HOW TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS AND CREATE A FAVOURABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Exercises for adult learners of languages

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Title HOW TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS AND CREATE A FAVOURABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - Exercises for adult learners of languages

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Abstract This Development Project Report discusses language teaching with a focus on motivation and favourable learning environment. The report tries to describe the concepts of motivation and favourable learning environment, and show which methods are most suitable for language teaching in adult education. The methods described in this report were used on an Academic Swedish course at the Jyväskylä Open University. Also other suitable activities are gathered from literature and these methods form a hand book which can be utilised in language teaching in general. Language teaching utilises all forms of communication; and the aim of second language teaching is to rehearse communication skills (speaking, writing, listening) for future in communication with native speakers of other languages. Language learning also includes cooperation with other people with other cultural backgrounds. The students should also be taught how to utilise these skills in their future language studying. The report tries to describe the kind of activities and methods which enhance language learning and show how motivating the students and creating a favourable learning environment affects on good learning results. Most of the material is based on studies and experiences of good practices, articles and literature. Also the feedback given by the students of the Academic Swedish course is discussed. It will give some information on how these students define good teaching and what they think is important in language learning.

Keywords adult education; language teaching; learning environment; motivation

Miscellaneous

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1 Introduction

1.1   Development Project background

This Development Project forms a part of my vocational pedagogy studies. My intention is to describe some working practices in language teaching and in that way to develop my own pedagogical skills. My intention is to build up a small practical handbook, which then can be used in my future teaching work and which also may give some thoughts for other language teachers. I am constructing a theory of practice uniting the practical knowledge into some theoretical ideas on learning, motivation and favourable learning environment. I may not be able to answer the question in the title thoroughly, but I have described some of the central concepts and useful methods and try to show how they could be dealt with and utilised in teaching languages.

1.2 Report structure

I will first describe how motivation, attitudes and learning environment affect on language learning. The basic concepts are well and widely explained in literature, and my intention is first to describe how they are connected to learning in general. I will then try to connect them to language learning and describe some methods which can be utilised in teaching languages and how they, in my opinion, enhance learning. I will deal with some widely used practices in language teaching, known by teachers and described in literature. I have also added here some of the activities used on the Academic Swedish course for university students, which was the 'scene' of my teaching practice. Most of the material is based on studies and experiences of good practices, articles and literature. I will also discuss the feedback given by the students of the Academic Swedish course even though it was not initially gathered this Development Project in mind. It will, anyhow, give some information on how these students define good teaching and what they think is important in language learning.

2. Basic concepts

2.1 Learning

2.1.1 Learning theories
The different learning theories; behaviouristic, cognitive, and humanistic theories stress different aspects in learning. Behaviouristic stresses the meaning of positive and negative reinforcement and repetition, cognitive theories stress the mental organization of knowledge, such as memory, information processing and problem solving (i.e

metacognition) (Schunk, 2000) and humanistic approaches focus on human worth and individuality (Lefrançois, 1997). When learning languages, a student utilises something of all of these theories, meaning rehearsing grammatical matters and the structure of the language or communication in another language. As language is used in communication with other people, also the cultural matters and human nature in general have to be taken into consideration. The student gathers information on all aspects of human language use and creates the language skills meaningful for his/her purposes.

2.1.2 Different aspects of learning

Learning in general has some common aspects despite the subject, and the different theories all describe learning in certain stages. Students are presented material step by step, in a way which enables them to utilise the knowledge, practice the use of it and get some feedback for they efforts. The social processes facilitate learning and it is also affected by the motivational and contextual factors. (Schunk, 2000)

While planning the teaching a teacher can focus on these theories according to the belief of their affects on learning or according to the stage or level of learning. Some teachers might think that it is important to get to know the construction of knowledge thoroughly, some might think that the needs of the students, and their characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings should be emphasised (Schunk, 2000). Some might stress metacognition, which makes the learners more aware of how they process information and also learn more. In most cases the current teacher expects that the student, at least an adult student, takes an active role in learning. The teacher is the expert of the subject matter but it is not possible to teach students who are not motivated or do not have any goals in the learning situation. The teacher creates the learning environment, but it certainly is affected also by the characteristics of the group members and their efforts.

An active adult student should acquire knowledge on how to facilitate his/her own learning, how to utilise the instruction given and how to use the social process of learning and other learners' knowledge effectively. The students also have a responsibility of the learning environment. The teacher then has to take into consideration students' different learning styles; some of them use their social skills and utilise the learning situation effectively, some of them focus on theoretical knowledge and some on sound and vision. The students represent many different characteristics of human nature, some learn by doing and some by applying theories. Especially, the adult students have varying backgrounds which affect on their learning processes. The teacher should try to get acquainted with the students in order to be able to use their background knowledge in teaching. When the teacher learns to understand the differences between students, it is possible to facilitate students' learning and help them to become individual processors of information (Kaikkonen, 1994).

Teachers select the methods according to their favourite theories, age of the group, background of the students, their learning styles and level of motivation. The teacher

should pay attention to the students' previous knowledge, their experiences, attitudes and special characteristics. The teacher's ability to guide the students in the learning situation requires good knowledge of human nature, good communication skills and ability to understand how motivation works.

2.1.3 Characteristics of language learning

The basics of a second language are learned at school, usually at comprehensive school, when the pupil in most cases has no idea of future plans and expectations on language use. The pupil might have some expectations on learning on the basis of the previous learning experiences, attitudes towards learning languages, and the certain language and the culture connected to it. The attitudes are built up by the experiences, surrounding people, adults, peers and media.

The curriculum of a high school emphasises language learning, which gives skills for communication with native speakers of a language. Learning should stress values connected to cooperation with other people. Language learning is seen as acquiring skills for speaking and communication, and also cultural aspects are emphasised. Teaching should enhance skills in learning languages and intercultural skills. (Lukion opetussuunnitelman valtakunnalliset perusteet, 2006)

At this level, a student is expected to use effective working methods for language learning. Practising and rehearsal are typical for language learning and communication with a foreign language. The teaching should also give students basic knowledge on how to utilize these skills in further language studies on their own. The meaning of patient rehearsal and all-round communicational skills are stressed. Students are guided to understand their strengths and needs in developing as language learners. They are supposed to get knowledge on strategies, which are appropriate for their own language learning and communication skills. (Lukion opetussuunnitelman
valtakunnalliset perusteet, 2006)

The EU programme for Enhancing Language Learning and Multilingual Society describes the meaning of language learning at vocational education and other schooling after comprehensive school: at these stages of education the students are developing further their language skills; those skills which they are expected to use for the rest of their lives. The basic idea of the programme is enhancing wide language skills and use of many languages in the society. The language teachers are seen as important links in creating multilingual Europe; they should be creating a life long enthusiasm in their students and enhance effectively a multicultural society and language learning in general. (Kieltenoppimisen ja kielellisen monimuotoisuuden edistäminen, 2004)

The teachers are given an important task: to create a life long enthusiasm in their students and enhance effectively a multicultural society and language learning in general. The language teachers should especially focus on motivating students for language studying,

and teach the students sufficient language learning strategies. The students should also get to know the culture connected to languages as much as the structure, vocabulary and grammar of a language. These expectations – and also the different factors in learning: different learning styles and different backgrounds of the students, different goals and motivating elements – in mind the teacher creates his/her own theory and ways to use different methods of teaching.

2.2 Motivation

2.2.1 Learning and motivation

Motivation is one of the basic concepts in learning. It reveals the reasons for the processes of goal-directed behaviour and explains why people behave as they do. Motivation guides students in activities that facilitate learning. (Schunk 2000) If the motivating aspects of learning are ignored by the teacher it is possible that there are no learning results.

Traditionally the teacher has decided what is important in language learning and which the best ways to learn languages are. There has not been room for student expectations or characteristics. Kaikkonen refers to Mönninghoff, who questions this kind of situation in schools: the teacher who is the specialist in a subject asks the questions and also knows all the answers. On his opinion it should be the student who asks the questions. (Kaikkonen, 1994) The teachers should find out what makes the students motivated, focus on the questions and expectations of the students and in that way let them benefit from the learning situation. Learning is an activity of a student and instruction is an activity of the teacher, these being two different matters (Engeström, 1994). Connecting these different sides, the expectations of the students and the expertise of the teacher, makes learning possible. Also other things create expectations, such as curriculum and expectations of the surrounding society, and they affect indirectly on the learning situations. These things have to be taken into consideration along with the motivational aspects.

The question is then, how to take into consideration all these expectations. The teacher has the curriculum in mind when introducing a subject in a meaningful and inspiring way. In many cases it is difficult to predict how the teaching really affects the student, and what really motivates a certain group of students. The teachers should find out about the students' previous knowledge and utilize it in the way that the students get positive learning experiences. The students should be given tools for processing information in a way which is most typical for them. The teacher should always keep the motivational aspects in mind, for example by integrating practices of language learning to other subjects and utilizing content-based teaching.

