Learning English in the multilingual classroom: 
Student voices

Att lära sig engelska i det mångspråkiga klassrummet: 
Student röster

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to investigate language diversity in the classroom and ways in which this could be a resource for teachers. By looking specifically at the experience of learning English as a third language, it aims to establish what if any differences exist between L2 and L3 learners. By first looking at the overall attitudes to learning English with the use of a survey, I hoped to identify any differences between these two groups of learners. Based on these results, focus groups were used to find out what strategies were employed and how ability, motivation and personality affected these learners.

The results show that whilst there is a tendency for L3 learners to be more aware of their individual language development than L2 learners, we cannot generalize. All students are motivated by travel, as this is seen as an opportunity to communicate with other nationalities. It would appear that L3 learners have greater access to travel since they often have relatives in different countries. This study also showed that students are not used to reflecting on their learning and this is something that we, as teachers should encourage in order to help students find appropriate strategies that work for them. Finally, this study showed that all students could benefit from a move away from a contrastive Swedish/English environment to a more inclusive study of language typology in general.

Key words: English as a third language, language acquisition, learning strategies, multilingual classroom, teaching
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1. Introduction

An increasing number of students have a diverse language background which means many teachers face a classroom situation with learners who already have a number of languages in their repertoire. Furthermore, there appears to be an equally diverse experience of language learning amongst these multilingual students. The complexity of these students’ backgrounds cannot be ignored; they range from those who have been born and raised in Sweden yet are fluent in their home language, to those who understand but struggle to communicate, to those who have come to Sweden as teenagers. It is generally considered that learning an additional foreign language is much easier for those who have already mastered one. Is this really the case for the students’ in our classrooms? Do teachers actively incorporate this reality into their classrooms?

As a native English speaker, I learned Swedish having already achieved a high level of fluency in French which helped me in terms of my approach to the new language and the speed at which it was acquired. This experience has resulted in my interest in others who have had similar experiences, not least the students I meet as a teacher in the classroom. Reading William Rivers’ study of adult learners intrigued me because it states conclusively that learners who have already learned one foreign language to a high standard employ deliberate strategies to learn an additional language (Rivers, 1996, p. 5). This raises the question of whether the same could be said of students at upper secondary school. Do Upper Secondary students who are learning a third language (L3) actively employ strategies in the same way as the adult learners in Rivers’ study?

As a teacher I feel that it would be beneficial to understand what current research and theory have discovered about these learners. This will enable me, as a teacher, to help them in a way which is appropriate, both to their situation and their stage of learning. It should also be possible to tap into the students’ bilingual skills as a resource to help, support and encourage other learners who have not had the experience of learning multiple foreign languages. My hope is that this research will highlight ways in which I, as a teacher, can be more effective in meeting the needs of both second and third language learners.

Teachers are challenged daily in motivating their students to take charge of their own learning and to actively engage with the English language. Individual personality characteristics can
also help or even hinder learners in the English classroom. Shy students do not capitalise on opportunities to speak, whilst they are overshadowed by extrovert students who attract all the attention. Even where students have a natural ability, this can be affected by personality traits which then have a negative impact on the students’ performance. It could be that these factors, together with a natural ability, have as much influence on the L3 learners as the fact that they are indeed L3 learners. It is only as an adult student that I have really begun to understand the way in which I learn best and I wonder how aware Upper Secondary students are of their own learning. Do they employ strategies which complement their own personal development? More importantly, are they able to articulate the way they learn? Assuming that knowledge of additional languages gives those learners an advantage, my study is therefore an effort to understand the way Upper Secondary L3 learners feel about their own learning experience.
1.1. Purpose statement

I am interested in investigating language diversity in the classroom and also, how I can tap into this as a resource in my teaching. By language diversity, I am referring to the variety of languages represented by the students in the classroom. I will do this by comparing second and third language learners’ overall attitudes towards learning English which I believe will show a marked difference. By further investigating the experiences of learners of English as a third language, I hope to be able to show ways in which these experiences could benefit the classroom as a whole. For this reason and due to limitations of time, I will exclude L2 learners from the latter part of my study. For ease of reference throughout the paper, I will refer to L3 learners as those who have a home language other than Swedish. The target group is Upper Secondary students in Southern Sweden.

1.2. Research questions

What similarities and or differences exist between learners of English as a second language (L2) and learners of English as a third language (L3) in terms of their attitudes towards learning English?

What strategies are employed by L3 learners at Upper Secondary level? What effects, if any, do ability, motivation and personality have on the individual L3 learner?

How might insights gained from this investigation be drawn upon to improve teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural classroom?
2. Language learning

2.1. Language acquisition

In order for language to be acquired effectively, it is important that students are stimulated with input at the right level. Vygotsky refers to this as “Zones of Proximal development”. He describes this as the way in which “the gap between a pupil’s current level of learning and the level he/she could be functioning at given the appropriate learning experience and adult or peer support” (Bartlett, 2006, p. 142). In practical terms this means that the student must be challenged, at the same time as he or she is provided with the right amount of support. This may mean, therefore, that L3 learners need different support and or material than their L2 peers. This depends on whether L3 learners are considered to acquire language from a different starting point. This study will not be able to state whether, in fact, this is the case. However, it may go some way to pointing out areas of strength which could and should be developed upon.

Michael Long’s theory of language acquisition states that second language acquisition is multi-dimensional, that is to say, it cannot be explained by any one single factor. This means that there is an interaction between different theories, which recognize both learner variables and environmental variables. He claims that this makes for a more powerful theory which is “clearly justified by the intriguing combination of universals and variability in adult language learning” (Long, 1990, p. 661). Even though, he specifically refers to adults in language learning, I believe this can also be applied to young adults. In order to understand the effect of these variables, he looks at the learner, the environment and the relationship between the target language and the home language, in terms of how they may affect both second and third language acquisition. In addition to “developmental and maturational factors”, Long claims that language development for all learners is also dependent on “the same universal cognitive abilities” and “subject to the same cognitive constraints” (Long, 1990, p. 657). Functional factors include “age, aptitude, attitude and motivation”, and these, he says are “systematically related to variance in rate of progress and ultimate attainment” (Long, 1990, p. 657). Affective factors such as “positive attitudes” are, he says, subordinate to a student’s maturity and development because motivation cannot overcome a basic lack of ability, even though, it can help in terms of time spent working and effort applied. Having looked at these learner variables, he goes on to assess the effect of environment where he says that comprehensible input is critical because “much of language is not learned consciously” (Long, 1990, p. 658).
Attention to form, feedback and appropriate input from the teacher are all essential aspects of language acquisition. In this article, Long raises the issue that we know that learners are impacted by a myriad different factors in different ways but that we, as teachers and theorists, do not know how these factors are experienced by the students themselves. With this study, I would like to try to address how these young adults view these factors and to what extent these particular students’ learning is affected. We know that they do have an effect, but how do these students feel about it personally?

To the best of my knowledge, language acquisition in the multilingual classroom has not been specifically addressed.¹ There have been a number of studies completed with bilingual students learning a third language and these are presented under previous research.

2.2. Learning strategies
In addition to theories of language acquisition, the effect of individual learner styles and the language acquisition strategies are pertinent to this study. What strategies are recognised as effective? Given that this study is specifically targeted towards Upper Secondary students in the Swedish school system, the learning strategies discussed by Ulrika Tornberg in her book Språkdidaktik are highly relevant. She focuses on the goal of communicative competence, as described in the syllabus for English and the way it is supported by specific learning strategies, most especially those which focus on communication (Tornberg, 2009, p. 51-74).

