

Phase 4 — The Big Middle Phase

**The Big Middle Phase:
Getting Underway with
500 Hours of Deep Life Sharing,
Hundreds of Hours of Shared Life**



Growing Participator Approach

Resource Packet for Phase Four

(with a brief overview of Phases 5 and 6)

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Don't learn the language!

Rather, discover a new world,

as it is known and shared by the people

among whom you are living.

Getting Underway with Phase 4 (5 and 6)

[Introduction](#)

Phase 4 — the phase of Deep Life Sharing. This is the make-or-break phase, or perhaps the sink-or-swim phase. This is the phase when life among host people needs to take off.

In the Growing Participator approach to learning language and culture, “language learning” is regarded as a matter of *growing participation in a host world*. Thus we challenge cross-cultural workers entering a new culture to see themselves not as “language learners” but as *growing participators* in their new home.

In order to grow quickly, such participators need to invest in special sessions with special host people that we call *supercharged participation* times. The first five phases of the Six Phase Programme of Growing Participation ideally involve 1,500 hours of these supercharged participation activities. Phases 1 to 3, the “beginner phases”, take 500 hours altogether. Phase 4 and 5, the “non-beginner phases”, take 500 hours each — bringing the total to 1,500. (Phase 6 is ongoing and lasts for years.)

Thus, Phase 4 is the giant, middle one-third of the 1,500 hour programme. Ideally it lasts from four to six months, during which the growing participator concentrates his life (by whatever means) on this growing participation.

I’ll give more background on Phase 4, and more information about it, in Part 2 of this guide, entitled Understanding Phase 4. For now, however, in keeping with the practice followed in the guides to Phases 2 and 3 of the Six-Phase Programme, let’s go straight to the action. That is what many users of this guide are interested in. The weakness in putting action ahead of understanding is that, depending on their basic assumptions about language learning and consequent personal goals, someone using this guide may actually be trying to achieve something different from what the activities are designed to achieve, and therefore, they may find the activities counter-intuitive, boring, or fruitless for their chosen goals! Fortunately, this is less likely to be the case in Phase 4 than in Phases 1 to 3, and so let’s just plough into the activities!

There are three major activities that can easily occupy a growing participator for all of the 500 hours of Phase 4, but they can be also supplemented by additional activities, mostly borrowed from earlier phases.

Part 1: Special Activities for Deep Life Sharing

Activity 1: The Life Story Activity

Ask a host friend to tell you the basic story of their life, capturing it with a recorder as they talk. Then listen to it with your friend, ‘massaging’ the content until you have explored their life on their terms and gained greater depth of understanding of the language and culture — while investing valuable hours in your friendship.

Note: Nowadays voice recordings may be made with tape recorders and various digital recorders, including computers. I will refer to the recording device as simply “the recorder,” and to voice recordings simply as “recordings”.

Step 1: Listen and make initial recording

Ask a host friend to tell you the basic story of their life, capturing it with a recorder as they talk. In some cases they may tell their first version of their life story in a couple of minutes. In other cases they may talk for ten or twenty minutes or more.

Rule Number 1: I want to hear is what is important to the storyteller.

The first rule is that there are no rules governing your host friend! What we want to hear is what is important to the storyteller. (There are rules governing *you*! We'll get to that.)

One man started telling the story of his life in Central Asia by mentioning the Leningrad blockade, which took place thousands of miles away from where he was. However, he turned out to be making the point that he was born at the height of World War II and that those were difficult times. Though he was nowhere near the action of the war, his early life was coloured by the fact that there was a war going on. The war had an overwhelming impact on day-to-day life in Central Asia. It wasn't obvious where he was going when he started talking about Leningrad! But he had his reasons, it turned out.

Other Central Asians have begun telling their life stories by talking about a famous person who was born in the same area where they were born.

You don't know how a person will begin, what they will talk about or why, but whatever they talk about, and for however long, they are not going "off track" and they don't need to be "steered back on track". They are creating the track for the life they wish to share.

Rule Number 2: I am interested in what they have to say, so I act accordingly.

This rule applies to *you*. Be genuinely interested in what they have to say, and act accordingly. There may be a lot that you don't understand yet as they talk, but if you are truly ready for Phase 4, there will be lots that you do understand.

Tell the person, sincerely, how interested you are in their life, and how interesting you find the story. Remind them often of how ignorant you are of life in their world. Hopefully, by the end of Phase 3, you have been deliberately observing how host people show they are listening to one another: Eye contact? Facial expressions? A particular word that gets repeated a lot, such as a word meaning "yes"? Silence? A variety of words and phrases ("O.K." "I see" "I understand" "Gotcha" "Mhm" "Right" "Really!" "Imagine that!" "You don't say!" "Wow!" "Oh my!" etc.)?

Let's turn now to a hypothetical life story interview. Suppose your host friend, George, told you the story of his life, and it began as follows: (*What is shown here is the first ninety second excerpt of a ten-minute life story.*)

Beginning of George's life story

"I was born in Los Angeles in 1947, and spent my early childhood there. However it was when I was nine years old, and we made our first trip to Canada that my life truly began. Not much interesting happened before that, but that summer of 1957 we spent two months in the wilderness camping and fishing. We went back for even longer in 1959 and became really close to some of the ranchers in that wilderness area, and even bought a ranch of our own. We worked on our ranch, and socialised with other ranchers in the summers of 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1965. In fact, in 1962-1963 we spent the whole fall, spring and winter on the ranch as well as the summers, and the other summers we took our full three-month school break, plus another week or two before and after, to be working our ranch, and to be part of the rancher society of that area. The winters—I was back in California—I more and more kept to myself, as I felt I wasn't one of them, and they would never know the real me—who I was up in Canada! In 1966 I worked one last time on a ranch there for five months, but my life was about to take a new direction... "etc., etc.

Step 2: Listen to the recording on your own

This step is not essential but people often express a desire to do this. Spend some time listening to the recording before your next session with the storyteller.

Among other things, while you listen you can:

- ü Identify parts that you cannot understand.
- ü Write down ideas for parts of the story that could be expanded on. (This will depend on how much you understand already.)
- ü Formulate questions you want to ask (**following the Step 4 guidelines).
- ü In general, become well prepared for a smooth time with the storyteller, massaging the story at a later meeting.

Step 3: Massage the Recording

If you have been following the Six-Phase Programme, you have been massaging recordings since Phase 2. If not, the idea of massaging a recording is simple: It means that you to listen to it together with a host person (in this case, with the host person whose story it is), and stop the recording as often as needed to clarify anything you do not understand.

Your lack of understanding may be due to a word that is new to you, it may be due to a combination of words that mean something unexpected, or perhaps it will be due to some aspect of host life that you don't understand yet. It may simply be that the pronunciation was not clear enough for you to understand it at your current level of listening ability, and you need your host friend to repeat it more clearly.

Sample Problems and How They are Massaged

In George’s story above, let’s imagine that you don’t understand parts discussed below. Let’s also assume that you are a newcomer to North America, and you don’t know the general Anglo-Canadian languaculture very well yet. (The concept of languaculture will be explained in Part 2. For now, you can take it to mean “language and culture”.)

First problem part:	spent my early childhood there
Exact problem:	You aren’t sure what “spent” means. You think it has something to do with money.
How you deal with it:	Host friend explains about spending money, and then gives examples of spending time—an hour, a week, June, the summer, someone’s whole childhood, someone’s whole life.
Second problem part:	wilderness
Exact problem:	Unknown word.
How you deal with it:	Host friend explains word.
Third problem part:	camping
Exact problem:	Unknown concept (a whole area of unknown host life experience—in your home languaculture, there is no concept of recreational camping.)
How you deal with it:	Host friend briefly explains camping. You still won’t have much understanding of it, but you have a basic idea that your host friend slept in a tent near lakes in the forest, and cooked on an open fire.

Warning: This is not the step in which you will explore the whole topic of camping, if our purpose is simply to massage the story.

Fourth problem part:	fishing
Exact problem:	Unknown word, though you know the word <i>fish</i> . You are also aware of the practice of recreational fishing, so you have a general concept already to go with the new word.
How you deal with it:	Host friend explains word.
Fifth problem part:	became really close to
Exact problem:	As you try to tell your host friend how you understand this, he realizes that you misunderstand—you think this means becoming physically close.
How you deal with it:	Host friend explains that “close” can mean knowing each other well, liking each other, <i>spending</i> time together.

Sixth problem part:	ranchers
Exact problem:	Unknown concept
How you deal with it:	Brief explanation. You decide they are cattle herders.

Warning: same as previously

Seventh problem part:	socialised
Exact problem:	unknown word
How you deal with it:	Your host friend explains that it means <i>spending</i> time together, talking, getting to know each other, perhaps <i>becoming close</i> .
Eighth problem part:	our full three-month school break, plus another week or two before and after,
Exact problem:	Understanding this requires knowing that California schools in the 1950s and 1960s had a twelve-week summer break, but you know nothing about this, and so it doesn't make any sense to you
How you deal with it:	Your host friend gives a simple explanation.
Ninth problem part:	kept to myself
Exact problem:	you know <i>keep/kept</i> , and <i>myself</i> , and <i>to</i> , but you don't understand the phrase <i>kept to myself</i> .
How you deal with it:	Your host friend gives a simple explanation.

Keep Developing Your Word Log

During this process record all new words in your running word log (which by the end of Phase 3 may contain 4,000 words already), with a note regarding the recording in which the word occurs, and the place in the recording where it occurs, if possible.

You may also wish to make a special recording that highlights new vocabulary. Digital recordings can be manipulated in a computer. In that case, it is easy to make a special vocabulary recording by copying sentences from the original story, and pasting them into a new file. You can thus make a file containing just the sentences in which the new words occurred, with the new word also placed before and following the sentence. In some cases you might want to shorten and modify the sentences, keeping the overall context clear.

For example, the following might be words you encountered for the first time in the above story excerpt, and therefore entered into your word log: spent, became really close , ranchers , wilderness , ranch , socialised , school break, kept to myself, etc.

You could be making a vocabulary recording that would go as follows, including each word from the word log, and the context in which it occurred:

Spent. I spent my early childhood in California. Spent.

Camping. We spent two months in the wilderness camping and fishing. Camping.

Fishing. We spent two months in the wilderness camping and fishing. Fishing.

Became really close to. We became really close to many of the ranchers. Became really close to.

Ranchers. We became really close to many of the ranchers. Ranchers.

Ranch. We even bought a ranch of our own. Ranch.

If you remember the basic context, hearing it should jog your memory when you can't remember what the word meant.

Another way to make a vocabulary recording is simply to record yourself and your host friend going down the list of new words in your word log, briefly discussing each word (in the host language, of course) to make it's meaning reasonably clear. In my experience this makes a somewhat more interesting vocabulary recording for later listening than the words-in-context approach.

The goal of massaging

The goal of massaging the recording is to become so familiar with it that whenever you listen to it again, you largely understand it. Therefore, after you have finished massaging any recording, it is good to listen to it a few more times in the days following. Then add it to your growing *Listening Library* of recordings that you can understand.

Step 4: Expand the Story — spotting the opportunities

Rule 3: At this stage in the process of building a life story, don't ask your host friend to tell you about anything they have not mentioned or at least alluded to.

Now you can start making a list of possible new topics for the story teller to enlarge upon. Wait to do this after massaging the recording or while massaging it, since before you massage it, there may be many parts that you don't yet understand, and thus you wouldn't know whether they could be expanded.

For example, what are some things you could ask George to enlarge upon in the excerpt of his basic life story as given above? Here are some possibilities:

1) George, you said you were born in 1947, right? Have you been told anything about the time when you were born?	2) From birth to nine years old is a long time. It's interesting that you have so little to say about it. Do you remember
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	very much about it?
3) Tell me all about those two months in 1957. That must have been really exciting.	4) <i>What happened in 1958?</i>
5) Tell me about those ranchers you became friends with.	6) Do you remember much of each summer? How about the fall, winter and spring that you stayed on the ranch in 1962-1963?
7) It sounds like you weren't really happy back in California. What all do you remember about those times?	8) Could you tell me more about the difference between who you were in Los Angeles and who you were in Canada?
9) Tell me about that last summer.	10) <i>Did you graduate from High School? When?</i>
11) <i>Did you have any girlfriends?</i>	

Note that in planning these questions, I have generally drawn on things George said, but I've also included (*in italics*) some questions that I would NOT want to ask at this point: 4), 10) and especially 11). They aren't things that were mentioned in the story, but just things I felt curious about.

This technique works best if you stick to things that the story teller cared enough about to mention, rather than giving priority to satisfying your own curiosity. Question 11) represents an extreme violation of the rule, having no connection at all to the story that was told—pure curiosity. In any case, answers to 4) and 10) are likely to occur as the story-teller expands the story.

Almost everything of interest to you is likely to come up, if you are alert to notice it. For example, you may be interested in weddings. Let's suppose George doesn't mention his wedding in his initial version of his life story, but he does mention his wife. So while expanding the original story, you will ask George to tell you about his wife. Sooner or later, the wedding will emerge! When it does, you can ask for the story of his wedding. In that story there may be mention of ways in which it was different from other weddings. You can also ask about ways in which it was similar to other weddings. You'll learn a lot about weddings by learning a lot about George. That is the basic pattern: Learn more by following up on things that were already mentioned.

Rule 4: Grow in understanding of host life by understanding individual host lives.

Step 5: Expand the Story—recording the expansions.

Your first question for expanding the story was: "George, you said you were born in 1947, right? Have you been told anything about the time when you were born?"

