"Pirate Teaching: Increasing Student Engagement in Apparel Courses"

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Innovative strategy. Constructing engaging lessons draws students to the "material as if by some magical or magnetic force" (Burgess, 2012, p. 75). The core of effective education has long been recognized as student engagement (Marzano, Pickering, & Heflebower, 2011). Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, and Wellborn (2009) linked specific emotions with engagement (e.g., enthusiasm, interest, enjoyment) and other emotions with a lack of engagement (e.g., boredom, disinterest, frustration). Students are more inclined to engage in learning when experiencing enthusiasm or zest (Marzano, Pickering, & Heflebower, 2011). Pirate teaching hooks for student engagement were adapted for the apparel context (Burgess, 2012).

Purpose of strategy. The main purpose was to construct new learning experiences in undergraduate apparel courses to increase student engagement in the face-to-face classroom. Apparel courses shifted to the online learning environment mid-semester due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, a secondary goal arose: to determine if pirate teaching methods could be adapted effectively for the online apparel context and improve student engagement in an e-learning setting as well. The following questions were to be addressed:

1. Can pirate teaching methods be successfully adapted for face-to-face apparel courses?
2. Can pirate teaching techniques be effectively modified for online apparel courses?
3. Will pirate teaching practices permit formative assessment of student learning and provide evidence of increased student engagement in both the face-to-face and online learning environments?

Implementation of strategy. Pirate teaching techniques were tested for two activities implemented in a face-to-face dress history course this past fall and one activity incorporated in an online dress theory class this spring. Each of these activities utilized Burgess' (2012) triad for constructing engaging lessons: content, technique/method (i.e., teaching hooks), and presentation inclusive of planning and preparation (see Table 1.1 below).

Table 1.1 Requirements for Adapted Pirate Method Apparel Activities

Apparel Course	Content	Technique/Method	Presentation	Supplies Needed
Fashion History	The 1890s & Bustle Era	Taboo Hook	Catchphrase on PPT slide; Build a Booty activity	Pillows, dress forms, fabrics, ribbons

Fashion History	WWII	Teaser Hook & Contest Hook	Prior to class, students informed of competitive activity; WWII activity	Blast poppers
Dress Theory	Dress & Identity	Teaser Hook & Reality TV Hook	Students informed in advance of interesting activity; catchphrase on PPT slide; Courtroom activity	Judge's robe, gavel

The first activity for Fashion History used the Taboo Hook, a topic appearing forbidden or secret (Burgess, 2012). This concept was adapted for the 1890s and Bustle Era lecture (i.e., Tortora & Marcketti, 2015) and concept of shifting erroneous zones (e.g., Laver, 1969). The phrase "Build a Booty" was typed on the first PowerPoint slide so that students saw it directly when entering the classroom. The lecture was taught. Then students were given supplies to construct a bustle form on mannequins as no bustle pads or crinolines were available. Then students draped fabric on the mannequins to create an era-appropriate design as the activity.

The second implementation of pirate methods for Fashion History, used two hooks: the Teaser Hook, sparking interest in advance, and the Contest Hook, a challenge to create competition (Burgess, 2012). The lecture focused on the WWII period. Students were notified in advance that an unusual, competitive activity would occur in class. Prior to students' arrival, the chairs aligned along the walls and the tables were leaned over on two sides of the room to create barricades. During the lecture and exercises, students sat in the chairs and were informed to pay close attention to the information. At the end of the class, students were informed the activity would begin. Students were given blast poppers, a type of air-powered, foam ball shooter (e.g., Exercise N Play, n.d.), that had been concealed, and were asked to get behind the table barricades in equal teams. Students were required to respond to questions based on the WWII lecture content. Students who answered correctly were permitted to fire at the opposing team.

For Dress Theory, the Teaser Hook was incorporated along with the Reality TV Hook, which is a lesson inspired by a popular TV show (Burgess, 2012). The lecture was on Dress and Identity (Lennon, Johnson, & Rudd, 2017). The activity was inspired by the reality TV show Judge Judy (1996 – 2020). Originally, the plan was for a face-to-face class period where the classroom could be converted into a courtroom setting. The instructor-selected topic was gender and identity for the purpose of students exercising decorum for a relevant, often controversial topic. Students were told prior to class something interesting would occur. Since this activity was adapted for the online setting, the use of Zoom video conferencing technology was required to teach the lecture. The instructor's virtual Zoom background was changed to a courtroom photo, and the instructor donned a judicial robe (i.e., a black graduation gown) and used a hammer in as a gavel. The PowerPoints were screenshared with students. The first slide declared, "Welcome to My Courtroom" with an image of a courtroom. Toward the end of the lecture, students were divided into 3 instructor-selected teams: jury, defense, and prosecution for the activity. Students

were informed they must research and build a case for their side of the argument in five minutes. The defense was assigned gender societal norms and the prosecution was assigned gender fluidity. When the instructor called time, the defense and prosecution presented their case to a jury of their peers and received a verdict.

Description of effectiveness of the strategy. Pirate teaching methods can be successfully applied to the apparel context for face-to-face and online learning environments. Student engagement increased in both learning settings apparent by: (a) instructor observations of the upsurge in students' focus in the classroom and the Zoom session and (b) greater students' questioning. Students were eager to discover what the activities were: "What on earth are we doing today," "Should I be worried," and "What's the big secret?" These activities also permitted the instructor both visual (i.e., Build a Booty) and verbal (i.e., WWII, Dress, Identity) formative assessments of students' learning of apparel concepts. These pirate teaching methods can clearly be adapted and applied for both face-to-face and the online learning environments for apparel courses. The use of these innovative methods has increased student class attendance and participation. Student feedback received after these lessons includes: "I never know what we're gonna do in class next," I'm always surprised at what we're doing," and "I can't miss class because I'm scared I'll miss out on something really important and fun!" Past students have commented they heard rumors about changes in apparel classes and questioned the reason these activities did not occur when they took the classes. The adaption of these pirate techniques have implications for both apparel courses and classes in other disciplines.

References

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