The strategies employed in language learning are, according to Rebecca Oxford (2002), metacognitive by nature, involving the use of organizing, evaluating and planning together with analysis, summaries, taking notes and reasoning. She points out that these are all techniques which could be applied to any learning situation. Other learning strategies, which are less often attributed to language learning, are affective and social strategies. Oxford states that even skilled learners do not mention these, since they do not view them as “real” strategies, or that researchers do not ask about them in detail. Oxford advocates a strategy system based on the “whole person”, which means that all the senses are involved, in order to be as effective as possible. She breaks these down into groups and gives examples of the ways in which they can be used. As a teacher, it is interesting to see such tools so clearly represented in a way that

¹ At a late stage in the preparation of this paper, I learnt of an ongoing project by Carla Jonsson at the Stockholm University’s Centre for Research on Bilingualism. I have therefore not been able to follow up on theories which could be applicable to this type of project.
ensures that the “whole” student is catered for. Given that no two individuals are alike; this further ensures that there is something for everyone. The six categories suggested by Oxford are affective, social, metacognitive, memory related, general cognitive and compensatory. The chart, which I have designed to guide the interviews, takes these aspects into account. Similarly, the additional questions which I have in mind to stimulate the discussion are loosely based on this list to see how much, or how little awareness of these different strategies exists, in the minds of these students (Oxford, 2002, p. 128). See Appendix 3 for a full list. It will be interesting to assess the level of awareness of such strategies amongst students at Upper Secondary level. I suspect that this is not something that is addressed in any detail particularly in the area of language learning in schools. Indeed, are such strategies taught? Or, are these more haphazardly acquired by lucky insights on the part of students or teachers?

In contrast, individual learning styles and the way in which they affect the way languages are learned are regularly discussed in schools. This makes it more likely that students will be able to identify the category into which their preferred method of study falls. Howard Gardner’s model seems to be regularly discussed in the school where this study is based. Similarly, personality characteristics such as how extrovert and / or introvert the students are, willingness to take risks and individual anxiety levels are known to have an impact on students’ learning patterns. According to Lightbrown and Spada, it is the learner’s personality in terms of the level of anxiety felt, how inhibited they feel, their attitudes to risk taking and lastly their motivation which most affect language acquisition (Lightbrown, 2006, p. 59–66). These are all factors which will be addressed in this study.
3. Previous research

William P Rivers has conducted the study *Self directed language learning and Third language learning*. His hypothesis states that third language learners are more autonomous than second language learners. They are more likely to engage in social learning strategies and adopt self directed learning behaviours. In addition, they have developed a greater metalinguistic awareness. He concluded that third language learners are more successful because they take charge of their own learning, compared to second language learners. These students direct the teacher towards problem areas and ask for specific help to improve their language development, which he refers to as “self directed learning” He gives examples of them making wall charts or flashcards. Furthermore, he claims that these students are more likely to know what their strengths and weaknesses are, as well as being able to regulate their levels of anxiety (Rivers, 1996, p. 5). His findings show that second language learners are more passive in their own language learning (Rivers, 1996, p. 6). His study was aimed at adult learners, which may mean that my findings will differ as a result of the maturity of the individual resulting in difficulty in expressing or recognising their learner strategies. Another factor which may affect my study is that learning a language in a classroom situation rarely achieves the same amount of motivation as full immersion in the target country. School students are more or less required to study the language, compared to adult learners who choose to learn an additional language for personal and or professional reasons. Will the same results ensue in Upper Secondary school students? Are they aware of the learning strategies they employ in their study of English? If so, is it possible to harness this knowledge and actively use it to encourage all students and consequently, achieve better results?

Marion Greissler has also documented a study in Austria to look at the effects of learning a third language on the second language and the proficiency thereof. She compares the results of students in a school, where English is the language of instruction, a school where English is taught to students who had already learnt an additional language from a young age and a regular high school. Key findings of the study are that language acquisition is clearly supported by prior knowledge of another language, that is to say, when English is learned as L3 as opposed to L2. Moreover, she claims that there are other equally important factors that play a part, specifically “language aptitude, attitude and motivation, but also parental interest, which means a home environment supportive of multilingualism” (Griessler, 2001, p. 59). It will be especially interesting to see if there is any evidence of this in my study.
Ulrike Jessner states in her paper on metalinguistic awareness in third language learners, that “prior language knowledge should be reactivated in the language classroom and that consequently multilingual education should also focus on the similarities between languages in order to increase metalinguistic awareness” (Jessner, 1999, p. 201). It is important to point out that her studies involve bilingual individuals where the teacher has knowledge of all languages. These teachers have therefore, the ability to make comparisons between all the languages.

Jasone Cenoz and Ulrika Jessner have conducted various studies based on Spanish students, where the students are bilingual in Spanish and Catalan and learning English as L3. Their focus is more towards bilingual students, who subsequently learn a third language. The results of these studies are reviewed in a paper by Yan Krit Ingrid Leung from the University of Essex and although less relevant to my study, is included to show what research has been done. However, these studies do show that bilingual students are more successful in learning additional languages. Since, they do not address the environmental or learner variables which clearly also have an impact upon language acquisition, they do not necessarily explain why they are more successful. It should also be noted that, students attending bilingual programmes such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) are generally considered by society to be highly motivated in their studies, hence the reason many parents choose to push their children to studying this programme. This level of motivation can be sadly lacking in other schools which follow the national curriculum of the given country, in this case Sweden.

Three other similar studies were undertaken in Germany by Jung (1981), at the German School in Stockholm, Sweden by Magiste (1984) and by the National Swedish Board of Education amongst 8th graders (1982). The results of these studies are compared in a short article by Edith Magiste, in the Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. In this article, she claims that “passive bilingualism seems to facilitate learning a third language, while active bilingualism might delay it” (Magiste, 1984, p. 420). According to Dehouwer (1999) active bilingualism occurs when the individual regularly responds and initiates conversations in two languages whereas a passive bilingual appears to understand both languages but produces only one (p. 77). I believe that this may well prove to be another factor which can be considered in my own results, especially where the individual’s link to the home language may not be as strong.
The Swedish study referred to by Magiste, was conducted by Anita and Torsten Lindblad in 1982, and investigated the issues facing students learning English as a third language based on a survey which was completed by 26 school districts. At this time, Grade 4 was considered to be the optimum time at which to introduce English. We know now that many schools begin with English much earlier, but there is still an ongoing discussion about the benefits of this decision. Although most L3 learners are “positive and well motivated”, they found that there is a close connection between success in English and proficiency in Swedish (Lindblad, 1982, p. 45). The report states that problems arise where the teacher is unable to understand the students’ specific difficulties if they are not proficient in the native language (Lindblad, 1982, p. 46).

It is perhaps important to realise in presenting these studies, that they were all conducted in the early 80’s, at a time when the objects of study were very different. Our society has changed considerably in the intervening time, in that we understand the impact of multilingualism and multiculturalism on our students in a different way than we did then. The student population is not the same today as it was twenty years ago and whilst this may seem obvious it is nevertheless pertinent to be reminded. Additionally, we were not able to preserve the results of the studies in the same way as we can today. This means that further analysis of older data is somewhat more difficult.

Carla Jonsson is a professor at Stockholm University’s Centre for Research on Bilingualism and is currently involved in a study of the multilingual student in the classroom. One of her research questions is to investigate what strategies multilingual students employ in order to develop their linguistic competence in additional languages (Jonsson, 2009, http://www.usos.su.se). This is very interesting in that it highlights the relevance of my own study in the context of our multilingual, multicultural society.²

² Time limitations have prevented me from a more thorough analysis of research into the students’ own interpretation of their learning in a multilingual context. However; the searches I have made, have not yielded anything more appropriate.
4. Methodology and data

This study was conducted at an Upper Secondary School in Southern Sweden. The classes included English A, B and C students attending two different Upper Secondary programmes: Science and Social Sciences with Sport. By including two different programmes, the aim is to try to get a broader picture of the way students feel about learning English at this school. Information was collated using both a survey and focus groups. An important element of any research project is demonstrating respect for “research ethics”. It is most important that the researcher shows the utmost consideration for the participants at every stage and that all answers remain anonymous. This is especially helpful when conducting a survey, because respondents are much more likely to give answers honestly and openly, if they are anonymous. Where the interviews are concerned, it is important to show respect and consideration, both in the choice of questions and the way in which the interviewer approaches the participants. In addition, it is necessary to get written permission of the parents to interview participants who are under 18 (Johansson & Svedner, 2006, p. 30). One of the focus groups involved students who were under 18, for whom it was necessary to obtain written permission from the parents. The other individuals who participated were over 18 and therefore, of age. The participants need to be informed that the film or recording is purely for research purposes and will only be made available to those directly involved in the research. Fictitious names have therefore, been assigned to protect the identity of the participants. Since it would not be impossible to work out the identities of the individuals based on the reporting of the native language, it is also important that the identity of the school remains hidden.

