3. Many specialists see the origins of TPR in the Gouin Series as well as Palmer's ideas (*English Through Actions*). What are their common features? What are the benefits of linking language use to actions and acting things out as you perform the activity?

4. What do you think about the use of background music in Suggestopedia? Would it disturb you or help you to concentrate? Would you be irritated by the choice of music if it were different from your favourite kind?

5. List the most important features of the four alternative methods using the grid below.

	The Silent Way	TPR	Suggestopedia	Community Language Learning
the key to language				
the role of the learner				
the role of the teacher				
teaching props				
special techniques				
other ideas				

Further reading

Bowen, D., H. Madsen, and A. Hilferty, 1985. *TESOL. Techniques and Procedures*. Cambridge, Mass.: Newbury House.

Oller, J. W., and P. A. Richard-Amato (eds.), 1983. *Methods that Work. A Smorgasbord of Ideas for Language Teachers*. Boston: Heinle.

Richards, J. C., and T. S. Rodgers, 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4.4. Focus on the learner

Focus on the Learner is the title of an influential volume, edited by Oller and Richards in 1973, which epitomizes 'post-methods' trends. The subtitle of the volume: *Pragmatic Perspectives for the Language Teacher* accurately reflects the predominant orientation in which the main focus of interest no longer rests on the teaching aspect, but on the language learners, their capacities, attitudes, strategies, and needs. 'Above all, students both young and old have heads' says Stern (1973:26). This results from a much more critical, self-confident attitude of the authors to the source disciplines, especially linguistics, in view of the fact that foreign language didactics should be regarded as a discipline in its own right, i.e. an autonomous discipline (Mackey, 1973), governed by its own research priorities. Mackey states on page 13 of his contribution to the volume:

The authors see the limitations of the notion of **language** and its implied focus on form and stress the concept of **language use** and the centrality of **language learning** instead. This position implies the relevance of psycholinguistics, which 'emphasizes the human being as a user of language' (Stern, 1973:18). Like many other authors, Stern stresses 'the intricate relationship between language and meaning, between language and thought and emotion, between language and culture' (Stern, 1973:24–25). Oller (1973a) is of the opinion that a theory of second language learning with aspirations to adequacy cannot disregard 'the communicative function of language'. This perspective requires researchers to bring together the linguistic and extralinguistic information involved in language use. In contrast to the view of language as a self-contained system, pragmatics is interested in the study of the relationships between linguistic forms to contexts, in other words, in what language users do with language signs and how they use language signs to send and receive messages. Language use is linked to psycholinguistic concerns regarding the encoding and decoding of messages, i.e. language production and comprehension, as well as perception and memory. In the same volume, Macnamara (1973) suggests that in child language learning, the need to communicate is the decisive factor. Children first determine the meaning which the speaker is trying to convey and only later work out the relationship between meaning and the expression they have heard. He states (1973:59): 'the infant uses meaning as a clue to language, rather than language as a clue to meaning.' Meaning is of paramount importance; it comes from the child's need to understand and express himself or herself. As for the tasks of the source disciplines, his view is the following (1973:64):

'One of the main tasks of linguistics and psycholinguistics is to make a systematic assault on the language learning device which is so remarkable in man. At present we know nothing of it in detail. We do, however, know that it is essentially geared to human thought and to its communication. It does not seem to function at all well unless the learner is vitally engaged in the act of communicating.' Kennedy (1973) adds that instead of having a rich linguistic environment, the language learner 'is fed intravenously'. 'The first responsibility of specialists is not to hinder language learning, and the next is to subordinate language teaching to language learning. Dykstra and Nunes (1973) argue that the teaching programme must be structured to match the specific individual characteristics of language learners and it should be developed and evaluated in the context of purposeful communication. 'Communication', Dykstra and Nunes (1973:287) point out '... emphasizes

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It is likely that language teaching will continue to be a child of fashion in linguistics and psychology until the time it becomes an autonomous discipline which uses these related sciences instead of being used by them. To become autonomous, it will, like any other science, have to weave its own net, so as to fish out from the oceans of human experience and natural phenomena only the elements it needs, ignoring the rest ... For the problems of language teaching are central neither to psychology nor to linguistics. Neither science is equipped to solve the problems of language teaching.

purpose and meaning in a social context. It emphasizes the individual in his environment. It emphasizes the use of language, not first of all the forms of language, which are important certainly, but exclusive emphasis on them constitutes an inadequate educational opportunity.' All the authors stress that language must be thought of primarily as a tool of interpersonal communication (Spolsky, 1973; Upshur, 1973; Oller, 1973b; Tucker and Lambert, 1973; O'Doherty, 1973).

