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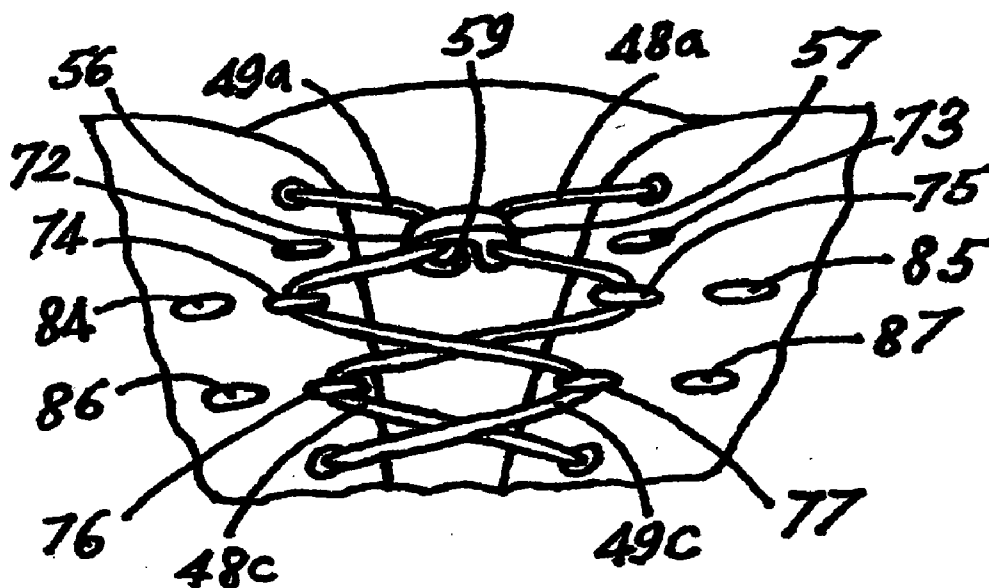
(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Voughlohn(10) **Pub. No.: US 2006/0053658 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Mar. 16, 2006**(54) **UNIQUE SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR
FASTENING FOOTWEAR****Publication Classification**(76) **Inventor: Dee Voughlohn, Fairview, OR (US)**(51) **Int. Cl.****A43C 11/00** (2006.01)**A43B 23/26** (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl. 36/50.1; 36/54**

(57)

ABSTRACT

A unique system comprises a tongue of a predetermined footwear, a lace, a lace-end fastener, and at least one lace-section fastener. The footwear has two opposite sides and a plurality of lace receivers disposed thereon. The footwear is laced with the lace to define opposite lace sections, each of which extends between two of the lace receivers on the same side. The tongue has at least one opening. The tongue comprises a plurality of layers. The lace is threaded through the at least one opening. The lace ends are fastened by the lace-end fastener. The lace ends are hidden inside the tongue. The at least one lace-section fastener is for at least one of the lace sections to be fastened thereon and for at least one of the lace sections to be unfastened therefrom, to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot, respectively.

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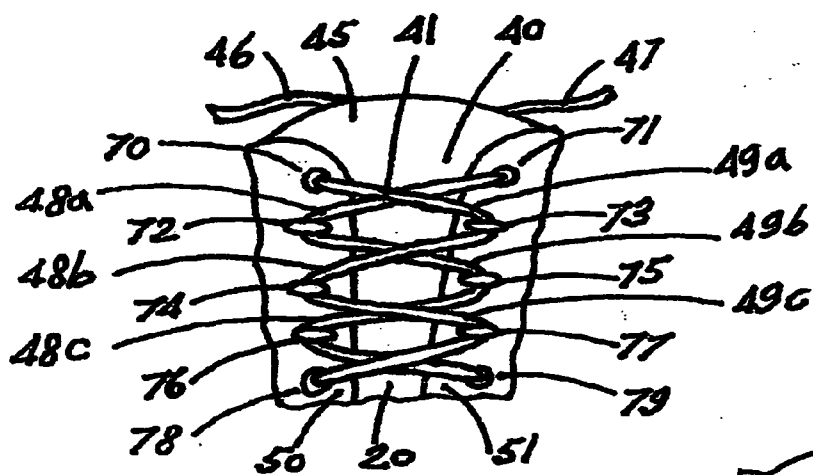


Fig. 1A

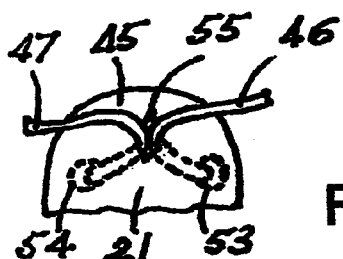


Fig. 1B

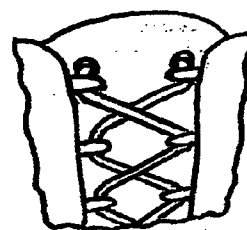


Fig. 1D

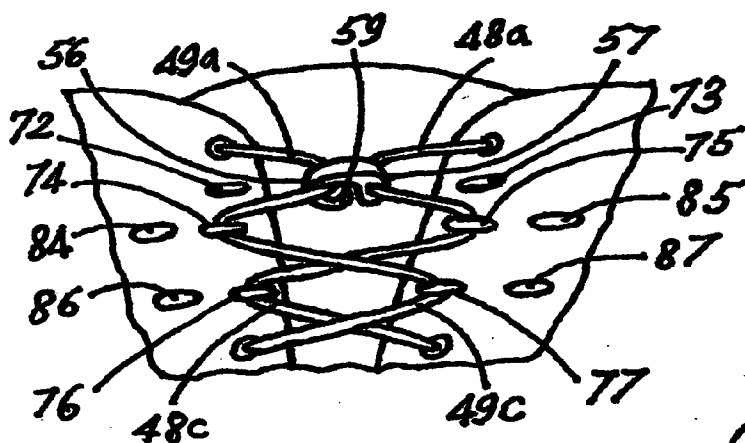
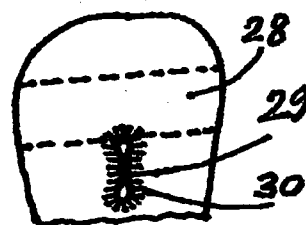


Fig. 1C



Fig. 3

Fig. 2



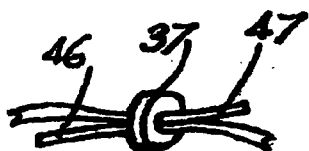


Fig. 4

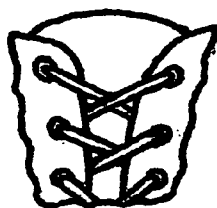


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

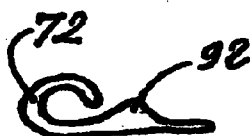


Fig. 8

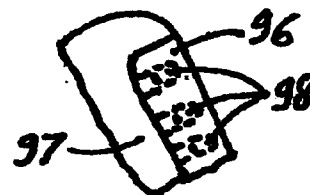


Fig. 9

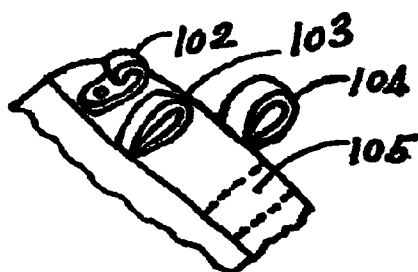


Fig. 10

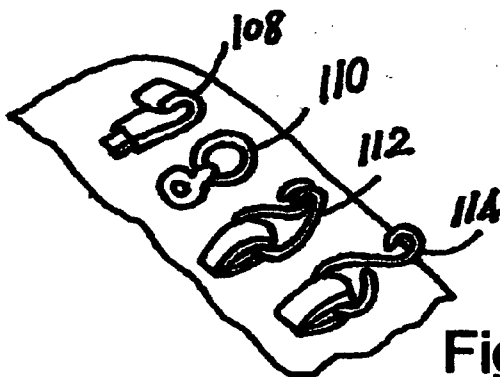


Fig. 11

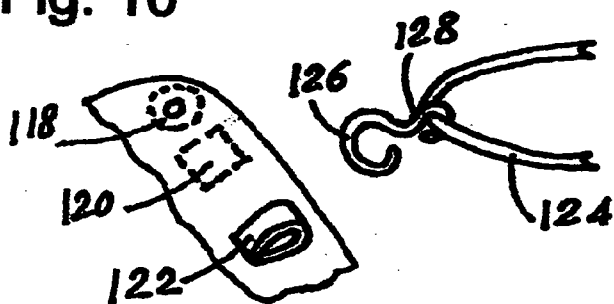


Fig. 12



Fig. 13A



Fig. 13B



Fig. 14

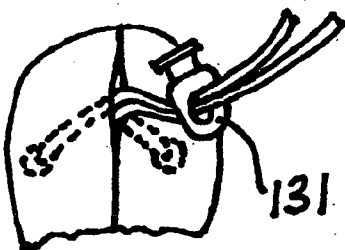


Fig. 15A

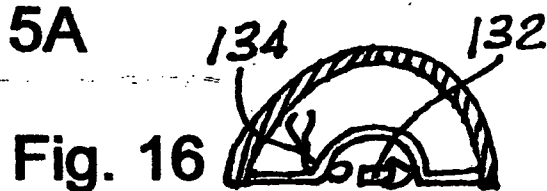


Fig. 16

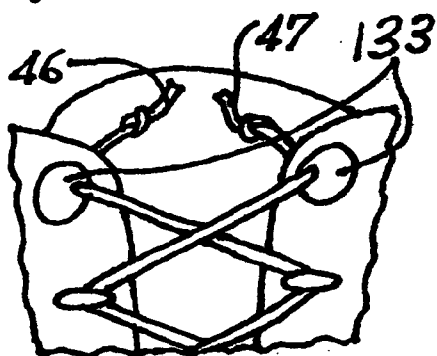


Fig. 15B

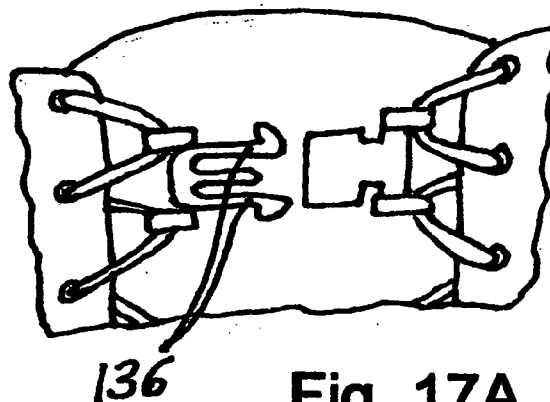


Fig. 17A

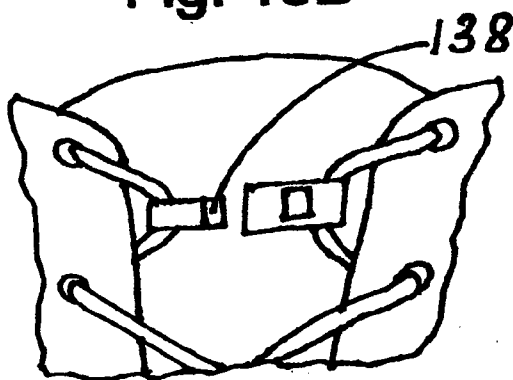


Fig. 17B

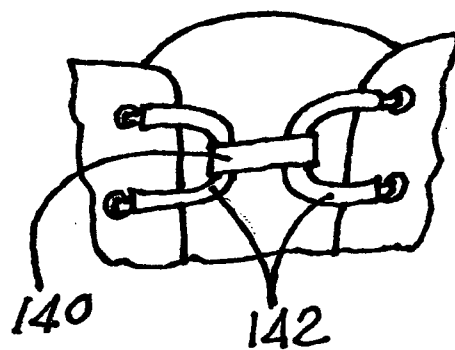


Fig. 18

UNIQUE SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR FASTENING FOOTWEAR

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Lacing-type footwear is an important part of our life, but adjusting, tying, and untying a lace are time-consuming and frustrating. Plus, a bow is snagging and cumbersome. Accordingly, there are ever-increasing demands for a convenient, safe, and aesthetic system, which could fasten a footwear quickly and easily, and is affordable, compact, and simple without exposing a bow knot.

