Abstract

With the introduction of the teaching plan Lpo94 and the others, many of the rules that restricted the teacher to just a few didactical methods disappeared. The former strict ruling system changed to a more free goal-oriented system. That and the fact that the governmental ruled shifted from a top down to a bottom up perspective gave the schools the freedom to choose whatever material and methods they would want, as long as the goals could be attained. This freedom allowed the employment of many new didactical methods. All these new methods had “activity” as their main asset. One such method that followed in this wake is “Shakespeare as a second language”, developed and created by Donya Feuer and Ted Hughes. The main objective with this essay is to introduce this method to the readers as well as introduce it in relation with literature in the field of alternative methods and the teaching and course plans of today. My intention is to let it go through some critical evaluation and see if it fits to be employed as a didactical method in the school of today.
“My state grew stranger, being transported and rapt in secret studies”

“In the company of Shakespeare”
Introduction

In September 2005 during AUO II, I signed up to an optional course in order to avoid the regular course, which involved a lot of writing and many obligatory sessions. This optional course however had no essay writing included, it only required 100% attention. The fact that it did not require an essay drew my attention. The course was labeled “Shakespeare as a second language” and was presented as a new way of teaching English to pupils ranging from 7 to 18 years. The course went on for four weeks until it ended with a show, produced and performed by us. During this time I learned to love and to understand this method and now I want to give back what I learned to other pupils and spread this wonderful way of working with the English language. Donya Feuer is the creator of this method. Back in 1990 it was a brand new cultural project started by Feuer in close cooperation with Ted Hughes and was named “In the Company of Shakespeare”. The main ideas with this project are to introduce William Shakespeare to the new generation and then to use Shakespeare as a means to learn English. The method itself is highly unorthodox, yet it stands on several approved theories. One is that children learn by moving and working with their body instead of with a pencil. The reason why this method is so unorthodox is that it is a part of the fairly new term, aesthetic learning processes, meaning that the teacher works with theatre and other aesthetic methods in order to teach its subject instead of conventional methods. Today this method has reached over 20 000 Swedish pupils alongside with several thousands all over Europe.

“Shakespeare as a second language” is a method most likely to become one of the methods that I want to work with during my professional career. The method is fairly new and has arisen from a project. Today “Shakespeare as a second language” should probably do well from some more critical evaluation that investigates and looks upon the method’s potential to support and meet the goals that are set in national course plans and teaching plans. The intention with the essay is to begin to fill this gap in knowledge and try to find out how far it is possible to work with “Shakespeare as a second language” and still be able to fulfill the goals for the 9th grade in English. It is also interesting to compare this new aesthetic method with a conventional method and see if it is possible to solely rely on the Shakespeare method as the only means of instruction or if it is possible to successfully combine old and new into a new and modern form of teaching.
Purpose

It is often hard to get children interested in the kind of studies that are incorporated within the boundaries of the elementary school. Many times pupils that are weaker than the average pupil have a hard time keeping up with the average pupil, falling further behind for each class. Given enough time and unattended, these pupils will eventually lose their motivation to study. Anders Åstrand points out in his book Språkutveckling och kreativitet the importance of motivation:

An important characteristic trait to the creative man is curiosity or interest. The Swedish pupils interest for schoolwork is not particularly defined, it seems even so that it dwindles with increasing age. Some explanations to their unrest might be the grading system, the concurrence, an unhealthy educational environment and uninspired education (Åstrand p.8, Author’s translation).

