Ma, Uma Wang), Milan (e.g. Angel Chen, Uma Wang, Xu Zhi) and New York (e.g. Chen Peng, Lan Yu).

One notable characteristic relative to these emerging designers is in terms of Chinese identity (Steele & Major, 1999; Finnane, 2008; Tsui, 2013; Segre Reinach, 2012). For this generation, design is no longer confined to such old concepts as geography or background. What they are in search of is not only new forms of clothing but also a new way of self-expression that can differentiate China from the West and their generation from their predecessors. Actually, they are reluctant to adopt the aesthetics

expressed in Western Chinese designs, which are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese symbols. They are also reluctant to adopt the current standards of beauty and fashion established in the West. Instead, they advocate a fundamental change in Chinese views of what beauty and fashion are - views that are now influenced by Western views. As Masha Ma (2015) expresses in an interview, "people of my age or younger don't have that fear of history in our DNA. We want to keep moving forward". These conflicting but interweaving views are completely manifested in their designs, which cross through a multitude of areas. Unlike most designs of the previous time, the creativity and originality of their designs spring from both China and the West. They prefer to choose an indirect, abstract or conceptual form to deliver their cultural identity (Tsui, 2013). In their creations, you rarely see certain traditional Chinese elements like mandarin collar, dragon motif, banding or piping. Instead, they use other elements such as color, cutting, fabrics or silhouette to feature their designs. Through this way, they attempt to deliver a special but strong statement about their individual creativity, identity and the philosophy of fashion. Wu (2009) mentions a new Chinese aesthetics initiated by the young generation, which melds the civilizations of both China and the West. She (ibid.) considers that this aesthetics will ultimately define Chinese fashion and characterize Chinese identity.

So far, the issue of fashion has largely been dominated by the West. Although this new generation has started to demonstrate their appearance onto the global stage, it is still a question regarding whether they could gain international acceptance from the West

as much as the Japanese designers did in the 1980s (Wu, 2012; Clark, 2012). What lie in front of them are not only simple design issues but also the reawakening and rejuvenation of the entire Chinese fashion system. Among them, how to find out a distinct Chinese identity in a globalized context is a significant challenge. It seems that this would be a rather long journey for them to explore. Moreover, it would be a process that constantly produces new meanings of how Chinese fashion is perceived both at home and abroad.

### 5.4.4 Selected Fashion Designers and Their Collections

This study sets to focus on the fashion designers in contemporary China. Among them, the designers born in the 1980s are preferred, considering that they are playing an active and emerging role in Chinese fashion industry for the moment, and whereby they may provide timely and pertinent insights into the current occurrences or phenomena under investigation. In addition, it may be relatively easy to track down useful and in-depth information about these designers from available publicized sources that further enhance the validity of theoretical underpinnings. More importantly, the designers of this new generation have their distinctive characteristics and powerful influences in the local and global fashion industry, which have been explored in the previous section. These multiple voices allow the researcher to incorporate extra variations of the instances and use them as reference to cultivate divergent perspectives and eventually ground the theory. Apart from the mentioned generation (Tsui, 2009), the study considers another factor of geographical location

(Ferrero-Regis & Lindgren, 2012), which influences the selection of designers in the study. The incorporation of different situations in the field is assumed to offer various, comprehensive and multifaceted information about the phenomenon observed, thereby contributing to a general understanding of the studied subject and strengthening theoretical constructions. For this reason, the sample for the study consists of emerging fashion designers from both Hong Kong and mainland China.

Given the number of designers involved in a wide range of Chinese fashion settings, further criteria are required to narrow down the scope of data and to identify the most representative and effective resources. In this study, the criteria for selecting the designers are as follows:

- Professional qualification: the designers are all currently employed in the agencies.

- Industry experience: the designers have established their fashion labels for more than three years.

- Brand recognition

- Signature style

- International reputation

- Other criteria including age, gender, geography and educational background.

Based on the above criteria, we select nine newly rising Chinese designers from Hong Kong and mainland China and their works as the case study (see Table 5.2). The

number of designers was adjusted and confirmed depending on the designers' availability and other arrangements. After selection, each subject to be interviewed and observed was contacted by the researcher by mail and/or by telephone beforehand. Such action served to explain the purpose of the study and to obtain the approval from designers for participation in the research project. The mail was followed by supporting letters that included the request for observation and additional information about the study. The researcher started data collection upon receipt of the consent from the designers. Areas for investigation cover the following points: the background of designers, their creations, design practice and other issues related to the designs. In accordance with proposed industry experience, the works to be studied are also in the range of at least three years. According to their characteristics, the study classifies the designers for clarity, for example, in terms of design style, marketing direction and cultural background. Details of data collection techniques including document review, interview and observation are further discussed in the next section. Information from the interaction with these designers is used as a reference point from which to conduct the grounded theory research. Through reading their works as well as their interpretations of design, the study attempts to grasp and reveal a general overview on how the meaning of fashion and clothing is delivered in the process of creation.

**Table 5.2** Selected Fashion Designers and Their Collections

| Designers | Gender | Brand | Year | Collection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Derek Chan | M | DEMO. | 2013 | 2015 FW "Synthetic Nature"<br>2016 SS "Harmony-at-Odds"<br>2016 FW "Dream of Dali"<br>2017 SS "Revisited Garden"<br>2017 FW "Mature Child"<br>2018 SS "Boys be Flowers" |
| Kay Kwok | M | KAY KWOK | 2013 | 2012 FW "Fake Eternity"<br>2014 SS "The Hidden Force"<br>2014 FW "It Is Not A Fake Story"<br>2015 SS "That Has Not Been Received?"<br>2016 SS "The Freeform" |
| Kenax Leung | M | KENAX LEUNG | 2012 | 2015 SS "Combo"<br>2015 FW "Error"<br>2016 SS "No Answer"<br>2016 FW "Be Not So Gentle"<br>2017 SS "It's Okay to Live a Life Others Don' Understand."<br>2017 FW "Waste Isn't Just Waste." |
| Kurt Ho | M | KURT HO | 2014 | 2014 FW "Over Mature"<br>2015 SS "Fallen"<br>2015 FW "The Place We Left Behind"<br>2015 PFW "We'll Run"<br>2016 SS "Surrogates"<br>2016 FW "Non" |
| Lilian Kan | F | KanaLili | 2013 | KanaLili #1 Collection: "The Snowland Angels"<br>KanaLili #2 Collection: Boudoir Collection<br>KanaLili #3 Collection<br>KanaLili #4 Collection<br>KanaLili #5 Collection<br>KanaLili #6 Collection: "Le Parfum" |
| Masha Ma | F | MASHA MA<br>MA by MA<br>MATTITUDE | 2011<br>2013<br>2016 | 2015 SS  "The Remains of an Urban Garden"<br>2015 FW "The Suzhou Museum"<br>2016 SS "FROM REBEL TO ICON"<br>2016 FW "SAVE THE DATE"<br>2017 SS "Collection W"<br>2017 FW "Collection P" |
| Mountain Yam | M | 112 mountainyam<br>MOUNTAIN YAM | 2011 | 2015 SS "Dandelion"<br>2015 FW "Camouflage Owl"<br>2016 SS "Water Drop"<br>2016 FW "An Eruption"<br>2017 SS "The Cactus Wave"<br>2017 FW "Exploring Self" |
| Moti Bai | F | BLACK SPOON<br>BLACK BRIDGE | 2012 | 2015 SS "Rhinestone of Ferry Street"<br>2015 FW "Ship of Fools"<br>2016 SS "Barroco"<br>2016 FW "Paradise Circus"<br>2017 SS "The Twilight Zone"<br>2017 FW "Bitter Sweet" |
| Nelson Leung | M | NelsonBlackle | 2013 | 2014 FW "Journey Walker"<br>2015 SS "You Only See What You Wanna See"<br>2015 FW "Do You Remember?"<br>2018 SS "I Don't Give a Shit" |

## 5.5 Data Collection

Fashion and clothing represents a complex social phenomenon. Evidence from research highlights the need for a wide variety of methods in order to study the phenomenon within fashion and clothing. Therefore, this study focuses on a combination of data collection methods with the aim of gathering the required data and addressing the identified questions. Similar to other qualitative approaches, data for generating a grounded theory can be drawn from a wide range of sources. In the grounded approach, procedures for data collection involve interviews, observations as well as existing texts and documents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 161-184). Each of these sources, as Glaser and Strass (ibid.) point out, is necessary to plan and carry out the research on the focal phenomenon and contributes to the final theorizing of constructs. To specify, the case study research allows for data collected through a standardized model and ensures a systematic guideline for data analysis. Use of documents and records is considered appropriate as they are rich sources of multiple data required to supplement the results. The interviews with fashion designers provide valuable opportunities for gaining deeper insights into their views and approaches toward the works. Observation enables the researcher to obtain first-hand information about how fashion and clothing is actually designed and produced. Accordingly, the "triangulation" (Denzin, 1970) of method orientations allows us to examine fashion and clothing from multiple perspectives and enhance the discovery and analysis of relevant results. These methods are discussed in the following sections, based on the progression of the research from document review via interview to observation.

### 5.5.1 Document Review

Document review is a valuable method in qualitative research. It can work as a complementary data collection procedure in support of triangulation and theory building research. Through systemic and comprehensive evaluation of existing information, document review can serve as part of an inquiry for various purposes. In this study, document reviews in Chinese and English were employed to gather information about the setting, history, characteristics and operational aspects of the subjects under investigation. Such information is considered useful in identifying and explicating the study area and supplementing the results from interviews and observations.

Two types of document review are involved in grounded theory: technical and nontechnical literature (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015). In terms of technical literature, documents refer to "professional and disciplinary writing", which consists of the information from "research reports", "theoretical or philosophical papers" and other sources (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 31). In this study, the examined documents mainly include three strands of inquiry. They specify the research background about fashion and clothing across disciplines, the theoretical underpinnings of social semiotics and research methodology, as well as the contextual and practical information about the historical development of contemporary Chinese fashion. The review of technical literature is used to formulate the research questions and facilitate

the progression of the research. In terms of nontechnical literature, documents take the form of a variety of materials (ibid.). In this situation, it may cover the records of designers from contemporary Chinese fashion and their creations, as well as a vast array of reports in magazines, newspapers, website and archives. Other analyzed documents may include biographies, interviews, journals, memos, memoirs, manuscripts, publications, press releases, reviews, videotapes and firm documents. Among these sources, archival research is centered round Chinese fashion industry. This is utilized to examine the evolution of the said industry and the changes in clothing styles in contemporary Chinese fashion. In addition, the review includes archival materials of the post-Mao era when contemporary Chinese fashion developed. Through perusal of these extant materials, the researcher can formulate a clear and complete understanding towards certain practical issues before beginning the analysis, thereby advancing the development of the research. In this sense, nontechnical literature provides especially rich and comprehensive sources for the investigated phenomenon, from primary and supplemental perspectives.

According to the information sources, we can also distinguish documents into internal and external information. Internal sources of data entail the information from within the firm. There are different types of internal information, including those on the background, production and marketing of the firm. Such internal documents reveal the information about internal rules and regulations, firm philosophies and objectives, and communication strategies. These statements constitute key components for

understanding a firm's direction and its communicative patterns over time. Evidence about design culture and ideology thus arise from the data obtained and analyzed through document review. Examination of internal documents during the same period at each field site enables the researcher to become familiar with the environment of the study area and to gain a clear perspective of the designer, products and the firm. Documents needed for further analysis were copied through the authorization of the firm, and privacy regulations had to be obeyed by the researcher. Conversely, external sources of data concern the information from outside the firm. As discussed, this kind of sources covers any documentation relating to the subject area produced external to the firm. Such information may be acquired from the library, the internet, archives and publications. As significant data sources, these documents can also be used to position the designers into the real fashion industry and verify the accounts or claims made during interviews and observations.

Document review was carried out prior to interview and observation and during the period when the researcher conducted field visits. This analytical approach enabled the researcher to gain insights into the actual setting for the study and enhanced the process of data collection. In performing document review, all related documents were examined and coded for analysis. Field notes were continuously kept by the researcher on a logbook for written communications. During this process, a simple coding system consisting of a few words that refers to a general theme was devised. Emergent themes were explored and identified, which were used for data comparisons.

Similarities and differences across designers in terms of background and practice were noted. This type of data lays a strong basis for conducting the data collection through the other methods used.

## 5.5.2 Interview

As another important research method, interview is used to gather data from the responses of participants. This bidirectional communication strategy involves the exchange of personal information about specific matters. The interview research is believed to provide the backbone for data collection, which can address the aims and objectives of the investigation and generate a deep understanding of the studied phenomenon. Three basic types of research interviews are employed for grounded theory purposes: unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 37-39). These interview techniques vary in their degree of standardization of questions and responses. Structured interviews are performed according to a prescribed interview guide. Changes in the questions or the addition of follow-up inquiries to responses are not possible during the interview. Unstructured interviews, conversely, are not conducted with a preconceived interview guide. Such an interview technique allows for open issues and problems pertinent to the main topic. Hence, unstructured interviews offer the most comprehensive source of data for building the theory. Semi-structured interviews consist of key topics that are relevant to the investigated issue, but it also permits participants to cover extra questions in order to clarify points and pursue a subject in greater detail. The flexibility of this approach

facilitates the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to the participants, through which each participant can give a detailed and extensive response to the explored questions. Accordingly, this study chose the semi-structured interview as its main form of interviews to analyze and solve the issues and problems from the discussion.

The primary purpose of interview schedules in this study was to gather data from emerging fashion designers in the Chinese fashion industry. The selection of designers according to the planned criteria has been discussed in the previous section. These interviews were conversational in nature, but a checklist of questions pertinent to the main topic was used. Interview questions were arranged by the researcher prior to the study and compiled in an interview guide for reference. In this work, the interview guide was constructed in accordance with theoretical and methodological literature, as well as the information from the pilot study. Questions were designed to elicit the designers' responses towards specific issues of interest. The topics on the interview guide mainly concentrate on four aspects in relation to literature review and design practice: design philosophy, design style, design process and design marketing (see Appendix 1). All these aspects are considered helpful for the researcher to obtain a clear and comprehensive view of the investigated phenomenon. It is noted that, to develop the information, the interview questions were open-ended, thereby providing some structures but without being too rigid. According to the designers' characteristics, useful information might be considered for further adjustment. The

first draft of the interview guide was carefully examined prior to field testing for clarity, relevance and objectivity. To accurately obtain the information sought, some questions were added or eliminated when revising the interview guide. The pilot study to field test the instrument was completed during a visit of a designer in the University. The interview with the designer involved topics in relation to her views, experiences, beliefs and motivations about design. Through this pilot study, the researcher gathered necessary information with the help of the interview guide and made suitable preparations for developing the later forms of interview and analysis. At the same time, the pilot study also proved that the interview is an effective means of communicating with the designer, which provided useful feedback on the issues and problems of the research.

The actual interviews with selected contemporary Chinese fashion designers were conducted by the researcher after the pilot study. Nine semi-structured interviews were performed in Hong Kong and mainland China according to the designers' availability and arrangements. Among them, the interview with Masha Ma is employed as the pilot study to test and revise the constructed frameworks before further data collection. Before beginning the research, all designers to be interviewed and observed were contacted through mail and/or through telephone. The invitation letter included a brief introduction about the nature and purpose of the research. The interview questions were also mailed to the designers, together with the letters requesting interviews and observations. Privacy was afforded to the designers during

the interviews, and a quiet room was made available for this purpose.

After obtaining the designers' agreement to participate, the researcher started to conduct the interviews. The organized interviews ranged from a minimum period of one hour to two hours, depending on the designers' responses and reactions. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission, and the recordings were transcribed into English for detailed analysis. The researcher also took notes before, during and after each interview to acquire accurate and comprehensive transcripts and delve into emerging themes for similarities and differences across the participants. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher provided a brief account of the research and indicated the potential results of the study. In addition, the researcher attempted to build good relations with the designers, as well as maintained an appropriate tone of voice and a positive climate for communication. Most topics and interview questions were arranged beforehand in the interview guide by the researcher to ensure continuity and consistency, and avoid distractions. To make effective use of time, information provided by documents from different sources was employed in response to relevant inquires. During the interviews, contextual information about the surrounding environment could add great insights into the subjects to be explored. Thus, observation of the context and the document review while in the field were considered necessary in conducting this research. After the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings and transcribed each interview based on a sequential schedule. Responses were encoded in a word processor for further analysis and

exploration. The typed transcripts were prepared for data processing. The coding of

the interviews, according to grounded theory research, builds on a list of appropriate

coding categories compiled by the researcher. It was from the initial coded

transcription that themes and patterns began to emerge. The detailed description of the

coding scheme applied for the interviews are provided in the data analysis section.


### 5.5.3 Observation

Aside from the aforementioned sources, observation also serves as a means of data

collection that offers substantial contributions to grounded theory studies and

qualitative research. As stated, potential drawbacks are found in applying document

review or interview research, as they do not fully satisfy the requirements of

qualitative research and fail to verify the relative truth or validity of data. From this

perspective, observation is often considered an alternative or an additional form of

data collection in planning and carrying out specific studies (Denzin, 1970).


This study explores the meanings of fashion and clothing embodied through design

practice and examines how values and symbols are materialized into such a specific

pattern. Taking an observation approach allows one to observe how the messages

conveyed by products are shaped from the moment of creation through the various

levels of development by social forces that comprise a given fashion culture. Such an

approach may be best suited to consider fashion and clothing as a whole phenomenon

rather than a single product. Conducting fieldwork at the design space in related

institutions and with a variety of personnel and audience can yield an in-depth and nuanced understanding of cultural patterns and social forces, which shapes disseminates knowledge through product creation. Working on this premise, the study treats fashion and clothing as a complete social world, where people with different backgrounds constantly and cyclically interact to generate, exchange and consume messages. Accordingly, observation aims to examine not only the designers' creations, but also the culture through which individuals of all types at a design setting create the message about fashion and clothing and deliver it to the audience. This form of data gathering is supported by Patton (2015), who argues that "creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening" and "creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied" (p. 302). Therefore, the observational procedure is meant to supplement the data obtained from other research strategies in the study. Given that observing everything in the fieldwork is impossible, some selection should be made during the research.

Observation techniques in grounded theory studies range from participant observation to nonparticipant observation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 40-42). In full participant observation, the researcher participates in the events and acquires a role within the social setting that they explore. In simple nonparticipant observation, the researcher is strictly confined to observation of the activities and does not engage in any social events. Thus far, numerous limitations have been identified with this method of data collection, one of which entails practicality and constrains to access. A great difficulty

arises for the researcher in terms of gaining access to fully participate in the day-to-day activities of institutions. Hence, on-site observations during visits to the institutions and/or studios were regarded as the most feasible method for the current study. Observations at each site were arranged according to the designers' availability and pre-arranged schedule. Letters of request for observations and interviews were simultaneously sent to designers. The observations, together with interviews, were completed during the time spent in the field. Similar to the interviews, detailed field notes were recorded before, during and after the observations for later transcription and coding as well as comparisons between the participants. A structured checklist used for observation contains pre-specified behaviors or events to be observed by the researcher. This checklist was based on the obtained information and the reviewed literature. Consequently, it included key issues about the studied phenomenon. During the fieldwork, three broad areas of inquiry were undertaken in this study (see Appendix 2).

To start with, the researcher needed to observe the designers' working environment because this was one of the most influential factors that enabled the researcher to learn about the operation and development of a design institution. In this context, the environment could be interpreted as something relevant to the physical facilities and design climate. Then, the researcher attempted to investigate the participants as incidents or events during the interactions appeared to be a key characteristic of communication. The purpose of observation was to articulate their personal

characteristics, to observe how they behaved during the design process and to determine how they interacted with other individuals in the industry. This source of information offered vital clues about the participants and gave fruitful insights into the phenomenon reflected in the study. Moreover, the researcher examined relevant accounts of works in progress through certain sample collections, such as photographs, mood boards, conceptual designs and the actual design works. At the same time, the visual, tactile and other observations concerning the sample collections were made during the on-site visits. Following this, the researcher focused on the activities conducted during the design process, with attention towards participant responses to the process of messages delivery. Finally, the researcher explored the ideologies and interests that informed and reinforced these representations. This led to the examination of issues relevant to the background of the institutions and their design culture. The researcher utilized the categories on the checklist as guidance for conducting the observations and organizing the field notes. Given that simple observations during site visits might fail to adequately capture the designer's reasoning, semi-structured interviews after tasks would be required for elicitation of underlying structural knowledge that could not be obtained through observation. The use of the interview technique with nonparticipant observation increased the validity of data collection and assured that the truth in the observations was checked through interview methods or vice versa.

Through the interviews with designers who create the collections, the direct

observation of their behaviors, and content analysis of their works and of the discussions by other scholars and practitioners, this study attempts to gain a general understanding of 1) individuals currently involved in the Chinese fashion design industry, who seeks to convey the notion that is constructed and shaped by their own interpretations of certain social or cultural phenomena, and 2) the ways in which they attempt to convey and communicate that notion. Those multiple approaches under the principle of grounded theory methodology provide a flexible set of inductive strategies for collecting data, from which the phase of analysis is to be conducted and incisive findings are to be yielded.

## 5.6 Data Analysis

The approach for analyzing data is derived from the grounded theory research (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015; Charmaz, 2006, etc.). A distinctive characteristic of grounded theory method is its simultaneous involvement with data collection and analysis in the procedures of research (ibid.). This integrated approach to collecting and analyzing data allows the researcher to identify, explore and validate relevant concepts in light of their properties and dimensions. Therefore, data analysis in the study was undertaken from the gathering of the first focused data. In performing this process, the initial coding formed through the first data becomes the basis of subsequent data collection and stimulates the generation and comparison of theoretical grounds in the field. Within grounded theory research, data analysis involves several dynamic and

evolving phases of research. These phases can be interpreted as the segmentation, comparison, conceptualization, categorization and integration of data (ibid.). As the research progresses, the level of analysis varies in terms of abstraction ranging from descriptive to abstract in order to develop concepts and construct theory. Basically, three forms of codes are engaged in grounded theory approach. They include open coding, axial coding and selective coding respectively (e.g. Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015). These fundamental coding constitute the analytical process of data analysis in the study, from which the theory is finally built.

### 5.6.1 Prelude to Analysis

At the beginning of data analysis, information collected from documents, observations and interviews were recorded by the researcher and then transcribed into texts as a springboard for closer examination. In order to clarify the subjects, interviews and observations were ordered chronologically according to the sequence of events. Field notes that accompany each interview and observation were re-recorded in a word processor once themes and patterns began to emerge. These emergent themes were utilized to delve into similarities and distinctions across subjects. Other sources of data relating to the subjects were combined as part of the information and incorporated into the data inventories used as reference. To yield factual information about the subjects, document review was conducted prior to, during and after each coding of interview and observation. In addition, writing theoretical memos became an important part of this study. The purpose of memos was to formulate and revise

theory during the research. Therefore, theoretical memos were used as resource guides in data analysis for exploring and developing findings from the sorted data.

**5.6.2 Open Coding**

Open coding is the initial step of theoretical analysis, which develops codes directly from the data. This form of coding ends when it finds a core category, during which the full range of variations in categories are covered under the phenomenon. In open coding, data is broken down into manageable analytical pieces based on their interpretative meanings. At this point, a line by line approach is applied to build concepts and categories for research. During open coding process, data is detailedly examined and constantly compared with others for similarities and differences. Then, they are assigned conceptual headings that are attached to separate instances of the phenomena. In this way, data that is similar in concept are grouped together to formulate categories and subcategories, depending on specific properties and their dimensions. This process of coding involves constant comparison and continues throughout the grounding theory. By means of such analytical procedure, the basis for theoretical sampling is achieved.

Following grounded theory, the study started with a description of open coding. Before the initial coding and analysis, the researcher read the entire interview, the field notes and the literature for a better understanding of the data collected. Then, each interview was coded before the next was conducted so that new information

could be integrated into subsequent encounters. To ensure accuracy and exhaustiveness, appropriate categories were derived from different sources: technical and nontechnical literature, questions in the interview guide, components of the observational checklist and the actual responses from subjects during the research process. These categories and subcategories were combined and assigned in a detailed coding scheme that was used for the interviews (see Appendix 3). As shown, each category or subcategory in the interview matrix is represented by an identifying letter: A denotes design philosophy, B refers to design style and position, C suggests design process, D signifies design marketing and E means design message(s). The number affixed to each letter indicates the chronological sequence of the content conducted in the interviews. The numbered code assigned to each interview category enables the researcher to identify their discrete characteristics when analyzing the data and clarify the similarities and differences in each category across the investigated subjects. Using this scheme, the interview transcript was coded. New themes and patterns emerging from the data were recorded for further analysis. Themes identified through the coding of initial interviews continued to be used as resource guides in follow-up interviews. During transcription, notations with themes and patterns were continuously compared to provide internal validation. For clarification, Table 5.3 demonstrates the process in a sample interview coding.

**Table 5.3** Sample Open Coding of Interviews with Fashion Designers

| Example in Design Philosophy | Open Code |
|---|---|
| Q: What does fashion design mean to you? | |
| LK: "Fashion design is actually telling people <u>who you are</u>." | Expression of identity |
| DC: "Fashion is a <u>demonstration of your personality</u>." | Demonstration of personality |
| KK: "Fashion design is a way to express my views on something, like news, cultures, things that <u>interest</u> me." | Personal interests |
| DC: "Fashion is a way to <u>present a lifestyle</u>." | Display of lifestyle |
| KH: "I make things when I have that <u>state of mind</u> or <u>emotions</u>." | Reflection of thoughts or emotions |
| KH: "If I look back, I can see <u>different states of myself</u> going through." | Personal experience |
| NL: "I have some messages: there are so many problems in <u>society</u>, like politics, pollution or everything." | Presentation of social issues |
| MM: "I think it meant to me as a matter of expression to explain <u>the relationship between you and the society</u>." | Relationship with the society |
| KK: "Designing is an <u>artistic</u> outlet for me." | Relevance to culture |
| LK: "It is a way for me to express how I define <u>beauty</u>." | Aesthetic beauty |
| MY: "It is through design that we actually <u>serve people</u>." | Needs of the target market |
| LK: "Fashion design is about how to make women <u>confident</u> to me." | Psychological effects |

In addition, coding was conducted to capture descriptive information on the data gathered from the observations. The exactly same procedure for analyzing and coding data from interviews was also applied to the data derived from observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In this study, observations mainly focused on the sample works from the designers under investigation. Given that this work is a social semiotic study, categories included in the observation schedule emerged from proposed theoretical frameworks in terms of visual and textural design elements (see Section 4.5.2). As a result, observations arose from the visual design of clothing which covers the categories of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory, together with style and collection for a full assessment of clothing. Observations also emerged from texture design, ranging from the categories of visual, tactile, aural to

kinetic textures. These categories were further divided into subcategories according to their properties and dimensions. Based on these resulting categories and subcategories, the coding of observations in visual and texture design was defined and developed (see Appendices 4 and 5).

### 5.6.3 Axial Coding

The initial open coding involved labels which were used to describe the semiotic phenomenon reflected in the study. Such labeling produces categories at a lower order of abstraction. To identify the relationships between these descriptive categories and integrate them into higher-level abstract categories, grounded theorists (e.g. Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015) propose the use of a "coding paradigm", one that can help categories establish the linkages with one another through conditions, context, strategies and consequences. According to Corbin and Strauss (ibid.), this process is referred to as axial coding. The purpose of this coding technique is to reassemble data into groupings based on hypothetical relationships and patterns within and among the categories identified in the data. Through axial coding, smaller units of data and their assigned codes are compiled to make larger units of data represented by categories or concepts. This type of coding strategy is of particular importance to grounded theory research, during which conceptual linkages are established and theory is accordingly conceptualized.

After the early phases of analysis, further development of categories was performed.

At this point, descriptive categories arising from open coding were combined to form higher-order analytic categories. Consequently, the categories of design philosophy, design style and position, design process, design marketing and their subcategories from the interviews needed to be integrated into a whole framework for the entire analysis. The categories of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory from the observations were also incorporated. Each of these categories and subcategories were considered to work under the principles of the paradigm model. During this analytical process, the research drew upon existing literature and practice in considering the conditions that might lead to the investigated phenomenon: in what context it occurred, the actions or responses being made in relation to the phenomenon and the possible consequences for actions or interactions. The assumption is that through this paradigm, the categories began to relate to their subcategories. In doing so, there arose some hypotheses which were repeatedly reflected and verified through the incoming data. All these resulting hypotheses were conceived to make a connection with three domains: they represent aspects of people's experience in the world, they involve relations when people engage with others and express their attitudes, and they show features in the construction of text and create its relevance to the context in which it occurs. Therefore, these hypotheses implied a close relationship between the hypotheses derived from data analysis and the three metafuntions of fashion and clothing proposed in Section 4.4.3.3. It was important to note that constant comparisons among the subjects continued to be made during the identification of axial codes. To clarify the scheme, a sample matrix that

synthesizes the relationships of subcategories in design collections from the observations is shown in Table 5.4. The observational analysis of the designers' selected works can be integrated into the category of design aesthetics; hence, this matrix is also used to illustrate part of the relationships in the data from interviews.

**Table 5.4** Sample Axial Coding of Observations in Fashion Designers

| Category | Axial Code | Open Code |
|---|---|---|
| Collection | EXPERIENTIAL<br>Narrative, conceptual representation of theme | Theme as a response to social, cultural, political, historical, aesthetic, environmental, technological, innovative and other issues<br><br>Theme developed through sequences of ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories<br><br>Theme related to design concept, design inspiration, brand identity, design style and target market |
| | LOGICAL<br>Spatial and temporal relations | Theme and style transformed into conjunctive elements to achieve thematic and stylistic development and sequential placement of ensembles in the collection |
| | INTERPERSONAL<br>Orientation to theme and style<br><br>Prominence of interplay through spatiality and temporality | Interplay within or across collections(s) relative to thematic development, stylistic coherence, the sequence of ensembles and the relations of ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories |
| | TEXTUAL<br>Subject<br><br><br><br>Type of theme:<br>topical, interpersonal or textual | Ongoing exploration of social, cultural, political, historical, aesthetic, environmental, technological, innovative and other issues<br><br>Narrative or conceptual representation of theme in terms of participant, circumstance or process<br>Communicate producer's opinion or signal the answer required from audience<br>Conjunction of themes through spatial and temporal |

| | | organization of collections |
|---|---|---|
| | Pattern of thematic development: narrative and conceptual | Descriptive or abstract organization of connected representation within theme(s) into a sequence of collection(s) |

## 5.6.4 Selective Coding

Selective coding is the final process of conducting grounded theory. This process involves the integration of all categories that have been fully developed and provides the researcher with a unified view of such elements. During this process, a core category emerges as a result, which marks the main analytical theory presented in the research. At this stage, the generalization of a grounded theory is achieved.

For a theoretical framework to be generalized, the researcher examined the categories already identified in the original study, under which a core category systematically relating to other categories developed. The basic feature of this general theory was to propose the linkages that could fully account for the variables covered through all the phases of the research. In the selective process, reading and interpreting the literature and field notes were also important for the researcher to explore data analysis and discover the main category. Such a full understanding could lead to the application of a systematic theory upon which to conceptualize all the categories and subcategories. At this stage, the researcher drew on theories from social semiotics as frames of reference and combined them with the practical information obtained. A major strength of social semiotic theories is their comprehensiveness and applicability for a wide range of topics in terms of their meaning making. As argued, such theories have

several characteristics of conceptualizing fashion and clothing as resources for making sense, of organizing the coding systems of fashion and clothing into various levels or strata (context, content and expression), of distinguishing meaning into three modes (ideational [experiential and logical], interpersonal and textual), and of considering meaning that takes place in relation to social context. Under their guidance, a core variable that represents the focal phenomenon of the study evolved from the interview and observation data. It was claimed that the findings identified four general modes of meaning in fashion and clothing. The matrices in terms of experiential, logical, interpersonal and textual metafunctions were constructed to portray the relationships of categories in fashion designers during the phases of design philosophy, design style and position, design process and design marketing. Data on these matrices display and interconnect the resources that designers utilized to achieve meaning during the process of creation. After clarifying the four separate metafunctions, an integrated category that combined all the ingredients was presented as the core concept of the study. At this time, theoretical saturation was considered to be attained and the research approached the end. In order to improve the validity of the theory, the final step of the analysis was to compare the emergent theory with the existing literature for the purpose of identifying conflicts and similarities.

## 5.7 Summary

This chapter reviews the research methodology utilized in the study and examines the data collection methods and approaches to data analysis within a background of contemporary Chinese fashion. First, an appropriate design for the research aims and objectives is discussed. Second, an overview of grounded theory methodology is documented, followed by a descriptive introduction of contemporary Chinese fashion which forms the case study database. In this section, nine sample fashion designers and their collections are selected and investigated in terms of the relationships with literature review and practical information. Then, the procedures of data collection are presented. Data collection methods in this study are open-ended because they allow for more flexibility in the discussion of issues as they emerged. To triangulate the findings, the researcher draws on different data sources and uses various methods of data collection, which includes observation, interview and thorough reading of extant texts. All these collected data are arranged chronologically for the next step of analysis. Subsequently, methods used to analyze the collected data are illustrated. The techniques of data analysis are based on the principles of grounded theory methodology ranging from open via axial to selective coding. As a result, the entire research is a dynamic, interactive and evolved process. All the categories, properties, dimensions and hypotheses that emerged from the analytical process become the cornerstone for advancing the central phenomenon of the study. Such a process repeatedly continues to the end of the research when theoretical saturation is achieved and the complete theory is eventually developed.

# CHAPTER 6 DATA RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 6.1 Introduction

Following the research methodology, this chapter is to present the analysis and discuss the findings. The investigation of results is based on Halliday's (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) systemic functional approach to language that has been extended to a wide range of semiotic resources. An overall introduction of systemic functional theory and its accompanying applications is provided in Chapter 3. These discussions form the theoretical foundations of the current study and offer a distinct possibility to examine the meaning arising from fashion and clothing. Chapter 4 describes the architectural nature of language in fashion and clothing semiotic systems from a technical perspective. It becomes apparent that further explorations of fashion and clothing in terms of its meaning making need to be considered elsewhere, as the description and discussion of fashion and clothing here are general. Hence, there emerges a natural recognition regarding the need for seeking fashion and clothing from practical experience.