2.2.2 Understanding student motivation

The educational psychology theories on motivation focus on students' self–esteem, goals and attributions. The theories formed on these concepts describe motivation according to

person's judgement on one's abilities, the explanations on successful learning, failure avoidant strategies and achievements. Students who are capable are seen more motivated than a student who does not feel that efficient. Attributions describe the person's explanation on why an event turned out as it did. Students' explanations describe various aspects in learning, as effort, skills and knowledge, strategies, luck, the teacher's characteristics, and influence motivation through emotions. A student does not want to reveal that s/he is trying hard, because in case of failure it shows that s/he is not very intelligent. In Western culture the worth of the individual is connected to the ability to do something well. Achievement goal theory explains that students' behaviour aim to achieve particular goals; the two dominant goals being learning and performance. Emotions and beliefs lead to certain patterns of behaviour, such as trying to do ones best, and trying to avoid failure. In classroom contexts the teacher should develop a favourable learning environment by focusing on feelings of autonomy, competence and meaning. This is possible by realizing the importance of the teacher – student interaction. (Seifert, 2004)

In the light of this, motivation is seen by psychologists in intrapersonal terms (within the individual), which does not give an overall picture of motivation. Elliot et al. who have researched motivation, engagement and educational performance in three different surroundings; Kentucky (US), Sunderland (UK) and St Petersburg (Russia), claim that the research done amongst students in these three cultures indicate that there are certain cultural aspects affecting on motivation. The theories on educational motivation have typically focused on characteristics of a certain culture and environment, in this case US high or middle school. There students have typically been compared on the basis of psychological constructs such as goals, expectances engagement and achievement. (Elliott, 2005)

Elliot et al brings other elements to the discussion, such as culture, peers and teachers and the interaction between them. In addition to task oriented goals of the students (a pass mark in a particular examination) or performance goals (mastering a learning situation to improve ones skills or trying to be better than the others) one should also try to think of the student – teacher interaction, the school practices and the learning environment, the assessment systems (grades and sanctions), students' efforts outside school, the students' perceptions of future employment prospects and peer practices and attitudes. These cultural, systemic factors and school and classroom factors affect on motivation and achievements in classrooms. (Elliott, 2005)

Haagensen (2007) sites in her dissertation 'Dialogue Pedagogy and Motivation' Wlodkowski's views on motivation: he thinks that students are always motivated, not perhaps motivated to learn something, but to do something. In his opinion it is not possible to motivate students but teachers may be able to create a learning situation, which is stimulating and attractive. The students are always responsible for their own learning and motivation, but the teachers should note that everything can be taught in a

meaningful way, which gives the teachers a lot of responsibility in the teaching situation. The teacher should be an enthusiastic expert who has an emphatic and clear way of teaching. Each learning situation should be planned thoroughly and the motivational aspects should be taken into consideration. Wlodkowski stresses that planning of a teaching session takes time and that the teacher should have social competence which is only possible for an experienced teacher, but he claims that the focus on motivation means a valuable investment. (Haagensen, 2007)

A teaching situation involves, in addition to the inner motivation factors of a student also the efforts of the teacher and the attitudes of the surrounding culture in many ways. The interaction between these factors makes the learning situation. The teacher should focus on bringing meaning on the students' work, create clear goals for the learning session, create a positive learning environment, which helps students to feel confident in their work and guide the inner motivational factors of a student towards learning instead of other possible attractive targets. Seifert speaks about learning oriented behaviour, which is enhanced by a teacher who is perceived as being nurturing, supportive and helpful (Seifert, 2004).

Teachers in Kentucky, St Petersburg and Sunderland gave several reasons for successful learning according to the research by Elliot et al. Amongst younger pupils the parents support effect on student motivation. Also the student - teacher relations affected in a way that motivation is higher in classes were students did not feel any hostility, respected the teacher and where tasks were not too demanding. The more the student liked the subject and the teacher, the more enthusiastic they would be as learners. The teachers also thought that rewards, like grades and sanctions motivate students, and the older the students the more they would value symbolic rewards. As success was seen as rewarding in itself, it was important to arrange tasks so that students could experience success, which was thought to be motivating. Teachers also wanted to point out that the time used for home work is important. One of the motivational aspects according to teachers is employment prospects. Effect of that of course varies with age, perceived personal threat of future unemployment and the current school achievement of students. What was also mentioned was peer influence; motivation to learn could be influenced by peer behaviours and attitudes. (Elliot, 2005)

Curriculum and assessment system as such might reduce student motivation and deep learning. The US system is criticised for testing a narrow range of academic skills and for encouraging a surface approach to learning. Researchers are increasingly recognising the important role of peer influences in achievement motivation. They also stress the influence of classroom climate. There is a certain culture in the classroom, which affects the behaviour and attitudes of students; in a negative or positive way. (Elliot, 2005)

The context of a learning situation always involves many 'moving parts'; there is the active learner, with certain inner motivational goals, a certain learning style, and attitude

towards the subject and teacher. The interaction with peers and teacher might be successful according to the situation and construction of the group. The teacher has certain characteristics, competences and expectations for the teaching situation. In addition to these classroom factors, there are systemic factors, which affect on motivation and achievements in classrooms. Some of these aspects are within the reach of the teacher, but the aim is to create the learning environment so that the active learner uses his/her competences to reach the goals which have been set by the different parties.

2.3 Favourable learning environment

2.3.1 Attitudes

Motivation is different according to the perspective to the situation; one might be motivated to perform a certain task, but in wider contexts does not find acquiring certain knowledge at all important. Learning a second language is always affected by the social context such as home, school, family, peers and teachers, and the learner has a certain attitude to the social context, where the learning takes place. The attitudes affect on learning and motivation. Studies on Finnish speaking students' attitudes on Swedish learning give varying results on student motivation; for example students with good skills were motivated by intrinsic reasons and others with poorer learning results were motivated by extrinsic reasons. Many of the studies described by Haagensen show that the student motivation was based mostly on trying to gain good marks (Haagensen, 2007).

The role of Swedish studying is problematic and controversy in Finland and the general attitude amongst Finnish youngsters towards Swedish studying is seen as poor. Every now and then, a discussion on compulsory Swedish "bursts into flames" on newspapers. Nurhonen has researched a group of 11 – 13 year old students studying Swedish and states that the attitudes for studying are actually good. The students were satisfied on studying (Nurhonen, 2001) despite that fact that studying Swedish in Finnish schools is obligatory and prescribed in the legislation in Finland.

As attitudes are seen as one aspect in learning, it is claimed that the positive attitudes towards the second language and its speakers affect on student motivation and a high motivation in turn affect on good learning results. Learning results can also affect on attitudes and through that on motivation. Attitude is "an inert, stable behaviour style indicating opinion and sentiment to something" (Pocket English Dictionary). Motivation shows what interests a person and how much. Attitudes of teachers and peers affect on students' attitudes, it is a concept used in social situations. Creating positive attitudes towards learning is somewhat more difficult than trying to affect on motivation. There should be a clear understanding in the society what is important and what kind of attitudes there are and if they will be accepted. Changing attitudes towards Swedish language, if there should be some changes, is a political decision, in the same way as the EU declaration on trying to enhance diversity in language use in Europe.

2.3.2 Learning environment

The ways to define a learning environment includes the physical, mental and social environment, which affect on the learning situation and motivation. (Meriläinen, 2006) A good social and communicative atmosphere is the basis of creating a favourable learning situation. The atmosphere is created with communication and communication skills are to be enhanced. When students get acquainted with their peers and the teacher, a favourable learning situation is created. It also enables the students to express feelings, tell about the knowledge and believes in a more open way. The teacher has the leading role in the situation, and s/he should encourage the students to express themselves, show their feelings and get to know each other. (Joutsenvirta, 2006)

Learning from peers is one of the most fruitful ways of learning; the possibilities to observe others' learning process and then utilise their ideas in own learning are immense. The performance of others shows the student what the important factors in learning a particular issue is. Student motivation may be deepened by the fact that there is so much to learn from others and vice versa. Dealing the own learning process with others gives the students a possibility to evaluate ones' own learning. The student is responsible on his/her learning process but at the same time can be of use for the others. (Joutsenvirta, 2006)

The role of the teacher is to work as a mentor/counsellor who gives constructive feedback and critique to the students. Authority and strict control are not the ways to create a favourable and constructive learning environment. The students have to be given responsibility and freedom. (Joutsenvirta, 2006) The favourable atmosphere in a class gives students freedom which enhances learning. The teacher has a responsibility in creating the favourable learning environment, but also the students affect on it. If the communication in the group is easy and open, all parties in the situation are effective.

2.4 Methods

At this chapter I will describe methods which are valuable in language teaching and try to study the possibilities in using certain methods to enhance motivation, and to create a favourable learning environment.

Effective learning includes such aspects as understanding, remembering, controlling the knowledge and strategies and active use of skills. The most effective teachers start their lessons with a brief review of prerequisite learning, indicate the lesson's goals, present material in small steps, allowing students to practice between steps, give exact instructions and explanations, expect all students to practice actively, ask many questions to check students' understanding and obtain responses from all students, give systematic

feedback and correct students' errors as they occur, and give clear instructions to monitor students' performance as necessary. (Lefrançois, 1997)

The methods used always depend on the teacher, the group and their opinions on the different phases of learning. If learner's own efforts are emphasised in acquiring new information one might trust on discovery learning. The reception learning involves mostly instruction rather than the learner's own efforts. A good teacher uses both these ways in teaching. Depending on the situation one could also use cooperative learning, which means that students learn together in small groups, instead of working independently. (Lefrançois, 1997) Working in small groups has many benefits; the group can utilise each others skills, also shyer students have a possibility to participate and it gives possibilities to rehearse and state opinions for all members of the group. The cooperative learning theory leads to good results in language learning as different group rehearsals are suitable for learning languages; it gives more tools for learning and also increases motivation (Kaikkonen, 1994).

Problem based-learning uses problem solving in learning. The students seek answers to questions like 'why' and 'how', but according to Hakkarainen school learning is based on fact seeking questions like 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'how many'. He states that it is only possible to offer knowledge on how to acquire skills and professional expertise to solve various problems and this kind of working aims at creating new knowledge and constructing own theories. (Hakkarainen, 1999)

Bodil Haagensen has studied motivation and its role in second-language learning. She has used dialogue pedagogy with a group that consists of university students with Swedish as their main subject. Within dialogue pedagogy, the social and cultural aspects of learning are of great importance. According to this view of learning, all learning should take place in a dialogue between equal discussion partners. The principles and work forms are seen to enhance student motivation. (Haagnesen, 2007)

Dialogue pedagogy comprises both integrative and instrumental motives, since the focus was set on the contact with Swedish culture and Swedish society, as well as on the demands facing the students concerning their knowledge and skills in the Swedish language in their future professional careers. The teacher and the students form a group where they equally can express attitudes, discuss different issues and their own experiences. The teacher is the specialist of linguistic matters and the subject Swedish, and in these areas she is working as counsellor or tutor of the group. The students are to be active and enthusiastic in the learning situation, they plan the activities and methods used in the group together with the teacher. The students have a possibility to enhance those skills they are interested in and take up such topics they are willing to discuss. (Haagnesen, 2007)

The most important factor in using this method is that it motivates and activates the students and encourages them to work independently. The students have responsibility for their own learning. It is particularly important amongst adult learners as the traditional classroom teaching does not meet the requirements of an adult who is used to make own and individual decisions in their lives. Adults also have their own experiences and attitudes they wish to express, and interests they wish to enhance in the learning situation and by communicating with other students. (Haagnesen, 2007)

The learning situations, topics and environments vary. It is important to vary also the methods used. Students may have positive or negative attitudes towards different methods and in many cases they do not understand the benefits of a certain method. The teacher has to give the instructions clearly so that everyone in the group understands the nature of the task. It might also be useful to ask the students what kind of methods they are used to use and try to find out together what the benefits of the different methods are. Working in small groups or with a pair, gives students a possibility to utilise each others knowledge and skills. If they do not realise that possibility the learning is not complete.