PRIOR ART

[0002] Prior arts heretofore have snagging and poking problem of either a bow knot or a cumbersome, hazardous device. A number of cumbersome, hazardous devices have been introduced in: the U.S. Pat. No. 4,094,029 filed Apr. 14, 1977; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,157,622 filed Sep. 26, 1977; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,428,101 filed Oct. 1, 1981; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,733,439 filed Jun. 3, 1987; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,777,705 filed Nov. 2, 1987; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,918,840 filed Jan. 26, 1989; the U.S. Pat. No. 4,884,321 filed Jul. 25, 1988; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,040,274 filed Apr. 30, 1990; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,158,428 filed Mar. 18, 1991; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,165,190 filed Jul. 16, 1990; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,203,053 filed Sep. 23, 1992; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,313,719 filed Apr. 27, 1993; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,903,959 filed Nov. 24, 1997; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,557,864 filed Feb. 6, 1995; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,669,116 filed Nov. 15, 1995; the U.S. Pat. No. 5,692,276 filed Jan. 16, 1996; the U.S. Pat. No. 6,453,525 filed Aug. 3, 2001; the U.S. Pat. No. 6,571,438 filed Aug. 3, 2001; the U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 filed Aug. 10, 2001; the U.S. Pat. No. 6,779,281 filed Feb. 12, 2003; and the U.S. Pat. No. 6,823,610 filed Dec. 6, 2002. These patents teach that to fasten a footwear onto a foot, a user ties lace ends of a lace together, fastens them to a cumbersome, hazardous, expensive device, and exposes them, causing snagging, poking, abrading problem and, therefore, inevitable personal injury. Therefore, all prior arts heretofore teach away from the present invention.

OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Having many advantages over all the prior arts heretofore, the unique system of the present invention:

[0004] hides lace ends and lace-end fastener inside the tongue of a footwear and prevent them from moving, to eliminate snagging, tripping hazards. This is highly advantageous over all the prior arts, because it utilizes the tongue of a footwear, which is already there, to hide lace ends and lace-end fastener therein, to eliminate the needs for any additional cumbersome, hazardous devices;

[0005] makes a foot feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing a footwear with the unique system applied thereto.

[0006] (for example, a footwear can have a predetermined tongue so that:

[0007] the tongue can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener of a unique system, and/or

[0008] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear).

[0009] has at least one lace-section fastener. If desired, at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear, which the unique system is applied thereto.

[0010] fastens the tongue of a footwear in place when fastening the footwear onto a foot;

[0011] only needs to be assembled once to set predetermined lace tensions, which can be reset any time;

[0012] eliminates the needs for adjusting, tying a lace every time a footwear is fastened onto a foot;

[0013] eliminates the needs for adjusting, untying a lace every time a footwear is unfastened from a foot;

[0014] is inexpensive, compact, safe, and simple. Thus, it can be used by people of almost any age;

[0015] applies interlock method. Thus, the harder it is pulled, the more securely it fastens a footwear;

[0016] only needs to be assembled once;

[0017] only needs one finger to be operated; and

[0018] can also serve as a safety system when, for example, partially or entirely made of light-reflecting or glow-in-the-dark material.

[0019] Other objects and advantages will become apparent from the ensuing specification and drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] A unique system comprises a tongue of a predetermined footwear, a lace, a lace-end fastener, and at least one lace-section fastener. The footwear has two opposite sides and a plurality of lace receivers disposed thereon. The footwear is laced with the lace to define opposite lace sections, each of which extends between two of the lace receivers on the same side. The tongue has at least one opening. The tongue comprises a plurality of layers. The lace is threaded through the at least one opening. The lace ends are fastened by the lace-end fastener. The lace ends are hidden inside the tongue. The at least one lace-section fastener is for at least one of the lace sections to be fastened thereon and for at least one of the lace sections to be unfastened therefrom, to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot, respectively.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0021] FIGS. 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D illustrate examples of the unique system.

[0022] FIGS. 2 and 3 illustrate examples of a tongue.

[0023] FIG. 4 illustrates an example of a lace-end fastener.

[0024] FIG. 5 illustrates another example of the unique system.

[0025] FIGS. 6, 7 illustrate examples of hook disposition.

[0026] FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate examples of a preventing device.

[0027] FIGS. 10, 11, and 12 illustrate a lace receiver or a part of a lace-section fastener.

[0028] FIGS. 13A and 13B illustrate the equivalents of the lace-section fastener.

[0029] FIG. 14 illustrates another tongue-opening disposition.

[0030] FIGS. 15A and 15B illustrate the equivalents of the lace-end fastener.

[0031] FIG. 16 illustrates an other application of the unique system.

[0032] FIGS. 17A and 17B illustrate the equivalents of the lace-section fastener.

[0033] FIG. 18 illustrates a protecting-device disposition.

FIRST EXAMPLE

[0034] Structure:

[0035] A unique system, partially or fully elastic or non-elastic, for fastening a predetermined footwear on a foot, can comprise: a tongue of the footwear, a partially or fully elastic or non-elastic lace, a lace-end fastener, and at least one lace-section fastener. The unique system is made of at least one predetermined material.

[0036] The footwear has two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receivers disposed thereon. The lace receivers can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like of at least one hook, the like of at least one ring, the equivalent of at least one hook, the equivalent of at least one ring, or a combination of at least two of the above. At least one of the at least one lace-section fastener:

[0037] can be separate from at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear,

[0038] can be attached to at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear,

[0039] can be integrated into at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear,

[0040] can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear, and/or

[0041] can have at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear.

[0042] FIGS. 1A and 1B of the present invention (please, refer to FIG. 4 in my above-mentioned patent) illustrate a unique system for fastening a predetermined footwear on a foot. The footwear has opposite sides 50 and 51 and a plurality of lace receivers disposed at predetermined locations thereon. The lace receivers have rings 70, 71, 78, and 79 and hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77:

[0043] Each of rings 70, 71, 78, and 79 is fixed or movable, has a hole, is made of predetermined material(s), and is attached to or integrated into one of opposite sides 50 and 51 as part thereof (For example, each of rings 70, 71, 78, and 79 comprises a ring-shaped portion of one of opposite sides 50 and 51. Each of these ring-shaped portions surrounds a hole).

[0044] Each of hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77 is fixed or movable, has a tip, is made of predetermined material(s), and is attached to or integrated into one of

opposite sides 50 and 51 as part thereof. The tips are predeterminedly bent to narrow the mouths of hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77, respectively, so that:

[0045] the tips can prevent hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77, respectively, from snagging, poking, etc., and

[0046] each of hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77 can securely fasten a lace thereon when the lace is hooked thereon, regardless of the tension of the lace (for example, the lace can be loose or tight; or the lace can be worn loosely or tightly).

[0047] The unique system comprises a tongue 40 of the footwear, a lace 41, a lace-end fastener, and at least one lace-section fastener:

[0048] a) Tongue 40 comprises at least one top layer 20 and at least one bottom layer 21. At least one of at least one top layer 20 is attached to or integrated into at least one of at least one bottom layer 21, at at least one predetermined location thereon (for example, they are sewn together partially or fully along their edges to define a seam between their edges). Tongue 40 has an outer surface, an inner surface, a tongue top 45, and three openings 53, 54, and 55.

[0049] Each of openings 53 and 54 extends from the outer surface, through at least one of at least one top layer 20 (or through the seam), to the inner surface. Opening 55 extends from the outer surface, through at least one of at least one bottom layer 21 (or through the seam), to the inner surface.

[0050] Openings 53 and 54 are disposed generally at the level of rings 70 and 71. Opening 55 is disposed generally above the level of rings 70 and 71. Each of openings 53, 54, and 55 can be disposed generally above, generally below, or generally at the level of rings 70 and 71. Tongue 40 can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic. Tongue 40 can be made of at least one predetermined material, so that:

[0051] tongue 40 can predeterminedly cushion a foot from lace 41, the lace-end fastener, and/or the at least one lace-section fastener, and/or

[0052] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0053] b) Lace 41 can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic. Lace 41 can be made of at least one predetermined material. Lace 41 has a plurality of opposite lace sections, and lace ends 46 and 47.

[0054] (For example, each of the opposite lace sections is selected from the group consisting of: opposite lace sections 48a, 49a, 48b, 49b, 48c, and 49c).

[0055] c) The lace-end fastener can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic. The lace-end fastener can be made of at least one predetermined material. The lace-end fastener comprises lace ends 46 and 47.

[0056] d) The at least one lace-section fastener can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic. The at least one lace-section fastener can be made of at least one predetermined material. The at least one lace-section fastener comprises one lace-section fastener, which

comprises two opposite lace receivers, which comprise opposite hooks **72** and **73**, respectively.

[0057] Assemblage:

[0058] To assemble the unique system, the footwear is laced with lace **41** so that each of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, **49b**, **48c**, and **49c** extends between two of the lace receivers on the same one side of opposite sides **50** and **51**:

[0059] lace section **48a** extends between ring **71** and hook **75** on the same side,

[0060] lace section **49a** extends between ring **70** and hook **74** on the same side,

[0061] lace section **48b** extends between hook **73** and hook **77** on the same side,

[0062] lace section **49b** extends between hook **72** and hook **76** on the same side,

[0063] lace section **48c** extends between hook **75** and ring **79** on the same side, and

[0064] lace section **49c** extends between hook **74** and ring **78** on the same side.

