

# Using English as a Tool: A CLIL-Based Fashion Design and Business Project in an EFL Context

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This paper describes a 15-week university course that combined English language use with fashion design and business learning through a CLIL-based approach. Rather than teaching English as a subject, the course aimed to develop lifelong language learning skills by using English as a working language for creative and practical tasks.

All classes were conducted in English, and students participated in project-based activities such as fashion sketching, mood board creation, textile selection, brand development, and cost-based pricing. To support creativity and focus, yoga meditation was also introduced as part of the learning process.

An examination of student portfolios, presentations, and reflective comments shows high levels of engagement and active language use. Students particularly enjoyed the creative aspects of design while also taking business decisions, such as pricing based on production costs and target customers, seriously. Many students showed greater confidence when using English to explain their ideas and justify their choices.

These findings suggest that content-based courses that connect creativity with real-world decision-making can support lifelong language learning. When learners use English to think, create, and communicate for meaningful purposes, the language becomes a practical resource that extends beyond the classroom.

Keywords: CLIL, Lifelong Language Learning, Creativity, Project-Based Learning, English as a Tool

## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine how a CLIL-based course integrating fashion design and business can contribute to students' development of lifelong language learning skills.

Specifically, this study explores how using English as a working language for creative and practical tasks influences students' engagement, creativity, and ability to apply English meaningfully in

decision-making contexts.

## Literature Review

Previous research on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) suggests that learning subject content through a second language can increase learner motivation and encourage meaningful language use (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

Studies on project-based learning and creativity have also shown that authentic, hands-on tasks promote deeper thinking and greater learner autonomy (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010). In addition, research on lifelong learning highlights the importance of transferable skills—such as problem-solving, creativity, and self-directed learning—rather than the simple accumulation of knowledge (Candy, 1991; Benson, 2011).

However, there is still limited research on CLIL courses that combine creative design, business education, and yoga meditation practices within university-level English instruction (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). This study aims to address this gap.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, classroom-based research approach. The participants were university students enrolled in a 15-week elective course taught entirely in English.

The course included lectures, practical workshops, and presentations focused on fashion design processes, brand development, market analysis, and revenue planning. As part of the course, students created mood boards, fashion sketches, product line-sheets, pricing plans, and final presentations.

The product line-sheet played a central role in connecting creative design work with business decision-making. A product line-sheet is a document that organizes a brand's seasonal collection by item name, style number, price, color, material, and size. In this

course, it was used as a planning tool to help students create cohesive and balanced collections while considering pricing, materials, and item distribution across categories. The task also encouraged students to think about commercial feasibility, such as avoiding gaps in product categories or an overconcentration of similar items.

Figure 1 shows a sample product line-sheet used in the course.

Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Line Sheet							
Name	Cashmere Chester Coat	Name	Wool Mohair Suit	Name	Melange Buttondown Shirt	Name	14G Basket weave Knit
Style Number	FW27-001	Style Number	FW27-002	Style Number	FW27-003	Style Number	FW27-004
Price	¥175,000	Price	¥95,000	Price	¥21,000	Price	¥28,000
Color Variation	Dark Gray, Camel Navy, Black	Color Variation	Charcoal Navy, Black	Color Variation	Blue/Orange Navy/Wine	Color Variation	Light Gray, Charcoal Dk. Purple, Navy
Material	Cashmere 100%	Material	Wool 75%, Mohair 25%	Material	Cotton 100%	Material	Wool 74%, Silk 26%
Size	S, M, L	Size	S, M, L	Size	S, M, L	Size	M, L
Product	Product	Product	Product	Product	Product	Product	Product

**Figure 1: Sample Product Line-Sheet Used in the Course**

The line-sheet supported production planning, basic inventory control, and merchandising considerations, and required students to use English to explain and justify their design and pricing decisions.

Data were collected from student portfolios, presentation materials, reflective comments, and classroom observations.

## Results

The results show a consistently high level of student engagement throughout the course. Students were particularly active during creative tasks such as mood board creation and fashion illustration, where they experimented with silhouettes, colors, and materials.

Students also approached business-related tasks—especially cost-based pricing and target-oriented price setting—with seriousness

and care. Many were able to explain and justify their pricing decisions clearly in English.

Overall, students appeared more confident using English when it had a clear purpose connected to their creative and business goals.

## Discussion

The findings suggest that strong student engagement was largely driven by the use of English as a means rather than an end. Because students needed English to explain their ideas, designs, and pricing strategies, language was used in a meaningful and relevant way.

From a lifelong learning perspective, the course supported skills that extend beyond the fashion context, including creative thinking, analytical decision-making, and self-expression. The inclusion of yoga meditation also seemed to help students maintain focus and explore ideas more freely, without fear of evaluation.

These findings are consistent with earlier research emphasizing authenticity and learner autonomy in content-based language learning.

## Conclusion

This study shows that a CLIL-based course integrating fashion design and business can effectively support lifelong language learning by developing creativity, autonomy, and practical communication skills.

By involving students in meaningful tasks that require both creative and analytical thinking, the course helped learners experience English as a practical tool rather than a subject limited to the classroom.

The findings suggest that language educators may benefit from designing integrated courses that connect language learning with creativity and practical use.

## References

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