4.1. The survey

Questionnaires were completed in six different classes at the above mentioned school, which included English A, B and C students attending two different Upper Secondary programmes: Science and Social Sciences with Sport. By carrying the study out in each of the year groups, I have been able to include a range of ages of students studying English at this school. This in turn, enables me to get a broader picture of their attitudes to learning English. The aim of the questionnaire was to access information about the way learners view their language acquisition strategies and to see if there is any difference between the group who learn English as a third language and the group who learn English as a second language. I have tried to model my questionnaire in such a way that it is possible to access similar results to William Rivers in his study.
The most important part of any survey is the questionnaire. Surveys are especially useful for “obtaining large numbers of responses relatively quickly” according to Bartlett Burton and Peim (Bartlett, 2006, p. 48). It is important to get it right first time, since repeating the study is not possible. A large number of responses enable the researcher to make an overall statement about the population included in the survey. So how big should the sample be? Bryman says that “the bigger the sample, the more representative it is likely to be” (Bryman, 2008, p. 180). However, the issue of time constraints cannot be ignored, not only in terms of asking respondents to complete the questionnaires, but also in terms of the time needed to analyze the responses. Bryman also stresses the importance of the sample being randomly selected, as this makes for more valid results. However, this has to be offset against availability of the sample and in this case, those students to whom I was allowed easy access. Another important aspect of my sample is the number of L3 learners of English present, not least because these respondents will form the basis for choosing interview candidates. To this end, I collaborated with the class teacher, to ensure that potential L3 candidates were part of the class and that individuals from both target groups were represented.

Analysing the results enables the researcher to present them in terms of statistics and charts, tools which make the results more accessible to the reader. Weaknesses however, include the lack of depth possible in the answers and the lack of flexibility available when gathering the answers. It is not possible to ask the respondent to enlarge on a given thought or to explain what is meant (Bartlett, 2006, p. 48). To this end, it is necessary to draw conclusions which may or may not be justified. However, this is where the interviews can be used to answer questions which may be raised by the answers given in the survey. Consequently, I completed some preliminary analysis of the survey results, prior to planning and executing the interviews.

### 4.2. Focus groups

Should an interviewer choose to conduct a group interview or a focus group? One could argue that the term “Focus Group” is just a fancy name for a group interview. However, the difference in fact, although subtle, is that a focus group takes the interviewer out of the spotlight and puts the focus on the interaction between the participants. In his book *Social Research Methods*, Alan Bryman describes a focus group as an interview with several people
at the same time on a specific issue or topic. It is often used to gather opinions where the participants respond to each other’s ideas and develop their ideas as a group and consequently, to provide more depth in the discussion (Bryman, 2008, p. 473). Thus, the participants feed off each other’s experiences and opinions which can even, sometimes develop into conflict. However, this conflict can yield a more accurate picture of the way in which the participants feel about the subject. Opinions are rarely cut and dried (Bryman, 2008, p. 475).

The plan therefore, was to take two groups of four or five students and allow them to discuss the topic with the help of the chart (See Appendix 2). Each student would be given a copy of this schematic. As the interviewer, I would have additional questions prepared to prompt them, should the conversation need to be stimulated or alternatively, if I needed to bring them back to the topic (See Appendix 3). Choosing suitable candidates to participate in the focus groups is both critical and challenging. Four of the classes which completed the questionnaires were well known to me. Whilst the questionnaire itself was anonymous, it provided me with a list of students and the languages they knew by class, which in turn enabled me to identify which students were L3 learners. I then asked all those students who spoke Albanian, Hungarian and so on to participate in my study. There were two classes with a large enough number of suitable candidates to form such groups. I invited all those students who fit the L3 category to participate. However, one individual who did not fit in the category but whose grandfather was Hungarian slipped through the net and I included him as it may well be that exposure to a third language in the family could have some effect on attitudes to language. Additionally, one of the students had an English parent and although he did not fit the pattern completely, I included him because passive language acquisition can also, have an effect on language attitudes.

There were five students in English B who agreed to participate and a date was set with relative ease. I decided to videotape this session in order to be able to identify who was speaking at any given time. These students were all male and under the age of 18. Consequently, a form was sent home to their parents to sign that they consented to their child’s participation in order to comply with the ethical rules of under age participation in research (Johannson & Svedner, 2006, p. 30). This group of students was well known to each other, also known as a “natural group” which can be helpful because they are at ease with each other despite the strange situation (Bryman, 2008, p. 482). This was also a motivator for
me as the interviewer because choosing students with whom I already had a rapport would help me to put them at ease and encourage them to talk about their language experience. This also had a negative impact in that they were more eager to draw me into the discussion. I, therefore, played a larger role in the discussion than planned. I did manage to ask all the questions and cover all the areas of discussion but it was very hard not to lead them. Nevertheless, they were very open and willing to discuss and since I knew which ones needed to be drawn into the conversation I was prepared to intervene appropriately.

The group of English C students did not know each other quite so well although they are all attending the same English class. This is because English C is an elective course which is made up of students from within all programmes in the same year group. Like the B group, they were all well known to me. There were nine students who fit the category however, only four agreed to participate. One could argue that the most motivated students were the ones who were willing to take part. However, finding a time that fit all their schedules was impossible since these are students attending the sport program which has a lot of training as part of their timetable. The only way to move forward was to divide them into two pairs and conduct these focus groups in this way. Since I had video taped the English B group, my plan was to use the same method of recording however due to technical difficulties I was forced to use my backup plan of a voice recording. This was no problem because it is quite easy to identify the voices on the recording and the sound was very clear. It would have been much more problematic with a larger group. These students were all over 18 and therefore, it was not necessary to contact the parents.

The aim of these focus groups was to investigate the specific strategies that learners of English as a third language use to develop their language proficiency, in addition to the role that motivation, personality and ability plays in language acquisition. I hope to be able to identify personality traits, attitudes towards motivation and specific strategies used by the students in learning English. It will be possible to relate the same findings to their experience of learning other languages, like French and Spanish, in order to find examples of the way in which students think in their approach to language learning. Specifically, I wanted to identify any students who exhibit traits of self directed learning to see if the results that William Rivers achieved on a group of adults can be discerned in Upper Secondary students.
4.3. Conducting interviews

The aim of the interviews was to investigate the specific strategies that learners of English as a third language use to develop their language proficiency. It is also possible to discuss their experience of learning other languages like French and Spanish in order to find examples of the way in which students think in their approach to language learning. Specifically, I am looking for those students who exhibit traits of self-directed learning to see if the results that William Rivers achieved on a group of adults can be relevant for Upper Secondary students.

Bartlett states that interviews, in contrast to surveys, can be much more flexible taking many different forms depending on the desired outcome (Bartlett, 2006, p. 49). As I have discussed, by using a group interview discussion, students can benefit from others’ input in order to think about the ways in which they learn. This can be especially helpful since many of us do not actively think about how we learn, we just learn.

The interview was divided into four segments according to the schematic: Personality, Motivation, Ability and Learning Strategies (see Appendix 2). I found the question of how much involvement the interviewer should have to be highly relevant here. Prior acquaintance with the students had both advantages and disadvantages since, on the one hand, they were more willing to talk to me because they knew me and, on the other hand, they directed all discussion towards me rather than each other. The latter may well have been the same had they not known the interviewer because it may simply be a question of maturity and a lack of confidence in the subject. With each segment, I found that I needed to introduce it in order to give them a platform from which to launch their discussion and similarly to stretch the topic when, in some cases, conversation dried up. The English B students needed more prompting and there was very little discussion between the students, rather discussion was pushed back to me as the interviewer. The two pairs of English C students were more independent and one of the pairs did actually ask each other questions, which was exactly what I was hoping for. It is highly likely that this is a question of both maturity and personality since of all the students these were the two most outgoing and social.

