Multiple methodology use in student centred tailor-made language education

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ABSTRACT

Much of the content of modern day language didactics can accomplish a lot when it comes to details and specific areas of learning, but rather seldom does it give a larger picture that can serve as a base to explore new territory and develop another way of teaching and learning.

The aim of this thesis is to develop a practical concept that enfolds some of these theories and ideas.

Instead of a focus on methodology this thesis attracts attention to the roles of both teachers and students as well as the use of multiple methodology use because of the goal which is individualised education.

Another issue is the mentality of the learner with the polyglot as the model for an efficient language learner. These ideas affect the content of the tool for investigation, documentation and guidance of the students that is presented.

Key words: learner styles, multiple methodology use, coach, human character, polyglot, individualisation and artificial language environment.
# Table of contents

Declaration of thesis  
Introduction and aim  
1. Background.  
2. The quest for a model  
2.1 Didactics – a beginner’s approach  
2.2. Single methodology use vs. multiple methodology use  
2.2.1 Single methodology use  
2.2.2 The choice of multiple methodology use  
2.3 The need for guidance  
2.4 Learner styles  
2.5 Learner atonomy  
2.6 Focus on learning  
3. The roles  
3.1 The role of the student  
3.2 The role of the teacher – defining what the role of the teacher is not  
3.3 The role of the teacher as the study guide  
3.4 The coach  
4. In search for models of learning  
4.1 To think outside of the box – alternative ways of thinking  
4.2 The interest in polyglot research  
4.3 Human character as a piece of the puzzle  
4.4 The attitude of the language learner  
5. The coaching  
5.1 Getting to know each student as a language student  
5.1.1 The process of evaluation  
5.2 Working with the list once the evaluation is done  
5.2.1 The weaknesses  
5.2.2 The strengths  
6. A detailed presentation of the list  
7. The artificial language environment  
8. The classroom  
9. Conclusion  
References  
Appendix
Declaration of thesis

It is possible to individualise language education within the framework of a regular size class.

Introduction and aim

Didactics has changed over time with new waves of approaches to teaching and learning. Today’s didactics expresses a number of good ideas and realistic theories such as learner’s autonomy, student centred teaching, learning styles and individualised learning, portfolio, mentoring etc.

In spite of all this, it can still be difficult to put the different pieces together in order to put these ideas and theories into practice. The practical side of the matter seems to be that it takes a lot of time for new theories to find their way into the classrooms. The reason for this is that old concepts tend to stand in the way for new ones. For the teacher this means that it may not be all that easy to find a ready-made theoretical model or a living example of a colleague to follow for those who wish to take a step in this direction and put some of these ideas into practice.

It is for this reason this thesis wants to produce practical tools that can be used to move in the direction of tailor-made language education. One such tool consists of a list that can be used to survey the individual circumstances around each student. Another tool is a model of mentoring that focuses on the creation of an artificial language environment in the daily life of every student.

The thesis also looks into the issue regarding the shift from teaching to learning to find out how this can affect the roles of both the teacher and the student.

Inspiration has been gathered from many directions, but the thesis supports first and foremost the two theories that the state of the student’s personal character is of importance for effective learning, and that attitudes typical for polyglots have can be beneficial for language learners.

My ambition with this thesis is to accept the challenge and present a larger perspective on language didactics rather than a number of small details of language learning. These smaller details do not necessarily have to be exchanged, but do in most cases fit in to a wholeness that can be shaped by a new way of thinking where the roles of the teacher and the student have been radically changed. This thesis presents a framework for teaching that can work as a platform to start with in order to develop some present day ideas of teaching further.
1. Background

The potential as well as the necessity for good language skills has never been greater than in this time of rapid globalisation (Tornberg). Simultaneously the practice of language teaching has changed considerably over the last decades. The existing resources in the area of language didactics today are tremendous compared to before. These circumstances could and should be enough for a great renaissance when it comes to language learning. The expected result would of course be a considerable improvement of knowledge and skills. Contrary to this expectation, the development has been very negative (The Chamber of Commerce), and many people worry about the state and future of language education in our schools. A sign of the negative development of language learning in our schools can be found in the reaction of the Department of Romance languages at the University of Gothenburg, which nowadays offer and recommend two preparatory semesters before the students can start with the basic level of Spanish that students used to be able to take straight after upper secondary school. When the students finally reach the basic A-course level they have to take a compulsory course in Swedish grammar, due to the fact that most students leave school without basic knowledge of grammatical terminology (University of Gothenburg). Could this negative development be explained by the change in language didactics that has taken place, because it happened to coincide? – Probably not. The shift towards more learner-centred teaching with focus on language exposure and practical application of knowledge is something which is welcomed by many people involved. It is more likely that the answer to this problem is to be found in the general development of learning within the educational system. “The results of the Swedish school have constantly been declining over the last 15 years” (Comment from the minister of education Jan Björklund, in the TV-show Gomorron Sverige SVT 1, 2008-02-15).

In a time when study results are rapidly declining in most areas of skills and knowledge due to a general change of attitude towards studies among young people, it not so difficult to accept that language studies, which require a lot of time and effort, will suffer more than other subjects in the time of the present development (Näs). Another explanation for the development is the change of status of language studies within the educational system, which has discouraged the choice of language studies (Näs).

Following the line of thought that progression, and not regression is the way to go we could end up with the conclusion that what we need in order to get success is some success, since success generates success (Gersne). This means at the level of the individual learner that successful language studies can be considered to be very rewarding due to the fact that language skills are extremely practical. From the teacher’s perspective this means that we can achieve more with students who have their interest boosted by their own progress. This is why the experience and strategy of second language learning is important.
for the development of the third language (Archibald & Roy). This theory stresses the need to start the right way so that we can enjoy the benefits of having stimulated and satisfied students to work with.

This thesis supports the theory that the right way to start is to teach the students how to study. The simple reason for this is the fact that our time with the students is limited, which means that that we have to make good use of the time, and that the main part of the studying will have to take place outside of the class room. This task can only be accomplished by students who know how to study, since it demands that the students take a lot of responsibility for their own learning (Eriksson & Tholin).
2. The quest for a model

2.1 Didactics – a beginner’s approach

The science of didactics is rather complex due to the fact that the human being is very complex. This can explain why seemingly contradicting theories are supported with results of research, a fact that only makes it more difficult. Anyone with the desire to approach the field of didactics will sooner or later reach a junction where it is no longer possible to follow all theories in the field at the same time, and a choice of direction has to be made. If the desire aims at a practical application this choice will have to be followed by a number of choices until the end of the road is reached in the sense that a satisfying theory has been found.

A choice that is unavoidable is choice between two different views where one represents the idea that there is one single theory of didactics that is superior, and the alternative point of view that contradicts the first one. The latter position opens up for the next two alternatives: to go with a single methodology or to take advantage of more than one way of teaching at the same time.