The more active the student is the more s/he learns. The dialogue pedagogy as described above seems to me a good way to enhance learning. The students have the responsibility for their learning, the teacher is the expert in subject matter, but does not decide the working methods or discussion topics. The active students set their own goals which then can be evaluated by the teacher, if necessary. The rules are also set by the students and it gives them more importance. The motivational aspects are selected by each student and of course they may vary. The learning environment is free and the atmosphere also as the students have themselves set the goals which are within the reach for them.

3. Practices and methods in language teaching

3.1 Phases of language teaching

In addition to motivational aspects there are other important aspects which influence the learning situation. In planning the teaching sessions, the teacher should remember that it is mostly the mental state of a person that affects, but certain external factors can influence also, i.e. previous success or failure, encouragement, anxiety and rewards. In learning situations it is important to focus on promoting student activity and co-operation, to reduce stress and individual anxiety and to focus on the students' own interests and creative abilities (Norman, 1986). Norman divides the language teaching process into a number of phases; first the issue is introduced in some way, then students practise the subject matter and finally there is some form of follow-up.

In learning situations the teacher has to decide what the most effective mode of studying is in a certain situation. The age, level and group dynamics has to be taken into consideration. Certain kind of methods can not be used with small children, but are most suitable with adults. The level of skills, of course, defines how the topics can be introduced and rehearsed. If a group of students has worked together for a long time it usually defines what kind of exercises can be used. The teacher also has to decide if the class is working together or in small groups, pairs, or individually.

Language teaching and learning normally involve giving the students information on certain grammatical issues, rehearsing the language use, vocabulary, practicing conversation, writing, listening, or reading texts. The most important aim for studying is to be able to use the foreign language skills in different communication situations. The most essential aspect in such a situation is that the persons understand each other, not that they use grammatically correct language or avoid mistakes. That is why the students should rehearse communication with the other language as much as possible.

When introducing new material, teaching new type of activity or method, it is sometimes most effective to do it to the whole class at the same time. (Norman, 1986) That is the most traditional way, but for example with adults it might be more effective to activate the students and not to give them ready made solutions. A group of students can be given tasks and exercises which guides them to discover the right answers or theories in a way which is natural to them. They might not use the right linguistic terms or theories, but the kind of solutions and mnemonics, which they can use in everyday language use situations. The students working in pairs or groups work actively and use each others' ideas effectively. If they do not understand they can ask each other or the teacher. It is important to introduce the theory also so that the students can test their own solutions. The students can also work independently on a given material, make notes, commenting and summarising and afterwards deal with the issue in small groups or with the whole class (Norman, 1986) depending on the issue or type of the students.

The practice phase includes a lot of possibilities to practice the skills and use the language the students have been studying; meaning listening, speaking, reading and writing, all forms of communication (Norman, 1986). The teacher has to create situations where students can rehearse actively; the atmosphere should be relaxed and suitable for learning. There are a lot of possibilities for the practice phase; many of them are suitable for all age groups, levels or people from different backgrounds. The language learning situations should be meaningful for the certain group of students. It is important that the teacher finds out what kind of interests there are in the group and uses the resources there are, and not for example focuses on too general topics, which do not interest anybody and in that way do not enhance the natural use of a foreign language.

In the following list of practices there are a lot of games and fun activities as they are most suitable in reducing tensions. Learning under stress is often ineffective and freedom from

anxiety and tension in a learning situation enhances learning (Norman, 1986). The practices used in a class affect on the atmosphere; if the students are working in pairs or small groups they usually work actively and without anxiety. In many exercises listed below the attention is lead away from the actual language learning towards the activity itself which encourages more subconscious learning. Methods, which encourage the students to concentrate more on what they say than how they say it, can include listening to music, role-playing, encouraging student initiative and creativity and performing tasks that are interesting in themselves.

The practising phase should be dealt with in a follow-up phase in order to give the students some information on what they have learned and also which topics need more practise. The follow-up can be carried out individually, in the whole class, in pairs or small groups or in cross-reporting groups. (Norman, 1986) It is important to correct misunderstandings and go through difficult points, which also aids memorisation.

Norman points out that one of the crucial moments in a learning situation is correcting; the students should not be corrected in front of the whole class, but the teacher should concentrate on common mistakes, avoid exposing individual errors in front of the class (Norman, 1986). Usually an experienced language teacher knows which the most common mistakes are and the tasks and exercises can be produced in a way that the students can concentrate on rehearsing the right and correct models. If the students are given feedback individually, it is possible to point out the mistakes, but it might be most effective to concentrate on clear communication and giving instructions on how to survive in certain kinds of difficulties in communication situations.

The language learning situations must be created in a way that the students can actively rehearse the different aspects in the foreign language. The tasks should enhance co-operation and the teacher should reduce stress and anxiety in order to create favourable learning situations. This can be done by pair and group work, but also the student - teacher co-operation and use of interesting topics are meaningful. The language learning situations should encourage personal involvement and creativity and they should be useful in the different communication situations where the students are involved in the future.

3.2 Classroom activities

Language teachers gather useful exercises in their own files for future use. These exercises are then used and recreated in different learning situations with different students. Overall, there are few books which include classroom activities and nowadays the Internet has become a useful source of methods and activities for language teachers. Some language book series have teachers' books included and discussions with fellow teachers give ideas for teaching.

At this part of the project work I have gathered useful activities and exercises, which on my opinion help in creating a favourable learning environment and enhance student motivation. The basic topics in a language class involve grammar, vocabulary and communication skills (writing, speaking and listening). I also find the cultural aspects important in language learning, and they can well be included in many of the exercises. In this project work I have mainly used the categories stated by Norman (1986) but also other sources are used. L1 is the language normally used by the student, their native language and L2 is the language being studied by the class, the target language.

3.2.1 Learning styles

It is important for a student to identify one's own learning style and the characteristics as a language learner. There are several tests to define ones own learning style, in literature or on the Internet. Usually the adult learners already have a good idea of the style they are using. One of the ways to define learning style is to think of the different ways of intelligence based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. The different approaches to intelligence are linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal approach (Atkinson, 2000).

Who do I remind as a learner

This exercise gives the student some idea of their learning styles and characteristics as a learner. The student might also be advised on how to develop their learning and gain better results. It is easier to think of a famous person or figure with the similar characteristics than to comment each other directly. This exercise can be done in the L1 or L2 depending on the language skills and level of the students.

Procedure: *The students are asked to think of a person who in their minds characterise their language learning. The persons/characters should be collected from literature, films, cartoons, myths, publicity, etc. and describe the student's language learning style. The students should explain their choices. For example the brave and disobeying Pippi Longstocking; the always positive thinking Polyanna, who discovers positive sides in all matters, even the negative ones; Piglet, the small and frightened friend of Winnie the Pooh; Elmo, the all-round athlete, fast and efficient master of all areas of sports; etc.*
The students discuss in groups about the roles they have selected and try to focus on the matters where they should develop their language learning skills. Alternatively the students can comment each others choices and give good advices to each other on developing their skills. (Kalaja, 2005)

3.2.2 Attitudes and motivation

As stated earlier the attitudes affect on learning and also motivation. The negative attitudes towards a language clearly affect the learning results. Changing one's attitude is difficult as it is rather permanent characteristic of a person. It is also affected by so many aspects (teacher, peers, family, society etc.) that it is almost impossible to affect on it in a

simple way in a classroom. Knowledge might help also in this matter; if the reasons for a certain attitude are highlighted, it might be possible to affect on them.

Experiences on language learning
It is important for a learner to realise why s/he has certain kinds of attitudes towards a language and what kind of possibilities there are to change them, if they are negative. (Kalaja, 2005) This might also show the teacher in which way it is possible to motivate students or avoid unpleasant situations. For example if the students feel ashamed when their mistakes have been corrected in front of the others, the teacher could try to avoid that kind of correction.

Procedure: *Students outline their lives as a language learner in a table/draw a line on a scale starting from the first contact to the language till this moment. They should point out three positive learning experiences (with +) and three negative learning experiences (with -) on the line. They should also write down where the experiences occurred and why they felt the way they did. The different learning experiences are compared with a pair. A list of positive and negative experiences is gathered within the group. The students discuss how they can affect on these experiences and if not who can (teachers, school officials).* (Kalaja, 2005)

My future as a language learner
The aim of this task is to identify the obstacles in language learning and also to find out some possible solutions, which help the language learner to choose the positive future. When the student is aware of the different solutions one might use, it also might motivate her/him to try harder.

Procedure: *Write first a negative and then a positive future about yourself as language learner. Use your imagination freely. Write one page on each situation. How could you think positively on the possible obstacles and difficulties? If the lack of time is your problem, how could you learn to use time more effectively? If you are a lazy person, what kind of ways you have to motivate yourself? Who could help you in the learning process?* (Kalaja, 2005)

3.2.3 Introductory activities
Creating an enthusiastic and favourable learning environment includes an enthusiastic teacher and active students. The better the students know each other, the better they communicate, which is the actual way of learning to use a language. That is why the teachers try in all means to introduce the students to each other. There are a lot of different kinds of exercises for starting a course, which also are called 'warm ups'.