I deliberately chose to involve students at different stages of foreign language proficiency. This was to see if it may be possible to discern a change in attitudes towards learning. Do students’ attitudes towards language learning change with maturity? Does their level of
motivation change as they get closer to reaching their goals? It may therefore, be evident that with more experience and success, students choose to be more self directed in their learning. However, how we measure this is extremely subjective and I suspect may well stretch beyond the scope of this study.

All the interviews were conducted in Swedish. It was important that the students be allowed to express themselves as freely as possible and with as much fluency as possible. They found this a little strange at first, since they are used to speaking with me in English. However, once the initial embarrassment wore off, it was a very relaxed atmosphere and I feel that all spoke freely. I have translated all their comments into English in reporting the content of the actual focus group sessions.
5. Results

5.1. Questionnaires

Students from six classes completed the questionnaire which resulted in a total of 118 individual responses. Of these 118 students, 35 were studying English as a third language, that is to say they had an additional home language as well as Swedish. With the exception of three, all these students ranked Swedish alongside or as their strongest language. The additional maternal languages which were represented in the survey were numerous and diverse. Figure 1 below shows the full range of languages represented in this study. Where English is concerned, this diagram only includes those students who self diagnosed their English as a number 1, that is equivalent to their mother tongue. These cases include students with an English speaking parent or those who have attended an International School in Sweden or abroad.

Figure 1: Which languages are represented in the study?

![Home Languages](image)

Additional languages taught at this school include French, German and Spanish as is the case in most European countries.

The ratio of male to female students was similar in both the L2 group and the L3 group of students, in which males dominated in both groups with 63% and 66% respectively. The
dominance of male students could be accounted for by the fact that the programs represented by the students who participated in this study are Sport based or Science based.

Figure 2 shows how the students feel about some key aspects of their language learning in terms of how they actively take charge of their own learning. In this table, I have compared the opinions of the L2 group with those of the L3 group. It is fair to say that their responses show few significant differences between the two groups of students. In fact, I would go as far to say that these answers are fairly typical of today’s students, in as much as they are aware of their “rights” to influence the content of the lesson whilst at the same time being prepared to believe that the teacher knows what they need. Student democracy is a term frequently heard in schools today with the encouragement of Student Councils who actively communicate with staff on issues which directly affect the students own learning environment. In many cases, students are too preoccupied by their own day to day life and consequently, they do what is required of them and allow other decisions to be taken by the adult in charge, in this case, the teacher. Students today are used to and expect to be able to have some influence on the content of the lesson and this target group was no exception. Similarly, the use of films and to a lesser extent books in the classroom, is a highly popular method of learning for all students. Growing up in a technological age, they believe that film and the internet are the teaching mediums of the future. It would be fair to say that they feel that they can learn all they need to know through these mediums. Moreover, they would be very happy to watch films in every lesson. However, many of the students would soon realise that although their understanding may improve, their language production would not.
Figure 2: What attitudes do the students in each target group express regarding their language learning? Comparison of L2 and L3 learners’ attitudes (%)

L2 students are slightly less inclined towards translation. Only 73% of students, compared to 77% of L3 students felt the need to translate into their mother tongue. This could be explained by the fact that students feel more confident that they know a word if they can translate it into their strongest language, especially when they have an additional language to track. Additionally L2 students are slightly more inclined to play with language, 69% compared to 65%. Interestingly 97% of L2 students thought they knew what they needed help with compared to 83% of L3 students. I was expecting quite a different pattern to emerge here in that L3 students would be more focussed on the target language and more inclined to play with it. L3 students are more inclined to disagree that the teacher knows best with a result of 70% compared to 80%. Additionally they are slightly less in favour of tests both at home and in school. In all these questions, I noticed that the L3 students were generally willing to be more definite in expressing their opinions. The four choices they were given to answer each question ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and the L3 students were more willing to agree or disagree strongly than the L2.
I asked all the students if they thought English is really hard and if they enjoy English. The reason I have analysed the answers to these questions together, is because I believe that we often enjoy that which we believe we can do, and this makes us more motivated. Therefore, if the students felt that learning English was easy, then it would follow that they enjoyed the subject. If L3 learners are more motivated and have a better foundation for learning English then their answers to these questions ought to reveal this. The questionnaires did not in fact, give me the answer that I expected. There was very little difference between the answers given by L2 or L3 students. However, only 3% of L3 students said that they did not enjoy English compared to 14% of L2 learners. Similarly, only 9% of L3 learners compared to 16% of L2 learners thought that English was really hard. Whilst not a strong indication, these results suggest a tendency towards (at least these) L3 learners being more motivated and more inclined to trust in their ability to do well in English.

Figure 3: L3 vs L2 learners Appreciation and Enjoyment of English (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;English is really hard&quot;</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>L3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;I enjoy English&quot;</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>L3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were asked to assess their classroom learning, in terms of the usefulness of grammar, conversation, reading, music, movies, and novels. The rise of film as a medium of teaching is evident in the answers to this question and also to the question of where students felt they learned most English. Almost without exception, students felt they learned most from film, internet and travel although the order varied depending on the student. It is fair to say that the L3 students were more likely to give travel as a source of learning. It can be argued that with roots in other countries, they are more likely to travel to other parts of the world. Film is a very important part of our culture of today and it is therefore not surprising that it
features high on their lists. Many of them felt that they should only watch film and that this should replace reading novels. The way students feel they learn most English is, arguably, a subjective question, since they will naturally choose that which they enjoy most and is often the least challenging. Undoubtedly, their understanding of film as a text is supported by the accompanying picture, even though they are rarely able to pinpoint exactly what they have learned. This requires skilled pedagogical input in order that it can be a learning situation. Whilst I hoped that they would be able to articulate some concrete examples to these questions, the lack of detail given in their answers is to be expected in a questionnaire of this sort.

Most students in both groups felt that they had all the help they needed and wanted. It could be that they interpret more help in terms of more teaching hours. The timetables that these students follow are extremely full, with physical training each day in addition to matches and coaching. Consequently, the idea of more help is associated with more time spent in a classroom, which is not attractive. However, those who realise where they need help recognise that extra one on one can help them to achieve their goals. Of those that asked for more help, the most common wish was for more conversation time, in particular more opportunity to speak with native speakers. The reason they perceive this as so valuable is likely to be because they cannot resort to Swedish with a native speaker in the way they can with their peers and their English teachers, who they know can speak and understand Swedish.

5.2. Student voices
From these 118 questionnaires it was possible to identify 35 students in the category of those who are learning English as a third language. Many of these students have also chosen to study an additional language; French, German or Spanish. The interviews took place in three groups. For each interview I will introduce the participants followed by the key points of the discussion which was conducted under the headings of personality, motivation, ability and learning strategies.
5.2.1. English B students

This was a group of five male students, all of whom knew each other well, since this is their second year of studying together at Upper Secondary school. In fact, two of the students’ are related; their fathers are cousins.

Thomas was born in Sweden, but both his parents are from Croatia, having moved to Sweden as young adults. He speaks mostly Croatian with his mother, but with his father, he tends to use more of a mixture of Swedish and Croatian. This he considers is due to the fact that his father speaks “pure” Swedish whereas his mother is fluent but not as fluent and it therefore feels more natural to communicate with his mother in Croatian. He has a sister who is 21, with whom he speaks both languages. He said however, that they always fight in Croatian! He studied German last year but he decided that it was “not his thing”. Thomas is extremely extrovert and not afraid to take risks exemplified by the way in which he suddenly started speaking in English saying “English lesson out of the window – the window was open”. A charmer, he is always happy to make a fool of himself. He gave an example of a lesson in which he was to mime the word “stare”, however he thought it was the word ”stair”. The result was obviously very funny, but he was not at all worried rather he laughed along and learnt a new word in the process. He said of this; “I am not the sort of person to get offended”.