In response to this George responds as follows, and you make a recording of it:

Mm, Mom didn't tell me a lot. I had an older brother—three and a half years older than me—and after he was born, my dad went overseas in the army. While he was overseas, he kept writing to my mom every day, although she would only get the letters occasionally, in big piles. And in his letters he used to tell my mom that when he got back, they would have a daughter. Well, I was the “daughter”, born the year after he came back. My mom had prepared dresses for her baby girl, and so she dressed me in them. Don't think that affected me. Another thing she told me was that when she was expecting me, she often ate really hot, spicy Mexican food. Don't think that affected me either, except that I love Mexican food! The other thing she had told me was that a famous local Hollywood cowboy—and in those days many of them were sure real cowboys—he was going by in a parade, doing stuff with a lariat, and suddenly he roped my pregnant mom, and me too, I guess you'd say. She was really embarrassed to have public attention drawn to her in that state. Now maybe that affected me—being roped by a cowboy, that is—because a dozen years later I was cowboying myself, and by the age of eighteen, I had become a real cowboy!

Two kinds of expansions

Some expansions are like the example just given—they are new stories growing out of the first story. Others are not stories, but explanations of some area of life. For example, among the possible questions for expansions was 3): “Tell me all about those two months in 1957. That must have been really exciting.”

Since those two months involved non-stop camping, a lot of information about camping might spill forth as your host friend tells the story of those two months. But you also dealt with camping as you were massaging the recording—it was an unknown concept, and so you needed a brief explanation in order to understand the story at all. In the story-expanding step, you might ask for a much more detailed explanation of camping. So in connection with the statement, “We spent two months in the wilderness camping.” you can ask either: “Tell me all about those two months...” or alternatively “Tell me what people do when they are camping.”

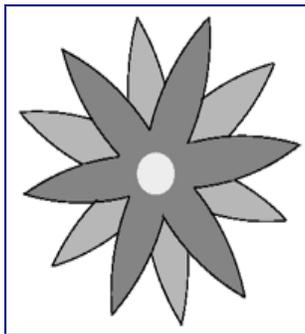
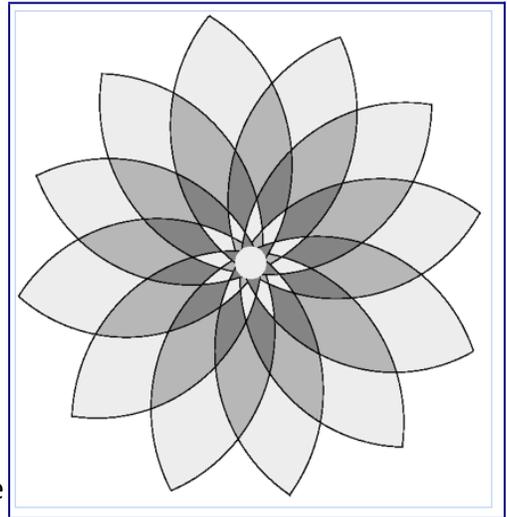
These two types of expansion are thus:

- ü Expanding the story (filling in the story) with a new story
- ü Expanding the story with a full explanation of a concept that is new to you.

The new stories may be stories of specific events, such as, “You mentioned one time you were almost attacked by a grizzly bear. Can you tell me about that?” Likely a straightforward, lively story will follow. Hearing a person's life should include hearing all the stories that they love to tell about exciting or interesting events of their life, as well as many stories that they never thought to tell before.

Expanding the expansions: the story doesn't just expand—it explodes!

Above you read the expansion of George's statement, "I was born in Los Angeles in 1947." It was the first type of expansion: a new story to fill in details of the original story, telling of how George's mother expected him to be a girl, and so on. Now many bits of this expansion could themselves be expanded. For example, in this expansion George said, "...my dad went overseas in the army." So you might ask for an expansion of this expansion: "Did your father tell you about his experiences in the



Army?" This may bring more information about George's parents' life leading up to his birth.

Now it wasn't hard to find about ten bits to expand in the original story.

I'll leave it as an exercise for you to come up with ten bits to expand from the first expansion (the story of events surrounding George's birth).

The original story segment given above was about ninety seconds long out of a ten-minute life story. I expanded one three-second bit of it ("I was born in Los Angeles in 1947") and the expansion is about ninety seconds too, as long as the whole original excerpt! Now imagine that all ten expansions were just ninety seconds long, although some would probably be longer than that. That would make a total of fifteen minutes of expansions from this original ninety-second story excerpt. Since I showed you just the first ninety seconds of a ten minute long story, if you continue expanding it at that rate, you would end up with over an hour and a half of expansions from the first ten-minute story. The first expansion might also provide ten more opportunities for expansions, such as, what the person knows about his father's experience in the army. So if the ten-minute story led to ninety minutes of expansions, then the ninety minutes of expansions could in turn "explode" into nine hours of further expansions.

In fact, the expansions of life stories will explode so much that soon you will learn to be very selective about what you want to expand. In a very short time you develop ten or twenty hours of story and explanation recorded from a single storyteller.

Step 6: Listen to the recordings you have massaged

Note: If you find that you do not fairly readily reach the point where, after a moderate amount of massaging, you can understand the story well then you are probably not ready for Phase 4 activities. It would be better to use activities that match your level of learning, to minimize frustration.

As you massage these stories and their expansions, you will become able to understand them fairly well. At least once or twice more, the same day or within a few days, you ought to listen to them again

to become more clearly familiar with your host friend's story. Each time you listen, pay special attention to the words added to your word log as they parade before you again in their original contexts.

You can then make these recordings part of your listening library. Years later you will be able to go back and benefit from listening again to these. Because they were geared toward you at a particular stage of your development, they will soon become relatively easy and inherently interesting to listen to.

Step 7: Summarise

After you've massaged a story and listened to it again on your own, try to summarise to your host friend what he/she has told you thus far. This will stretch your talking ability, thus helping you to grow, and will also help your host friend to feel understood and appreciated.

A helpful form for organising these activities

Below you will find a form (Stories to Record Form) that provides a way to keep in mind the steps and substeps in the Life Story Activity that we've been discussing. Please refer to that form as you read the following explanation:

On the first line of the form, assuming you are going to be learning the story of George's life, you would write: 1) George's life story

You would place a check-mark (✓) in the column, "audio recorded," once you first record it.

As you massage it, you add new words to your word log, and write the total number of new words in the appropriate column.

Once you largely understand the story from massaging it, place a checkmark (✓) in the column "massaged".

At some point you will add ideas for new topics. So in the example I have been using, the first, wide column "Stories to Record, Parts to Expand, Topics to Explore" you might now add ideas 2 through 8 to 1.

1) George's life story	5) What was happening the rest of the year
2) George's birth	6) Difference between George in Los Angeles and George in Canada
3) Birth to nine years	7) Final summer on a ranch
4) Summer-by-summer stories	8) Father's experience in the Army

Line 1 is the original open question you asked George. Lines 2 through 7 are related to the questions suggested under Step 4, Expanding the Story.

Next you would record the stories surrounding George's birth, checking off the "audio recorded" column of line 2.

From that expansion in turn comes line 8, since, when talking about his birth, George mentioned that his father was in the army, and so you might have added that (and a number of other things, on lines 9 and onward) as a possible point to expand.

In this way, the explosive list of topics is captured and used as the basis for planning further questions, and you can also keep track of what you have done with each topic. Using this chart for awhile will help you to get into the pattern of following the steps and sub-steps suggested above, until they become second nature. When it has become second nature to you, then you will be ready for the alternative approach discussed next.

Stories to Record, Explore	Parts to Expand, recorded	Topics to audio massaged number of new words	checked for new topic ideas	listened to again	listened to later
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Alternative: The Two-Recorder Technique

The steps described above, along with the chart for keeping track of the life-story interviews, are a good way to get started and to develop a set of skills for both life-story interviews and ethnographic interviews (which I will explain a bit later). However, once you are clear on this particular procedure, you may prefer to intermingle the steps, as convenient, rather than going through them in sequence. Here is one way to intermingle them.

Step 1: Record the initial life story

As before.

Step 2: Massage It, Recording as You Do So

Play it back and listen to it, massaging it with your host friend as you listen, at the very same time, spotting opportunities for expansion, and actually asking questions such as those in Step 4 (Expanding the Story) right while you are massaging the recording.

During step 2, you *make a second recording of you and your host friend discussing the first story with you*. So eventually all of the first recording will be heard in scattered pieces throughout the second recording, but in between those scattered bits of the first recording will be your questions about words you don't know, about other things you don't understand, your requests for expansions, and the expansions themselves. In fact, your voice will not be heard a whole lot in this recording, as your host friend is doing most of the talking—your fifteen second question may bring a five minute answer.

During the initial recording, you (hopefully) spoke very little indeed, encouraging your host friend to talk about whatever they were interested in talking about while telling their life story. During this second recording, the recording of the process of massaging and expanding, you may ask a fifteen-

second question, and then listen with interest to a five-minute response. During the response you may interact a moderate amount, in a natural way, asking immediately about words you don't understand, for example. For example, if we asked George about his birth, and were listening to his response as quoted above, using the two-recording device approach, we might ask for an explanation of words such as "lariat" (and ask questions such as "what would the cowboy in the parade be doing with the lariat") simply in order to understand the basic story without having to massage it later. However, we'd be writing down ideas for possible expansions, in addition to any expansions that we ask for right at the time. At the end of an expansion, such as the story of the events surrounding George's birth, we can at once ask for the expansions of parts of that story, "Did your father tell you anything about his experiences in the army?"

If you've developed the skills needed for steps 1 through 6 as described earlier by actually carrying out those steps repeatedly, you will now be able to apply those skills in a smooth flowing manner, using the two-recorder technique, without separating out the individual steps. It all just flows together. You will again find that these secondary recordings of discussions of the primary recordings (the latter always being heard in the background) make fascinating listening material in later months and years.

We can call the initial recording the *primary recording* and the recording of our massaging and discussing it the *secondary recording*. During the secondary recording, there may be points where your host friend starts to take off telling an animated story that is obviously important to him. At such points, it is wise to stop interacting (interrupting) much — proceed as though this is a new primary recording: show lots of interest, and encourage your friend to talk as much and as long as he/she wishes. Don't divert him/her from what he/she is wanting to talk about.

If this happens, you will have your primary recording and your secondary recording and within the secondary recording, some stretches will also be primary-recording material. So you may also record as you massage and discuss such parts of the secondary recording. You'll need to massage them in any case, since you didn't ask for clarifications as you listened to the live telling. So you might as well record the process, or you may lose a lot of interesting details. The process of massaging parts of the secondary recording is thus recorded in a *tertiary recording*.

I've never gone beyond that, making a quaternary recording, but it is conceivable you would do that. Anytime a lively, lengthy story pops up, you may need to massage the recording later, and it is helpful to have a recording of that massaging process.

Do I have to make recordings?

Some people wonder how their host friend will feel regarding having their stories and discussions recorded. In fact, many people find that the recording process quickly fades from their awareness, and doesn't much interfere with the life-story interviews. The recordings are an enormously valuable part of your listening library, rich in information about host life, and spoken in relatively simple language, since the host person is aware that they are explaining these things to someone with limited

understanding. Therefore it is worth going to some (gentle, cautious) effort to convince your friend that you will benefit from recording the stories and discussions. Promise that no one but you will hear the recordings, unless the speaker gives permission for that. Promise that if the speaker decides that they want something they said erased, you will immediately and permanently erase it. Keep your promises.

Very often, the first person you do life-story interviews with will be someone who has already been doing “language learning” activities with you, and therefore, who is accustomed to recordings. Once you have done some life story recordings with this person, you can tell others that this is what you’ve been doing (while not playing any of the interviews to others without permission.)

You may want to do an initial couple days without recording and then point out that you are losing so much, and ask if you can try recording once, and then massaging it without making a secondary recording. Once your host friend sees the value of massaging recordings, he/she may let you record all of the interviews from then on, including the secondary ones.

However, there may be situations where recording interviews is out of the question—for example, where women’s voices are not supposed to be heard by strangers, or where there is a history of government eavesdropping on private conversations. In such situations, as soon as possible after an interview, make notes of as much as you can remember. During the following interview with the same person try to summarise back what you remember. It should almost always be fine to write down (or have your host friend write down) new words. In fact, it may make perfect sense for you to make a recording of new words and sentences which illustrate them (or discussion of them), even if the interview in general cannot be recorded.

You can also be doing plenty of informal “interviews”, too. There will be parts of what your host friend tells you that are obviously not of a confidential nature. For example, they may mention that when they finished building their home, they conducted a special ceremony. You might say to any number of other friends, “Someone was telling me of the ceremony when they finished building their home. It was so interesting. Have you ever done that?” (Note how this still largely protects the anonymity of the original host person.) That is, topics from our interviews become topics of conversation woven naturally into many other relationships. Most of us are not going to be carrying a recording device around to record these natural conversations. But discussing the topics further with more people is an important part of our growing/learning experience.

(You are encouraged at this point to read the section on life story interviewing in Part 2 for a deeper understanding of this activity.)

Activity 2: Ethnographic Interviewing à la James Spradley

In the Life Story Activity, we concentrated on the way a particular life has unfolded over many years. The Ethnographic Interviewing Activity we turn to now looks at the daily lives of individuals at the

present time. In all societies different people fulfil different roles. We want to learn about what it is like to fill many of those roles. In the process, many life values and themes should emerge as well.