Getting to know you
The aim of this exercise is getting to know each other in a new class. The students themselves create the questions and suitable topics might be those things which are familiar to them; students' interests, family, home, work, language studies etc. The purpose of this activity is to give the students a possibility to meet each other and relax;

this is more important than the language used at this stage. The focus is on discussion not on correcting mistakes. (Norman, 1986) The aim might also be practising asking questions.

Procedure: *The whole class makes up questions in L1 to ask each other for example: What's your name?, Where do you live?, How do you come here?, What is your favourite hobby?Each question is translated with the teacher's help and written on the board. Students work in pairs and take turns to ask and answer the questions. Continue the activity by making new pairs.* (Norman, 1986)

There are several variations of this kind of introductory activities; the students might for example introduce each other to the whole group, introduce themselves to each other by telling how they were given their name, what kind of hobbies they have, etc. The participants could be asked to introduce themselves and mention three things about themselves. One of them should be untrue and the other participants try to guess which one is. In addition to the language skills practiced the participants got to know each other more thoroughly. For example: "I used to work as a waiter, have travelled to Cuba and have 3 kids (have 2)".

Find the right person
The aim of the exercise is to learn various language skills: making questions, giving simple information about yourself, simple responses (Yes I am/can/do, etc.) The topic might also be teaching for example expressions such as ' I'm afraid not…'. The main point of the activity is to find the right person, not on the language used. (Norman, 1986) This is also a good practice in getting to know each other.

Procedure: *The teacher prepares a set of cards each containing an idea such as the following in L2:*

Someone who has been to Scotland.   *Someone who hates using a computer.*
Someone who prefers tea to coffee.   *Someone whose favourite sport is tennis.*
Someone with at least four brothers and sisters. Someone who likes Italian food.
Someone who can't ride a bike.   *Someone who can speak German.*
Someone who remembers their great grandmother.
Someone whose birthday is in June.

Each student is given a card. The students stand up, walk around the room and try to find somebody in the group who fits the description on their card. It is sometimes a good idea to help students first by giving one or two sentences in L2 on the board which show them how to turn the information on their card into questions: Can you speak German? Is your birthday in June? Do you like Italian food? (Norman, 1986)

3.2.4 Vocabulary and structure
There are different ways on learning vocabulary and structure. The following ones might interest students as they are conducted as games and the attention is lead away from the actual language learning towards the activity. Norman talks about subconscious learning

and in these tasks the students concentrate the language structure even if they do not notice it.

Odd men out

The aim here is to introduce connections between words and explaining reasons. One might also think that there is only one correct answer, but this activity enhances creative thinking and language practice. In this case there are no right and wrong answers which gives more possibilities for the students.

Procedure: *Teacher writes a list of four words on the board, for example:*
SEA   CLOUD   ICE   RAIN
WALK   RUN   JUMP   GALLOP
Each student tries to make a group of three words that belong together. The fourth word is the 'odd man out'. The important point is that there is no correct answer. In each group of words there would be at least two possible 'odd men out'. In whole class – students say which word they have chosen as odd man out and give reasons. Continue with new groups of words. Work first individually, then in pairs or small groups to compare the answers.

The sets of examples should be made so that they may be grouped in at least two different ways. Usually this means two ways of grouping by meaning: hand, eye, nose, ear, cheek: hand is not part of the face, we do not have two noses.

It is also possible to make groups in quite different ways. For example, in the set given above (walk, run, jump, gallop) only run has an irregular past tense form. Here are some alternative ways of making groups:
1. *go, snow, now, low (pronunciation)*
2. *put, set, make, cost (grammar – types of irregular verb)*
3. *sock, shoe, shirt, trousers (grammar – a pair of)*
4. *possible, perfect, polite, popular (grammar – opposite im-)*
5. *played, listened, smiled, walked (pronunciation of –ed)*
6. *calm, knowledge, silent, autumn (silent letters)*
7. *man, woman, child, boy (irregular plural)*
8. *church, which, machine, choose (pronunciation ch)*

Students should be encouraged to group examples in any way they like providing they can give a reason for their choice of the odd man out. (Norman, 1986)

Similarities and differences

The aim is to practise comparison, constructions using words or phrases such as both, only one, the…has/is, but the …hasn't/isn't, etc. This activity is suitable in the beginning or end of a lesson. It also enhances new ways of seeing familiar objects.

Procedure: *The teacher writes two words on the board, for example: Cow – Dog. Students try to find as many features as possible that they have in common – the similarities and the differences*

they can think of. Continue with new pairs of words, working first in pairs then checking in the whole class.

The words may be chosen so that the activity is suitable for different ages or different levels of ability in L2. Pairs of nouns are often easiest; verbs and adjectives more difficult, both linguistically and conceptually.

The words may be of different kinds, but usually the same grammatical group (nouns, verbs, adjectives):

MEAL – SNACK	*BANANA – STRAWBERRY*
FRIEND – ACQUAINTANCE	*EYE – EAR*
BEAUTIFUL – ATTRACTIVE	*HOUSE – FLAT*
IMPORTANT – VALUABLE	*WALK – RUN*
SEE – WATCH	*SMILE – LAUGH* (Norman, 1986)

Discover grammar

People usually learn and remember better for example grammar rules when they independently try to find out what the structural patterns of them are. The aim of this task is to figure out and make own explanations for grammatical structures. The usual way is that the teacher explains the rule and the students listen and make rehearsals. This process includes observation, making questions, correcting etc. and the students take part in the learning situation actively. (Norman, 1986) This task is using problem solving in learning and the students create a pattern for their use. It is more valuable for learning to do it yourself than to read it out of a grammar. When students actively process the problem they will also remember and understand it better.

Procedure: *The teacher distributes a text in which examples of a certain grammatical feature occur. The students are asked to find a pattern, relationship or rule. The students work in pairs to solve the task and find a pattern or formulate a rule. The rules will be checked afterwards in a grammar book or with the teacher.* (Norman, 1986)

Grammar translations

The aim of this task is to focus on specific grammar points which usually cause difficulties. This translation task can be done with easier or more difficult examples according to the level of students.

Procedure: *The students work individually. Each student chooses some sentences illustrating a specific grammar point from a grammar book. Translate these sentences into L1 on a separate piece of paper. After that the students work in pairs, exchange papers and translate each other's sentences back into L2. The correct versions are checked in the grammar book.* (Norman, 1986)

Make your own grammar examples

The aim is this task is also to understand grammatical patterns. This rehearsal also utilises the active role of students; the students make their own examples and it will make them work more actively and relaxed. Students usually ask questions which concern their own examples, meaning also that they are more likely to understand and remember the critical points. The focus is on learning and not on teaching. This is also an example of discovery learning as the students themselves explore and discuss their own examples. It is also easier for a teacher to realize the difficult points in the matter.

Procedure: *The students study a grammatical rule, structure or pattern, using for example, the discovery method (see above Discover grammar). The students put aside the grammar book, work in pairs and try together to make their own examples in L2 to illustrate the point. The various examples are presented in the whole class and possible errors and how the rule was illustrated are discussed.* (Norman, 1986)

3.2.5 Dialogues

Dialogues can be used in many kinds of exercises; rehearsing grammar, communication skills, or vocabulary, or all of them at the same time. Dialogues are useful as the students can help each other in the difficulties and they learn from each other. It is easier to work in pairs than in the whole class.

Situational dialogues

The aim is to practise situational phrases, vocabulary, pronunciation and use of important expressions (excuse me, please) in common communication situations. This kind of exercise will give the students an active role in creating dialogues on matters of their interest. The rehearsing becomes more meaningful, when the students take up typical situations in their lives and surroundings.

Procedure: *Students form pairs. Each pair decides on a typical tourist situation such as "trying on and buying a sweater" or " buying railway tickets". With the help of dictionaries, each pair works together to make a list of words and phrases that might normally occur in that situation. Using the list as a basis each pair then writes a dialogue for the situation. In the whole class, students and teachers comment on the dialogues, adding phrases, correcting important errors or omissions. Practise the dialogues first in pairs, then act out to the rest of the class. Exchange papers and practice one another's dialogues.* (Norman, 1986)

3.2.6 Text-based activities

Listen and fill in!

The aim is to rehearse accurate, intensive listening, contextual comprehension, and spelling. This is a way of varying dictation so that students are involved. It will give the students an active role and give them a possibility to rehearse different kind of language use. Active role of the students motivate them to perform their best.

Procedure: *A text with omitted words or phrases is copied and a copy given to each student. Students work in groups. One student in each group reads out the original complete text, and the others write in the missing words or phrases. Afterwards each student compares his or her own text with the original.* (Norman, 1986)

Students' comprehension questions

The aim is to practice forming questions, and text comprehension. Students form questions themselves and find out that there are different kinds of questions, which can be answered by simple Yes/No or more complex answers. The students can select the difficulty level of their questions and work at the level which is comfortable for them. Involving the students will affect on the motivation, and gives them possibilities to rehearse for real life situations.

Procedure: *Each student makes up three questions on a known text, and writes them down. After that, students work in small groups. Each student, in turn, asks all his or her questions; the others answer, with or without the text. The one who is asking the questions can look at the text and check if the answers are correct.* (Norman, 1986)

Reflecting on a text

This kind of reading comprehension and discussion exercise gives the students an active role. The students will work in pairs, which gives them more possibilities to discuss their own opinions and lead the discussion in those matters which interest them. This makes the situation more natural.

Procedure: *The teacher distributes an L2 text. Discuss first in L1 any expectations or associations the students gain from the title or illustrations to the text. Each student reads silently through the text and makes notes on reactions and thoughts concerning the content of the text (What have I learned from the text?, Do I agree or not?, What objections can be raised?, Any personal experiences that are relevant?, Does it confirm or change your own opinion?, What else should be taken up in this context?). Work in pairs. Compare notes and discuss different reactions and thoughts on the text.* (Norman, 1986)

Answer an advertisement

This exercise gives the students a possibility to rehearse such language skills they might need in some stages of their lives; when living or visiting abroad, searching for a job or discussing with a foreigner. The certain subject based vocabulary and conversation rules will become familiar to them. The use of real material also makes the situations more authentic. The active use of language give the students possibilities to create own patterns for different situations and enhances creativity and motivation.