It is important that the teachers of tomorrow are able to find ways to keep pupils motivation alive. One way is to improve the school environment and providing the pupils with methods that constantly challenge their curiosity. Almost all children have something inside them, some kind of dormant energy that erupts as soon as their curiosity is awakened. Sadly, school is one of those things that have the capability to put out the fire of even the most creative child. Every child has the power to learn and it is amazing to see how fast a curious child is able to learn something new. It would be great to be able to catch the entire class in a wave of curiousness, sweeping through the canon of English literature like Odin in his “Great Hunt”. It is almost impossible to achieve a method that makes one child more inclined to learn but that does not affect another in the opposite way. Ulla Runesson explains:

Here lies the problem and the thrill when it comes to education. We cannot point out one way of teaching as the best. It is impossible to say, “do this, and it will be good”, on top of that, tutoring is far to complicate. There is nothing like the correct way to tutor. The method with a capital M does not exist. (Runesson 9, Author’s translation)
It is difficult to capture the interest of an entire class with conventional methods. One single will never work, thus creating the need for many different strategies. “Shakespeare as a second Language” is one such strategy.

**Approach**

The intention with this essay is to introduce “Shakespeare as a second Language” as a didactical method. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to let you take part of the project and the method that has developed out of this initial project. Readers need to take part of the course plans and teaching plans that are valid today in order to understand what it is required of a didactical method. Schools must follow what is written in those goals, although they can achieve those goals in many different ways. A new method needs to reach a certain amount of those goals in order to be successful. A method that is time consuming and fun but only reaches a few goals is considered to be too unprofitable to work with and therefore will be rejected. Furthermore, it is required to be able to set up a plan for this new method and see how it performs in real life and not only in theory. So, to be able to introduce the Shakespeare method as a new and good method, it is required to have some good and solid practical examples as a back up to the theoretical examples.

The Shakespeare method is an alternative method, which means that the method does employ a different strategy compared to the learning methods that are common in the schools of today. There are many books that bring up the benefits of such a method. The few that I mention here focus their discussion in the field of theatre, movement, creativity and motivation. Those things are also true for the Shakespeare method. It is good for the reader to know and understand not only the benefits of these methods but also the way they work when it comes to actually learning something from them.

There has been some fieldwork done, both by me and by others. The purpose with having fieldwork is to actually see if some, if not all, of the proven theoretical evidence will actually work down in the classroom level. The results of the fieldwork that I have done will add some extra weight to the discussion.
Research Material

The literature used is focused mainly on Feuer’s project on Shakespeare but also on other methods that work with students’ motivation to learn. Another aspect of this method is the importance of how we learn and why it is so important to use the entire body while learning.

The primary sources are mainly various forms of pamphlets and articles that bring up “Shakespeare as a second language” and talks about it as the project and as the method that it has become. “In the Company of Shakespeare” by Kåre N Rugsæter, and Annie Ørvig, is an article, which discusses the Shakespeare project from a classroom viewpoint as well as its history from the beginning until the present day. Ole Sørud brings the discussion further when he brings up the inside experience of actually being a part of the project/method and describes what he has been through from his point of view. Ishrat Lindbad writes about how and where the Shakespeare project has spread and how it has been evolving. There are quite a few articles and pamphlets that bring up the method both relating its beginnings as a project and how it is now as a didactic method. Amongst them is, “In the company of Shakespeare, Ett möte över 400 år, en utbildning av groundlings läsåret 2002”, which describes the didactic methods, and why it is in the way it is. Furthermore, an abstract from the group “In Will’s Company”, which is a group of teachers that travel the country of Sweden, and teaches this method to both new students and teachers. This abstract contains many of the Shakespearean texts that they work with. These texts are the particell’s that I have used in my fieldwork.

Eva Klinthäll has provided a written plan for one session working with the Shakespeare method, which has proven to be of great value both when working with and writing about it.