Richard has a mother who is English and a father who is Swedish. Although he was born in Sweden, he has two older siblings who were born in England. Since, he speaks only Swedish at home he considers himself to have the same opportunities as any other Swedish student. However, since his siblings went to an English school when they were young, English has always been present in his home. His mother has always said that they can speak English if he would like them to but this has never happened. In this case L3 is German. On the surface, it seemed problematic to include an individual with a passive language which was English, when the discussion concerned primarily learning English as L3. However, I decided that, since he had learned an additional language, his input could still be valuable. Furthermore, since he has grown up with English in the home, his passive acquisition of English could provide valuable insight. Richard is a quiet student who does what is required. He is not afraid to contribute although, he often chooses not to, since he feels that he “ought to be much better than he is because his mother is English”.
Peter was born in Sweden to Hungarian parents. As a family, they try to always speak Hungarian, so as not to “forget” the language. He is an only child and had “Home Language” tuition when he was younger. He has also studied Spanish. Peter is shy when speaking English although in other situations he is quite open and talkative. About this he said; “I don’t want to make mistakes so I laugh instead of trying” even though nobody actually laughs at another’s mistakes.

Daniel was born in Sweden. His mother is from Serbia and his father from Croatia. They have always mixed Serbo-Croatian with Swedish but he realises that in actual fact that there is quite a lot of Swedish spoken at home. However, with his uncle and grandfather, Serbo-Croatian is the only language used. He has an older brother and he thinks that Swedish has become more predominant as they have become older. They have not had “Home Language” tuition. Last year he also studied Spanish.

Steven was born in Sweden, as were his parents. His grandfather, on his father’s side is originally from Hungary, but his grandmother is Swedish and they are here in Sweden too. The family speaks little or no Hungarian however Steven has grown up with the additional language as part of his culture. Even though, he speaks no Hungarian at all, he identifies with his grandfather. He has an older brother who is 21 and studied German. I chose to include Steven because he wrote on his questionnaire that one of his languages was Hungarian. Having invited him to take part, I felt it was unkind to exclude him and I thought it would be interesting to see if the way he felt about this subject would differ from his L3 peers. He is a shy character who really wants to speak English but does not push himself to take the opportunities when they are offered.

**Personality**

As you would expect, these are five very different individuals with very different personalities. I asked each of them how they would describe themselves which is clearly not easy. The extrovert in the group is Thomas who is unafraid to express himself, even making fun of himself, in order to help his peers out or just to make people laugh. Like in the example he gave of how he is prepared to take risks in English when he mistook the word “stare” for “stair” and consequently mimed the wrong word, he was not in the least worried by this experience. Since he is prepared to take risks he also found it easy to describe himself. Richard is thoughtful and whilst prepared to contribute when asked a question, will not
necessarily get involved in a discussion unless he feels he has something to contribute. Peter likes to stay within his comfort zone. Even though, he is able to communicate quite well he holds back unless pushed to contribute. Daniel likes to be sure of himself before he commits to the discussion, again he is more capable than he shows because he wants whatever he says to be correct. Steven is the quietest of the five, however, when he chooses to speak, he makes a valuable contribution. Personality traits are clearly a factor in this group of very different characters. Group dynamics also contribute to the effect personality has on language learning. They all commented on how important it is to feel comfortable with the class as a whole in order to have the confidence to risk making mistakes. They felt this especially when they joined their class at the beginning of their Upper Secondary course. They said “it is important to get to know them because in the beginning you are a bit watchful”. They all recognised that it is important to take risks in the language learning process as this is the way skills are developed.

Motivation
On the surface, it appears to be highest in the individuals with a strong association to their home language, that is to say Thomas, Peter and Daniel. Ambition is closely linked to how motivated you are to succeed, whether “all you want English for is to travel” or in the case of Daniel, who plans to “apply for college later”, a fact that is a great motivator for him. Living in Sweden where television programmes are broadcasted in English was a great help. Thomas had just returned from Italy where everything is dubbed and this made him very aware of what an asset Swedish television is for their English.

Ability
When asked if they felt that they had a natural ability, all felt that this had nothing to do with their multilingual status. It seemed that they were highly unused to discussing their L3 status or their home language either with each other or a teacher. They considered it to be something quite separate from their English language learning. However, when they began to discuss specifics, it was evident that they found certain aspects easier. Daniel remembered that he found Spanish pronunciation much easier than his peers because the sounds in his native Croatian are very close to Spanish. Richard also felt that English pronunciation was no problem and thought perhaps it had something to do with having grown up with the English language all around him. His elder siblings, having attended school in England before the family moved to Sweden, always conversed with each other in English. Thomas commented
that “languages fit together with each other” and gave the example of excuse me, ursäkta, escusi; all words which sound similar and mean the same thing. Moreover they all felt that it was definitely not a disadvantage to be fluent in two languages.

**Learning strategies**

They all found it hard to identify the way in which they learn best, or even the way in which they approach language learning. Learning styles was an opening as this is discussed in school. Whether they learn by doing, writing, hearing, seeing is easier to identify with. Thomas is very kinetic and needs to move around to express himself. Daniel is aware that he needs to write things down in order to remember them whereas for Peter, it is best that he hears things repeatedly, albeit perhaps in different ways.

Learning vocabulary appears to have been stressed throughout their schooling and the way in which they have all been taught is through the medium of Swedish. This is most evident in vocabulary development where they do not feel they “know” a word until they can translate it back and forth between the Swedish and English. Use appears to be much less important for all of them. Interestingly, their home languages play no part in this process.

**5.2.2. English C students: group 1**

This group consisted of two male students, who attend the same English class and know each other well since this is their third year of studying together at Upper Secondary school. In both cases Albanian is their home language where both had left Kosovo in 1992. Consequently they both have a slight accent when speaking Swedish.

Charles came to Sweden in 1992 from Kosovo, Albania. He has two younger siblings. The language spoken at home is almost exclusively Albanian. He is 18 now and extremely motivated, a fact that comes up many times. He plays football and is hoping to be able to play abroad, perhaps even in England.

Arden also left Kosovo, Albania in 1992 when he was 11 years old, however the family moved first to Germany where they stayed for four years. During this time he also learned German. The language spoken at home is Albanian and although occasionally he speaks Swedish with his brothers, he always speaks Albanian with his parents.
**Personality**

Charles describes himself as very goal oriented, extremely motivated and hard working. He performs well in tests and has good pronunciation. He finds it easy to understand even difficult words. However, since he strives for fluency in his speaking, he becomes discouraged when he is unable to express himself the way he believes he can. As a result he chooses to use simpler language to ensure fluency. Arden considers himself to be quite shy and even though he knows he is capable of speaking well, he prefers not to. He feels he has changed this year since he is now in English C because the other students in his class are much more capable and he feels at a disadvantage. During English A and B, he feels he was more open and not afraid to make mistakes but now that he feels at a disadvantage, he prefers to stay quiet. Although this also depends on the subject under discussion because if he feels confident with the subject he feels more able to speak freely.

**Motivation**

Both these students are extremely motivated and enthusiastic. They consider English to be a very important subject and use English a lot on the Internet. Charles says that “English is an international language” and the desire to be better is very strong for both Arden and himself. Charles is very ambitious and says that “to be a professional football player in England would not be so dumb!” but that it is important to be able to speak English correctly because they are expected to give interviews in the media.

**Ability**

They feel that their English is both supported and hampered by having Albanian as a mother tongue. They both considered that their pronunciation in English was considerably better as a result of similar sounds which exist in Albanian. They told me that Albanian has 36 letters compared to 26 in English and 29 in Swedish. This means that sounds like “ch” and “th” which exist in both English and Albanian but not in Swedish were very easy for them to emulate. Not only could they pronounce the sounds clearly and accurately, they could also recognise when they made mistakes.

**Learning strategies**

Reading texts and understanding them was very important way of learning for Charles. Both felt that watching English films without subtitles was a good way of developing their vocabulary although it is hard to pinpoint exactly what they have learned. Could it be that
they believe they have learned something because they have understood the film? They recognised that input from a teacher is also important.

Phonetics was taught in Arden’s Secondary school and he has found this very helpful to ensure correct pronunciation. He finds that he can always look up a word in the dictionary and with the help of the phonetic alphabet accurately pronounce the word in question. This is not something Charles does, since he has never learned this technique.