Procedure: *The teacher collects a number of different adverts from newspaper in L2 (eg. job vacancies, articles for sale, personal column, accommodation wanted). Students work in pairs and*

distribute the adverts amongst the pairs. Each pair works on its advert, first making sure that they understand it. They then prepare a telephone conversation between the advertiser and the reader. Students make notes and phrases needed for the conversation and practice the conversation in pairs, using the advertisement and notes as aids. Act out the conversation in the whole class or by rotating in pairs. (Norman, 1986)

Explaining in other words

This is a useful exercise in many ways. In real language situations it is common that a certain word which you would use in L1 does not come to you mind in L2 right away. This exercise helps you to create a strategy for that kind of situations.

Procedure: *Work in pairs and explain in other words as many words, names, phrase as you manage in a certain time (for example 2 -3 minutes). For example: cauliflower, ear, false morel, basket, beer, diet, Weight Watchers, Tony Halme, the Land of Nod…*(Kalaja 2005)

3.2.7 Listening activities

Active listening is one important part of language learning and it can be rehearsed in many ways also outside classrooms. The students should be pointed out that listening actively different kinds of speakers of a language also gives them other information on the language use, than grammar or vocabulary examples. The way a language is spoken includes also culturally based factors which can be heard when listening to a native speaker in different situations. Those factors might differ from ones own language and has to be pointed out for a language learner.

Identify attitudes

This activity helps students to be more aware of something they frequently do not even recognize such as the state of mind of the speaker.

Procedure: *The teacher plays a recording in L2 and asks the students to note how many people are involved in the conversation. The teacher then presents a chart showing the people involved together with a list of possible attitudes expressed in the conversation. Can be adapted to different levels; at low levels it is best to use short dialogues with a three point attitude scale such as: ENTHUSIASTIC – NEUTRAL – BORED or ANGRY – NEUTRAL – PLEASED. At intermediate levels: HAPPY – ANGRY – UNCERTAIN – IMPATIENT – BORED. Advanced level: such attitudes as sarcasm, irony, disbelief, and more complex speech factors such as rhythm, pitch, speed… The class listens again to the recording and tries to identify the attitudes of each speaker, as indicated by their intonation or tone of voice. Students mark their charts during, or immediately after listening. Follow up by comparing notes in pairs or small groups and then in whole class.* (Norman, 1986)

3.2.8 Conversation, Discussion and Role-play

Discuss and report

This exercise gives the students possibilities to test their language use in many ways; listening, making notes and reporting from their notes. This activity gives responsibility to each student in a way which motivates them to do their best. The student has to be active in order to be able to enhance each others' learning.

Procedure: *Decide in the whole class on a topic for discussion. Divide into small groups and discuss the topic for a given length of time. Each student makes notes on the main points discussed. Make a group summary of the discussion at the end of the planned time. At a pre-arranged time, cross-reporting groups are formed. Each student in turn then reports to the new group what was discussed in his/her original group.*
Variations: The discussion may be based on previously studied material; Each group discusses a different aspect of the same topic; Each group chooses its own topic for discussion, from a given list or completely freely. (Norman, 1986)

3.2.9 Creative activities

Creative activities usually activate students and give them possibilities to test their own language skills. The students can also choose the level of difficulty or activity, and feel more comfortable in their language use situations, when they are given some sort of freedom of choice.

Tell a joke

The students need rehearsal on speaking in informal situations as much as possible. The aim here is to rehearse how to affect on listeners by using informal style and vivid narrative language. This is to rehearse speaking and also translating, not literally but telling a meaningful story for the listeners. If students find it difficult to think up a joke, the teacher can have some in reserve taken out of newspapers or magazines. The jokes can be short in the beginning so that everybody can participate. It is impossible to translate some jokes, so think about the translation before hand. This is also suitable for those who have never before told a joke in their lives. (Norman, 1986)

Procedure: *In pairs tell each other a joke in L1. By working together students translate both jokes into L2 and write down the translations. Use a dictionary if necessary, or ask the teacher for help. When all pairs are ready, come together and take it in turns to read out the jokes.*
Variation: Make a classroom joke board, where the best jokes are written out carefully and pinned to the board. Hang the board outside the classroom so other students can read it. (Norman, 1986)

Continue the story

The aim is use vocabulary and structures previously introduced in a text; rehearsing verb forms, especially past tenses and connecting words. It also enhances creative thinking and writing in L2. Much language teaching, particularly at lower levels concentrates on

grammar rules or on useful language for communication. Many students enjoy this form of activity which encourages creative use of the foreign language.

Procedure: *A story is chosen by the class or the teacher. The story can be a text, a recording or a series of pictures. Students work in pairs. Each pair extends the story in any way they wish and writes down their version, using a dictionary if necessary. Different pairs read their version aloud for the whole class, or by rotating pairs.* (Norman, 1986)

Letters to the editor

The aim of this exercise is to rehearse expression of opinions, trying to use spoken ideas in a written form and enhance listening comprehension. The different forms of rhetoric, such as discussing, arguing, stating opinions in small groups are rehearsed. The students can use some sample letters from a magazine to get the idea of different styles.

Procedure: *Students work in small groups to compose a letter in L2 to a magazine. They can use a dictionary if needed. The letter may be about something of general concern, some problem or something one wants to change or complain about. Each group reads out its letter to the class. Each group chooses, from among the letters read out, the one it wants to answer and then works out a reply. More than one group can choose to reply to the same letter. When all groups are ready, the replies can be read out, group by group. Afterwards the various letters and the suggested replies can be discussed in small groups, and followed up in the whole class or by cross reporting.* (Norman, 1986)

3.2.10 Cultural awareness

Language learning includes always the cultural point of view. It is important to realise what kind of differences and similarities there are between two different cultures and how that might affect on the language and learning the language. The cultural differences might affect on use of vocabulary, communication skills and discussion habits. The language use reflects cultural matters in all kinds of situations and it is important to be aware of them.

Critical situation

The awareness of cultural differences helps to avoid certain critical points in communication, which might occur in real language use situations. This exercise might give some thoughts about prejudices, stereotypes and difficulties in communication between persons form two different cultures.

Procedure: Students think of situations where they have encountered in difficulties because of certain aspects of language use and cultural differences. The situations can be discussed in the whole class, groups or pairs. Also the reasons for the critical situation is discussed and the ways to avoid similar situations. Also some mistakes in actual language use create misunderstandings and in that way become crucial for the communication situation.

3.2.11 Mnemonics and other useful practices

There are numerous ways to learn language in everyday situations if one is motivated. In order to practice the skills also outside school or a course try these ones listed by Kalaja (2005) or create your own selected best practices.

- *create a memory game on word pairs (English – Finnish) (mark the papers to ensure the right word pairs)*
- *play a role play, for example Jane Austen –role play*
- *keep diary in an other language*
- *write SMS-messages in English*
- *read a book, which you already have read in Finnish, in an other language*
- *subscribe a foreign magazine*
- *watch TV without the subtitles*
- *draw a cartoon in an other language*
- *when reading a text in Finnish translate it in English at the same time*
- *form a discussion group*
- *create funny sentences to remember a grammar rule*
- *select a chapter in a book and try to find prepositions and time expressions in the text, omit articles and try to put them back again in their right places*
- *rehearse vocabulary with real objects*
- *make a vocabulary test to your fellow student* (Kalaja 2005)

4. Academic Swedish Course

4.1. Basic information about course

My practice was completed at an Academic Swedish course at the Jyväskylä Open University (Akademisk svenska), a compulsory course for all university students. The university students have certain requirements for their skills in Swedish regulated by laws (424/2003) and decrees (19.8.2004) in Finland. Nowadays the Swedish course is a part of Bachelor's studies. Clear rules are settled for what the students should be able to perform at the end of the course. The curriculum of the course is fixed and includes certain parts, as writing, discussing and giving a presentation on ones own subject area.

The students have the basic knowledge of Swedish before they come to the course. Most of them have completed the matriculation examination. As the Open University is the organizer of the course, it is also possible for other people than university students to attend the courses.

This particular course was aimed for students of educational subjects and social sciences. My task was to refresh the students' grammatical skills. There were two discussion

sessions planed, one on an educational topic and one on social science topic. I was also actively involved in giving feedback for the students on the discussion session, which included a short introduction held by a student and a discussion guided by a student. I also read the short essays, which the students wrote during the course, and planned an extra grammatical session on the basis of the texts trying to focus on the matters which caused most trouble for the students.

The course was held during three weekends in November 2007 and the timetable was demanding for the students as well as for the teachers, my supporting teacher and me. It was challenging to include all the relevant parts of the course (discussions, writing skills, grammar) in such a compact form and such a manner that the students won't be exhausted after that. It was very important to create a favourable learning environment and motivate the students, right in the beginning of the course. A language course "needs" active and talkative students, but the question was how to make the students act that way.

4.1.1 Aims

The aim of the Academic Swedish course is to rehearse Swedish skills in diverse ways. The course includes some grammar, reading comprehension, oral practices and practising the written language skills. The studies also benefit studying in general (for example reading literature for exams, utilising foreign literature and articles in written assignments, comprehension of the vocabulary of ones own field and using it in conversations), and the reading and oral skills for using Swedish in work life.

The aims may also be clarified through a research done by the Language Centre of the University of Helsinki (2005) which shows which language skills are needed in academic professions according to such employers. Employees should have an ability to conduct their own work in another language and the most important aspects are communication skills and courage to use a foreign language, seldom the correct use of grammar. An employee should have good language skills of ones professional field, as the tasks are demanding and complicated. The person should have intercultural skills and understand different cultures. The most important languages are English, Swedish, and perhaps Russian. All in all the communication is more important than correct use of languages, and the research indicates that at the studying phase the focus should be on communication and not in grammar mistakes (Karjalainen, 2006)

4.1.2. Pedagogical principles

In my practice I wanted to focus on concepts like different learning styles, motivation and metacognition. My intention was to find out about the students' previous knowledge and utilize it in the way that the students get positive learning experiences. The students should be given a lot of information on the subject, because it helps them to remember better. The information given also included the basic matters, which should have been acquired earlier. I had defined a goal for each session, presented the material in small

steps and the students then practiced after that. My intention was to give clear instructions and answer the questions of the students carefully. Also the feedback should be constructive and give valuable information for the students on their skills. My task was to motivate the students, for example by integrating the texts used to the interest areas of the students, and to utilize content-based teaching or by using motivating methods, like working in groups.