2.2 Single methodology use vs. multiple methodology use

2.2.1 Single methodology use

The practice of a single methodology use is common and there is no lack of living examples of this practice to follow. One obstacle on the way of choosing which (single) teaching methodology to use consists of making a choice between the many different options available.

2.2.2 The choice of multiple methodology use

The traditional way to approach education has been to first establish a view of teaching and learning based on a certain theory of general methodology. The second step is to adapt the subject in order to make it fit in to the theory. This is a good way of getting sympathy from other people who are in favour of that specific methodology, but it can be questioned whether it is the key to instant success when it comes to language learning. In this context it would be correct to question whether the specific theory that appeals includes specific applications for language teaching or not. The choice to take the direction of multiple methodology use does not guarantee instant success. It is a more difficult way in the sense that it is not all that easy to find a package deal in the same way that a single methodology use often supplies a kit that is ready to be used. A major obstacle to conquer for anyone desiring to apply multiple methodology use is the big question: which methodologies to use? To choose one methodology to use is
difficult enough, this problem will automatically be multiplied for those who decide to endeavour out into the often-unknown territory of multiple methodology use. Even so, in the same way that the choice of a single methodology use can be the base for successful language learning the choice of multiple methodology use should have an even greater potential for success. The first reason is the advantage of being able to pick the cherries out of a number of cakes in the bakery of language didactics. The second reason is the aspect of learner styles (see the passage about learner styles). The chance of hitting more students with the best methodology for each particular student will of course increase with the number of methodologies being used. “When the students become aware of how each and every one of them learn in the best way, and they themselves take a greater responsibility for their own learning there will of course be many different methods of learning in use at the same time” (Tornberg, 25). If we are striving for perfection however, we have to face the fact that just adding methodologies is still a matter of taking a chance and seeing what the outcome will be. As mentioned before, a certain amount of conviction regarding the choice is also required here, even if it takes a lot of reasoning and trying out to end up with an entire plan that will meet all the needs of an entire class, or the whole student body.

My own conviction is that these two roads, single methodology use as well as multiple methodology use, can both lead to fine achievements in language learning. We are however not in the business of manufacturing inanimate all-identical objects; therefore we can draw the conclusion that it is beyond reason to expect that all human beings could all learn in the best possible way if they are taught using the same teaching methodology. The opinion of the author Ulrika Tornberg is that there is no superior way of learning in the sense that one method is better than the other (Tornberg).

### 2.3 The need for guidance

The choice of multiple methodology use has a potential to improve the learning results looking at the actual subjects, but it leaves a number of problems unsolved. Just using multiple methodology does not cater for all the needs of all students, it does not necessarily develop the students as learners and it does not supply the teachers nor the students with information about the students general progression as students. A consequence of the latter problem is that though a student might benefit from the multiple methodology use of one teacher in one subject; it does not necessarily mean that this will affect the studies of another subject or any other future studies. This raises the issue regarding the need to develop general study skills in every single student. We want all our students to be successful in our subjects, but the question is whether it includes making them dependent on us for their success or not, if so, it would be very short-sighted both in time and in space. In order for our students to be successful in the same
way also in the subjects that we do not teach ourselves, a transformation of all the students is required. This transformation is from a dependency on the teacher to an independent state where the students are able to learn well independently of what kind of teachers they will meet in the future. The transformation will only happen if we are able to teach the students how to learn; this is the key to change in learning strategy (Dryden Vos in Tornberg.). This leads to the conclusion that an important part of the teacher’s job is to work him or herself out of the job when it comes to developing the students as students, so that they will be able to apply what they are taught to any subject that they will study in the future.

We as teachers could direct the students’ attention to strategies that they could use for different tasks, and allow them to try them out. We can also talk to them about general principles for language learning and language development, and in this way make it easier for them to become aware of how they work (Tornberg). When given the opportunity to use different strategies the students are likely to choose strategy according to personal learner style.

2.4 Learner styles

The core of the matter is the theory that every student is unique and that different students have different abilities to benefit from the different ways of learning that we may introduce to them. In order to benefit from the knowledge about various learner styles we need to introduce the different options of learning to the students and let the students examine themselves under supervision in order for them to find out who they are in the sense that they identify their specific learner style(s) (Tornberg, Eriksson & Tholin).

It appears to be an important task for the school to help the students to get to know who they are since going to school is about working with oneself, and as stated in the regulations of The Swedish National Agency for Education (Lpf 94): “The task of the school is to encourage all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals…”

The choice of seeing each student as a unique individual, with a special way of learning, as the best way for that individual, should call for a deeper interest in this particular field of studies. Tornberg indicates a few works and authors: four different learning preferences are presented in Learning styles and Adult Migrant Education (Willing, 1987). The issues of how to perceive and how to organise information the easiest, and also the matter of physical, social and emotional factors are dealt with in The learner style preferences of ESL students (Reid. J. 1987, TESOL Quarterly 21/87).
2.5 Learner autonomy

Along with different options like learner styles and the students responsibility for their own learning comes the consequential call for the necessity to empower the students, to give them the power over their own learning. This sounds so good, but how is that supposed to happen? We often come across teachers who let the students do whatever they want in the classroom, but that does not give them the power over their own learning. It only gives them the power over time and space, and that in itself does not accomplish anything (Dysthe). There is not necessarily any learning taking place at all under these circumstances. What is learned is controlled by the learner, and not by the teacher, nor by the textbooks or the syllabus (Ellis, R. in Tornberg).

A mere empowering of the students does not accomplish much learning without the instruction how to use this power constructively. The consciousness about one’s own learning is important knowledge for the school to transmit (Tornberg). Some educational plans already put the responsibility for the actual learning on the students, which is the correct thing to do, but it also gives the teachers the moral obligation to instruct the students how to learn.

2.6 Focus on learning

The shift of attention from teaching to learning in the general methodology of the present day brings along the great challenge of the implication in the specific subject (Tornberg). The model that will be presented in this thesis is meant to be a suggestion among other suggestions that have the potential to be developed by those who desire to look further into learner-centred teaching, and to take a first step in the direction of tailor-made education.
3. The roles

The consequential shift of focus from the teacher to the student that follows a shift of attention from teaching to learning can bring about radical changes of the roles of both the teacher and the student.

3.1 The role of the student

Student centred teaching implies a focus on the student in many ways, like the fact that the teaching is fashioned after the student and not after the teacher. The role of the student as the worker has to be clearly communicated to each student. In a situation where the teacher is perceived as the worker as such, and the student is a mere spectator of the work that is being done there is no guarantee that any learning is taking place, no matter how excellent the teaching might be in the sense of the transmission of facts. The more entertaining the teacher can be the better, but the role of the student is to do the work of learning, not to be a consumer of entertainment.

Before the course material of the subject can be learned successfully each the student must realise that he or she is the one at work in a general sense, and that it is the student’s task to learn how to learn (Krachen in Erard).