Vocabulary is again learned by rote based on translation into Swedish and back to English. Although, you might expect less dependence on Swedish since both these students learnt Swedish after the age of 11, this is in fact not the case. They both agreed that they never translate from English into Albanian. Charles feels that synonyms are very important and he tries to group together words in this way to develop his language. This is particularly evident when he is making a presentation as he feels it is very important to achieve fluency in his speech. If he is unsure of a word therefore, he uses a simpler synonym that he finds easier to pronounce correctly.

They both felt that having more contact with native speakers would be a positive experience since it is much easier to force yourself to speak English when you know that the other person cannot speak Swedish. They admitted that they should make more effort to use English in the classroom and that it was easier to just speak Swedish when you were unsure.

5.2.3. English C students: group 2

This pair consisted of one male and one female student, who attend the same English class but despite being in the same class did not know each other very well. This is because students choose English C as an elective subject which means that groups are sometimes formed outside of the core class group with whom all other compulsory subjects are studied. In addition some students opt for a four year course when they choose the Sports program, and this was the case for the male student. Albanian and Bosnian were the home languages for these students and in both cases they were born and bred here in Sweden.

Martin’s parents came to Sweden from Bosnia when they were 17 and 18 respectively. He has a sister who is 20 and with whom he speaks almost always Swedish, as he does with his mother. He speaks almost exclusively Bosnian with his father unless there are others present
who do not speak Bosnian. The extended family also lives in Sweden with whom they meet often and with whom Bosnian is spoken. One of his relatives is married to a Swede who has learnt to speak fluent Bosnian, something he was noticeably impressed by. The Bosnian language is a very important part of his culture and his identity. His father did not allow him to go to Preschool until he could speak fluent Bosnian because he did not want Swedish to affect his mother tongue. He thinks that it is most important to be able to speak the language and he considers himself to be completely bilingual although his Swedish is a little stronger. He can read Bosnian texts even though it takes more time, but he finds writing very hard.

Anna was born in Sweden. Her parents moved to Sweden from Albania when they were about 25, having grown up and been together since they were children. Her father came to study and her mother followed after a few months, due to the war. Although, Albanian is spoken at home, she was quick to point out that there was a lot of code switching with Swedish and even English. She has three younger siblings with whom she speaks 90% Swedish but even there, it can be quite a mixture. Everyday subjects are discussed in Albanian however; anything she considers to be important is always discussed in Swedish. This she says is to emphasise that it is important. She has a large extended family here in Sweden and with them the language used is always Albanian, particularly with her grandparents. She had “Home Language” tuition for nine years and considers that she is completely fluent although, she admits that it is probably not quite as good as her Swedish. She says with pride “I am Albanian” and adds that you must never forget your heritage. The language and culture is very important.

**Personality**
Since both of these students have very strong personalities, this could very obviously be seen as a key factor. They are both, by their own admission “happy, sociable and very extrovert”. These characteristics are immediately evident during the interview. They are not afraid to speak English, to offer their opinion or to engage with people.

**Motivation**
Travel formed a key part of the discussion. Both these students have close links with relatives who live outside Sweden and this exposure has had a direct impact on their desire to learn English and improve their skills in order to effectively communicate with their relatives. Martin has a godfather who lives in New York and an aunt and other relatives in San Diego,
USA. He has visited his relatives on several occasions and consequently, experienced the need to make himself understood in English without being able to use any other language. This has been a very valuable experience which has given him the ambition to study in the USA later. In addition, exposure to American culture and the opportunity of communicating with native speakers has given him a very strong American accent, something many of his teachers have complimented him on. Anna commented that there are very few European countries where her family does not have relatives. This has opened her eyes to the possibility of travel and the need for a common “lingua franca”, English. Her family has impressed on her the importance of English and studying and this is a great motivator for her.

*Ability*

Pronunciation comes much more easily to both of them; partly because they have different sounds in their home languages but also because they feel that they are more exposed to English in their daily lives. Anna says that in her family, there is a lot of code switching between not only her native Albanian and Swedish but also with English. Martin feels that he has much more exposure to English due to his relatives in the USA with whom he often communicates using email or Skype. Consequently, he feels that he is much more likely to search for information on the internet in English.

Another related aspect in both these students’ lives is family encouragement. It is expected that they will speak English fluently and this they feel has had a huge impact on both their motivation and their ability. Martin said that “Swedish” families are more likely to accept failure in their children’s lives by saying “you can do it later” whereas his family would not accept this. Anna agreed with this most vehemently.

*Learning strategies*

They feel that they take every opportunity to develop their English which is offered to them. Both are very active in class, particularly when it concerns speaking activities. Their confidence helps them a lot in this area. As with the previous interviewees, they learn vocabulary through translating into Swedish.

Searching for information on the internet in English is a very useful tool for developing new vocabulary. Martin gave the example of his newly purchased chameleon, which he says is very difficult to take care of and where there is very little information available in Swedish.
He feels that he has learnt a lot of specialized vocabulary relating to this subject and this is fairly normal with any new hobby. Anna goes through phases where she only reads English books “only in English”, she says for emphasis. She finds that this really develops her knowledge of English and helps give her a feel for expressions and the correct way to write.
6. Discussion

Having collated and analysed my results, it is time to refer back and answer my research questions. This I will do by looking at the key issues raised by the students themselves. Much of the research which I have used to support this study has proven that all learners acquire English most effectively through experience and the need to communicate in real life situations. The L3 students that I interviewed seem to be saying the same thing. I am quite convinced that this applies equally to L2 learners but since I have not interviewed this group, I am unable to refer specifically to these learners.

6.1. General Attitudes to learning English

The questionnaire showed very little difference in the responses from L2 and L3 students. In broad terms, all the students seem to appreciate the same things and have the same needs. They all have the same trust in the teacher, feeling that they can rest in the knowledge that “the teacher knows best”. The L3 students do have a tendency to be more opinionated but it could also be argued that the motivated L2 students are equally assertive in their opinions. It could also be argued that the broader range of responses from L3 students implies that they are more aware of their language learning and therefore, more willing to state what they feel. It is not possible to say that this is definitely the case from such a small sample, although this tendency is supported by the findings of Jessner (1999), Griessler (2001) and Rivers (1996).

The differences between the results in my study and that of Rivers (1996) can, as I suspected, be largely accounted for by the age and maturity of the participants in the two studies. Comparing school learners with adults learning the target language in the country can also account for the difference in motivation. Therefore, the similarity in the answers given by L2 and L3 learners, suggests that age, maturity and location may have as much, or even more impact on self directed learning than being multilingual. Furthermore, adult learners are generally more articulate about the way they learn than Upper Secondary Students. The learning strategies reported by the students all related to styles of learning; visual, audio, kinetic and so on, rather than specific methods which can be used in the language classroom. As Oxford (2002) says, this could be because they do not think of these as strategies and not because they do not use them.
6.2. The L3 learner: motivation, ability, personality

Previous studies have investigated whether L3 learners have a natural aptitude for language acquisition based on prior knowledge of other languages. Whilst this study cannot claim this, it is fair to say, in the words of a student “it is certainly no disadvantage”. Prior experience and knowledge enrich our lives and there is no reason to believe that these L3 students are not positively affected in their learning of English by being multilingual, whether actively or passively. I suggest that the results of my study support Edith Magiste’s conclusions that even a passive L3 learner has a better springboard for learning a language than an L2 learner. This is exemplified by Stephen’s experience of growing up with exposure to another language in his family. Despite having little or no active knowledge of the language itself, he feels that he has an in-built intuition for learning language.

Learning a language involves both productive skills: speaking and writing, and receptive skills: listening and reading. It is in the productive skills that personality plays a key role in terms of helping or hindering language development. An extrovert student takes opportunities to speak and write and, therefore, practice language production in a way that an introvert student is unable to do. An introvert student may well focus their energy on the receptive skills and thus be more skilled at reading and listening. Very often the introvert student will understand what is said whereas the extrovert student is more focused on what they want to say. It is however possible that an introvert student has the insight to be able to push themself beyond the boundaries of their own personality. The question is whether L3 learners are more likely to push themselves to be productive and whether their motivation can therefore overcome the constraints of their personality traits. Given the right environment and encouragement, most students can be encouraged to speak and this is applicable to all students, whether L2 or L3. However, the comments that came from the participants suggest that there is an added boost, amongst L3 students, which comes from improved pronunciation and extended vocabulary. These factors thus enable the L3 student to more easily overcome their natural shyness and consequently develop their English.