[0065] Each of lace ends **46** and **47** is threaded through one of openings **53** and **54**, and through opening **55**. Lace ends **46** and **47** are tied together so that they are fastened together (e.g., lace ends **46** and **47** are tied together into a bow, and further if desired, the bow is tied into a knot), to set at least one predetermined lace tension of lace **41**. A foot can be inserted into the footwear at any time (e.g., a foot can be inserted into the footwear before, during, or after lace ends **46** and **47** are fastened together). Then, lace ends **46** and **47** are threaded back through opening **55** and hidden inside tongue top **45**, so that:

[0066] lace ends **46** and **47** are predeterminedly secured in place and prevented from moving,

[0067] lace ends **46** and **47** predeterminedly stay above the rest of lace **41**, and

[0068] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0069] Operation:

[0070] The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 (column 3, from line 50 to line 56), respectively:

[0071] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot:

[0072] hook at least one of the lace sections on the at least one lace-section fastener, respectively.

[0073] b) To unfasten a footwear from a foot:

[0074] unhook at least one of the lace sections from the at least one lace-section fastener, respectively.

[0075] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods above, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods above, respectively:

[0076] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** on hooks **72** and **73**,

respectively, to fasten opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** on the lace-section fastener.

[0077] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** from hooks **72** and **73**, respectively, to unfasten opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** from the lace-section fastener.

SECOND EXAMPLE

[0078] FIG. 1A of the present invention (please, refer to FIG. 4 in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0079] The lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **74** and **75** (instead of opposite hooks **72** and **73**).

[0080] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0081] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **48b** and **49b** on the lace-section fastener.

[0082] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **48b** and **49b** from the lace-section fastener.

THIRD EXAMPLE

[0083] FIG. 1A of the present invention (please, refer to FIG. 4 in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0084] This unique system has two lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0085] first lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **72** and **73**, and

[0086] second lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **74** and **75**.

[0087] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0088] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, and **49b** on the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0089] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, and **49b** from the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

FOURTH EXAMPLE

[0090] FIG. 1A of the present invention (please, refer to FIG. 4 in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0091] This unique system has two lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0092] first lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **72** and **73**, and

[0093] second lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **76** and **77**.

[0094] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0095] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** on the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0096] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** from the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

FIFTH EXAMPLE

[0097] **FIG. 1A** of the present invention (please, refer to **FIG. 4** in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0098] This unique system has three lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0099] first lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **72** and **73**,

[0100] second lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **74** and **75**, and

[0101] third lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **76** and **77**.

[0102] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0103] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, **49b**, **48c**, and **49c** on the three lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0104] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, **49b**, **48c**, and **49c** from the three lace-section fasteners, respectively.

SIXTH EXAMPLE

[0105] **FIG. 1C** of the present invention (please, refer to **FIG. 1** in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0106] a) The lace-section fastener comprises hook **56** and ring **57** (instead of opposite hooks **72** and **73**). Hook **56** and ring **57**:

[0107] are equivalent to and replace opposite hooks **72** and **73**, respectively,

[0108] are attached to or integrated into each other, and separate from the footwear; and

[0109] b) Ring **57** has a hole. Ring **57** is for lace section **48a** to be hooked thereon (by being threaded there through) to fasten lace section **48a** on ring **57**. Hook **56** has a tip **59**. Tip **59** is equivalent to the tip of any one of hooks **72**, **73**, **74**, **75**, **76**, and **77**. Tip **59** is pre-determinedly bent to narrow the mouth of hook **56**, so that:

[0110] tip **59** can prevent hook **56** from snagging, poking, etc., and

[0111] hook **56** can securely fasten lace section **49a** thereon when lace section **49a** is hooked thereon, regardless of the tension of lace section **49a** (for example, lace section **49a** can be loose or tight; or lace section **49a** can be worn loosely or tightly).

[0112] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0113] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook lace section **49a** on hook **56** to fasten it on the lace-section fastener.

[0114] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook lace section **49a** from hook **56** to unfasten it from the lace-section fastener (for example, by lifting hook **56** until lace section **49a** slides off hook **56**;

[0115] or by flipping hook **56** off lace section **49a**).

SEVENTH EXAMPLE

[0116] **FIG. 1C** of the present invention (please, refer to **FIG. 1** in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the sixth example, except that

[0117] this unique system has two lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0118] first lace-section fastener comprises hook **56** and ring **57**, and

[0119] second lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **74** and **75**.

[0120] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0121] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook at least one of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, and **49b** on at least one of the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0122] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook at least one of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, and **49b** from at least one of the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

EIGHTH EXAMPLE

[0123] **FIG. 1C** of the present invention (please, refer to **FIG. 1** in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique

system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the sixth example, except that:

[0124] This unique system has three lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0125] first lace-section fastener comprises hook **56** and ring **57**,

[0126] second lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **74** and **75**, and

[0127] third lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **76** and **77**.

[0128] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0129] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook each of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** on at least one of the three lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0130] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook each of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** from at least one of the three lace-section fasteners, respectively.

NINTH EXAMPLE

[0131] **FIG. 1C** of the present invention (please, refer to **FIG. 1** in my above-mentioned patent) illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the eighth example, except that:

[0132] at least one of the second and third lace-section fasteners can be replaced with at least one of the following fourth and fifth lace-section fasteners, respectively, and vice versa,

[0133] the fourth lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **84** and **85**,

[0134] the fifth lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks **86** and **87**,

[0135] each of four opposite hooks **84**, **85**, **86**, and **87** is equivalent to any one of four opposite hooks **74**, **75**, **76**, and **77**, and

[0136] each of four opposite hooks **84**, **85**, **86**, and **87** is attached to or integrated into one of opposite sides **50** and **51** at predetermined location thereon, for lace **41** to hook thereon to create a different predetermined lace tension of lace **41** (e.g., to create higher or lower lace tension of lace **41**).

[0137] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0138] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook each of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** on at least one of the lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0139] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook each of opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48c**, and **49c** from at least one of the lace-section fasteners, respectively.

TENTH EXAMPLE

[0140] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, comprises the unique system in the sixth example, except that:

[0141] This unique system has two lace-section fasteners (instead of one lace-section fastener):

[0142] first lace-section fastener comprises hook **56** and ring **57**, and

[0143] second lace-section fastener comprises a duplicate of the first lace-section fastener (the second lace-section fastener comprises a duplicate of hook **56** and a duplicate of ring **57**, which are attached to or integrated into each other as in the sixth example). Similar to the first lace-section fastener, the second lace-section fastener is equivalent to and replaces opposite hooks **76** and **77**, and is separate from the footwear.

[0144] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0145] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **49a** and **49c** on the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0146] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **49a** and **49c** from the two lace-section fasteners, respectively.

ELEVENTH EXAMPLE

[0147] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, comprises the unique system in the fifth example, except that (similar to the ninth example above):

[0148] at least one of the first, second, and third lace-section fasteners can be replaced with at least one of the following fourth, fifth, and sixth lace-section fasteners, respectively, and vice versa,

[0149] each of the fourth, fifth, and sixth lace-section fasteners comprises two opposite hooks,

[0150] each of these opposite hooks is equivalent to any one of six opposite hooks **72**, **73**, **74**, **75**, **76**, and **77**, and

[0151] each of the opposite hooks is attached to or integrated into one of opposite sides **50** and **51** at predetermined location thereon, for lace **41** to hook thereon to create a different predetermined lace tension of lace **41** (e.g., to create higher or lower lace tension of lace **41**).

[0152] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0153] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, **49b**, **48c**, and **49c** on the lace-section fasteners, respectively.

[0154] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **48a**, **49a**, **48b**, **49b**, **48c**, and **49c** from the lace-section fasteners, respectively.

TWELFTH EXAMPLE

[0155] FIG. 1D illustrates a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0156] each ring of the lace receivers is replaced with a hook so that the lace receivers comprise only hooks (instead of hooks and rings),

[0157] this unique system has at least one lace-section fastener (instead of one lace-section fastener), and

[0158] the at least one lace-section fastener comprises at least one of the lace receivers for lace 41 to be hooked thereon and to be unhooked therefrom to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot, respectively (the at least one of the lace receivers can comprise any hook(s) of the hooks).

[0159] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0160] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook at least one of the opposite lace sections on the at least one lace-section fastener, respectively.

[0161] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook at least one of the opposite lace sections from the at least one lace-section fastener, respectively.

THIRTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0162] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can comprise the unique system in the fifth example, except that:

[0163] This unique system has one lace-section fastener (instead of three lace-section fasteners):

[0164] the lace-section fastener comprises opposite hooks 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77.

[0165] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0166] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections 48a, 49a, 48b, 49b, 48c, and 49c on the lace-section fastener.

[0167] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections 48a, 49a, 48b, 49b, 48c, and 49c from the lace-section fastener.

FOURTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0168] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can comprise the unique system in the eighth example, except that:

[0169] This unique system has one lace-section fastener (instead of three lace-section fasteners):

[0170] the lace-section fastener comprises hook 56, ring 57, and opposite hooks 74, 75, 76, and 77.

[0171] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening

methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0172] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections 48a, 49a, 48c, and 49c on the lace-section fastener.

[0173] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections 48a, 49a, 48c, and 49c from the lace-section fastener.

FIFTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0174] In the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth example:

[0175] each hook of the lace receivers (which is not a part of any lace-section fastener(s)), can be replaced with a ring, and/or

[0176] each ring of the lace receivers (which is not a part of any lace-section fastener(s)), can be replaced with a hook.

SIXTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0177] In the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, or fourteenth example:

[0178] each hook of the lace receivers (which is not a part of any lace-section fastener(s)), can be replaced with a ring, and/or

[0179] each ring of the lace receivers (which is not a part of any lace-section fastener(s)), can be replaced with a hook.

SEVENTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0180] In all the examples in the present invention, tongue 40 can have only two openings 53 and 54 (instead of three openings 53, 54, and 55):

[0181] when assembling the unique system, lace 41 is threaded through only two openings 53 and 54 (instead of three openings 53, 54, and 55),

[0182] then, lace ends 46 and 47 are tied together so that they are fastened together, to set predetermined lace tensions of lace 41, and

[0183] lace ends 46 and 47 are threaded back into tongue 40, and hidden in tongue top 45, so that lace ends 46 and 47 are secured in place and prevented from moving.

EIGHTEENTH EXAMPLE

[0184] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, comprises the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0185] the lace-section fastener can be replaced with another lace-section fastener,

[0186] the other lace-section fastener comprises two opposite hooks,

[0187] each of these two opposite hooks is equivalent to any one of opposite hooks 72 and 73, and

[0188] each of the two opposite hooks is attached to or integrated into one of opposite sides 50 and 51 at predetermined location thereon, for lace 41 to hook

thereon to create a different predetermined lace tension of lace **41** (e.g., to create higher or lower lace tension of lace **41**).