Few people want to start a journey unless they know where they are going. We must communicate the goals very clearly (Lonsdale), but we must also communicate the way to reach the goals so well that the students actually start walking in the right direction. If the students are going to do their share they must know where they are going, and how that is supposed to happen. We must communicate this to each student in a way that can be easily understood by the student (Eriksson & Tholin).

When this is clear the student has to get to know him- or herself as a student (Archibald & Roy). Each student is unique with his or her specific strengths and weaknesses to be considered. This knowledge will help the student to focus on these areas during the process of learning.

The third thing that the student needs to accomplish before the desired goals of good skills and knowledge in the specific subject can be achieved is to learn is how to study. This includes general study techniques and specific learning schemes that are especially designed for the individual student.

After this initiating phase the student has two different learning projects going on at the same time. As the language studies progresses, the student also becomes more skilled at studying well in a general sense according to his or her special circumstances. This general part of the teaching can be applied to any school subject (Säljö, Dysthe, Archibald & Roy). This brings us to the conclusion that the role of the
student is to first develop into a good learner in a general sense in order to learn the required subjects so that the desired goals regarding knowledge and skills will be fulfilled.

3.2 The role of the teacher

–defining what the role of the teacher is not

As teachers we are not in show-biz. The students do not attend school in order to be entertained, if that was the case it would be very difficult for the teachers to compete with the students’ teenage idols. There is a great challenge in making certain young people change their view of life in the sense that some people believe that the meaning of all activity is that it is just supposed to be “fun”. The purpose of education has never been to be self-fulfilling, neither has it been to be a form of entertainment. Education is a means and not an end in itself. If the purpose of education was to be “fun” it would be an impossible task to lead education for the simple reason that “fun” can never be defined since it is a matter of personal opinion, taste and preference. This means that it is very difficult to determine whether education is “fun” or not. The question whether it matters if school is “fun” or not, is therefore less relevant than the question whether it is important if school is perceived as being “fun” or not for as many students as possible. Of course it is important that the students enjoy what they are doing; it would be remarkable if teachers had boredom as an aim for their work.

A lot of effort has been made to make teaching “fun”, but the question is if it is not a better idea to work on the attitude of the students (Archibald & Roy), so that they perceive learning and knowledge as “fun” instead? Well-being is closely connected with satisfaction. Satisfied students can be expected to also be achievers, and for such students it is easier to perceive school as being “fun”. The conclusion is that if we really want to make education “fun”, we should make sure that we do our uttermost for all our students to be as successful as possible (Archibald & Roy).

3.3 The role of the teacher as the study guide

People used to think that the desired results, good skills and knowledge, depended on a good performance of the teacher, since students of teachers with the desired performance did well. The teacher does however never accomplish the needed action that is directly connected with success, and that is the learning. Some teachers do somehow inspire and facilitate learning very well. This is why we can define good teaching as learning-promoting teaching. It is all about making someone else carry out the necessary action of learning, because we can never learn something on behalf of someone else. The
“passing on” of knowledge requires a really good receiver in order for the intake of knowledge to take place, and this is not always the case. The reason for this can be found in the law of sowing and reaping: if students do not learn well it is because they are seldom taught how to learn well. “Stephen Krashen, a professor emeritus of education and linguistics from the University of California, Los Angeles, believes that exceptional language learners simply work harder at it, and have a better understanding of how they learn” (Erard). If the teacher accepts the role as the one responsible for the availability of knowledge regarding the know-how of studying then he or she is also promoting equal opportunity in a practical way. The issue of grading has been debated over a number of decades, and some argue that grading a person is unfair and destructive. Grading study results is indeed unfair if the school does not give every student the same chance to learn how to learn. This should be a minimum requirement in order to level out the biggest circumstantial differences between the students, even if differences in opportunity will never cease to completely exist.

3.4 The coach

The idea of giving the teacher the role as a coach is very old. Aristotle has been described as a coach and a mentor (Potter). It is important to stress the fact that the students are the ones who will perform the actual work of learning. The coach is only there to serve them so that they may carry out their work as successful as possible.

The Swedish National Agency for Education, Lpf 94:

“The teacher should take as the starting point that the pupils are able and willing to take personal responsibility for their learning and work in school.” As many of us know, just taking this as the starting point does not get the job done. Wishing is just not enough. Our students need help to know what to do and how to do it just like any other workers. It is remarkable that this principle is taken for granted when it comes to learning to do any other work, but when it comes to studying, which is the base for any other training, the workers (the students) are often expected to fix it themselves.

A student centred view of teaching recognises the need for the teacher to get to know each student well enough to guide him or her to the best way of learning (Eriksson & Tholin). “Understanding and learning is affected by the background and personal character of the individual. This gives the teacher a new role. The teacher is no longer a high commander but rather a pilot (in the spirit of Vygotsky) that can help the student to find his or her own way” (Tornberg, 2005).

The fact that there is a clear need for a shift of focus from the teacher to the student does not mean that the teaching profession does become easier. On the contrary, it is indeed becoming more complex. It is
fully possible for a teacher to isolate him or herself from the students and run an impressive and entertaining show up front without knowing hardly anything about the students and their individual learning processes. The students must be made aware of their own learning (Eriksson & Tholin), and this does not happen by chance. In order for the students to develop as students they need a teacher who functions as a coach for them, someone who can coach them through the process of learning with adequate support until the students really know how to study well. In addition the teacher will have to assist the student in the learning of the subject. “In the teaching of foreign languages, the subject specific supervision is allotted the main part of the teaching time” (Johansson, 151). The teacher must inspire the students to walk this complex but most rewarding road to excellence in learning. It does not matter how convinced the teacher is if the students refuse to participate. The degree of participation is directly linked to the student’s consciousness; the more aware the student is the more he or she will participate in the classroom activities (Tornberg). The aware-making of the students regarding their own learning process is extremely important (Archibald & Roy). To learn how to learn is indeed the task of the student, but the teacher must be at least one step ahead of the student. In order to assist the student in this process the teacher must accept the task to study each student as a learner, so that the teacher may know how to lead each student. The teacher has the tools, the insight and the experience to interpret the student’s results in a way that is beyond the capacity of the student in the initial stage of the student’s development. The teacher can understand why the student gets it right, and why he or she fails, so much better then the student him/herself understands at this stage. Once again: the teacher has to work him or herself out of the job. The desired goal must always be to see the students taking responsibility for their own learning in a practical sense, and that they do it successfully. Ingela Nyman claims that “students learn when they get the opportunity to take responsibility” (Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg, 135). This can be true, but the necessary condition is that we give them the tools to succeed. To follow the development of each student this closely can of course give a rather complex picture of a class, but it still gives the teacher a lot of information about how the subject needs to be taught in order to accomplish the desired learning results. Apart from the theoretical knowledge of the matter there is not much required from the teacher besides flexibility and a great amount of humility. The teacher must step aside from the centre of the attention in the mind of the student, since teacher centred education leaves little space for individualisation (Eriksson & Tholin). We should not want the students to hear us; we should want them to hear what we say. The students may appreciate a teacher as a lecturer because the teacher manages to entertain the students well. This might produce a sense of emotional well-being inside the students, which generates a positive association with the subject (Dewaele). This is positive, but it might also fool the students and become a long detour around the core of the problem; it does not solve the problem of a limited learning ability. The process of learning a language outside of its natural
habitat is so complex that a sense of well-being seldom is enough in order to reach the desired goals. It is necessary that the teacher dares to let go of his or her favourite way of teaching if the insight into the students’ learning processes shows that there is a more suitable way to teach the class. This means that the teacher sometimes has to join the students as they venture out of their comfort zones. This will ultimately bring us to the conclusion that we have longed for; the answer to “the eternal question”: which method of language teaching is the best? The teacher who will seriously study his or her students will soon find out that all claims regarding the title of the best method can be questioned. The simple explanation is that we are not working with dead material. We are working with living beings. Each one of our students is a unique individual, and each one has his or her own best way of learning (Wenden in Tornberg). The students will seldom find this way themselves, we normally have to assist them (Treffiger, Dunn & Dunn in Tornberg).