To fulfill this research purpose, the methodological foundation and contextual background relevant to the current study are introduced and described. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, a key characteristic of grounded theory methodology lies in its flexibility and inclusiveness, particularly when addressing the complex phenomenon of fashion and clothing. The manner in which theory is grounded in this

research strategy may lead explored subjects into a comparative and evolutionary process. Such continuous way of grounding theory enables us to have a broad vision in examining how resources are constructed through designers during creation and what patterns are formed in specific styles of fashion and clothing. Therefore, the grounded approach, as a primary methodology of data collection and analysis, can provide useful guidelines in the development of conceptual frameworks and theorization of fashion and clothing. With an awareness of how theory is portrayed from a grounded viewpoint and using contemporary Chinese fashion as a backdrop, the researcher can take full advantage of their methodological and practical insights to create and evaluate what interpretation fashion and clothing provoke in the producer and beholder.

Before moving towards the analysis, it is necessary to distinguish this study from several other studies which typically involve the investigation of meaning in fashion and clothing. At this point, three principles are introduced. The first is ideational metafunction, which refers to the principle of construing experience. This metafunction includes two components: the experiential when constructing a particular view of reality and the logical when elucidating the relations embedded in that construction. The second is interpersonal metafunction, which denotes the principle of projecting personal and social relations. The third is textual metafunction, which signifies the principle of relating to the organization of text and establishing coherence with its context. These principles may be characterized as potential sources

of meaning from fashion and clothing. Consequently, they provide the starting point for the current data analysis. The potential results of the study are targeted mainly at these three types of meaning, so the following discussion is organized into respective sections according to their properties. Specifically, the results are examined in relation to the construction of experiential, logical, interpersonal and textual meanings proposed in Section 4.4.3.3. In each section, the general framework for analysis, together with a brief review of related literature, is presented to explain theoretical and methodological underpinnings of fashion and clothing research. Detailed theoretical apparatus for modeling the semiotic construction of fashion and clothing are then developed. This interpretation draws on the interaction between grammatical and discourse systems (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and emerges from the integrated use of data gathered and analyzed through grounded theory methodology. After that, the proposed frameworks are discussed in connection with the findings. During this stage, several existing studies related to the background of contemporary Chinese fashion provide useful practical input to construe and discuss the situation under investigation. In addition, other relevant theories in Chapter 2 form effective contextual guidance in the constructing of frameworks across different metafunctions.

**6.2 Fashion and Clothing as Representation: The Experiential Meaning**

**6.2.1 Description of Experiential Metafunction**

The search for theory in this study starts with the domain of experiential meaning.

The fundamental assumption behind this metafunction is Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) systemic functional theory and Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) discourse systems of language. These theoretical constructs are utilized to explain the nature of experiential metafunction in fashion and clothing and the strategies through which experiential meaning is realized.

According to Halliday, experiential metafunction concerns the construal of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30). One major grammatical system in the experiential metafunction is TRANSITIVITY, the resource that is used to explore the flow of events in our experience. From the perspective of SFL, each TRANSITIVITY structure has three constituent elements: a process, the participants involved in the process and circumstances where the process occurs (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 175). These three elements are conceptualized as semantic configurations in language structure, which provides the model for understanding our experience of the world. For example, *cherry blossom flowers in the spring*. It is a representation of the phenomenon around us. In this instance, there is a participant (cherry blossom), process (flowers) and circumstance (in the spring). To reveal the semantic features of experience, six different process types are further identified in the system of TRANSITIVITY (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 213-310). They are material, the process of doings and happenings; mental, the process of sensing; relational, the process of attribution and identification; behavioral, the process of psychological and physiological behavior; verbal, the process of saying and existential, the process of

existing or happening. These process types differ considerably in the construction of the process and attendant participants. Within the first three principle processes, there are several distinct subtypes concerning in-depth descriptions of experience as process. Material process is categorized as action and event (ibid., p. 228); mental process as perceptive, cognitive, desiderative and emotive (ibid., p. 256); relational process as attributive and identifying (ibid., p. 263). Apart from process type, another instrumental resource for construing experience in TRANSITIVITY is circumstantiation. Circumstance covers several types of elements, which include extent, location, manner, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role, matter and angle (ibid., pp. 313-314). Based on Halliday's lexicogrammatical organization, the major characteristics in the system of TRANSITIVITY are listed in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1** The TRANSITIVITY System (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)
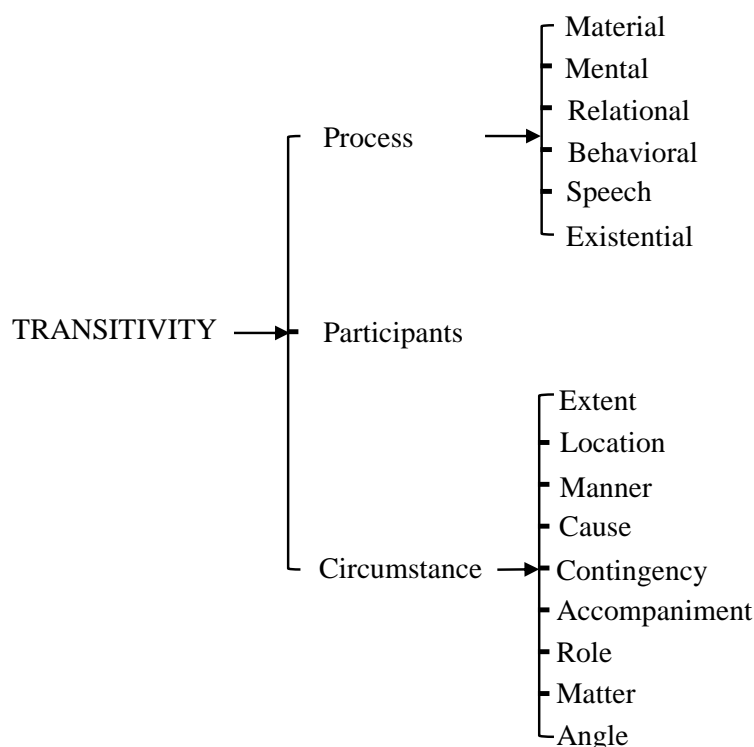
Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) extends Halliday's grammatical systems to discourse semantics and elaborates meanings with respect to texts in social context. The difference between these two systems is that Halliday's SFL model emphasizes semantic descriptions in systems of lexicogrammar at every rank of unit - word, group/phase, clause and clause complex, whereas Martin's discourse analysis focuses on the systems of semantic resources which operate as paragraphs and a text unfold. Martin's proposal also involves three additional communicative planes of register, genre and ideology which are utilized to explore the connections between discourse semantics and social context. In framing the SFL model of language in social context, Martin (ibid.) proposes a series of systems in the semantics of discourse. One of them is IDEATION which is defined as the resources for representing experience in discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 73). In Martin's (ibid.) conception, three sets of experiential patterns are necessary for organizing resources in the aspects of experience. The first is taxonomic, which concerns chains of relations between lexical elements with the unfolding of a text (ibid.). The system of taxonomic relations gives rise to several subtypes of relations, including repetition, synonym, contrast, class and part (ibid., p. 81). The second component is nuclear, which pertains to the central relations involved in the progression of process (ibid., p. 73). The third is activity sequences, which involve relations between activities as a series of activities unfold (ibid., p. 73). During the realization of a process or quality, there exists an important strategy for reconsturing our experience of reality, which Martin (ibid., p. 109) refers to as experiential metaphor. This kind of meaning transference from one thing to

another enables us to create the expansion of discourses by introducing different ways of expression and contributes to a deep and comprehensive understanding of the reality we experience. Summarized from Martin's theoretical model, Figure 6.2 displays an outline of the IDEATION system.

**Figure 6.2** The IDEATION System (Martin & Rose, 2007)

```
                                              ┌ Repetition
                                              ├ Synonym
                  ┌ Taxonomic relations ──→   ┤ Contrast
                  │                           ├ Class
                  │                           └ Part
                  │
                  ├ Nuclear relations
IDEATION ──→      │
                  ├ Activity sequences
                  │
                  └ Experiential Metaphor
```
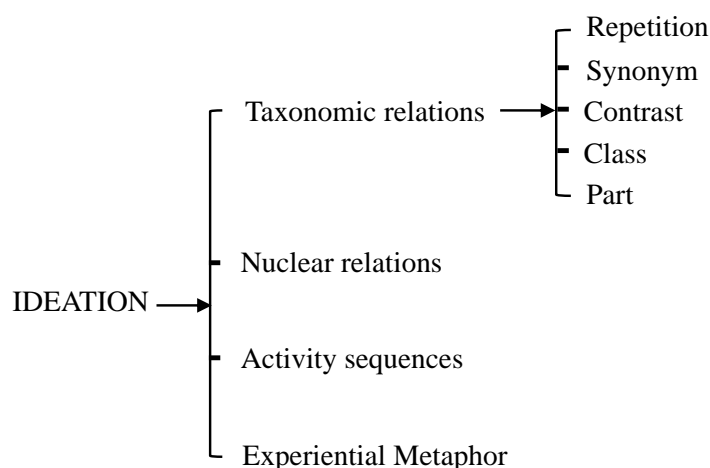
As evident in previous chapters, the exploration of TRANSITIVITY system in language has been developed into other fields. For instance, based on Halliday's model, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) examine how TRANSITIVITY is instantiated in visual images and what types of structure can be drawn from the analysis of visual design. In their interpretation, representation is classified into narrative and conceptual patterns. Each consists of a set of processes: action, reactional, speech, mental and conversion for the narrative (ibid., pp. 63-68); classificational, analytical and symbolic for the conceptual (ibid., pp. 79-87). The structure of visual transitivity also involves participants and circumstance. For participants, they define the ones who initiate the act of communication as interactive and the ones who receive as

represented (ibid., p, 48). For circumstances, they classify them into location (or setting), means and accompaniment (ibid., p. 72). In a similar fashion, O'Toole (2011) extends TRANSITIVITY into the visual analysis of sculpture. He portrays the processes of action, event, existence and relation at the rank of Work and the participants of agents, patients and existents at the rank of Figure. The analysis of TRANSITIVITY is applied to mathematical discourse as well. Drawing on pioneering works, O'Halloran (2005) applies the same notions of process, participant and circumstance to the discussion of mathematical symbolism and visual images. The difference is that she chooses the label operative instead of material for the symbolic framework. Therefore, the types of process become operative, relational, existential (mathematic symbolism), relational and transformational (visual images). Participants become numbers and variables with regard to algebraic expression, and circumstances become accompanying group structures. One distinct feature across O'Toole and O'Halloran frameworks is the inclusion of rank scale in their specific texts, which corresponds to Halliday's lexicogrammatical composition for language. In these studies, our experience of the world is realized according to the rank along the principle of constituency structure, that is, according to building, floor, room and element or graph, episode, figure and part. This is significantly different from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic approach to multimodality. Another important characteristic in O'Halloran's framework is that she incorporates Martin's discourse system into mathematics. The model provides a systemic description of semantic systems, through which the intersemiosis between language, symbolism and

visual images is theorized in mathematical discourse.

These language and multimodal descriptions of TRANSITIVITY and IDEATION systems provide insights into the ways in which theoretical frameworks are organized to fulfill the functions of fashion and clothing. Through their inspiring applications, the unique relations between language and other semiotic resources are explained in terms of the nature of the mappings that may be made in experiential metafunction. It is therefore recognized that the systemic functional models of TRANSITIVITY and IDEATION can serve as a useful starting point to explore our experience of the world. In what follows, we rely on these inspirations and attempts to interpret experiential metafunction and its grammatical, discursive strategies in the context of fashion and clothing.

## 6.2.2 Methodological Construction of Experiential Meaning in Fashion and Clothing

After introducing the theoretical foundations of fashion and clothing, the methodological strategy for the development of descriptions in the experiential domain is discussed according to the coding process guided by grounded theory methodology and proposed theoretical frameworks inspired by the SFL models of language and multimodality. In this situation, proposing an appropriate framework in fashion and clothing is necessary to explain the issues that emerge from the coding process and develop grounded theory for the discussion. Other practical and literature

information that contribute to data analysis is also included during the research process. As acknowledged in Chapter 5, these integrated components formulate the methodological basis to model the experience of fashion designers.

In this study, the construal of experience involves analyzing the grammatical, discursive resources and choices made in specific interviews and observations, examining these resources and choices in relation to the content and expression planes and discussing them together with the social construction of genre and ideology. The data analysis process follows the procedures in building grounded theory (Section 5.2). Despite the different coding schemes adopted, the procedures of data analysis in interviews and observations are exactly the same. That is, data analysis starts from collecting the first piece of data, conducted with respect to open, axial and selective coding. Such process continues to repeat across all selected data until theory saturation when the final theory is generalized. Throughout the research process, all data are constantly compared with one another to find similarities and differences and evaluate the emergent theory. At the end of the analysis, the emergent theory is compared with the extant literature for enhancing the validity.

The coding of experiential metafunction in fashion and clothing is based on different theoretical and methodological contributions. To delineate how experience is construed, an integral framework for investigating the experience is developed in this section. The framework first distinguishes the content plane from the expression plane,

which is derived from the SFL approach to the hierarchy of stratification (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Lemke, 1984, 1995; Royce, 1999). Analogous to that of language, fashion and clothing is stratified into various levels or strata. These levels relate to one another in a realizational (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) or metaredundancy manner (Lemke, 1984, 1995). The content plane consists of discourse semantics and sensory grammar, the expression plane of symbology and materiality, the context plane of ideology, genre and register. Each stratum in the organization is characterized as a system for communicative functions. A detailed discussion concerning the stratification in fashion and clothing is outlined in Section 4.4.2. As introduced in Section 6.2.1, the experiential metafunction is examined according to the TRANSITIVITY system in terms of process, participant and circumstance (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In this study, TRANSITIVITY analysis expands into two, namely, language and visual structures reflected through interviews and observations. Therefore, visual analysis in TRANSITIVITY (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; O'Toole, 2011; O'Halloran, 2005) provides a frame of reference for the researcher to make sense of experience in fashion and clothing. One feature in Halliday's lexicogrammar systems is compositional hierarchies, which explain the function of each element in the configuration of the whole. The need for rank, together with axis in the model of fashion and clothing, becomes apparent in Section 4.4.4. The discussion of rank is involved in the analysis of grammatical systems, which operate across the categories of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. From this point, construction is associated with the rank analyses of

O'Toole (2011), O'Halloran (2005) and Owyong (2009) and the axis analyses of Barthes (1973) and Barnard (2002). The theorization of the patterns of experiential metafunction is also related to the IDEATION system of Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007). This ideational framework takes place within the stratum of discourse semantics and organizes experience via three main relations - taxonomic relations, nuclear relations and activity sequences. These relations, as reviewed in Section 6.2.1, serve as basis to elaborate the systems of meaning in fashion and clothing in this study. The framework of analysis is also informed by several fashion studies that deal with relevant issues. First, the investigation of experiential metafunction in visual design elements at symbology level draws upon theories from various fashion studies (e.g. Angus et al., 2015; Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Fiore, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2013; Owyong, 2009; Tortora & Eubank, 2010). These references include rich and effective information that is utilized to explain the visual composition of clothing from different perspectives (Section 4.5.2.1). Second, the investigation of experiential metafunction in texture design elements at symbology and materiality levels comes from semiotic theories (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011) and fashion aesthetics (Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). Texture dimension is essential in the presentation of fashion and clothing. Relying on these theories, the study displays a textural model for analyzing fashion and clothing (Section 4.5.2.2).

In reference to the described methodology, the study proposes a theoretical and

descriptive framework for developing experiential metafunction in fashion and clothing (Figure 6.3). As fashion and clothing is designed to fulfill different functions, revisions are required to demonstrate specific features of the phenomenon investigated. This framework outlines the major systems through which fashion and clothing is organized as semiotic resources for experiential metafunction at content and expression planes. With this framework, data analysis and discussion in relation to the experiential are developed in the following sections.

**Figure 6.3** Proposed Experiential System in Fashion and Clothing
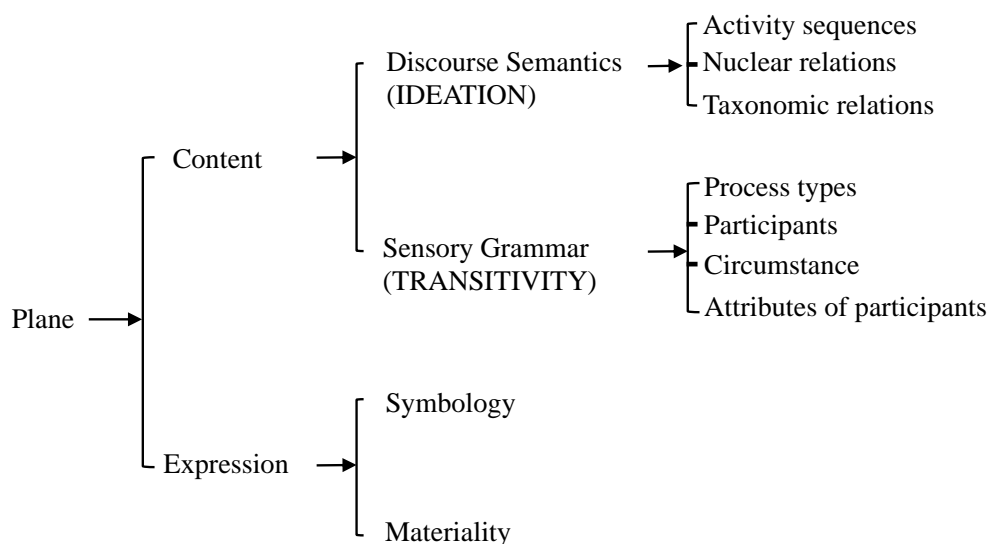


### 6.2.3 Realization of the Experiential Meaning

This section starts to present the data results and analysis of the study on experiential meaning in contemporary Chinese fashion. Section 5.4.4 provides a detailed introduction of sample fashion designers and their collections. With the criteria as basis, nine Chinese fashion designers, together with their works in a span of three years or more, are chosen as the main research focus of the study. Section 6.2.3.1

reports and discusses the findings from the analysis of discourse semantics in comparison with Section 6.2.3.2 from the analysis of grammar. Data analysis is based on various theoretical and methodological contributions, as mentioned in Section 6.2.1. According to these theoretical insights and other related studies, Section 6.2.2 proposes a methodological system for modeling the experience in fashion and clothing (Figure 6.3). It is assumed that this analytical framework draws up a useful guideline for the study to code data and develop theory. To address research problems and generate reliable findings, the grounded theory serves as the methodology in guiding the procedures of analysis and introducing a means of explaining the phenomenon in question. A full description of this methodology is in Section 5.2.

**6.2.3.1 Discourse Semantic Analysis**

The study begins with discourse semantic analysis by investigating linguistic texts and multisemiotic resources in contemporary Chinese fashion designers. The main theoretical basis for the investigation of discourse semantics is Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) IDEATION system, as outlined in Section 6.2.1. Three distinct subsystems involved are taxonomic relations, nuclear relations and activity sequences. Such theoretical insights bear significant implications for the representation of experience in fashion and clothing (Section 6.2.2). Therefore, in this section, we adopt these discursive systems to construe the experience arising from the unfolding of the design process in fashion designers. To thoroughly understand the system, we separate it into a set of small parts for detailed interpretation.

The first results pertain to **taxonomic relations**, a system used to model human experience by constructing the relations of repetition, synonyms, contrast, class and part (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 81). These relations are particularly powerful resources through which we attempt to construe fields of experience in fashion designers. Repetition involves something that indicates the same experiential meaning. Synonyms mean elements that have similar meanings with one another in the same text. Contrasts are lexical words or expressions that show differences in meaning, including oppositions and series. Class refers to a group of people or things that share similar characteristics or qualities, involving the relations of class to member and co-class. Part concerns lexical items as a member that together with others makes up a whole, which consists of whole to part and co-part (ibid.). Through this classification, two general displays of taxonomic relations are identified from the analysis of interviews with designers and observations of their works.

One such kinds of relations are instantiated in the form of structure of lexical items or phrases as the unfolding of interviews. Basic similarities exist in all investigated fashion designers concerning this set of relations. These categories include design philosophy, design style and position, design process, design marketing and their accompanying subcategories that are instantiated along the phases of interview. A detailed description of taxonomic relations in interviews is in Appendix 3. From the analyses, each of them has relations in the construction of taxonomies of people, things, places and their qualities within or across designer(s). In terms of phase

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relations, we illustrate several components of the interview, moving from design philosophy, to design style and position, then to design process and finally to design marketing. They form important resources in many stages for constructing taxonomies in which one phenomenon is related to another. Such taxonomic relations help to interpret a field of experience, particularly from fashion designers, as the interviews unfold. During the process, we include repetition in which the same item is often repeated in different categories, such as design inspiration in design philosophy and collection. We also recognize synonym in which different items share a similar meaning, such as visual, tactile, kinetic, aural or olfactory design elements. In addition, we find class in which members of a class gather together to show certain characteristics. In the class of design philosophy, co-class members entail design concept, design inspiration and brand identity. Then, we note part in which different parts integrate into a single unit. For example, a design progress is made of information processing, concept development, design activities and presentation activities. In terms of lexical relations, Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) offers a basic system of IDEATION to construe experiential semantics in lexical items. To provide a sample for the investigation and establishment of lexical relations as taxonomies, Table 6.1 outlines the patterns of these relations that can be combined to construe experience. From a discourse semantic perspective, five types of taxonomic relations are identified between elements: repetition, synonyms, contrast, class and part. Therefore, the findings are classified into corresponding categories according to the aforementioned taxonomies. Of all the interviews analyzed, we observe plenty of

repetition, synonyms, contrast, class and part relations. These relations vary significantly across designers. The following are examples extracted from the interviews to show the relation of taxonomies constructed by designers. To clearly display the relations between them, each mention of lexical items in a text is highlighted in bold and italic.

**Table 6.1** Taxonomic Relations of Linguistic Texts in Fashion Designers

| Relation | Instance Statement |
|----------|-------------------|
| Repetition | LK: "I think it is a way for me to express how I define ***beauty***, how I want my customers to look ***beautiful*** and how I help them to look ***beautiful*** for different occasions." <br> NL: "I will bring a ***positive*** energy through my clothes." <br> "I want my audience to have ***positive*** thinking." |
| Synonyms | DC: "I will think how my ***target market*** responds to and affects my design." <br> MY: "When I see there is ***a need they want***, I create." |
| Contrast | MY: "I always want to create that kind of woman who is ***tough***, but at the same time can be really ***feminine*** at home." <br> KL: "We not only create the styles or the products from the ***outside***, but also focus on the design ***inside***." |
| Class | MM: "My inspirations come from both ***China*** and ***Europe***." <br> KH: "I've been working on ***the same theme*** for every collection yet from ***different perspectives*** and in a ***different interpretation and execution***." |
| Part | (Geographic) <br> KK: "My fashion brand is based in ***London***." <br> "Actually I have different lines that serve for different ***locations***." <br> (Demographic) <br> NL: "My stuff is for ***unisex*** people." <br> DC: "Target range is around ***30 to 40***." <br> MB: "They generally work on arts and design." <br> (Psychographic) <br> KH: "I think position is that you think there are people who ***like*** you, ***think*** like you or ***appreciate*** how you think." <br> (Behavioral) <br> KK: "Daring, imaginative, creative and forward-thinking." <br> (Product-related) <br> LK: "KanaLili Fleur" |

As for repetition, many instances indicate repeated lexical items in the interviews that deliver the same meaning by each designer, such as Lilian Kan, "beauty"; Nelson Leung, "positive"; Masha Ma, "express"; Kay Kwok, "daring"; Derek Chan, "soft"; Mountain Yam, "nature" or "people"; Kurt Ho, "think"; Kenax Leung, "lifestyle" and Moti Bai, "classical". These items are closely associated with design philosophy and therefore have great significance for the construal of the experiential meaning. In synonyms, items with different expressions are treated as having similar meanings in the text. Many synonyms are frequently used by designer(s) throughout the interviews. One common synonym among them emerges when they express their attitudes towards the potential target market. Therefore, we list it here as an example to demonstrate the use of synonyms across the interviews. During the analysis, we also identify items with differing meanings from one another for constructing taxonomic relations. These lexical items are presented as an example of contrast, which is displayed in the table. It is considered that the opposing relations form a very significant part in the interpretation of experience with regard to contemporary Chinese fashion designers. In this study, contrast includes gender, personality, location, career, interest, attitude, value, lifestyle, opinion and culture, depending on the functions to be fulfilled and the meanings to be delivered. Class is another important resource for establishing the relations of class to member and co-class. Similar to other resources, it also involves a number of examples. For the moment, we choose design inspiration and its constituent members to exemplify the class found in the interviews. Each inspiration works as a general class, under which various co-class

members exist for presentation throughout the collections by designers. The final relation of part focuses on the way how it relates to the whole. To illustrate this relation, we present an example of the target market with geographic, demographic, psychographic, behavioral and product-related parts.

The other kinds of relations are instantiated in sequences of collection and ensemble, and relations of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. To better account for such relations in a multimodal environment, the proposed frameworks for fashion and clothing are drawn upon (Sections 4.4.4 and 4.5.2). The systemic functional-based theories offer a solid foundation for this analysis which includes rank scale and multimodal applications, as illustrated in Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2. In addition, other related literature in fashion contributes to a complete understanding of data (for details, see Section 6.2.2). Based on these studies, taxonomic relations of designers' works are realized through observations. Similar to lexical items, Table 6.2 is divided into five categories. Here, repetition and contrast differ from the ones described in the principles of design.

**Table 6.2** Taxonomic Relations of Design Works in Fashion Designers

| Relation | Instance Statement |
|----------|--------------------|
| Repetition | Thematic and stylistic patterns as foreground in flat *space* |
| | Tailored, close-fitting in combination with voluminous, oversized or boxy in volume *space* |
| | Thematic and stylistic *lines* |
| | Thematic and stylistic *shapes and forms* |
| | Diversity of *silhouette* ranging from loosely fitted to oversized and boxy |
| | Thematic and stylistic *colors* in different shades |
| | Thematic and stylistic *patterns* |

| | Thematic and stylistic *fabrics and materials* |
|---|---|
| Synonyms | LK: Color, digital print, draping, cutting, silhouette, detail, etc. <br> NL: Bright primary color, story-inspired pattern, playful detail, 3D modeling, embroidery, patchwork, trimming, etc. <br> MM: Sharp tailoring, deconstructed element, simple cutting, architectural shape, etc. <br> KK: Strong and edgy cutting, bold color, innovative digital printing, oversized silhouette, classic tailoring, etc. <br> DC: Styling, detail, pattern, color, cutting, etc. <br> MY: Detail, color, tailoring, cutting, silhouette, pattern, etc. <br> KH: Traditional tailoring, handmade, sewing pattern, cutting, line, space, color, shape and form, detail, etc. <br> KL: Styling, tailoring, pattern, treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork, shape and form, cutting, color, space, line, etc. <br> MB: Styling, pattern, treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork, color, shape and form, cutting, space, line, etc. |
| Contrast | *Classic* clothing items with *contemporary* parts, details and elements: <br> Conversion of dress code from *conventions* to new *personalized* interpretations through parts, details and elements <br> Conversion of dress code from *masculine* items and garment construction into *womenswear* or from *feminine* items and garment construction into *menswear* through parts, details and elements (styling, tailoring, cutting, silhouette, line, color, etc.) <br> Adoption of contrasting combinations in *upper-lower*, *in-out* way |
| Class | (Upper body) <br> Various styles of jacket/coat/waistcoat/shirt/top/knitwear <br> (Lower body) <br> Various styles of pants/skirt <br> (One piece) <br> Various styles of dress/suit/jumpsuit |
| Part | (Parts in different styles) <br> Shoulder, neckline, collar, lapel, bodice, sleeve, cuff, pocket, waist <br> (Details in different styles) <br> Cutting, layering, dart, seam, pleat, decorative stitching, edge finish, hem, neckline, waistline, fastener, opening, stitches, panel, accessory, surface treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork |

In the table, we use design elements as an example to explain the relation of repetition. These elements are the basic components from which a fashion design is formed. Throughout the whole collections, fashion designers choose various design elements

to manipulate works and construct meanings. No matter which forms of element they display, all are established in relation to the theme and style of a collection. Despite applying the same set of elements, each designer has a particular way of selecting and arranging elements to a certain extent that can represent his signature style, deliver personal meanings and construct brand identity. Therefore, a wide range of differences are noted in the use of elements across designers. For example, Lilian Kan shows plenty of feminine elements in her design, including space, line, color, pattern, draping, silhouette, detail and fabrics. All of the elements she uses points to similar meanings - delicate, romantic and refined. Kay Kwok uses edgy elements with strong personal characteristic, covering color, cutting, print and styling. The elements he applies to his design are daring, imaginative, creative and forward thinking. Although each element has its aspects and variations, the effects they ultimately create are coherent and continuous. This finding is in accordance with the interpretation of Davis (1996). Another significant characteristic in the analysis relates to contrast. From this aspect, we can identify the types of opposing relations: classic and contemporary, masculine and feminine, upper and lower, in and out. Through manipulating such contrasts, designers give rise to a number of meanings. In class and part, we all adopt design aesthetics to show the features of taxonomic relations. At each category, a class or a whole is broken down into constituent members or parts according to the variations in function and style.

The second results of this section are **nuclear relations**, which formulate the central

semantic pattern of a field (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 73). The most distinctive feature of these relations derives its theoretical foundations from Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) concept that people and things participate in each activity as either nuclear or marginal elements. This grammatical system becomes the basic components for the study to explore the nuclear relations of fashion designers. Following it, nuclear relations are construed here as participant, process and circumstance. These components, according to Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007), can be further divided into agent, medium, process and beneficiary in terms of the function they fulfill in the organization of the clause. Among them, the most nuclear participant is medium, through which an agent actualizes the process to beneficiary. For example, in the clause "we have discussed what punishment should be given to the boys in this afternoon": "we" is interpreted as agent; "have discussed" and "should be given" are processes; "punishment" is medium; "the boys" is the beneficiary and "in this afternoon" is circumstance.

Within the design process, designers as agent, together with other producers, engage in a series of activities. The main purpose of their activities is to give or demand information and goods-&-services to the target audience or customers. These various types of activities involve generating, developing and communicating and thus formulate the process in terms of nuclear relations. The audience, including customers, becomes the third participants known as beneficiary. As for medium, it takes on different forms and thus varies according to designers. This nuclear element is

typically associated with design philosophy. From our analyses of nuclear relations, three kinds of design philosophy are central to the process: design concept, design inspiration and brand identity. For example, design concept may be the creation of lifestyle in youth culture or classicism through a contemporary approach. Design inspiration may include nature, culture or society. Brand identity may consider the construction of modern femininity or masculinity. In this particular text, medium is construed as information and commodity that is given to various recipients (audience) by a giver (designer). At the same time, it is construed as a demand from the giver for the responses from recipients. In addition, the situation in which participants are involved and the activities take place pertains to circumstance, which relates to the construal of experience in design field. Several types of circumstance are included in this context, such as place, time, cause, role, means and matter (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 95).

With Martin (ibid.) as basis, four nuclear elements are therefore distinguished: center, nucleus, margin and periphery. Central elements in this construal refer to the processes of exchange, such as "express", "share", "reconstruct", "narrate", "explore" or "demonstrate". Nuclear elements are the exchanged information and commodity that relate to design concept, design inspiration and brand identity. Marginal elements include their givers (designers) and recipients (the audience). Peripheral elements are connected to circumstances. These nuclear relations are presented in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3** Nuclear Relations of Fashion Designers

| Agent | Process | Medium | Beneficiary | Circumstance |
|-------|---------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| LK | Express | Admiration for the beauties of nature and female | Audience | Daily street or affairs Casual/formal |
| NL | Share | Personal experience and values in social issues | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| MM | Reconstruct<br><br>Narrate | New femininity (via self-awareness) (Sub)culture | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| KK | Explore | Mysteries of space | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| DC | Explore | Modern masculinity (via contemporary classic and soft masculinity) | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| MY | Explore | The self in modern femininity (via maturity power) | Audience | Daily street or affairs Casual/formal |
| KH | Share | Personal interpretation of garments | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| KL | Demonstrate | Lifestyle of youth culture | Audience | Daily street Casual |
| MB | Reconstruct | Classicism through a contemporary approach | Audience | Daily street Casual |

The third results involve **activity sequences**. In Martin's (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 101) interpretation, these relations primarily concern the configurations of activity or event series in expectant sequence. In this case, experience is construed as unfolding in a series of activities throughout the design process, which are typically organized into several distinct phases: production, marketing, dissemination and consumption. Within each field, further activities are expected to be constructed in order to explain the phenomenon of the field. As for activity series in fashion and clothing, Section 4.5.3 provides a detailed generalization and discusses how meaning shifts from one context or practice to the next. Depending on the gathered data, the study narrows down its scope to the specific fields of information processing, concept development,

design activities and presentation activities. The simplified design process in relation to recontextualization or resemiotization is presented in Figure 4.9. To explain the sequence of social practices in the fashion industry, Table 6.4 presents examples.