[0189] By applying the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, the following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0190] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, hook opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** on the two opposite hooks, respectively.

[0191] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, unhook opposite lace sections **48a** and **49a** from the two opposite hooks, respectively.

Equivalents

[0192] 1) Tongue:

[0193] A tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0194] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic.

[0195] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0196] A tongue of a footwear or each layer of a tongue (which is equivalent to tongue **40**) can be made of at least one predetermined material, so that:

[0197] the tongue or at least one layer of the tongue can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener, and/or

[0198] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0199] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can comprise at least one predetermined top layer and at least one predetermined bottom layer. At least one of the at least one top layer can be attached to or integrated into at least one of the at least one bottom layer, at at least one predetermined location thereon. Independently, each layer of the at least one top layer and the at least one bottom layer can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be made of at least one predetermined material.

[0200] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can be made of at least one predetermined material.

[0201] The cross-section of a tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0202] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can comprise a plurality of predetermined layers. Each of the layers

can be attached to or integrated into at least one other layer of the layers, at at least one predetermined location thereon.

[0203] A tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can comprise a plurality of predetermined layers. Each layer of the tongue, regardless of the rest of the tongue:

[0204] can have any predetermined shape and size, can be made of at least one predetermined material,

[0205] can comprise a single piece of material(s) or a plurality of pieces of material(s), which are attached to or integrated into each other (or one another),

[0206] can have a width which is narrower than, equal to, or wider than the width of any other layer of the tongue,

[0207] can have a length which is shorter than, equal to, or longer than the length of any other layer of the tongue, and/or

[0208] can have a size which is smaller than, equal to, or larger than the size of any other layer of the tongue.

[0209] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can comprise at least one top layer and at least one bottom layer. Each layer of the at least one top layer and the at least one bottom layer can be attached to or integrated into at least one other layer of the at least one top layer and the at least one bottom layer.

[0210] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic.

[0211] For example, a footwear has a tongue. The tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can be made of at least one predetermined material, so that the tongue can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener, and so that the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0212] For example, a part or an entirety of tongue **40** can be selected from the group consisting of: at least one predetermined foam layer, at least one predetermined fabric layer, at least one predetermined plastic layer, at least one predetermined nylon layer, at least one predetermined vinyl layer, at least one predetermined leather layer, at least one predetermined suede layer, at least one predetermined rubber layer, the like, the equivalent, and a combination of at least two of the above.

[0213] For example, each layer of a tongue, equivalent to tongue **40**, can be attached to or integrated into at least one other layer of the tongue and can be reinforced to be prevented from fraying, with at least one re-enforcing device (for example, a re-enforcing device, for re-enforcing the layers of a tongue to prevent the layers from fraying, can comprise elastic thread, non-elastic thread, glue, heat, rivet, grommet, velcro, clamp, snap lock, button, hook, ring, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above).

[0214] For example, FIG. 2 illustrates a tongue (equivalent to tongue **40**) of a footwear. The tongue is made of at least one predetermined material, so that:

[0215] the tongue can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener, and

[0216] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0217] The tongue comprises at least one top layer and at least one bottom layer. The at least one top layer is attached to or integrated into the at least one bottom layer along the edges thereof, by using elastic and/or non-elastic thread(s) (as re-enforcing device(s)). The at least one top layer has two openings (equivalent to openings 53 and 54 in the first example).

[0218] The at least one bottom layer has at least one layer 28 and an opening 29. Opening 29 (equivalent to opening 55 in the first example) is disposed generally below the level of the two openings of the at least one top layer. At least one layer 28 (represented by the dotted lines) is disposed between the at least one top layer and the rest of the at least one bottom layer. At least one layer 28 is disposed generally at the level of the two openings of the at least one top layer. At least one layer 28 is made of at least one predetermined material, so that:

[0219] At least one layer 28 can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener, and

[0220] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0221] At least one layer 28 can have a width which is narrower than, equal to, or wider than the width of any other layer of the tongue.

[0222] At least one layer 28 can have a length which is shorter than, equal to, or longer than the length of any other layer of the tongue.

[0223] At least one layer 28 can have a size which is smaller than, equal to, or larger than the size of any other layer of the tongue.

[0224] At least one layer 28 can be attached to or integrated into at least one other layer of the tongue (for example, at least one layer 28 can be partially or fully sewn to either at least one of the rest of the at least one bottom layer, at least one of the at least one top layer, or both). At least one layer of the tongue can be made of material(s), such as vinyl, leather, suede, rubber, the like, the equivalent, etc. which will not fray.

[0225] Further, the tongue can comprise at least one re-enforcing device (for example, a re-enforcing device can comprise elastic thread, non-elastic thread, glue, heat, rivet, grommet, velcro, clamp, snap lock, button, hook, ring, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above). Each of the at least one re-enforcing device is for attaching at least one layer of the tongue together and for re-enforcing at least one layer of the tongue to prevent at least one layer of the tongue from fraying (e.g., an elastic or non-elastic thread is sewn along the edges of at least one layer of the tongue to attach the at least one layer together, and another elastic or non-elastic thread 30 is sewn on the edges of the tongue around opening 29 to re-enforce the edges of the tongue around opening 29 to prevent the edges from fraying) (e.g., heat and/or glue is pressed along the

edges of at least one layer of the tongue to attach the at least one layer together, and heat and/or glue is pressed along the edges of the tongue around opening 29 to re-enforce the edges of the tongue around opening 29 to prevent the edges from fraying).

[0226] For example, a tongue (equivalent to tongue 40) of a predetermined footwear, can have a plurality of predetermined layers. At least one layer (equivalent to at least one layer 28 in FIG. 2) of the layers is made of at least one predetermined material, so that:

[0227] the at least one layer of the layers can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener, and

[0228] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear.

[0229] For example, FIG. 3 illustrates a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40. The tongue has at least one opening. The tongue comprises at least one top layer and at least one bottom layer. At least one of the at least one top layer can be sewn to at least one of the at least one bottom layer, at at least one predetermined location thereon, as follows:

[0230] for example, anywhere along the edges thereof with at least one thread, to define a seam 23 between the edges thereof; and/or

[0231] for example, anywhere in the mid sections thereof with at least one thread 22, to define and/or to close partially or fully the tongue top of the tongue for lace ends of a lace and/or a lace-end fastener to be hidden in the tongue top and to be prevented from moving (e.g., to be prevented from sliding down).

[0232] Each layer of a tongue (which is equivalent to tongue 40) can have any predetermined shape and size, regardless of the rest of the tongue.

[0233] For example, each layer of a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can be attached to or integrated into at least one other layer of the tongue.

[0234] For example, any layer of a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can be smaller than, narrower than, shorter than, equal to, bigger than, wider than, and/or longer than any other layer of the tongue.

[0235] For example, any layer of a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can be rectangular, square, oval, round, triangular, or otherwise shaped.

[0236] A tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can have at least one predetermined opening. Each of the at least one opening can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location thereon, in any predetermined direction therefrom.

[0237] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can comprise a plurality of predetermined layers:

[0238] a) each of the layers is sewn to at least one other of the layers, along their edges, to define at least one seam between their edges; and/or

[0239] b) if any of the layers comprises a plurality of portions, these portions can be sewn to each other (or

one another), to define at least one other seam in the layer between the edges of its portions.

[0240] The tongue can have at least one opening and outer and inner surfaces. Each of the at least one opening can extend from the outer surface to the inner surface. Any of the at least one opening can be disposed:

[0241] in at least one of the layers,

[0242] in at least one of the at least one seam and/or the at least one other seam (e.g., in a seam at the tongue-top area and/or in a seam at the tongue-side area and/or in an other seam in at least one of the layers), and/or

[0243] a combination of at least two of the above.

[0244] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can comprise at least one top layer and at least one bottom layer:

[0245] a) the at least one top layer is sewn to the at least one bottom layer along their edges, to define at least one seam between their edges; and/or

[0246] b) if any layer of the at least one top layer and the at least one bottom layer comprises a plurality of portions, these portions can be sewn to each other or one another, to define at least one other seam in the layer between the edges of its portions.

[0247] The tongue can have at least one opening and outer and inner surfaces. Each of the at least one opening can extend from the outer surface to the inner surface. Any of the at least one opening can be disposed:

[0248] in at least one of the at least one top layer,

[0249] in at least one of the at least one bottom layer,

[0250] in at least one of the at least one seam and/or the at least one other seam (e.g., in the seam at the tongue-top area and/or in the seam at the tongue-side area and/or in the other seam in at least one of the at least one top layer and/or in the other seam in at least one of the at least one bottom layer), and/or

[0251] a combination of at least two of the above.

[0252] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, has at least one opening. One or each of lace ends 46 and 47 can be threaded through at least one of the at least one opening of the tongue. Lace ends 46 and 47 are tied together so that they are fastened together, to set predetermined lace tensions of lace 41, and are hidden securely inside the tongue top of the tongue and prevented from moving.

[0253] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can have three openings. The seam, where at least one top layer of the tongue is attached to or integrated into at least one bottom layer of the tongue, has two of the three openings. The at least one bottom layer of the tongue has the last one of the three openings. Each of lace ends 46 and 47 is threaded through one opening in the seam, and through the last opening. Lace ends 46 and 47 are tied together so that lace ends 46 and 47 are fastened together, and are threaded back through the last opening into the tongue top to be hidden therein and prevented from moving.

[0254] For example, a tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can have at least one opening. Further, if desired, any one of the at least one opening can comprise grommet, thread (e.g., elastic or non-elastic), glue, predetermined material(s) (e.g., folded portion(s) of layer(s) of the tongue surrounding the opening), the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above, which surrounds the opening to re-enforce the portion of the tongue surrounding the opening to prevent the opening from fraying.

[0255] For example, a tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can replace any tongue in the present invention. The tongue can have just two openings (e.g., they are equivalent to openings 53 and 54 in the first example, respectively). One of the two lace ends of a lace can be threaded through these two openings; Then, the two lace ends can be tied together so that they are fastened together; And the two lace ends can be threaded back through one of the two openings of the tongue and hidden up inside the tongue top.

[0256] For example, a tongue, equivalent to tongue 40, can have at least one opening. Each of the at least one opening, regardless of the rest of the at least one opening, can be disposed upside down, right side up, sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.

[0257] For example, a tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can have at least one opening. Each of the at least one opening, regardless of the rest of the at least one opening, can have any predetermined shape and size (e.g., a curved line, a straight line, a wavy line, a line with at least one of its two ends rounded to prevent wear and tear (for example, the shape of a dumb bell of opening 29 in FIG. 2), an oval, a waxing-or-waning-moon shape, a square, a rectangle, a triangle, a round shape, any other shape, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0258] 2) Lace:

[0259] A lace, equivalent to any lace in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0260] A lace, equivalent to lace 41, can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a footwear and/or a unique system (which is equivalent to the unique system in the first example).