It may not be so difficult to support the idea of the teacher as a coach in theory. It could however, be more difficult to know how to make that come about. Chapter 5 gives an example of a model that can be used to kick-start that process.
4. In search for models of learning

The search for the key to success in language studies has often been carried out within the general theories of didactics. To learn a language is however a rather complex mission compared to other learning tasks. A high capacity for memorising facts is not sufficient for successful language studies. There are other ways of approaching the problem. Another line of thought is to follow those who practice best, assuming that the one who knows how to practice well also knows how to learn and how to teach well. Once again the complex matter of language learning appears to be difficult to compare with other disciplines of science and didactics, because in our case, the most skilled people must be the native speakers (L1 speakers), they have however acquired their own mother tongue, and they have not necessarily learned any foreign language at all. This achievement is the result of an upbringing with total exposure to the language, and with constant correction of the spoken language from other native speakers, something that we can never offer our language students. The fact that the L1 speaker performs a perfect practice of the desired skill does not necessarily mean that he or she knows anything about the structure or peculiarities of the language, or that the L1 speaker has any knowledge about language learning at all. Basically all native speakers of languages with complex case structures like German, Finnish or Hungarian can get it all right when they use their languages themselves, but few of these native speakers can explain their use of case to another person.

4.1 To think outside of the box – alternative ways of thinking

The conclusion is that we are stuck with the need for new ways of thinking. In order to think outside of the box it is extremely helpful to leave the box, or to be in the privileged position of not ever having been in the box in the first place. This does not mean that we should disrespect all specialists in every possible field, but it is often true that a tour into a different discipline of science can be rewarding if we desire a new way of approaching a problem, rather than just consulting a theory of our choice.

In this case I have chosen to take a look at human character and polyglots, two areas that are normally disregarded in most theories of didactics. The idea that more studies should be devoted to polyglots in connection with language learning is supported by Jens Allwood at the Department of linguistics at the University of Gothenburg.

4.2 The interest in polyglot research

The reason for this interest in polyglot research is that it is a step in a new direction. This different way of approaching the problem is based on the idea to seek knowledge from those who have actually managed to do what we want our students to do, which is to successfully learn a foreign language.
Without doubt there are no better people than the polyglots when it comes to achieving results in language learning. Not only do they usually manage to learn a language better and faster than others, they also do it over and over again, which proves that it is no coincidence. Compared to the rest of the population these people can be viewed as remarkable in their achievements, though it is questionable if the polyglots themselves find it so special, because it is no big deal for them to pick up another language – or two. If polyglots were just supernaturally talented people then the research on polyglots would simply be of less value for language didactics. If the case is the opposite, that polyglots lack something, then most people given the right circumstances would be able to become polyglots themselves, or at least take advantage of the results in order to carry out successful language studies.

4.3 Human character as a piece of the puzzle
The learner’s personal character may not be the most frequently discussed topics of our time, and yet there are still those who claim that such a connection not only exists but is very important for the end results (Tornberg). This area could be seen as an interesting field of study in order to find more pieces to the puzzle of language learning (Lightbown and Spada in Tornberg). Good personal character is beneficial for acquiring attitudes that work in favour of language learning.

4.4 The attitude of the language learner
People with an extravert personality are like polyglots in the sense that they have less foreign language anxiety, and they communicate more (Dewaele). This type of attitude is important for developing language skills since willingness to speak and good interpersonal relationships have shown to be essential for third language acquisition (Dewaele). This can be compared to the typical mono- or bilingual person who forces him-or herself to interact with strangers in order to improve his or her language skills with a lot of fear and anxiety. For many people these situations are nightmares, and when they finally make it, they never ever want to go through it again. Polyglots have a completely different attitude towards these situations; they see the gain and the progress rather than the trouble. People in common have a strong need of being in control; they prefer to know exactly what to say, so that they do not have to leave their comfort zone. A polyglot does not seem to understand what a comfort zone is. The curse of language teaching is often the assumption that the foreign language must be well developed before it can be used (Tornberg). The preconceived idea that causes the problem is that other people’s opinion about them is first and foremost based on the correctness of their language skills. To speak to someone else also means that you have to take risks and that you cannot be afraid of making a fool of
yourself (Tornberg). To consult this type of emotions is both self-destructive and unprofitable for language learning. This emotional handicap seems to be unknown to the polyglots. They are just determined to communicate, no matter what. They could not care less if they make complete fools out of themselves as they develop their new language. The polyglot is focused on learning more about the person in front of him and his culture and society with a positive attitude, just like successful L3 learners (Dewaele). Making a mistake is not just negative; it is a free ride on the rollercoaster of language learning. If a mistake catches the attention of a polyglot, it is perceived as a valuable piece of information that can only help him or her to communicate better in the future. To the normal person, the language can appear as a big obstacle that stands in between him or herself and his or her needs. This is contrary to the mentality of the polyglot. The polyglot sees the language as a precious tool independently of his or her own present level. The polyglot is happy about starting a conversation in a language that is little known to him or herself and without hardly any words in his or her own vocabulary for the simple reason that you have to start somewhere.

What the language learner has to do in order to lay hold of the productive polyglot mentality is to develop the ability to adapt to the present language learning situation so that blocking fear does not develop (Ellis in Tornberg). The language student must more or less make a decision to dare to plunge into the insecurity that using limited language skills always means (Tornberg).
5. The coaching

Before anything can be accomplished it must first be well communicated to the students. Whatever the teacher desires to do, as long as it requires the participation of the students they need to know and understand what the teaching is about, what the meaning is and what they have to do in order for the mission to get accomplished (Bley-Vroman in Tornberg). We also need to communicate that we see the students as unique individuals who may need to take different roads in order to reach the same goals. Teachers are not leaders of the students in their learning unless they lead the students somewhere, and few are willing to take on a journey unless they know where the end of the journey is.