The Shakespeare method must find support from the political level in order to become an approved method. The method must also be good enough to be able to reach some, if not all, of the goals set up in a specific subject if it is to be good. Such sources are www.skolverket.se, The Swedish national agency for education’s website, where you can look up the different subject goals that are required to be reached both in the 5th grade and in the 9th grade. Another one is the teaching plans and they can be found in several books as well as The Swedish national agency for education’s website but “Lärarens Handbok” is the one used in this essay.
Literature that brings up alternative methods, discussing what defines them and why they are needed in the elementary school will be of great value. It is also good to know the difference between conventional and alternative methods and why alternative methods are important. Ulla Runesson writes as well as does Birigit Lendahl in the book, *Vägar till elevers lärande* about different theories of how a student learns. *Språkutveckling och kreativitet* discusses the lack of curiosity among Swedish students. Furthermore, he claims that this lack of curiosity is caused by the absence of creativity and that in turn affects their learning capabilities negatively. Lev S Vygotskij is one of the great celebrities in pedagogy. His book *Fantasi och kreativitet i barndomen* argues that creativity is a creative process there something new is created from our earlier impressions and experiences. Vygotskij argues that this trait makes us humans and makes us capable of creating our future and forming our presence. He continues to argue that fantasy is a form of creativity and that fantasy always takes experiences from the mind and makes something new with it. Theatre is the most common of means of creation. By all means since theatre stands so close to a child due to the fact that theatre resembles actual play.

**The Project**

Bengt Börjesson, former principal of The Teachers Training College in Stockholm, bring up the following questions:

> How shall we make it possible for children and youths to make the wonderful discovery that they inside themselves have a language or more likely that they can develop a language that can open a world of experiences to themselves? Can we aid this young man to find his authenticity and from there redefine his existential position? Can we forge a self-knowledge to these young people that will give them the power to resist towards cultural exploitation and to define their meeting with the world with their own the self-esteem as a base (Börjesson, Author’s translation).

According to him these questions are what define the cultural and pedagogical project called “In the Company of Shakespeare”. Börjesson explains that the project is remodeling the current teacher program and is an adaptation to the school “raising” role. Furthermore,
Börjesson says that through the texts of Shakespeare and the work made with them these youths can find their true sense of self.

The project is about waking up young people; make them realize that they have an identity of their own and then to make something out of their newly discovered knowledge of their own identity. The project wants to inspire people to be more creative and then put this creativity to work in various fields and subjects. The work with the students’ self-esteem is also important. A student that is self-confident is unlikely to fall for negative temptations, influences or quit school.

It all started back in the 1970s in Amsterdam where Donya Feuer first made contact with Ted Hughes:

I had just finished directing Peter Schat’s Opera *Houdini* for the Netherlands Opera in 1976. Free and relieved and feeling somewhat like an escape artist myself, I walked into the Athenaeum bookshop in Amsterdam and found, on the table in front of me, *A choice of Shakespeare’s Verses*, ´selected with an introduction by Ted Hughes`. I opened the paperback book and met his introduction. Incredible. (Börjesson)

After this first meeting with Ted Hughes, Feuer was inspired to set up some more plays. She finally met Ted Hughes for the first and only time in London some year after she first got to see and read his book. After this meeting they started to communicate first via phone calls and later through letters. These conversations resulted in more books from Hughes and more plays from Feuer. It ultimately led to Donya starting to work with younger people. Thus the idea was born. In 1989 Feuer started to work with young children, which gave her contact with some schools in Stockholm. In September 1990, inspired by Ted Hughes’ letters, she got the idea that the workshop she conducted with young people could lead to something more than just a vast workshop, that it could be developed into a long-term education of a new audience for a theatre. During the following years the project evolved and culminated in 1998 when Stockholm was the cultural capital of Europe. (Lindblad/Börjesson)

During the years of 1994 and 1995 The Teachers Training College got curious about Feuer’s project and her new and creative pedagogical methods. To begin with it was hard to explain
Feuer’s project in pedagogic terms. The discussion that followed between Feuer and The Teachers Training College led to the insight that the dramaturgic work form in fact was an in depth pedagogic method (Börjesson):

On account of the enthusiasm, which their contact with Shakespeare in the original language generated among the schoolchildren with whom she had come into contact, in 1990 Donya Feuer entered into a joint collaboration between “Dramaten”, The Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden, “Kulturhuset “, The Culture House, and a large number of primary, middle and high schools in the Stockholm region in order to get schoolchildren of all ages to engage with Shakespeare’s texts in English. This project was entitled “Shakespeare kommer. Kommer du”, Shakespeare will come. Will you? It set a ball rolling that meant that either directly through this project or one of its offshoots by the year 2001 more than seventy schools in greater Stockholm, 14 in other Swedish cities, and a few schools in Romania, Finland, Denmark and even 4 schools in New York U.S.A had been exposed to Donya Feuer’s pedagogic method (Lindblad p.2)