**Table 6.4** Activity Sequences in Fashion Designers

| Activity | Instance Statement |
|---|---|
| **Information Processing** | |
| Inspiration | **LK:** "First I have to have *inspiration*." |
| Research analysis | **DC:** "When I have a theme or an inspiration, I will do more *research* like images, reading books, etc." |
| Information mapping | **MY:** "After presenting a clear story, we also do *mappings* to develop some elements such as silhouette, colors, details, and fabrication." |
| **Concept Development** | |
| Elements development | **MB:** "When you delve into it, you can take the *elements* from the movie, painting or song. They may be visual elements or cultural elements." |
| Line/collection arrangement | **MY:** "We have to plan what we need in the *collections* so we develop 12-15 *lines*. Each line has to serve for different locations." |
| **Design Activities** | |
| Sketches | **MY:** "After having the *sketches*, we start to think about whether the silhouette is saleable, the silhouette is good enough, or it is the key silhouette for the seasonal collection. Then we start to do the *sampling*. After sampling, we always do the *fitting*, take orders and revise samples before *production*." |
| Samples | |
| Communication | **LK:** "I need to *communicate* with them like two or three times. When they come out, I ask models come to *fit*." |
| Fitting | **DC:** "I need many practical or technical things, like *sampling* also *communication* with tailors, etc." |
| Manufacture | |
| **Presentation Activities** | |
| Release | **MM:** "I think it is not just the clothes to interact with the audience, I think in one year we have a *show*, the music, the light, the venue, how they walk the catwalk and the empowered moment to communicate with them." |
| Marketing | **DC:** "There are many other ways to communicate with customers, like the *social media* or apps now. Facebook and Instagram are very popular." |
| Visual merchandising | **MY:** "In my *shops*, I have some rough woods or natural elements for |

| | decoration, at the same time with polished finishing on the wall or concrete floor. When you walk into the shop, you can feel a bit of natural elements. So people can relax a little bit." |
|---|---|
| Customer service | **MY:** "We have to translate the ideas or train our *salespeople* to tell the story. If the dress is hung on the rack, nobody knows the story only whether they like it or not. But when we have the salespeople and the story, they can actually tell the customers why we design like this." |

From these samples, we can identify that the design process can be broken down into smaller component activities. The relations between these activities are listed as follows. Information processing begins with inspiration, after which research analysis is expected by information mapping. Elements development and line/collection arrangement then form parts of concept development phase, which relate to each other in sequence. At the design phase, each activity is followed by the succeeding event. This time, the event series include sketches, samples, communication, fitting and manufacture. Finally, as part of presentation activities, release must be informed through marketing, which is in turn anticipated by visual merchandising and further by customer service. The continuous series of activities eventually generates, develops and communicates the information that designers attempt to deliver. Each activity in such sequences is considered to be in a "redundant" or "metaredundant" (Lemke, 1984, 1995) relation with one another (Section 4.5.3).

### 6.2.3.2 Grammatical Analysis

In this section, we move the analysis from the stratum of semantics to grammar. The purpose is to investigate grammatical system in the particular domain of fashion and

clothing. As introduced in Section 6.2.1, one significant system of TRANSTIVITY relates to the construal of experience, which is realized in the grammar as the rank of Clause. In this study, we interpret it as taking place at the rank of Ensemble in the same stratum. According to Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 175), TRANSTIVITY as a quantum of change is organized into the configurations of process, participant and circumstance. Therefore, the results of this section are demonstrated in terms of these three major categories within the system of TRANSTIVITY, as indicated in Section 6.2.2.

To begin with, we focus on the findings from **process**. As a key component in the system, this exploration is used to construe the flux of experience around and inside us. There are various kinds of experience and the ways of construing such semantic domains. Hence, the process is distinguished into several distinct types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 213-310). In this study, findings in process types are based on the analysis of data from interviews with the designers and observations of their works throughout collections. Based on Halliday's description (ibid.), six types of process are recognized in the gathered interviews which encompass material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. These process types are set out and illustrated in Table 6.5 depending on their characteristics.

**Table 6.5** Examples of Types of Process in Interviews with Fashion Designers

| Process Type | Subcategory | Instance Statement (process in bold and italic) |
|---|---|---|
| Material | Action | (Designer)<br>**LK:** "I have to ***make*** dresses for the needs."<br>**NL:** "I will ***bring*** a positive energy through my clothes."<br>**MM:** "Throughout the design, you do ***communicate*** and also ***form*** a method in a way."<br>**KK:** "I try to ***use*** different creative design processes for every season…and ***play*** with the forms to generate interesting designs."<br>**DC:** "When I ***go*** to different places, I can ***absorb*** their culture and ***compare*** the differences."<br>**MY:** "When I need to ***design*** something, I have to ***solve*** something."<br>**KH:** "I don't have to ***mix*** and ***match*** stuffs."<br>**MB:** "I try to ***combine*** and ***reconstruct*** things through space and time in the future."<br>(Audience)<br>**LK:** "They're ***looking for*** quantity more than quality for me."<br>**NL:** "If they want to ***try*** something new, they will ***come*** to my store and ***buy*** my outfits."<br>**MM:** "I think it is a matter of audience that how they ***portray***, ***absorb***, or ***acknowledge*** what you wanna do."<br>**MY:** "They can ***wear*** my dresses for ball events, or they can ***wear*** my design at home."<br>**DC:** "As the audience, you can ***read*** my story, but you can ***add*** your feelings or another story." |
| Mental | Perception | (Designer)<br>**MY:** "It's more like five senses from what you ***see***, ***smell***, touch, ***hear*** and ***feel***."<br>**KH:** "Most of my ideas are the way you think, you ***perceive*** objects."<br>(Audience)<br>**MY:** "You can ***feel*** a little bit of natural elements."<br>**MB:** "You seldom ***see*** too fitted, exposed or sexy things in my collections."<br>**KH:** "Not just like I want to say something and you have to ***hear*** it." |
| | Cognition | (Designer)<br>**MM:** "I ***think*** in every a day more about you crush should be what interests you to shape your design."<br>**KK:** "I ***believe*** everything can happen with your imagination and creativity."<br>**MY:** "I ***appreciate*** working women who have to take care of their families, at the same time have to perform their work."<br>**KH:** "I try to ***understand*** culture as much as possible." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **MB:** "I *know* my preference is absolutely not suitable for the mass market." |
| | | (Audience) |
| | | **NL:** "When the audience looks at my collection, they will *recall* their childhood memories." |
| | | **MY:** "If you only hang the items on the rack, the customers perhaps can *understand* part of the story." |
| | | **KH:** "I think position is that there are people who like you, *think* like you, or *appreciate* how you think." |
| | | **MB:** "They *consider* that is a beauty." |
| | Desideration | (Designer) |
| | | **MY:** "I always *want* to create that kind of woman who is tough, but at the same time can be really feminine at home." |
| | | **KL:** "We *wish* to bring youth energy or their attitudes into the design." |
| | | **MB:** "I *hope* they live in a fantasy world." |
| | | (Audience) |
| | | **MM:** "I think everybody *decides* that according to their own experience." |
| | | **KL:** "They *want* to voice out something they *wish* to tell." |
| | Emotion | (Designer) |
| | | **LK:** "I *love* to use soft and delicate fabrics to represent that quality of women." |
| | | **MM:** "What *interests* me is something that always has a constructed logical point of view in life." |
| | | **KK:** "I am always *attracted* by mysterious stories." |
| | | **MY:** "I *like* to play with contradictions and dualities." |
| | | **KH:** "I *hate* to make things so clear." |
| | | **MB:** "I have to follow my heart and *please* myself first." |
| | | (Audience) |
| | | **LK:** "They *love* fairy tales and dreams." |
| | | **DC:** "They don't *worry* too much about how to wear the jacket or how to mix and match with this." |
| | | **MY:** "They *like* my ideas and styles." |
| | | **MB:** "Many of my customers are familiar with classicism art and *love* this type of culture and style. They *enjoy* my design very much." |
| Relational | Attribution | **KK:** "Fashion *is* our culture." |
| | | **MY:** "It *is* actually my personal interests." |
| | | **MM:** "My inspirations *come from* both China and Europe." |
| | | **NL:** "My design *is* more like playful and colorful stuffs which I want to bring out some positive messages through my outfits." |
| | | **LK:** "The elements I have been using *are* those elements they like." |
| | | **MB:** "They *are* very romantic and sentimental." |

| | Identification | **MM:** "I think it *meant* to me as a matter of expression to as any forms of creativity you use as to *express* who you are or explain the relationship between you and the society." <br> **KK:** "Fashion design *is* a way to express my views on something." <br> **NL:** "Bright colors also *represent* my brand identity." <br> **MB:** "Everything you use in fact *reflects* one side of your spirits." |
|---|---|---|
| Behavioral | - | **LK:** "They *dream* about their wedding gowns." <br> **NL:** "I want my audience to *think* about and have reactions after looking my collections." |
| Verbal | - | **NL:** "I like to *tell* the friends, audience 'if you face the same problem, just remember when you are young, you play video games'." "My audience will *think*, 'yes, I didn't let my child think. What should I do for my child?' " |
| Existential | - | **LK:** "*There are* lots of colors naturally existing in the nature." <br> **NL:** "Nowadays in society *there are* so many problems, like politics, pollution or everything." <br> **DC:** "*There are* many other ways to communicate with customers, like the social media." <br> **KH:** "Every time you see the past work of yourself. You can think *there is* more to be done." <br> **MB:** "*There are* very rich elements and cultural heritage." <br> "*There are* some signature elements throughout my every collection, for example lantern sleeves, soft silk and velvet fabrics." |

The examples indicate that several processes are involved in the construal of designers' experience. Material, mental and relational constitute the most dominant process types for designers to construct their experiential meanings. These processes are instantiated differently by designers in their design progression. Specific findings can be drawn from the analysis of process type in this section:

• Material process concerns construing actions and events in which participants are involved. This process focuses mainly on participants' outer experience of the material world (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 224). Here, the participants are interpreted as designer and audience according to the responses from the interviews with designers. Through the analysis, we can find a large amount of

material processes when designers describe their experience in creating design works. The actions conducted by designers take place throughout the entire design process that range across design philosophy, style and position, process and marketing. Differences are shown by designers in the deployment of material process.

- Mental process pertains to construing sensing of participants, which focuses on their consciousness or inner experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 245). Within this class, experience is construed with regard to four subcategories: perception, cognition, desideration and emotion. All these extracts that contribute to mental process are related to design philosophy, style and position, process and marketing. It can be observed that designers use different properties of mental process to construe their inner experience. During this process, experience from the audience becomes an important component reflected in designers' consciousness and influences their creation. From the analysis, mental process is one of the most dominant processes in designers' interpretation of fashion and clothing.

- Relational process is about the construction of attribute and identity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 259), which constitutes another key process in this study. As shown in the excerpts from the table, relationships of participants' experience are realized in different domains, including design philosophy, style and position, process and marketing. Among them, attributive relations characterize class membership and identifying ones explain symbolization. The use of relational

process varies depending on designers.

- Behavioral process involves the resources for construing physiological and psychological behaviors (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 301). Compared with other previous processes, few examples in the interviews directly reflect the nature of this process. In their accounts, all designers attribute behaviors to the responses to theme and design that need to be given by the audience. Therefore, different interpretations are offered in this respect, for example, "dream" in Lilian Kan and "think and action" in Nelson Leung. In addition, there exist other material patterns analogous to the scope of behavioral process that persuade the audience to behave. Examples include "explore, express and empower" in Masha Ma, "imagine, create and think" in Kay Kwok, "demonstrate and create" in Derek Chan and "perceive" in Kurt Ho. Although these material processes are not clearly defined, we consider that they indicate behavioral potential that designers suggest the audience to perform. Because of this, we classify them into the behavioral category for the moment.

- Verbal process refers to the dialogue among participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 302). It is not a frequent process in this analysis, as interview itself is a process of saying for sharing experience that should be considered as a verbal process between the sayer and receiver. Apart from interview, other possible ways are available for setting up a dialogue and delivering information to receivers. Taking Masha Ma as an example, each of her collections has narrative passages attached to introduce the collection: "SAVE THE DATE" (2016 FW), "NEVER

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BE SILENCED" (2017 FW), "No, I'm the real thing" (2018 FW), etc. These supplemental sayings are important resources that contribute to the creation of speech interactions with receivers. In addition, other designers utilize theme to establish a potential dialogue which may find in such as, "That Has Not Been Received?" (Kay Kwok, 2015 SS), "Do You Remember?" (Nelson Leung, 2015 FW) or "It's okay to live a life others don' understand." (Kenax Leung, 2017 SS). Another type of verbal clause in fashion and clothing is slogan as a component of garment, which is considered to represent the process of saying emanating from a designer. Examples are traced in Nelson Leung's collections: "WORK NOW!!!", "PLAY" (2014 FW), "PLEASE LET ME THINK!!!" (2015 FW) or Kenax Leung's collections: "I'm free" (2016 FW) and "TO AVOID DANGER OF SUFFOCATION, KEEP AWAY FROM BABIES AND CHILDREN DANGER" (2017 FW). In these cases, the process of saying is possibly closer to "narrative speech" in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) term.
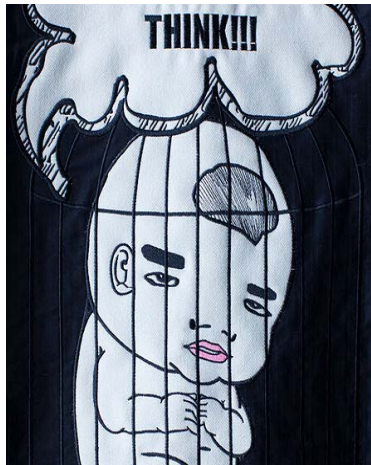
- Existential process is about construing existence (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 307). Many existential clauses are adopted by designers when they discuss fashion and clothing. Based on the analysis, the existential experience takes place in different stages of the design process and serves as a reflection of the issues across society, culture, history, politics, aesthetics, environment, personal experience, etc.

Drawing on the findings of process types in language, we attempt to extend the

analysis from language to fashion and clothing. In a similar vein, our discussion is established on the basis of Halliday's theoretical paradigm (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Besides, the visual frameworks from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and O'Toole (2011) also make valuable contributions to the construction of process types in fashion and clothing. As described in Section 3.3.2.2, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue visual image represents two patterns, narrative and conceptual. Each pattern has several types of process. Narrative processes include action, reactional, speech, mental and conversion, whereas conceptual ones contains classificational, analytical and symbolic. Based on the analysis, we can interpret fashion and clothing as representing these two patterns. In narrative representation, it embraces material, mental, behavioral and speech processes. In conceptual representation, it entails classificational, analytical and symbolic processes. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 109-113) explain, affinity exists between language and image in terms of conceptual structures: visual classificational and analytical structures are akin to linguistic attributive clauses, and visual symbolic to linguistic identifying and existing clauses. Therefore, conceptual structures in images are relevant to linguistic relational and existential processes. From this perspective, fashion and clothing actually performs the same types of process as language, but it is realized in different structural devices. As shown in Table 6.5, these processes have been instantiated in language. The comparison has to be made with linguistic structures because they have something in common with fashion and clothing in terms of the experience they represent, either from designers or from the audience.

There are concrete examples that elaborate narrative and conceptual representations reflected in fashion and clothing. In the narrative structure, we select examples from Nelson Leung's 2015 FW collection. This collection draws inspiration from childhood memories. The core message, as the designer introduces, is to recall the audience's childhood memories and bring out the important issue about children in Hong Kong. As a result, every participant in the collection is related to the designer's childhood, such as games, cartoon characters, robot, homework and rocket. Participants in Table 6.6 portray a series of narrative processes, including action, event, consciousness, behavior and speech.

**Table 6.6** Examples of Narrative Process (Nelson Leung)

| NELSON BLACKLE 2015 FW "Do You Remember?" | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| **Action Process**<br>A cartoon character plays hide-and-seek with you. | **Event Process**<br>A rocket is flying to space. | **Mental process**<br>A baby trapped in the cage projects a thought bubble of "PLEASE LET ME THINK!!!" to elicit the content of his inner mental process. |

| | | - |
|---|---|---|
| **Behavioral process**<br>The character's staring is construed as a form of behavior. | **Speech process**<br>"FLY ME TO THE SPACE!!!" voices out the wish of designer and the children in Hong Kong. | - |

In the conceptual structure, classificational relation concerns construing taxonomy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 79-87), through which all the participants are connected to one another. This process in fashion and clothing discourse is realized mainly through design philosophy, style and aesthetics. Table 6.7 shows one instance of design inspiration from the designer Moti Bai to illustrate the process.

**Table 6.7** Examples of Classificational Process (Moti Bai)

| BLACK SPOON<br>**Class:** Classicism and surrealism<br>**Member:** Reflection of relevant qualities | |
|---|---|
| **Collection** | **Design Inspiration** |
| 2015 SS | Gothic novels by Angela Carter |
| 2015 FW | *Madness and Civilization* by Foucault<br>"Ship of Fools" from *The Republic: Book VI* by Plato<br>Prints from painting "Ship of Fools" by Hieronymus Bosch<br>Poem from "The Drunken Boat" by Arthur Rimbaud |
| 2016 SS | The Baroque<br>Prints from "Bacchus" by Michelangelo Caravaggio and "Las Meninas" by Diego Velázquez |
| 2016 FW | Surrealistic films in East Europe |

| | Prints from medieval tapestry<br>Music from "Paradise Circus" by Massive Attack |
|---|---|
| 2017 SS | American science-fiction, fantasy and psychological-supernatural horror anthology television series "The Twilight Zone"<br>Prints from Op art<br>Music from "OAR 001 - B" by Oni Ayhun |
| 2017 FW | Darkwave band Sopor Aeternus & the Ensemble of Shadow<br>Albums of the poems by Edgar Allan Poe<br>Italian progressive rock band Goblin<br>Prints from oil panel painting "The Triumph of Death" by Pieter Bruegel; "A Scene on the Ice near a Town" by Hendrick Avercamp<br>Music from "L'alba Dei Morti Viventi" (from Dawn of the Dead) by Goblin |

Analytical relation is about construing part-whole structure (ibid., pp. 87-104). A "Carrier" (the whole) and "Possessive Attributes" (the parts) constitute two main participants in the process. A number of examples can be found in fashion and clothing regarding this structure. For instance, the whole collection is a Carrier, which is made up of several parts or Possessive Attributes, including ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories. Here, we use a collection from Derek Chan to explain analytical relation. The design inspiration of this collection is drawn from children growing up, which is used to state family relationships between children and parents, and thus reflects the social relationships between Hong Kong and mainland China. Therefore, all the participants are labeled as Possessive Attributes and characterized as the attributes of Carrier (the collection) or children growing up.

**Table 6.8** Examples of Analytical Process (Derek Chan)

| DEMO. 2017 FW "Mature Child" | | |
|---|---|---|
| Phase I: protection period (kindergarten) | Phase II: rebellion period (primary, secondary, high schools) | Phase III: maturity period (during or after university) |
| Young and innocent | Disordered | Sensible |
|  |  |  |

Symbolic relation pertains to construing identity or meaning (ibid., p. 105), which is distinguished into symbolic attribute and suggestive. In fashion and clothing, identity or meaning is constructed through design philosophy, style and position, aesthetics, collection (properties of theme, inspiration, key design elements, accessories, fashion show, etc.) and marketing (similar characteristics relevant to geographic, demographic, psychographic, behavioral and product-related segmentations). Such symbols are displayed in Table 6.9, where the participants in garments symbolize the attributes of modern femininity characterized by the contrasts between seductiveness and female strength, between conformity and defiance.

**Table 6.9** Examples of Symbolic Process (Masha Ma)

| | |
|---|---|
|  | **MASHA MA 2017 SS "Collection W"**<br><br>**Identity**: new femininity<br>**Meaning**: duality of femininity<br>**Symbolic attributive or suggestive**:<br>juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength<br><br><u>Seductiveness and femininity</u><br>Collapsing volumes<br>Light chiffon, silk satin, organza georgette<br>Soft shades of nude and pastel<br>Delicate details - ruffles and ostrich feathers<br>Narrowly cut trousers<br>Skirts cut short<br><u>Female strength and empowerment</u><br>An empowering uniform of sharp tailoring, exaggerated shoulders, boxy silhouette<br>Aggressive patent white platform boots sprayed yellow, purple and hard metallic looks |
|  | **MASHA MA 2017 FW "Collection P"**<br><br>**Identity:** new femininity<br>**Meaning:** duality of femininity<br>**Symbolic attributive or suggestive:**<br>juxtaposition of conformity and defiance<br><br><u>Conformity</u><br>English and Italian traditional suiting fabrics in tartans<br><u>Defiance</u><br>Skirts cut short<br>Sharp tailoring<br>Exaggerated shoulder with pads inserted<br>Wide, elongated flowing sleeves<br>Exaggerated lapels<br>Revealed fishnet, bondage belt, D-ring straps, metallic rings, chokers with spikes<br>Platform boots<br>Exposed skin |

The second findings of the section go to **participants.** From the above process

analysis, two distinct kinds of participants are involved in fashion and clothing discourse. One refers to the participants in the real act of communication, which are explicitly represented outside the clothing system. In Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, p. 48) words, the designer is "interactive participant" who serves to initiate the communication, whereas the audience is "represented participants" who function to receive the information delivered by the designer. The other participants point to the components that relate to the construction of garments. This type of participants is recognized within the clothing system. In the study, these participants are organized along the rank scale of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. Within each rank, different types of garment pieces, parts, details, elements and accessories are available in various styles to participate in the processes (Table 6.10). All the involved components are considered participants for delivering the information. As for these participants, Section 4.5.2 proposes detailed frameworks for the visual and textual interpretations of fashion and clothing.

**Table 6.10** List of Participants in Designers' Works

| Designer | Texture Design Elements | Visual Design Elements |
|----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| LK | Silk satin, silk chiffon, silk organza, lace, etc. | **GARMENT** (Upper body) |
| NL | Combinations of high-end fabrics and materials (wool, cashmere, silk, leather, etc.) | Various styles of jacket/coat/waistcoat/shirt/top/knitwear (Lower body) |
| MM | Leather, suiting fabrics, silk, denim, net as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials | Various styles of pants/skirt (One piece) Various styles of dress/suit/jumpsuit |
| KK | Neoprene, leather, cotton, mesh, plastics and other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials | **COMPONENT** (Parts in different styles) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DC** | Wool, tweed, cotton, pattern and natural fabrics as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials | Shoulder, neckline, collar, lapel, bodice, sleeve, cuff, pocket, waist (Details in different styles) |
| **MY** | Natural fabrics and materials (cotton, silk, wool, calf) in combination with functional, sporty fabrics and materials | Cutting, layering, dart, seam, pleat, decorative stitching, edge finish, hem, neckline, waistline, fastener, opening, stitches, panel, accessory, surface treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork |
| **KH** | Most common fabrics and materials as the core plus thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials (cotton, suiting fabrics, linen, wool, silk, leather) | |
| **KL** | Traditional fabrics and materials in combination with innovative fabrics and materials (cotton, wool, silk, knitwear, denim, mesh, neoprene, jacquard, fur, etc.) | **ELEMENT** Thematic and stylistic space, line, shape and form, light, color, texture, pattern **ACCESSORY** |
| **MB** | Traditional fabrics and materials (silk, velvet, linen, cotton, wool, fur, etc.) | Various styles of worn or carried accessories |

Following participants, the next findings concern **circumstance**, which is associated with the process. This important element constitutes the structure of TRANSITIVITY. In Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) linguistic framework, circumstance is divided into several categories. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 72) extend the analysis to narrative images, which entail the circumstances of location, means and accompaniment. In fashion and clothing, circumstance is classified into three types, depending on the analysis of circumstances (Table 6.11). They are location (including place and time), degree (including casual and formal) and cause (including reason, purpose and behalf). In the circumstance of location, during the interviews, most of designers express that they do not have a specific target market, except for Kay Kwok and Mountain Yam. Kay Kwok considers London as his base, whereas Mountain Yam targets his brand at Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and other developing countries. In addition, Lilian Kan, Masha Ma, Mountain Yam and Moti Bai design

different lines for their brands to serve the needs of customers in different locations. For this reason, spatial location is distinguished into the categories of global and local as well as single and multiple. In temporal location, seasonal interpretation is a typical feature of fashion and clothing, which comprises two major seasons of Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter. Therefore, the construal of temporal location involves concrete occasions and seasonal expression. As the examples illustrate, all the processes unfold in a daily setting and occur across four seasons. The circumstantial element of degree construes the extent in which the process is actualized. This type of circumstance is often characterized as a range from casual to formal in terms of formality in the unfolding of the process observed. Cause refers to the circumstance concerning the reason in the actualization of the process. In fashion and clothing, it is typically expressed by reason, purpose and behalf. In this study, the circumstantial expression of reason across designers mainly indicates the construction of different lifestyles. Purpose represents various functions fulfilled by clothing, including practical, social, psychological and aesthetic. Behalf describes a collection of people the brand is closely connected with in terms of gender, age and career.

The final findings come from **the attributes of participants**. This aspect is achieved by Royce (1998) to explore the ideational intersemiotic complementarity in a multimodal text. We regard the attributes important for interpreting fashion and clothing and therefore treat them as part of the analysis. In considering the types of participants involved, we need to address this issue from different perspectives.

**Table 6.11** List of Circumstance in Fashion Designers

| Designer | Location | | Degree | Cause | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Place** | **Time** | | **Reason** | **Purpose** | **Behalf** |
| **LK** | Global<br>Different fashion lines | SS/FW<br>Everyday, party,<br>wedding, etc. | Casual<br>Formal | **Femininity** via sweetness, fantasy,<br>fairy tale over reality | Beautiful, good | Female<br>18-33 |
| **NL** | Global | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Behavior** to think and action | Solve social issues with a<br>positive attitude | Unisex<br>25-40 |
| **MM** | Global<br>Different fashion lines | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **New femininity** via self-awareness | Confident, powerful | Unisex |
| **KK** | London | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Behavior** to imagine, create, think | Daring, imaginative, creative,<br>forward-thinking | Male<br>25-35<br>Fashion industry |
| **DC** | Global | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Modern masculinity** via fusion of<br>gender fluidity into classic style | Demonstrate personality and<br>curiosity; create values and<br>significance to the clothing | Male<br>30-40 or above |
| **MY** | Developing countries<br>Different fashion lines | SS/FW<br>Everyday, party, etc. | Casual<br>Formal | **Modern femininity** via maturity<br>power | Demonstrate the personality;<br>perform social functions;<br>embrace the confidence | Female<br>30-45<br>Working |
| **KH** | Global | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Behavior** to perceive | Perceive the world | Unisex |
| **KL** | Global | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Youth culture** | Youthful energy and attitudes | Unisex |
| **MB** | Global<br>Different fashion lines | SS/FW<br>Everyday | Casual | **Contemporary classicism** | Cherish classical things | Unisex<br>Arts and design |

One is the designer and audience, which consist of interactive and represented participants in the process of communication. To understand their characteristics, we first divide designers based on their relationships in the analysis (Table 6.12). Several findings are drawn from designers within these categories. For example, they were born in the same generation and received education in Hong Kong or in London. Such similarities mean the comparison between designers can be made in terms of the situations they have experienced and the place they are actively engaging in. In addition, considerable overlap is observed on their focus of attention: gender (4), society (2), individualism (2) and traditional culture (2). However, they show marked differences in the interpretation of these issues.

**Table 6.12** The Attributes of Participants (Designers)

| Designer | Gender | Generation | Education | Activity Place | Orientation |
|----------|--------|------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| **LK** | F | New generation<br>Born after 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Feminism<br>Idealization |
| **NL** | M | New generation<br>Born after 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Society<br>Playfulness |
| **MM** | F | New generation<br>Born in 1985 | CSM | Paris, Shanghai | Feminism<br>Juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance |
| **KK** | M | New generation<br>Born after 1985 | LCF | London | Individualism<br>Imagination |
| **DC** | M | New generation<br>Born after 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Gender<br>Tradition<br>Balance between contradictions |
| **MY** | M | New generation<br>Born before 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Feminism<br>Mixture, contradiction |

| KH | M | New generation Born after 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Individualism Perception |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KL | M | New generation Born after 1985 | Poly U | Hong Kong | Society Innovation |
| MB | F | New generation Born after 1985 | CSM | Beijing | Classicism Contradiction |

Then, we continue to segment customers into several broad variables according to the concept of market segmentation (Kotler, 1997; Morrison, 2010), which covers geographic, demographic, psychographic, behavioral and product-related. In their interpretations (ibid.), customers are differentiated into the following groups: the geographic segmentation on the basis of location, region and country; the demographic segmentation on the basis of gender, age and career; the psychographic segmentation on the basis of personality, interests and lifestyles; the behavioral segmentation on the basis of consumers' behavior towards a product and the product-related segmentation on the basis of the relation with a product. The potential customers within these segmentations exhibit different profiles through the responses of designers in the interviews, the results of which are presented in Table 6.13. From these analyses, customers are characterized as female and male from different geographic locations; they are in different age ranges; they share similar characteristics with the DNA of a brand; they wish to respond to the theme and design; finally, they participate in presentation activities, including fashion show, design marketing, visual merchandising, customer service and other relevant products.

**Table 6.13** The Attributes of Participants (Customers)

| Designer | Geographic | Demographic | Psychographic | Behavioral | Product-related |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LK** | No specific target market | 18-33 female | Share similar aesthetics and preference; love fairy tales, dreams, fantasies and delicate things; weak and immature, more feminine, similar to girls; feel beautiful and good about themselves; have positive emotions | Dream | Presentation activities "KanaLili Fleur" |
| **NL** | No specific target market | 25-40 unisex | Story lovers; want to attempt a new style; wish to be outstanding, unique, different; feel happy when wearing the clothes | Solve social issues | Presentation activities |
| **MM** | No specific target market | Unisex | Contemporary, very strong-minded, independent and never silent | Explore, express, empower the self | Presentation activities |
| **KK** | London | 25-35 male Fashionistas, editors, stylists | Open-minded, individualistic; extremely interested in the fashion world; wish to attempt the edgy designs | Dare to imagine and create; think forward | Presentation activities |
| **DC** | No specific target market | 30-40 or above male | Introspective, soft, nonchalant; deeply intrigued by life's mystery; eager to uncover the mysteries of the unknown world | Demonstrate personality and curiosity; create values and significance to the clothing | Presentation activities |
| **MY** | Different locations; Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and other developing countries | 30-45 working female | Feminine, masculine, modern, energetic, sophisticated, independent, tough; perform social functions among family, work and life | Demonstrate the personality; perform social functions; embrace the confidence | Presentation activities "1234.93 K" |
| **KH** | No specific target market | Unisex | Like you, think like you, appreciate how you think | Perceive the world | Presentation activities |
| **KL** | No specific target market | Unisex | Want to voice out something; have their own attitudes; want to focus on what they love to do; do not want to be the idols in their lives | Express the lifestyle | Presentation activities "1234.93 K" |
| **MB** | No specific target market | Unisex Work for arts and design | Very romantic and sentimental; live in a fantasy world; familiar with classicism art and love this type of culture and style; share a common interest with design elements; enjoy design | Respond to the story and design | Presentation activities |

The other participants are the constituent elements in the construction of garments, which embrace ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. As observed, these participants represent distinct qualities in theme and style (Table 6.14). There are some findings from design components across the interviewed designers. In terms of theme, 1) themes serve as a response to social, cultural, political, historical, aesthetic, environmental, technological, innovative and other issues; 2) themes are developed through sequences of ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories; 3) themes are related to design concept, design inspiration, brand identity, design style and target market. In terms of style, 1) various styles are found in subculture and aesthetics; 2) design styles are endowed with personalized characteristics; 3) design styles are related to design philosophy, design aesthetics and target market; 4) design styles are associated with personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, childhood and family, education and practice, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle.

**Table 6.14** The Attributes of Participants (Design Components)

| Designer | Theme | Style | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | **Subculture** | **Aesthetics** | **Signature** |
| **LK** | Nature | Feminine | Romantic | Aesthetic beauties |
| **NL** | Stories oriented to Hong Kong society and life | Hip hop | Sporty | Playful combinations |
| **MM** | Narration of (sub)cultures | Punk Grunge | Minimalist Deconstructivist | Juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance |
| **KK** | Mysteries (space) | Futurist | Minimalist | Contemporarily |

| | | Hip hop | Sporty | futuristic, modern, daring |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DC** | Contemporary classic and soft masculinity within cultural domain | Dandy Androgyny | Classic Minimal Sporty | Balance between contradictions |
| **MY** | The self in modern femininity | Feminine | Sporty | Mixture, contradiction, design for purpose |
| **KH** | Garments through personal thinking or experience | Retro Androgyny | Minimalist Deconstructivist Antifashion | Mixture, fashion independence |
| **KL** | Construction of lifestyle (youth culture) through contemporary art and subculture | Hip hop Grunge Androgyny Futurist | Sporty Deconstructivist | Experimentation, combination |
| **MB** | Classicism through a contemporary approach | Surrealist Gothic Feminine | Neoclassic Romantic | Contradiction, comfort |

To summarize, this section examines the grammatical resources for realizing the experiential meaning across designers. It shows that a variety of choices are made by different designers. Based on the analysis in this section, Figure 6.4 presents a summary of the grammatical employment in fashion and clothing.

**Figure 6.4** Summary of Grammatical Analysis in Fashion Designers
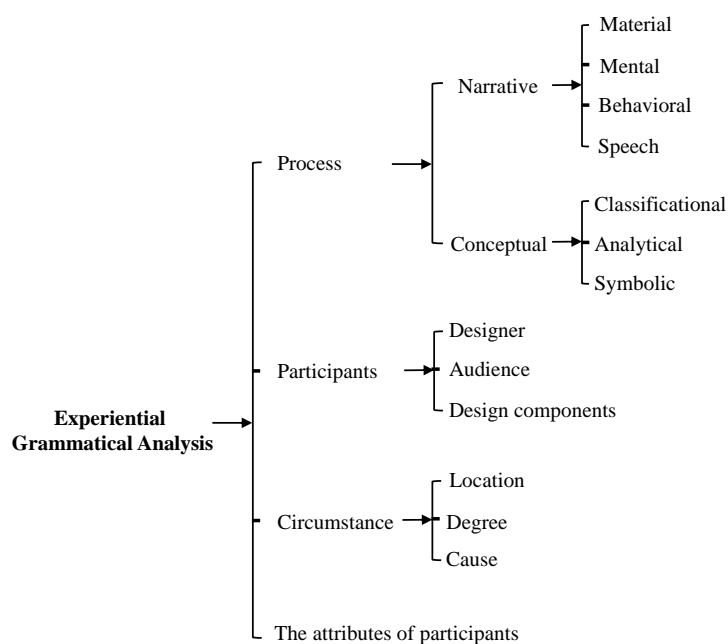
**6.2.4 Discussion**

To further elucidate the experiential meaning of fashion and clothing, we characterize the results of previous sections, as illustrated in Table 6.15. The IDEATION and TRANSTIVITY systems constitute the key components in the construction of experiential meaning. In what follows, these two systems are discussed in further detail. The information is considered relevant to the remaining sections investigated in this chapter and applicable to different fashion designers when they describe and manipulate their experience.