I once decided to learn about the current life experience of a rickshaw driver in Pakistan. (A rickshaw is a small vehicle with a two cycle motor, a seat for the driver in the front, with handle bars and other controls, a seat in back for two or three passengers, a plastic roof over the top, and otherwise largely open to the breeze.) I chose that walk of life because I was a constant user of rickshaws, and thought it would be valuable to better understand that whole area of Pakistani life experience.

You can begin by recruiting an interviewee from any profession that impinges greatly on your life, or that you find interesting. If you are planning to do medical work among host people, you might start by interviewing a nurse, for example. You certainly shop, and you can interview a shopkeeper. It is useful to do this with representatives of several walks of life. As this involves extended interviewing on more than one occasion, and making sound recordings of the interviews, you should insist on paying the interviewee a reasonable amount per hour based on local standards.

Step 1: Ask a grand tour question and record the response

Let's assume we have asked a rancher to let us interview him. We are going to ask a "typical" "grand tour" question. It is called "typical," not because it is a typical question, but because we are asking for a typical example—a typical day, a typical shift on a job, a typical process of building a house, etc. It is good to start with a typical day or shift on a job. Let's ask a rancher about his typical day.

As you encourage your storyteller to talk, emphasize two things: 1) Many things that are commonplace to this rancher, and may seem not worth mentioning, are things that you know nothing about. 2) All of these things he is talking about are really interesting to you, and you want to hear lots about them.

So here is the first grand tour question at the beginning of the interview process with Jack, the rancher:

Step 2: Massage the recording

Massaging the recording is always the same process—stop the recording when you don't understand part of it, and find out what is keeping you from understanding it, which might be unknown words, the pronunciation, aspects of host life that you don't understand, a sentence that you just can't make sense of, etc.

If you discover new words or idioms, add them to your word log. Once ethnographic interviewing is going smoothly for you, you may want to combine the next step with this one.

Step 3: Write down possible future questions in the chart below

A new form (Grand Tour Form) is provided below which differs slightly from the form used for the Life Story Activity, to remind you of the further types of questions you might ask in the Ethnographic Interview Activity.

More Grand Tour Questions

In the case of the rancher, we might ask about a typical day during other parts of the year, since he mentions that a typical day in winter is different from other times of year. What are some other possible grand tour questions suggested by his account of a typical day?

Typical year	A description of fencing (building fences—this sounds like a rather lengthy activity, longer than even a single afternoon)
Typical day during other times of year	Bringing hay down from the high meadow
A description of the layout of the ranch	other?

Mini-tour Questions

Various smaller activities were mentioned. A grand tour question covers an amount of time such as a whole day or more, or a whole shift at work, or some other lengthy process, or a description of a large place. A mini-tour question covers a much briefer activity, asking for a lot more detail about that activity. For example the process of harnessing the team might take ten minutes, if that. However the description of this process might end up being as long as the initial description of the entire day. From the account of the typical winter day on the ranch, we might find the following possible mini-tour questions.

making the fire in the cookstove	coffee break
putting on the coffee	eating dinner
eating breakfast	breaking holes in the creek
getting the team and hitching them up	eating supper
throwing hay down into the rack	description of the barn
tossing hay down	description of the shop

Don't get hung up debating whether a particular question is a grand tour question or a mini-tour question, though usually it is obvious whether a question will prompt a story which takes a few hours or a few minutes.

Example of a mini-tour question:

Interviewer: Jack, tell me about all you do when you make the fire in the cookstove.

Jack: Well, you take the handle, and move the lid. And you open the chimney. Then you take some kindling. Well, it's got shavings on it. I always make the shavings before I go to bed. Last thing. Then they're ready. So I light a piece of kindling and put it down in the stove, and then I add a few more

pieces, and then it's cracklin' and you can stick in a block of wood and it'll take. Well, a couple small blocks. When she's really roarin', you close down the chimney a bit. And that's about it. You know the big stove is goin' all night in the winter. You don't wanna let that one burn down, our you'll wake up and wish you hadn't. But now other times, like fall or spring, when you ain't usin' the big stove, then you do freeze your ass a bit, tryin' to get that fire goin'. But then it's O.K. and Ellen can get up and it ain't bad at all. Don't know why she don't make the fire. But anyway that's what we do. Other guys, their wives make the fire, you know. Ellen? I don't think so!

Jack: Anything I missed?

Interviewer: well, what exactly do you do when you light a piece of kindling?

Spotting and Filling In Cultural Domains

Cultural Domain refers to a set of items that are all of the same type. For example, "animals" is a domain. The members of the domain of animals are all the animals people are aware of, such as dogs, cats, horses, lions, tigers, etc. Implicit in the notion, however, is also the idea that membership in the domain is not solely determined by the individual respondent, but that it exists "out there" either in the language, in the culture or in reality. Hence, the set of colors that a given respondent likes to wear is not what we mean by a cultural domain.

Filling in a cultural domain involves asking your host friend, or other host people, to add to a list—a list that they themselves mentioned or implied. Some possibilities in the interview above might include

things that need workin' on	different places where there is hay
times to get up in the morning	different buildings on the ranch
Ellen's tasks	places on the ranch
breaks during the day	times of the year (from the standpoint of the work)
conditions of the creek	after supper activities

Take the example of "After Supper Activities". Jack mentioned reading and listening to the radio. Based on that, you might ask the following question:

Interviewer: Jack, you mentioned that after supper, you read and listen to the radio. Is there anything else you might do?

Jack: Oh, maybe a bit of crib with Ellen. Or just kick back.

Interviewer: Read, listen to the radio, play crib, kick back. Anything else.

Jack: Yeah read, or look at the catalogue; maybe play a bit of solitaire.

You see how the list of “After Supper Activities” is growing. Maybe Ellen will add some more ideas. Imagine the sort of list that might form out of each of the other possible cultural domains listed above.

You will want to put some thought into the follow up questions that you ask, and use all of the question types discussed in the section on ethnographic interviewing in Part 2. You will also find more information there about exploring cultural domains.

Use the form below much as you used the form for the Life Story Activity. First use the form until it becomes second nature, in order to make good choices about what to explore further, rather than going quickly to the two-recorder approach.

Step 4: Ask a follow-up question, and repeat the steps

	audio	massage	number	checked	checked	listened	listened
Grand tour questions, mini-tour questions, cultural domains to explore	recorded	d	of new words	for new topic ideas	for new cultural domains	to again	to later

Activity 3: Detailed Observation Activity

Introduction

In this activity you will be observing specific social situations, then describing them to a friend and listening carefully as they discuss or comment on what you are trying to describe. A social situation involves a place, activities and actors. Examples are virtually endless. A small food shop is a *place*, which includes within it smaller places such as the cash register, and *actors* such as customers and shopkeepers, and the *activities* of gathering food and checking out. The idea of a “social situation” is taken from Spradley (1980).

At this point, I recommend you read the further details on social situations and cultural scenes in Part 2.

Step 1: Identify some “social situations” and choose one for detailed observation.

The world of any host people group is full of social situations. Take a walk and make a list of places you see with actors and activities.

Social situations you might be able to observe:

Choose from your list one social situation that you will now observe in order to describe it in detail.

Step 2: Visit the social situation and take notes

You want to have highly detailed memories of what you observed. Given the limits of our brains, it is important to take notes. There are two kinds of notes: “head notes” and “jottings” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

Making head notes means paying attention to details with the intention of remembering them long term. Practically speaking, head notes need to be converted into written notes as soon as possible. The longer you wait, the less your head notes will survive.

It is better if possible to make jottings. You can invent your own shorthand for this. You can make a diagram of the social situation, and assign numbers, letters or abbreviations to different parts of the location and actors. For example if your social situation is a bus and there are fifteen rows of seats, you might designate the third row, right-hand aisle seat as “3RA”. A capital letter “D” can stand for the driver and “C” for the conductor.

Record as much as possible of what you experience in your chosen social situation—describing physical details (wall paper in the cafe, half-full trash can about ten inches high to the right of the door, stain on waiter’s apron, aromas present in the room, man and woman come in, the man, in black slacks and white short-sleeve shirt, is slightly ahead of the woman, etc.) Give much attention to facial expressions and other body language, to the positions people occupy, and their patterns of conversation—things like who talks first, who talks how much, etc. Don’t think about what you might or might not be easily able to describe in the host language. You don’t want any restriction on what you are going to need to talk about later with your host friend who will help you understand all that you observed.

Once you have left the setting, look over your jottings, and add details that will be helpful at a later time as you interpret what you wrote.

Here is an example of some fleshed out notes of observations at a petrol station early one morning in Central Asia:

It is six a.m. The sky is clear, but it isn't hot yet. There is one man, muscular, in a sleeveless t-shirt and dirty jeans, sweeping. No one else in view. No customers. It is dark inside the little shop of the service station, and there doesn't appear to be anyone there. The area surrounding the gas pumps and right up to the little store is paved with interlocking red bricks with zig-zag edges. To the right and left of that area is a downward sloping asphalt area through which cars enter and leave the red brick area. The man is sweeping with a typical local heavy-duty broom (round stick handle, thin sticks bound together at one end to form long bristles which spread out to make a wide sweeping end, maybe thirty centimetres wide—the whole thing over a metre long) pushing dirt, pebbles, rare small pieces of paper, forward ahead of him. Each long sweep is a arc-like motion along the ground. Man bends over slightly to sweep. With each sweep a low cloud of dust flies along in the air in front of the broom, along with other dirt, etc. moving along the ground. The man moves forward with each sweep, parallel to the building. Occasionally vehicles pass on the road. The area in front of the little shop is spacious, and the man keeps moving along steadily. He is working parallel to the little shop, and then outward toward the three double gas pumps which are also parallel to the building and each on a little raised white-tiled oval with a curb around it painted blue. In the direction that he is moving, he continues sweeping right down the sloping asphalt area to the edge, and then leaves all of the sweepings down at the edge as he sweeps the next wide strip parallel to the building. Eventually he sweeps all of the sweepings down the asphalt and into the street.

Step 3: Relying on your jottings or notes, describe the situation to your host friend

Now meet with a host friend for the purpose of describing and discussing what you observed. You will find that this will stretch your talking ability nicely. You may have ideas regarding the full meanings of what you saw. However, it is better to find out what your host friend is thinking about the situation you are describing than to share your own speculations: Who is the man with the broom? What is behind his sweeping? Who is the sweeping important to and why? What is the significance of the time of day? As you hear your host friends answers (or speculations), these can provide many insights into values and assumptions of host people.

You will probably be noticing many details of life that host people don't normally think about. Therefore one host person's explanations may not be the final word on some matters. Rather, anything that seems important to you is worth discussing with two or three other people—a process called triangulation (Fetterman, 1989). Confirmation by triangulation gives you a basis for confidence that you have discovered something of wider significance than an off the cuff conjecture of a single

individual. For example, it might be that several host people will conclude from the man's dress, but not from the fact that he is sweeping, that he is a labourer and not a supervisor. On the other hand, one host person may suggest that he is sweeping in the early morning to avoid the heat of the day, but no one else may find that a compelling explanation. Rather, three other people just feel that when a place opens for business in the morning, it should be clean. You don't need to triangulate on every detail, but only on matters that strike you as potentially important in terms of local life activities and values.

In describing what you observed, do not go easy on yourself. Tell your host friend about *all that you observed*—every detail in your notes or jottings.

And don't forget your word log!

Step 4: Record your host friend's summary and commentary.

Finally, your host friend describes the scene you described to them, as they understand your description, also commenting on the meanings they attached to what you observed. They should be sure to include all new words that were added to your word log.

Special cases: One-Time Events we are able to participate in

There are certain events that are not constantly available for observation, which are highly important. You should recognise when you are experiencing such an event, make many head notes, and as soon as possible, convert them to jottings and more detailed notes. You can then follow through with Steps 3 and 4. This might be an unexpected event with serious consequences, such as an automobile accident or a fight, or it might be a traditional event such as a memorial meal following a fixed period after a death.

Supplementary Activities

The Life Story Activity, Ethnographic Interviewing, and the Detailed Observation Activity will easily expand to fill 500 hours, and those 500 hours will take you far and wide as you continue exploring the host world from within. In order to grow steadily, it is important that your listening vocabulary grows steadily (words you understand when you hear them), and that you spend an adequate amount of time talking—struggling to express yourself in your own words.

You may find yourself frustrated as you try to express yourself as a host person would express themselves, keenly aware of your inability to get it quite right. For each of the problems you encounter, there are particular solutions. If you have been following the Six Phase Programme, you are already familiar with the activities suggested below as solutions.

Problem 1: Your vocabulary isn't growing very quickly

We recommend that for every hour of special activities (such as The Life Story Activity, Ethnographic Interviewing, and the Detailed Observation Activity) you have strong encounters with an average of eight or more new vocabulary items. We find that the primary Phase 4 activities often do not involve so many new words. The people we are interviewing adjust their speech because of our limitations, and much of the subject matter involves everyday topics and vocabulary we are already familiar with. You have learned a huge amount of everyday vocabulary by the beginning of Phase 4. Still, you are nowhere near our goal of 10,000 words in our listening vocabulary. You mustn't slow the pace at which you are becoming acquainted with new words. So during Phase 4, we recommend that if over the course of four days, you have added significantly less than eight words per hour of special activities, you should set aside time on the fifth day for activities which will expose you to many more new words. These might involve:

Hole-finding

In a hole-finding activity, you try to talk about something that is difficult for you, in order to find holes in your ability, such as unknown words. An example would be to watch a Tom & Jerry cartoon or a silent movie (Charlie Chaplin, Mr. Bean—both easy to purchase in many countries) and try to describe absolutely everything that happens. Describing your detailed observations in Activity 3 is also a good hole-finding activity. A busy picture (example to the right) or children's busy books, such as Brocklehurst, Dogerty, Milbourne & Gower(2003) can provide great opportunities for hole-finding. Just open to any page and try to describe what you see.