The structure of the project

The Shakespeare project has two purposes. The first is to reach and engage as many students as possible in various schools. The second one is to incorporate it within the Teacher Training College in different ways. The two purposes have had different emphasis during the two phases of the project. The first phase of the project culminated in 1998 with six days of relay performances and was a part of the Cultural Capital year. One could say that the ambition to work with schools was the main purpose. Over 9000 students from schools in Stockholm were a part of this project. The work with the students in schools has three main objectives. The project shall be directed to students in all ages, from the first school year to the last. It shall be directed to the entire class. Finally the project is directed to every kind of school and to students with all social backgrounds (Börjesson).

The project is a work in progress meaning that the intention is to continually educate new teachers in this form of teaching so that they in turn can educate schoolchildren to engage with culture that was and is around them as well as developing their command of the English
language. The whole project is supposed to work in a big loop, reminding people that theatre is much more than merely a medium to entertain rich people as well as keeping the youth of today interested in theatre and the “classic” cultural arts.

**The Method**

In the original form the method involves the creation of a small piece of text that is always taken from the American edition of Ted Hughes’s selection entitled *The Essential Shakespeare*, which she names a “particell”, echoing Mozart’s use of the word for his notes for a “partitur”. There are several key particell’s that are used. The small ensemble of teachers that have been following Feuer founded those and her project is named “Will’s Company”. (Lindblad p.2)

One of the key particell’s is: “When my cue comes, call me/ And I will answer, I will answer”, from the Bottom’s lines in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Another is “I am not what I am / I follow but myself;/Heaven is my judge…/I am not what I am”, from Iago’s lines in *Othello*. (Lindblad p.2)

There are probably as many variants of the method as there are practitioners but there are many similarities between them all and although there are no rules to follow there is a certain standard that everybody tries to follow. Ishrat Lindblad describes how she has learned the method:

Students are at first made to read the lines out loud and then to try and find as many synonyms in their own language as they possibly can for the English words. This inevitably makes them aware of the multiple interpretations a line can have and also of the nuances of difference in regard to the connotations of apparently synonymous words. (Lindblad p.2)

By letting the students play with the English words they will find it more fun and it will create a massive storm of various interpretations and students will eventually try to best each other by coming up with the most far-reaching of them all. After breaking down the particell in words and translating those words, the students may now try to translate the whole particell and talk about what they think it means. This is done by sitting around in a ring and letting the word go from student to student. This interpretive part can be done whenever the teacher
feels the time is ripe. These interpretations are creating a didactical situation where knowledge derives from the dialogue and the teachers is staging a knowledge situation

Having experimented with translation, the next step is to memorize the lines. This is done playfully by the students together in chorus. Once the lines have been learnt by heart, the students are divided into smaller groups and helped to devise their own performance of the lines they have learnt. They are encouraged to experiment with a variety of ways of staging the lines, in chorus, or by repeating the same lines after each other, or breaking up a line to be spoken by different performers. Ultimately they are preparing for a relay performance based on passages the different groups have chosen and rehearsed. In this way they not only get to know a fairly large number of Shakespeare lines by heart, but also derive the manifold benefits of working as a team to produce a play; acting different roles, creating their own interpretations and getting the applause… (Lindblad p.2)

Basically what Lindblad describes above is what Feuer has done up till 1996 when she was contacted by Bengt Börjesson, the former head of the Teacher’s Training College in Stockholm. Donya Feuer was asked to join his staff as a professor in order to introduce teacher candidates to her method and to make it more pedagogic. The idea was that the teacher students should learn how to use Shakespeare’s language as a pedagogic tool in their own future professional activities. This ultimately led to the above-mentioned happenings in 1998 and the further development of the method.