The problem with trying to stress the metacognitive skills is that if the students are not motivated enough they will not benefit of this at all. Problems occur if the teacher is not aware of the level of the students' basic knowledge. Also the certain timetable and schedule restricts flexibility in teaching. Extra tasks to be done as homework require strong motivation. My teaching was based on the presumption that the students are motivated by learning and seek for the knowledge actively, but only some of them were motivated that much. The most important motivator for the students was that they wanted to pass the course and would be given a grade, so their aims were quite instrumental. This was not taken into consideration in the first place but became obvious during the course.

One of the presumptions was also that the students take advantage of the learning situations and work together. The working in groups gives the students more tools for their learning and also increases motivation. The students worked a lot together in small groups so that each member of the group was able to participate equally. The pedagogical principles should have been explained to the students more thoroughly as in many cases these seemed to be unclear.

Even though the students were not motivated to learn (as they stated in their feedback forms), they obviously were motivated to work actively with the group work tasks and it seemed to me that the tasks I had given them were useful. As the students were active and cooperative many of the tasks were good for information processing. I was lucky to work with students, who wanted to work in small groups and they seemed to benefit from it. Also discussing together seemed to help them solving the problems and preparing the tasks.

4.1.3 Characteristic of the Students

One of the reasons why I wanted to practice at the Open University was the possibility to teach adults. Getting to know the students properly from the beginning, and getting knowledge on their different learning styles and study skills is quite impossible during such an intensive course. Students' previous knowledge, their experiences, attitudes and special characteristics, become somewhat clear during the course, but utilising this knowledge in teaching and by that way facilitating students learning seem to be difficult.

When I was planning my teaching I only had presumptions on the knowledge and the characteristic of the students or their level of language skills. The course was aimed for a certain group of students (education, social sciences) and followed the curriculum of the

Language Centre of the university, which gave frames for preparing the course. The first introduction task of the first meeting (see in Introductory activities) gave me a picture of the level of the students' oral skills and the written task after the first weekend gave me valuable knowledge on their grammar skills, and according to those I was able to plan the teaching of the following weekends. I guess that this is the level of knowledge on students which usually is available. It did not seem to be a problem that the students were of different ages (21 – 56) and backgrounds. They were cooperative and used to work with many kinds of people and worked well as a group. There were 19 students at the course.

It became clear during the course that there were students who benefit from the written material more than the others and others who benefit most of the group work. It was possible to select tasks and texts which motivated the students for discussion according to the knowledge which was gained by the introductory and other tasks. The atmosphere of the course was first tense, but the first days' tasks broke the ice.

4.1.4 Analysing students' learning process

It was my intention to give the students a clear, systematic overall picture of the substance to be learned. The theory part always includes the most important details of the contents to be learned and on the basis of that information the students can then perform the given tasks. The integral learning process by Engeström (1994) can be the basis of the process in most of the cases with motivation, orientation, internalization, externalization, critique and control. The aim is that the students can apply the knowledge they have gained, in new situations. I wanted to give the students possibilities to speak even though it became obvious during the course that more should be focused on the grammatical skills and on rehearsing them.

Instructional formats used were *presentations*, mainly short presentations by the teacher and also the students, because that method is suitable for new areas of knowledge. The students were also doing a lot of *independent assignments*, they were reading, writing and using other self guiding learning materials (such as tasks on the Internet), which are also suitable for learning new areas but also practising, controlling and evaluating. There were many *conversation* rehearsals, which enhance practicing the communicative skills. I tried to create difficult but simple tasks. One of the aims was to use the *cooperative instruction or peer assisted learning* which is suitable for motivating and orientating students to new subject matter. As mentioned earlier it appears to be advantageous for learning to form pairs or small groups – instead of each student solving a separate, motivational problem and cognitive conflict, the same task could be given to a groups of students (Engeström, 1994). It also means that the learners are given an active role and responsibility as they are working in groups and hopefully taking advantage of that.

The achievements of the students were evaluated on the basis of the classroom performance and the presentation they were giving. The students also evaluate themselves by interrogating one another, correcting each others' work and checking each others'

understanding when they are working in groups. There was a collective feedback given on the basis of the written assignments and an individual feedback after the presentation. Also an exam was held in the end of the course.

4.2. Academic Swedish course - exercises

In this chapter I will list some of the exercises used at the Academic Swedish course. They are all conducted in L2 (=the language being studied by the class, the target language), which in this case was Swedish. Most of them can be applied in teaching other languages also. The exercises here focus on some area of language learning as writing skills, grammar, vocabulary, communication skills, metacognitive skills etc. The activities can be dialogues, discussion and role-play, conversation, text-based activities, listening activities and creative activities. These exercises were used by me or my supporting teacher and some of them are created by us or are commonly used in language teaching. It is therefore difficult to state any sources for them.

Each exercise includes a description of the procedure and an explanation or a comment on how it enhances language learning, what the theoretical point of the task is and how the task is supposed to motivate the students.

4.2.1 Introductory activities

Getting to know each other
In the beginning of the course it is important to create a supportive atmosphere and a favourable learning environment. The sooner the students get to know each other the better they can perform the following conversation and discussion tasks. This is also important for the teacher; s/he gets some background knowledge of the students, and some hints of their skills in L2 and also their characteristics. The teacher can then evaluate the plans which have usually been made without any knowledge on the level of the students. S/he might also be able to make some decisions on the following exercises or forming groups etc. on the basis of this knowledge.

Usually this kind of an exercise is motivating the students to language use as they hear that their fellow students are mostly at the same level, mistakes are not disturbing the situation and it is easier to start to tell about someone else than yourself in front of the whole group. This exercise also contains an element of fun as the questions by the teacher are funny or surprise somehow. The atmosphere is created at this phase of the course.

Procedure:
1. Interview: The students work in pairs and interview each other in L2. They should ask simple questions like What is your name?, Where do you live? Do you have children? etc. Students make notes.

2. Introducing your pair to the other students: The students introduce each other to the rest of the group on the basis of their interview. One of the other students will make an extra question for the student in turn. Also the teacher asks a question (for example: What would you do if you won in lottery?).

3. The interviews can be followed by an interview of the teacher, i.e. the students interview the teacher.

Small talk –rehearsal

The aim of the exercise is to rehearse conversation skills. The topics are chosen by the students themselves, and they usually are motivated to discuss as they have an opinion to express on them. The small talk skills are important and the use of phrases becomes automatic, when you change partner once in a while. As there are no "real situations" where to use language, the situations have to be created. This exercise also contains an element of fun, if such topics are selected by the teacher.

Procedure: Students write down current, commonly known topics or name of famous persons (one each) on a peace of transparency. The topics are given to the teacher.

The students walk freely in the class and stop to discuss with another student on a topic which the teacher shows with the overhead projector. The students should start the conversation with greetings and using commonly used phrases when meeting people. These can be given to students on paper, so that they can check the right phrases in case they do not remember them. The topic and the partner will change after 3 minutes.

4.2.2 Dialogues

Working in pairs give the possibility to each student to rehearse language skills, and that is why a lot of dialogue activities are used in language teaching. The students make mistakes, but are corrected by each other, not in front of the whole group. The topics used are to be motivating, and familiar for the students, not too complicated or scientific.

Att studera på högskolan - **discussion in pairs**

The aim of the exercise is reading comprehension and to widen the vocabulary on a topic. At this course it is appropriate to discuss on studying as most of the participants are university students. The text can be on any topic related to the background of the students or the vocabulary area, which should be rehearsed.

Procedure: The students read a text on studying at a university or other school. The pairs will be given different roles: A & B or a student and a counsellor. The teacher has given a list of words for both students (A & B) and they should explain the words for each other in other words. As a student and counsellor, one student asks questions given by the teacher and the other answers on the basis of the text. The roles are changed after a while.

4.2.3 Vocabulary and structure

Grammar is seen as one of the most difficult and unmotivating topics in language learning. The teacher should vary the methods in teaching, try to make the exercises inspiring or interesting in various ways. The topics rehearsed are usually the most difficult ones and they should be explained clearly and thoroughly. The students should be given a lot of tools to manage the area and such tools which can be utilised even after the course. Even though it was stated earlier that this is not the most important area of language use, the basics of grammar are to be taught to students. Even these clearly structured grammar issues can be studied in groups and creative learning methods can be used. Learning in groups and from peers are also valuable ways to get into the matters, even if the teacher is seen the expert of the issue.

Min familj sedd genom ordklasserna **- Grammatical terms**
The different word classes are introduced as family members (mother=verbs, father=nouns, sister=adjective, brother=adverbs, younger sister=questions, the dog=prepositions, grandfather=exclamations, uncle=conjuncts).

By presenting the word classes in this way the students might remember them better. The teacher in using the concepts in future teaching and it is important to acquire the basic concepts, even if these have been learned also in L1 and other foreign languages.

En gåta **– an e-mail joke was used, just to use a simple and funny text**
The text used is simple and funny, and also the sentences formed by the students are usually quite funny or surprising. This is a good way to rehearse a basic grammar issue which has been learned in the beginning of one's language studies. The text in itself is not difficult and the students working in groups remind each other of the rules concerning this matter. The basics are then summarized by the teacher and the students can ask about the unclear structures.

Procedure: Students work in groups of five and read the text, one sentence each. The text includes a lot of phrases but only one adjective is used in all. The students read the sentences and choose another adjective in the place of the one used in the text. They should also remember to use the right form of it (according to the noun) and correct each other's mistakes. In Swedish the declension of nouns and adjectives go hand in hand. This causes difficulties for Finnish students as there is no such feature in Finnish.