**Table 6.15** Checklist Matrix of Experiential Metafunction in Fashion Designers

| SEMANTICS | |
|---|---|
| IDEATION | |
| • Activity sequences | Construal of experience as an unfolding series of activities in the design process from generating, developing and communicating information |
| • Nuclear relations | Participants and process |
| • Taxonomic relations | Construal of experience through constructing class to member, whole to part, repetition, synonyms and contrast relations |
| **GRAMMAR** | |
| **ENSEMBLE** | Narrative or conceptual representation of theme and style through manipulation of layout structure, surface structure and light structure in garments |
| TRANSITIVITY | • Types of process<br>• Participants<br>• Circumstances<br>• Attributes of participants |
| **GARMENT** | Display thematic and stylistic garment pieces through manipulation of function, structure and decoration |
| **COMPONENT** | Represent thematic and stylistic characteristics in garment parts and details through manipulation of layout and surface structures |
| **ELEMENT** | Represent thematic and stylistic qualities and variations in design elements in terms of individual potential, interaction and composition of elements |
| **ACCESSORY** | Display thematic and stylistic worn or carried accessories |

The findings at the stratum of semantics and grammar are presented using the categories as Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007) and Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) suggest, which draw a parallel between those evolving from language-based approach to systemic functional frameworks and generalizes those utilized in developing the code schemes of interview and observation. In this sense, the semantic and grammatical fields of fashion and clothing are considered to include certain experiential features compared to language. From the analysis, all designers share similar result patterns in terms of discourse semantics including activity sequences, nuclear and taxonomic relations, as well as grammatical system including TRANSITIVITY and rank. However, the resources they choose to display are strikingly different from one another. The differences are mainly derived from several factors within and around the designers. These factors involve such as personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, family and education background, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle.

At the stratum of grammar, of all the examples, only very few representations found in the collections of Nelson Leung and Moti Bai are narrative. The rest of them are conceptual ones. Therefore, conceptual structure becomes the most dominant process type in fashion and clothing, which takes the classificational, analytical and symbolic forms. From this perspective, experiential meaning in fashion discourse largely concerns the description and manipulation of relations and existence. As we analyze,

the primary narrative options include action, event, mental, behavioral and speech processes. In this section, the ways in which clothing achieve these narrative processes are mainly through pattern and slogan. One reason may help understand this phenomenon: direct or explicit expressions are no longer the most favored choices for these Chinese designers. Instead, they prefer to embrace indirect, implicit elements or details to express themselves and deliver information. In this sense, a clear transition arises that moves from narrative towards concept in their design representations. It brings to mind Tsui's (2013) study on the evolution of national identity in Chinese fashion. For her, Chinese fashion has undergone a transformation from concrete symbols to abstract spirits in the past decades. In this context, concept is interpreted as "spirit" (ibid., p. 586). To paraphrase, Tsui's statement depicts a fact that Chinese fashion design is no longer the expression of traditional Chinese elements or details but the interpretation of Chinese spirits. Such considerable transformation in Chinese fashion is considered an outcome of recent developments in Chinese society (Section 5.4.2).

One way for designers to achieve this shift is through the choices and arrangements of participants they make inside the clothing or the collection. Compared with their precursors, traditional Chinese cultures are not priorities in their creation. What they are more interested is to demonstrate their understandings towards the issues that surround themselves, including society, culture, politics, history, aesthetics, environment, technology and innovation (Table 6.14). As a result, their designs are

often infused with the specific new qualities of modernization featured as self-expression and ambivalence (or contradictions) as well as hybridization between cultures featured as Chinese and Western, tradition and modernity (or contemporary) (Table 6.14). These findings echo with the statements of Entwistle (2000) in terms of fashion and modernity and Tsui (2013) in terms of national identity in Chinese fashion. The components and techniques they choose to adopt in their designs are various and varied, which are located in different categories as listed in Table 6.10. From here, the designers are more influenced by Western fashion than its Chinese counterpart. According to the analysis, the choices and arrangements of these participants are closely associated with design philosophy (design concept, design inspiration and brand identity), design style and marketing position.

As for circumstance in which the processes occur, several patterns are displayed across the designers with regard to location, degree and cause. First, the designers seek to target their focus on a worldwide scale, which aims to design for domestic and international markets. This strategy is considered a response to the integrated trend that currently takes place in the fashion industry. Through such globalized process, they attempt to enhance the interaction and integration between people in different countries and boost the development of their brands in different areas. Then, the designers choose to define their individual looks in relation to casual occasions, with emphasis on comfort and personal expression. The deployment of casual wear is due to recent advances in this lifestyle, where people prefer to enjoy a relaxed and

comfortable state as they face the pressures or difficulties in their life and work. Next, for most of their works, the designers seek to people with gender-unspecific young people, each of them dressed to suit their particular needs. Therefore, gender blending is one dominant feature of these designers. This action shows a salute to the androgynous lifestyle nowadays and resonates with the growing trend in society. The gender-fluid trend has been manifested in many ways through designers from their design philosophy, design styles, design aesthetics and marketing positions. In comparison with gender, other circumstantial elements such as age and career are not the main factors influencing designers to create the products. In addition, lifestyle is a key element that promotes the designers to construct their design. Therefore, it becomes an important factor in the elaboration of circumstance. The lifestyles designers strive to construct are classified into gender (4), behavior (3) and culture (2). In gender, the characters of modern femininity and masculinity are separately established by different designers. Three types of modern femininity emerge, which include romantic, fairy tale; self-aware, powerful and professional, mature. These three types can exactly represent three periods of women in their gradual process of development. Such a loud voice for femininity marks an increasing role of women in society and suggests the significance of female consumers in the fashion industry. To the contrary, modern masculinity is described with a blurring of both sexes, referred to as androgynous. This masculinity combined with feminine characteristics is an obvious contrast with modern femininity, which attempts to display a remarkable inner strength of their personal abilities. The gender ambiguity found in this section

resonates quite well with the social construction of gender, which encourages people to eliminate gender discriminations or prejudices and to develop their personalities without the limitations of rigid stereotypes. As regards behavior, all the behavioral patterns designers wish to promote all concern cognition and perception, such as "think and action", "imagine, create and think" and "perceive". That means designers tend to focus on creating an inner experience of consumers towards the material world, which can also be found in the description of consumers' psychographic aspects (Table 6.13). From this sense, the psychological orientation of individual consumers becomes an essential element for designers to construct the lifestyles. For culture, it proves valuable to observe two cultures which have different lifestyles, youth culture compared to contemporary classicism. Youth culture displays the associated qualities of innovation through experimentation and combination, whereas contemporary classicism introduces a revival of the styles and spirits of classic antiquities. The two lifestyles are actually a combination and reconstruction of cultures by introducing one into another. Some common features exist between them: promoting the freedom of thought and expression; demonstrating the attitude to go against fashion establishment; exploring individuality and new identities and introducing an active lifestyle to the audience. A possible way of explaining these cultural lifestyles behind the designers can be described as the experience of modernity and hybridity, as stated earlier in this section.

From the analysis of experiential meaning, we depict an overview map to construe

how designers construct their experience during the design process. Based on the above discussion, three essential new changes are generalized from the development of their design. They are the evolution from narrativization to conceptualization, from localization to globalization and from collectivization to individualization. These evolutionary changes are considered a result of both contextual influences and personal attributes and thus mark the transition of Chinese fashion from traditional to contemporary as well as the establishment of a new type regarding Chinese identity.

## 6.3 Fashion and Clothing as Conjunction: The Logical Meaning

### 6.3.1 Description of Logical Metafunction

Apart from the experiential, another component exists in the ideational metafunction, which is dedicated to construe logical relations of experience. This metafuncion in SFL is known technically as logical (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30). Similar to the presentation of experiential metafunction, Halliay's SFL principles (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) discourse analysis in language serves as points of departure for this study, from which the logical metafunction is realized in the systems of fashion and clothing. To construct the logical metafunction and its patterns for fashion and clothing, a review of systemic functional theory and the accompanying grammatical and discourse systems is provided at the initial stage.

One characteristic feature fulfilled in this metafunction is to establish a complicated

series of connections among group, phase and clause and to present these structures in the form of complexes. Based on Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 373), the logical metafunction is realized through two simultaneous systems: INTERDEPENDENCY (TAXIS) and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. In this interpretation, INTERDEPENDENCY is referred to as the system, which functions to show the status of two grammatical units within a complex. Two separate interrelationships are involved in the system (ibid., p. 374). One is parataxis, where each unit independently exists in a complex. At this point, two units are linked to be given equal status. The other is hypotaxis, in which structure each unit is interdependently related to one another. During this stage, units are linked to be given unequal status. LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS is referred to as the system, which functions to specify the logic of interconnection. There are two fundamental types of LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS, namely, projection and expansion (ibid., p. 377). Expansion relates to meaning which is realized through conjunction, whereas projection to speech and thought is realized through quote or report. Expansion has three kinds of subtypes (ibid., pp. 395-422): elaboration (exposition, exemplification, clarification and description), extension (addition, alternation and variation) and enhancement (time, space, manner, cause and condition). The relations of projection are not thoroughly elaborated in this section because they are not usually found in fashion and clothing. The system of logical metafunction theorized in SFL is given in Figure 6.5.

**Figure 6.5** INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS
(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)
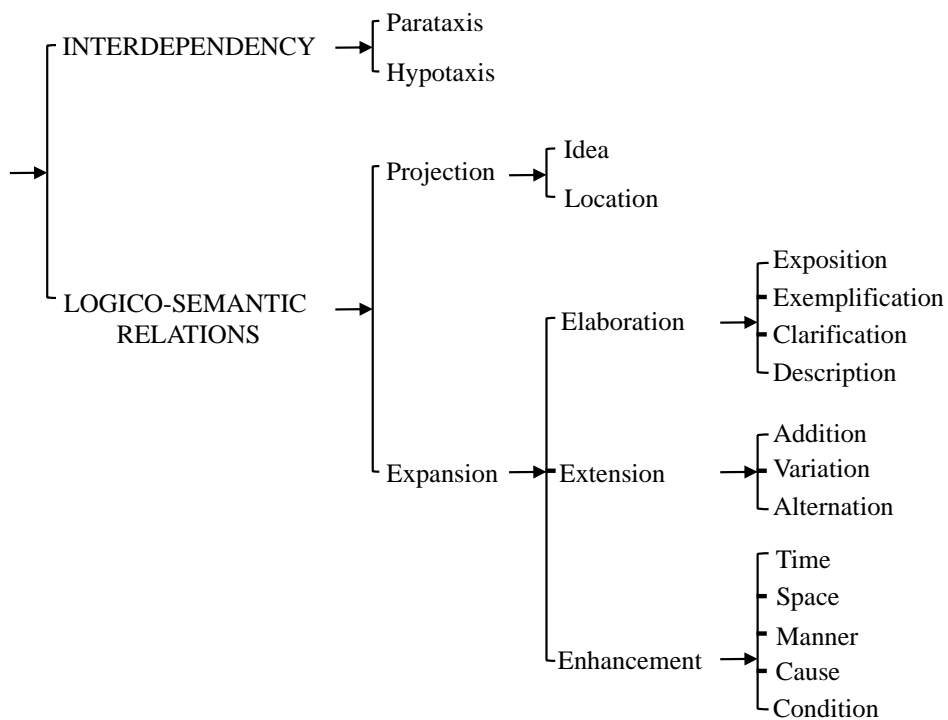


For Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007), the particular discourse system in logical

connections is under the work of CONJUNCTION, a concept utilized to connect

activities and meanings. Two basic systems of conjunction exist in his discourse

semantics - external and internal (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 116). In general, external

conjunction is related to the construal of experience in activities beyond the text,

whereas internal conjunction to the organization of information within the text. These

two conjunctions fall into four types of logical relations: addition, comparison, time

and sequence (ibid., p. 117). This is different from Halliday's logical paradigm, which

details the grammatical structure from logico-semantic relationships. In other words,

Halliday's strategy focuses on the internal development of text. Therefore, the system

of conjunction in his model is distinguished into structural and cohesive according to

the functions forming in the clause. Another significant feature constructed by Martin is logical metaphor. It is a principle for reconstruing logical relations between grammatical classes, such as process, circumstance, things and qualities. This metaphorical discourse enriches layers of meaning and reveals logical relations in discourse analysis. Together with the experiential, it constitutes ideational metaphor. Figure 6.6 shows a full range of conjunction types in Martin's discourse system.

**Figure 6.6** The CONJUNCTION System (Martin & Rose, 2007)

```
                                                    ┌ Addition
                                        ┌ External ─┤ Comparison
                                        │           ┤ Time
                                        │           └ Sequence
                                        │           ┌ Addition
CONJUNCTION ─────┤ Internal ─┤ Comparison
                                        │           ┤ Time
                                        │           └ Sequence
                                        ┤ Continuatives
                                        │
                                        └ Logical Metaphor
```
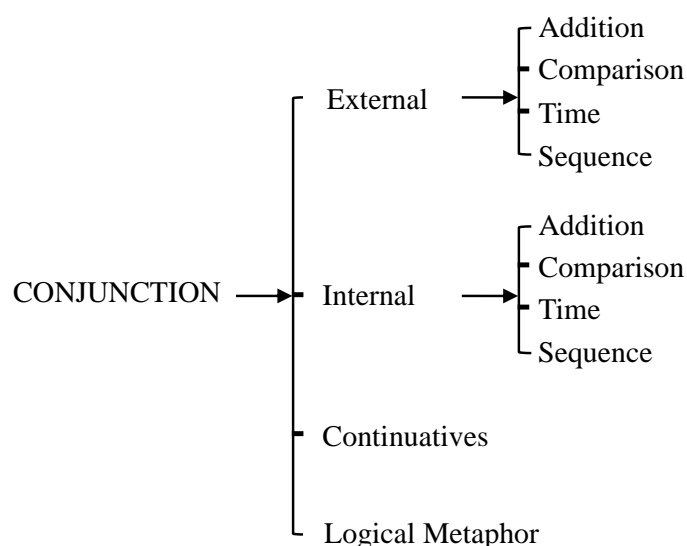
The system of logical metafunction has been applied to the field of mathematics by O'Halloran (2005), which is employed to analyze the logical meanings in the discourse across language, symbolism and visual images of the text. It is evident that the logical reasoning is significant in mathematic discourse because of complex logical relations within (ibid.). In her pursuit of the logical features in mathematics, O'Halloran employs Martin's (1992) systems of CONJUNCTION and CONTINUITY as theoretical guidelines to explore structural and cohesive conjunctions, which occur

in the spatial and temporal organization of the text. The logico-semantic relations in O'Halloran's mathematical discourse system include the expansion, which follows Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) tradition in the form of elaboration, extension and enhancement. A substantial contribution of O'Halloran's framework to logical metafunction is her attempt to analyze intersemiotic mechanisms across semiotic resources and to discuss the ways for explaining the relationships among them in the process of constructing logical meaning. This kind of analysis lays a valuable foundation for multimodality and this study, given that fashion and clothing is also considered an outcome of the collaboration between different semiotic resources. Following SFL's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) linguistic approach and O'Halloran's (2005) multimodal analysis, this study starts to establish how such logical relations are constructed in fashion and clothing from a grammatical and semantic view.

### 6.3.2 Methodological Construction of Logical Meaning in Fashion and Clothing

Before discussing the logical relations of fashion and clothing, the methodology employed is revisited to suggest a possible scenario of data analysis in this section. Typically, the procedures for analyzing experiential representation are also applicable to the construction of logical metafunction, which forms the general methodological approach in the study, as evidenced in Section 6.2.2. This is because in systemic functional theory, the three metafunctions connect inextricably with one another and occur simultaneously in the process of creating meaning. In other words, any semiotic

resource is capable of being organized simultaneously into three patterns of meaning. From this point, these three metafunctions can be realized together in the conducting of data analysis. Therefore, the coding procedures for investigating data across the metafunctions are generally the same in some way, which range from open via axial to selective coding, then to theoretical replication until the closure of research and finally to literature comparison. For this reason, the coding process of logical metafunction is not repeatedly explained here (see Section 5.2 for a detailed description). However, further research is needed to theorize the patterns of resources through metafunctions. Consequently, specific theoretical frameworks within each metafunction are constructed in considering the nature of meaning potential. It is assumed that these proposed frameworks are able to represent the characteristics of patterns in the metafunctions of fashion and clothing and to contribute to the entire coding process in the study.

From a logical view, the general analytical framework is built on the influential theories of Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) SFL and Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) discourse systems. The first dimension is stratification (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Lemke, 1984, 1995; Royce, 1999), the detail of which in data analysis is established in Section 6.2.2. In the description, fashion and clothing is organized into several stratified levels: the content plane involving discourse semantics and sensory grammar and the expression plane involving symbology and materiality. At each of the planes, a series of related

studies function to explicate the logical relations in fashion and clothing. In terms of sensory grammar at the content, the systems of INTERDEPENDENCY (parataxis, hypotaxis) and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS (expansion) by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) are utilized to illustrate the combined relations between two grammatical units of clothing. This is the second dimension of theoretical investigation, as reviewed in Section 6.3.1. Similar to experiential system, grammatical units at this level are identified in terms of hierarchy based on its constituency structure. That is, the units of rank in fashion and clothing consist of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory (Section 4.4.4). In terms of discourse semantics, the systems of CONJUNCTION by Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) are drawn on to describe the logical relations in fashion and clothing, which form the third dimension. The construction of discourse typically involves external and internal conjunctions (Section 6.3.1). In terms of materiality and symbology, similar references in relation to fashion studies are contained to offer the factual information for guiding logical meaning arising from the gathered data (Section 6.2.2). The analysis from fashion scholars proves the significance of the logical aspect in fashion and clothing. This fourth dimension mainly focuses on the literature within a multimodal domain, such as the discussions of visual, textual and other relevant semiotic resources. Taken together, these theoretical concerns provide a comprehensive social semiotic approach to analyze the essential components of logical meaning in fashion and clothing. To clarify these theoretical guidelines, Figure 6.7 shows a sketch of the framework where logical

meaning is encoded through the listing of the above-mentioned systems. Based on this framework, the study continues its step to analyze and interpret fashion and clothing from its logical perspective.

**Figure 6.7** Proposed Logical System in Fashion and Clothing
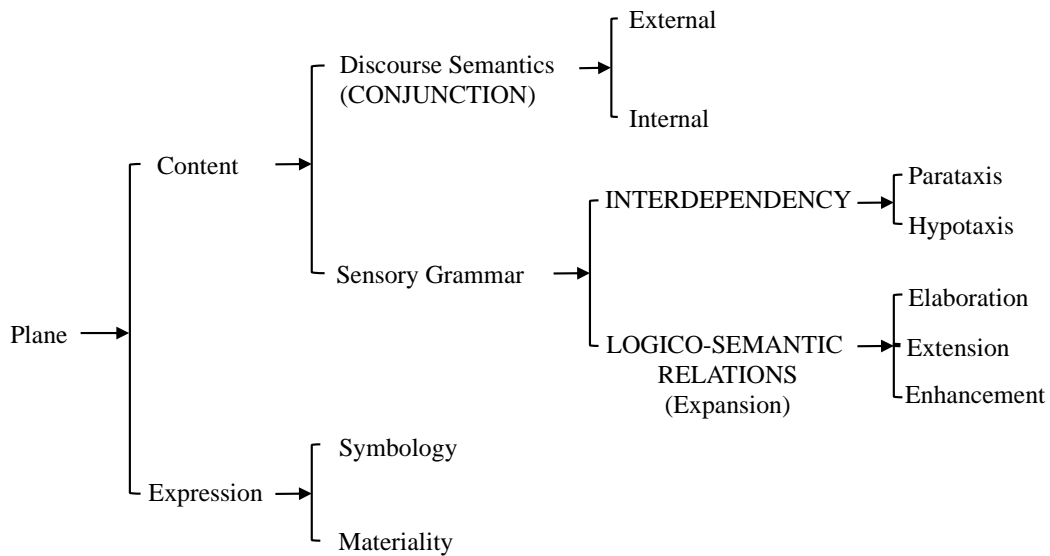


### 6.3.3 Realization of the Logical Meaning

To this point, we have illustrated theoretical and methodological frameworks about how related systems work to connect experience in discourse and grammar. These frameworks can help reveal how the logic of relations is construed and serve as key strategies for this study to acknowledge the logical meaning in fashion and clothing. Drawing on the frameworks introduced above, this section provides the overall findings towards meaning as a logical construction. To map out the repertoire of choices in conjunctive relations, we select the cases from Chinese fashion designers. The purpose is to accumulate the resources that designers can use for conjunction and to analyze the logical organization of fashion discourse. To begin with, we present the

analyses of conjunction at the stratum of discourse semantics, which are set out in

Section 6.3.3.1. We then analyze the findings from the perspective of grammatical

structure, which are illustrated in Section 6.3.3.2. Similar to the presentation of

experiential meaning, all data are coded and analyzed according to the principles of

grounded theory methodology.


### 6.3.3.1 Discourse Semantic Analysis

The first analysis within the logical mode is discourse semantics. Martin (1992;

Martin & Rose, 2007) provides the basic motivation behind this structure. Their

models are introduced in Figure 6.6 and reproduced in Figure 6.7, with minor

adaptations in this case. Based on Marin's account, the overall deployment of

CONJUNCTION in fashion and clothing as discourse system is presented as follows.


External conjunction is utilized to indicate the cohesive relations of activities

occurring beyond the text (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 115). With this definition, the

external can be interpreted as sequences of activities that are logically organized to

construe experience. Therefore, it relates to activity sequences in the system of

IDEATION (Section 6.2.3.1) and resonates with the recontextualization of fashion

and clothing in the design process (Section 4.5.3). Generally, a design process is

composed of several activities, which range across the different phases of production,

marketing, dissemination and consumption. In this environment, we describe them as

the succession of events, including information processing, concept development,

design and presentation activities. Each of them includes a series of logical steps, which links to one another via addition, comparison, time and consequence. Addition means that events are logically organized into sequences of using the adding. Comparison indicates that events are compared with one another by logical similarity and difference. Time concerns itself with the conjunction of events in temporal relations. Consequence represents events showing the relations of cause, means, condition and purpose. Consequently, these activities in sequence form the external conjunction, as Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) suggests. Figure 4.9 and Table 6.4 offer specific examples for this conjunction.

By contrast, internal conjunction is used to describe the organization of text (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 115). It is the conjunction that is internal to the text. In fashion and clothing, internal relation is interpreted as the sequential connection of display elements in collections, ranging from an episode of discourse to subsequent one. Such relations are in a certain way similar to the external ones, which can also be expressed by addition, comparison, time and consequence. Based on the case of Derek Chan, Table 6.16 outlines the general options for internal conjunctions in fashion and clothing. In the following example, the conjunctions expressing internal addition include development, which are commonly utilized to develop design philosophy, style and aesthetics. The conjunctions that realize internal comparison are similarity and difference, which compare one discourse with another. There are many variations in internal similarity, including design philosophy, design style, design aesthetics,

design progress and target market. There are also many differences as they are manifested in various presentations. The conjunctions that suggest internal time is succession, which organizes the sequence of collections into a cohesive discourse. The conjunctions that signal internal consequence are identical to the patterns in external ones. Therefore, it is different from the model shown by Martin. By this means, consequence is construed as cause, means and purpose as summarized in the table.

**Table 6.16** General System for Internal Conjunctions (Derek Chan)

| Option | Instance Statement | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Addition | 2015 FW "Synthetic Nature" 2016 SS "Harmony-at-Odds" 2016 FW "Dream of Dali" 2017 SS "Revisited Garden" 2017 FW "Mature Child" 2018 SS "Boys be Flowers" | Development in terms of addition |
| Comparison | "<u>Synthetic</u> <u>Nature</u>" "<u>Harmony-at-Odds</u>" "<u>Dream</u> of Dali" "<u>Revisited</u> Garden" "<u>Mature Child</u>" "<u>Boys</u> be <u>Flowers</u>" | Similarity and difference <br> • Design concept: contemporary classic, soft masculinity, love for details <br> • Design inspiration: combination of sense and sensibility featured by science, art, tradition <br> • Brand identity: modern masculinity via contemporary classic, soft masculinity <br> • Design style: balance between contradictions (<u>synthetic and nature, harmony and discordance, dream and reality, history and contemporary, maturity and child, masculinity and femininity</u>) <br> • Design aesthetics: visual, textural and other design elements <br> • Design progress: information processing, concept development, design activities, presentation activities <br> • Target market: geographic, demographic, |

| | | psychographic, behavioral, product-related |
|---|---|---|
| Time | 2015 FW<br>2016 SS<br>2016 FW<br>2017 SS<br>2017 FW<br>2018 SS | Succession in terms of order |
| Consequence | Combinatory patterns realized through spatial and temporal relations<br><br>Combination features distinct qualities in theme and style, reflects the spirits and attitudes involved in the design process | • Cause: design philosophy, design style, target market<br>• Means: spatial and temporal organization<br>• Purpose: exchange of information and goods-&-services |

**6.3.3.2 Grammatical Analysis**

Following discourse semantics, this section focuses on the analysis of grammar. As shown by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), two general dimensions of conjunction are illustrated in the system of conjunction: INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 display the basic patterns for describing the conjunctive relations, which occur at the stratum of grammar. Building on these conceptions, the analysis of logical meaning in fashion and clothing is investigated below.

In terms of INTERDEPENDENCY, the relations manifested in the system of conjunction fall into two types of taxis, namely, parataxis and hypotaxis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Halliday (ibid.) describes parataxis as linking the members of a complex (clause, group and phase) into equal status, whereas hypotaxis as linking the

ones into unequal status. Based on this interpretation, clothing is also considered as developed from a combination of paratactic and hypotactic complexes. Corresponding to language, this logical structure can be shown using the rank scale. Hence, we can have many possible interpretations of complex in clothing, such as ensemble, garment, component, element or accessory complexes. When the elements are linked in independence, they are in paratactic structure; at this point, one element functions as initiating and the other as continuing. Conversely, when the elements are combined in dependence, they are in hypotactic structure; at this time, one element is represented as dominant and the other as dependent. This basic pattern thus allows us to bring out the ways in which the elements are combined to one another for the logical mode of meaning. By virtue of this classification, we may characterize the relation between two elements within a sequence by assigning them different statuses and formulate a grammatical strategy which is employed to guide the development of text. The system of taxis in clothing is summarized in Figure 6.8.

**Figure 6.8** The System of Taxis
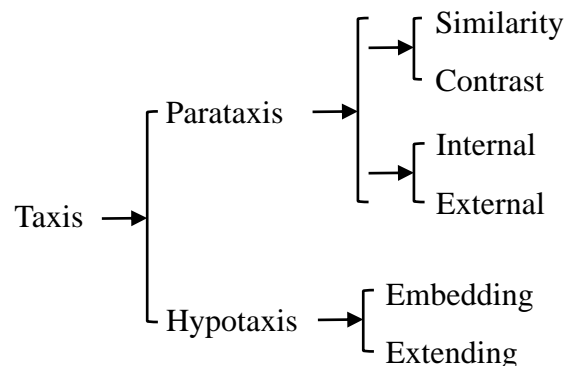


As illustrated above, with the representation of parataxis, the distinction is made

between similarity and contrast, between internal and external; with the representation of hypotaxis, the distinction is between embedding and extending. Such construction is similar to the paradigmatic nature of film as discourse proposed by Bateman (2007), which distinguishes paratactic from hypotactic. For clothing, these structures have evolved into frequent and established options that can account for the logical relations in discourse. Therefore, they differ from those structured sequences within language. In parataxis, similarity organizes the elements as a sequence, each of which stands in similar relations, whereas contrast establishes the conjunction between the elements through contrasting relations. Internal constructs the relations between elements out of the same category, whereas external focuses on the elements which relate to one another from different categories. In this sense, they are quite different from Bateman's (2007) filmic discussion. In agreement with linguistic account, these four options work independently of one another. In hypotaxis, embedding serves as the elements which participate in the complexes and form part-to-whole relations, whereas extending includes the elements which relate to the act of increasing but not fulfilling the functions of participants. In contrast to the ones in parataxis, these two options combine sequences in terms of dependence. Further elaborations in relation to the system of parataxis are set out in Table 6.17 through the analysis of designers.

**Table 6.17** Examples for the System of Parataxis

| Rank | Similarity | Contrast | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ensemble | Sequential placement of ensembles relevant to theme, style, design philosophy | Contrast in types of garments, variation of fabrics and materials, the arrangement of colors, the numbers of layering, the length of garments, etc. | Ensembles from the same category in terms of thematic and stylistic development | Ensembles from different categories in terms of thematic and stylistic development |
| Garment | Classic items in street fashion with personalized contemporary details and elements<br>• Upper body<br>  Various styles of jacket/coat/ waistcoat/shirt/top/knitwear<br>• Lower body<br>  Various styles of pants/skirt<br>• One piece<br>  Various styles of dress/suit/jumpsuit | Contrast in the relation between upper and lower body, in one item or in the relation between outer and inner wear; contrast in style, garment, component, element, garment construction<br>• Upper body/lower body<br>• Upper body/upper body<br>• Lower body/lower body<br>• Upper body/one piece<br>• Lower body/one piece | Garment pieces from the same categories of upper body, lower body and one piece | Garment pieces in different categories of upper body, lower body and one piece |
| Component | Classic items in street fashion with personalized contemporary details and elements<br>• Layout structure<br>  Parts in different styles (various styles of shoulder, neckline, collar, lapel, bodice, sleeve, cuff, pocket, waist)<br>  Details in different styles (various styles of cutting, layering, dart, seam, pleat, decorative stitching, edge finish, hem, neckline, waistline, fastener, opening, | Contrast in style, garment, component, element, garment construction<br>• Layout structure/layout structure<br>• Surface structure/surface structure<br>• Layout structure/surface structure | Garment parts and details from the same structure and category | Garment parts and details in different structures and categories |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | stitches, panel, accessory)<br>• Surface structure<br>Texture of fabrics and materials, pattern, surface treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork, colors in different shades to create contrasts and combinations, exposed skin | | | |
| Element | Display of elements relevant to theme, style and design philosophy in terms of individual potential, interaction of elements and composition of elements | • Individual potential<br>Contrast of space, lines, shapes and forms, silhouettes, patterns, colors, fabrics and materials<br>• Interaction of elements<br>Interaction of space, line, shape and form, color, pattern, texture; feminine elements in combination with masculine elements | Elements from the same category | Elements classified into different categories; each separately functioning as an independent category with different subcategories |
| Accessory | Display of elements in accessories relevant to theme and style, design philosophy | Contrast in different categories of accessory; contrast of details and elements in accessories in terms of fabric and material, detail, pattern, shape and form, color, line | Accessories from the same category | Accessories in different categories |

In terms of LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS, Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) classification for logical relations in language, particularly the category of expansion, are developed for the purpose of fashion and clothing. Such resources of expansion are utilized to indicate how meanings can be realized through conjunctions. As earlier noted, three essential ways of expansion exist in the linguistic account, which include elaboration (exposition, exemplification, clarification and description), extension (addition, alternation and variation) and enhancement (time, space, manner and cause). Following Halliday (ibid.), these types of relations are modeled in clothing as shown in Table 6.18. It is worth noting that the LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS proposed for clothing is similar to language, which takes place within the conjunction realized by either parataxis or hypotaxis.

**Table 6.18** The System of Expansion

| Type | Category | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Elaboration | Exposition | Explanation of message by ***restating*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| | Exemplification | Explanation of message by ***developing*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| | Clarification | Explanation of message by ***clarifying*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| | Description | Explanation of message by ***describing*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| Extension | Addition | Extension of message by ***adding*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| | Alternation | Extension of message by having ***alternative*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| | Variation | Extension of message by ***replacing*** thematic and stylistic qualities |
| Enhancement | Time | The sequential organization of collection |
| | Space | Interplay of ensembles; relations of garments, components, elements, accessories |

| | Manner | • Means (theme and style, the principles of design and Gestalt theories) |
| | | • Comparison (similarity and contrast) |
| | Cause | • Reason (theme and style) |
| | | • Purpose (indication of associated messages) |
| | | • Result (orientation to thematic and stylistic development) |

As the above table displays, the system of expansion in clothing is also demonstrated in the form of elaboration, extension and enhancement, which characterizes several subtypes of combination. From previously established results, the conjunctive relations are heavily dependent on the development of theme and style, based on which the elements are linked, and the logical meaning is given. Design philosophy is the key factor that influences the selection of theme and style by designers. In other words, design philosophy, theme and style together define and form the logical meaning in clothing. For a clear presentation of these relations, a specific example from Masha Ma is listed in the following table, from which the systems of INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS are combined for illustration. As discussed, Masha Ma focuses on the construction of new femininity, which is characterized as the juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance. Within this collection, she was inspired by the streets of London and its punk heritage. For Masha Ma, fabrics and materials are a main outlet to construct logical relations and demonstrate new femininity, where suiting fabrics and velvet represent tradition, leather and denim reflect modernity and silk symbolizes femininity. The combination of these fabrics and materials accordingly creates two prominent oppositions between conformity and defiance (suiting fabrics,

velvet in contrast to leather, denim), between seductiveness and female strength (silk in contrast to leather). From the examples below, we can find that her creations are full of oppositions and contrasts, which exactly reflect her design style and philosophy - "enjoy the struggle and embrace the chaos" in her own words. Hence, design philosophy, theme and style form powerful strategies to guide the connections of display elements and the development of collection(s).

**Table 6.19** Examples for the Systems of INTERDEPENDENCY and
LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS (Masha Ma)

| MASHA MA 2017 FW "Collection P" (Punk) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fabric | 1<br>α, β | 2 =, +, ×<br>α, β | 3 =, +, ×<br>α, β | |
| Suiting fabric |  |  |  | 1 |
| Velvet |  |  |  | 2 =, +, × |

| Leather |  |  |  | 3 =, +, × |
| Denim |  |  |  | 4 =, +, × |
| Silk |  |  |  | 5 =, +, × |

*Note*. Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 438) suggests certain notations to organize INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. In parataxis, 1 is the initiating member, and other numbers within a sequence are continuing members. In hypotaxis, α represents dominant member, and β represents dependent member(s). In the system of expansion, "=" for equals relates to elaborating, "+" for addition relates to extending and "×" for multiplication relates to enhancing.