Language learning is regarded as a natural process governed by its own laws. Richards (1973:107) evaluates the traditional view of language learning as completely inaccurate: 'Many current teaching practices', he says, 'are based on the notion that the learner will photographically reproduce anything that is given to him, and that if he doesn't, it is hardly the business of the teacher or textbook writer.' The focus is on what the teacher did and what materials were used but not on the learning strategies that the learners are developing. It may be the case, however, that learning strategies are fairly independent of the available methods used for teaching. **The learner is not wholly dependent on the teacher for what he or she learns: the language cannot be taught but must be learned.**

4.5. Individual factors in foreign language learning

The learner is now considered to be the central figure in the language learning process and largely in charge of it. In one and the same set of circumstances, the process of language learning is bound to produce variable effects in different individuals. The factors responsible for these differences include foreign language aptitude, understood as the individual gift for languages (Stern, 1983), motivation, which would nowadays be defined as both the sustained and task commitment of the learner to the learning process. Foreign language aptitude has much in common with general language aptitude which manifests itself in the native and other languages and includes verbal intelligence and reasoning, as well as word knowledge and verbal fluency. **Aptitude** refers to specific learner qualities necessary in second language learning. The most influential conception of language aptitude comes from Carroll and Sapon (1959, *Modern Language Aptitude Test and Elementary Modern Language Aptitude Test*) and Pimsleur (1966, *Modern Language Aptitude Battery*). These tests may be used for prediction and diagnosis, which in practical terms means selecting more promising and less promising, i.e. faster and slower learners of the target language. It is not a single entity but a cluster of composite abilities which learners demonstrate to a varying degree (Stern, 1983; Dörnyei, 2005), such as:

- **phonetic coding ability** involves the auditory capacity of phonemic discrimination, coding, assimilating and phonemic memory, essential in acquiring the target language phonological system productively and receptively;
- **grammatical sensitivity** is the ability to perceive and become aware of the grammatical forms, their functions and patterning, and establish relations between graphemic and phonemic representations;

- **rote learning ability** is the ability to store and recall partly arbitrary language material accurately and assign associations between sounds and meaning, and retain them.
- **inductive language learning ability** is the ability to infer regularities from language material, identify patterns of relationships involving meaning and gram-matical form.

The notion of **motivation** is linked to the study of attitudes and motivation by Lambert and Gardner in Canada in 1972. Their research was conducted in the framework of social psychology to explore the relationship between attitudes towards the target language group and learning outcomes in Montreal, a French-English bilingual setting. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished two kinds of motivation: **integrative**, which is connected with a positive attitude to the target language group and a desire to become its member, and **instrumental**, which is connected with utilitarian goals for language learning, such as obtaining a better-paid job or possibility of travel. Initially, Lambert and Gardner thought that suc-cessful language learning is linked to integrative motivation, but it turned out that the relationship is much more complex. Certainly, motivation is not a causal fac-tor in language learning. It may be claimed nowadays that the source of motiva-tion is not as important as the fact that it is activated. Equally important is the concept of **intrinsic motivation,** which is the energy activated for the purpose of conducting a given task and bringing it to its completion. Research on motivation in foreign language learning nowadays focuses not so much on the learners' atti-tudes towards speech communities of the target language – with English as a world language – but on the much more specific concept of attentional policy in various learning tasks, defined by Keller (1983:389) as 'the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect.' It follows that the notion of motivation refers to **the deployment of the cognitive resources by the learner, the degree of effort and the extent to which it is sustained in the long run.** Current interest in moti-vation is much more classroom-oriented (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005), whereas the view of motivation is much more dynamic. The teacher's responsibility is to raise the level of motivation and maintain it this way as long as possible.

Forisha-Kovach (1983:124) defines **intelligence** as 'the ability to learn from experience, the ability to acquire and retain knowledge, and the ability to respond quickly and successfully to a new situation.' She stresses that to be considered intelligent, behaviour must be rational and purposeful, as well as meaningful and valuable. Two factors have been defined in measures of intelligence: the general ability known as the 'g' factor and specific abilities known as the 's' factor. Results of intelligence tests are usually presented as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which expresses how a person compares to other members of his or her age group. Average scores are computed for each age group which provide the basis for deter-mining the mental age. The IQ score is computed by dividing the mental age by the chronological (actual) age of the person and multiplying by 100. The factors that affect intelligence are both heredity, which imposes a certain ceiling which

we may or may not reach, and environment, especially differential practice. The role of intelligence in foreign language learning is increasingly recognized nowadays in view of the perception of language learning and use as strategic behaviour.