[0261] The cross-section of a lace, equivalent to lace 41, can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0262] A lace, equivalent to lace 41, can comprise at least one lace, each of which can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be made of at least one material.

- [0263] A lace, equivalent to lace 41, can have a plurality of lace sections.
- [0264] A foot can be inserted into a footwear at any time(s).
- [0265] For example, in the first example, the foot can be inserted into the footwear before, during, or after lace ends 46 and 47 are fastened together, to set at least one predetermined lace tension of lace 41. Lace ends 46 and 47 can be refastened any time to reset at least one predetermined lace tension of lace 41.
- [0266] For example, in the first example, the foot can be inserted into the footwear before, during, or after the assemblage.
- [0267] 3) Lace-end fastener:
- [0268] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.
- [0269] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, can be partially or fully fixed or movable.
- [0270] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a footwear and/or a unique system (which is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention).
- [0271] The cross-section of a lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can have any predetermined shape and size.
- [0272] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into a tongue of a footwear, a lace, at least one lace-section fastener, and/or a footwear.
- [0273] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, for fastening two lace ends of a lace, can comprise at least one portion of the lace and/or at least one portion of a predetermined device (for example, a device can comprise a clamp with or without an electronic device, for example, to measure a walking distance).
- [0274] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, for fastening two lace ends of a lace, can comprise the two lace ends of the lace and/or a predetermined device.
- [0275] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have a lace-end fastener. The lace-end fastener can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from the unique system and/or a footwear.
- [0276] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can be fixed or movable, and can comprise at least one predetermined hook, at least one predetermined ring, the like of at least one predetermined hook, the like of at least one predetermined ring, the equivalent of at least one predetermined hook, the equivalent of at least one predetermined ring, or a combination of at least two of the above.
- [0277] Each hook can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a unique system. Each hook can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each hook is for a lace to be hooked thereon, from any predetermined direction.
- [0278] Each ring can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a unique system. Each ring can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each ring is for a lace to be hooked thereon (by being threaded therethrough), from any predetermined direction.
- [0279] For example, a lace-end fastener (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can be disposed upside down (for example, FIG. 6 illustrates an upside-down hook), right side up (for example, FIG. 7 illustrates a right-side-up hook), sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.
- [0280] For example, a lace-end fastener (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can be disposed upside down, right side up, sideways (for example, FIG. 4 illustrates a lace-end fastener disposed sideways), upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.
- [0281] For example, a lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, can comprise the two lace ends of a lace. The two lace ends can be tied together so that the lace ends are fastened together.
- [0282] For example, a lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, can comprise a predetermined clamp for releasably or permanently clamping, at predetermined pressure(s), two lace ends of a lace together so that the lace ends are fastened together. Each of the two lace ends can be clamped in any predetermined direction.
- [0283] For example, a lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example, can comprise a predetermined clamp and/or two lace ends of a lace. The two lace ends can be tied separately or together. The clamp is for releasably or permanently clamping, at predetermined pressure(s), the two lace ends together so that the lace ends are fastened together.
- [0284] For example, FIG. 4 illustrates a predetermined lace-end fastener, equivalent to the lace-end fastener in the first example. This lace-end fastener comprises a predetermined clamp. The clamp comprises a prede-

terminated ring **37**, which has a predetermined hole. Each of lace ends **46** and **47** is threaded through the hole of ring **37** in the same direction as or in the opposite direction from the direction the other of lace ends **46** and **47** is threaded in. Then, each of lace ends **46** and **47** can be tied separately (e.g., tied into at least one knot or at least one half-bow knot so that each of lace ends **46** and **47** can be untied quickly and easily), or can be tied together with the other of lace ends **46** and **47**. As a result, the clamp releasably or permanently clamps, at predetermined pressure(s), lace ends **46** and **47** together so that lace ends **46** and **47** are fastened together.

[0285] 4) Lace-section fastener:

[0286] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0287] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can be partially or fully fixed or movable.

[0288] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. Any of the at least one lace-section fastener, which is equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into a tongue of a footwear, a lace, a lace-end fastener, any other of the at least one lace-section fastener, and/or a footwear.

[0289] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from the unique system and/or a footwear.

[0290] For example, a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can be disposed:

[0291] on the top-side of one of the two opposite sides of a footwear;

[0292] on the under-side of one of the two opposite sides of a footwear;

[0293] at the edge of one of the two opposite sides of a footwear;

[0294] in one of the two opposite sides of a footwear (e.g., a lace-section fastener can comprises a predetermined integrated ring (for example, ring **118** in **FIG. 12**), which comprises a ring-shaped portion of one of the two opposite sides. This portion extends from the top-side to the under-side of one of the two opposite sides, and surrounds a predetermined hole); or

[0295] a combination of at least two of the above.

[0296] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into a footwear at any predetermined location(s) thereon, in any predetermined direction(s) therefrom. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can fasten at least one lace section thereon. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0297] For example, a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. The at least one lace-section fastener can comprise at least one lace-section fastener in the first example and/or at least one lace-section fastener in the sixth example. Each of the at least one lace-section fastener can function as described in the first and/or sixth examples above, respectively.

[0298] For example, a unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. Any (or the top of any) of the at least one lace-section fastener can have the predetermined shape of any heart, any bow, any flower, any oval, any rectangle, any square, any circle, any partial-or-full-human-being shape, any partial-or-full-animal shape, any animation, any shape in nature, any man-made shape, and/or any other predetermined shape.

[0299] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can be fixed or movable, and can comprise at least one predetermined hook, at least one predetermined ring, the like of at least one predetermined hook, the like of at least one predetermined ring, the equivalent of at least one predetermined hook, the equivalent of at least one predetermined ring, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0300] Each hook can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a unique system (which is equivalent to the unique system in the first example). Each hook can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each hook is for a lace to be hooked thereon, from any predetermined direction.

[0301] Each ring can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a unique system (which is equivalent to the unique system in the first example). Each ring can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each ring is for a lace to be hooked thereon (by being threaded therethrough), from any predetermined direction.

[0302] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. At least one of the at least one lace-section fastener can be separate from, can be attached to, can be integrated into, can function as, can comprise, and/or can have at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear, which is equivalent to any footwear in the present invention.

- [0303] For example, each of the at least one lace-section fastener in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and/or twelfth examples, can comprise or have at least one of the lace receivers therein.
- [0304] For example, the lace-section fastener in the sixth example are separate from the lace receivers.
- [0305] For example, the lace-section fastener in the first example comprises two of the lace receivers.
- [0306] For example, three lace-section fasteners in the eighth example have four hooks **74**, **75**, **76**, and **77** of the lace receivers.
- [0307] For example, any lace-section fastener (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can be disposed upside down (for example, **FIG. 6** illustrates an upside-down hook), right side up (for example, **FIG. 7** illustrates a right-side-up hook), sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.
- [0308] For example, any lace-section fastener (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can be disposed upside down (for example, **FIG. 1C** illustrates upside-down hook **56** and ring **57**), right side up (for example, **FIG. 1C** illustrates right-side-up hooks **72**, **73**, **74**, **75**, **76**, **77**, **84**, **85**, **86**, and **87**), sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.
- [0309] For example, any lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can also function as any lace receiver of any footwear, and vice versa.
- [0310] For example, a lace-section fastener, equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can comprise a wire with its one end bent into a hook and its other end bent into a ring. The hook and ring function similarly as hook **56** and ring **57** in the sixth example, respectively.
- [0311] For example, a lace-section fastener, equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can comprise a wire spring, which is resilient. The wire spring has one of its two ends bent into a hook and the other one of its two ends bent into a ring. The hook and ring function similarly as hook **56** and ring **57** in the sixth example, respectively.
- [0312] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a footwear and/or a unique system (which is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention).
- [0313] The cross-section of a lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can have any predetermined shape and size.
- [0314] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can be made of different predetermined material(s) from or can be made of the same predetermined material(s) as any element(s) of a footwear, and can be attached to or integrated into the footwear as part of the footwear.
- [0315] For example, a predetermined hole in one side of the two opposite sides of a footwear is the hole of a ring (for example, ring **118** in **FIG. 12**). The ring is part of a lace-section fastener. The ring comprises the ring-shaped portion of that one side of the two opposite sides. As part of that one side, the ring-shaped portion surrounds the hole, and is part of the footwear.
- [0316] 5) Equivalent methods:
- [0317] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention, can comprise: a tongue of a predetermined footwear, a partially or fully elastic or non-elastic lace, a predetermined lace-end fastener, and at least one predetermined lace-section fastener. If desired, the unique system can be similar to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention. The footwear has two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receivers disposed thereon. The lace receivers can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like of at least one hook, the like of at least one ring, the equivalent of at least one hook, the equivalent of at least one ring, or a combination of at least two of the above. At least one of the at least one lace-section fastener:
- [0318] can be separate from at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the sixth example),
- [0319] can be attached to at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example),
- [0320] can be integrated into at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example),
- [0321] can function as at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example, or in **FIG. 5**),
- [0322] can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., see **FIG. 4** in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590) (e.g., in the first example, or in **FIG. 5**), and/or
- [0323] can have at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the seventh example).
- [0324] The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively. The following fastening and unfastening methods are also equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 (column 3, from line 56 to line 64), respectively:
- [0325] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, the foot is inserted into the footwear.
- [0326] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, the foot is pulled out of the footwear.
- [0327] For example, **FIG. 5** illustrates a unique system, equivalent to any unique system or its equivalent in the

present invention. This unique system can comprise the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0328] each lace receiver, which is a hook, is replaced with a ring; and

[0329] at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener comprises at least one of the lace receivers.

[0330] The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively. The following fastening and unfastening methods are also equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 (column 3, from line 56 to line 64), respectively:

[0331] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, the foot is inserted into the footwear.

[0332] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, the foot is pulled out of the footwear.

[0333] For example, a unique system, equivalent to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention and similar to the unique system illustrated in **FIG. 5**, can comprise the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0334] each lace receiver, which is a ring, is replaced with a hook; and

[0335] at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener comprises at least one of the lace receivers.

[0336] The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively. The following fastening and unfastening methods are also equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 (column 3, from line 56 to line 64), respectively:

[0337] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, the foot is inserted into the footwear.

[0338] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, the foot is pulled out of the footwear.

[0339] For example, a unique system, equivalent to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention and similar to the unique system illustrated in **FIG. 5**, can comprise the unique system in the first example, except that:

[0340] the lace receivers can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above; and

[0341] at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener comprises at least one of the lace receivers.