In the case of clothing, ensembles, garments or display elements linked to another

within a collection are often realized through cohesive conjunction as developed from the LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. This type of conjunction concerns the organization of the members in a complex to create cohesion within ensemble or create semantic links across ensembles. Apart from this, another type of conjunction that closely relates to clothing is referred to as structural conjunction. It is also a significant strategy in our exploration of conjunctive relations in fashion and clothing. This strategy is realized through connecting the parts with the way in which garments are organized to function. Some examples are analyzed by Davis (1996) and Delong (1998). However, both cohesive and structural conjunctions are considered the internal organization of complexes into logical relations. In addition, there exists a conjunction that constructs the relations of events in the text, drawing on Bateman's (2007) concepts. With this distinction, the system of construction in clothing is also related to external events, such as portrayal of process, attributes of participants and circumstantial features (Section 6.2.3.2). At this stage, conjunction is construed as external organization.

## 6.3.4 Discussion

The previous sections present the system of CONJUNCTION, INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS, illustrating how conjunctions are utilized to reveal the relations by which a text is developed in clothing. Based on these findings, the system of logical meaning in fashion and clothing is set out in Table 6.20.

**Table 6.20** Checklist Matrix of Logical Metafunction in Fashion Designers

| SEMANTICS | |
|---|---|
| CONJUNCTION | Patterns of relations unfolding through external/internal connections |
| **GRAMMAR** | |
| **ENSEMBLE**<br>INTERDEPENDENCY | |
| Parataxis | Ensembles combined being of equal status<br>• Similarity/contrast<br>• Internal/external |
| Hypotaxis | Ensembles combined being of unequal status (extending) |
| LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS | |
| Expansion | Elaboration, extension, enhancement |
| Conjunction | (Internal) structural and cohesive conjunctions<br>(External) portrayal of process, attributes of participants, circumstantial features |
| **GARMENT**<br>INTERDEPENDENCY | |
| Parataxis | Garment pieces combined being of equal status<br>• Similarity/contrast<br>• Internal/external |
| Hypotaxis | Garment pieces combined being of unequal status<br>• Embedding<br>• Extending |
| LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS | |
| Expansion | Elaboration, extension, enhancement |
| Conjunction | Structural and cohesive conjunctions |
| **COMPONENT**<br>INTERDEPENDENCY | |
| Parataxis | Garment parts and details combined being of equal status<br>• Similarity/contrast<br>• Internal/external |
| Hypotaxis | Garment parts and details combined being of unequal status<br>• Embedding<br>• Extending |
| LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS | |
| Expansion | Elaboration, extension, enhancement |

| Conjunction | Structural and cohesive conjunctions |
|---|---|
| **ELEMENT**<br>INTERDEPENDENCY | |
| Parataxis | Design elements combined being of equal status<br>• Similarity/contrast<br>• Internal/external |
| Hypotaxis | Design elements combined being of unequal status<br>• Embedding<br>• Extending |
| LOGICO-SEMANTIC<br>RELATIONS | |
| Expansion | Elaboration, extension, enhancement |
| Conjunction | Structural and cohesive conjunctions |
| **ACCESSORY**<br>INTERDEPENDENCY | |
| Parataxis | Accessories combined being of equal status<br>• Similarity/contrast<br>• Internal/external |
| Hypotaxis | Accessories combined being of unequal status<br>• Embedding<br>• Extending |
| LOGICO-SEMANTIC<br>RELATIONS | |
| Expansion | Elaboration, extension, enhancement |
| Conjunction | Structural and cohesive conjunctions |

At the strata of grammar and discourse semantics, there are two possibilities of conjunction in relation to fashion and clothing: internal and external. A significant difference between the conjunctions of both strata is that one concerns the semantic descriptions of grammar across the units of rank, and the other regards semantic resources unfolding in collection(s). On this account, internal conjunctions can be construed as complex structures of all kinds either within ensembles (ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory) or across collections. External conjunctions can be construed as the sequential connections either of events in the

ensembles or of activities beyond the ensembles. To clarify the conjunctive nature of clothing, we further distinguish internal conjunction at the grammar into structure and cohesion, according to the functions fulfilled by the complex.

In cohesive conjunctions, we draw on the systems of INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS to interpret the logic of relations in clothing. The findings of these two systems are presented in Tables 6.17 and 6.18 respectively. In such cases, different combinations of INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS are found across designers, which invite various interpretations towards the construction of logical meaning, for example, femininity and masculinity, sportswear and partywear, tradition and modernity. The detailed attributes of combination adopted by designers are in Table 6.14, from which a general pattern of conjunction emerges. As for INTERDEPENDENCY, when elements are combined with equal and unequal statuses, they display the logical relations of similarity, contrast, internal, external, embedding and extending. Specifically, among all the instances of complexes within ensembles, we find that similarity is illuminated in classic items with personalized contemporary details and elements, and in sequential placement of ensembles and display of elements which are oriented towards theme, style and design philosophy, whereas contrast is illuminated in style, the qualities of display elements, garment construction, tradition and modernity, femininity and masculinity. We find that internal relations represent display elements from the same category in terms of style, function, structure and

decoration, whereas external relations represent display elements from different categories. We also find that embedding refers to display elements in part-to-whole relations, whereas extending refers to display elements in extended relations. As for expansion in the system of LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS, meaning is manifested within elaboration, extension and enhancement. In this environment, theme and style form the initial impetus to steer the development of text. In addition to this grammatical analysis, conjunctions take place within a broad scope in terms of collections and activity sequences. These two conjunctions in the analysis also form logical meanings realized by the relations of addition, comparison, time and consequence.

Such conjunctions under investigation are considered related to many purposes. For example, through these relations, designers demonstrate the spirits of theme and style; create relevance to design philosophy and target market; present an interpretation from personalized juxtapositions; explore new possibilities in menswear and womenswear and provide a wide range of products for the market. In a similar vein, various factors contribute to this occurrence, which are personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, family and education background, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle. From this perspective, the conjunctions designers choose to manipulate are actually based on the relations with external events, including portrayal of process, attributes of participants and circumstantial

features (Sections 6.2.3.2 and 6.3.3.2). A special construction also exists: the logical connections they display in most instances are directed towards conceptualization, globalization and individualization instead of narrativization, localization and collectivization. This is in accord with the findings from experiential meaning. The reason is quite relevant: it is precisely the influences from the development of contemporary China and the accompanying changes in Chinese fashion.

## 6.4 Fashion and Clothing as Exchange: The Interpersonal Meaning

### 6.4.1 Description of Interpersonal Metafunction

Interpersonal metafunction is of great importance in Halliday's concept of SFL. In this metafunction, language is utilized as a tool for people to communicate with others. Through language, we establish, change and maintain relationships with others and society. Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30) states that language achieves two kinds of interpersonal functions. One is the personal aspect, which expresses the speaker's or the writer's attitude and appraisal towards the addressee(s) and the issues being discussed. It relates to the resources for people to construe experience. The other is the interactive aspect, which reflects speech roles and relations. It concerns the resources for people to engage in the communication.

In Halliday's framework, MOOD and MODALITY are considered principle grammatical systems to realize interpersonal meaning. The system of MOOD is the resource for creating roles and setting up relationships, which realizes the interactive

aspect. It construes the exchange as giving or demanding information and goods-&-services, through the classification of speech role and exchanged commodity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 134-135). The system of MODALITY is the resource for expressing meanings in the interaction, which realizes the personal aspect. In SFL analysis, four types of modality are involved in the dialogue: probability, usuality, obligation and inclination. The first two types to evaluate propositions are classified as modalization, whilst the last to evaluate proposals are categorized as modulation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 176-178). In addition, other systems are available with respect to MODALITY. They are the systems of POLARITY (including positive and negative opposition), ORIENTATION (including subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) and VALUE (including high, low and median). The systems of MOOD and MODALITY are summarized in Figure 6.9.

Besides, Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) elaborates and develops the resources of interpersonal meaning in the systems of discourse. A remarkable achievement of Martin's conception is to introduce the theory and descriptions of language in text and to discuss them within each social context. In the interpersonal metafunction, Martin (ibid.) develops two systems of APPRAISAL and NEGOTIATION to analyze attitudes and dialogue. APPRAISAL is a system for evaluating the speaker's or the writer's attitudes. Such evaluations are realized through negotiating resources in attitudes, graduation and engagement (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). NEGOTIATION is a system for enacting speech

roles and relations in dialogue. Such interactions are realized through negotiating

speech function and exchange structure (Martin & Rose, 2007).

**Figure 6.9** The MOOD and MODALITY Systems (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)
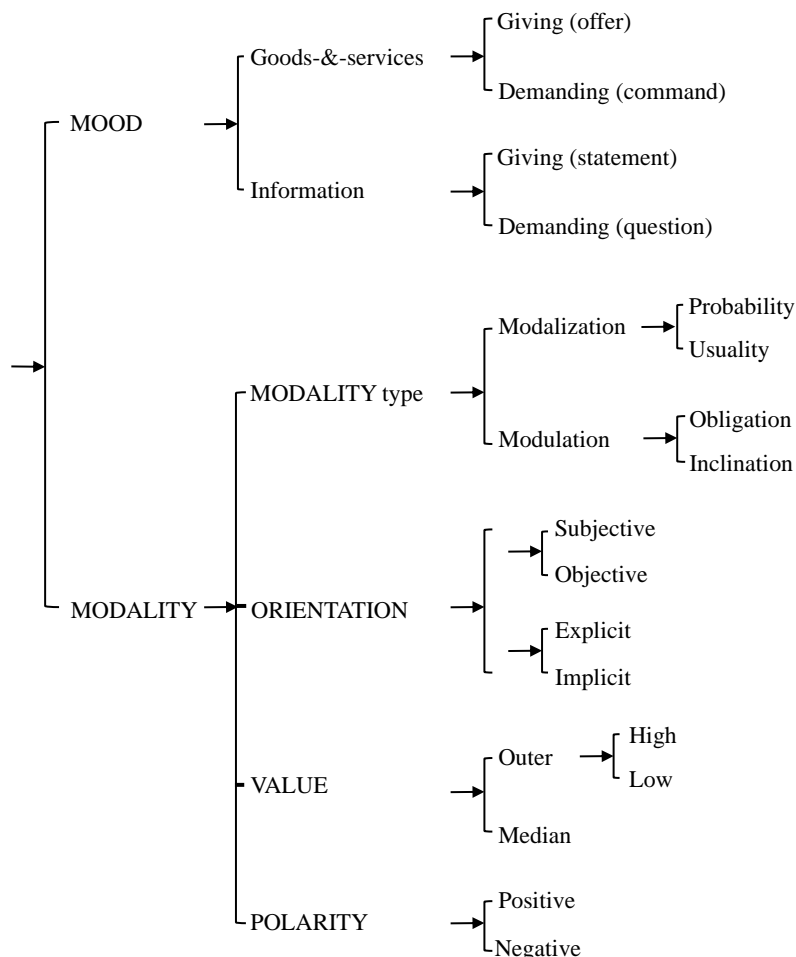


To begin with attitudes in APPRAISAL system, three main ways are designed to

explore the relationships between the addresser and addressee(s). Affect concerns

resources to describe emotions and is divided into un/happiness, in/security,

dis/satisfaction and dis/inclination (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 49-51). Judgment deals

with resources towards assessing behavior and is grouped into social esteem and

social sanction (ibid., pp. 52-53). Appreciation entails resources to build up aesthetic

impact and is separated into reaction, composition and valuation (ibid., p. 56). Then, graduation is a distinctive feature for scaling resources of attitudes and engagement, either up-scale or down-scale. The semantics of graduation is realized through force in the form of intensification and quantification and through focus in the form of sharpening and softening (ibid., p. 137). The next is engagement, which outlines a framework to characterize the source of attitudes. This dialogic nature of framework provides a systemic description to negotiate the addresser's attitudinal positions, which operate via alignment and disalignment. In exploring this aspect of intersubjective positioning, Martin (ibid., p. 99) proposes the terms monoglossic and heteroglossic according to dialogistic alternatives. If recognized as a single voice, then it will be monoglossic; otherwise, heteroglossic. One important distinction in the heteroglossic dialogue is expansion and contraction (ibid., p. 102). Such additional positions and voices are introduced by projection, modality and concession.

Alongside APPRAISAL systems, another way of introducing speech roles and relations into a dialogue is NEGOTIATION. In this dimension, Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007) demonstrates several basic types of interaction. One is speech function, which responds to Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) grammatical realization of MOOD. According to Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 223), any negotiation is involved in two types of exchanging move, namely, initiating and responding. Combined with the commodity being exchanged (information and goods-&-services), these two distinctions give rise to the speech roles of giving and demanding. All the

three distinctions taken together define speech functions (ibid., p. 224). The other

interactive type is exchange structure, which describes the sequence of choices as

moves in dialogue from initiation towards responding. Based on Martin's proposal,

Figure 6.10 outlines the basic systems of APPRAISAL and NEGOTIATION.

**Figure 6.10** The APPRAISAL and NEGOTIATION Systems
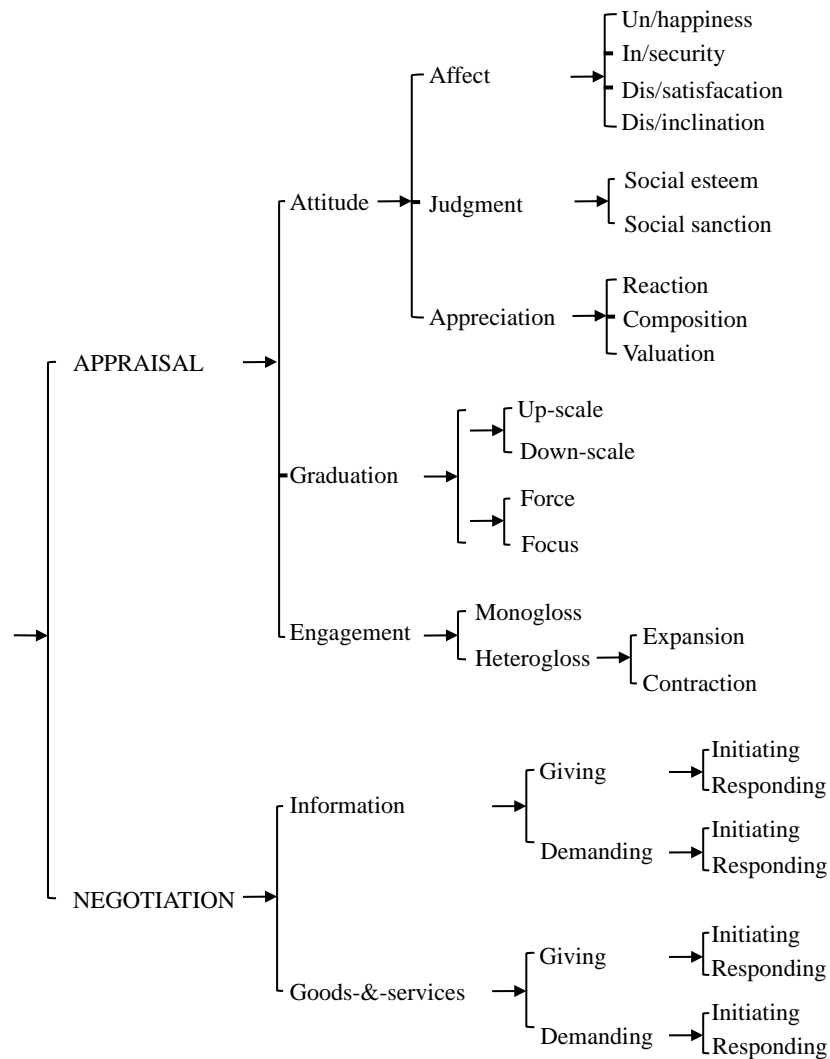


Owing to the significance of interaction in communication, numerous multimodal

studies draw on the interpersonal metafunction to develop theory. For example, in

visual communication, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) use interactive as its label and

explore it in the field of visual design. Their interactive framework includes contact, distance, perspective and visual modality. O'Toole (2011) adopts different terms of modal and interpersonal to describe the interpersonal features and relationships of painting, sculpture and architecture. In tactile communication, Bezemer and Kress (2014) consider touch as a meaning-making resource and suggest its interpersonal meaning within an accompanying social context. Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) define interpersonal one in the semiotics of texture and apply it into the discussion of PowerPoint. It is noted that most of the interpersonal studies have their ways to construct interpersonal metafunction. However, none of them clearly distinguish Halliday's grammatical systems of MOOD and MODALITY within the multimodal domain. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; van Leeuwen, 2005) initiate to explore visual modality with a social semiotic approach. For them, visual modality is related to the degree of truth or untruth of the images (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 160). Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), a set of specific criteria for judging visual modality is listed by van Leeuwen (2005). They are the articulation of detail, contextualization, color saturation, color modulation, color differentiation, image depth, illumination and brightness (for detailed explanations, see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 160-163; van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 167). These modality markers, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 163), are judged in terms of cultural and historical background. To account for the social and contextual features of modality, they (ibid.) distinguish four coding orientations: technological, sensory, abstract and naturalistic (ibid., p. 165). O'Halloran (2005) derives its theoretical backgrounds from Halliday

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and Martin (1992) and constructs the interpersonal meaning in mathematical discourse. Based on their paradigms, she proposes the grammar and discourse systems for mathematical language, symbolism and visual images and discusses the intersemiotic relations across the three resources. Feng (2012) extends Martin's APPRAISAL theories to systematically model semiotic resources and the process in the discourse of film. These sets of meaning-making resources are demonstrated here for providing access to the multimodal construction of interpersonal meaning in fashion and clothing. Working with the theoretical underpinnings, we set out to offer a systemic functional modeling of interpersonal meaning in fashion and clothing.

## 6.4.2 Methodological Construction of Interpersonal Meaning in Fashion and Clothing

Following the discussion of theoretical literature, we propose a methodology that describes a procedure to conduct data analysis and discuss the findings. As stated before, the methodological framework for interpersonal meaning works similar to that of experiential and logical metafunctions, which is based on grounded theory methodology and SFL-inspired theoretical models (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.3.2). Therefore, this section focuses mainly on the construction of a theoretical framework for the interpersonal metafunction that motivates the study. In what continues, Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) grammatical and Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) discourse systems are extended in an attempt to

theorize this framework in fashion and clothing.

In the framework presented in Figure 6.11, systems which operate at the planes of content and expression are included. This stratification is in alignment with the stratified model proposed in Section 4.4.2 and discussed in Section 6.2.2. Thus, four basic strata exist, comprising fashion and clothing as social semiotics, namely, discourse semantics, sensory grammar, symbology and materiality. Considering that fashion and clothing is closely connected with the context, the strata of ideology, genre and register are also involved. At each stratum, a number of theories provide insights into the ways in which semiotic resources are modeled to fulfill the interpersonal function and the ways in which the grammatical and discourse systems in fashion and clothing are distinguished from those found in language and other multimodal studies. The interpersonal systems are then discussed with reference to sensory grammar. As displayed in the figure, the system at this stratum concerns modeling the resources for communication. In making this interactive meaning, we seek to extend our understanding of how the system of MODALITY theoretically termed by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and further adopted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; van Leeuwen, 2005) is construed in the field of language and visual design (Section 6.4.1). The current study relies on these notions and interprets MODALITY as a characteristic of interpersonal function that expresses intermediate degrees of meaning in fashion and clothing. These modality possibilities are considered gradable from maximum to minimum, each of which includes two

extremes, positive and negative. For Halliday, these determinacy or indeterminacy of language depends on modalization in the form of probability and usuality, as well as modulation in the form of obligation and inclination. For Kress and van Leeuwen, this truth or untruth of image depends on visual modality markers (Section 6.4.1). In this case, modality is expressed in either of the two ways by combining both together: language and image. There exists another possibility regarding modality in other semiotic resources, such as texture. Fashion and clothing is multimodally constructed by different resources, all of which construe meaning in the process. These modalities fall in between positive and negative poles, standing for the meaning moving across various kinds of uncertainties. Through this system, we may find a way to discover the interactive meaning that is made in the exploration of fashion and clothing. In addition, the rank-based constituency structure is involved ranging across ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory (Section 4.4.4). The interpersonal systems are subsequently investigated in relation to discourse semantics. At this stratum, Martin's systems of APPRAISAL and NEGOTIATION are drawn on to model semiotic resources. Owing to the scope of the study, only parts of systems are generally established and described. APPRAISAL is realized according to the systems of affect, judgment and appreciation. NEGOTIATION is realized through speech function characterized as giving or demanding information and goods-&-services, and exchange structure moving from initiating to responding (Section 6.4.1). The interpersonal systems are finally explored from the expression plane. Similarly, this perspective includes the strata of materiality and symbology, the discussion of which

corresponds to that found in Section 6.2.2. The systems discussed above together define the system of interpersonal metafunction in fashion and clothing, as displayed in Figure 6.11.

**Figure 6.11** Proposed Interpersonal System in Fashion and Clothing
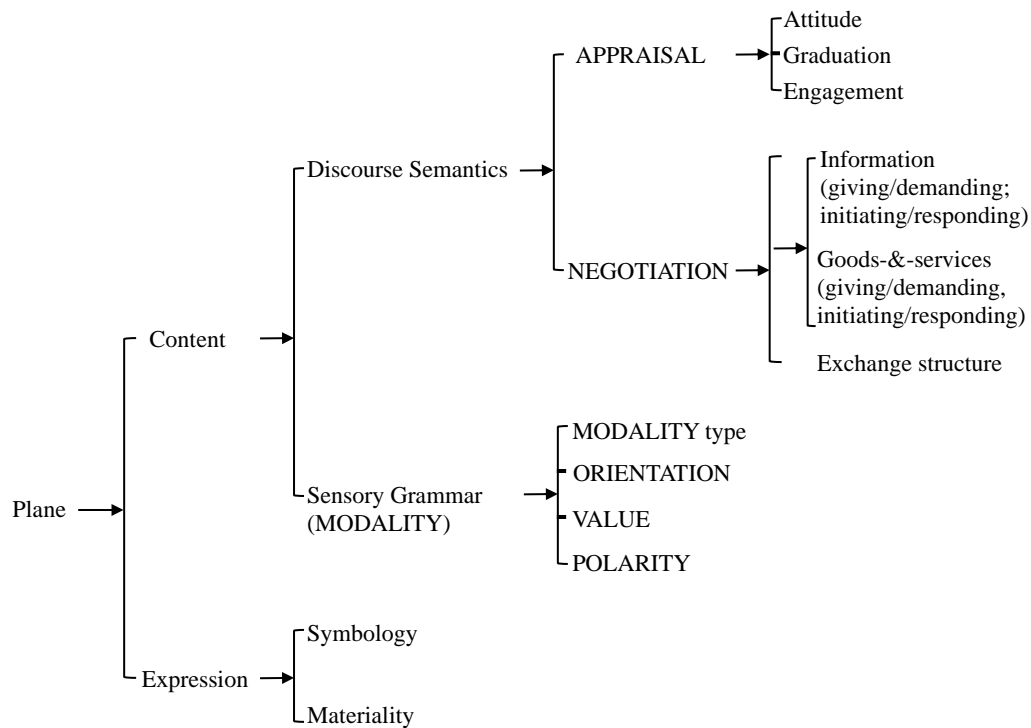


**6.4.3 Realization of the Interpersonal Meaning**

As for interpersonal metafunction, the primary theoretical and methodological foundations have been established in Sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2. Based on these paradigms, this section aims to map out the resources of interpersonal meaning and to provide a systematic account of how they are constructed in the context of fashion and clothing. The discussions can be examined via two general directions: Section 6.4.3.1 to introduce the findings from the stratum of discourse semantics and Section 6.4.3.2 to present the ones from the stratum of grammar. Along the lines, grounded theory

methodology serves as guidance to manipulate data analysis, and contemporary Chinese fashion depicts a contextual environment to verify and validate the theoretical frameworks.

**6.4.3.1 Discourse Semantic Analysis**

The semantic analysis in interpersonal meaning is based on Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) discourse principles. The description of these principles is displayed in Section 6.4.1, from which two distinct constituents are generalized, namely, the systems of APPRAISAL and NEGOTIATION. In what follows, these two systems are separately investigated with respect to fashion and clothing. Through such analysis, we attempt to describe the patterns of resources in relation to interpersonal meaning and theorize the mechanisms for explicating meaning potential within each of them.

The APPRAISAL system concerns the resources, which are used to evaluate a designer's attitudes and negotiate social relationships. Following the general introduction in previous sections, this system is composed of three main variables which include attitude, graduation and engagement (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Under each category, several subcategories are further distinguished (Section 6.4.1). Specifically, attitude refers to the resources for expressing attitudes. Three kinds of attitudes are involved in the system: affect (feelings), judgment (character) and appreciation (value). Graduation is about the resources for scaling attitude and engagement. By reference to scalable clines, graduation is organized into

up-scale or down-scale and operates within the domains of force (intensity and amount) or focus (sharpening and softening). Engagement involves the resources for describing the source of attitudes. According to positions and voices in the discourse, engagement can be distinguished into alignment and disalignment, monogloss and heterogloss (expansion and contraction). Based on these scaffolds, the results that relate to the system of APPRAISAL in the case of fashion and clothing are developed as follows (Table 6.21). The examples illustrating the system are drawn from the analysis of lexical items and display elements across different designers.

Of all these examples, the resources for evaluating attitudes offered by designers are very different. However, certain broad generalizations exist behind the analysis. In terms of affect, designers make attempts to offer different kinds of emotions, construed as positive or negative. These emotions reflect the inner mental state of designers, which falls into four major categories including un/happiness (cheer, affection), in/security (confidence and trust), dis/satisfaction (displeasure, interest, admiration) and dis/inclination (desire). In addition, the designers choose two general ways to express their emotions, which are depicted as direct or implicit. In terms of judgment, the major pattern for designers to assess characters is personal judgments. For Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005), it belongs to the category of social esteem but without further classification. Different from linguistic account, the characters in this context are extended from individuals towards society, culture, politics, history, aesthetics, environment, technology, innovation and other issues.

Table 6.21 Comparison of APPRAISAL System across Fashion Designers

| Designer | Attitude | | | Graduation | Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Affect** | **Judgment** | **Appreciation** | | |
| **LK** | Positive<br>Implicit<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(affection, interest, admiration,<br>desire) | (Admiration)<br>The beauties of nature and female | (Reaction)<br>Natural phenomena, female beauty<br>(Composition)<br>Aesthetic beauties<br>(Valuation)<br>Femininity via sweetness, fantasy,<br>fairy tale over reality | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Soften | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |
| **NL** | Positive<br>Direct<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(cheer, affection, interest, desire) | (Admiration)<br>Freedom of expression<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social issues | (Reaction)<br>Positive storytelling<br>(Composition)<br>Playful combinations<br>(Valuation)<br>Behavior to think and action | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |
| **MM** | Positive/negative<br>Direct<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(affection, confidence, interest,<br>displeasure, desire) | (Admiration)<br>New femininity featuring female<br>empowerment and self-expression<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social conventions | (Reaction)<br>Lifestyle for a new generation,<br>identity recognition, searching<br>process<br>(Composition)<br>Juxtaposition of seductiveness and<br>female strength, conformity and<br>defiance<br>(Valuation) | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |

| | | | New femininity via self-awareness | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **KK** | Positive<br>Direct<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(affection, interest, admiration) | (Admiration)<br>Imagination, creativity, thinking forward<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social and cultural conventions | (Reaction)<br>Culture<br>(Composition)<br>Contemporarily futuristic, modern and daring<br>(Valuation)<br>Behavior to imagine, create, think | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |
| **DC** | Positive<br>Implicit<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(affection, interest, admiration) | (Admiration)<br>Tradition, gender equality<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social and cultural construction towards gender difference, social environment | (Reaction)<br>Contemporary classic, soft masculinity, details<br>(Composition)<br>Balance between contradictions<br>(Valuation)<br>Modern masculinity via fusion of gender fluidity into classic style | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Soften | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |
| **MY** | Positive<br>Implicit<br>Different kinds of emotions<br>(affection, confidence, interest, admiration) | (Admiration)<br>Modern femininity<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social environment | (Reaction)<br>Psychological construction of the self in modern femininity<br>(Composition)<br>Mixture, contradiction, problem solving<br>(Valuation)<br>Modern femininity via maturity power | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss<br>(expansion, contraction) |
| **KH** | Positive/negative | (Admiration) | (Reaction) | (Amount) | Alignment |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Implicit<br>Different kinds of emotions (affection, interest, displeasure) | Self-actualization, intuition of time, implicit expression, tradition and culture<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social and cultural construction, including stereotyped way of perceiving, direct expression and fashion trends | Ability and behavior to perceive<br>(Composition)<br>Mixture, fashion independence<br>(Valuation)<br>Behavior to perceive | Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Soften | Monogloss, heterogloss (expansion, contraction) |
| **KL** | Positive/negative<br>Direct<br>Different kinds of emotions (affection, interest, displeasure, desire) | (Admiration)<br>Lifestyle with characteristics of youth culture<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social issues | (Reaction)<br>Construction of lifestyle<br>(Composition)<br>Experimentation, combination<br>(Valuation)<br>Youth culture | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss (expansion, contraction) |
| **MB** | Positive/negative<br>Direct<br>Different kinds of emotions (affection, interest, admiration, displeasure, confidence, comfort, desire) | (Admiration)<br>Lifestyle about a revival of the style and spirit of classic antiquities from classicism<br>(Criticism)<br>Existing social and cultural phenomena | (Reaction)<br>Contemporary classicism<br>(Composition)<br>Contradiction, comfort<br>(Valuation)<br>Tradition (classicism) | (Amount)<br>Up-scale<br>(Intensity)<br>Up/level/down-scales<br>(Focus)<br>Sharpen | Alignment<br><br>Monogloss, heterogloss (expansion, contraction) |

From this perspective, judgment actually forms the basic resources of theme for designers to construct their design. Similar to affect, the resources of judgment are also displayed in the form of direct and implied, positive and negative (admiration and criticism). In terms of appreciation, different kinds of resources for evaluating phenomena are involved in the system, which demonstrates positive and negative aesthetic responses from designers. In Martin's (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) conception, they are defined as reaction, composition and valuation. Examples of these three aspects are set out in the table above. Based on the analysis, reaction is associated with design philosophy as a result of attention and emotion impacts towards a text or process; composition to deal with individual perceptions of a text or process is oriented towards design style and aesthetics; valuation concerning the social significance of a text or process corresponds to consumer culture that designers wish to deliver. In terms of graduation, force and focus constitute the essential parameters to grade resources. Throughout the designers' collection(s), there are two sets of resources in relation to the appraisal system. One is force, which is recognized as up-scaling according to amount and as up-scaling, level-scaling or down-scaling according to intensity. The other is focus, which is grouped into sharpen and soften according to the prototypicality or preciseness of statements on the reality which designers attempt to draw. In terms of engagement, the source of attitudes responsible for evaluation is outlined by reference to designer and audience. As shown in Table 6.13, the members of the audience are the ones who share a common interest with the designer or with the brand. Consequently, the relationship of

alignment or agreement is directly built between the designer and audience. In making

this aspect of interpersonal meaning, two resources are introduced in the

communication: monogloss featuring single position and voice and heterogloss

featuring multiple positions and voices. Therefore, we consider that monogloss

represents the position and voice from the designer, whilst heterogloss does the

positions and voices from both the designer and audience. Given that different voices

are involved in a dialogistic discourse, two kinds of options to present attitudes

accordingly occur: expansion referring to the increase of the resources in utterances

and viewpoints, where the audience agrees with and expands what the designer talks

about and contraction referring to the restriction of the resources in utterances and

viewpoints, where the audience is unable to understand or partially understands the

messages delivered by the designer. In our analysis, heterogloss taking place in each

designer's discourse becomes a critical aspect for designers to construct their

collections and maintain a close association with the audience. Summing up, attitude,

graduation and engagement are three main systems of evaluating attitude in fashion

and clothing. To present an accurate reflection of these three simultaneous systems,

Table 6.22 outlines an overview for analysis.

**Table 6.22** Summary of the System of APPRAISAL

| Attitude | Affect | • Display of positive and negative ambience<br>• Direct and implicit approaches to expression<br>• Different kinds of emotions<br>(un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction and dis/inclination) |
|---|---|---|
| | Judgment | • Display of positive and negative judgment<br>• Direct or implied reference to assessment<br>• Social esteem as a major type of judgment |

| | Appreciation | • Display of positive and negative responses |
| | | • Different kinds of reactions, composition and valuation |
| Graduation | Force | • Oriented to up-scale in quantification |
| | | • Oriented to up, level and down-scales in intensification |
| | Focus | • Sharpen |
| | | • Soften |
| Engagement | | • Sources of attitudes: designer and audience |
| | | • Alignment as a major type of engagement |
| | | • Monogloss and heterogloss (expansion and contraction) |

In addition to APPRAISAL, another key system is NEGOTIATION, which concerns the resources for negotiating speech roles and relations in dialogue. Based on the review, we can generalize two basic types of interaction that are built up in the NEGOTIATION system (Martin & Rose, 2007). The first type is speech function, which refers to the speech roles of exchange moves in a dialogue. In this system, three parameters of negotiation are introduced, namely, initiating and responding, information and goods-&-services, giving and demanding. The second type is exchange structure, which is about the sequence of exchange moves. Here, various possibilities for the linguistic form are reviewed. Generally, the move potential to negotiate information or goods-&-services is from initiation to follow-up. Drawing on the work by Martin (ibid.), we can interpret the negotiation system in fashion and clothing as follows. Exchange consists of information or goods-&-services negotiation with basic categories, such as initiating and responding, giving and demanding. These classifications relating to speech function are used to clarify the types of dynamic moves found in fashion and clothing. When a designer offers information to the audience and requests information from them, the function they realize is an exchange of information. When a designer gives goods or services to the

audience and demands commodities from the audience, the function they realize is an exchange of goods-&-services. On this basis, moves are classified as a designer who has the commodity to be negotiated and the audience who is invited to receive and give responses to the commodity being exchanged. For this reason, the distinction between initiating and responding is developed as the structure of exchange in order for a designer to give and demand information or goods-&-services.