4.6. Individualizing foreign language instruction

This major educational movement in the United States in the early seventies (Altman, ed., 1972; Disick, 1975) offered an alternative to the idea of a universal or monolithic teaching method. The main point of individualized foreign instruction is to systematically take into account individual differences in language learning, i.e. to deliberately adjust teaching to learner characteristics. Disick (1975:5) defines individualized instruction as 'an approach to teaching and learning that offers choices in four areas: objectives of learning, rate of learning, method (or style) of learning, and content of learning', or a combination of two or more of these. It recognizes the students' unique talents, interests, and limitations. As a result of these choices, foreign language programmes promote self-study, flexible pace of work and choices in the content of learning. The students move freely about the room and the school, they work in flexible formats, such as on their own, in pairs or groups and with the entire class. Emphasis is placed on the personalized contacts of the teacher and the learners to provide tailor-made instruction suitable to individual interests and requirements. Disick (1975) describes one of the purposes behind individualized instruction as humanizing and personalizing classroom relationships, in which he recognizes the importance of humanistic psychology, especially the influence of Carl Rogers and his view that an educated man is the person who has learned how to learn, the man who has learned how to adapt and change. The most important effect of education is not the body of knowledge but the skills and problem solving abilities. The assumption that what is taught is in fact learned is far from being true. Several beliefs lie at the bottom of the philosophy of individualized instruction:
- belief in the need to humanize mass instruction,
- belief in the rights of learners to communicate their own ideas,
- belief in the need to learn how to learn,
- belief in the need for self-discovery and self-actualization,
- belief in the value of foreign language learning, which promotes new understanding and new insights.

Attributes of individualized instruction include learning packets created by the teacher with assorted supplementary materials for learning the foreign language and culture, independent study sessions, elective assignments, and a choice of course content. Testing and evaluation strategies as well as plentiful individualized feedback and correction procedures are also especially adjusted to the individualized programmes.

Chastain (1976) links individualized instruction with the need to cater to low-achieving students in the American educational system. In his view, the main

consideration in the philosophy of individualized instruction is Carroll's (1963) new understanding of *aptitude* as 'how long the learner takes to learn a given amount of material rather than the amount of the material he can learn.' At the same time, he lists some critical opinions about individualized instruction. The first objection is that it is not as new as it sounds – teachers have always made attempts to diversify instruction to suit individual learners' needs. The next point is that it is unfeasible to teach a course individually; instead, the whole group should be addressed with adjustments made for the brighter and the weaker students respectively. Individualized instruction is impractical in that it requires large quantities of materials to be produced by the teacher. Ideally, the teachers should be able to relate to individuals and manage group activities at the same time. Stern (1983:387) is also fairly skeptical about this trend: 'While this movement had rightly responded to a weakness in language pedagogy, it lost its impetus after a few years, like many other language teaching innovations, probably because its advocates had underestimated the magnitude of the task they had set themselves in trying to match individual learner characteristics with appropriate teaching techniques.' However, much as I dislike to disagree with Stern, we do not have to 'match individual learner characteristics with appropriate teaching techniques' because language is learned and used through humanly universal verbal communication. Every human being is capable of it, with few anomalous exceptions. Individualization can and should be implemented **within** the context of communication processes, which still enables the learners to exercise the right to communicate their own ideas (the right of communicative freedom, autonomy, and creativity in language use'), to learn how to learn (learning autonomy), seek self-discovery and self-actualization (realizing one's human potential), as well as understanding new insights (the right to continuous education). Designing special materials, although highly desirable, is most effectively limited by our resources. The degree to which 'tailor-made' materials prepared by the teacher may supplement the professionally-made set of coursebooks selected at the beginning of the programme is determined strategically rather than academically, it would seem.