[0342] The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively. The following fastening and unfastening methods are also equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in my aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,590 (column 3, from line 56 to line 64), respectively:

[0343] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, the foot is inserted into the footwear.

[0344] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, the foot is pulled out of the footwear.

[0345] 6) Footwear:

[0346] A footwear, equivalent to any footwear in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0347] A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can further comprise at least one predetermined preventing device. Each of the at least one preventing device is equivalent to any bent tip in the first example, which prevents the respective hook from snagging thing, poking thing, and/or from releasing a lace when the lace is hooked thereon. Each of the at least one preventing device can be disposed at any predetermined location on the unique system.

[0348] For example, at least one preventing device can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into at least one lace-section fastener (each of which is equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example), respectively, to prevent the at least one lace-section fastener from snagging thing, poking thing, and/or from releasing a lace when the lace is hooked thereon.

[0349] For example, **FIG. 8** illustrates a predetermined preventing device **92**, equivalent to any bent tip in the first example. Preventing device **92** (for example, having the form of a hill) can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into hook **72** of the lace-section fastener in the first example to prevent hook **72** from snagging thing, poking thing, and/or from releasing lace **41** when lace **41** is hooked thereon.

[0350] For example, **FIG. 9** illustrates one of two opposite sides **97** of a footwear (which is equivalent to the footwear in the first example). A plurality of opposite hooks **98** are attached to or integrated into two opposite sides **97** at predetermined locations thereon, respectively. Two predetermined opposite preventing devices **96** (which are equivalent to at least one of the bent tips in the first example) comprise two opposite elastic or non-elastic portions, which are attached to or integrated into two opposite sides **97**, respectively. The two opposite elastic or non-elastic portions cover opposite hooks **98**, respectively, to prevent opposite hooks **98** from snagging thing, poking thing, and/or from releasing a lace when the lace is hooked thereon.

[0351] Each of the two opposite elastic or non-elastic portions can be lifted up, when a predetermined external force is applied thereto, to expose at least one of opposite hooks **98**; and can return to its original form and/or location, when the predetermined external force is removed therefrom. A unique system, equivalent to the unique system in the first example, can have at least one lace-section fastener. At least one of opposite hooks **98** can be a part or an entirety of the at least one lace-section fastener (each of the at least one lace-section fastener is equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example).

[0352] A footwear can be laced with a lace (of a unique system equivalent to the unique system in the first

example) in any predetermined way to define a plurality of lace sections and to form any predetermined lacing style, using some or all of its lace receivers. Each of the lace sections extends between two of its lace receivers on the same side.

[0353] 7) Lace receiver:

[0354] Any lace receiver (equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention) of a footwear, regardless of other lace receivers of the footwear, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0355] A lace receiver, equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention, can be partially or fully fixed or movable.

[0356] Each lace receiver (equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention) of a footwear, can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on the footwear, in any predetermined direction from the footwear, regardless of other lace receivers of the footwear.

[0357] The cross-section of each lace receiver (equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention) of a footwear, can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0358] For example, each lace receiver of a footwear (which is equivalent to the footwear in the first example) can be disposed on one of the two opposite sides of the footwear.

[0359] For example, regardless of other lace receivers of a footwear (which is equivalent to the footwear in the first example), each lace receiver of the footwear can be disposed:

[0360] on the top-side of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear;

[0361] on the under-side of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear;

[0362] at the edge of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear;

[0363] in one of the two opposite sides of the footwear (e.g., a lace receiver can comprises a predetermined integrated ring (for example, ring 118 in FIG. 12), which comprises a ring-shaped portion of one of the two opposite sides. This portion, as part of one of the two opposite sides, extends from the top-side to the under-side of one of the two opposite sides, and surrounds a predetermined hole); or

[0364] a combination of at least two of the above.

[0365] Any lace receiver, in the present invention, can be replaced with any other lace receiver, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0366] A footwear, equivalent to any footwear in the present invention, can have a plurality of lace receivers. At least one of the lace receivers can be separate from, can be attached to, can be integrated into, can function as, can comprise, and/or can have at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener of a unique system, which is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention.

[0367] For example, any lace receiver (which is at least one hook, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above) can be replaced with any other lace receiver (which is at least one ring, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above), and vice versa.

[0368] For example, any lace receiver in the present invention can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like of the at least one hook, the like of the at least one ring, the equivalent of the at least one hook, the equivalent of the at least one ring, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0369] A lace receiver, equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention, can be fixed or movable, and can comprise at least one predetermined hook, at least one predetermined ring, the like of at least one predetermined hook, the like of at least one predetermined ring, the equivalent of at least one predetermined hook, the equivalent of at least one predetermined ring, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0370] Each hook can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a footwear. Each hook can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each hook is for a lace to be hooked thereon, from any predetermined direction.

[0371] Each ring can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from a footwear. Each ring can be made separately, attachedly, or integrally. Each ring is for a lace to be hooked thereon (by being threaded therethrough), from any predetermined direction.

[0372] For example, any lace receiver (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention, can be disposed upside down (for example, FIG. 6 illustrates an upside-down hook), right side up (for example, FIG. 7 illustrates a right-side-up hook), sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.

[0373] For example, any lace receiver (for example, at least one hook and/or at least one ring), equivalent to any lace receiver in the present invention, can be disposed upside down (for example, FIG. 1D illustrates upside-down hooks), right side up (for example, FIG. 1A illustrates right-side-up hooks), sideways, upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.

[0374] For example, at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear can also function as at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener of a unique system, and

vice versa. The unique system is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention and is applied to the footwear.

[0375] For example, each of rings **70**, **71**, **78**, and **79** in the first example can be fixed.

[0376] For example, each of hooks **72**, **73**, **74**, **75**, **76**, and **77** in the first example can be fixed or movable.

[0377] For example, **FIG. 10** illustrates some examples of a lace receiver and/or a part of a lace-section fastener. The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener is equivalent to any lace receiver and/or a part of any lace-section fastener in the present invention. The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener can comprise:

[0378] a metallic or plastic hook **102**, attached to or integrated into the top-side of a footwear with rivet(s) or thread(s), so that the hook is fixed or movable; or

[0379] a plastic or fabric ring **103**, **104**, or **105**, attached to or integrated into the under-side of a footwear with rivet(s) or thread(s) (each of rings **103**, **104**, and **105** is a strip of material riveted or sewn to the footwear to create a fixed or movable ring). Rings **103**, **104**, and **105** are disposed on the top-side of, at the edge of, and on the under-side of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear, respectively.

[0380] For example, **FIG. 11** illustrates some examples of a lace receiver and/or a part of a lace section fastener. The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener is equivalent to any lace receiver and/or a part of any lace-section fastener in the present invention. The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener can comprise:

[0381] at least one metallic or plastic hook **108**, at least one metallic or plastic ring **110**, at least one metallic or plastic hook **112**, or at least one metallic or plastic s-hook **114**, attached to or integrated into at least one metallic, plastic, or fabric ring, respectively. The at least one metallic, plastic, or fabric ring is attached to or integrated into one of the two opposite sides of a footwear, so that at least one hook **108**, at least one ring **110**, at least one hook **112**, or at least one s-hook **114** is fixed or movable.

[0382] For example, **FIG. 12** illustrates some examples of a lace receiver and/or a part of a lace-section fastener of a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention. The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener is equivalent to any lace receiver and/or a part of any lace-section fastener in the present invention (for example, The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener is equivalent to either hook **72** or hook **73** in the first example). The lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener can comprise:

[0383] a metallic or plastic hook **126** and a metallic or plastic ring **128** (attached to or integrated into each other), and/or

[0384] either a ring **118**, **120**, or **122** (attached to or integrated into a side of a footwear as part of the footwear).

[0385] Ring **118** comprises a ring-shaped portion of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear. The ring-shaped portion has a hole, which extends from the top-side to the under-side of one of the two opposite sides of the footwear. Ring **118** is represented by the dotted line. Ring **118** is equivalent to each of rings **70**, **71**, **78**, and **79** in the first example. Rings **120** and **122** are sewn to the under-side and the top-side of one of the two opposite sides, respectively.

[0386] When assembling a unique system equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, a lace section **124** can be hooked on ring **128** (by being threaded thereto). Lace section **124** is equivalent to any lace section in the present invention (e.g., lace section **124** is equivalent to either lace section **48a** or **49a** in the first example). Equivalent to hooking lace section **48a** on hook **72** or hooking lace section **49a** on hook **73** in the fastening method in the first example, to fasten lace section **124** on the lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener, hook hook **126** on either ring **118**, **120**, or **122**.

[0387] For example, a lace receiver and/or a part of a lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace receiver and/or a part of any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can comprise a ring (for example, ring **70**, **71**, **78**, or **79** in **FIG. 1A**; or ring **118** in **FIG. 12**), which has a hole. The ring comprises a ring-shaped portion of one of the two opposite sides of a footwear, and surrounds the hole. Further, if desired, the ring can comprise a re-enforcing device (for example, a re-enforcing device can comprise elastic thread, non-elastic thread, glue, heat, rivet, grommet, velcro, clamp, snap lock, button, hook, ring, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above), which surrounds the hole to re-enforce the lace receiver and/or a part of the lace-section fastener.

[0388] 8) Unique system:

[0389] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0390] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be applied to any type of footwear.

[0391] For example, the unique system can be applied to working footwear, sporting footwear (e.g., recreational footwear), dress footwear, safety footwear, convenient footwear, and/or any other type of footwear (e.g., sneaker, tennis footwear, hiking footwear, walking footwear, running footwear, cross-training footwear, basketball footwear, volleyball footwear, indoor footwear, outdoor footwear, thongs, sandals, boots, shoes, the like, the equivalent, etc).

[0392] A part or an entirety of a unique system, which is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be disposed at any predetermined location(s) on a footwear, which this unique system is applied to.

- [0393] For example, a part or an entirety of a unique system, which is equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into a footwear at any predetermined location(s) on the footwear.
- [0394] Any element(s) of a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be made in at least one color.
- [0395] Any element(s) of a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be made separate from, attached to, or integrated into any other element(s) of the unique system and/or any element(s) of a footwear, at any predetermined location(s) thereon, in any predetermined direction(s) therefrom.
- [0396] For example, in the tenth example, further, if desired, the unique system can comprise at least one connecting device to connect the first and second lace-section fasteners with each other and/or with the footwear.
- [0397] Further, a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can comprise at least one additional element, which can be attached to or integrated into any other element(s) of the unique system and/or any element(s) of a footwear, at any predetermined location(s) thereon, in any predetermined direction(s) therefrom.
- [0398] The at least one additional element is selected from the group consisting of at least one predetermined relief, at least one predetermined design, at least one predetermined printing, at least one predetermined painting, at least one predetermined stamping, at least one predetermined device, at least one predetermined inscription, at least one predetermined decal, at least one predetermined engraving, at least one predetermined embossing, at least one predetermined decor, and a combination of at least two of the above.
- [0399] For example, a light-reflecting tape, a design, a printing, a decal, and/or a relief can be printed on, glued on, baked on, or molded on the lace-section fastener of:
- [0400] any unique system in the present invention, or
- [0401] any equivalent of any unique system in the present invention.