There are many more details to the method that are not mentioned. However, Lindblad manages to summarize the method very well. The left-out details are more or less remnants of Feuer’s profession as an artist and as a director. These details are not crucial to understanding the core and the purpose of the method. They are however important to the performance and to the illusion created for the students. While continuing writing there will be moments when such details are brought up and they will be explained in more detail there.
The school of yesterday and today

The old, and commonly used, conventional methods have begun to become obsolete. New research and the reorganizations that has arisen from the new teaching plans, Lpo94, Lpf94 and Lpfö98, have created the need for new methods that are more up to date with these new teaching plans and that can replace the old methods. These new methods speak of individualization and the benefits that come with it. At the same time we get an increasing number of students and a decreasing number of teachers. The schools are redefining themselves and are moving from a public good to a private good system. This change is mostly due to the new teaching plans and that the government has loosened the grip and allows the change from a top down ruling to become more a bottom up ruling, allowing the local authorities to give the schools in their precinct the freedom to choose their own plans, material and methods. All these changes add up to the new demands made from schools, they need to refresh their organization and add new didactical methods that are in tune with the new teaching and course plans.

Today the most popular of the methods that are used are all about activity during class and creating lust to learn. All in line with the new teaching plans. These activities can be everything from practice, drama, games, labs and various experiments. Usually these methods are requiring much more time than the conventional methods of today. Yet, what you lose in time you will gain in knowledge and experience. Allowing students to work in their own pace and using their own interests as a foundation will most likely awaken their curiosity and what they learn will stick with them for a longer time, not to mention to valuable experience gain at actually “doing” something instead of just reading about it.

Working with Shakespeare

Equipped with nothing more than my wits, a roll of scotch, a stick and some printed particells, I went down the hall and went through the door. I was on my way to one of the many English classes held by me with these 9th graders. The difference this time was that I was going to introduce a new method to them, the Shakespeare method.

The particells are the same particells used by Will’s company when they were touring around schools with the Shakespeare method. They consist of various difficulty levels and they are
designed to suit both strong and weak students spanning from the 1\textsuperscript{st} to 9\textsuperscript{th} grade. Unfortunately there was not enough time to work extensively with the method; one reason was the national tests in English that just happened to be held roughly at the same time as my practice period. Due to the lack of time I was not able to fully carry out my plans. The plan was to be able to set up a relay of plays in the Feuer fashion and invite both teachers and parents to come and watch. However, I managed to go through with the main agenda. The Shakespeare method is originally intended to work with a whole class but I was only given the boy part of a 9\textsuperscript{th} grade to work with. These boys had a reputation to be weak in English and very unruly and hard to work with.

Based on what I have learned from Eva Klinthäll’s course and her being kind enough to lend me some of her class plans I planned six English lessons with the Shakespeare method. The first lesson, the introductory lesson, started with some small exercises and learning the key particell “When my cue comes, call me and I will answer, I will answer” by heart. Before we could start there were certain things to do. Firstly the classroom needs to be divided between a stage and a classroom. This was simply done by taking the roll of scotch and draw out a line in the middle of the classroom. Secondly the rules of the method must be taught, talking in English as much as possible and when the teacher talks the class is quiet. Thirdly the boys needed to be divided into two groups. Finally every time something is about to start I knock three times with the stick on the floor and then we all start simultaneously. The knocking is a remnant from the theatre days. While the pupils struggle to learn this simple phrase by heart, we would move around in the class in various patterns, aiding the learning process both with movement and with our voices, lowering and increasing both tempo and volume.