Some of the critical comments addressed to individualized instruction seem accurate, however: indeed the social unit for which the learning processes are organized is the group; the process of foreign language teaching need not be considered as taking place solely in the minds of the individuals without any reference to this social context; the group is a miniature social entity which has its own norms, values and dynamics. Language as a tool of verbal communication must be learned as a code for social interaction, which implies a set of norms and conventions followed by the group. From this point of view, extreme individualization in foreign language learning would be unnecessary as well as impossible in our educational system; adding touches of individualization in the areas mentioned above: the pace of learning, supplementary materials, the choice of content to be learned, plenty of feedback, look like a worthwhile attempt to diversify foreign language instruction. It seems clear that individualized instruction is a forerunner of

such current developments as learner autonomy and learner-centredness as well as what I call the principle of addressing teaching to the language learner.

4.7. The beginnings of Second Language Acquisition Research

In a classical article *Interlanguage* from 1972, Larry Selinker states the most important theses of Second Language Acquisition Research for the decades to come. It is of interest to us here primarily as departure from the method's tradition and its emphasis on teaching. The most comprehensive overviews of SLAR can be found in Ellis (1985, 1994) and Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991). First of all, like many authors already mentioned, Selinker makes a distinction between the teaching perspective and the learning perspective in pursuing the theory of second language learning. The former prescribes what has to be done in order to help the learner learn, whereas the latter focuses on the internal structures and processes of the learning organism. Selinker (1975:117) thinks one is compelled to hypothesize 'the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from the learner's attempted production of the TL norm. This linguistic system we will call 'interlanguage' (IL). Data relevant to the identification of IL forms include (1) utterances in the learner's native language (NL); (2) IL utterances produced by the learner; (3) TL utterances produced by the native speakers of the TL. There are five processes central to second language learning:

- language transfer is the process which leads to fossilizable language items, rules and subsystems as a result of the NL;
- transfer-of-training results from teaching procedures;
- strategies of second language learning result from the approach of the learner to the training material;
- strategies of second language communication are the approach of the learner to communication with native speakers;
- overgeneralization of TL linguistic material.

It is assumed that there is a mechanism of fossilization in the latent psychological structure which includes 'linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the TL.' (Selinker, 1975:118–119). A successful process of second language learning involves the reorganization of linguistic material from an IL to identify with a particular TL.

It is clear from this short account that Selinker sets a research agenda for Second Language Acquisition Research in which learning is much more significant than teaching and it is to be formally investigated on the basis of the L1 and L2 utterances. Another such ground-breaking contribution comes from Corder (1967, 1981), who regards learner language as an **idiosyncratic dialect**, a language governed by its own rules which are dynamic and reflect the state of the learner's interim competence. He thinks that teaching does not directly influence

learning because language learning follows a **built-in syllabus**, the learner-generated sequence of learning which is not identical with the teacher-generated sequence. He points out that the learner is using a definite system of language at every point in his development, although it is not the target language in the developed sense. The learner's errors are evidence of that system and should be distinguished from mistakes, which one can correct oneself; errors are systematic whereas mistakes are random; errors belong to the realm of competence whereas mistakes – to performance. Systematic errors of competence reveal the state of the learner's transitional competence, that is the learner's language knowledge to date. The significance of learner's errors is in that they point to the way in which the learner tests his or her hypothesis about the nature of the language s/he is learning. Corder makes yet another important terminological distinction between input and intake. Input, controlled by the learner, is what is potentially available to the learner and intake is what actually goes in. He makes the following, characteristically deep reflection (1967:169):

We have been reminded recently of Von Humboldt's statement that we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way. We shall never improve our ability to create such favourable conditions until we learn more about the way a learner learns and what his built-in syllabus is. When we do know this (and the learner's errors will, if systematically studied, tell us something about this) we may begin to be more critical of our cherished notions. We may be able to allow the learner's innate strategies to dictate our practice and determine our syllabus; we may learn to adapt ourselves *to his needs rather than impose upon him our preconceptions of how he ought to learn, what he ought to learn and when he ought to learn it.*

To sum up, the most important developments in the field of foreign language teaching to mark the 'post-methods' era selected for this outline include gradual **emancipation** of the field of foreign language teaching from linguistics and psychology with an increasing awareness of its own problems and priorities. The concept of language, which has been central in foreign language teaching so far, gives way to the concept of **language use**, i.e. verbal communication with the learner's participation as an individual, to prepare ground for **learner-centredness**. The relationship between foreign language teaching and learning is now modified: **teaching behaviour must be subordinated to the learning process** and there is an urgent need to find out as much as possible about both the process and the learner.

1. Do you think that there are advantages in developing the field of foreign language teaching as an autonomous discipline? If so, what are they? What are the problems involved? Is it absolutely necessary, in view of the history of its relationship with the source disciplines?