VARIATION, RAMIFICATION, AND CONCLUSION

- [0402] Having many advantages over all the prior arts heretofore, the unique system of the present invention:
- [0403] hides lace ends and lace-end fastener inside the tongue of a footwear and prevent them from moving, to eliminate snagging, tripping hazards. This is highly advantageous over all the prior arts, because it utilizes the tongue of a footwear, which is already there, to hide lace ends and lace-end fastener therein, to eliminate the needs for any additional cumbersome, hazardous devices;
- [0404] makes a foot feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing a footwear with the unique system applied thereto.
- [0405] (for example, a footwear can have a predetermined tongue so that:
- [0406] the tongue can predeterminedly cushion a foot from a lace, a lace-end fastener, and/or at least one lace-section fastener of a unique system, and/or
- [0407] the foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear).
- [0408] has at least one lace-section fastener. If desired, at least one of the at least one lace-section fastener can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear, which the unique system is applied thereto.
- [0409] fastens the tongue of a footwear in place when fastening the footwear onto a foot;
- [0410] only needs to be assembled once to set predetermined lace tensions, which can be reset any time;
- [0411] eliminates the needs for adjusting, tying a lace every time a footwear is fastened onto a foot;
- [0412] eliminates the needs for adjusting, untying a lace every time a footwear is unfastened from a foot;
- [0413] is inexpensive, compact, safe, and simple. Thus, it can be used by people of almost any age;
- [0414] applies interlock method. Thus, the harder it is pulled, the more securely it fastens a footwear;
- [0415] only needs to be assembled once;
- [0416] only needs one finger to be operated; and
- [0417] can also serve as a safety system when, for example, partially or entirely made of light-reflecting or glow-in-the-dark material.
- [0418] For example, a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can have at least one lace-section fastener. The at least one lace-section fastener can comprise and function as at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear, which the unique system is applied to (for example, the at least one lace-section fastener can comprise and function as the six lace receivers of the footwear illustrated in **FIG. 1D**). These six lace receivers are for the lace sections of a lace to be hooked thereon and to be unhooked therefrom to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot, respectively.
- [0419] For example, **FIG. 13A** illustrates a lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention. The lace-section fastener comprises three hooks and one ring integrated into one another. Each of the hooks is equivalent to and functions as hook **56** in the sixth example and/or hook **84, 85, 86, or 87** in the ninth example, to create a different predetermined lace tension of a lace when the lace is hooked thereon. The ring is equivalent to and functions as ring **57** in the sixth example.
- [0420] For example, **FIG. 13B** illustrates a lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention. The lace-section fastener comprises four hooks integrated into one another. Each of the hooks is equivalent to and functions as hook **56** in the sixth example and/or

hook **84**, **85**, **86**, or **87** in the ninth example, to create a different predetermined lace tension of a lace when the lace is hooked thereon.

[0421] For example, a tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can have at least one opening. Any of the at least one opening can be disposed upside down, right side up, sideways (for example, **FIG. 14** illustrates an opening **130** of a tongue disposed sideways), upwards, downwards, longitudinally, horizontally, diagonally, or otherwise disposed.

[0422] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention, can comprise: a tongue of a predetermined footwear, a partially or fully elastic or non-elastic lace, a predetermined lace-end fastener, and at least one predetermined lace-section fastener. If desired, the unique system can be similar to any unique system or its equivalent in the present invention. The footwear has two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receivers disposed thereon. The lace receivers can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like of at least one hook, the like of at least one ring, the equivalent of at least one hook, the equivalent of at least one ring, or a combination of at least two of the above. At least one of the at least one lace-section fastener:

[0423] can be separate from at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the sixth example),

[0424] can be attached to at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example),

[0425] can be integrated into at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example),

[0426] can function as at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example, or in **FIG. 5**),

[0427] can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the first example, or in **FIG. 5**), and/or

[0428] can have at least one of the lace receivers of the footwear (e.g., in the seventh example).

[0429] The assemblage of the unique system is similar to that of any similar unique system in the present invention, but with the two lace ends of the lace not yet tied and not yet hidden inside the tongue. For example, referring to **FIG. 1B** and **FIG. 15A**, **FIG. 15A** illustrates a tongue equivalent and similar to the tongue in **FIG. 1B** except that, the bottom-layer of this tongue comprises two opposite portions partially attached to each other longitudinally along their adjacent edges to create an opening (which is equivalent to opening **55** in **FIG. 1B**) therebetween in the bottom-layer for the two lace ends of the lace to be threaded therethrough:

[0430] 1) Example 1: Referring to **FIG. 15A**, the lace-end fastener can comprise a predetermined clamp (e.g., a predetermined spring-loaded clamp **131**). Clamp **131** is for clamping the two lace ends together to fasten them together when the two lace ends are threaded therethrough. The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0431] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot,

[0432] clamp **131** is slid toward the footwear so that a predetermined fastening tension of the lace is created, and

[0433] the two lace ends and clamp **131** are hidden inside the tongue.

[0434] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot,

[0435] the two lace ends and clamp **131** are taken out of the tongue, and

[0436] clamp **131** is slid away from the footwear so that a predetermined unfastening tension of the lace is created.

[0437] 2) Example 2: Referring to **FIG. 1B**, the lace-end fastener comprises the two lace ends (e.g., lace ends **46** and **47**). The following fastening and unfastening methods are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively:

[0438] a) To fasten the footwear on a foot, the two lace ends are tied together so that they are fastened together, and the two lace ends are hidden inside the tongue.

[0439] b) To unfasten the footwear from a foot, the two lace ends are taken out of the tongue, and the two lace ends are untied from each other so that they are unfastened from each other.

[0440] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention:

[0441] can be separate from a footwear,

[0442] can be attached to a footwear,

[0443] can be integrated into a footwear,

[0444] can be separate from at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear,

[0445] can be attached to at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear,

[0446] can be integrated into at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear,

[0447] can function as at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear,

[0448] can comprise at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear, and/or

[0449] can have at least one of the lace receivers of a footwear.

[0450] For example, **FIG. 15B** illustrates a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention. This unique system comprises the unique system in the first example, except that tongue **40** has no opening and two rings **70** and **71** are replaced with two predetermined cups **133**, each of which has a hole. The lace-end fastener comprises two lace receivers, which are two cups **133** (instead of lace ends **46** and **47**). Instead of threading lace **41** through the at least one opening of tongue **40**, each of lace ends **46** and **47** is threaded through one of the two holes of two cups **133**, and is tied into a knot or an equivalent, to set at least one predetermined lace tension of lace **41**, so that

each of lace ends **46** and **47** is fastened inside one of two cups **133** and is hidden therein and prevented from moving.

[0451] This unique system operates similarly as the unique system in the first example to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot. The fastening and unfastening methods of this unique system are equivalent to the fastening and unfastening methods in the first example, respectively.

[0452] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can also extend to a wide range of applications (e.g., at least one lace-section fastener can be used on any clothing product and/or accessory, any type of headwear, any type of hat, any beauty product and/or accessory, any sport product and/or accessory, any type of bag, box, container, or brief case, any medical product and/or accessory, any fashion product and/or accessory, any safety product and/or accessory, any convenient product and/or accessory, etc.).

[0453] For example, **FIG. 16** illustrates an inside view of the back portion (equivalent to a tongue of a footwear) of a hat. The hat has first and second lace sections (equivalent to lace sections of a lace) and at least one lace-section fastener. Each of the first and second lace sections can be partially or fully elastic or non-elastic. The at least one lace-section fastener comprises lace-section fastener **132**, and is equivalent and similar to the lace-section fastener in the sixth example. The first lace section is threaded through the ring of lace-section fastener **132**, and sewn to one of the two opposite sides of the hat, to be attached thereto. The ends (equivalent to the lace ends of a lace, functioning as a lace-end fastener) of the second lace section are threaded through the hole(s) in the other one of the two opposite sides of the hat, and tied into a knot **134**, to be attached thereto and to create predetermined tension(s) of the first and/or second lace sections. The ends of the second lace section can be untied and retied any time to adjust the tension(s). Lace-section fastener **132** functions similarly as the lace-section fastener in the sixth example, to fasten the hat on a head.

[0454] The first lace section can be replaced by a duplicate of the second lace section, which functions like and is assembled the same way as the second lace section; or the second lace section can be replaced by a duplicate of the first lace section, which functions like and is assembled the same way as the first lace section.

[0455] This unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can also extend to the wide range of applications mentioned above.

[0456] For example, at least one lace-section fastener, equivalent to the lace-section fastener in the first example, can be used to replace button, snap button, zipper, Velcro, etc. to fasten: hat, shirt, sleeve, glove, bikini, shorts, pants, bra, purse, fanny bag, suitcase, backpack, any bag, any box, any container, any clothing article, any clothing accessory, any sport article, any boot, sandal, any sport accessory, the like, the equivalent, etc.

[0457] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can comprise a double-hook lace-section fastener having double hooks **136** as illustrated in **FIG. 17A**. This lace-section fastener comprises a male portion and a mating female portion. Each of the male and female portions has at least one ring or the equivalent for at least one of the lace sections of a lace to be hooked thereon (by being threaded therethrough). The male portion can be inserted into the female portion so that the male and female portions can snap-hook on each other and/or can snap-lock each other to fasten the lace sections together.

[0458] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can comprise a single-hook lace-section fastener having single hook **138** as illustrated in **FIG. 17B**. This lace-section fastener comprises a male portion and a mating female portion. Each of the male and female portions has at least one ring or the equivalent for at least one of the lace sections of a lace to be hooked thereon (by being threaded therethrough). The male portion can be inserted into the female portion so that the male and female portions can snap-hook on each other and/or can snap-lock each other to fasten the lace sections together.

[0459] A footwear, equivalent to any footwear in the present invention, can have a plurality of lace receivers. Each lace receiver, regardless of other lace receivers of the footwear, can comprise at least one hook, at least one ring, the like of at least one hook, the like of at least one ring, the equivalent of at least one hook, the equivalent of at least one ring, or a combination of at least two of the above. A unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, is applied to the footwear. The unique system can have at least one lace-section fastener. For example, the unique system can have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30 lace-section fasteners. Each of the lace-section fasteners can comprise and function as the lace-section fastener(s) in the first example, fifth example, sixth example, seventh example, eighth example, and/or tenth example.