When the students have a clear vision of the goal(s) and the road that will take them there it is time to move on forward with actions in three steps that will correspond directly to the three initial needs of any language student. In defining these three needs there is a strategy which can be used to turn an unskilled student into an efficient learner, and to bring the student all the way to the desired goals of knowledge. The first step is for both the teacher and the student to get to know the student as a student. This process is described in detail in this chapter. The second step is for the student to learn how to study in general, and how to study languages specifically. The third step is to learn/teach the actual subject, in our case a certain language.

5.1 Getting to know each student as a language student

The purpose of this is to get the information needed in order to guide the students in the direction of the specific goals of the studies in the best possible way.

Another purpose of this process is to let the students know who they are and how they function as students (Johansson). Instead of never understanding why they are successful in some parts of the studies and failing in others, they will get a clear picture of their own learning conditions.

5.1.1 The process of evaluation

In order to start this evaluation process a tool can be used. The point of using a list as a brain storm tool is that it is practical in the sense that it is difficult to remember everything without some sort of documentation. A detailed presentation of such a list will follow in chapter 6. I have chosen to present my own list that consists of 27 points that all relate to the ability to achieve good study results. The students get to evaluate themselves, and to indicate whether the point in question is considered to be an individual weakness or a strength. This information will indicate the needs for tailor-made study
techniques that would meet the actual needs of each student (Nunan in Håkansson in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg).

After this is done the students will be instructed in how to combat every weakness, and how to take advantage of all the strengths on the list. Simultaneously a dialogue with the students is carried out in order to become aware of the needs that the students sense that they have. Apart from helping the student and the teacher to get started, the list also serves them throughout the studies, as revisions are made in order to monitor the students’ progress.

5.2 Working with the list once the evaluation is done

This type of tool for documentation can turn out to be very useful for the practical reason that this type of coaching is a very complex task that would require a lot of space in the human memory if we did not have the option of putting things in writing.

As the self-evaluation is done we can say that we are working with two lists, because the points on the list will be treated so differently depending on which side of the division between strengths and weaknesses each point will end up.

The idea behind the studies of strengths is based on the assumption that strengths can only be fully beneficial when they are known. When the students get the proper coaching so that they really know how to use their strong sides the students can make these particular strengths work for the own benefit. On the other side, the weaknesses are likely to function as obstacles for the student’s progress for as long as they remain unknown to the student and to the teacher. In addition to this the students need proper coaching along the way in order to combat and eliminate the weaknesses.

“The debate is personal because, from each of those branches, swinging precariously is an individual: A student who is counting on you to recognize his or her unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. This individuality means a great deal more than a certain percentage on a standardized test.” (Tokuhama-Espinosa).

5.2.1 The weaknesses

The teacher can use the list to help the student combat the weak sides; this will be an important part of the teacher’s duty as a coach, since not all students are aware of their own weaknesses and how to work with them. The expectation is that more and more points on the evaluation list will shift from the right to the left column (from being a weakness to being a strength). It is easy for a teacher to forget the
students’ perspective and take for granted that all students are able to turn information into knowledge and practical application instantly.

5.2.2 The strengths

The other side of the coaching contains the work with the students’ strong sides.

Our strengths do not serve us at their full potential if we do not know how to make them work for us. This means that many students have the potential to achieve more than they are doing due to unawareness. Our goal as teachers must always be to make every student reach their full potential. As a coach the teacher should help the student to remove obstacles in combating the weaknesses, but it is also important to help the students to develop those areas where they already perform very well. We should allow students to become really good at some aspect of the target language, in spite of the fact that there are still some weaknesses to deal with, this means that we are not robbing them of the joy of being really good at something. This can have a positive effect on other sides of their language learning.
6. A detailed presentation of the list

For the purpose of explanation of each point mentioned in this presentation will deal with all aspects of the use of the list: both strengths and weaknesses before and after the evaluation. The points are divided into three categories of circumstances that are more or less subject to change, and that is really the focus here: to change what can be changed for the better.

The first category is talents (normal script). It is a common misconception that successful language learning should depend entirely on talent(s), but if the talents do exist, it is important to make use of them. Some talents can indeed be developed, even if this option generally is limited. Like the talents, the assets (italic script) are less subject to change in a general sense. It is often a matter of either having them or not. In the cases where these assets actually can be attained this information can turn out to be very valuable. The bold script indicates the specific details of the student’s character as a student. The points have been chosen as a result of studies of the areas of the human character and polyglots described earlier. These points are of great interest for both teacher and student, first because of their importance, but also because of the fact that they are to a large extent subject to change. The teacher who is interested in putting so much effort into the work that he or she goes for tailor-made teaching is likely to be interested in the things that are subject to change as it could make a difference in the potential of reaching the goals.

Character (bold script)

Point 1. An open mind (attitude)

This is not only an extremely important point, but also a very complex one. The first point sums up the mental characteristics of the polyglot. This means that in order to work on a closed mind, the student has to overcome all personal obstacles of psychological nature that hinders the language learner to freely engage him or herself in conversation in the target language (Dewaele). One characteristic of an open mind is that fear does not stand a chance against the feelings of joy and curiosity when it comes to speaking the target language in spite of the limits in personal skills (Tornberg, Bergström in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg). This usually works automatically, because it is usually those who love to speak in general and in any language that benefit from this mentality (Dewaele), but a lot can be achieved by making the student aware of this mentality, especially if the student can practice speaking skills outside of the class room. Another characteristic of an open mind is the complete surrender to the structure and the particularities of the target language. It is important that the learner does not insist on keeping the structure of another language, like for example the mother tongue or the language of instruction. It is acceptable to translate expressions word by word in order to make the conversation flow, with the aim of learning through practicing when we have never learned the correct way to express something in the
target language, not even an open mind can solve that before it is learned. The point is however, to submit to the way of the target language, i.e. syntax, idioms etc. without insisting on keeping the pattern of another language. A practical example of these differences is the different ways to express age in different languages. The typical pattern in Germanic languages is that the subject has his or her age as a character, and the verb which is used to ascribe character to a person is of course “to be”. Every one is a certain number of years old. This is generally not the case in Romance languages where there are other ways of expressing age. In Portuguese the subject is in possession of his or her age, thus having a number of years. In Spanish there is also the alternative to allow the subject to complete a certain number of years. Such differences in construction tends to make it difficult for native speakers of Romance languages to learn and to practice Germanic languages well, because the difference in structure is difficult to accept, thus submission to the target language is needed. The key is to develop a questioning learner style instead of a questioning attitude which is something counterproductive (Bergström in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg). The impact of interaction in learning is very important (Pica, Young & Doughty in Tornberg). The recognition of the benefits of learning by asking questions is very old and goes back to Aristotle.