A Phase 2 activity with a picture story you haven't used yet

Use a wordless picture story that you have not used before, and attempt to tell the story to your host friend. This is a good time to use *Anno's Journey* (Anno, 1977).

A Phase 3 shared story that you haven't used yet

Any of the Phase three activities are likely to bring a steady influx of new vocabulary. This includes massaging world stories, or host stories you know from translation, or building new scripts of life.

It is our experience is that many of these earlier Six Phase Programme activities can result in a steady flow of new vocabulary. You will probably want to make a recording recapping the activity and including all of the new vocabulary.

Problem 2: Even when you know the words you need, you struggle to put them together in a native-like way

The Input Flooding and Output Flooding activities of Phase 3 may continue to be helpful. We won't explain them again here, but refer you to the Guide to Phase 3. ("Getting going in Phase 3: 250 Hours of Shared-Story Activities") The key is that you use these activities to raise your awareness of *aspects of grammar that you find yourself struggling with*. (See the section on grammar in Part 2 below.)

Record Yourself for Feedback

Another activity that some of us find useful is called Record Yourself for Feedback. In this activity you tell a story, or discuss a topic, addressing a host friend, and recording yourself as you talk. Then you go to the beginning of the recording, and go through it, a sentence at a time. Pause after every sentence. While you are paused, your host friend asks him/herself, "Is that something that I or another host person might have said, or is it clearly different from how host people would talk?." If the answer is that a host person might have said the same thing, then go on to the next sentence. If the answer is, "no, no host person would talk like that", then create a chart like the following:

What I said	How a host person might have said it	Optional statement of the nature of the problem
He blew her nose.	She blew her nose.	"He" refers to males.
My friend were there.	My friend was there.	he was, she was, they were, we were, you were!
etc.	etc.	(This column might be left empty)

Aspects of grammar that show up in your speech as non-native sounding in this activity can be used as a source of ideas for future input flooding or output flooding activities.

Writing Activities

Phase 4 is also a good Phase in which to begin writing, if the written language doesn't differ radically from the spoken language. You can begin writing a journal addressed to a host nurturer, and get feedback on that as well.

Such activities can keep raising your awareness of ways in which your speech is non-native sounding. But more important than that is to keep interacting with host people who help you to formulate your sentences, and PAY ATTENTION, pay lots of attention, to the ways they help you and correct you.

Problem 3: You aren't talking enough

Of the three main Phase 4 activities described above, two of them—Life Stories and Ethnographic Interviews—involve you in a lot of listening and only a little talking. However, in order for your own talking to become smooth and easy, you need to do a lot of talking yourself, too.

If you are developing a lifestyle of healthy participation, being involved with host people in your home life, leisure life, faith life, work life, etc., then you can greatly increase the amount of talking you do, even without relying on supercharged talking activities. However, as you are not yet in Phase 5 and 6, life alone may not be enough, and supercharged talking activities may still be of great value. (There is a section on such activities in the Guide to Phase 3, also.)

Supercharged Talking Activities: Ways to Talk a Lot

« Detailed Observation Activity is a good one in this connection. It stretches you to talk about details of everyday life that you do not yet find easy to talk about.

« Periodically retell, in summary form, what a host friend has been telling you in the Life Story Activity or the Ethnographic Interview activity.

« When your host friend has told you fascinating stories that are not confidential in character, and those can be retold in a way that leaves the original teller anonymous, then tell those stories to others—friends, co-workers, taxi drivers, your barber! These can provide rich conversation material.

« Spend some time telling the story of your own life to host friends; some of the important incidents of your life you can tell to various people, steadily increasing your ability to tell those particular stories, and in turn, increasing your ability to tell stories in general.

« Tell an epic story—one that goes on and on—to a number of people, in small instalments.

« Find host groups to participate in that require you to contribute orally to group life. It may be a faith-based group that holds discussions that you can join, or a special interest group of some sort, or perhaps just a group of people that regularly gather in the same teashop and discuss current issues. You will want to fit in and not be overly disruptive to the flow of group life, but later in Phase 4 you may be able to make extended contributions that flow smoothly with the contributions of the others.

« Maintain an active social-life in general, being a visitor and having visitors. (And see the section in Part 2 on competition between the home world and host world.)

« Any strategy that involves telling the same story, or giving the same explanation, to several different host people on different occasions will be profitable. You will notice great improvement from the first telling to the second, and on to the fourth or fifth retelling.

Distributing Your Time

In the idealised Growing Participator programme, five hundred hours are meant to be spent in Phase 4. It is fully possible to spend the entire five hundred hours just doing the Life Story Activity with a handful of host people. Limiting yourself in that manner would not be a great calamity, as that activity has proven to be the most fruitful one in many respects, because it focuses on helping us grow in our understanding of host life by enabling us to grow in our understanding of the lives of host individuals.

Try the three major activities right at the beginning of Phase 4, and then set personal goals as to how much time you will spend on each. As one example, you might set a goal of 300 hours of the Life Story Activity with five different host people, 100 hours of Ethnographic Interviewing with representatives of five walks of life, and 100 hours of Observing and Describing. You could structure this in many other ways, and it will be good if you can discuss it with a language learning advisor.

Part 2: Understanding Phase Four

At the beginning of this Guide to Phase 4, I said I would go right to the action, without pausing for a lot of explanation, and that is just what I did. Part 2 is here to help you understand Phase 4 in more depth.

Are you ready for Phase Four?

Recall that the Six Phase Programme involves an ideal of 1,500 hours of supercharged participation activities. Phases 1 to 3 take up 500 hours combined, while Phases 4 and 5 take 500 hours apiece. (Phase 6 goes on for years.) Thus, Phase 4 is that big middle phase.

***Phase 1, Phase 2,
Phase 3***

500 hours

Phase 4

500 hours

Phase 5

500 hours

This long middle phase raises some big challenges. I called it a “make-or-break” phase or a “sink-or-swim” phase. You’ve been relying so far on supercharged participation activities for most of your growth, and that is because the outside world didn’t provide hundreds of hours of rich growth opportunities. In Phase 4, you need to start making the outside world a richer and richer source of growth activities. It is becoming more possible, in this Phase. But it may not be easy! You may have to fight your way through tough times until it starts getting easier.

Are you really ready for Phase 4? Well, the basic rule is, if you can carry out the activities smoothly, you are ready. If you have done something at least similar in spirit to the idealised Six-Phase Programme for five hundred hours, then it is time to try Phase 4 activities. If the Life Story Activity seems exceedingly difficult the first day or two, you should press on for a few more days before deciding that Phase 4 is too advanced for you. I suggest pressing on for several days in the face of difficulty because some people have very high expectations of themselves, and have difficulty accepting the realities of what a struggle communication will be at this point. Thus they may never feel ready to go on, but will want to keep doing more and more lower phase activities. They must be encouraged to go on at some point! You may need the sink-or-swim spirit!

However, if after a week or two it doesn't get any easier, then you should spend more time with Phase 2 and 3 activities combined with increasing informal social interaction. Then try returning to Phase 4 Activities after a month or two.

In the idealised plan, Phase 3 involves 250 hours of supercharged participation activities. You may decide to try Phase 4 activities after less than 250 hours of Phase 3 activities. That's okay. If you find that the Phase 4 activities go smoothly and are fruitful, then go ahead with them. However there are certain benefits of Phase 3 activities that you want to keep in mind. Phase 3 activities allow your brain to process large quantities of complex speech, and thus they help to speed up your developing host-language listening system. Phase 3 activities also allow you to keep adding new vocabulary at a rapid pace. As mentioned in Part 1, we have found that in Phase 4 the pace with which we encounter new vocabulary may slow down, and so occasionally we need to use some Phase 2 and 3 activities for healthy infusions of new vocabulary.

If you *haven't* been using any of the Phase 1 through 3 activities, and have progressed in your communication ability to the point where you can easily do these Phase 4 activities, then you are ready! However, you may also find considerable benefit in learning to use activities from earlier phases, especially for providing lots of missing vocabulary and for gaining experience interacting with many topics. In fact, if you have the chance to coach a group of newcomers through Phase 1 (staying with them and the nurturer and doing all of the activities with them) you will probably be surprised how much you learn even doing the Phase 1 activities this late in your learning.

How Your Ability to Communicate Changes Throughout the Phases

Let's think about how some of your basic communication abilities have developed to this point:

Phase 1	You <i>understood</i> isolated statements and commands when you can see what the nurturer is talking about, and struggled to <i>talk</i> in highly constrained ways.
Phase 2	You started to <i>understand</i> sequences of statements that made up simple stories. You were <i>talking</i> in isolated statements about what you could see, and starting to <i>talk</i> flexibly.
Phase 3	You started to <i>understand</i> rich, complicated stories when the content was familiar in advance. You started to <i>understand</i> explanations ("expository" language). In your <i>talking</i> , you started to tell simple stories.

Can you see how these abilities have led you to Phase 4? In Phase 4 you will be learning deeply about host life, through learning deeply about individual host lives. This will require that you understand lots of explanations. You will also be summarising what you've been told, and sharing some of it (when it is non-confidential in nature) with others, retelling moderately complex stories. Most of your focus will be on host life, but to a smaller extent you'll also be sharing your own story—transformed into a new

story within the host world. In the depths of sharing life, issues of values will arise, and emotional issues will arise. You'll be occasionally explaining your views on complex matters.

Grammar and Vocabulary through the Phases

In terms of grammar, there is a built in progression in the Six-Phase Programme from:

here-and-now grammar, to simple story grammar (needed for simple sequences of events, mainly),
to complex story grammar (to show foreground, background, flashbacks, etc.),
to grammar needed for explanations (talking in general ways, in abstract ways, or talking hypothetically).

Much of this you don't need to worry about, as it falls into place. We've talked a bit about dealing with what doesn't fall into place.

"Grammar" is the glue that connects words together into coherent thoughts. It mainly involves word order (think of the difference between the expressions "he doesn't" and "doesn't he"), word groupings ("happy horse riders" can mean happy riders of horses, or riders of happy horses, depending on how you group the words: {happy} {horse rider} vs. {happy horse} {rider}), small words with special functions (*the, a, can, is, will, if, that, when, to etc.*) or variations in the form of words (*run versus ran, works versus working, man versus men, cat versus cats*). Sometimes you may know all the words you need for a particular idea you wish to express, but you are at a loss for how to put them together. To some extent, this may be a matter requiring patience.

Scholars tell us that our ability to use native-like grammar develops gradually, and often follows a particular developmental sequence. You may not be able to use a particular bit of grammar before you are ready for it. However, how do you know if you are ready? One idea, which we alluded to in Part 1, is that you may be ready for some particular aspect of grammar when you start noticing it a lot, and even trying to use it in your own speech.

For example, even without knowing a lot about grammar, you may notice that you are trying to say sentences that convey the idea "the X who is Y" (the man who is working), and you are vaguely aware of how host people do this, but not sure how to do it yourself. Or perhaps it is sentences of the sort, "He likes to X". Or "Someone helps him to X." In other words, there are ideas of a certain sort that you are trying to express, but find you don't know exactly how to put the sentences together. That is when we suggest input flooding and output flooding as described in the Guide to Phase 3. This provide a powerful way to become familiar with how such particular types of ideas are expressed, and can start giving you some confidence in expressing such ideas yourself.

The Record Yourself for Feedback activity can also alert you to aspects of grammar that are relevant in relation to your present talking ability, and provide you with a source of ideas for input flooding and output flooding activities.

Be warned, however, that there will be some bits of grammar that will puzzle you for a long time, perhaps indefinitely. Think of the English sentence, “Many Minnesotans like going to the lake on the weekend in the summer.” Now imagine someone is learning English, and they want to know why we say, “the lake” instead of “a lake” in this sentence, since they’ve been told that “the lake” would mean “one specific lake,” when in fact there are many lakes involved. Even one family that “went to the lake” every weekend might have been going to many different lakes. Now imagine trying to explain that in a way that would be helpful to the non-native English user who is puzzling over it. And even if you have a good answer in this case, there will be many more puzzles about the use of “a” and “the” in English. If you could answer all of the puzzles, it wouldn’t mean the non-native English user could remember the answers quickly enough to make use of them in speaking. In editing non-native English writing, I notice that non-natives have constant difficulty with “the” and “a”, and there are often no simple explanations that can help them. The only ultimate solution is for them to become highly familiar with how native English users talk! This will come with years of extensive participation in Anglophone languacultural worlds. Or it may never totally come. Probably in all languages there will be such difficult aspects of grammar that cannot be readily explained, or clarified by examples, as in input flooding activities.

As noted in Part 1, the process of interacting with host people who help you to form your sentences in more native-like ways may be a really important road to more native-sounding grammar. Beyond that, there can be no harm in becoming highly familiar with how host people talk by hearing host people talk, while understanding what they are saying, for thousands of hours!

In terms of vocabulary, you will have some acquaintance with perhaps 4,000 words by the beginning of Phase 4, so that new words will occur at a reasonable rate in the context of familiar words.