All these students accept that English is important. However, knowing and accepting the importance of English is not enough to keep any student motivated. Travel was a recurring theme for all the participants in the focus groups. It also featured often as a method of learning English amongst many of the students who completed the survey. Certainly, many
families travel abroad on holiday and this is when students experience for themselves the value of English as a “lingua franca” in communicating with other nationalities. This is when the practical importance of English in terms of achieving communicative competence really becomes real and acts as a motivator.

Although the question of travel applies to all students, it would appear that L3 students may still have an advantage because many of these families not only have relations in their homeland but often in other parts of the world. In the case of families who have fled due to political conflict, it is not always possible for all to settle in the same place and branches of the same family as well as friends and acquaintances often end up in different parts of the world. This was certainly true for the four English C students in my study. This gives them more opportunities to travel and consequently to use English, whether in the UK or USA or another country like Germany. This in turn further motivates them in their studies. In the case of Anna, English is even used to fill the gap in the linguistic competence of their home language. Whilst travel is a motivating factor for all students, research points to the importance of appropriate input at the right level and the need for skilled pedagogical guidance to explain rules and to ensure accurate language production. The risk, therefore, is that these students focus more on the need to communicate when they are using the language, without paying attention to the need for grammatical correctness required on paper. Many students talked about the importance of exposure to native speakers, something which Long (1990) also highlighted as important in terms of input. It is easier to speak English to someone who is unable to speak your native language, simply because it is the only means of communication. Many of the participants were actively planning to study abroad and were aware of the need to improve their English. The key appears to be contact with native speakers who will then force them to use their language in a more natural way. It is not being an L2 or L3 student which makes the difference, but the simple fact that the L3 students in my sample happen to have family scattered around the world.

From the student voices in this study we can deduce that personality and motivation are inextricably interwoven. Whilst the L3 students’ motivation could be said to be positively affected by their L3 status, it is their personality which is the decisive factor in how much or how little they engage with the language. An introvert student is not able to capitalise on the benefits of their L3 status to the same high degree as the extrovert ones. I believe that this is clearly shown in the experiences of the four English C students, of whom two could be
described as introvert and two as extrovert. The extrovert students were not afraid to make mistakes and it is only through making mistakes and daring to express oneself that they can make progress and achieve what Ulrika Tornberg (2009) describes as “communicative competence”. Here, it is not only their L3 status and accompanying ambition which act as the springboard for success, but also their personalities. However, achieving communicative competence is also made more possible for the less extrovert students by their motivation and tendency towards studying the receptive techniques. This becomes their learning strategy to achieve their goals and perhaps overcome the constraints of their personalities.

Another aspect which was discussed by many of the participants in my study was the family. These particular L3 students felt that their parents expected more of them than their “Swedish” counterparts and instilled in them the importance of English as an international language. This could be as a result of having immigrated to Sweden not knowing a word of Swedish, which would give them a personal awareness of English as an international language. Language and culture are inextricably interwoven and form a part of one’s personality which becomes, therefore, an important part of the individual identity. The students who talked about culture and heritage also identified most strongly with their home language. For them, it was important that they not only knew their home language, but also their home culture and all that it entailed. They felt that their families functioned in a completely different way to their Swedish counterparts and that this was also instrumental in forming their personalities. They were expected to be sociable and outgoing within their families and this acted as an enabler for them.
6.3. Teaching and learning in the multilingual classroom

There are two key issues which were raised by the L3 students in the focus groups which I would like to draw attention to as they affect the multilingual classroom. The first is the fact that they felt pronunciation and learning certain vocabulary was easier. The second was that language learning in the classroom was dependent on the knowledge of Swedish and the relationship between English and Swedish. I think it is especially interesting that all the students who took part in the focus groups expressed surprise at my interest in their home language. They were not used to being asked about their experience of learning English as L3. Is this because the emphasis in the English classroom is on the relationship between English and Swedish and not English and their home language? What it does mean is that our students are not used to thinking about English in relation to their home language. It is simply not discussed by their peers or their teachers. In fact, they all admitted that they do not even discuss it with other students in the same situation. Two of the participants were in fact cousins and even they had not discussed how they felt about their situation or learning English.

Pronunciation and vocabulary learning were frequently mentioned by the L3 students, as being easier. They felt that they were able to read and understand complex texts and use the internet to look for information in English. These advantages could also be transferred to other foreign languages learned in school: Spanish, French and German. This may not be very different to other L2 students but these L3 students have spent many years formally learning their home languages in addition their “school” languages. This surely gives them a higher metalinguistic awareness, which Jessner (1999) says should be capitalised upon in the English classroom. That is, the experience of the L3 students could be used to raise the awareness of the L2 students.

All the L3 students closely associated learning vocabulary with translation between Swedish and English. Furthermore, they only felt that they truly knew their vocabulary if they could translate the words between the two languages. Throughout their schooling, there has clearly been an emphasis on translation in the classroom. Yet, I feel, as a teacher and language student, that in order to write effectively, it is important not to translate but rather to express yourself with the language you have acquired. The output is then based on the input, rather than translation from Swedish. When students try to translate, a special skill in itself, there is a
risk that their writing becomes over complicated and difficult to understand. It is therefore, important to work with structures and language that you know how to use in order to reduce errors and be more fluent. There was no mention of using the words in terms of forming sentences, making associations between other words or forms of the same word. Only one student discussed the importance of synonyms in order to develop his vocabulary and to be able to use it in an oral situation. It was this same student who talked about choosing vocabulary he was comfortable with in order to achieve fluency in his speech. Another reason language acquisition is so closely linked with Swedish may be that many teachers choose to teach English grammar in Swedish and switch the classroom discussion to Swedish for difficult issues or administrative details. This is a separate issue, although it does relate to the dominance of Swedish in the English classroom and is not seen as a problem since Swedish is in fact the common language or “lingua franca” in the classroom. Not even those who did not start learning Swedish until the age of 11 translated English back to their native tongue.

I did not ask the students how they would feel if their home languages were incorporated into their learning situation but it is an interesting idea. It would be interesting to see how one might work on vocabulary with reference to every student’s own L1. There are many English synonyms which have equivalents in other languages but which do not exist in Swedish. Swedish false friends will not be the same as their Albanian equivalents. Furthermore, there is the whole issue of how we categorize the world through language. By this I mean the way in which words like ‘mormor/farmor’ for which English has one word ‘Grandma’ and words like ‘lagom’ that cannot be translated. Using these examples in the classroom would give our L3 students’ language knowledge a chance to shine whilst at the same time enriching the experience of our L2 students. This would not exclude the L2 students either, as in the case of Stephen who would be able to share his grandfather’s experience. This means that the distinction between L2 and L3 becomes less clear cut and everyone can contribute their own knowledge and observations about how words work in and between languages.

This paves the way for a discussion about language typology which is inclusive by nature. Languages are built up of different sounds and it is the common sounds that are easier to replicate for those with the same sounds in their language. By focussing on language typology, we can move away from a contrastive Swedish / English approach and include all languages. Why would we want to do this? If I use the examples of ‘ch’ and ‘th’ which are sounds that are known to be hard for Swedish students to replicate: several of the interviewees
report that they have better pronunciation thanks to their L1. They heard the sounds that they recognised from their home language and were able to both replicate them accurately and notice when they got it right or others mispronounced. These L3 speakers are actually commenting on details of pronunciation that are focused on in the classroom and this means that they think they have good pronunciation. What they don’t realise is that there are other sounds that they do have problems with which are not brought up in the classroom. The question then is which sounds do they have trouble with? Since I have not asked my participants this question I cannot give an example from their experience. However, I know that Finnish speakers find the English ‘sh’ very difficult since they produce it as ‘s’ instead. This would represent a sound which is not raised in class because it is not seen to be difficult in the all-Swedish context. At the same time that the L3 students are not given the opportunity to help the Swedish students, these same students are not given the opportunity to help their L3 counterparts. By moving away from the Swedish/English contrastive focus in the classroom to a more general language typology discussion, it opens up for full participation. The advantages would mean that all students would benefit because both L2 and L3 students’ knowledge and experience would be utilized. This in turn would give a valuable contribution to the phonetics discussion which would become more alive and interesting. At the same time, it gives weaker or less interested and motivated students a more lively experience which in turn ought to make for a better learning experience.