Point 2. Motivation
This can be labelled the engine of any learning. The expression that motivation beats class is really true. Children are not dependant on motivation in order to acquire their mother tongue, but language learning is different to language acquisition (L1). The one who really needs to learn will also learn (Archibald & Roy). As teachers we always have the task of motivating our students. The teacher should help the students to find this motivation by having a discussion on the topic of why they need the language (Eriksson & Tholin). For those who want to learn a foreign language motivation will often decide if they are going to make it or not (Tornberg).

Point 3. Diligence
Language learning is very much about hard work (Krachen in Erard); there is just no way around it (Bergström in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg). This does work together with motivation, and something that usually motivates diligence is the accomplishment of good results.

Point 4. Enjoying challenges
Language studies involve getting challenged the whole time. Success is to a certain degree determined by how the students react in these moments. Avoiding the challenges does not promote development. To
take on the challenges by walking on thin ice in the sense that the student dares to read texts that are a little more difficult, dares to speak using half-familiar expressions and write longer and more complex texts than necessary does take courage, but it is also most rewarding when it comes to developing language skills. The right level of difficulty is slightly above what the learner masters (Dulay, Burt & Krashen in Eriksson & Tholin). Language will take care of itself, it will be learned when the learner becomes involved in real communication (H. Stern in Eriksson & Tholin).

**Point 5. Social character**
The purpose of acquiring language skills is to be able to communicate. The greater urge a person senses to communicate the more important it becomes to lay hold of those language skills that make it possible to communicate in that language. This can explain why worse students with good social skills, in the sense that they love to talk and interact, can do better in language subjects than students with the exact opposite background. If these students with poor academic achievements in other subjects really get the chance to blossom in their language subjects it could actually turn the ship around for them when it comes to the rest of their studies. It is generally more difficult to get silent people to talk in the target language. One of the most destructive factors in language learning is the vicious circle created when the student does not learn by practicing because the student does not speak because he or she does not dare to say anything because the student is not sure if he or she can say it correctly (Tornberg, 2005).

**Point 6. Persistence**
Considering the number of people who have ever started a language course we could expect to live in a nation of polyglots, but this is not the case. One reasonable explanation among others to the fact that so many start out without completing their studies is the students’ lack of persistence.

**Point 7. Patience**
Languages seldom jump on you unexpectedly. They take time and effort. In an age of instant satisfaction the virtue of patience has shown to be a real commodity when it comes to language learning.

**Point 8. Love for the subject (the language)**
Like motivation, passion can work as an engine for learning (Krachen in Erard). This can explain why some students can do so much better in a seemingly more difficult language compared to their weaker results in another language. This is also supported by research that indicates that foreign language attitudes are language specific (Dewaele). The teacher is the one who has to present his or her subject in a way that the students become passionate about it, but in the end this is also a responsibility of the
students (Dewaele). It is fully possible for a student to master or manipulate one’s own feelings and make a quality decision to love the subject in order to perform well academically. The teacher also has to detect even the sparks of this passion in order to boost it and make it work in the favour of the student when that passion does exist (see also Point 9. Enjoying studies).

**Point 9. Enjoying studies**
Contrary to what many students think, preference is a matter of choice, and the best choice a student can make is to enjoy studies in a general sense. Good results and the usefulness of the skills contribute to the students’ perception of a joyful course. The great advantage the language teachers have in this sense is the option of having the students communicate with real people, in school or anywhere in the world making use of the target language. There are many ways of making this happen. Some schools have exchange programs with schools in countries where the target languages are spoken. Another option is to start a language café with other schools in the vicinity, or to make use of the Internet to communicate with speakers of the target language who are located far away.

**Point 10. General interest in languages**
This is something that can either work as vicious circle, or the other way around. The lack of this interest prevents successful language studies, and successful language studies bring about a general interest in languages.

**Point 11. Concentration**
This is a real trap that can drain the students of a lot of their time. The question is if the student is able to focus on the teaching, reading etc. or if the mind makes a time consuming loop around before the student gets into the action. The good news is that the problem can be analysed and solved. Common reasons for problems in the area of concentration can be lack of sleep, nutrition and physical exercise. Other problems such as emotional or social problems, as well as neurological disabilities can explain a student’s dysfunction related to a lack of concentration. Unfortunately this kind of disabilities is seldom detected without a coaching or mentoring teacher role in function.

**Point 12. Book worm**
Lots of reading is promoted for language students. It is easy to find testimonies from people who have learned and kept up languages by reading large quantities of books, but it can be difficult to get started and to continue to read if reading for pleasure is not a personal habit. The bookworm definitely has an advantage when it comes to digesting literature in the target language. The common thing is to promote
original works in the target language, and to get acquainted with the literature of the language is definitely something that belongs to regular language studies, but in the difficult cases when it just does not work out we have to think outside the box in order to find solutions. For students who do not take any pleasure at all in reading, non-fictional literature could be the solution, because everyone has some area of interest. Translated fiction is not usually the first thing that comes to mind, but it can also be used. A situation when this could be the solution is when the student’s preference is very limited. An example of this phenomenon is the notable recent success of the fantasy genre among young people who never used to read anything, and who still limit their reading to this specific genre. It can be very difficult to find something so special in the target language. Many times it is easier to find a copy of an international best seller that has been translated into the target language. Until the students have developed into bookworms we should be more concerned about language exposure and quantity than with the taste and quality of the literature.

Point 13. General interest in foreign cultures
An interest in different cultures is often something that inspires language studies, and it is helpful when it comes to the studies of the countries where the target language is spoken (Dewaele).

Assets (italic script)

Point 14. Time
It really costs a lot of time to learn a language (Flynn in Erard). This used to be less of a problem in the Swedish upper secondary school system before time consumption in language studies was instantly compensated in the credit system. If time is an individual weakness it can often be solved with Point 15. Time management.

Point 15. Time management
Inside the Canadian educational system a course in Study plan and time management (SPAF) is compulsory for all students attending upper secondary school. The question is whether there has ever been a greater way to promote education and equal opportunities than this one presented anywhere. All students have 24 hours per day and 7 days per week, the question is what they do with their time. If we truly want to give our students the best education possible then this area cannot be ignored.
Point 16. Study techniques
This point is listed as an asset because it is a precious possession for those who have it. To teach the students how to study is often needed. We cannot expect the students to know how to study if we do not teach it (Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg). (see also Point 15. Time management).

Point 17. Other languages
The testimony of many polyglots confirms the thesis that the more languages you speak the easier it becomes to pick up another one (Flynn in Erard). Research does show that students belonging to an ethnic minority tend to perform better in L3 learning (Archibald & Roy). This is however a case of have or have not, but if a student does speak another language the teacher can help to boost this effect, especially if the teacher happens to master the other language. If this is the case the teacher can make comparisons and trigger the student’s association skills which can give the student a flying start in understanding many aspects of the target language like syntax vocabulary etc. If the teacher does not speak the third language, he or she can help the student to open their minds by asking about the equivalent structures and construction in the third language. If the teacher manages to learn from the student it will become the teacher’s asset that can be used in the future to trigger the association skills of another student who speaks the same language. An example of these strategies would be to refer to the existence of case in some languages. To handle the four different cases in German does not seem to be that much of an obstacle for the student if he or she gets to see it in the light of the 15 different cases in the mother tongue (Finnish).