From Supercharged Participation to General Life with Host People

The first five of the six phases of the Six Phase Programme are named for the central *supercharged participation activities* of those phases. This is a bit unfortunate, as our real concern is with developing relationships with host people and our growing participation in the host world. However, the supercharged participation activities are extremely valuable to the extent that the host world does not yet provide us with rich growth opportunities for many hours a week, and in general, that doesn’t happen until Phase 6, although life should be moving in that direction by Phase 4.

Why do we say supercharged participation?

To make a long story short, we recognise that people grow in their “language ability” through participation in the host people group. We see host people as living a shared life, and ourselves as being nurtured into it, or apprenticed into it. Talking and listening are a huge part of the life we are being nurtured into, but there is not a *thing* called language that is independent of the ongoing process of talking and listening, or independent of the stream of actions and experiences in which talking and listening are embedded. (For sure, there are mental processes that go on inside the heads of the talkers and listeners, and we do keep those in mind as well, but those processes develop primarily as a result of the external activities of participation in the host languaculture.)

Now research in places like Europe and Canada has shown that host people in such places do not readily provide newcomers with rich opportunities to participate and thus to grow into the host languacultural world. Instead, newcomers are mainly able to interact with people in *service encounters* (such as paying for something at the check-out stand) and *bureaucratic encounters* (such as getting a driver’s license), but the host people in those relationships aren’t very nurturing to the newcomers! Even if you are a newcomer in a place where host people reach out to you, constantly inviting you into their homes and trying to get to know you, you may find that only a small percentage of your participation with them is very meaningful at first. How could it be otherwise? You can’t understand them and they can’t understand you, except minimally.

Thus we say that everyday life among the host people gives us only scattered opportunities to participate and grow, and therefore, we like to hire a host person who will provide us with heavily concentrated opportunities to participate in their world, and thus to grow. It is our times with such *paid nurturers* that we call *supercharged participation*.

Relationships through the Phases

As noted, the first five phases of the Six Phase Programme are named for their central type of supercharged participation activity: Phase 1) Here-and-Now activities, Phase 2) Story-Building activities, Phase 3) Shared Story activities, Phase 4) Deep Life Sharing Activities and Phase 5) Native-to-Native Discourse activities. By the time of the big, 500-hour midsection of the programme (that is, by Phase 4), there needs to be a lot more to life with host people than just the supercharged participation activities (if at all possible). In fact, more and more I am trying to remove the supercharged participation activities from the centre of our picture of the phases, and understand the phases first and foremost in terms of the relationships that need to develop in each phase. Let’s consider the six phases now in terms of our relationships with host people.

Phase 1	Our only rich growth relationship in the host world is our relationship with our paid nurturer. And it is a pretty limited relationship!
Phase 2	Our relationship with the paid nurturer is becoming more meaningful, and scattered shallow relationships are possible, but they don’t take a huge portion of our time.
Phase 3	Our relationship with the paid nurturer is becoming deep indeed, and scattered other relationships are becoming more meaningful.

Phase 4	A few relationships can become deep. Many relationships can be quite meaningful.
Phase 5	There is considerable freedom in forming meaningful and deep relationships.

Tough Times

As I said at the beginning, Phase 4 is a challenging phase. This is the time when it becomes urgent that you get serious about relationships with host people beyond the relationship you have with your paid nurturer. Some growing participators will have already been serious about other relationships in Phase 3, which is great, but not yet mandatory. In Phase 4, additional relationships are mandatory.

You will have months of difficult struggling ahead. Understanding host people requires tremendous concentration, tremendous mental effort, and even at that, you're aware that you are missing a lot, and hesitant to stop and ask for clarification as often as you would like. Expressing yourself will continue to be a challenge, as you struggle to come up with words you've heard a few times, but haven't yet used in your own speech. You set out to express ideas as you would readily express them in your native language, but they may not be ideas that host people would readily express in the host language. Or you launch off into a sentence, and realise that you don't know how to finish the sentence you started, or you get three quarters of the way through it, and realise that you needed to start the sentence differently from the way you started it. You are often embarrassed that you used a wrong word (wanting to say *tomato* you said *jealous*, which sounds slightly similar). Etc., etc., etc. You may talk, talk, talk, sensing that you aren't getting much right! In all of these struggles, you know you need to keep your relationships with your conversation partners primary. However, you are in fact very much absorbed in thinking about "how to talk", while the host people with whom you are talking are absorbed in the purpose of the conversation. Oh, these can be trying times through the months of struggles during Phase 4 and even in Phase 5. But no pain, no gain. Decide that there is no place to go but forward, even if you feel you're walking into a swift current. I sympathise with you, but you just gotta do it!

Never forget that no matter how badly it is going, participation in relationships is growth. I find this easy to believe when I watch a growing participator in my home world—someone "learning English". I actually find it exciting to see vivid growth happening before my very eyes! I see the non-native English user groping for a word, and the native helping them to find the word they are groping for, sometimes guiding them gently in the way they are forming their sentences, sometimes rewording what they themselves just said in order to make it simpler or clearer to the non-native.

Whenever you are among host people, interacting with them and involved in their interactions, that is growth happening. Growth happens slowly, but that is just how growth is. It is slow. Even "rapid growth" is pretty slow!

Thus, at this stage, you need to start filling your life with host relationships. Just listening to a variety of different speakers with different voices and different pronunciations is a challenge until you have

done it a lot. Your listening ability is a complex, many faceted ability, and every aspect of it is being strengthened as you are interacting with host people, and observing and participating in their interactions. Likewise in talking, so many words will be a struggle until you have needed to use them in talking to someone. Struggle-grow-struggle-grow-struggle-grow. Thousands of words need to become easy! And even if they're easy, you may get stuck trying to put them together with the necessary grammatical glue. As host people help you to say what you are trying to say, you keep getting a better sense of how to do that. You can't interact with host people or observe and participate in their interactions too much! This is a major concern in this long, tough, middle phase. Get in there. Slog on. Slog, slog, slog. It may be hard to believe, but things will get better in time.

Discovering the Host World: Choosing Topics to Investigate

Phase 4 is all about discovering the host languacultural world from within, a world that is radically distinct from your home world in which you continue to live, even when physically present in the host country. The host languaculture cannot be simply translated into your own languaculture. However, you can come to know it to a large extent. You know this host life by living it with host people who nurture you more and more deeply into it, letting you come to know what they know in the only way that it can be truly known—by means of their story building pieces, and their stories. (See the section below on languacultural worlds and *they stories*). For this reason, I am highly sympathetic with Spradley's (1979, 1980) emphasis on letting the host culture itself tell us what to investigate, rather than coming with our own list of topics to investigate.

"Classical anthropologists" sometimes came with checklists of topics to investigate, even before they knew anything about the host world. This might involve fancy English terms such as "mate selection" and "bodily adornments, cosmetics, ornaments and apparel". If we bring such ideas of our own, our understanding of host people will be far removed from their actual experience. Instead, we want to stay as near as we can to their actual experience (Geertz, 1984), and we mainly do that by listening to how they talk about their experience in their own everyday terms, and understanding what they are saying because we listen to them a lot.

Whether we start with the Life Story Activity or with Ethnographic Interviews, start first with broad, open questions: "Tell me the story of your life." "Tell me what you do in a typical day." The main source of later questions will be what your host friend has mentioned already when responding to your earlier questions. By asking only the most general questions at first, and allowing our host friend to talk about whatever they choose to talk about, we begin finding out what is important to them, what is most noteworthy, what seems to them hardly worth mentioning, and so on. We can in fact, be on the lookout for their mention of "key events" (Fetterman, 1989) which may reveal a lot about important themes in host life. These might include random but major events, like a house fire, and

also the regular major events of life such as weddings, births, deaths, etc., regular religious events, special days (such as holidays) and so on. Thus, although we don't pursue discussion of such topics out of context, we are alert to the mention of them.

For example, if our host friend mentions that she is twelve years older than her youngest sister, we might ask what she remembers about the time when her sister was born (which we wouldn't ask if she is only three years older). We will find that all aspects of life can be explored if we start with general questions, letting our host friends talk about what they wish to talk about in reply, and then following up on things they have said with more questions, and continuing that cycle.

There is one further source of topics for exploration, and that is anything that we observe, or hear about from the host people. This includes the discussions of the Observe and Describe Activity, but not only those. We might experience something that seems likely to be of special significance, like a person getting struck by a car, and observe the reactions of those around, or we might just explore anything in our daily experience in the host world that puzzles us, such as times when people seem unexplainably upset with us. Asking about whatever we experience is another way to open up rich possibilities for exploring the host world, letting it unfold from within. On a Saturday morning, we see many people leaving their homes and going in different directions. Where might they be going? That is a general question. The answer to it will tell us much about host life. In addition, it is tied to our clear, concrete experience in the host world.

We also look for opportunities to be present at any key events, and while present at them, we at least take a lot of head notes, followed by written notes, followed by discussion with a host friend.

Both when deciding follow-up questions or when choosing observations to discuss with host friends, we are certainly guided by matters that interest us. These have been called *sensitizing concepts*. If we are interested in anything to do with values, the supernatural, exchanges of possessions or services, alienation, reconciliation, major life events, etc., we *do* pursue them *when they arise* naturally in our host friend's discussions. Fetterman (1989) also mentions paying attention to events that recur cyclically, such as daily, weekly, monthly or yearly events, as they may reflect important forces at work in shaping the culture.

Thus, we don't come to the host languacultural world with a blank slate. However, we also don't start from our own list of such issues, and begin by directly interrogating host people about matters they have not mentioned, or shown any interest in, or that we have not observed. We will find that by following up on replies to broad questions, and pursuing a deeper understanding of events and situations that we have personally experienced or heard host people talk about, we can roam far and wide, discovering the host world as host people live it and know it.

More on Life Story interviews

Our presentation of the steps in the Life Story Activity may have sounded dry and mechanical. However, you will find that this is far from the reality. Robert Atkinson, in the book *The Life Story Interview* (1998) tells how his first life story interview for his master's thesis in folklore, to his surprise, led to a "deep, personal connection" with the storyteller, and how this experience recurred with many other storytellers in the years following. He makes comments such as the following

When we assist someone else in this personally sacred endeavour of telling his or her life story, it can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding interpersonal experiences ever. (p. 22)

As an approach to understanding another's individual life and really connecting with another's experience, there may be no equal to the life story interview. (p. 24)

I believe that for the vast majority of people, the sharing of their life stories is something that they really want to do. All that most people usually need is someone to listen to them or someone to show an interest in their stories and they will welcome the opportunity. (25)

Atkinson also lists many benefits to those who tell their life stories:

A clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings...greater meaning to one's life...stronger self-image and self esteem

Cherished experiences and insights...shared with others

Joy, satisfaction, peace...

...purging, or releasing, certain burdens, and validating personal experience

..creates community...help other people to see their lives more clearly

Others will get to ...understand [the story teller]..in a way they hadn't before

A better sense of how we want our story [our life] to end... (pp. 25-26)

The storyteller may indeed come to understand him/herself in a much richer way. What a gift we can give to another! The life story "will highlight what is most personally meaningful to the teller," tell us "who they are at their core," and "make it clear what matters most in a life." (p. 14)

In life story interviews, the first priority is to be a good listener—to let our host friend have the joy of being truly understood. That is another reason why we don't begin by pursuing issues that are of interest to us, but begin with whatever our host friend wishes to emphasise.

One host person told her basic life story without mentioning that from the age of six to fifteen she was raised by relatives rather than by her parents. The fact that this did not seem worthy of mention in the primary life story is of significance in understanding the life of her people. When this fact did finally emerge it also led to the recounting of lively memories of the time when the relatives came to get her.

By following the host friend's priority, the host values emerged in a way that wouldn't have happened if the listeners had followed their own agenda regarding what they wanted to hear about.

On another level, though, the story that gets told will be strongly influenced by the listener. Although during the main story telling times, you try not to steer the story, during other times, you will be interacting with the storyteller, raising questions that others might not think to raise. In one case, a woman had told a summary of her own life, and then as we expanded it, she told of her father's life. I called her attention to the fact that her father and she had the same profession. She went on to tell about how and why she disliked her father's profession when she was a child, and how later circumstances led her into the same profession, and how she loved her profession. You might not have mentioned the fact that her father and she had the same profession. You might also mention things I would not mention. The total story that emerges is very much a product of your interaction with the storyteller. It is their life, but the version that gets told can be said to be jointly constructed in a living relationship between the storyteller and you. Your contribution to the story will be small, but your influence on the story will not be small. The very fact that the story is set within a whole way of life that is new to you, the listener, is going to make this version of the person's life story different from a version that would emerge if the interviewer were not a newcomer, but just another host person.

Person-Centred Listening

We want to come to know the world of our host people. Life history interviewing lets us do that. We come to know the host people group deeply by coming to know several host people deeply. To quote Atkinson again, life stories "provide us with information about the social reality existing outside of the story." When an anthropologist takes this approach to a culture, it has been called "person-centred ethnography" (Wolcott, 1999). Though we growing participators are not usually anthropologists, we can say that our approach to languacultural growth is also person-centred.

Expect a strong bond to form with anyone with whom you do extensive life story interviews. The first few days, however, you may want to avoid focusing on the more personal incidents. For example, your host friend may mention the death of a parent during their initial story. You might not ask them to expand that on the first day. Allow time to become comfortable with one another, and let the relationship steadily deepen. Soon people may be sharing their deepest joys and hurts. There will be real laughter in your interactions. Don't be surprised if there are real tears as well—your host friend's and your own. Being nurtured into a host people group is a priceless privilege. Treat it as such.