As displayed in the table below, this considerable potential for exchange is obvious in the discourse of fashion and clothing. This is because both information and goods-&-services are the most important commodities for designers, which are often taken for granted in a negotiation. From the analysis, there emerge some kinds of pattern with exchanges of information and goods-&-services. As noted, the information that is being negotiated between a designer and the audience is counted as design philosophy, by reference to which a consumer culture can be attained. In this structure, a designer proffers information and the audience responds to the information elicited by the designer. Because of this, an exchange takes place. The goods-&-services being negotiated typically occur through goods-and-service activities initiated by a designer and reactional activities followed by the audience. As for goods-and-service activities, fashion and clothing entails multiple functions, which have been discussed in terms of anthropology, psychology, aesthetics and other related studies (Section 4.4.3.1). The services have also been introduced, including presenting activities of release, marketing, visual merchandizing and customer

services (Section 4.5.3). As for reactional activities, the findings are oriented towards specific behaviors that a designer expects the audience to perform, examples of which are also given in Table 6.13. Similar to information, the exchange of goods-&-services is as well established between a designer for initiating and the audience for following up. The descriptive categories for NEGOTIATION are summarized and exemplified in Table 6.23.

### 6.4.3.2 Grammatical Analysis

After building up the systems of discourse semantics, this section mainly discusses a grammatical construction of interpersonal meaning. With regard to this aspect, Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 have established theoretical and methodological underpinnings, based on which we start to develop the analysis. Compared with other available systems, we consider that the systems of MODALITY by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; van Leeuwen, 2005) are more suitable to investigate the patterns of fashion and clothing. As a result, they are presented as guiding strategies to construct interpersonal meaning in this environment. Following their paradigms, MODALITY in fashion and clothing refers to intermediate degrees between truth and untruth of the statements about the reality and in doing so demonstrates interpersonal relations between designers and the audience. Generally, this system can be divided into four components, namely, MODALITY type, ORIENTATION, VALUE and POLARITY, according to the classifications by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and Kress and van Leeuwen

**Table 6.23** Comparison of NEGOTIATION System across Fashion Designers

| Designer | Information (giving/demanding) | | Goods-and-services (giving/demanding) | | Exchange structure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LK | Aesthetic beauties (femininity via sweetness, fantasy, fairy tale over reality) | Response to beauties | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Dream | From initiation to response |
| NL | Personal experience and values towards social issues (behavior to think and action) | Personal interpretation of social issues | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Solve social issues | From initiation to response |
| MM | Lifestyle for a new generation featuring cultures (new femininity via self-awareness) | Female voices relevant to their own experience | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Explore, express, empower the self | From initiation to response |
| KK | Exploration of mysteries (behavior to imagine, create and think) | Personal expression | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Dare to imagine and create; think forward | From initiation to response |
| DC | Contemporary classic, soft masculinity, details (modern masculinity via fusion of gender fluidity into classic style) | Personal interpretation according to life experience | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Demonstrate personality and curiosity; create values and significance to the clothing | From initiation to response |
| MY | Psychological construction of the self in modern femininity (modern femininity via maturity power) | Personal understanding of the whole design process | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Demonstrate the personality; perform social functions; embrace the confidence | From initiation to response |
| KH | Personal interpretation of garments (behavior to perceive) | Personal reaction to garments | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Perceive the world | From initiation to response |
| KL | Lifestyle (youth culture) | Personal interpretation of lifestyle | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Express the lifestyle | From initiation to response |
| MB | Reconstruction of classicism through a contemporary approach (contemporary classicism) | Personal preference for classicism | Goods (functions) Services (related activities) | Respond to the story and design | From initiation to response |

(2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). In what follows, the components that involve a set of resources for expressing modality are illustrated in detail.

The type of MODALITY is examined at the beginning of the analysis. In our interpretation, two sets of resources are available for judging modality in fashion and clothing. One refers to the resources describing meaning making through only one semiotic mode or resource, and the other refers to the resources concerning the ways in which multiple semiotic modes or resources function integratively to construe meaning in text. Through a close examination of the meaning realized within and across semiotic modes or resources, fashion and clothing is formulated as a multimodal construction in the study (Section 4.5.1). By means of this approach, we can understand that fashion and clothing is a complex interaction of multisemiotic elements, where verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural, olfactory and such are considered semiotic resources. In this sense, the modes to realize the interpersonal meaning of fashion and clothing stem from both monomode and cross modes, which are instantiated in the form of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. To elicit special interplay with the audience, designers utilize key guidelines to manipulate such semiotic resources. As discussed before, they are design principles and Gestalt theories (Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). Some basic options within the two are shown in Section 4.5.2.1. This set of guidelines demonstrates that semiotic resources are organized as a synergistic whole in the dissemination of information, which are closely attached to theme and style, whether the form they

take (one or various semiotic resources) or the organization they formulate (spatiality or temporality).

In addition to MODALITY type, the other three dimensions are also relevant to our analysis. One is ORIENTATION, which discusses the resources of subjective and objective, explicit and implicit in modality (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These oppositions are considered essential variants in the formulation of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. To be specific, the judgment stated by designers is either subjective where expression is based on personal feelings or opinions or objective where expression is established on the basis of facts. As for the way to present judgment, two variants of explicit and implicit are given by designers in their construction of modality. Along this dimension, other domains that show variations in the system are VALUE and POLARITY. VALUE concerns the resources for dealing with the indeterminacy between positive and negative. Three values are identified throughout the system: high, low and median. POLARITY which operates to construe uncertainty is classified as positive and negative, corresponding to the value of modality. These dimensions with the comparison between designers are presented in Table 6.24. As seen from the table, a lot of options are chosen by designers to establish a connection with the audience. They are MODALITY type, ORIENTATION, VALUE and POLARITY, in line with the notions of Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). From the analysis, we can find the mode of realization is strikingly similar among designers. However, the ways to achieve

modality vary considerably in orientation, value and polarity. A variety of reasons cause the differences, among which theme, style and design philosophy are considered recurrent ones across the designers.

**Table 6.24** Comparison of MODALITY System across Fashion Designers

| Designer | Mode | Orientation | Value | Polarity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LK | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural, olfactory) | Subjective/objective Implicit | Median | Positive |
| NL | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Explicit | High | Positive |
| MM | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Explicit | High | Positive Negative |
| KK | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Implicit | Low | Positive |
| DC | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Implicit | Median | Positive |
| MY | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Implicit | Median | Positive |
| KH | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective Implicit | Low | Positive Negative |
| KL | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Explicit | High | Positive Negative |
| MB | Multimodality (verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural) | Subjective/objective Explicit | High | Positive Negative |

The exploration of fashion and clothing as a modality system can also be demonstrated through the theoretical contributions by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). This is because the construction here is more complex than display, which leads to a further problem regarding the way how resources are manipulated to instantiate the modality by designers. As a result, their works that describe the meaning-making resources may be taken as an approach to develop specific criteria for judging the modality of fashion and clothing. According to Kress

and van Leeuwen (ibid.), some scales can serve as a marker for the evaluation of visual modality, which includes the articulation of detail, contextualization, color saturation, color modulation, color differentiation, image depth, illumination and brightness. Within each scale, there is a continuum graded from the maximum value to the minimum value. It is assumed that two extremes of the continuum do not always coincide with the highest and lowest modalities. For some cases, the median represents the highest modality. In considering the nature of fashion and clothing, we select some to explain: representation (the articulation of detail), contextualization and color. Summarized from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 160-162), the articulation of detail ranges from "maximum representation" to "maximum abstraction"; contextualization from "the most fully articulated and detailed background" to "the absence of background"; color saturation from "full color saturation" to "the absence of color"; color differentiation from "a maximally diversified range of colors" to "monochrome"; color modulation from "fully modulated color" to "plain, unmodulated color". Apart from the scales, visual modality is judged depending on cultural and historical background (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 163). To account for the contextual features of modality, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) use four coding orientations defined as technological, sensory, abstract and naturalistic (pp. 165-166). Based on their conception (ibid.), sensory coding orientation focuses on the principle that is used for pleasure. Abstract coding orientation relates to the principle which is designed for specialists in academic and scientific contexts. Naturalistic coding orientation is the dominant principle, which is shared by all members of a

given society (p. 165). To illustrate their account in fashion and clothing, examples of these three coding orientations, together with modality markers, are provided as follows.

**Table 6.25** Examples for the System of MODALITY

| Instance | Modality |
|---|---|
|  | BLACK SPOON 2015 FW "Ship of Fools" <br><br> **MODALITY type** <br> <u>Verbal</u> <br> *Madness and Civilization* by Foucault; "Ship of Fools" from *The Republic: Book VI* by Plato; "The Drunken Boat" by Arthur Rimbaud <br> <u>Visual</u> <br> Ensemble, garment, component, element, accessory <br> (prints from the painting "Ship of Fools" by Hieronymus Bosch) <br> <u>Tactile</u> <br> Traditional fabrics and materials (silk, velvet, linen, cotton, etc.) <br> <u>Kinetic</u> <br> Movement of textures <br> <u>Aural</u> <br> "Motion" by Balam Acab; "Dog Door" by Sparklehorse; "Hell Broke Luce" by Tom Waits <br> **ORIENTATION** <br> Subjective (express personal interests, aesthetic preference, spirits) <br> Objective (culture) <br> Explicit <br> **VALUE** <br> High <br> **POLARITY** <br> Positive (the style and spirit of classic antiquities from classicism) <br> Negative (existing social and cultural phenomena) <br> **Modality marker** <br> Maximum representation of detail <br> The most fully articulated and detailed background <br> Full color saturation <br> Maximally diversified range of colors <br> Fully modulated color |

| | **Sensory coding orientation** |
| | Classicism |
|  | KAY KWOK 2014 FW "It Is Not A Fake Story" |
| | **MODALITY type** |
| | <u>Verbal</u> |
| | "Reports of mutilated cows, alien abduction with unexplained body marks, unidentified flying object witnesses...they are not fake stories, but conspiracy of extraterrestrials. What do 'they' want from us?" |
| | <u>Visual</u> |
| | Ensemble, garment, component, element, accessory |
| | <u>Tactile</u> |
| | Neoprene, mesh, plastics and other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials |
| | <u>Kinetic</u> |
| | Movement of texture |
| | **ORIENTATION** |
| | Subjective (express personal interests) |
| | Objective (culture) |
| | Implicit |
| | **VALUE** |
| | Low |
| | **POLARITY** |
| | Positive (behavior to imagine, create and think) |
| | **Modality marker** |
| | Maximum abstraction (simplest line) |
| | Absence of background |
| | Absence of color |
| | Monochrome |
| | Plain, unmodulated color |
| | **Abstract coding orientation** |
| | Space exploration |

| NELSON BLACKLE 2014 FW "Journey Walker" |
|---|
| **MODALITY type** |
| <u>Verbal</u> |
| "WORK NOW!!!", "WORK", "PLAY", "GAME OVER?" |
| <u>Visual</u> |
| Ensemble, garment, component, element, accessory |
| (characters of video games, video game setting) |
| <u>Tactile</u> |
| Combinations of high-end fabrics and materials (wool, cashmere, silk, leather, etc.) |
| <u>Kinetic</u> |
| Movement of texture |
| **ORIENTATION** |
| Subjective (share personal experience and values; interact with audience) |
| Objective (social issues) |
| Explicit |
| **VALUE** |
| High |
| **POLARITY** |
| Positive (behavior to think and action) |
| **Modality marker** |
| Maximum representation of detail |
| The most fully articulated and detailed background |
| Neutral saturation |
| Maximally diversified range of colors |
| Fully modulated color |
| **Naturalistic coding orientation** |
| Social issues |

Some points are drawn from the analysis of the three examples. The first, modality in fashion and clothing is realized through a multiplicity of discourses ranging from different semiotic modes or resources. For this reason, modality is construed as an outcome of individual resource and the interaction of resources and composition of resources. The second, modality is an expression of subjective and objective evaluations, which can be manipulated in an explicit or implicit way. Under such

situation, contextual factors, both inside and outside, provide very important cues to interpret fashion and clothing in question. The third, modality is organized as a system of values with which intermediate degrees between positive and negative are explored, known technically as polarity. With reference to these systems, we can distinguish the status of a designer's judgment and clarify the relationship between the designer and audience. The fourth, modality is oriented towards different coding orientations, including sensory, abstract and naturalistic. As stated above, these orientations take place within cultural contexts. For sensory coding orientations, the designer attempts to elicit sensory reactions from the audience to the issue being discussed. Here, sensory modalities form a source of pleasure, by means of which interpersonal meanings are conveyed. In this context, the truth of reality is generally given to those who share similar characteristics in the perception of specific culture. For abstract coding orientations, the resources are organized to characterize reality as having only marginal members in society, i.e. those who receive special training in academic and scientific domains. From this point of view, high modality is nearly hard to achieve. Consequently, the definition of "what is real" always remains inaccessible to the general audience, which leads to a clear separation between the designer and audience. In contrast to sensory and abstract ones, naturalistic coding orientation acknowledges the way in which texts can be coded by any member of society. Under such environment, the effect is to introduce the maximum involvement of audience into the position invited by a designer and hence to offer a modality value directed towards maintaining a strong alignment with those who have similar experience within a given

society. This orientation in our discussion comes closest to the fact of reality which designers depict for the audience. To sum up, fashion and clothing modality is evaluated by a complex interaction of criteria for what counts as real and true. Similar to visual modality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), this modality is also determined by several markers and also corresponds to the reality defined by cultural standards. Following the analysis, it may seem that when a designer's judgments have been given, the assessment of modality is almost dependent on the audience. Behind this, there is a belief in audience considered to be capable of understanding reality as it is in some ways. For the time being, their interpretations of the world actually become the main source for judging what is real and what is not. Therefore, a hypothesis is drawn that the ability of audience to understand designs directly influences the realization of modality and interpersonal relation.

### 6.4.4 Discussion

Section 6.4.3 presents the findings of interpersonal meaning. As demonstrated through the analysis, interpersonal meaning in fashion and clothing can be construed from three general systems: APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION and MODALITY. To summarize the findings and map out the basic resources for realizing interpersonal meaning, these types of analysis are outlined in Table 6.26.

In the system of APPRAISAL, three basic patterns are utilized to evaluate the attitudes of designers and develop the relationships with the audience. As displayed in

**Table 6.26** Checklist Matrix of Interpersonal Metafunction in Fashion Designers

| SEMANTICS | |
|---|---|
| APPRAISAL | • Attitude (affect/judgment/appreciation) <br> • Graduation (force/focus) <br> • Engagement |
| NEGOTIATION | • Information orientation <br> • Goods-&-services orientation <br> • Exchange structure |
| **GRAMMAR** | |
| **ENSEMBLE** <br> MODALITY | • Prominence of interplay through multisemiotic resources in ensembles <br> • Orientation (subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) <br> • Value (high, low and median) <br> • Polarity (positive and negative) <br> • Marker (contextualization) <br> • Coding orientation (sensory, abstract and naturalistic) |
| **GARMENT** <br> MODALITY | • Prominence of interplay through multisemiotic resources in garment pieces <br> • Orientation (subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) <br> • Value (high, low and median) <br> • Polarity (positive and negative) <br> • Marker (contextualization) |
| **COMPONENT** <br> MODALITY | • Prominence of interplay through multisemiotic resources in garment parts and details <br> • Orientation (subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) <br> • Value (high, low and median) <br> • Polarity (positive and negative) <br> • Marker (representation, contextualization) |
| **ELEMENT** <br> MODALITY | • Prominence of interplay through multisemiotic resources in design elements <br> • Orientation (subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) <br> • Value (high, low and median) <br> • Polarity (positive and negative) <br> • Marker (representation, contextualization and color) |
| **ACCESSORY** <br> MODALITY | • Prominence of interplay through multisemiotic resources in accessories <br> • Orientation (subjective and objective, explicit and implicit) <br> • Value (high, low and median) <br> • Polarity (positive and negative) <br> • Marker (representation, contextualization and color) |

Table 6.21, they are organized as attitudes, graduation and engagement according to the properties of designers. In line with Martin's terms, these patterns are classified into further subcategories: attitude in terms of affect, judgment and appreciation; graduation in terms of force and focus; engagement in terms of alignment and disalignment, monogloss and heterogloss. From the analysis, designers use similar evaluative systems to describe their attitudes and interact with the audience. However, the resources that designers use, the values involved and the ways in which they present to the audience vary significantly, the findings of which can be found in Tables 6.21 and 6.22. In the system of NEGOTIATION, speech function and exchange structure constitute two ways of negotiating roles and relations for designers to interact with the audience. Function refers to giving and demanding information or goods-&-services, among which giving is made for initiating and demanding for responding. Exchange structure refers to the sequence of exchange between designers and the audience, which moves from initiation to follow-up. In our analysis of this system, the information to be negotiated across designers is design philosophy and resultant consumer culture, whereas goods-&-services to be negotiated are commodities and associated activities. No matter what kind of negotiation it is, information or goods-&-services, exchange is all realized through designer's initiation and audience' responses. The details of negotiation in the context of designers are demonstrated in Table 6.23.

In the system of MODALITY, four different kinds of resources are identified

according to Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014): MODALITY type, ORIENTATION, VALUE and POLARITY. Similarly, these resources can be divided into several variables for the evaluation of modality. To specify, the types of MODALITY include single and multiple semiotic resources; ORIENTATION includes subjective and objective, explicit and implicit; VALUE includes high, low and median; POLARITY includes positive and negative. The examples given in Table 6.24 are utilized to illustrate the modality made by different designers. As the analysis shows, in being able to have distinctive features, designers choose various resources to characterize modality, particularly in orientation, value and polarity. However, the modes they use to realize modality are nearly the same. In addition, another type of modality is involved in the construction of interpersonal meaning by designers. This kind of reference to modality derives from the theoretical basis of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). To illustrate the nature of fashion and clothing, we employ three criteria for judging modality: representation, contextualization and color. We also draw on three coding orientations of sensory, abstract and naturalistic to explain contextual features in the culture shown by designers (Table 6.25).

Interpersonal meaning is concerned about the construction of personal and social relations. As such, the fundamental properties of interpersonal relations come from two perspectives. In this context, one is from the designers and the other is from the audience. The perspective of designers is demonstrated throughout all the systems of APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION and MODALITY. Based on our analysis, the

resources for realizing these interpersonal systems are multisemiotic resources, which take the form of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. Such semiotic resources with a wide range of qualities and variations are organized under the guidance of design principles and Gestalt theories (Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). It is assumed that all these manipulations are in close connection with the design philosophy, design style and target market proposed by designers. On this account, marked differences are found in the three systems among designers. Several significant factors can explain this situation, including personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, family and education background, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle. In contrast to designers, the perspective of the audience is realized through their participation in the systems of APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION and MODALITY initiated by designers. As active participants, their understanding of a designer's creation does matter in the discussion of interpersonal relations. Underpinning this is a basic assumption that they are able to interpret what they have received from the designers. However, their interpretations are always subject to variation due to varying experience. To some extent, we can consider that their evaluations decide whether the realization of modality or interpersonal meaning is successful.

To locate interpersonal meaning within specific contexts, we also generalize evaluative patterns that are applicable to the explored designers in the study. These

patterns are construed as modernization and hybridization mainly through the systems of APPRAISAL and MODALITY. Compared to globalization in the system of NEGOTIATION, conceptualization and individualization are the main features of these two systems. In a similar vein, the social background of fashion in contemporary China is the major cause that promotes the changes and development of these designers.

## 6.5 Fashion and Clothing as Organization: The Textual Meaning

### 6.5.1 Description of Textual Metafunction

The use of textual metafunction is a key element in SFL, which concerns the resources for organizing information into the text. Such arrangements of text integrate ideational and interpersonal metafunctions into a whole and permit the discourse to be seen as a flow of information and created in a coherent and continuous context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30-31). In textual metafunction, the main theoretical frameworks are two interrelated systems (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 89). One is the THEME system for organizing the information of each clause as a message, which involves the Theme and Rheme. When an element is presented as a point of departure, by reference to which the message of a clause is interpreted, this is the Theme. Based on the local context or point of departure, the rest of message in the clause are developed. This is the Rheme. Therefore, any clause as message is construed as a configuration of two thematic functions, a Theme followed by a Rheme. In Halliday's framework, the Theme of a clause includes the constituents from all

three metafunctions: textual, interpersonal and topical (experiential) Themes (ibid., pp. 105-108). The other is the INFORMATION system for organizing textual resources to create the flow of discourse, which involves the elements of Given and New (ibid., p. 114). Given is realized at the initial position of a clause, which specifies the information already known to the addressee(s), and New is realized at the non-initial position, which indicates the information inaccessible to them (ibid., p. 116). Each information unit within the system is organized into two functional elements, a Given plus a New. In the linguistic sense, the system of INFORMATION is closely related to the system of THEME. That is, the ordering of information structure corresponds to that of thematic structure: Theme within Given and Rheme within New (ibid., p. 119). Halliday's textual frameworks can be illustrated in Figure 6.12.

**Figure 6.12** The THEME and INFORMATION Systems
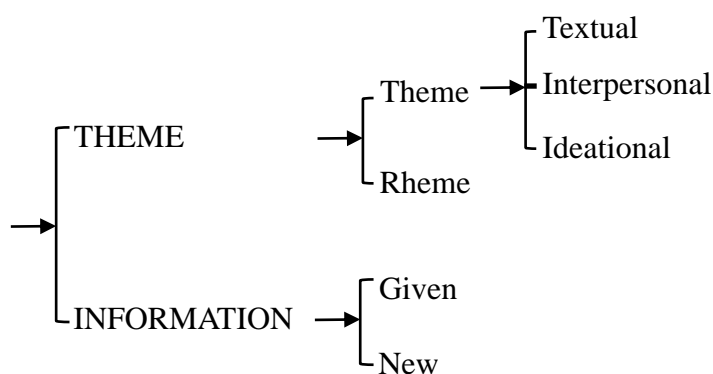


In exploring textual metafunction in semantic discourse, Martin (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) proposes a system for tracking people and things, which he refers to as IDENTIFICATION (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 155). The purpose of this system is to make sense of discourse in question. Within the system, various kinds of resources are

available to introduce participants and track them as text unfolds. In general, the system of IDENTIFICATION consists of two main systems (ibid.). One system is to track the identity of participants, which is realized through presenting (introducing) and presuming (tracking) reference. The other system is to compare their identities, which is realized through comparative reference. In addition, generic and specific reference is a means that works to identify the participants (Martin, 1992, p. 103). To clarify presumed identity, Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 169-173) recognizes different ways of tracking. The types of reference include anaphora, cataphora, esphora, homophora, endophora and exophora, which are classified into the recoverability system. In Martin's concept, there is also a system for tracking presumed information in text that unfolds in its context. This tracking system is built up on the basis of specific discourse presumed and the genre situated in (ibid., p. 183). Figure 6.13 shows an overview of the resources used to introduce and track participants in Martin's IDENTIFICATION systems.

**Figure 6.13** The IDENTIFICATION Systems
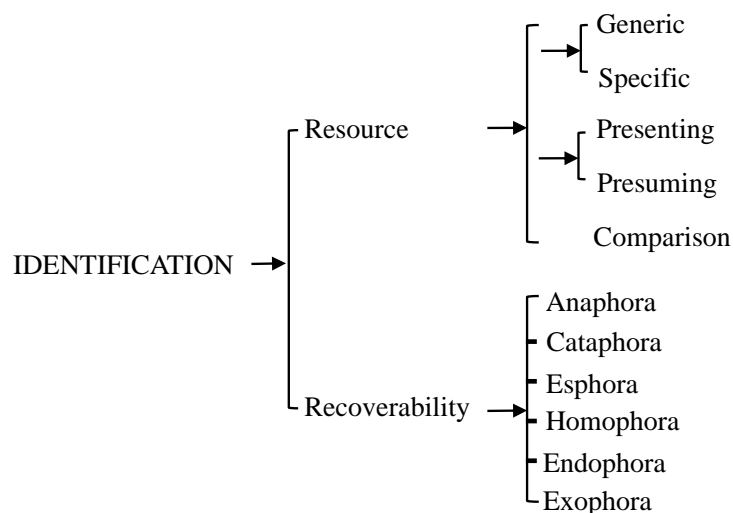
Within multimodal studies, a number of attempts exist to construct the textual frameworks for different semiotic resources, which includes the works of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), O'Toole (2011), Bezemer and Kress (2014), Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011), O'Halloran (2005), etc. These attempts have provided comprehensive theoretical and practical approaches to textual analysis in the field of multimodality. As an example, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) define compositional meaning in visual design and consider how visual text is organized into a discourse by information value, salience and framing. O'Toole (2011) investigates the resources in painting, sculpture and architecture with reference to their distinct compositional or textual functions that they fulfill in the process of communication. Bezemer and Kress (2014) extend textual meanings to touch and establish its relations with other semiotic modes in formulating a complete semiotic whole. Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) explore the textual dimension through instantiating the texture across different media. One great contribution of their investigations to SFL and multimodality is that they prove a wide range of applications in textual metafunction and provide a guideline for future analysis in this dimension. Among them, the extension of INFORMATION analysis to the multimodal context is made by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In their visual framework, information system is realized by the placement of the elements within composite texts: left and right, top and bottom, center and margin (ibid., pp. 179-200). The three dimensions are not isolated but combined in the visual composition to convey information value. O'Halloran (2005) adopts Halliday's THEME and Martin's IDENTIFICATION to deal with the issues of mathematic

discourse. As argued, multisemiotic nature is central to her modeling of textual metafunction. In this aspect, the multimodal frameworks she proposed are referred to as the useful theoretical foundations for the study, based on which we can interpret the textual organization of fashion and clothing.

### 6.5.2 Methodological Construction of Textual Meaning in Fashion and Clothing

The methodology for investigating textual metafunction shares many similarities with other metafunctions (Sections 6.2.2, 6.3.2 and 6.4.2). Thus, the procedure of data analysis to realize textual meaning is not provided again. The main purpose of this section is to formulate the theoretical framework for textual metafunction, through which fashion and clothing is organized as a coherent and continuous text unfolding in its context. During this process, Halliday's SFL principles and Martin's discursive concepts offer theoretical and methodological underpinnings to map out the patterns of semiotic resources in the textual system.

As indicated in Figure 6.14, the textual organization of fashion and clothing also involves a number of theoretical issues, including stratification, lexicogrammar and discourse systems. In addition to SFL theories, other related studies provide guiding principles by reference to which fashion and clothing presents itself in textual terms. At this point, an introduction of the textual organization is needed to have a general idea about how textual meaning is created and expressed. One major characteristic introduced in this organization is stratification, which operates in the form of several

interrelated levels or strata. The content plane is stratified into discourse semantics and sensory grammar; the expression is stratified into symbology and materiality and the context is stratified into ideology, genre and register (Sections 4.4.2 and 6.2.2). For textual framework, the stratum of sensory grammar is discussed according to Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) THEME and COHESION systems (Section 6.5.1). Of this stratum, the rank scale exists as other metafunctional systems, which is composed of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory (Section 4.4.4). The stratum of discourse semantics is organized depending on Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) IDENTIFICATION system, as given in Section 6.5.1. This system for tracking participants is categorized as presenting, presuming, comparative, generic and specific according to the nature of reference. In the end, the strata of symbology and materiality are analyzed in accordance with the counterparts discussed in Section 6.2.2. To generalize this proposal, Figure 6.14 gives an overview map from which the textual system of fashion and clothing is realized.

**Figure 6.14** Proposed Textual System in Fashion and Clothing
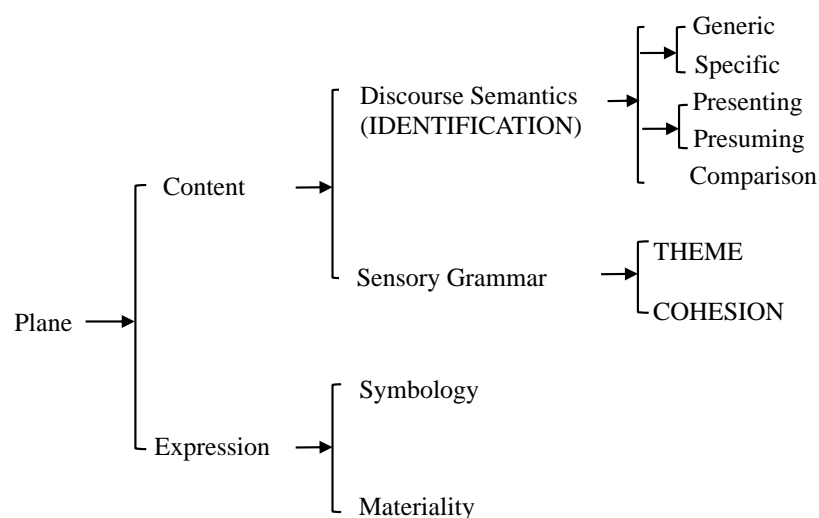
### 6.5.3 Realization of the Textual Meaning

Following a general introduction in Sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2, this section presents the findings from the analysis. For further understanding, a detailed explanation in the construction of textual meaning is provided. Section 6.5.3.1 outlines the findings, which arise from the analysis of the resources at the stratum of discourse semantics. Section 6.5.3.2 delineates the resources of grammar and explores the ways in which fashion and clothing constitute the systems that can be used to realize the organization of text. In a similar manner, the analysis is established in the context of contemporary Chinese fashion and guided by grounded theory methodology.

### 6.5.3.1 Discourse Semantic Analysis

At the beginning, this section provides an analysis of the findings obtained from discourse semantics. During this process, Martin's (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) discourse approach provides a systematic mechanism for modeling the resources in fashion and clothing. As introduced in Section 6.5.1, the theorization of IDENTIFICATION by Martin is concerned about the resources for tracking participants into a discourse, which encompasses three specific systems: generic and specific, presenting and presuming, comparative (ibid.). In this study, the three strategies serve to generate the patterns that designers use to construct textual meaning and to map out how such discourse makes sense to the audience. For this reason, these types of analysis are developed.

The first system for tracking participants is generic and specific reference (Martin, 1992, p. 103). According to Martin (ibid.), the two opposites can identify participants and keep track of their identities in discourse. Generic refers to the patterns that are applied to a whole group of things, and specific refers to the patterns that are associated with only one particular thing. By this interpretation, the tracking system of clothing can be construed as well. We assume that several reference chains exist within every designer's collection(s). These reference chains are considered to link participants and to track them with the unfolding of a text or a collection. In Martin's (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 157) term, they are a set of choices which can be deployed by designers for identification. Under this overarching guidance, a range of resources are mapped out to initiate the introduction.

As analyzed, two basic choices are made by designers. One is design philosophy, including design concept, design inspiration and brand identity. The other is design style, which covers the categories of subculture and aesthetics. Different from other choices, the two run throughout the sequence of a designer's collections. As a result, they form the main backbone of one's creation, by means of which a design of clothing is achieved. We refer to this type of choice as generic reference. Each designer has his own specific language and way to communicate, so the basic choices they choose to explore differ greatly from each other. From this sense, we can interpret that generic reference defines a designer's signature and finally creates his distinct identity. Aside from generic, there is another type of choices, which serves to

reflect relevant qualities in generic reference and thus forms a way that participants can be introduced and tracked through the whole text. Each of them has its distinct representation; hence, they are referred to as specific reference. In fashion and clothing, these choices have various interpretations. For example, a collection is composed of several ensembles, ensembles of garments, garments of components and components of elements. Accessory is also considered an effective means to introduce participants and keep track of their identities.

The second system within the system of IDENTIFICATION is presenting and presuming reference (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 155). This set of reference is also utilized for introducing and tracking the identity of participants. Presenting is employed to introduce participants, whereas presuming to track participants. Basic resources for presenting reference are similar to generic reference, including design philosophy and style. Because of this, presenting reference also forms the key element for designers, which can differentiate one from others. However, the resources for presuming reference are a little different because they can be in a wide range of applications in the industry. Therefore, design aesthetics, collection and marketing can track the participants we already know - the properties introduced by presenting reference.

The third system for identification is comparative reference, which compares the identity of participants (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 155). Two choices are distinguished

in the system of comparison: similarity and difference. By similarity, resources for

identifying participants include design philosophy, design style, marketing position,

design aesthetics and design progress. By difference, resources for identifying

participants include different presentation in design collection(s) in terms of theme,

inspiration, choice of design elements, product-related and so on. To gain a clear view

of the system of IDENTIFICATION, the resources are synthesized and tabulated as

shown in Table 6.27.

**Table 6.27** Resources for the System of IDENTIFICATION

| Type | Resources |
|---|---|
| Generic | Design philosophy and design style as generic reference through collection(s) |
| Specific | Stylistic organization of ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories as a reflection of relevant qualities in generic reference |
| Presenting | Reference introduced by design philosophy and design style |
| Presuming | Reference tracked by<br>• Design aesthetics: properties of design elements relevant to presenting reference<br>• Design collection: properties of themes, inspirations, key design elements, accessories, etc. relevant to presenting reference<br>• Design marketing: properties of target market relevant to presenting reference |
| Comparison | • Similarity in design philosophy, design style, marketing position, design aesthetics and design progress<br>• Difference between different presentation in design collection(s) in terms of theme, inspiration, choice of design elements and product-related, among others |

According to Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 169-173), various ways of devices are

available in the system for tracking presumed information. In clothing, it can

generally be divided into two: inside the text, including references pointing forward

and back and outside the text, including references relating to shared knowledge and

the situation. In other words, we can identify the information inside collections(s)

through looking for these identities forward or back. At the same time, we can also

obtain information outside collection(s) through connecting the identities with cultural

knowledge shared by designers and the audience or the specific situation in which

identities occur. We take Moti Bai's design as an example to illustrate the types of

reference in the system of recoverability. Within the text, contemporary classicism is

the central theme that works as generic or presenting reference through the whole

collection(s). There are two places that help look for presumed identities. As noted,

one is to be found when looking forward and the other when looking back in the

preceding text(s). Such reference allows specific connections to be made within or

between collection(s), by means of which the cohesion of ensembles is realized.

Outside the text, the reference is obvious because stylistic organization in the form of

surrealist, gothic, feminine, neoclassic and romantic is usually manipulated in this

way. Such stylistic forms are featured in ensembles, garments, components, elements

and accessories. For example, in romantic style, some essential elements include

classic shapes, ideal silhouettes, broad shoulders, voluminously wide sleeves, narrow

waist, ample skirts, billowy gowns, layers upon layers of organza, drop-waist dresses,

ruffled blouses, frilly collars, to name but a few. Through the cultural knowledge

shared by designers and the audience, it aligns a special group of people who are

familiar with these types of style. In the meanwhile, the designer draws on a variety of

cultural works characterized by classicism art as her design inspiration (Table 6.7).