Det var en gång… **- Use of word order**
Word order is one of the most difficult issues in Swedish for Finnish students. There are clear rules though, and the students should learn the rules for grammatically right language use. As they are learned in the beginning of one's Swedish studies, the intention here is to activate these previously learned rules. Also in this case activating is done by doing. The students work in groups so that all can participate actively. It is even better if the students create the text themselves but also a given text might be used. The teacher

explains the basic rules first and also gives some written material for the students, which they then should be using in their work. The teacher supports the students but does not give the right answers. The point is that the students actively create rules for the particular grammar issue; they can learn from each others explanations and remember the rules better.

Procedure: Students work in groups of five. One of the students starts a sentence by for example saying "Once upon a time there was a lion…" and the next student continues with another clause or subordinate clause. This goes on till all group members have added a clause in the sentence. When the sentence is ready the students write it down and analyse it. Later all the groups show their texts to others and explain what kind of rules define the word order in sentences. Another option is to give the students a suitable text and they analyse it in the same way.

A basic exercise on genitive
The discussion about the rules and the certain example sentences will help the students to remember the rules. Also working together is more effective than working all alone.

Procedure: The teacher shows the students some sentences in Finnish including genitive expressions (in Finnish for example: *Svenin auto; koulun vahtimestarin koira; Matin siskon miehen työnantajan tyttären auto suistui tieltä.; Kallen mopon takarenkaan korjauskustannukset ihmetyttävät minua hiukan*.) The sentences range from simple to very complex and the students are asked to form the right kind of genitive forms in Swedish. The construction of genitive in Swedish is more complicated than in Finnish, and different kinds of prepositions, compound nouns, attribute structures and subordinate clauses are used. With the help of these phrases the students are taught the rules of genitive. The teacher is trying to figure out with the group the structure of the phrase and how the genitive is constructed in the particular cases.

After that the students work in groups and do exercises on genitive, translate Finnish sentences into Swedish and try to figure out which rules concern the expressions. The students will also be given a written handout on the rules. The exercises are then checked together with the whole class and the main points of them are dealt with again shortly. The unclear points are examined more thoroughly.

4.2.4 Mnemonics and other useful methods
The texts written by the students can be used later also when rehearsing more about word order. The students find it encouraging if they sentences can be used in learning and perhaps remember better the issues handled. A common tip for learning a certain grammar issue and memorize that is to create a funny sentence including that structure. Many of the memory rules are abbreviations of rules as in Swedish the *SPLOTPA* and *KONSUKIEPRE* rules for word order.

The word order in a subordinate clause in Swedish is always the same: subject – predicate. The word order can be remembered from abbreviation KONSUKIEPRE, which is formed from the Finnish words. *(KON = konjunktio - conjunction (att, eftersom, därför att, om, fast …), SU = subjekti* – subject of the clause, *KIE = kieltosana + muut liikkuvat määreet (inte, aldrig, ofta, sällan …)* – negative words and *PRE = predikaatti* – predicate*). SPLOTPA* is a similar memory rule.

An essay written at home – *Kontroll av skrivuppgift*
The aim was to give the students and also the teacher an overall picture of the level of the students. The grammar session planned for the second weekend of the course was planned according to the essays and the grammatical difficulties occurring in them. That task gave important knowledge for both the students and the teachers, and the students were able to rehearse for the final exam, which was a similar test focusing on writing skills.

Procedure: The students were given some topics to write about, the text were supposed to have the length of one page. The topics were as follows: 'I as a student'; 'My work'; 'Describe what kind a person you are and what kind of matters you find important in life, what kind of future plans you have etc'. The topics were easy, so everyone had a possibility to try writing an essay.

At an earlier occasion a list of grammar issues was given to students for their use. The list includes the grammar issues which the students should check in their own texts. The list states the most usual mistakes done by students. A systematic control of the text will give them hints on their own mistakes and a possibility to correct them before returning their texts. The students become aware of their own mistakes and difficult grammar issues and will be able to concentrate on them, learn on them and produce texts with correct language.

The list is meant for independent working and while working the students also get to know which matters are unclear for them and which they will have to ask from the teacher. It is more appropriate to concentrate on the matters which the students find difficult and not to take up matters they already know and can handle. When the students work actively with the grammar rules they will memorise them better and find out how to utilise them in their texts. Using a grammar as a handbook might be more useful than the teacher's explanations. Of course this is also a matter of learning style; some of the students have difficulties with the written rules and they wish that someone explains the rules for them.

The main difficulty in using such a control list is that the student has to have certain language skills already and s/he has to be motivated to do some extra work. The students should be aware of their learning styles and have an overall picture on their skills and

how they really learn. They should actively try to find out how they learn and discover the main points which enhance learning in general.

Using the Internet as a learning environment

There are a lot of various grammar rehearsals on the Internet and it is possible to rehearse them there. Usually the programme gives right answers and "teaches" the grammar that way. A list of links to various material and web pages are given to students. They can do the tasks individually and focus on the matters which are most difficult for them. In some cases the mechanical rehearsing might help in learning grammar issues.

There are also a lot of other material which can be used in language learning; web pages in L2, newspapers, other texts and word lists which can be used for rehearsing reading skills; dictionaries; and radio or TV programmes for rehearsing listening skills.

4.2.5 Text-based activities

Ny forskningsrapport om orsakerna till utslagning - **discussion on a current topic**

If a text is interesting students usually have opinions on the topic and they also want to tell them to others. In the following exercise the text should be short in order to leave more time for discussion. The teacher's questions should activate the discussion, but the main responsibility is given for the students. It is important that the selected text really interests all the students and that is why the backgrounds of the students should be known. At the course in question the students were given a text on dropouts in schooling and as they were students of social sciences and education (many of them were teachers) it was an easy topic. They had opinions and experiences on the subject. Talking about one's own experiences gives more possibilities to be actively involved in the discussion and creates an atmosphere of a 'real' communication situation. The students will be able to utilise the vocabulary used and issues discussed also in their work.

Procedure: A short text on a current topic is given to the students and they will discuss it in groups of five. There are some words explained at the end of the text but also dictionaries may be used. The aim is to rehearse discussion skills and vocabulary. The groups then explain to each other what they have been discussing. Alternatively the whole group discusses about the subject in the first place.

Interkulturell kompetens i socialt arbete - **discussion on a more scientific text/article**

The aim is basically the same as in the above mentioned task, but the text is more difficult and scientific. The topic should be familiar to the students and the discussion should focus on their own experiences, not that much on the text given. Own experiences are more interesting and create more discussion. The text gives them the main concepts and the vocabulary used while discussing the issue. The students learn vocabulary of their own

main subject and profession. The topic should also be meaningful, interesting and of use in their work in order to create real opinions and discussion.

The aim is that the students discuss the issues and prepare a common presentation of their discussion, where they present the main points of the issue in a clear form. The task also gave them a possibility to rehearse their presentations skills in front of the class before the actual presentation exercise.

Procedure: The students are given a scientific article and they read it at home. There will be some questions, which they should answer while reading. The topic of the text was the multicultural matters at the area of social work. The teacher first tells about the so called 'critical situation' which quite often occurs within communication between people from different cultures. The students work in groups of five and prepare a poster where they present the answers of the questions given by the teacher in advance. The poster is then presented by the group of students and the others can make questions and also the teacher asks some specific questions. The presentation can be a mind map, drawing, list of important matters or anything which shows the others the main points in the discussion.

4.3 Feedback by the students

At the end of the Academic Swedish course the students were asked to fill in a questionnaire stating that it would be used for developing these kind of language courses. 13 of the 19 students returned the feedback form and this chapter gives some ideas on the thoughts of the students after the course. Most of the questions dealt with the structure of the course and my intention was to find out what kind of learning styles the students have and in which ways they usually think they learn most. The form included questions on the different subject areas (grammar, oral skills, written skills), best practices in language learning, general evaluation of the course and feedback for the teachers. The form in Finnish: attachment 1.

I am analysing the feedback here as part of my project work, even though I did not plan the questions this Development Project in mind. The form was based on the questionnaire of the Language Centre at JYU but I added in it also other questions, which I found important. I wanted to know how the students describe the best practices of learning and which learning styles they are using and which methods they find most important at each section of the course: grammar, writing skills, oral skills. I also wanted to know how the students evaluate their metacognitive skills, but found out that this questionnaire did not give any answers for that.

4.3.1 Feedback for teaching – the answers of the students

Question 1 – 'As a learner, I am independent … need very much guidance'
The first question tried to evaluate the students learning style: are they independent learners or do they need a lot of guidance. There were five options to select from the scale 'I am very independent' to 'need very much guidance'. The students seemed to have different learning styles. Four of them thought that they are very independent learners. Three thought they are a little less independent (the second selection on the scale), three that they are medium independent and the same amount of those who thought that they need quite a lot of guidance in learning. No one selected the last option in the scale ('need very much guidance'), which shows that most of the students found their learning style being quite independent or somewhat independent.

Question 2 – 'The exercises I find most useful at each area (in common or at this course). Select three most important types of exercises.'
The next questions evaluate the types of exercises which the students find useful when learning grammar, rehearsing communication/oral skills and writing skills.

a) Grammar:
The alternatives given are teacher's explanations in front of the class; group work; written material; learning on the Internet; real language use; other; working in pairs; independent working; and learning from peers. Most of the students (11) found that teacher's explanations are the most useful way to learn new things in grammar. Also the written material (7) and real language use and independent working were found useful (6). Some of the students also mentioned working in groups, the Internet and working in pairs. Nobody found learning from peers important or gave any alternative ways to learn grammar.