Furthermore, it also opens up the debate on attitudes to accents and dialects. It also moves the subject of pronunciation away from being only about who can and cannot get it right, to why these difficulties arise and why and how individual language backgrounds affect the output in L3. This would then be a positive force in the classroom and a positive reinforcement for the individual student who is able to achieve the right sound, whatever their L1.
7. Conclusions

The attitudes of L2 and L3 learners are basically the same even though the results of my study do show more variation and a tendency towards being more self assured in terms of their opinions about language learning amongst L3 learners. This in turn could suggest a stronger awareness of their individual language development. However, since my study is so small, it lacks depth and quantity in order to say this with any conviction.

I found that students were not able to assess their own ability definitively and there is no evidence to suggest that L3 students are more able than L2 students. The same can be said for personality. There is no doubt that outgoing students are able to take advantage of opportunities for language practice in the classroom than shy students but this cannot be claimed as a factor relating to the L2 or L3 learner. However, having interviewed both extrovert and introvert students in my study, I believe it is fair to say that since introvert students take the time to formulate what they will say, they pay more attention to accuracy.

There is no doubt that the L3 learners are motivated by travel and the possibilities that come with it, for example studying and working abroad. Whilst this can equally apply to an L2 learner, all the participants in my study had easy access to relatives living in both English speaking countries and in other parts of the world. Although, I cannot scientifically prove this from my study, the fact that my participants point towards pronunciation examples and connections in vocabulary between different languages suggests an awareness of language based on their previous experience.

Learning strategies proved to be an interesting issue amongst these students due to the fact that they were so tightly bound to the context of learning English through the medium of Swedish. It shows that they do not reflect on the way in which they learn, rather they accept what their teacher tells them is the way to learn. I think it is important to present students with a range of language learning strategies in order that they can find a method that suits them. In order to improve teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural classroom, I believe my study shows the benefits of moving away from a contrastive Swedish vs English environment. By embracing the ideas of language typology and adopting an inclusive attitude to all prior language knowledge, my hope is to nurture an environment which incorporates the
language expertise of both L2 and L3 learners. It is as important not to exclude Swedish as it is to embrace all other languages represented in the classroom.

In conclusion, I would argue that all L3 students have a special contribution that they can make to the classroom situation. Judging by the students’ own reflections in this study, there are situations where their linguistic experience can be put to good use. Even though my study is a small sample and by no means representative of all learners, it does give me, as a teacher, some specific objectives to work with. I believe that L3 learners have linguistic knowledge which can be used to the good of the class as a whole and I hope that I, as a teacher, will tap into this resource in order to develop the way in which students think about language. Even though Swedish is the common denominator in the English classroom, it will be beneficial to be more open and include Albanian, Croatian, Hungarian, Serbian and so on. In this way, I hope to make English a “lingua franca” in my classroom. In so doing, perhaps I can motivate all my students to use English in order to communicate with each other and thus take another step towards communicative competence. My goal as a teacher is to motivate my students in order to maximise their potential. What better way to achieve this than by openly embracing their heritage and the benefits of previous language acquisition, actively encouraging them to be a part of the language classroom?
**Bibliography**

*Primary Sources*

Questionnaires (November, 2009)

**Interviews**

- English B Students (2009-12-02).
- English C Students (1) (2009-12-02).
- English C Students (2) (2009-12-02).

Recordings/transcriptions available on request

*Secondary sources*


Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Selena Harvey. As part of my Teacher Training at Malmö Högskola, I am examining students’ language learning strategies both inside and outside the classroom. Your answers are of great value to me and I would very much appreciate if you took the time to answer this questionnaire as thoroughly as possible. In addition to this I would be grateful if you would be willing to participate in an interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. Should I need your help in this way I will contact you through your teacher. All your answers will be completely anonymous in the study. Thankyou!

Gender:  M F

Age:  ______________

1. Please list which languages you know or have learned and how proficient you are in reading, writing, listening and speaking where 1 is proficient and 4 is beginner (include reading, writing, speaking and listening in your assessment)
   a. ____________________ Proficiency: 1 2 3 4
   b. ____________________ Proficiency: 1 2 3 4
   c. ____________________ Proficiency: 1 2 3 4
   d. ____________________ Proficiency: 1 2 3 4
   Comment: ______________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

2. The teacher knows best what I need to learn
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

3. I like to have regular tests in class to monitor my progress
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

4. I test my knowledge of grammar regularly at home
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

5. I like to translate vocabulary into my strongest language to ensure that I understand words correctly
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

6. I like to have the opportunity to influence the content of the lesson
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

7. I know what I need help with
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

8. I like the structure of grammar rules and practice
   a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

9. I like to play with language by using it e.g. translating odd words or sentences
10. I like grammar but I want to choose other ways to work with grammar like reading novels or watching films so that I can influence what I want to work on
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree
   Please give your reason __________________________________________________

11. I use English internet websites regularly
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

12. Please list the kinds of websites you use in order of frequency and preference, for example; chat forums, you tube, news, gossip etc
   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________

13. I think learning English is really hard
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

14. I really enjoy learning English
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

15. I learn most English from: (mark all that apply)
   a. Internet
   b. Films
   c. Books
   d. Travel
   e. Classroom

16. If classroom, which activities do you find most helpful (mark all that apply)
   a. grammar because ___________________________________________
   b. conversation because _________________________________________
   c. reading because _____________________________________________
   d. music because ______________________________________________
   e. movies because ______________________________________________
   f. novels because ______________________________________________

17. If I had more help, it would make learning English easier
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

18. What kind of extra help would you like?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

Thank you once again!
### Appendix 2:

#### Figure 1: Interview Chart – With Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONALITY</th>
<th>MOTIVATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What kind of person are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How motivated are you to learn English?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What effect does that have on learning English?</td>
<td>How does this affect the way you approach learning English?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABILITY / PROFICIENCY</th>
<th>LEARNING STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you rate your own ability?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What strategies do you actively use – if any?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this affect the way you approach learning English?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 2: Interview Chart - Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONALITY</th>
<th>MOTIVATION</th>
<th>LEARNING STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What kind of person are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How motivated are you to learn English?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What strategies do you actively use – if any?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What effect does that have on learning English?</td>
<td>How necessary is the language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>introvert – extrovert</td>
<td>Is it valuable to you? In what way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social – like own company</td>
<td>How do you feel about the language and associated country and people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carefree – worrier</td>
<td>How important is the teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risktaker – cautious</td>
<td>How important are the activities in terms of variety and enjoyment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talkative – quiet</td>
<td>How much influence do you want to have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe yourselves?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABILITY / PROFICIENCY</th>
<th>LEARNING STRATEGIES</th>
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<td><strong>How would you rate your own ability?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What strategies do you actively use – if any?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this affect the way you approach learning English?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rate of success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouragement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making yourself understood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how easy / hard you find it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligence (IQ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What factors affect your language learning?
How do these factors affect/influence each other?
What effect does learning English as a third language have? Give examples if you can.
What in your opinion has the most effect on your learning? Would a teacher who understood these factors help your learning??
Appendix 3:

Categories of Learning Strategies and suggested practical uses are as follows:

1. affective – anxiety reduction, praise, encouragement
2. social – asking questions, interaction with native speakers, cultural awareness
3. metacognitive – planning, self evaluating, monitoring errors
4. memory related – grouping, imagery, rhyming, structured review
5. general cognitive – reasoning, analyzing, summaries
6. compensatory – guessing, synonyms, gestures

(Oxford, 128)