Drawing on these definite references, alignment is established with the audience who

is familiar with classicism art and who shares a common interest with this type of

culture. Likewise, when the designer tells something to the audience regarding what

they can experience and imagine, then they can find the presumed identities in the situation which the designer especially indicates. The connection between the designer and audience is accordingly formed.

### 6.5.3.2 Grammatical Analysis

In this section, we extend our analysis to the level of grammar through examining the resources available to designers during the design process. In Section 6.5.1, the grammatical frameworks for textual meaning are examined in relation to Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) insights. The contribution of this approach is to provide a model for showing how a text cohesively unfolds. With this technique, we can investigate the complex construction in fashion and clothing and accordingly form the general patterns of textual meaning. Following Halliday (ibid.), this section has two parts. The first part discusses the system of THMEM and the second part explains the system of COHESION. In the next, details of these two systems appear.

Inspired by Halliday, THEME is the system which serves to organize the ensembles as a message. Within THEME, the message used to orient the development of text is Theme. For this study, Theme is construed as being developed through sequences of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. According to thematic status they are given, Theme has three types: textual, interpersonal and topical (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 105-108). These Themes, as stated, correspond to three metafunctions. That is, textual theme relates to the organization of text; interpersonal

theme functions to enact personal and social relations; topical theme is to construe human experience. Through this way, we can summarize thematic types from the analysis and interpret the functions which Theme performs by designers. Examples under Theme are given in Table 6.28.

**Table 6.28** Comparison of Theme across Fashion Designers

| Designer | Type | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Textual Theme** | **Interpersonal Theme** | **Topical Theme** |
| **LK** | KanaLili #1 collection<br>KanaLili #2 collection<br>KanaLili #3 collection<br>KanaLili #4 collection<br>KanaLili #5 collection<br>KanaLili #6 collection | - | (Participant)<br>#1 collection: "The Snowland Angels"<br>(Circumstance)<br>#2 collection: Boudoir<br>(Process: relation)<br>#6 collection: "Le Parfum" |
| **NL** | - | 2015 SS "You Only See What You Wanna See"<br>2018 SS "I Don't Give a Shit"<br>2015 FW "Do You Remember?" | (Participant)<br>2014 FW "Journey Walker" |
| **MM** | 2017 SS "Collection W"<br>2017 FW "Collection P" | - | (Participant)<br>2015 SS  "The Remains of an Urban Garden"<br>2015 FW "The Suzhou Museum"<br>(Process: relation/material)<br>2016 SS "From Rebel to Icon"<br>2016 FW "Save the Date" |
| **KK** | - | 2014 FW "It Is Not A Fake Story"<br>2015 SS "That Has Not Been Received?" | (Participant)<br>2012 FW "Fake Eternity"<br>2014 SS "The Hidden Force"<br>2016 SS "The Freeform" |
| **DC** | - | 2018 SS "Boys be Flowers" | (Participant)<br>2015 FW "Synthetic Nature"<br>2017 FW "Mature Child"<br>(Circumstance)<br>2016 FW "Dream of Dali"<br>2017 SS "Revisited Garden"<br>(Process: relation) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 2016 SS "Harmony-at-Odds" |
| **MY** | - | - | (Participant)<br>2015 SS "Dandelion"<br>2015 FW "Camouflage Owl"<br>2016 SS "Water Drop"<br>2016 FW "An Eruption"<br>2017 SS "The Cactus Wave"<br>(Process: material)<br>2017 FW "Exploring Self" |
| **KH** | - | - | (Participant)<br>2016 SS "Surrogates"<br>(Circumstance)<br>2015 FW "The Place We Left Behind"<br>(Process: relational/material)<br>2014 FW "Over Mature"<br>2016 FW "Non"<br>2015 SS "Fallen"<br>2015 PFW "We'll Run" |
| **KL** | - | 2016 FW "Be Not So Gentle"<br>2017 FW "Waste isn't just waste"<br>2017 SS "It's okay to live a life others don' understand." | (Participant)<br>2015 SS "Combo"<br>2015 FW "Error"<br>(Process: existential)<br>2016 SS "No Answer" |
| **MB** | - | - | (Participant)<br>2016 SS "Barroco"<br>(Circumstance)<br>2015 FW "Ship of Fools"<br>(Process: relational)<br>2015 SS "Rhinestone of Ferry Street"<br>2016 FW "Paradise Circus"<br>2017 SS "The Twilight Zone"<br>2017 FW "Bitter Sweet" |

From the results, designers choose to use different types of Theme within collections, including textual, interpersonal and topical. In textual Theme, themes are organized according to the order through which combinations are made. Such conjunction of themes is realized through spatial and temporal organization of collections. Based on

this type of Theme, a continual and cohesive reference is attained by designers. Themes in interpersonal aspect establish a direct association with the audience. As shown in the table, various interpersonal Themes are involved. The purpose of these themes is to communicate designers' opinions or to signal the answers required from the audience. Topical Theme construes the experience of designers, which contains the experiential elements of participant, circumstance or process. In this case, designers utilize different configurations of elements to construe a particular domain of experience and introduce a collection. As for process, most of the types found are relational process, which serves to characterize. Depending on the degree of abstraction, the topical Theme can be further divided into two: narrative and conceptual. This is in accord with the experiential construction of process type (Section 6.2.3.2). Then, the subject of Themes is various, which depends on designers themselves. Generally, the selection of Themes represents a positive response to the issues that surround designers, including society, culture, politics, history, aesthetics, environment, technology, innovation, etc. (Table 6.14). In addition, the choices of Theme exactly relate to design philosophy, design style and target market which designers aim to construct. Next, in our brief sketch of the Theme, there emerge two basic patterns of thematic progression. One is narrative and the other is conceptual. As we analyze, conceptual pattern is the most favored type of development by designers. In this pattern, ensembles are organized towards abstraction, which is directly opposed to its narrative counterpart. Table 6.29 serves as a summary developed from the system of THEME in clothing.

**Table 6.29** The system of THMEM

| Category | | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Subject | | Ongoing exploration of social, cultural, political, historical, aesthetic, environmental, technological, innovative and other issues |
| Type | Topical | Narrative or conceptual representation of theme in terms of participant, circumstance or process |
| | Interpersonal | Communicate designer's opinion or signal the answer required from audience |
| | Textual | Conjunction of themes through spatial and temporal organization of collections |
| Pattern of thematic development | Narrative | Descriptive organization of connected representation within the theme(s) into a sequence of collection(s) |
| | Conceptual | Abstract organization of connected representation within the theme(s) into a sequence of collection(s) |

Apart from THEME, COHESION also forms the system to construct textual meaning in clothing. The basic COHESION system we discuss concerns grammatical resources, which are used to explore the relations within text. In this sense, the system is to organize garment pieces within an ensemble or create semantic links across ensembles. The guiding principles behind this system are conjunction, reference, substitution and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 603-608). It is assumed that these four principles provide a key mechanism to situate the system of COHESION within clothing.

Conjunction is involved in the organization of display elements to create cohesion within or across ensemble(s). Such display elements in clothing can be interpreted as ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. As discussed in Section 6.3.3.2, the conjunction of clothing can be distinguished into several subcategories

depending on functions. In the case of clothing, we consider that the resources for creating cohesion in textual meaning are similar to those functioning to realize logical meaning. In this way, conjunction in our interpretation of COHESION is composed of structural and cohesive, as well as internal and external. In internal conjunction, elements are linked to create cohesion by structural or cohesive organization. In external conjunction, elements are cohesively related to portrayal of process, attributes of participants and circumstantial features.

Reference deals with cohesive resources, which establish semantic links between display elements. In the last section, various referential chains that relate to the development of discourse in clothing have been identified. Among them, design philosophy and style are considered the most key references that introduce participants and track them throughout the whole collection(s), as indicated in Table 6.14. Within the grammar, theme is another type of resource for linking the participants and forming referential chain in the unfolding of ensembles. In a similar way, such reference can be recoverable inside the text through pointing forward and back. At the same time, it can be recoverable outside the text through creating links in terms of shared knowledge and the situation. A detailed example to show these types of reference is in Section 6.5.3.1.

Substitution pertains to a systemic variant of resources, which replaces one participant for the creation of cohesion. In clothing, these variants can be interpreted to occur at

each rank scale, which takes the form of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory. There are various styles across each rank; hence, variant in this case also gives prominence to the elements that form cohesion in different styles. For this point, Section 4.5.2 provides a full description in terms of visual and textual systems in fashion and clothing. Table 6.10 also gives specific examples of visual and texture variants that designers frequently use during the design process. It is noted that no matter what form of elements taken within or across ensemble(s), they all make direct reference to the theme and style that are defined by designers.

Lexical cohesion is about cohesion, which takes place in lexis and is realized through the selection of lexical items. Different from language, lexical items have different interpretations within the context of fashion and clothing. For this reason, we choose the term cohesion in design elements instead of lexical cohesion to illustrate the property of clothing. As is clear from the analysis in Section 4.5.2, lexical items defined as design elements can be addressed from two major motifs. One is visual design elements (Section 4.5.2.1), which can be organized as space, line, shape and form, light, color, and texture (Davis, 1996). The other is texture design elements (Section 4.5.2.2), which can be proposed as visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures. In addition, other aspects of lexical items may be found within clothing, for instance, language, fragrance, gesture, music, sound and other elements within fashion and clothing systems (Section 4.5.1). From this sense, the cohesive area in fashion and clothing is not only confined to one semiotic mode or resource, but also extended to

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multisemiotic modes or resources which work cohesively to create meaning for the audience. In other words, cohesion in clothing is established in two modes of realization: monomodal and cross modal.

For the types of relation in design elements, we follow Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 644) linguistic form as elaborating (repetition, synonymy and hyponymy), extending (meronym) and enhancing (collocation). These three types of expansion fall into the same category as LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS in logical meaning (Section 6.3.3.2). Therefore, we interpret that design elements are organized to show the relations of repetition, synonymy, classification (specific to generic), part to whole and association as exemplified in Table 6.30.

**Table 6.30** Types of Relation in Design Elements (Lilian Kan)

| Expansion | Type of Relation | Instance Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Elaborating | Repetition | Space: space<br>Line: line<br>Shape and form: shape and form<br>Color: color<br>Texture: texture<br>Pattern: pattern |
|  | Synonymy | (Femininity, softness, romantic, delicacy and the beauty of nature)<br>Filled space with <u>nature-inspired</u> shapes as foreground<br><u>Tailored, close-fitting</u> in combination with <u>voluminous, airy</u> in volume space<br><u>Thin, soft, curved, smooth and even</u> line<br><u>Nature-inspired</u> flat shapes<br><u>Feminine</u> forms from nature<br>Diversity of silhouette ranging from <u>classic slim</u> and <u>fitted</u> to <u>oversized and boxy</u><br>Multiple <u>light</u> colors, <u>soft</u> value, <u>low</u> intensity |

| | | Visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures of <u>silk chiffon, silk satin, silk organza, lace</u> <br> <u>Nature-inspired</u> patterns |
|---|---|---|
| | Hyponymy | Space: dimension, enclosure, emptiness, position <br> Line: length, thickness, straightness, evenness, edge, continuity, consistency, direction <br> Shape and form: size, type of shape, placement, direction, dimension, silhouette <br> Color: hue, value, intensity <br> Texture: surface, treatment of material <br> Pattern: source, interpretation, approach, arrangement, composition |
| Extending | Meronymy | Shape and form: space, line <br> Pattern: space, line, shape, color, texture <br> Texture: space, line, shape and form, color, pattern |
| Enhancing | Collocation | (Femininity, softness, romantic, delicacy and the beauty of nature) <br> **Visual design** <br> Space, line, shape and form, color, pattern <br> **Texture design** <br> Visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures of <u>silk chiffon, silk satin, silk organza, lace</u> <br> **Olfactory design** <br> (Fragrance product) <u>floral</u> fragrance families, <u>natural</u> ingredients based composition, <u>light</u> intensity |

Such multimodal phenomenon in clothing has accordingly given rise to a wide range of possible ways in the manipulation of cohesive resources. One common way by designers is achieved through design principles and Gestalt theories (Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010), which have been explicated in Section 4.5.2.1. These manipulative techniques provide a basic method for designers to create visual effects of clothing. Therefore, they form a potential way to make sense of the resources within or across cohesion, to generalize the patterns of their relationships and to construct the textual meaning that designers attempt to deliver. In our analysis, designers share similar ways when they construct cohesive resources in terms of

design principles and Gestalt theories (Section 4.5.2.1). A striking feature when reading their collections is contrast and balance, for example, playful combinations (Nelson Leung); seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance (Masha Ma); contemporary classic and soft masculinity (Derek Chan); femininity and masculinity, sportswear and partywear, nature and function (Mountain Yam); experimentation and combination (Kenax Leung); contemporary and classicism (Moti Bai). We argue that the frequent use of contrast and balance in these emergent Chinese designers is related to their attributes (Table 6.12) and the development of contemporary Chinese fashion (Section 5.4.2). Such complexity within the designers finally promotes the emergence of seemingly integrated but actually contradictory presentation in their collections. However, the specific visual effects they create are very different, which are displayed in many aspects, for example, the elements they use, the degree of complexity, the types of principle and the perceptual organization of effects. These aspects are considered dependent on designers' design philosophy, personal style (Table 6.14) and the target market they wish to cater for (Table 6.13). Table 6.31 demonstrates an overview of the resources used in the COHESION system by designers.

**Table 6.31** The system of COHESION

| Category | Note |
|---|---|
| Conjunction | (Structural) Organization of ensembles with the way in which elements are connected for function<br>(Cohesive) Organization of ensembles, garments, components, elements |

| | and accessories to create cohesion within ensemble or create semantic links across ensembles<br>(External)<br>Organization of ensembles in relation to portrayal of process, attributes of participants and circumstantial features |
|---|---|
| Reference | Theme and style as referential chains in the unfolding of ensembles to create semantic links between elements |
| Substitution | Variant display of elements for the interpretation of theme and style within ensemble or across ensembles |
| Cohesion in design elements | • Cohesion within one semiotic resource or through the interaction of multiple semiotic resources<br>• Cohesion in elaborating, extending and enhancing relations<br>• Cohesion through principles of design and Gestalt theories |

## 6.5.4 Discussion

Thus far, we have reported the results that relate to textual meaning in clothing. These results are derived from two perspectives: the system of IDENTIFICATION at the stratum of discourse semantics and the systems of THEME and COHESION at the stratum of grammar. Drawing on the results presented in Section 6.5.3, a general framework is developed to explain the textual organization of clothing across designers, as summarized in Table 6.32.

**Table 6.32** Checklist Matrix of Textual Metafunction in Fashion Designers

| SEMANTICS | |
|---|---|
| IDENTIFICATION | Tracking participants through a sequence of collections<br>• Generic/specific<br>• Presenting/presuming<br>• Comparison |
| **GRAMMAR** | |
| **ENSEMBLE**<br>THEME | • Subject<br>• Type of theme: textual/interpersonal/topical<br>• Pattern of thematic development: narrative/conceptual |
| COHESION | • Conjunction (structural and cohesive, internal and external) |

| | • Reference (theme and style) |
| | • Substitution (variant display of ensembles) |
| | • Cohesion in ensembles (modes of realization, types of relation, manner) |
| **GARMENT** COHESION | • Conjunction (structural and cohesive) |
| | • Reference (theme and style) |
| | • Substitution (variant display of garment pieces) |
| | • Cohesion in garment pieces (modes of realization, types of relation, manner) |
| **COMPONENT** COHESION | • Conjunction (structural and cohesive) |
| | • Reference (theme and style) |
| | • Substitution (variant display of garment parts and details) |
| | • Cohesion in garment parts and details (modes of realization, types of relation, manner) |
| **ELEMENT** COHESION | • Conjunction (structural and cohesive) |
| | • Reference (theme and style) |
| | • Substitution (variant display of design elements) |
| | • Cohesion in design elements (modes of realization, types of relation, manner) |
| **ACCESSORY** COHESION | • Conjunction (structural and cohesive) |
| | • Reference (theme and style) |
| | • Substitution (variant display of accessories) |
| | • Cohesion in accessories (modes of realization, types of relation, manner) |

The first is about the system of IDENTIFICATION. Three basic options for our presentation of textual meaning have been built up, which are generic and specific, presenting and presuming, comparative. As we display in Table 6.27, the resources to realize these options are subject to variation, which covers a wide range of design philosophy, style, process and marketing. Among them, design philosophy and style become the main references across designers' collections, which work as generic, presenting and comparative to introduce participants. Following these two reference chains, participants that designers talk about can be tracked in the discourse. Design

philosophy and signature style designers choose to take on are significantly different. Hence, many differences are observed in the findings of references among designers. Several reasons can explain this situation, which entail personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, family and education background, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle. Similar findings have also been generated from the construction of experiential, logical and interpersonal meanings. In this way, generic and presenting are seen as the references which can distinguish one designer from others. Moreover, a general pattern of the ways to recover presumed information in clothing is discussed across designers, which includes the reference within the text (forward and back) and outside the text (shared knowledge and the situation). Based on such pattern, we can identify presumed identities from the collections and gain a deep understanding of how discourse is cohesively constructed.

In the system of THEME, we describe three basic resources that contribute to textual meaning in clothing: subject, type of Theme and pattern of thematic development. As seen from the results (Table 6.29), multiple Themes in different types have been selected by designers in terms of the three resources. First, the subject of Themes is oriented towards the issues of society, culture, politics, history, aesthetics, environment, technology and innovation, among others. Second, Themes are categorized into textual, interpersonal and topical Themes: textual Theme establishes a cohesive link between collections; interpersonal Theme elicits the interaction with

the audience by sharing designers' opinions or raising questions to the audience; topical Theme construes designers' experience by means of participant, circumstance or process. Third, Themes are developed in a narrative or conceptual way, where conceptual pattern achieves a dominant position in designers' collections. Such choices of Theme are dependent on designers in terms of the meaning, manner and cause which designers wish to present. As a result, a close association is made among the choices of Theme, design philosophy, design style and target market. The factors that influence the selection of Themes are similar to those presented above.

Another form of textual organization in the grammatical category is the system of COHESION, where we suppose the elements within or across ensemble(s) are linked by conjunction, reference, substitution and cohesion. Some similarities have emerged from the analysis, as shown in Table 6.31. For example, elements are linked through structural and cohesive, as well as internal and external conjunctions; theme and style serve as referential chains to create semantic links between elements; a variant form of elements is displayed within or across ensemble(s); design elements are made cohesively in terms of modes of realization, types of relation and manner. However, the analysis also demonstrates that the choices for realizing these four cohesive types vary considerably among designers. Such differences are also considered a direct consequence of design philosophy, design style and target market.

We have already explored how textual meaning can be realized in fashion and

clothing. From the analysis, design philosophy, design style and target market are the most influential components in formulating textual meaning of the study, the ones which are also found in experiential, logical and interpersonal meanings. Similar to the three, some common features that relate to modernization and hybridization have arisen out of textual meaning too, which are manifested in conceptualization, globalization and individualization. The tendency towards such textual organization is evident. For example, conceptualization is realized by the type of theme and pattern of thematic development; globalization is realized by substitution and subject of Theme and individualization is realized by substitution and cohesion in design elements. Together with other metafunctions, these formulate typical features of contemporary Chinese fashion, which stems from the progression of contemporary China.

## 6.6 Summary

In this chapter, the study presents the findings that demonstrate how three metafunctions, developed by Halliday in SFL, can be utilized to investigate fashion and clothing in terms of its social interpretation. Based on the findings and discussion, we have contextualized the systemic frameworks of fashion and clothing developed in Chapter 4 and generated a grounded theory that can display the resources deployed by designers for making meaning. From here, a general pattern to model fashion and clothing as social semiotics has emerged. Such modeling is established on the basis of a multimodal environment, where different semiotic resources work in close

collaboration on the creation of meaning. In this pattern, fashion and clothing is examined through three theoretical motivations covering ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions and conceptualized across four semiotic strata including discourse semantics, grammar, symbology and materiality. When it is used to construe experience of the reality, it achieves experiential meaning where the systems of IDEATION and TRANSTIVITY are clearly theorized (Table 6.15). When it is to construct the logic of relations, it is logical meaning where the system of CONJUNCTION, INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS are described in any instance of fashion and clothing use (Table 6.20). When it serves to perform personal and social relations, the meaning it realizes is interpersonal where APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION and MODALITY are defined as the systems to explore the discourse of fashion and clothing (Table 6.26). When it concerns the organization of text and its relation to context, it represents textual meaning where IDENTIFICATION, THEME and COHESION constitute the essential systems of resources for meaning (Table 6.32). With these metafunctional frameworks, the description and reconceptualization of fashion and clothing as semiotic systems are made to be explicit. Such frameworks provide mechanisms to highlight the meaning potential of resources in the process of design and communication and to elucidate the meaning making in fashion and clothing through the designers.

In the effort to efficiently decode meaning, the contextual background in relation to contemporary Chinese fashion and other approaches to fashion and clothing discourse

are involved during the progress of investigation. From this sense, fashion and clothing as a complex social phenomenon permeates different levels of our society. To interpret this phenomenon means to understand a wide range of knowledge across fields, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics. Such approach to interpretation therefore considers the nature and implications of a social semiotic perspective on fashion and clothing so that other studies to realize their full meaning potential may be appreciated. In our discussion, two key contextual characteristics exist for underlying the metafunctional views of fashion and clothing. The first is design philosophy, design style and target market. The properties of these elements are believed to be the core, which determines a designer's construction and orients the development of meaning in fashion and clothing. The second is modernization through self-expression and ambivalence (or contradiction) as well as hybridization between Chinese and Western, between tradition and modernity. Throughout the designers, such characteristics are presented by qualities, variations and arrangements of display elements which feature conceptualization, globalization and individualization. These unique characteristics serve as the product of social development in China and thus mark the transition of Chinese fashion from tradition to contemporary. The emerging designers and their creations in question prove that what they have been doing is a matter of reconstruction of fashion in contemporary China, more than just the accumulation of facts about the past.

As a result, the comprehensive examination of fashion and clothing in the study not

only addresses how meaning is constructed from the perspective of Halliday's social semiotics which conceptualizes fashion and clothing as a multisemiotic discourse, but also enables us to gain an in-depth understanding towards practical design process through which designers manipulate the resources for creating meaning and interacting with the audience. In addition, this examination identifies a solid association of fashion and clothing with the context in which it takes place, through the example of contemporary Chinese fashion. This corresponds to previous findings and leads to a direct application to other texts within the same context or across different contexts. Such exploration of fashion and clothing in relation to theory, practice and methodology can provide support for the audience in their understanding of fashion and clothing, help practitioners to anticipate meaning potential in the process of creation and communication and have implications for surrounding studies with a social semiotic approach. As a summary of our analysis in this chapter, Table 6.33 synthesizes the findings from the three metafunctions presented in Sections 6.2 through 6.5.

**Table 6.33** Function-Stratification Matrix of Fashion and Clothing Semiotics in Fashion Designers

| Plane | Stratum | Ideational | | Interpersonal | Textual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Experiential** | **Logical** | | |
| **Content** | **Discourse Semantics** <br> (*systems of meanings*) | IDEATION <br> • Activity sequences: a series of activities unfolding in the design process from generating, developing and communicating information <br><br> • Nuclear relations: participants and process <br><br> • Taxonomic relations: class to member, whole to part, repetition, synonyms and contrast | CONJUNCTION <br> • Sequential organization of activities in construing experience of the design process <br><br> • Sequential organization of display elements in collections | APPRAISAL <br> • Evaluation of meanings through the enactment of attitude, graduation and engagement <br><br> NEGOTIATION <br> • Integration of information and goods-&-services into symbolic exchange of meanings | IDENTIFICATION <br> • Tracking participants across semiotic resources through generic/specific, presenting/presuming and comparison references in the sequencing of collections |
| | **Sensory Grammar** <br> (*systems of sensory design*) | TRANSITIVITY <br> • Types of process (material/mental/behavioral/speech/ classificational/analytical/symbolic) <br><br> • Participants <br><br> • Circumstances <br><br> • Attributes of participants | INTERDEPENDENCY <br> • Elements combined of being equal status (parataxis) as independent relation; <br> Elements combined of being unequal status (hypotaxis) as dependently modifying relation <br><br> LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS (EXPANSION) | MODALITY <br> • Mode of realization: multisemiotic resources across verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural, olfactory, etc. <br><br> • Orientation: subjective and objective, explicit and implicit <br><br> • Value: high, low and median | THEME <br> • Exploration of social, cultural, political, historical, aesthetic, environmental, technological, innovative and other issues as subject <br><br> • Use of textual, interpersonal and topical themes <br><br> • Narrative and conceptual |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | • Expansion in the form of elaboration, extension and enhancement<br><br>• Types of conjunction: structural and cohesive, internal and external | • Polarity: positive and negative<br><br>• Modality markers in terms of representation, contextualization and color<br><br>• Sensory, abstract and naturalistic coding orientations | thematic development<br><br>COHESION<br>• Conjunction realized through spatial and temporal organization by means of structural and cohesive, internal and external<br><br>• Theme and style as reference chains in the unfolding of ensembles<br><br>• Variant display of elements for the interpretation of theme and style<br><br>• Cohesion in design elements |
| **Expression** | **Symbology**<br>(*systems of design elements*) | • Thematic and stylistic representation of qualities and variations in design elements | • Spatial and temporal organization of design elements into conjunctive relations | • Interplay of qualities and variations in design elements through spatiality and temporality | • Design elements in terms of qualities and variations organized in relation to theme and style |
| | **Materiality**<br>(*systems of material representations)* | Various fabrics and materials in the medium of sensory design | | | |

# CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

## 7.1 Introduction

The study examines fashion and clothing from the perspective of social semiotics and conceptualizes fashion and clothing as a multisemiotic discourse by developing relevant systems to theorize their resources and patterns in the realization of three metafunctional meanings. To achieve this research purpose, the study reviewed fashion and clothing discourse manipulated by different accounts, proceeded to construct fashion and clothing semiotic systems in terms of architecture and multimodality and instantiated the ways in which the main theoretical frameworks are investigated in the realm of contemporary Chinese fashion. In this concluding chapter, we initially set out to summarize the main findings developed in previous chapters and to draw the conclusions from our discussion. Then, we provide the theoretical, practical and methodological contributions, which are followed by the implications arising from this study. Finally, we describe the limitations of the study due to the constraints of time and space within this thesis, by means of which possible areas for further research and investigation are suggested accordingly.

## 7.2 Summary and Discussion of the Findings

In the following sections, the major findings of this study are stated. The organization of the findings corresponds to the research objectives raised in Chapter 1, with each section answering one or more research question(s). Specific arrangements for

findings, research objectives and research questions are listed in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1** Relations Between Findings and Research Focus

| Section | Research Objective | Research Question |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 7.2.1 | Investigating fashion and clothing through multiple contextual approaches | How do fashion and clothing make meanings? |
| 7.2.2 | Defining fashion and clothing as semiotic systems in the architecture of language | What kind of systems do fashion and clothing form in the meaning-making processes? What types of meaning can we identify during the processes? |
| 7.2.3 | Framing fashion and clothing as multisemiotic discourse | What semiotic resources are constructed in the processes to allow the realization of different meanings identified in Question 3? |
| 7.2.4 | Modeling patterns of three metafunctions in fashion and clothing | How do designers manipulate these semiotic resources to communicate their brands? |
| 7.2.5 | Exploring fashion and clothing in contemporary China | What are the social contexts of these designers? |
| 7.2.6 | Situating the findings within the social context of contemporary Chinese fashion | Are there any relations between their selection of resources and the social contexts where they live? |

## 7.2.1 Investigating Fashion and Clothing Through Multiple Contextual Approaches

The contributions of different approaches towards fashion and clothing discourse have been reviewed in Chapter 2, which include the knowledge from sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics. These disciplinary sources provide basic theoretical underpinnings necessary to understand the phenomenon of fashion and clothing. By means of this integrative method, a general landscape for the development of fashion and clothing discourse is mapped out. Under our review, these disciplines adopt different means to address meanings, each of which has a particular

interest, focus of attention and methodological strategy. A comparison of the approaches is presented in Table 2.2. From this point of view, we can construe fashion and clothing as a complex social phenomenon that includes a discussion of views across disciplines for meaning making. In order to obtain a comprehensive and holistic interpretation, we need to investigate these views, observe their participation and incorporate them into particular dimensions of meaning. Such examination of fashion and clothing is based on the presupposition that fashion and clothing makes sense within society, which can demonstrate fully the nature of fashion and clothing as social semiotics.

Among the available approaches, two general problems in the study of fashion and clothing were evaluated. One is partial, fragmented theoretical orientations and the other is limited, single methodological strategies (Section 1.2). To generalize, studies into fashion and other related disciplines for communication have centered on Saussure's disputable tradition of dichotomy semiotics, for instance, Barnard (2002), Barthes (1973, 1977, 1985, 2012), Davis (1992) and Lurie (2000). In spite of its significant contributions to fashion and other related studies, this structural reference has drawn a mere analogy among language, fashion and clothing, which leads indubitably to several inappropriate interpretations of fashion and clothing as an individual semiotic entity. Thus far, no reasonable evidence could support this descriptive metaphorical reference to fashion and clothing sufficiently in terms of communication, and thus the comparison is confined mostly to a mechanistic parallel

with no more contribution to the nature of phenomenon (Davis, 1992; Enninger, 1985; Entwistle, 2000; Finkelstein, 1998; Kaiser, 1997; Karamura, 2005; McCracken, 1988; Nöth, 1990; Svendsen, 2006). Another prominent problem within this parallel is its tendency to separate the meaning from the context in which it happens. Such investigative view is unable to provide a complete description of meanings found in fashion and clothing because they are generally regarded as being formulated within society. Moreover, this semiotic model has often focused on the separate aspects of meaning rather than on the holistic understanding of fashion and clothing through its meaningful dimensions. Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 have outlined detailed accounts of the limitations in Saussure's semiotic tradition and its resultant fashion studies. In addition, research into fashion and clothing is always independent and disconnected which is dispersed across different disciplines. To date, none of them has been integrated together to provide a systematic analysis of fashion and clothing in terms of their multidimensional meaning-making. Drawing from these inspiring circumstances, a new approach for the development of theory, practice and methodology in fashion and clothing is accordingly needed to deal with the identified problems.

**7.2.2 Defining Fashion and Clothing Semiotic Systems in the Architecture of Language**

This study takes as its starting point a definition of fashion and clothing as the social construction of semiotic systems. Instead considering clothing and its functions in terms of descriptive metaphor, the study treats fashion and clothing as a separate

social phenomenon that has distinct systems in the processes of communication. The theoretical bases for advances in fashion and clothing as social semiotic research are derived from SFL (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and multimodality (O'Toole's, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Iedema, 2001, 2003). The productivity of SFL and multimodality has been demonstrated in the further analysis and findings of this study, as shown in Chapter 3. With reference to these theoretical frameworks, a social semiotic approach to fashion and clothing is eventually generated. According to these inquiries, fashion and clothing is defined as semiotic resources, rather than a code or a set of rules, for meaning making. This is one of the fundamental principles that distinguish SFL from other linguistic theories (for the distinctions between structuralism and social semiotics, see Section 3.4). More importantly, in Halliday's (1978) insights, fashion and clothing with respect to its functional relations is organized into social phenomena. As defined in Chapter 4, the social semiotic systems of fashion and clothing are composed of several components.

Following SFL conventions, fashion and clothing is first theorized in terms of **the ordered typology of systems**, which builds on the foundations by Halliday and Matthiessen (e.g. Halliday, 1996, 2005; Matthiessen, 2007a, 2009; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). According to our analysis, fashion and clothing operates within four interconnected phenomenal realms, ranging

across biological, physical, social and semiotic systems (Section 4.4.1). These four orders are systematized by complexity, with each higher order inheriting the properties of the preceding one. In their conception, the first two are the lower-order material systems and the last two are the higher-order immaterial systems. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, fashion and clothing represent two distinct systems and hence fall into different ordered systems: fashion within immaterial and clothing within both immaterial and material. From this perspective, the four ordered systems are given the same prominence to the interpretation of fashion and clothing. In order to understand the phenomenon of fashion and clothing, one needs to consider both material and immaterial systems.

Second, fashion and clothing as semiotic systems is developed through **the hierarchy of stratification**. They consist of a number of strata or levels, covering context, semantics, sensory grammar, symbology and materiality, with the relationship among them described as realization (Halliday, 1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) or metaredundancy (Lemke, 1984, 1995). The details of stratification for fashion and clothing are set out in Section 4.4.2. With this stratified model, we can figure out how the meaning of fashion and clothing is realized through semiotic resources across different levels and make sense of how such patterns of meaning relate to the context in which they are activated.

Third, fashion and clothing at the semantic system is conceptualized as three

**metafunctions**. In correspondence to language and other semiotic systems, they include ideational metafunction for construing experience, interpersonal metafunction for enacting personal and social relationships and textual metafunction for organizing a text and establishing the relevance of the text to context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30-31). Within the ideational meaning, two components are further separated: the experiential and the logical (ibid.). This metafunctional view of fashion and clothing is derived from Section 4.4.3.3, which considers fashion and clothing simultaneously fulfilling the three domains of meaning. To clarify the functions of fashion and clothing, we attempt to discuss the evolution of functions within different literary texts. It is assumed from there that fashion and clothing nowadays is designed or dressed no longer to perform one function but a multiplicity of functions (Section 4.4.3.1). Behind this assumption lies an explanation concerning the types of function fashion and clothing can perform. According to our review and analysis, two general categories exist: one is intrinsic and extrinsic; the other is structural and communicative (Section 4.4.3.2). The three metafunctions are just intrinsic and communicative functions. Through such classification, a general view of functions within fashion and clothing can be delineated, which enables us to elaborate on how clothing is structured for use so that a comprehensive interpretation of fashion and clothing in terms of meaning making may be achieved.