Fetterman (1989) makes a similar point about ethnographic interviewing in general. The anthropologist may come to know more about the life of an "informant" (in Fetterman's terms, a *key actor*), than just about anyone else other than the informant themselves. Knowing that someone else knows one so well will inevitably lead to an unusual relationship with that person. (Such relationships are celebrated in writings such as Grindal & Salamone's, 1995 collection in *Bridges to Humanity: Narratives on Anthropology and Friendship*.) This often means that a strong bond forms between an

anthropologist and an informant, even though the anthropologist's purpose was not to form a strong bond at all—it may even have come as surprise that this happened.

Confidentiality Reminder

A further word about confidentiality is thus in order. Crane and Agrosino (1992), citing pioneer anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, talk of the relationship of the storyteller to the interviewer as involving “trust comparable to that enjoyed by a physician, lawyer, or priest” (p. 82). Although you are probably not a researcher, intending to use your friend's life story for your own personal advancement, you should still honour the highly personal nature of someone sharing their life in such depth. I believe that if you are a researcher, you should be sworn to absolutely protect the anonymity of all the information you collect, unless specific permission is granted to the contrary. As a simple growing participator, you don't face such a severe restriction. Your interviews are part of your normal growing relationships with host people, and those people may tell you interesting incidents of a non-personal character that you would be free to relate to others: “My neighbour had such an interesting experience in his childhood. He said that...” In fact, it's good to do this. It may lead others to share similar experiences, and it gives you something interesting to talk about. However, you must know where to draw the line. If someone tells you of their grief over a miscarriage, you should not feel free to tell that to anyone else in any way that would risk violating anonymity. Err far on the side of caution. If word gets back to your host friend that you are talking to others about them, think what that might do to the person, and to your relationship with them.

Again, most growing participators are not anthropologists. Atkinson points out that life history interviews are used by folklorists, research psychologists, counsellors, historians, linguists and others, all with their own purposes that influence their approaches. We can now add growing participators to the list! We are especially influenced by the approach of anthropologists, since they, like us, are interested in the “insider's perspective”. This claim can be exaggerated, though, when it comes to anthropologists. Geertz (1984) points out that an anthropologist is analysing the host experience in a way that is removed from that experience to a smaller or larger degree. Growing participators are much more fully concerned than anthropologists with functioning from within the insider's perspective, not primarily building outsiders' theories regarding the insider's perspective! (See the final section of Part 2 for more discussion of the differences between anthropologists and growing participators.)

More on Ethnographic Interviewing and Detailed Observations

In this section we provide more information from Spradley's books (1979, 1980) that we find helpful. Most growing participators will not use all of the steps in those books, though it wouldn't be a bad idea. We just present the ideas that we find most fruitful for growing participators.

Cultural domains

In the explanation of the Ethnographic Interviewing Activity, I introduced the idea of cultural domains using the example of "After Supper Activities" on the ranch: reading, listening to the radio, playing crib, kicking back, playing solitaire. I suggested you might also ask Ellen to add to the list. Eventually, you might take the list you have compiled so far, and read it to other ranchers, to see what they add. It may be that winter evening activities would turn out to be an extensive cultural domain, in which case, you would know you have discovered an important aspect of ranch life.

What will you call this cultural domain? I called it "After Supper Activities on the Ranch". However, to find the host cover term for this cultural domain, we would read the list to some ranchers and ask them, "What are these examples of?" (or some such question). We might thus discover what they would call the particular cultural domain. In some cases, the host person being interviewed will provide the name at the same time they give you evidence of a cultural domain. That was the case with "things that need workin' on." In the examples I cited in the discussion of the Ethnographic Interviewing Activity, I was rather liberal in making up names for cultural domains. For example, I used the word "breaks", when Jack had only mentioned "dinner," and two "coffee times". It may turn out that this is a cultural domain for Jack, and that he doesn't have a fixed term to call it by. In that case, you can still get him to come up with some cover term that he is comfortable with.

Spradley (1979) proposes the following list of relationships involved in cultural domains (p. 111) :

Strict inclusion	X is a kind of Y
Spatial	X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y
Cause-effect	X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y
Rationale	X is a reason for doing Y
Location of an action	X is a place for doing Y
Function	X is used for Y
Means-end	X is a way to do Y
Sequence	X is a step (stage) in Y
Attribution	X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y

You might want to refer to this list at first when looking for cultural domains. A basic idea behind this is that people's knowledge of their world is not randomly organized, but rather is well structured, and you can gain a lot of understanding by exploring the way it is organized. There are further steps in

analysing cultural domains, and if you are interested in pursuing this farther, we refer you to Spradley (1979).

Although the exploration of cultural domains is rewarding, I don't find this activity any more important than asking grand tour questions, mini-tour questions, and other types of descriptive questions.

Ethnographic Questions

Spradley (1971) distinguishes between *descriptive questions* (such as grand tour questions), *structural questions* (such as, "What are some other evening activities?") asked in an effort to fill in a cultural domain, and *contrast questions* ("What is the difference between a day in haying season and a day in the early fall?") asked in order to better understand a cultural domain. For most growing participators following the Six Phase Programme, the descriptive questions are the mainstay, and they will generate a huge amount of information about host life, both within specific walks of life, and more generally. Descriptive questions include the following (pp. 86-88)

Grand tour questions	
Typical grand tour questions	Such as asking Jack about a typical day on the ranch
Specific grand tour questions	Such as asking Jack to tell you what he did from morning to night on Wednesday—an actual day that occurred recently
Guided grand tour questions	Such as asking Jack to tell you about all the places in the barn, and actually being in the barn with him as he does it, so that you can see what he is talking about
Task-related grand tour questions	Such as, Jack harnesses a horse and tells you what he is doing at each point
Mini-tour questions	Such as asking Jack to tell you about lighting the kindling
Experience questions	Such as "Have you had any really interesting experiences while feeding the cattle?"

It is good to use questions of all of these types. Asking about what Jack did on Wednesday will lead to a different picture from the general picture of "a typical day". Both kinds of descriptions are important. Experience questions can lead to great enrichments of your understanding of host life, as they will reflect expectations, assumptions and the kinds of problems that can arise when things don't go as expected. "Typical" questions might more directly reflect how host people's knowledge of their world gets organised when it is talked about.

Detailed Observations, Social Situations and Cultural Scenes

In connection with making detailed observations, Spradley distinguishes between a social situation and a "cultural scene". Two people sitting on objects with legs and a back, facing each other across a surface that is also supported on legs, manipulating objects, would be an example of a social situation. If we see the same situation as two people dining in a restaurant or two people playing chess, we are attaching rich meanings to what we see, beyond the basics. However, in spite of making such a

distinction between social situations and cultural scenes, Spradley's examples of supposed social situations on pp. 40-45 all seem in fact to be cultural scenes, such as "grocery store checkout counter".

Spradley's idea of a bare social situation is similar to Geertz' (1972) idea of a "thin description". Geertz took an example from philosopher Gilbert Ryle in which a certain action can be described either as a "wink" (a *thick description*, full of cultural meaning) or as a "rapid contraction of the right eyelids" (a *thin description* stating a bare physical fact with no cultural meaning attached). In fact, a rapid contraction of the right eyelids might not be a wink at all, but merely a twitch, or it may indeed be a wink. If you describe it either as a wink or a twitch you are interpreting it, giving it a meaning. You likely give it a meaning based on your own culture, rather than seeking the meanings it might have within the culture of the person whose right eyelids contracted (see the appendix on "*they stories*").

As we make our initial observations of social situations, we try to keep our descriptions relatively thin. However, we adopt the view of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky that thought and experience are largely carried out *by means of* culturally given *symbols* (basically, symbols are sounds or sights, plus the concepts that are tied to them—we discuss this at length below in the next section). Thus there are no "thin descriptions" or "bare" social situations with no meanings. We see meaningfully. We cannot see meaninglessly, but rather understand what we see in terms of the options our culture provides us with. To say that someone's right eyelids contracted is to make use of the words (and hence concepts) *right*, *eyelids* and *contracted*, which are as much a part of the cultural way of understanding the world as are winking and twitching. We need to recognise that when we observe actors acting in a location, we are already interpreting what we see, in the very act of looking. We hope that by being aware of this fact, we will be in a better position to start hearing how host people see the same situations differently from the way that we do, and to increasingly experience host situations in host ways. This will require years of living in the situations and hearing host people talk about life situations in general. The current activity is intended to supercharge that many-year process.

Linguacultural Worlds, "They Stories" and the host Story

Much of our thought life happens in the form of stories or conversations (or as one side of a conversation, as though another is listening and responding). And if that is true of our thought life, it is true of our ongoing experience of life. We interpret what we see, just as we would interpret a story that we listen to, creating the story of our life right as we live it. And life is heavily interactional—our actions are often like statements, requests, warnings, etc., even if we aren't talking. And we respond to one another's actions in an interactive way, whether we are talking or not. If you are standing, and I bring a chair into the room and set it near you, I have offered you a seat. If you sit in it, you have responded to my offer. So life flows forward as a story, with many conversations in it. At times the

story and the conversations are spoken, and at times they are not. Looking back on events, we retell them, and in the process we re-design the original story that we experienced as we lived the events. This flow of life, with the stories and conversations lived and spoken, is what Michal Agar (1994) called a *languaculture*.

Within the Growing Participator Approach, our understanding of languaculture doesn't stop there. The Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (Wertsch, 1985) developed the idea that humans don't experience the world, or even their own thoughts, directly, but rather indirectly through using *means*. Tools are one example of means. Animals generally deal with the world directly. A lion bites a zebra, kills it, strips pieces off, eats them, all very directly. A human will use one tool to kill the zebra, another to butcher it, other tools to cook it and other tools to eat it. The world of humans is different—wildly so—from what it would be if it weren't lived by means of tools.

Human experience and thinking are also carried out through *means*. In this case, the means are *symbols*, as mentioned in the previous section. We might tie knots on a string as a way of counting (perhaps counting cows) and as a way of adding. The knots symbolise what it is we are counting and symbolise the numbers, although numbers are themselves already another sort of symbol.

Thus a symbol includes a form and a concept. The form might be a knot on a string, a stick figure, a wave of the hand, a spoken word, etc. The concept is what the form stands for. For example the word form *tomato* stands for the tomato concept—starting with what a tomato looks like and feels like and so on, and continuing with everything else we associate with tomatoes.

The main collection of symbols which humans use as their means for experiencing life and for thinking is their language. Other symbols, indeed other means of living, such as tools, pale in significance when compared to language. The impact of language on the world that people know is colossal. Language, more than anything else, determines the nature of human life, of human experience.

We readily recognise that words are meaningful, but the physical objects, actions, etc. that words are associated with are also meaningful in their own right. A tomato, for example is a meaningful object in that when I see a tomato, it opens to me certain possibilities of action: washing it, slicing it, eating it (and experiencing its possible flavours), boiling it. Other possibilities—throwing it, stepping on it, sitting on it—are less central. So the tomato concept, what the spoken word form *tomato* stands for, is available to me as I deal with tomatoes in life. It guides my dealings with tomatoes. I have massive stock of such concepts available to me. The set of concepts is tied to the set of words in my speech, to a large extent, though not exclusively. However, without speech, we would have an impoverished set of concepts. Speech enables us to collect concepts that our ancestors have been developing for generations, and the talking that goes on around the concepts greatly enriches them.

This idea that human experience and thinking are done by means of this massive set of richly developed “tools” (symbols) has transformed my understanding of “language learning”. I used to think that the world we experience is just “out there” waiting to be talked about in whatever language we

happen to know. I thought that words (to simplify) are labels for the things out there in the world, and that in learning a new language we replace the labels of our native language with the labels of the new language (among other things), but that the objects we are labelling are there independently of the words used to label them. How could it be otherwise?

I came to see that it is otherwise. Between us and the objects are the “tools” (symbols)—the word forms and their concepts. And as with tools, choice of symbols determines much about the world we experience. The bare objects in the world leave the world relatively meaningless. The meanings are what we bring to the objects. For example, take an object—a bathrobe (dressing gown). It is manufactured in China and shipped to Canada and sold as a bathrobe. The identical object is shipped to Kazakhstan and sold as a *khalat*. However, we can't say that the article that the Chinese manufactured is “the same thing” for Canadians and for Kazakhs, with Canadians happening to call it a bathrobe and Kazakhs (and Russians) happening to call it a *khalat*. A bathrobe is not a *khalat*! In Canada, people have various options for sleepwear: nightgowns, pyjamas, underwear, nothing at all. A bathrobe is what you wear over your sleepwear once you are up and before you put on your primary daytime clothing (or after you take off your primary daytime clothing and put on your sleepwear, but haven't gone to bed). This is the primary meaning of bathrobes in Canada (there are other, lesser meanings). A *khalat* is an item of everyday clothing, mainly for around the house, but not limited to around the house. It is important to understand that the identical article, if shipped to Canada becomes a bathrobe, and if shipped to Kazakhstan, becomes a *khalat*.

Bathrobes are one of the pieces of Canadian life. The word “bathrobe” is one of the scores of thousands building blocks of Canadian spoken (or written) stories, and the bathrobe itself is one of the building block of the Canadian *lived* story. *Khalat*s are one of the pieces of Kazakh life. The word “*khalat*” is one of the scores of thousands of building blocks of Kazakh spoken (or written) stories. The *khalat* itself is one of the building blocks of the *lived* Kazakh story. But note that when I say, “the bathrobe itself” and “the *khalat* itself”, I might be talking about the identical physical article. But what it is as a physical article is a very small part of what a bathrobe or *khalat* is to a Canadian or to a Kazakh, respectively, though a physical object with certain features is indeed necessary for us to have a bathrobe or a *khalat*. (To complicate matters, although most *khalat*s would count as bathrobes, and most bathrobes would count as *khalat*s, if I saw a dozen different exemplars of one or that other at the same time, I would know right off whether I was looking at bathrobes or *khalat*s, based on the features they tend most frequently to have.)