The students were also asked to comment freely the grammar part of this particular course. Most of the students thought that they should have needed more time to rehearse grammar issues. They also thought that the exercises were good, focused on the most important issues and were effective. One of the students thought that there was enough grammar. The essay written as part of the course gave useful information for one student about the level of the grammar skills and the student also mentions the word order rules which on her/his opinion should have been explained right in the beginning of the course.

b) Communication skills/oral skills:
The alternatives given are teacher's comments; group work; learning on the Internet; real language use; other; working in pairs; independent working; and learning from peers, for example during the presentation each of the student gave. The students found teacher's comments (9), group work (9) and working in pairs (9) most effective exercises. Also the real language use situations (6) were considered useful. Also independent working and

learning from peers were mentioned, but no one indicated any alternative ways of learning.

The students commented the communication skills exercises as follows: the students found the rehearsals important, useful and activating but some of them wanted even more practice on that area. They thought that it was a good way to improve ones vocabulary and enhanced conversation skills. Three of the students mentioned that they should have needed more guidance in pronunciation. According to one student the atmosphere was good in the group, which encouraged the students to speak and one of them thought that the shyer students did not get possibilities to prove their skills.

c) Writing skills:
The alternatives given are teacher's comments on one's own essay; teacher's comments on the essays of other students; Internet learning tasks; real language use; other; working in pairs; group work; and independent working. Most students found the comments on their own essays (11) most useful. Also the independent working (9) was found effective and the comments the teacher gave on the essays of other students (6) found important. Some students also learned writing skills when doing tasks in pairs (5), group work (4) and working with tasks on Internet (2). Also real language use was mentioned once. No one mentioned any other ways of learning.

The students commented the writing skills exercises as follows: the essay was a good way to practice and evaluate one's level in writing. Most of them thought that there should have been more writing exercises which then had been corrected by the teacher. Also independent tasks with given correct answers were mentioned as a good way of practice.

Question 3 – My best tips for language learning
There were several types of comments given to this question, but only some actual tips were mentioned. One of the students said that "be brave and speak, speak and speak and learn the grammar, that's most important". Also the others thought that working hard is the only way to learn. One of the students mentioned that for her/him it was easy to work in pairs and another told that watching TV with Swedish titles or listening to a Swedish programme were useful ways of learning. Most of the answers pointed out that the more active the student is the more s/he learns.

Question 4 - Comment the course in general, the practical arrangements, contents and the atmosphere.
Seven of the students mentioned the good atmosphere of the course; it was nice, good, open, easy and safe, even encouraging. The students were afraid of the course before hand, but were positively surprised. The teacher, nice peers and good content were making the course rewarding. Many of the students also mentioned that it was tiring because of the timetable and overloaded contents. Most comments on the contents were positive, though. It seemed that the course was suitable for most students even though

they had very different level of language skills and different backgrounds. Some of the students had difficulties with the changes in timetable, which occurred during the course and one thought it was expensive because of the nights at a hotel.

Question 5 – Feedback for the teachers:
a) Feedback for the supporting teacher:
The students thought that the teacher was nice and gave clear instructions. She was encouraging, calm, funny and created the positive atmosphere. She was professional and gave enough tools for the students and activated the students in a positive way. One of the students mentioned that even though s/he was not at all motivated to learn the subject it was a positive experience. One of the students became interested in Swedish language.

b) Feedback for the teaching practice:
The teacher was thanked for the grammar part of the course, but at the same time the students would have needed more guidance in that. The students had many expectations on the teacher's personality, which gave a somewhat traditional picture of the student teacher interaction. Some of the students said that the teacher should be more enthusiastic as the subject is not one of the most popular; the enthusiasm of the teacher activates the students.

4.3.2 Some conclusions

The questionnaire gave a lot of information on the students' thoughts on Swedish language learning and the processes they preferred in their learning. As expected they felt that they were basically independent learners, but there was variation in that. Sometimes a certain kind of regression is seen in adult students, as they are sitting in a class and seem to be surprisingly dependent on the teacher in front of the class. Some students were seemingly affected by this kind of effect. Most of the students at the course were teachers or future teachers which also affect on their behaviour as students. I guess these adult students were very aware of their strong sides as language learners.

As adults usually, they also gave comments to most of the questions. It was a bit surprising that the answers in the second question shows that the students emphasise the teacher explaining in front of the class in all parts of language learning: grammar, communication skills and writings skills, as one might think that an independent learner perhaps depends on some other options. The students found the grammar issues important, and that was also one of the things emphasised, perhaps a little too much in the light of the fact that the communication skills are the most important according to employers. It is of course challenging for a language teacher to ignore these errors and entirely focus on communication.

As expected the students preferred rehearsing the communication skills in small groups and real language situations. The only way to rehearse these skills is to communicate in the foreign language and that was also understood by the students. They practiced

actively and the free atmosphere enabled the participation of all students. There were no difficulties to form groups and everybody worked in pairs actively. The students also found the activities important and meaningful.

Even though the students thought that rehearsing writing skill would have required more effort they were not suggesting that they should have done that independently using the written aids and the check list given to them. Only some of them mentioned the tasks with the correct answers given to them as good way of utilising independent home work.

To my question about tips for language learning I did not get any proper answers. I was hoping more comments on that. The students were active, but only if they were given tasks, not independently. Successful learners also focus on metacognitive skills and have acquired that kind of strategies for language learning. The answers in the questionnaire gave me that impression that the good atmosphere was a very meaningful aspect in the learning process of most of the students, even thought they did not state the fact directly. The good atmosphere created by the teacher and the students' own activity seemed to affect most on learning and it affected also on the situational motivation of the students.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this project work was to create a handbook of good practices for teaching; a very practical guide, which could be used in language teaching. I did gather a set of exercises but I also realised what kind of consequences those tasks have and how much can be affected on motivation and the good atmosphere in the class by selecting right kind of exercises.

Language use is communication and learning languages requires a lot of student activation and guidance in order to get any successful results. Students ought to be active and define what kind of aims they have; studying languages may be an obligatory part of the students' studies or the students might need the skills in their future work, or free time. The aims in mind each student figures out how to enhance ones language skills and acquire the needed level. A right kind of an attitude enhances the facilitation of one's own learning. The students should utilise the instruction given and see the other learners as co-teachers, as part of their own learning process.

A teacher also has challenges; in addition to the active students there are always students who are not at all motivated. It seems that motivating adult students is not even possible, but situational motivation can be affected, which is one step forward in learning. What happens if the students attend the course but are not actually willing to learn; nothing, as the learning process demands activity. Motivation is partly something very individual and it can be affected differently in different situations, ages and groups.

The theoretical part of my project gave me some knowledge on the theoretical aspects on learning, motivation and creating a favourable learning environment. The things which affect on a learning situation are numerous: the students and their characteristics, their attitudes, beliefs and feelings. It also involves students' ability to process information, and the ability to take an active role in the learning situation. As students are responsible for their own learning, they should be given advice in how to utilise the instruction given and the social processes in the learning situation. Also the learning styles and background knowledge affect.

The teacher's tools for guiding the students are good knowledge of human nature, good communication skills and ability to understand how motivation works. A person's behaviour is based on their previous experiences, they background knowledge and skills to utilise that knowledge in different situations in their life. Motivation includes aspects like student teacher interaction, culture, learning environment, peer practices and attitudes. The teacher can affect on the learning environment and enhance learning by making it stimulating and attractive.

The teacher's role as a facilitator includes planning such tasks and exercises, which take into consideration the aims of teaching, the structure of the group and the communicative atmosphere. Creating a positive learning environment enhances learning and the sessions should include exercises which give the students enough responsibility and freedom. The methods used include peer assisted learning, problem-based learning or dialogue pedagogy as they are seen as effective methods in language learning.

The benefits of the above mentioned aspects or the lack of them could be seen on the Academic Swedish course where I was practising. Also the questionnaire answered by the students indicated that the students want to be independent learners and appreciate good guidance, certain methods and a favourable learning environment. A challenge for a teacher is to find answers to such questions as how to create such an atmosphere which is favourable for students, how to utilise students' background knowledge and how to motivate them to acquire language skills needed in their work or other activities. This project work has given me knowledge on the factors and processes which affect on language learning and some tools for creating a life long enthusiasm for language learning in general.

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APPENDIX 1

PALAUTETTA OPETUKSEN KEHITTÄMISTÄ VARTEN:

1. Olen oppijana (ruksi asteikolta):
Itseohjautuva □   □   □   □   □ Tarvitsen paljon ohjausta

2. Minkä tyyppisistä tehtävistä opin eniten kultakin osa-alueelta (yleensä tai tällä kurssilla). Valitse 3 tärkeintä!

Kielioppi:
    □ opettajan suullisesta opetuksesta, kalvoilta ja taululta
    □ ryhmätyötehtävistä   □ paritehtävistä
    □ kirjallisesta materiaalista   □ itseopiskelutehtävistä
    □ nettitehtävistä   □ opiskelukavereilta
    □ todellisissa kielenkäyttötilanteissa
    □ muusta, miten _____

Kommentteja kielioppitehtävistä tähän kurssiin liittyen:

Suullinen kielitaito (valitse 3 tärkeintä):
    □ opettajan kommenteista
    □ ryhmätyötehtävistä   □ paritehtävistä
    □ nettitehtävistä   □ itseopiskelutehtävistä
    □ todellisissa kielenkäyttötilanteissa   □ opiskelukavereilta, esim. alustustilanteessa
    □ muusta, miten_____

Kommentteja suullisista tehtävistä tähän kurssiin liittyen:

Kirjallinen ilmaisu (valitse 3 tärkeintä):
    □ opettajan kommentoidessa omaa kotiainetta   □ paritehtävistä
    □ opettajan kommentoidessa kotiaineita yleisesti □ ryhmätyötehtävistä
    □ nettitehtävistä   □ itseopiskelutehtävistä
    □ todellisissa kielenkäyttötilanteissa
    □ muusta, miten_____

Kommentteja kirjallisista tehtävistä tähän kurssiin liittyen:

3. Paras vinkkini kielten opiskeluun:

4. Kommentoi kurssia yleisesti, esim. käytännön järjestelyjä ja toteutusta, kurssisisältöä ja opiskeluilmapiiriä.

5. Terveisiä opettajille:

Ohjaava opettaja:

Opetusharjoittelija:

KIITOS VASTAUKSISTA!