In addition to the global dimensions discussed above, fashion and clothing is also seen as the local organization of **rank and axis**. We argue that both dimensions have direct

relevance to the generation of or changes in the meaning of fashion and clothing, and thus they are fully incorporated in our discussion. Axis relating to structural semiotics is discussed in Sections 2.5.1.1 and 2.5.1.3, whereas rank deriving from social semiotics is outlined in Section 4.4.4. Depending on the principle of rank scale (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), we propose to classify clothing as ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory, with each rank organized in terms of paradigmatic system and syntagmatic structure. These two organizational dimensions provide the point of departure for our later examination of fashion and clothing as multimodal discourse, by reference to which visual systemic functional frameworks are formulated.

### 7.2.3 Framing Fashion and Clothing as Multisemiotic Discourse

The comprehensive description of fashion and clothing as social semiotics is not only demonstrated in the theoretical models of SFL but also embodied through the principles of multimodal research. The basic assumption behind this description is that fashion and clothing is considered to be primarily a multisemiotic discourse, which creates meaning through a variety of semiotic modes or resources and through the unfolding of dynamic social processes. This unique nature of multimodality and resemiotization for fashion and clothing is illustrated in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.3 respectively. During our analysis, Halliday's (1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) systemic functional theories and their implications to other communicative modes or resources offer a robust theoretical basis for the development of multimodality in

fashion and clothing (see Chapter 3). To specify, O'Toole (2011) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) pave the way for the exploration of visual semiotic construction in fashion and clothing. Bezemer and Kress (2014) as well as Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) lay solid foundations for the investigation of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems in texture. Iedema (2001, 2003) takes a complementary view of resemiotization to look at fashion and clothing in the recontextualization of social practices. Based on their seminal frameworks, a multisemiotic construction of fashion and clothing as systems is set out in terms of the complex semiotic resources that designers have made in the process of communication (Section 4.5).

Adopting the rank scale, the present study at first models fashion and clothing as **visual** semiotic system, where participants of clothing across different ranks (ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory) are fully examined to achieve a comprehensive and holistic semiotic framework (Section 4.5.2.1). At the Ensemble rank, clothing is explored in terms of three visual structures, namely, layout, surface and light (and shadow). At the Garment rank, clothing is classified as upper body, lower body and one piece, each of which has various styles of garment pieces. At the Component rank, clothing is divided into parts and details. As observed, a considerable amount of subcategories with different styles are available for designers to use and communicate. At the Element rank, clothing is organized into space, line, shape and form, light, color, texture and pattern. These basic elements supply very rich sources of information with respect to qualities and variations, interaction of

elements and their compositions. At the Accessory rank, clothing is attached to several types of accessories including carried, worn, detachable and body adornment. The variations of these categories in accessories are also considered a means for designers to construct information. The study then suggests a framework for exploring meaning making in **texture** semiotics (Section 4.5.2.2). Within this system, clothing texture is divided into four segments: visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures. In our proposal, visual texture can be described through the properties of surface contour, surface friction, thermal character, luster, opacity, density, consistency and regularity. Tactile texture can be explained through the properties of flexibility, compressibility, extensibility, resilience, density, liquidity, temperature, relief, durability, consistency and regularity. Aural texture can be analyzed through the properties of loudness, pitch range and roughness. Kinetic texture can be elucidated through the properties of flow, direction and force. In addition, the study explores fashion and clothing in **the unfolding of social practices** to see how meaning is transferred from one context or practice to another (Section 4.5.3). Considering the complexity of processes in the fashion industry, we only select parts to discuss, encompassing information processing, conceptual development, design activities and presentation activities. From this, a flow of meaning in the design process is mapped out, from information processing to conceptual development, from conceptual development to design activities and from design activities to presentation activities. Similar to the stratification, these processes relate to one another through the principles of redundancy and metaredundancy (Halliday, 1978, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014;

Lemke, 1984, 1995).

Several key points have been made from these semiotic examinations. They include the following: 1) Theoretical frameworks are established on the basis of existing literature, which includes sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics. Therefore, an integrative approach that derives the knowledge from different disciplines has been realized to explain fashion and clothing in the process of meaning making. 2) All the participants, either visual or texture (also others), are not isolated from one another but work in close collaboration to create viewing effects and make meaning to the audience. 3) The principles of design and the theories of Gestalt are utilized as the main methods for designers to manipulate the participants. 4) Visual and texture semiotics are the resources of choices made by designers, which are guided by several contextual factors, such as taste, style and interest. Therefore, they should be situated within the social context in which they are produced to discuss and interpret. 5) The meaning of fashion and clothing occurs not only within the internal organization but also in the dynamics of social processes. Both multimodal dimensions contribute to the whole interpretation of fashion and clothing.

### 7.2.4 Modeling Patterns of Three Metafunctions in Fashion and Clothing

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of fashion and clothing as social semiotics, our analytical focus also offers a systematic account of how different semiotic resources are manipulated to realize three metafunctions. Such development of

paradigmatic systems aims to theorize the patterns of meanings at the levels of semantics and grammar. In order to ensure the production of a grounded theory, we choose grounded theory methodology as the core principle for guiding the procedures of data collection and analysis (Chapter 5). Therefore, during the coding process, the study follows the roadmap described by grounded theory methodology to collect data from document review, interview and observation (Section 5.5) and to analyze data from open via axial to selective coding (Section 5.6). After the entire coding, a number of findings have emerged from the analysis of gathered data by the researcher.

As proposed, the designers organize their meanings in similar ways with language and other communicative modes or resources, in what can be viewed as semantics and grammar that are realized by the organization of various semiotic resources outlined above. At this stage, Martin's discourse systems (1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and Halliday's grammatical description (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) play a central role in the modeling of patterns across the three metafunctions. Hence, in fashion and clothing, as in language and other communicative forms, there are multiple semantic and grammatical ways of constructing experience (through IDEATION and TRANSTIVITY), of explicating conjunction (through CONJUNCTION, INTERDEPENDENCY and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS), of interacting with audience (through APPRAISAL, NEGOTIATION and MODALITY) and of relating to the organization of text and context (through IDENTIFICATION, THEME and COHESION). The roles of these theoretical

underpinnings in shaping the patterns of fashion and clothing from the three

metafunctions are investigated in Chapter 6. From the preceding discussion, the

resultant patterns demonstrate how essential choices made by the designers are

systematized for the construction of meaning, and thus they can be applied to the

designers within a wide scope. Through these frameworks, the organization of fashion

and clothing as semiotic systems becomes evident, and one means for understanding

fashion and clothing, the investigation of semiotic resources which occurs in the

practical design process is necessary. Only from this perspective can fashion and

clothing be completely understood.


**7.2.5 Exploring Fashion and Clothing in Contemporary China**

In this study, the practical context chosen to address the research questions is

contemporary Chinese fashion. This contextual choice is inspired mainly by the

influences of Chinese fashion on modern China and the world, as well as the niches of

Chinese fashion in the academia and industry (Section 5.4.1). As one of the most

influential and promising fashion countries, China has been undergoing a series of

evolutionary transformations since the reform of Chinese economy in 1978. This

transitional period occupies a distinguished position in the history of modern China,

from which Chinese fashion has stepped into a brand new generation. Therefore, in

this study, we choose to focus on the fashion that happens especially after 1978, a

period often recognized as the beginning of contemporary Chinese fashion (Section

5.4.2).

Thus far, the study of contemporary Chinese fashion as a research topic has aroused great interest within a wide range of disciplines. There have been valuable investigations to analyze the characteristics of Chinese fashion, to discuss the growing influence of Chinese fashion on the international stage and to predict the significant role that Chinese fashion plays in the industry (Section 5.4.2). As reviewed, their guiding principles unfold how Chinese fashion is imagined, produced and disseminated within wider social, economic, cultural, historical and aesthetic domains. Based on these approaches, a comprehensive account of fashion in contemporary China is given, through which we may come to recognize that Chinese fashion is concerned largely with social processes and meaning is a response to these social transformations. Distinct from widely acknowledged Chinese traditions, a contemporary Chinese style cannot be identified easily. By just taking a glance at the market, you will find large and various styles on the racks. As the editor-in-chief of *Vogue China*, Angelica Cheung comments Chinese style today is "like a melting pot" and it is "yet to form" (2015). Two key words are combined to inform the nature of contemporary Chinese fashion. One is globalization characterized as an integration of multiple cultures between Chinese and Western, between tradition and modernity. The other is localization characterized as a reformulation of identities for Chinese society, with emphasis on personal expression and ambivalence. It is considered that the two reflect fully the social processes of modernization within contemporary China (Section 2.2.4).

In attempting to explore contemporary Chinese fashion, it is worthwhile to consider the participation of fashion designers within the context. As shown in Section 5.4.3, these Chinese designers with their talents gradually began to establish themselves on both domestic and international runways under the discernible influences from this situation. According to the designed selection criteria (Section 5.4.4), the study selects nine emerging designers and their works from Hong Kong and mainland China as subjects to investigate (Table 5.2). These designers, who were born around 1985s, are all from the "new generation" (Tsui, 2009). Because of this, they share similar characteristics with regard to educational background, design style, marketing orientation and career development, among others (Section 5.4.3). As we state, this period is crucial for the research on the development of contemporary Chinese history when it happened to meet social movements: Deng Xiaoping's modernizing policies of the late 1970s, the burst of the "85 New Wave" and the culmination of the "1989 China Avant-Garde". During this period, a profusion of different styles and experimental tendencies subsequently emerged, thereby shaping social changes for creators which include Chinese art as well as the fashion industry. In the meanwhile, the transformations of society provided contemporary Chinese with more opportunities to gain knowledge from the world, as well as the ability to work independently from the state commission and sanctioned socialist realist style. Therefore, in comparison with their precursors, designers from this generation could better represent the spirits of contemporary Chinese fashion, from either the interpretation and attitude towards Chinese design or the definition and reconstruction

of Chinese identity. Such multiple voices of the designers provide rich and sufficient raw materials for this study to delve into meaning potential in fashion and clothing on the one hand, and form useful contextual motivations to demonstrate the essence of the study regarding investigating fashion and clothing through society on the other hand.

## 7.2.6 Situating the Findings Within the Context of Contemporary Chinese Fashion

In Chapters 4 and 6, we have summarized the semiotic resources and patterns that derive from the three metafunctions in fashion and clothing. As discussed, these are the choices made by designers in relation to the social contexts that surround them. For this reason, the role of context for structuring fashion discourse is well recognized within the study. Based on our findings, several contextual patterns have been developed in designers' making-meaning process: design philosophy, design style and target market. These patterns are considered the fundamental principles that guide the development of text across the designers. In this way, all display elements in terms of qualities, variations and arrangements at different ranks are selected and orchestrated by designers to make meaning in particular situations and to reflect the properties of the three contextual parameters (Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.3, 6.4.3 and 6.5.3). Designers always hold differing views towards the three principles; hence, we can also regard the principles as the distinctive characteristics that help designers to distinguish one from another.

Such diversification into the patterns of design philosophy, design style and target market across designers can be seen as the result of multiple situational contexts. In Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.3, 6.4.3 and 6.5.3, the situational contexts are interpreted as personal interests, aesthetic preference, personal experience and values, family and education background, natural, sociocultural, political and historical environments, fashion trends, technology and innovation, needs for market and lifestyle. Therefore, the selection of design philosophy, design style and target market is motivated by two broad contextual factors, namely, inside and outside. The environment inside the designers determines which choices they prefer to make, and the environment outside the designers provides the explanations as to why they have made such decisions. On this account, fashion and clothing as social semiotics is an outcome of the complex contextual interaction of designers' social, cultural, psychological, aesthetic and emotional origins, a point corresponding to Jewitt's (2014, p. 34) view. It may be assumed here that a designer's origins determine the presentation of fashion and clothing and influence the generation of meaning within.

In spite of the different ways they attempt to construct in their design, some common features have emerged from the analysis of these Chinese designers. In a similar vein, the findings from all three metafunctions reflect the contemporary phenomena such as individualization, contradiction, conceptualization and globalization, which are realized through the selections and arrangements of semiotic resources (Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.3, 6.4.3 and 6.5.3). These similar characteristics arising from the process of

modernization in Chinese society demonstrate fully the nature and development of Chinese fashion at the moment. Most importantly, these designers reiterate a clear and powerful statement that what they have been doing is to seek a feasible way of reconstructing Chinese identity instead of repeating the past, like their forerunners. This thus draws a conspicuous distinction between the emerging generation and other generations.

**7.3 Contribution of the Study**

As introduced in Section 1.3, the study is situated within an interdisciplinary field of investigation, which aims to develop new theoretical and methodological issues in the domain of fashion and clothing. In previous chapters, the interdisciplinary nature of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems has been presented in terms of its relation to social context. Based on these preceding analyses and discussions, the study contributes to the literature on fashion and clothing in three particular ways.

First, in terms of **theory**, this is a socially oriented study that focuses comprehensively on fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. The main theoretical issue is to explore how different semiotic resources work together to construct three dimensions of meaning. To achieve this theoretical purpose, the knowledge across diverse disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics and semiotics, has been completely drawn upon. Distinct from previous studies, this study is the first to provide a holistic and comprehensive description of

real fashion and clothing as social semiotic construction. With these discussions, the theoretical significance of the study can be summarized in three points: (1) providing a new approach to the study of fashion and clothing as communicative product and practice, by integrating contextual lens from different theoretical aspects; (2) exploring fashion and clothing as semiotic systems in a new domain, with new multisemiotic frameworks generated in the emerging multimodal field and (3) extending SFL as an appliable linguistic theory into fashion and clothing, through the definition of fashion and clothing semiotic systems in terms of architecture.

Second, in terms of **practice**, the study chooses to focus on contemporary Chinese fashion and investigates the meaning of fashion and clothing from the perspective of designers within their social practices. By bridging a link with practitioners in the fashion industry, the study hopes to establish the correlations between theory and practice as well as strives to provide insights into how fashion and clothing is systematically deciphered in a real social context. The importance of practice in the current study can be demonstrated in several aspects. Firstly, the theoretical frameworks arising from design practices could provide a new approach for practitioners and the audience to perceive fashion and clothing and improve the ways of how they think, talk and deal with it. Secondly, the frameworks might offer effective guidance for practitioners in their design and communication processes, in terms of how to construe the reality, interact with audience, organize the message and create its relevance to context. The findings from this study have already provided us

with rich and detailed information, which reveals some properties of designers in the three perspectives. It is presumed that the findings can give feedback on their design, help them to solve relevant questions emerging from design practices and anticipate potential difficulties in the process of communication. More problems might be addressed further if we extend the scope of the investigation to all the participants in the fashion industry. Thirdly, the frameworks should be able to inform the strategies for producing and developing meaning through the design process and to highlight the possibilities of improving and renovating present communication methods. It is a hope that the study would also offer a model for future research along similar practical lines.

Third, in terms of **methodology**, the study of fashion and clothing is an interdisciplinary one. Evidence from the research emphasizes the need for an integrated theory across different disciplines today. Therefore, the methodology, intertwined with a variety of theoretical approaches, is necessary to explore fashion and clothing phenomenon. In this study, we combine grounded theory methodology and case study research for theory building. Case study research offers rich and comprehensive guidelines for gathering empirical data, whereas grounded theory methodology establishes a solid basis for guiding the process of constructing theory and addressing research questions. Their theoretical contributions and methodological principles play an important role in the formation of theory throughout this study. Following them, a systemic and comprehensive method for modeling fashion and

clothing is provided through the combination of document review, interview and observation. The triangulation of methods undertaken in the present investigation enhances the reliability and validity of its findings and allows us to view fashion and clothing phenomenon from different perspectives. In the meanwhile, the study adapts into fashion and clothing the systemic functional modeling of the "architecture" of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2007a, b), which sees the organization of fashion and clothing semiotic systems along a series of semiotic dimensions ranging from global (the ordered typology of systems, stratification and metafunction) to local (rank and axis). Given the complexity of fashion and its capricious nature, discussions about fashion and clothing are far from clarity and raise particular challenges for the academia and industry across different disciplines. The view from global to local dimensions opens up new perspectives to give a multifaceted view of fashion and clothing in context and provides potential possibilities of discussing the theoretical differentiation between fashion and clothing as semiotic systems and other related notions. In addition, this study adopts a trinocular theoretical perspective to explore fashion and clothing. The "trinocular perspective" has been proposed by systemic functional theorists (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2007b; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009; Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). According to their conception, we can view fashion and clothing from three different but complementary angles: "from above" ("from the context plane"), "from below" ("from the expression plane") and "from roundabout" ("from the content plane"). Such trinocular approach enables us to obtain

a holistic view of how meanings at different levels are cohesively constructed and to yield a comprehensive understanding of meanings in fashion and clothing.

## 7.4 Implications of the Study

Based on the discussion in previous section, this social semiotic-inspired study will have theoretical, practical and methodological implications for social, psychological, anthropological, aesthetic, epistemological, design and other theories in the realm of fashion and clothing. The research therefore achieves the aims of advancing the social semiotic approach to the analysis of fashion and clothing, exploring multimodal meaning-making in the practical industry and enriching the methodological strategies of fashion and clothing studies. With these contributions, consequential research in relevant areas could be carried out to further the theorization of fashion and clothing as social semiotics. In the following section, we would suggest some possible implications that may arise out of this study. Corresponding to the theoretical frameworks and methodological orientations in Sections 4.4 and 4.5, these implications are organized into two parts. One is to extend the analysis of fashion and clothing in the semiotic dimensions of architecture to more specific and comprehensive institutional contexts. The other is to illuminate the need for a multimodal construction in the domain of social practices and design education.

## 7.4.1 Extending the Semiotic Systems of Fashion and Clothing to Social Institutions

The first implication is to consider the semiotic systems of fashion and clothing in the context of social institutions. As reviewed in Section 2.2, this institutionalized nature of fashion and clothing has been well demonstrated by sociologists through different approaches: macro, meso and micro. A common statement derived from these explorations is that fashion and clothing as a social system is composed of interrelated functional parts which range from large scale to small scale, and also the individuals who perform their functions within the system (e.g. Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2004, 2005; Roach et al., 1980; Wilson, 2003). Consequently, different levels of analysis into fashion and clothing are necessary to gain a deep understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation.

From the perspective developed here, fashion and clothing can be interpreted by analyzing how different networks are structured into broad social situations - from a macro perspective; by studying how individuals are combined to formulate a social network - from a meso perspective and by examining how each individual within the network interacts with others for the purpose of communication - from a micro perspective. Such analyses of fashion and clothing demonstrate that it is critical for the study to understand the meaning that not only occurs in semiotic resources, but also is developed through a close collaboration between social practices (Section 4.5.3). Compared with the former, the analysis of social practices might produce more

useful results. This is because fashion and clothing is produced, disseminated and consumed through a series of interactions that take place in society. The strength of these integrated accounts is that it does not view fashion and clothing from certain separate parts within the industry; instead, it yields a comprehensive and holistic theory which treats fashion and clothing as particular types of the meaning-making system produced from a large scope of society. As such, it enables the phenomenon of fashion and clothing to be accounted for towards a whole.

In this study, we have provided an overview of fashion and clothing as social semiotics and discussed the systems of fashion and clothing in a general way, in terms of the ordered typology of systems, stratification, metafunction, rank and axis (Section 4.4). Given the scope of this study, the dimension of instantiation in fashion and clothing is not included. For an initial exploration, we attempt to establish the theory based on the interaction with a small scope of fashion designers from contemporary China (Section 5.4.4). However, specific applications of these semiotic dimensions to social institutions within a wide range are not given for the moment. In fashion and clothing, these institutions might be generalized as production, distribution and consumption, each of which contains a number of functional individuals, including both producers and consumers. All of them inform an important part in their representations of fashion and clothing. Therefore, we suggest the need to explore fashion and clothing in a way in which they might be interpreted and demonstrated in a variety of social practices and in which they might be described and

formulated through the participation of different individuals involved in the system. Such wide incorporation of knowledge in the systems is argued to provide rich and comprehensive insights into the investigation of fashion and clothing, thereby contributing to the formulation of fashion and clothing as social semiotics in terms of domain expansion and theoretical development separately.


## 7.4.2 Recognizing the Need for Multimodality in Design Practices and Education

The second implication is to focus on the role of multimodality in design practices and education. In Section 4.5.1, a general introduction of fashion and clothing in the field of multimodality has been made, where fashion and clothing dominated by various semiotic modes or resources is viewed as a multisemiotic construction for making meaning. This perception is built on the ideas of SFL and its accompanying multimodality, which emphasizes the intermingling of textual analysis and contextual involvement. In addition, the theories from different disciplines provide coherent frameworks to conceptualize the resources in the context of fashion and clothing. A common feature of this construction is an expansion of traditional semiotic form, in which the analysis of communication is not restricted to a single semiotic mode or resource but focuses on a collaborative performance created through the integration of different semiotic modes or resources. On this account, we see that meaning is not simply extracted from a single communicative form but lies in an interaction between different communicative forms and in its social context. As reviewed in Section 3.3.1, a synergy exists in their combined meanings, which is realized by intersemiotic

relations.

In order to design or read a text of this sort, one needs to equip himself with the multimodal knowledge and to develop such kind of competence and sensitivity. In other words, he needs to know and understand the meaning-making potential of various semiotic modes or resources, including such as language, image, texture, music, sound or fragrance, and to appreciate the interrelationships between different semiotic modes or resources in constructing a coherent text. Most importantly, he needs to be aware that the effective combination of semiotic modes or resources is situated within the social context in which a text is produced and interpreted. Hence, multimodality, as a means of communication, plays an important role in guiding one to communicate and interpret fashion and clothing. With the proliferation of multimodal representations worldwide, there is a pressing need for one to attend to the multimodal aspects of communication and to explore multimodal construction in the target domain. This kind of in-depth analysis on multimodality has the potential to enhance one's literacy skills, facilitate communication strategies and develop contextual awareness.

In Section 4.5.2, there gives rise to a cohesive theoretical basis for describing and explaining the resources of visual and texture and illustrating the role of these resources for making meaning in multimodal ensembles, especially for fashion and clothing. It provides theoretical and practical justifications for practitioners and the

audience in the designing and appreciating of texts, which is particularly vital in the current fashion communication. In addition, a resemiotization approach to fashion and clothing is proposed to examine the transition of meaning with the unfolding of social practices (Section 4.5.3). What emerges from this analysis is the perception: this multimodal approach can facilitate practitioners and the audience to gain useful insights into fashion and clothing in terms of their meaning making and to form the strategies regarding how to effectively communicate design message and organize the text. Therefore, we assume that multimodality has offered specific implications for the construction of knowledge and experience in design practices. The theoretical frameworks can also be extended to design education, where educators and learners require taking into account multiple forms of semiotic resources chosen by practitioners, reflecting on their coarticulation and being familiar with the associated social context. To date, most fashion studies still deal with semantic or pragmatic features of clothing and focus primarily on the single resource, ignoring, for the most part, multimodal components and implications. This study initiates a meaningful exploration for the development of a specific pedagogy from the emerging field of multimodality, which definitely contributes to design knowledge teaching and learning and promotes effective communication of educators and learners towards fashion and clothing design.

## 7.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although many findings concerning fashion and clothing as social semiotics have

been produced, the study is far from flawless because proposed theoretical frameworks are still at an exploratory stage. There are many obvious limitations that need to be further explored and discussed. In what follows, we attempt to introduce these limitations and accordingly provide some suggestions. It is hoped that these limitations and suggestions would contribute to future studies along the way.

The first limitation of the study is **theoretical focus**. In this study, we discuss fashion and clothing as multimodal discourse mainly in terms of verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural and olfactory. However, discussions in relation to these semiotic resources are only very brief and general, without detailed analysis and further characterization. In addition, fashion and clothing involves other semiotic resources, such as gesture, music and sound, as exemplified in Section 4.5.1. All these constitute useful semiotic resources that can help us to understand fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. Moreover, this study neither involves the intersemiotic relations between these semiotic modes or resources nor discusses their roles in the construction of fashion and clothing as a complete social semiotics. As acknowledged (Section 3.3.1), this is a very important dimension in multimodality. By adding this system, it would contribute to a fruitful area of study for understanding the meanings made intersemiotically in fashion and clothing.

The second limitation arising from the study is **practice design**. Given the constraints of time and space, the current study only examines the viewpoints from fashion

designers. As become evident in the analysis, the scope of this study is very small: only nine emerging designers from contemporary Chinese fashion are interviewed and observed. Apart from them, more Chinese designers, either from different generations or within a wider range, can be used as a research topic to further analyze and discuss. Moreover, we can discover fashion and clothing in other cultural contexts, for instance, French, Italian, English, American and Japanese, or draw the comparisons of meaning between different contextual backgrounds. Such cultural input into the discussions may also generate more motivated results for the study to realize fashion and clothing in terms of meaning making. In addition to designers, a number of practitioners are available in the fashion industry. Similar to designers, their practical knowledge is also of critical importance to the study of fashion and clothing. It is believed that their participation would offer necessary practical interpretations towards the issue we discuss and contribute to fashion and clothing as institutionalized systems.

The third limitation directly points to **research methodology**. This study draws methodologically on the analytical models developed by grounded theory, which provides specific and systematic procedures in data collection and analysis (Section 5.3). In order to obtain a comprehensive view of data, multiple research techniques are employed to develop social semiotic frameworks of fashion and clothing, which covers document review, interview, observation and case study (Sections 5.4 and 5.5). These techniques are definitely limited in many aspects. One apparent limitation is the

scope of data we obtained in the study, which thus highlights the need for further research to cover a wider scale and include more participants during the process. This expansion could help to generate reliable findings and outline a more detailed and clearer picture of the phenomenon under investigation. As presented in our discussion, fashion and clothing is viewed as the interaction between practitioners and the audience. Therefore, when we talk about the role of practitioners in fashion and clothing, another type of participants cannot be ignored in that their voices as well make sense and should be incorporated into our analysis. For this reason, questionnaire as a response from the audience also needs being added to the further study of fashion and clothing. Based on the previous discussion, details of possible directions for future research are outlined in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2** Potential Research Directions for Future Study

| Direction | | Current Study | Future Study |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theoretical focus | Semiotic modes or resources | Yes | More details and reach |
| | Intersemiotic relations | No | Yes |
| Practice design | Type of practitioners | Designer | More practitioners in the fashion industry |
| | Number of practitioners | 9 | More (within the same context or across different contexts) |
| Research methodology | Case study | Yes | More (within the same context or across different contexts) |
| | Document review | Yes | More details and reach |
| | Interview | Yes | More (practitioners and the audience) |
| | Observation | Yes | More details and reach |
| | Questionnaire | No | Yes (the audience) |

**7.6 Conclusion**

Fashion and clothing is described as a social system capable of communicating meaning. An important characteristic of this system is its complexity and variations, which makes it difficult to form effective ways of capturing and defining its elusive meanings. To gain an adequate and deep understanding of this phenomenon, the study develops a theoretical framework to explicate fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems and meanwhile nurtures an analytical methodology to investigate meaning in the context of social practices. These attempts, as mentioned previously, are formulated eventually on an interdisciplinary basis, with a multiplicity of approaches collaborated for investigation. In particular, SFL and multimodality offer comprehensive and effective guiding principles for the study, through which fashion and clothing as social semiotics may be viewed. Using this approach, there emerge two specific contributions that may distinguish this study from other traditional approaches. One is to theorize fashion and clothing as semiotic systems along the dimensions of architecture, and the other is to explore its meaning making through a complex multimodal construction. Such social semiotic approach not only unravels the mystery of meanings in fashion and clothing, through which a close connection between meaning and its social context is made, but also enables us to gain a deep understanding of practical processes where designers engage with semiotic resources to make meaning for the audience.

As presented from the discussions, to fully appreciate fashion and clothing, one

should have a solid grasp of the integrative meanings arising from the interaction of different semiotic resources within a given social context. This is particularly important for practitioners, where fashion and clothing needs to be related to a variety of semiotic resources. It is concerned that a deep understanding of multimodality may help construe design situations and motivate communication strategies. From this perspective, practitioners should be able to recognize, capture and translate the multimodal nature as a means of developing communicative abilities and enhancing literacy skills. Further to this, a reading of fashion and clothing today is often based on a multimodal view, which indicates that the study of multimodality can also be used for other realms within the field, such as design education, where multimodal construction may be demonstrated through close textual analyses as undertaken in social practices. Hence, the recognition of multimodality for meaning making has made valuable contributions towards the study of fashion and clothing as well as towards the practices and processes of education.

This study is an initial attempt to show how the social semiotic approach can be used to define fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems. It is a limited exercise, and necessarily cannot deal with many complex problems which arise from the study of fashion and clothing. This accordingly highlights the need for further works in this direction, which may contribute to a better understanding of how meaning in fashion and clothing is produced, transmitted and received through the integration of semiotic resources as well as through the unfolding of social practices.

**NOTES**

[1] Contemporary Chinese fashion in this study specially refers to Chinese fashion in the post-Mao era, namely, from 1978 to present. Contemporary Chinese fashion fully incorporates designs from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora (Ferrero-Regis & Lindgren, 2012). The target designers in this study mainly focus on the designers from Hong Kong and mainland China.

[2] Text is an instance of the process and product of social meaning in a particular context of situation. It may take various forms, including language, images or any other medium of expression. Context pertains to the total environment in which a text unfolds (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

[3] The term "architecture" is utilized to discuss the organization of fashion and clothing semiotic systems (Matthiessen, 2007a, p. 505).

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1** Interview Guide for Fashion Designers

**(Design philosophy)**
1. What does fashion design mean to you? How do you define fashion communication?
2. Can you introduce your design philosophy?

**(Design style and position)**
3. How would you describe your style and position in the fashion market?
4. Can you talk about the influence of cultures and traditions on your design and marketing?

**(Design process)**
5. What is your design aesthetics?
6. Can you talk about one of your collections?
7. Can you describe your creative design progress?

**(Design marketing)**
8. How does your design relate to the target market?

**(Design message)**
9. What key message(s) does your design deliver to the target audience?
10. Do you think which factors greatly influence and shape your design message?

**Appendix 2** Observation Checklist

1. Environment
   - Physical facilities
   - Design climate

2. Designer
   - Characteristics of designers
   - Participation of designers in the design process
   - Interaction between designers and other participants

3. Sample works
   - Visual design elements
   - Texture design elements
   - Other design elements
   - Relevant accounts of works

4. Design format
   - Design activities and design process
   - Communication

5. Design culture

**Appendix 3** Coding Scheme for Interview

| Category | Subcategory | | Plan Code |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A** Design philosophy | Definition of fashion design | | A1 |
| | Definition of fashion communication | | A2 |
| | Design concept | | A3 |
| | Design inspiration | | A4 |
| | Brand identity | | A5 |
| **B** Design style and position | Design style | | B1 |
| | Marketing position | | B2 |
| | The influence of cultures and traditions on design and marketing | | B3 |
| **C** Design process | C1 Design aesthetics | Visual design elements | C1A |
| | | Tactile design elements | C1B |
| | | Kinetic design elements | C1C |
| | | Aural design elements | C1D |
| | | Olfactory design elements | C1E |
| | C2 Design collection | Theme | C2A |
| | | Design inspiration | C2B |
| | | Key design elements | C2C |
| | | Accessory | C2D |
| | | Design message(s) | C2E |
| | C3 Design progress | Information processing | C3A |
| | | Concept development | C3B |
| | | Design activities | C3C |
| | | Presentation activities | C3D |
| **D** Design marketing | D1 Target market | Geographic | D1A |
| | | Demographic | D1B |
| | | Psychographic | D1C |
| | | Behavioral | D1D |
| | | Product-related | D1E |
| | D2 Relations between design and target market | | D2 |
| **E** Design message(s) | E1 Core design message(s) | | E1 |
| | E2 Factors influencing design message(s) | | E2 |
| | E3 Message delivery process | | E3 |

**Appendix 4** Coding Scheme for Observation in Visual Design

| Category | Subcategory | Property & Dimension |
|---|---|---|
| Style | Stylistic features<br>• Subculture<br>• Aesthetics | <br>• Qualities of style in subculture<br>• Qualities of style in aesthetics |
| Collection | Typical themes<br>• Narrative theme<br>• Conceptual theme | <br>• Degree of abstraction |
| Ensemble | Stylistic organization of garments<br>• Layout structure<br>• Surface structure<br>• Light structure | <br>• Three-dimension manipulation of garments on the body<br>• Two-dimension surface of fabrics and materials<br>• Light and shadow effects on garments |
| Garment | Garment pieces<br>• Upper body<br>• Lower body<br>• One piece | <br>• Function<br>• Structure<br>• Decoration |
| Component | Garment parts and details<br>• Parts<br>• Details | <br>• Function<br>• Structure<br>• Decoration |
| Element | Design elements<br>• Space<br>• Line<br>• Shape and form<br>• Color<br>• Texture<br>• Pattern | Qualities and variations<br>• Space<br>(dimension, enclosure, emptiness, position)<br>• Line<br>(length, thickness, straightness, evenness, edge, continuity, consistency, direction)<br>• Shape and form<br>(size, type of shape, placement, direction, dimension, silhouette)<br>• Color<br>(hue, value, intensity)<br>• Texture<br>(surface, treatment of material)<br>• Pattern<br>(source, interpretation, approach, arrangement, composition) |
| Accessory | • Carried<br>• Worn<br>• Detachable<br>• Body adornment | • Function<br>• Structure<br>• Decoration |

| Category | Subcategory | Property |
|---|---|---|
| Texture | Visual texture | • Surface contour (smooth/rough)<br>• Surface friction (slippery/harsh)<br>• Temperature (warm/cool)<br>• Luster (dull/shiny)<br>• Opacity (transparent/opaque)<br>• Density (sparse/dense)<br>• Consistency (homogeneous/heterogeneous)<br>• Regularity (regular/irregular) |
| | Tactile texture | • Flexibility (supple/rigid)<br>• Compressibility (soft/hard)<br>• Extensibility (stretchy/non-stretchy)<br>• Resilience (resilient/limp)<br>• Density: Fabrics (fine/coarse)<br>        Structure (open/compact)<br>        Thickness (thin/thick)<br>• Liquidity (wet/dry)<br>• Temperature (warm/cool)<br>• Relief (flat/relief)<br>• Durability (low/high)<br>• Consistency (homogeneous/heterogeneous)<br>• Regularity (regular/irregular) |
| | Aural texture | • Loudness (quiet/loud)<br>• Pitch range (low/high)<br>• Roughness (smooth/rough) |
| | Kinetic texture | • Flow (static/dynamic)<br>• Direction (left/right; forward/backward; up/down)<br>• Force (weak/strong) |

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