[0460] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can further comprise at least one predetermined protecting device for covering, decorating, and protecting at least one portion of a lace of a footwear. Each of the at least one protecting device can be disposed at any predetermined location on the unique system. Each of the at least one protecting device can be separate from, attached to, or integrated into the lace of the footwear and/or any element(s) of the unique system.

[0461] Each of the at least one protecting device can have any predetermined shape and size, and can be disposed at any predetermined location on and in any predetermined direction from the footwear and/or the unique system. The cross-section of each of the at least one protecting device can have any predetermined shape and size.

[0462] Each of the at least one protecting device can be partially or entirely made of at least one material, which can

be elastic, non-elastic, flexible, non-flexible, resilient, non-resilient, rigid, semi-rigid, transparent, non-transparent, fluorescent, light-reflecting, glittered, glow-in-the-dark, fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber, plastic, thread, eye-catching, metallic, steel, bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin, the like, the equivalent, or a combination of at least two of the above.

[0463] For example, **FIG. 18** illustrates a lace-section fastener **140** of a unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention. Lace-section fastener **140** is equivalent and similar to the lace-section fastener in the sixth example, and is for fastening two opposite lace sections. The unique system, further, comprises two protecting devices **142**, which are two predetermined rubber, vinyl, or plastic tubes made in at least one predetermined color. Two protecting devices **142** are resilient. Two protecting devices **142** are slid over the two opposite lace sections of a lace to cover, decorate, and protect them.

[0464] For example, two protecting devices **142** in **FIG. 18** can be replaced with two equivalent protecting devices, each of which can have the shape of an accordion tube, and is resilient. The accordion tube can shrink when an external force is applied thereto, and can return back to its original form and/or length when the external force is removed therefrom.

[0465] All the elements of all the unique systems and their equivalents of the present invention and all the steps of all the fastening and unfastening methods and their equivalents of the present invention can also extend to a wide range of applications.

[0466] For example, a change in scale of any unique system and/or any of its equivalents in the present invention can be made to apply it to a doll's footwear, a puppet's footwear, a statue's footwear, the like, the equivalent, etc.

[0467] A unique system, equivalent to any unique system in the present invention, can be made in at least one predetermined color.

[0468] A tongue, equivalent to any tongue in the present invention, can be made in at least one predetermined color.

[0469] A lace, equivalent to any lace in the present invention, can be made in at least one predetermined color.

[0470] A lace-end fastener, equivalent to any lace-end fastener in the present invention, can be made in at least one predetermined color.

[0471] A lace-section fastener, equivalent to any lace-section fastener in the present invention, can be made in at least one predetermined color.

[0472] In addition to all of the aforementioned exemplifications of the present invention, all the elements of the unique systems and their equivalents and all the steps of the fastening and unfastening methods and their equivalents are also capable of various variations, ramifications, equivalents, structures, materials, colors, forms, functions, dimensions, operations, permutations, styles, alternatives, extensions, arrangements, applications, modes, scales, ranges,

configurations, simplifications, additions, adaptations, modifications, substitutions, combinations, associations, etc., without departing from the scope of the present invention. The scope of the present invention will be determined by the ensuing claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the aforementioned exemplifications.

I claim:

1. A unique system comprising a tongue of a predetermined footwear, lacing means, lace-end-fastening means, and at least one lace-section-fastening means, the footwear having two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receiving means disposed thereon, said lacing means having a plurality of lace sections and lace ends, the footwear laced with said lacing means so that each of said lace sections extends between two of said lace-receiving means on the same side, said tongue having at least one opening and outer and inner surfaces, each of said at least one opening extending from said outer surface to said inner surface, said tongue comprising a plurality of layers, said lacing means threaded through said at least one opening, said lace ends fastened by said lace-end-fastening means, said lace ends hidden inside said tongue, said at least one lace-section-fastening means for at least one of said lace sections to be fastened thereon and for at least one of said lace sections to be unfastened therefrom to fasten the footwear on and to unfasten the footwear from a foot, respectively.

2. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, a part or an entirety of said tongue selected from the group consisting of:

- at least one predetermined foam layer,
- at least one predetermined fabric layer,
- at least one predetermined plastic layer,
- at least one predetermined nylon layer,
- at least one predetermined vinyl layer,
- at least one predetermined leather layer,
- at least one predetermined suede layer,
- at least one predetermined rubber layer,

at least one predetermined layer so that a foot will feel predeterminedly comfortable when wearing the footwear,

- at least one partially elastic tongue,
- at least one fully elastic tongue,
- at least one partially non-elastic tongue,
- at least one fully non-elastic tongue,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

3. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said lacing means selected from the group consisting of:

- at least one partially elastic lace,
- at least one fully elastic lace,
- at least one partially non-elastic lace,
- at least one fully non-elastic lace,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

4. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said lace-end-fastening means selected from the group consisting of:

at least one predetermined clamping means for clamping said lace ends together so that said lace ends are fastened together,

at least one predetermined snap-clamping means for clamping said lace ends together so that said lace ends are fastened together,

at least one predetermined spring-loaded clamping means for clamping said lace ends together so that said lace ends are fastened together,

at least one predetermined hook,

at least one predetermined ring,

said lace ends for being tied together so that said lace ends are fastened together,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

5. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said lace-end-fastening means disposed in a manner selected from the group consisting of:

being separate from the footwear,

being attached to the footwear,

being integrated into the footwear,

being separate from said tongue,

being attached to said tongue,

being integrated into said tongue,

being separate from at least one of said lace-receiving means,

being attached to at least one of said lace-receiving means,

being integrated into at least one of said lace-receiving means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

6. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said lace-end-fastening means operating in a manner selected from the group consisting of:

functioning as at least one of said lace-receiving means, comprising at least one of said lace-receiving means,

having at least one of said lace-receiving means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

7. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said at least one lace-section-fastening means selected from the group consisting of:

at least one predetermined hooking means for at least one of said lace sections to be fastened thereon,

at least one predetermined snap-hooking means for at least one of said lace sections to be fastened thereon,

at least one predetermined spring-loaded hooking means for at least one of said lace sections to be fastened thereon,

at least one predetermined hook,

at least one predetermined ring,

at least one of said lace-receiving means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

8. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, at least one of said at least one lace-section-fastening means disposed in a manner selected from the group consisting of:

being separate from the footwear,

being attached to the footwear,

being integrated into the footwear,

being separate from said tongue,

being attached to said tongue,

being integrated into said tongue,

being separate from at least one of said lace-receiving means,

being attached to at least one of said lace-receiving means,

being integrated into at least one of said lace-receiving means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

9. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, at least one of said at least one lace-section-fastening means operating in a manner selected from the group consisting of:

functioning as at least one of said lace-receiving means,

comprising at least one of said lace-receiving means,

having at least one of said lace-receiving means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

10. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, at least one of said lace-receiving means selected from the group consisting of:

at least one hook,

at least one fixed hook,

at least one movable hook,

at least one ring,

at least one fixed ring,

at least one movable ring,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

11. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, a part or an entirety of the unique system made of at least one material, each of said at least one material selected from the group consisting of:

at least one predetermined material,

elastic material, non-elastic material,

flexible material, non-flexible material,

resilient material, non-resilient material,

rigid material, semi-rigid material,

transparent material, non-transparent material,

fluorescent material, light-reflecting material,

glittered material, glow-in-the-dark material,

fabric, cotton, leather, vinyl, nylon, rubber,

various plastic, various metallic material,

plastic, metal, eye-catching material, steel,

bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, iron, alloy, tin,
and a combination of at least two of the above.

12. The unique system of claim 1, wherein, said tongue having at least one seam, each of said at least one seam extending from said outer surface to said inner surface, each of said at least one opening disposed at a location selected from the group consisting of:

- in at least one of said at least one seam,
- in at least one of said layers,
- and a combination thereof.

13. The unique system of claim 1, further, comprising at least one element, each of said at least one element selected from the group consisting of:

- at least one re-enforcing means
 - for re-enforcing said layers,
- at least one preventing means
 - for preventing said at least one lace-section-fastening means from snagging hazard,
- at least one connecting means
 - for connecting at least one element of the unique system
 - with at least one other element of the unique system or
 - with the footwear or
 - with both,
- at least one protecting means
 - for covering at least one portion of said lacing means to decorate and to protect the at least one portion of said lacing means,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

14. The unique system of claim 1, further, comprising at least one element, each of said

- at least one element selected from the group consisting of:
- at least one predetermined relief,
- at least one predetermined design,
- at least one predetermined printing,
- at least one predetermined painting,
- at least one predetermined stamping,
- at least one predetermined device,
- at least one predetermined inscription,
- at least one predetermined decal,
- at least one predetermined engraving,
- at least one predetermined embossing,
- at least one predetermined decor,

and a combination of at least two of the above.

15. A unique method for fastening a footwear on a foot, providing a predetermined footwear and a unique system,

the unique system comprising a tongue of the footwear, lacing means, lace-end-fastening means, and at least one lace-section-fastening means, the footwear having two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receiving means disposed thereon, said lacing means having a plurality of lace sections and lace ends, the footwear laced with said lacing means so that each of said lace sections extends between two of said lace-receiving means on the same side, said tongue having at least one opening and outer and inner surfaces, each of said at least one opening extending from said outer surface to said inner surface, said lace-end-fastening means comprising said lace ends, said lacing means threaded through said at least one opening, said lace ends tied together so that said lace ends are fastened together, said lace ends hidden inside said tongue, the unique method comprising the step of

- hooking at least one of said lace sections on

- said at least one lace-section-fastening means.

16. The unique method of claim 15, further, comprising the step of

- unhooking at least one of said lace sections from said at least one lace-section-fastening means.

17. The unique method of claim 15, wherein,

- at least one of said at least one lace-section-fastening means comprising at least one of said lace-receiving means.

18. A unique method for fastening a footwear on a foot, providing a predetermined footwear and a unique system, the unique system comprising a tongue of the footwear, lacing means, lace-end-fastening means, and at least one lace-section-fastening means, the footwear having two opposite sides and a plurality of lace-receiving means disposed thereon, said lacing means having a plurality of lace sections and lace ends, the footwear laced with said lacing means so that each of said lace sections extends between two of said lace-receiving means on the same side, said tongue having at least one opening and outer and inner surfaces, each of said at least one opening extending from said outer surface to said inner surface, said lace-end-fastening means comprising said lace ends, said lacing means threaded through said at least one opening, the unique method comprising the steps of:

- tying said lace ends together so that said lace ends are fastened together, and

- hiding said lace ends inside said tongue.

19. The unique method of claim 18, further, comprising the steps of:

- taking said lace ends out of said tongue, and

- untying said lace ends from each other so that said lace ends are unfastened from each other.

20. The unique method of claim 18, wherein,

- at least one of said at least one lace-section-fastening means comprising

- at least one of said lace-receiving means.

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