Point 18. Home environment
Some homes make good places for studying while others can be labelled as “war zones”. This is a difficult point since a lot of students live with other people, but it is important that the students become aware of the necessity of a good environment for their studies. When there is nothing to do about the home environment, the student must find an alternative venue for their studies in order to make good use of the time. (See also Point 11. Concentration).

Point 19. A study mate
This is a precious resource that has saved many students throughout the centuries, but it does not mean that these relationships develop automatically, or that they are everyone’s asset. The teacher can really help the students by promoting and organising this way of studying.
**Point 20. Speakers of the target language around**

This resource can make a difference, but a lot of students do not see the potential in using the speakers of the target language that they already know. It is even common to run into students who are children of native speakers of the very same language that these students are trying to learn in school without getting any help at home. Understanding how valuable this help is for the student, it is reasonable to expect the teacher to approach these parents, especially when we view this task in the light of the ambitious language teachers who specifically educate the parents in helping their children to learn a language that the parents do not know at all. For those who wish to explore this field, further reading of Chris Lonsdale’s work is recommended. Lonsdale regards the language learner a “linguistic orphan” in the sense that he recommends everyone to find a “language parent” who can help out with the language learning (Lonsdale).

**Talents** (normal script).

**Point 21. Ability to study alone**

This ability, or lack thereof, is often related to the points 11. Concentration or 16. Study techniques. It is important to communicate that the classroom sessions should be seen as the top of an iceberg. The major load of work has to be accomplished by the students outside of the classroom. In order to make this happen we must allow the coaching of the home work to consume time in the classroom as well. Tailor-made education where the role of the teacher is that of a coach must have a good over-all view of the student’s progress, which unavoidably will have to take place primarily outside of the classroom. It is inside the classroom that the teacher normally has the ability to affect what is taking place when the student studies alone outside of the class room through efficient coaching. To the extent that on-line discussions or e-mail communication between teacher and students is being used it can release the classroom settings from some of the coaching in order to get time to develop skills where the classroom setting is essential.

**Point 22. Memory**

Memory is a necessary talent, but it is a talent that can be developed irrespectively of the current level of function. Science has provided a lot of help for those who are aware. The start is to teach about memory and memorising (Tornberg). Howard Gardner’s 7 different intelligences can be tried out by the students in order for them to discover their own learning style when it comes to memorising vocabulary (Tornberg).
**Point 23.** Associative ability

This capacity is related to the points 17. *Other languages* and 10. *General interest in languages*, 25. *Fantasy* and 1. *An open mind*. It is important that the students develop an ability to discover patterns in the language like suffixes, gender, plural endings and the semantics without being taught everything specifically. A student who can put two and two together and figure things out will benefit more from language exposure. This ability is unevenly distributed among the student body, but it is an ability that can be developed, and the students can do with some help. It is often a matter of transmitting the thought patterns of a skilled language learner to the student who has this journey ahead of him or her (Archibald & Roy).

**Point 24.** Creativity

This relates to the ability to make something out of nothing. It can be creative ideas about how to study, or a creative mind that sees solutions within the specific tasks in the course, like the ability to work out a way around a word that is missing in the present vocabulary.

**Point 25.** Fantasy

Fantasy is related to 24. *Creativity*. Language courses include exercises that demand production of a nature that leaves the students with a lot of free choices. A lack of fantasy can become a stumbling block that makes some student lose valuable time when it comes to finding things to talk about and themes to write about.

**Point 26.** Ability to study with others

Some people are used to just studying on their own but it can be very beneficial to study together with others. This relates to any subject, but there are so many sides to language learning that different students often see different sides and details of the language.

See also Point 19. *A study mate*.

**Point 27.** Taking in information from lectures

It goes without saying that it is important to pickup what is being said, but there is a lot more to class participation than just listening to the transmission of facts. The students must develop the ability to put everything into the right context, and to see their own needs. It is a matter of getting a picture of what they know and what they do not know. The teacher has tests to find this out, but the best is still if the students can develop this consciousness themselves, so that the test results will not become a surprise to
them. A productive student makes sure to fill in the knowledge gaps by studying outside of the classroom, but he or she does also learn how to make use of the lectures in the best possible way by asking questions. Each student must come to realise that lectures do not exist to keep teachers from being unemployed. Lectures and teachers are there for the sake of the individual student. All students must get trained in taking notes, and to get the habit of writing down their questions (Bergström in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg). It is so easy for many students to think that they are the only ones in the classroom who does not understand, but the case can many times be the right opposite. This can be compared to the urge to communicate at any cost in the sense that the students’ need to understand must supersede their sense of embarrassment for not knowing (Lonsdale). See also 11. Concentration.
7. The artificial language environment

To learn a language outside of its natural habitat is usually a difficult project. As language teachers we need to realise that no matter how well we perform we can never reach above the position of the second best. If our top priority was to get the best possible results in studies of foreign languages we would have to place the students in a *natural language environment* that would do a lot of the work for us. To achieve this we would have to close down our schools and send the students off to the countries where the target languages are spoken. Since most people are not willing or able to make this priority it is our task to make the students develop in the direction of their full potential with the second best, which is the development of an *artificial* language environment.

Some teachers make sure to speak as much as possible in the target language during class because the target language is considered to be non-existent for the students outside of the classroom. In many cases it is a correct observation, but the target language does not have to be dead outside of the classroom. Just like in many other areas, this is also a matter of individual choice. It is important that the teacher passes on the awareness of the environmental aspect of language learning to the students. The difference between language studies and other subjects becomes more obvious when the students realise that this is a problem that they have to solve themselves. The students are not supposed to study a language because it is a part of the curriculum; they are supposed to learn a language because it is a valuable communications tool for life (Bergström in Nyman, Ferm & Malmberg).

A way to solve the problem of how to go from awareness to action is to give all the students the individual task of making a personal plan to create an artificial language environment with the target language in their own daily life (Eriksson & Tholin). Since the plan is a means and not an end it is good if the plan can centre on the personal interests of the individual student. The best plans are those that get put into practice. This is a good opportunity for the teacher to get to know each student better. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to learn from the students. One way of organising this is to give the students this task, and then invite them to present their different ideas in class so that others can benefit from their creativity, a brainstorm exercise that will result in a lot of ideas about making the target language come alive outside of the classroom. Common suggestions are to read books, magazines and newspapers. The whole area of entertainment can be used to fill the ears with the target language; music, television and films are plentiful. The virtual world of the Internet is a place where our teenagers spend a lot of time, but they may have neglected the opportunity to do this with the purpose of improving their language skills. The time issue is familiar to many of us. Students tend to complain about lack of time. They can be encouraged to simply change language as they consume entertainment, with the consequence that they spend the same amount of time doing the same thing but with the benefit of
immersing themselves in the target language if they have created an artificial language environment. It is a question of decision-making and habit. There is a point in handing this over to the students as a task rather than just telling them what to do. We already tell them so many things that they have to do, and it can so easily become another thing among many other things that the students experience as burdens. As stated before, the most important thing about the plan is that it becomes reality in the students’ daily lives, and therefore it can be assumed that the students will be more eager to put it into practice if they feel that it is their own the project, and if it is their own ideas that has to be acted upon. When this functions as planned the result will be that a large part of the language learning will take place outside of the classroom with some effort and a little help from the teacher and the classmates (Dysthe, Säljö).