After approximately fifteen minutes, we then sat down in a ring and had the “pass the word around” exercise, meaning that a student starts with the first word of this phrase and the student to his left utters the second one. We did this exercise for a couple of minutes. By this time around half of the forty-minute long class was already over. Confident that the students have learned the phrase by heart, I then moved to the final step of the introductory lesson. The two groups are now assigned to create a small play with the phrase. The only rules are that they can use no other words but the phrase learned by heart, on the other hand they can use the phrase in what order or as many times they want to. What amazes me all the time is that I have until now never seen a play with the particell “When my cue comes” that even vaguely resembles another one. After the first group is done with their performance the other
group is allowed to explain both to me and to the performers what the play was about. The performing group in turn explains how they thought when they came up with the idea to the play and if the group guessed right. Then the second group enters the “stage” and after three knocks from my stick they start with their performance. After the second performance the lesson came to an end but before leaving I gave them all some homework, namely to think about the particell and what the particell means to them and then to tell me in their own English words. The following five lessons went more ore less in the same pattern; the difference was that I kept increasing the difficulty levels of the particells and the exercises with them. During the second lesson most of the students knew what was going to happen and the lesson could start faster, giving us more time to work instead of explaining. In the final lesson the students held a longer play consisting of three of the particell’s learned during this period and were consequently their “test”.

The nature of the Shakespeare method is in tune with the “popular” methods of today, meaning that it is a method that is working with activating students to “do” things in order to learn. It is clear that it has become more important to use the entire body while learning during the past years. The Shakespeare method is a method that teaches the student to use and to work with his entire body while learning. Carla Hannaford states that we are focusing too much on the head, meaning that the greater part of the methods of today are working with the head and not using the rest of the body in their learning process. These ideas are becoming old and do not find support from the new research that is made in this field (p.11).

The Shakespeare method is a method that encourages students to be creative in their school environment and to feel safe while practicing English. The safety lies in the lines that are learned by heart, the student does not need to worry about what to say but can instead focus on using those lines in a different and thus creative way. The creativity is born not by improvising new texts but by remodeling the lines that are taken out from a play into a new play and creating synonyms from the words used in the lines. Åstrand argues that creativity is essential in the school curriculum (p.4, 8) and I think that it is very important to ensure that the natural creativity a child is born with remains even after the child has started school.

Another aspect that has been discussed lately is the classroom environment. Åstrand argues that the classroom environment is crucial to the curiosity of a student. He suggests that since there is nothing that intrigues the curiosity of a student in the Swedish classrooms, there cannot be the creativity needed for a learning process to take place (p.8). The Shakespeare
method uses the classroom as a stage with very simple means: a stick, some scotch and lots of
imagination is all that is required to make the classroom environment to become something
special. At least for the reminder of the class, it encourages students to let loose their
imagination.

Lev Vygotskij connects creativity with learning. He writes that creativity is dependent by
fantasy and fantasy in turn is dependent on personal experience from which one can take in
inspiration to the fantasy and thus feeding the creativity within you. Theatre and drama is the
most common form of creation amongst children. According to Vygotskij it is because it is so
closely related to their play (p.81).

Children that are playing often “pretend” to be somebody else, hence their natural ability to
“act” their fantasy even within the school curriculum. The Shakespeare method employs
theatre and dramatizations of various particells taken from one of Shakespeare’s many plays.
It is in this mishmash of lines, creativity and fantasy that the learning process takes part.
Learning processes that are employed in methods like the Shakespeare method are called
“aesthetic learning process”. The process that takes place while using this method is called
“knowledge from dialogue” and further defines the aesthetic learning process. While working
with these lines in different ways the student will begin to understand the English language.
The linguistic knowledge and experience that comes from using the lines and act them out
vary from student to student but they all become aware of the flexibility of the English
language. The difference from conventional methods is that the result of what a student
actually learned cannot be measured.

The role that the teacher plays while working with the Shakespeare method is first to create
enough fantasy to make the students motivated in order for them to be able to act out the lines
in a highly creative way so that they in turn can achieve knowledge from dialogue. Then the
teacher must be experienced enough to be able to evaluate and appreciate what the student/s
actually have learned during the lesson.
The teaching plan Lpo94

Having introduced the Shakespeare method in relation to some of the literature in the field of alternative methods, the next step is to introduce the Shakespeare method in relation to the contemporary teaching plan and course plan.