Now when a Canadian visits Kazakhstan, he might see a woman in a bathrobe out on the sidewalk, or in the little neighbourhood grocery shop, or occasionally on the bus, or even, in one case, in church, or in another, on a Saturday group picnic out in the mountains. And so he tells his story to another Canadian: “I was in the neighbourhood grocery shop, and there was a customer in there in her bathrobe.” This is what we call a *they* story. He is using his Canadian symbols to experience the actions of Kazakhs. He is building a Canadian story about Kazakhstan, using Canadian story-building pieces.

But the story he is building is radically different from the story that the Kazakh woman is living. She is not in a grocery shop, but rather an azyk tulik dukeni (to slaughter her pronunciation) and not wearing a bathrobe but a khalat. The Canadian story seems worth telling, as there is something noteworthy that is observed. I mean, we don't expect to see customers in the grocery shop in bathrobes. The Kazakh story isn't worth telling, as it is just ordinary, expectable life scene, which would typically go unnoticed and not be remembered.

To enrich the idea of *they stories* a bit, a Canadian might say, "I saw a Kazakh woman in a bathrobe drinking tea from a small bowl." In fact none of the key pieces of this Canadian *they story* match the pieces of life that the woman is experiencing—not the *bathrobe* (which is actually a *khalat*), not the *bowl* (which is actually a *kece*, primarily used for tea drinking—though in the Canadian world, it is indeed a bowl), not the *tea* (which is actually *shai*, and not at all to be equated with tea, even if made with the same leaves, milk and sugar—the place it has in life is so different), and certainly not the *Kazakh woman*. Again, the Canadian is building a Canadian story (a Canadian experience) using Canadian story building pieces, and it is radically different from the story (experience) that the Kazakh woman is living. That is the essence of *they stories*. In fact, the story building pieces (experience building pieces) probably never match up across languacultures. The meanings of the words and of the objects (and actions, etc.) differ significantly, be they rocks or rills, bread or tea, buses or houses, eating or sleeping or be they abstract pieces of life like honour or friendship (or be they including facial expressions or other bodily motions, or the arrangements of objects in space, or who sits or stands where, or who talks when and how much and who listens, ad infinitum). Until we have joined the story-building practices of another languacultural group, using its story-building pieces, the only way we can experience that group is in terms of *they stories*.

This idea of *they stories* has provided us with a new way of understanding our growing participation. When we first begin living in a host community, we experience everything as *they stories*. After all, our most powerful means of thinking is our language and the concepts it includes, or rather, our languaculture—the "things themselves" and the actions that involve them, and the ways they are talked about, and the intermingling of actions without words, and actions with words, in a continuous flow of human life. We have no hope of leaving our own languaculture back in our home country. It is the only way we can make much sense out of our experience at all. But over time, we want host people to nurture us into the story that they are living, and the stories that they are telling. It isn't a matter of replacing labels from one language with labels from another language. Rather, it is a matter of discovering a whole new collection of story building pieces, and possible stories built from them, possible ways life can go.

The "things in themselves" (khalats, bathrobes and thousands of other things) are rarely, perhaps never, the "same thing" in two different languacultures. If two languacultures have been in close proximity for a long time, interacting, sharing artefacts, importing and exporting to one another, perhaps intermarrying with one another, then translating story-building pieces between

languacultures may not be so exceedingly difficult as when two languacultures have been radically isolated from one another for millennia. In any case, they are different stories, and newcomers to a languaculture will initially be building a story using their own story-building pieces, and that just is not the story that the host people are living.

This understanding of language learning as growing participation in another languacultural world puts our supercharged participation activities in a different light. In Phase 1, we are largely learning only part of the host symbols: the sound of the words, but not the concepts. We hear *khalat*, and we attach it to our bathrobe concept. We interpret what we see in a grocery shop using our home-languaculture grocery shop concept and applying our home-languacultural *script* of what normally happens in grocery shops.

(Some have complained that in Phase 1, we aren't learning the culture at all, but only words. In fact, the words—more precisely, the sounds of the host languacultural words—are no small detail of host life, but rather a massive part of the host languaculture, and so the fact that we are learning them is nothing to apologise about, even if we are often connecting them to our home languacultural concepts at first. Words are a wonderful place to start. Besides that, many new pieces of life are encountered in Phase 1 for which there is no home languacultural concept. An example would be the *dombra* musical instrument in Kazakhstan. Nothing like it exists in Canada. The Phase 1 experience is tied to the pieces of local host life as much as possible, whether or not they have identical physical counterparts in the home-languacultural life. Besides that, Phase 1 includes a more than words. It also includes the ways host people meaningfully combine words, and which words they in fact combine with which other words and so on. That is all part of the languaculture. In any case, we have to start somewhere in understanding host speech. We can't start with deep life sharing. It will take a few hundred hours to become capable of that.)

As we go through the phases of the Six Phase Programme, we are nudged more and more into the story that host people are living. By the end of Phase 5, we hope that we are living their story with them, though still plagued by our native “accent” (not just an accent in our pronunciation, but also in our understandings—I still see bathrobes when Kazakhs are out in their *khalats*!)

We can thus see Phase 4 as pivotal in this regard as well as in so many others. It is the phase of the great cross-over, going from living life among host people largely as a *they story*, to living the host story with host people.

Discourses of Life and other Phase 5 issues to Keep in Mind

Many of us have had the experience of coming upon two acquaintances who were deeply involved in conversation, and trying to step into the conversation in the middle of it, only to find that our

intended contribution doesn't fit, because we have not been party to the information that preceded. A very similar experience can arise even when we are involved in a conversation from the beginning. This happens when the conversation itself is not an isolated event, but part of a bigger "conversation" that goes on in our society on a particular topic, such as the ongoing conversations in our society about hockey, computers, the stock market, etc. Here too, if we try to join in the specific, individual conversations, even though we are there from the beginning, our intended contribution may flop, if we are not truly a party of the ongoing conversation in society (for example, we have never discussed hockey before, but try to make a meaningful contribution to a discussion of the playoffs).

Each little conversation about hockey is what we call a discourse about hockey. The big conversation about hockey that permeates Canadian society is what we call the Discourse (capitalised) about hockey. The discourses belong to the Discourse (hopefully).

Being accepted as a legitimate participant in host life means coming across as though we are a party to the Discourses that all members of the host group are party to (as well as being party to the Discourses that people of our chosen walk of life are party to). This goes beyond knowing the story building pieces and scripts that host life follows, to knowing how people talk about the things they talk about, what they mention, the background knowledge that they assume, and so on. This is one of the areas we will tackle with full steam in Phase 5, but in Phase 4 we can be asking about themes, people, places and events that are universally known to host people.

Other issues that will come to the fore especially Phase 5 (the Native-to-Native Discourses Phase) include 1) the issue of how to "do things with words" appropriately (make requests, accept requests, decline requests, apologise, express forgiveness, make a commitment, etc.); and 2) the issue of using appropriate styles in appropriate contexts. Only in Phase 5 are you likely to have enough ability in terms of grammar and vocabulary to deal seriously with such advanced issues.

Along with the Discourses of Life these are mentioned here to encourage us to keep a bigger picture in view: We are being nurtured into the languacultural world of host experience. This world is constructed by host people through their interactions with one another. We are learning to be actors in a social world, a world where the most important actions that make life what it is are actions involving *talking* and *listening*.

Competition between the Home World and the Host World

On the conceptual level—the level of how we experience life—the new languaculture faces an enormous challenge in your life: you already are living by means of a full-blown languaculture. In this you have a great advantage compared to someone who might have reached adulthood with little languaculture at all (such as children raised by wild animals or in isolated abusive non-nurturing or

deprived environments). You have a massive “bag of tools” for coping with the enormous challenge of growing into a new languaculture, or any other enormous challenges of life. That bag of tools is your old languacultural symbol system—your main means of thinking, problem solving, coping. (As an old credit card commercial used to say, “Don’t leave home without it!”) At the same time, how can the new languaculture possibly compete with it for time. Every waking hour in order to experience life, you are making heavy use of your home languaculture. Now you have a few hours a week to grow into using another languacultural symbol system, but your old one is always there, wanting to do as much of the work of living as it can, robbing your new languaculture of the chance to take solid hold in you.

You need to spend thousands of hours participating in this new languacultural world. Your supercharged participation sessions have been key during Phases 1 to 3. Without them, meaningful participation would have been limited indeed. They continue to be of great value in Phase 4. However, there is going to need to be a lot more than another thousand hours of supercharged participation activities. Somehow, you need to get to the point where, for an extended period of time, you are living a significant portion of your life with host people, and using the host languaculture as a major means of living with them.

In Phases 1 to 3 this was not been a big issue, as functioning in the host world outside of your supercharged participation sessions was not a major possibility. You may have spent a lot of time trying to interact with host people, but in fact the amount of really meaningful interacting was rather meagre. Now that needs to change.

It is likely that there are people similar to yourself who are also living in your host world, in my case, other Anglo-Canadians, or at least, North Americans. Let me pick on North Americans a bit here, because I find us to be the biggest offenders when it comes to staying home in our hearts while we are abroad in our bodies, and even inviting (or dragging) others into our transplanted North American world (which I also call our home-away-from-home world). However the same general danger I discuss here exists for people from any part of the world living abroad, if ever there are a number of them from the same home country living in the same city abroad.

We North Americans get together often, and carry on a very North American life in the midst of a big *they story* of the host world that we share together—making what host people are doing a part of our ongoing North American story, rather than growing deeply into the radically different story that host people are actually living. This North American community is an important source of emotional support for newcomers who are also from North America, helping them to survive the early culture shock. But then what? Phase 4 is the “sink or swim” phase. Are we going to switch over to having much less “home life” and much more “host life,” or are we going to stay marooned on our island, rather archipelago, of home life. It is a rich home away from home—an amazingly robust world with it’s own history, jargon and folklore. It can easily become our primary world while abroad. And the old-timers (six months or more) in this home-away-from-home world will be quick to orient newcomers with appropriate *they stories*!

The challenge is especially great these days for expat families abroad. There is such a temptation to stay “home” socio-culturally, even while physically living abroad. Our families can live in little home-world isolation bubbles, holding the strange host world at bay. The family may even have satellite TV from their home world, and a large collection of home-world DVDs for their leisure time. In the interest of strong family supports, it may appear wise to drive the host languaculture from the home! Oh, we’ll tell lots of *they stories* about host people (sometimes with gales of laughter at predictable places). The *they stories* are an essential part of living in our home world while abroad. But we quickly turn the television dial when a host-world broadcast appears! And we’ll live much of our life in the archipelago of home-life islands in the great sea of host people— island hopping from home-world activity to home-world activity. We’ll find a way to be soccer moms and little league dads in our archipelago, reproducing and maintaining as much of the home world as we can manage, with its typical North American over-packed schedule. We just can’t believe that our family would be enriched, not impoverished, if it were to make the big move. Might it even be in the interest our children’s wellbeing to escape this world where most people they see on the street are “them” and not “us”? This doesn’t mean “going native”. It just means looking for a healthier balance. North American homes can stay North American! Our expat friends can be as precious to us as ever. But the archipelago needs to be broken down a bit if we are to experience healthy growing participation on a large enough scale to takes us on to Phase 6, self-sustaining growth.

It is sometimes a bit easier for single people to live a host life in the host world than for families to do so, but there are no guarantees. Many single people also find ways to remain at home while abroad. Again, that may be of much value during Phases 1 to 3, but in Phase 4 it is definitely time to re-evaluate: Are we going to “stay home” while abroad, or are we going to make a big enough move that we truly will swim and not sink?

Another phenomenon I observe in many countries is that we North Americans are very good at creating our North American worlds, abroad and bringing host people into them, without them ever needing to go to North America. We create wonderful contexts for host people (and international co-workers from other parts of the world) to grow into our Anglo-American languacultural world, right in the middle of their own country. However, we are very bad at creating, finding or fostering comparable host contexts where we have the same kinds of opportunities to grow into the host. The context is often truly amazing. Host people (and international co-workers from Asia, Europe or Latin America) sail along in their growing participation among us, while we sink rather than swim among them. I find this phenomenon truly puzzling.