The follow-up of this task will take place throughout the course as this is something which needs to function in the life of the student. Has the student managed to create the artificial language environment that he or she set out to do? Is it working? What can be changed in order to serve the student better? Etc, etc.
8. The classroom

So far a lot of attention has been given to the use of time outside of the class room and the students’ own workload, while very little about the class room activities has been mentioned in this thesis. The explanation for this is to be found in the nature of the matter. The view that each student is unique and has unique needs will consequently lead to the conclusion that every constellation of individuals will be unique as well. We just have to work with the classes we have, there is no use to try to work with imaginary classes that would fit into ready made theoretical structures. It can be very difficult to predict how the students will be able to interact with one another, even if we work on it and hope for the best. The atmosphere in the classroom decides if socio-affective strategies will be used or not (Tornberg).

The time in the classroom can be used to coach the students in their own learning that will take place outside of the scheduled classroom hours for the main part. Naturally there will be plenty of time used for the teaching of the subject that is addressing the entire class such as pulpit teaching, individual exercises, and group exercises etc. as means to develop the students’ language skills. One skill that directly refers to general studying is the student’s ability to ask relevant questions. The classroom is also the natural place for oral exercises, and we have to make sure that we can supply the students with at least the minimum of training that is required, since the students are not equally successful in using the language outside of the classroom.

It is mentioned earlier in this thesis that most of the learning in the context of successful language studies takes place outside of the classroom. The reason why the student has to develop alone is most of the time practical; our time in the classroom is limited and our classrooms are often full of students who all need our help to develop.

Teachers who tend to complain about a lack of classroom time for their subjects may find it hard to accept more tasks and activities, but in this case it is a matter of working oneself out of the job. The time spent coaching the students so that they will study outside of the classroom will certainly pay off in the long run.
9. Conclusion

There is a lot to do for those who wish to practice and develop the area of language didactics. The need for better language learning is great but the resources are also plentiful due to the recent contributions made to this field of science.

In line with many of these theories this thesis also favours the shift towards a more learner centred teaching with focus on language exposure and practical application of knowledge that centres on the ability and potential of the individual student. To enable this development a new method is not sufficient, but rather a number of methods in order to embrace a number of different students that all need a specially designed plan so that they can reach their full potential. Before such a plan can be designed, both teacher and student must find out the background and characteristics of each student since this affects both learning and understanding. The knowledge of each student’s specific learner style is very valuable in this context.

As a bottom line all students need to be taught how to study in a general sense. This notion is an expression of what the goal and meaning of the school really is: to be a place where the students learn. There is no point in having a teacher who teaches if there is no one who learns anything. The teacher is not in school for his or her own sake, but for the benefit of the students so that they may learn something. If the students do not learn it can be questioned whether the students know how to learn. If the students do not know how to learn, then there is no one else but the teacher to teach them how to learn. In the light of the importance of this matter we realise that the transmission of facts relating to the actual subject is just a part of the very complex task of guiding others to achieve knowledge. As the revelation increases we also start to re-evaluate the very nature of our profession in the sense that we start to question our role as teachers with the primary task to transmit knowledge. Instead we ought to consider the shift of attention from teaching to learning which will call for a new teacher’s role where the student and not the teacher is in the centre of the attention. This shift will instantly promote a new student role as the productive learner, responsible for the hard work of learning, and in need of the assistance of a mentor or a coach that can fulfil the many different individual needs of a student body that may be very diverse in its constitution. If we scratch the surface of this diversity we will find individuals with individual needs due to the fact that a student body contains so many different learner profiles that correspond to a number of learner styles as the best option for each individual. Tailor-made teaching breaks down this study training to the level of details; it moulds and shapes these details in order to make them fit the individual student. The subject specific (language specific) applications that
are needed will be added on top of the general study training and followed up as the student progresses with the studies.  
A tool for documentation can turn out to be very useful for the practical reason that our memory is limited.

Since we lack the natural language environment of the target language it is important to create an artificial language environment in every student’s daily life that will support efficient language learning. Communicative skills that involve human interacting like language skills require attitudes and mentality that facilitates language learning. The absence of the right mentality can be very negative for the student’s progress. For this reason language teachers have a special responsibility to help their students get the right attitude towards the learning and practicing of foreign languages. The complex task of language learning that relates to personal attitude includes acquiring a fearless mentality that makes the learner communicate at any cost in order to learn and develop practical language skills. This desired attitude can be found in the minds of the best language learners: the polyglots. Language learners can achieve a lot by copying their attitudes and their behaviour. Such development seldom takes place by chance, so the function of the teacher as a coach or mentor is very important in the area of transmitting the required knowledge, and to apply the necessary coaching in order for the students to develop in this direction.

In the same way that the students can benefit from the application of the necessary subject specific learner attitude, a general change of attitudes towards studies is needed for the students to reach their full potential. The widespread tendency among students as well as teachers to prioritise the consumption of entertainment instead of achieving skills is very destructive since the quality of entertainment always will be measured against what the entertainment industry is able to produce. Another problem with aiming to please the students by trying to make school “fun” is the character of this vague expression due to the wide range of personal preference. This attitude towards studies must be changed by a conscious decision to enjoy studies in a general sense. A good way to boost the altering of mind set towards studies is the achieving of good results, since doing well at school is something that can give the students satisfaction.

As mature adults and teachers we are hopefully less dependent on whether we enjoy ourselves in every moment or not since we are focused on producing results for the benefits of others. The development of a new teacher’s role accompanied by a new student’s role has the potential to reach far beyond what we can perceive today. As with everything else; it does become what we make of it.
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Appendix

Self evaluation form

Key: Normal = talent  
Italic = asset  
Bold = character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTH</th>
<th>WEAKNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An open mind (attitude)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Diligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Enjoying challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Social character</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Persistence</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Patience</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Love for the subject (the language)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Enjoying studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. General interest in languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Concentration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Book worm</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. General interest in foreign cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Time management</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Study techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Other languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Home environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. A study mate</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Speakers of the target language around</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Ability to study alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Associative ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Creativity</td>
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<td>25. Fantasy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Ability to study with others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Taking in information from lectures</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>