Lpo94 stands for “Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet (Lpo94)” and means “Teaching plan for the obligatory school, preschool and after school” (Lärarens Handbok p.9). The difference between Lpo94 and other older Lpo’s is the new goal-oriented way of working. Before the Lpo94 and all the changes that followed the enforcement of Lpo94, there were no goals but only rules. These rules were much harder than goals and did not leave any options for the teacher and were very stiff and hard to work around. As a result there were almost no new methods or material introduced to the school curriculum. All this changed in 1994 when the Lpo94 was released. Suddenly the schools had the freedom to develop their own local teaching plans and choose whatever material and methods they wanted as long as the goals could be achieved.

In this plan, together with the school law, there are written all the obligations, duties and rights that both teachers and students have. There are also written all the goals that a student is required to achieve both in 5th grade and in 9th grade. There are three different kinds of goals; guidelines, goals to aim for and goals that students are required to achieve. The guidelines define the identity of the school. Basically it says that the students should be taught democracy and west European standards, be social enough to function in society and learn to react to wrongdoings. The goals to aim for are about the student’s character. These goals are there to make sure that the student at least tries to develop an ability to be curious, listen and discuss as well as develops a good self-esteem. The student must also have a desire to learn and to be able to get a rich and nuanced native as well as foreign language. Finally the goals that must be achieved are the basics and the most important stuff that a student must obtain in order to properly function in Swedish society. Comparing these goals to software and the students to hardware the goals that must be achieved are the minimum requirements needed to operate the hardware. There are sixteen goals that each student must achieve before finishing the 9th grade (Lärarens Handbok).
The goals that are relevant to the Shakespeare method are:

The student:
- Controls the Swedish language, has an active listening and reading habit and is able to express ideas and thoughts in speech and writing
- Has developed the ability to be creative and has obtained an increased interest to participate and take part of the cultural (utbud)
- Has an understanding of the crucial and central parts of our Swedish, Nordic and western cultural heritage
- Can develop and use knowledge and experiences from as many different forms of expression as possible such as, language, art, music, drama and dance
- Has developed an understanding of other cultures
- Is able to communicate in speech and writing in English

(‘Lärarens Handbok’ p.15-16, Author’s translation)

The Shakespeare method is designed in such a way that the student is able to work with obtaining many goals at the same time. For example the method is working with drama and using English but at the same time the student also learns to listen, discuss and become aware of the English culture as well as adding up a more nuanced English language etc. Most of these things happen without the students noticing that they actually learn. They have too much fun to notice. It is important that a didactic method is able to fulfill as many goals as possible. The reason is that time is short and cannot be wasted. There are only 480 hours of English per student distributed from the 1st to the 9th grade. The law allows schools to cut up to 20% of the hours if they find it necessary (Lärarens Handbok).

The English Course plan

While the teaching plan is designed for the entire school system, the course plan is designed specifically for subject with their own goals. At The Swedish national agency for education’s website there is a short description of the English subject:

English is the mother tongue or official language of a large number of countries, covering many different cultures, and is the dominant language of communication throughout the world. The ability to
use English is necessary for studies; travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds. The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts, and an increasingly internationalized labor market, in order to take advantage of the rapid developments taking place, as a result of information and communications technologies, as well as for further studies. The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures.

All pupils need to be prepared so that on their own they can further develop their knowledge after completing schooling. The subject thus also aims at pupils maintaining and developing their desire and ability to learn English” (www.skolverket.se)

The English subject has twelve goals to aim for and no more than seventeen goals that students should have attained. Those goals in turn are divided into 5th grade achievements and 9th grade achievements. The goals to aim for are once again character goals and describe the quality of a student; they should be able to learn how to be responsible in their learning and to understand and reflect over the various English cultures etc. The goals that a student should have attained after the 9th grade are various skills and knowledge that a student must posses in order to be able to speak, write and understand the English language properly. While working with the Shakespeare method the student is able to achieve quite many of the goals that are required by the end of the 9th grade. The students should:

Understand clear speech, even though regional in nature, in instructions, narratives and descriptions concerning familiar conditions and their own areas of interest,

Be able to actively take part in discussions on familiar subjects and with the help of different strategies communicate effectively,

Be able to orally relate and describe something, which they have seen, heard, experienced or read, as well as express and give their reasons on how they understand a topic that is of personal importance,
Be able to read and assimilate the contents of relatively simple literature and other narratives, descriptions and texts putting forward argument in subjects they are familiar with,

Be able to ask for and provide information in writing, as well as relate and describe something,

Have a knowledge of everyday life, society and cultural traditions in some countries where English occupies a central position, as well as be able to make comparisons with their own cultural experiences,

(www.skolverket.se)

No more than six goals are directly connected to the Shakespeare method. It is not important to pinpoint exactly how many goals that can be achieved with the Shakespeare method but it is essential to show that the method has the potential to work with many goals at the same time.

**Discussion**

With this essay I have introduced the Shakespeare method both to the readers as well as in relation to the literature in the field of alternative methods and the contemporary teaching and course plans. The reason why I felt that it had to be done is that the method is new and needed to be a subject of some more critical evaluation. The evaluation done by me in this essay has proven that the Shakespeare method is more than able to withstand and to fulfill many of the goals posed by the teaching and course plans. The Shakespeare method has also been compared with the characteristics and “goals” posed by the literature in the field of alternative methods. The result was that the Shakespeare method uses many of the terms and techniques stated there. These techniques are used to engage and activate the students and to motivate them to be creative and develop their curiosity and sense of self, thus making them more eager to learn.

The Shakespeare method has also been tested by me in a field work. The fieldwork has added some extra weight to the critical evaluation of the method. The fieldwork has proven, at least to me, that the method is truly able to work with many goals stated by the Lpo94 and that a
teacher that is experienced with the method does indeed see improvement done by the students, even in quite short time.

The most important part is that now the Shakespeare project has gone through a critical evaluation done with scientifical means and is now able to lean back and find support from this work in the future.

**Conclusion**

Even though I feel that the Shakespeare method has passed the critical evaluation with a good grade, there still are problems with the method. One for sure is time, there are only so many English hours and those hours must be divided in such a way that by the end of 9th grade the student must be able to pass the goals required at the end of 9th grade. I do understand why many teachers even today choose to use the same old methods used decades ago, they work with the class as a group and spares a lot of time and, to the relief of many teachers, they are all easily measured. The question is if the students learn better in this old fashioned way or not? That is a question not easily answered but the mere fact that there has been popping up various alternative methods during the past ten years do show that there is at least a “need” for some rejuvenation in the schools. All these new methods stress activity as their most important asset, so does the Shakespeare method. The main difference, apart from the activity-based education, is that these new methods are hermeneutical in their profile, which means that it is impossible to measure the progress made by the student in a written group exam. The students need all to be graded and judged individually even when they work together in a group. The professional skill of the teacher grading the students must be much higher since most of the evaluation of a student will be done in an oral or visual way. All these individual gradings will of course take much more time both in planning and in execution. Time would be the main problem with these new methods. The Shakespeare method deals with the time problem by working with many goals and criteria at the same time. This is enabling the teacher to work with the same method during a longer period of time. The teachers of tomorrow must be better schooled in these new methods than the teachers of today in order to successfully employ them.
I have long since abandoned the idea to only work with one method. The reason is that the motivation of a student must be kept alive all the time. That motivation will easily dwindle and wither away if the educative methods and school environment is not changed. The other reason why the Shakespeare method will not work on its own is that the method does not use written English at all and it does not introduce enough new English words. However, combining the Shakespeare method with a more theoretical method, such as extensive reading, will surely prove to be a successful combination.

The main objective was to critically evaluate the Shakespeare method and add this evaluation to the scientific discussion that is about “Shakespeare as a Second language”. I hope that this method will continue to live on and that this essay will inspire new “groundlings” to continue to work with and to be “In the Company of Shakespeare”.
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