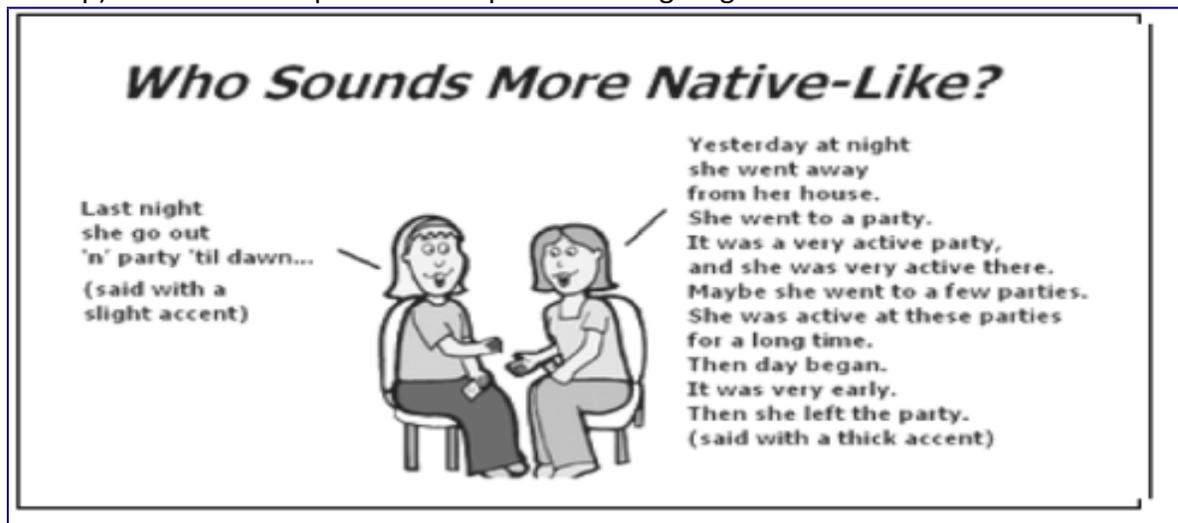
Sometimes I manage to find a little host context, and try to spend time in it, but I notice that if another North American comes along, the little host context is quickly swamped and becomes a North American context. Put a North American into the middle of a Bedouin camp, and you may have a growing participator in a host context. Along comes another North American, and the home context at once takes over and drowns out the host context.

Many of the people whom I encourage in my role as language learning advisor work with NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and their office staff is a mix of host people and expats. The host people are having forty hours a week participating in a North American or European languacultural context, right in their own country. The North Americans or Europeans are missing a precious opportunity to be in a host context for forty hours a week. As I say, put two North Americans in a vibrant host context and watch the host context get flooded out by the home context.

In talking to non-Anglophone expat workers in Anglophone dominated NGOs, I often find that they are not partial to having English be the language of group life, and might even prefer that the host language serve as the language of group life when relating to Anglophones. After all, many of them have as much difficulty with English as with the host language, but we make them choose to live in our world. We have this assumption that everyone is anxious to use English. We Anglophones seem to have little idea how feasible, and possibly desirable it would be, to have the host language serve as the language of international group interaction in the host country. Hopefully, with more reflection, we can gradually see a change in these attitudes.

At any rate, Phase 4 is the time to come to start coming to grips with this challenge. How are we truly going to live many hours a week in host contexts? We need to make some choices. If not in Phase 4, then in Phase 5? If not in Phase 5, then will there even be a true Phase 6? These are questions we need to face in this “sink or swim”, “make or break” phase of Deep Life Sharing.

We can think of our life in terms of our work life, our leisure life, our recreational life, our domestic life, life out in the community, our faith life, and our general social life. In each of these domains (which overlap) what are some possibilities open to us for giving our host-world-life a fair chance to



compete with our home-away-from-home life? This is something to discuss with a language learning advisor.

Deep Life Sharing Versus Anthropology

We have drawn a lot on ethnographic methods in designing our activities for Phase 4 of the Six Phase Programme: Deep Life Sharing. If you have a strong background in ethnographic methods, you may feel we are leaving out much that is crucial, such as the importance of developing focused hypotheses, ways to investigate them, the process of writing up our findings, and more. However, although a large number of growing participators will benefit from activities inspired by ethnographic methods, few of them are going to become ethnographers, desirable as that might seem. I for one am not going to.

If all growing participators were to be actual anthropologists, how would their approach differ from that of simple growing participators in the Deep Life Sharing Phase? For one thing, they would try to get close to host people's experience, not simply by understanding the symbols that host people live by, but also by analysing the host symbol system in more abstract ways, looking for patterns within their data. They would work within some particular theory or other of anthropology (Roberts, et al., 2001).

According to Wolcott (1999), a truly anthropological approach would be 1) holistic (understanding each part of a culture within a sophisticated and technical understanding of the whole), 2) cross-cultural (done by outsiders to the group being studied, so that they see things that insiders miss because of their familiarity) and 3) comparative (coming back to the big picture of what commonalities and variation among cultures tell us about the nature of humankind). Of these three elements of anthropological research, simple growing participation informally embraces two of them: It is cross-cultural in nature and aims to be holistic.

An anthropologist might focus on some topic or issue with both theoretical and practical implications. The write-up of the research will play an enormous role for the anthropologist in the discovery and analysis process. Growing participators, by contrast, have a very broad interest in understanding the host world, and so will keep pushing for breadth more than depth, for the most part, though some may choose a narrower focus as well. For example health workers or agricultural development workers might focus on areas of host life that impact health or agriculture respectively.

Most growing participators, however, simply want to be nurtured into genuine participation in the ongoing host story, and this guide is addressed to them in particular, with appreciation to ethnographers for the help they have provided.

Part 3: The Goal of Non-Beginner Activities: Broad Familiarity And Ease In Communication

Understanding Native-To-Native Interactions

Many second language users tell me that, after several years of language learning, they can express almost anything they want to say in their new language. Also, as long as people are talking to them

directly, especially people who know them already, they can understand most of what they hear. However, they say that when two natives ignore them, and converse animatedly with each other, they have some difficulty understanding what is being said. Why is that?

Also, what about their speaking ability? How similar is their speech to the speech going on around them in the community? How can they know, if much of the speech going on around them is unintelligible to them?

They do find that they are quite capable of talking about themes that they have frequently talked about before, which is a great blessing. Wonderful! However, they also find that they have less fluency when talking about the host of common topics that they have rarely or never discussed before.

I am now convinced that there is a solution to reaching this level of fluency. It is simple on the surface: become familiar with the language. Become familiar with how people talk about the whole range of normal life experiences. Become familiar enough that often, when someone gets two-thirds of the way through a sentence, we can finish it for them. That's simple enough, isn't it?

What is it that keeps us from becoming familiar with the language? Three aspects of the challenge come to mind:

1. The Processing Aspect: Speech goes by too fast for us to keep up (understanding speech requires the operation of complex, rapid, unconscious mental processes).
2. The Vocabulary Aspect: We don't know a lot of the words.
3. The Cultural Knowledge Aspect: People are talking about aspects of their experience and beliefs that are unfamiliar to us.

Brief Review Of Underlying Principles

Become Familiar And Fluent, Through Listening And Understanding A Lot

If we want to become familiar with a language, we're going to need to hear it for hundreds, ultimately thousands of hours in a way that we can understand. As we do this, our mental processing of the language becomes faster and faster, our vocabulary constantly grows and is constantly being strengthened in various crucial ways, and hopefully, we come to know about most of what the host people all know about — how they interpret people's actions, values they take for granted, and so forth.

We would like, by the end of two years of full-time language learning, to be able to understand most of what we hear, and then keep on hearing a lot. As we pile up those thousands of hours of hearing and understanding, the language becomes familiar to us.

Become Familiar And Fluent, Through Speaking A Lot

At the same time, we must be speaking a lot if our speech is to become more native-like. How growing participators' speech becomes more native-like is certainly too complex an issue to go into here. However, talking a lot — talking repeatedly about particular topics — then talking repeatedly about more topics, and more topics — always interacting heavily with native speakers, will play an important role. For someone who is highly familiar with a language, on a practical level, learning to talk well is primarily a matter of simply talking a lot. A lot!

How Much Accuracy In Grammar Do We Need?

Growing participators can get distracted by the issue of grammar. In fact, rather than grammatical details, it may be that pronunciation, precision in vocabulary choice, phraseology, idioms and general ease of communication are more important in making growing participators sound native-like.

What do you notice in the example below?

The second speaker gets her grammar right and makes the same point that the first speaker makes. The first speaker appears to be familiar with how North Americans actually talk. she does get some grammatical details wrong, though.

Which one sounds more native-like? Which one would fit in more smoothly in the speech community?

Of course, many of us would love our grammar to always sound native-like. Unfortunately, we can become so preoccupied with this that we don't learn much of the language other than the grammar, and then still can't get it right! Let's keep our field of vision wide. If we emphasize being extremely familiar with the language, and talking a lot, we can also devote a little attention to making our grammar sound more native-like, for example, by paying a lot of attention to corrections, by using the "Record for Feedback" technique I discussed ten years ago (see Appendix), and by having native speakers point out places where our grammar is non-native-like. In advanced stages, writing compositions which native speakers correct can also help.

How does one gain more skill in pronunciation, precision of vocabulary choice, phraseology, idioms and general ease of communication? It won't happen in a small room on one's own — all these qualities come with depth and breadth of interaction in the real life language community.

Three Aspects Leading to Fluency

As we move into the language learning activities of the three Non-Beginner phases, let's keep in mind the processing, vocabulary and cultural knowledge aspects.

The Shared Stories Phase mainly addresses the first two of these aspects. It brings Non-Beginners to the point where they have the building blocks they need to seriously tackle the third aspect, which they do during the Deep Life Sharing Phase. By the second Non-Beginner phase, they have made huge progress with regard to all three aspects and are rapidly filling in gaps in their language ability.

Process Smaller Bits, Then Longer Bits

Regarding the processing aspect, a key principle is that as it gets easier to mentally process smaller bits of language—words, phrases and simple sentences—it becomes possible to start developing the ability to process longer bits: longer sentences, complex sentences, and sequences of sentences that form paragraphs, stories or logical arguments.

Keep Up the Speed Of Increasing Vocabulary

Regarding the vocabulary aspect, I feel this should be taken extremely seriously at all points during the language learning pilgrimage. If one has followed something similar to our Beginner phase activities, s/he will be entering the Non-Beginner phase with reasonable familiarity with 3000-plus words related to the most common building blocks of life experience.

During the Non-Beginner phases, the pace of word learning must not slow down. The growing participator should aim to average from five to ten new words per hour of language session. By the end of the second Non-Beginner phase she should hope to have made acquaintance with 8,000-10,000 vocabulary items.

Develop Cultural Understanding Through Deep Involvement In Culture

Regarding the cultural knowledge aspect, I will discuss an organized way to deal with this on a sizeable scale. However, as with all aspects of language learning, the ultimate level of learning will be heavily affected by the extent with which our lives are intimately intertwined with those of local people.

If one had to choose between the most powerful language learning activities possible and a life intimately intertwined with local lives, one would probably be better off making the latter choice. That person may not have nearly so positive an outcome, however, as someone who can do both. And if opportunities for intertwining life are (temporarily) limited, and a nurturer is available, it really is amazing how far good language learning activities can take a learner.

Part 4: Native-To-Native Discourses, Entering Phase Five

Growing participators will have been, in fact, confronted with native-to-native speech from the beginning of language learning. However, it has been a big tangled mess, with no way



to break into it. For that reason, dedicated language sessions have been extremely valuable in providing speech that you could process.

In keeping with their role in the process of growing participation, we often call language sessions “Supercharged Participation Sessions.” They are intended to be similar to the participation that goes on in the flow of life in the host community, but optimized to facilitate growth for the newcomer. The course of all of this participation, in and outside of the Supercharged Participation Sessions, some essential language processes were allowed to develop in the language acquirer’s brain during each earlier phase of learning that are then foundational to new processes that need to develop in subsequent phases.

After, say, a thousand hours of fruitful growing participation activities (including the Beginner level activities), one finally arrives, in fine shape, at this Native-to-Native Discourses Phase, that is, the phase when the language sessions are largely based around native-to-native speech. Hopefully, native-to-native speech is no longer a big tangled mess, although it is still challenging, reflecting the need for still more progress in relation to the processing aspect, the vocabulary aspect and the cultural knowledge aspect.

Working With Native-To-Native Discourses

Understanding Ability High, Massaging Brings Great Fruit

Now the growing participator can understand huge amounts of what she hears in native-to-native conversations, speeches, movies, and even some novels that she might read, especially those geared to teens or older children. Working with a nurturer, she can massage such native-to-native materials quickly enough to make it worthwhile, rapidly gleaning a lot of benefit from them.

As with ethnographic interviewing, I am recommending five hundred hours of language sessions during which the growing participator uses native-to-native materials. The process of massaging the materials continues as before. As always, it generates a lot of conversation between growing participators and their nurturers, which may range far and wide. The nurturer’s explanations will continue to be rich in ethnographic content, since often the cause of non-comprehension on our part will be our lack of cultural knowledge.

Hole-Finding

At this phase, growing participators should have the sensation that they are finding holes in their language ability and filling them in. It is good for them to keep a list of topics that prove difficult for them to talk about, and to try talking about some of those topics with several different people.

It is important to deliberately include a variety of language styles—from highly colloquial, to formal spoken, to popular written, to academic written language—among the native-to-native texts (audio, video or printed) around which you centre your language sessions.

Resources to Gather

The following are typical examples of native-to-native materials around which language sessions might be based:

📖 Anything written or broadcast for small children (books, magazines, TV, commercial recorded stories—these latter were easy to find in Urdu and Russian).

🗣️ Live recorded speech addressed to small children (for example, stories)

📖 Textbooks for any school subject from the early grades

🗣️ Actual live, recorded school lessons

🗣️ A wide range of live recorded conversations

📖 Novels, short stories, magazines for older children and young teens

📖 In some developing countries there are books geared to newly literate readers on adult themes such as health or farming.

📖 Textbooks for middle and higher grades

🎬 Documentary and educational films on many topics (in the case of Russian, my films included films for Russian children on school subjects, including Russian language, and films on topics from clay modelling to sewing to cooking to origami to dog care to car care to baby care and much more). These can often at least be recorded from television, if they can't be purchased.

📺 TV Shows. These can be everything from talk shows to sit-coms to dramas and soap operas.

🎬 Feature-length dramatic films. These can represent many genres, from those in which people speak in “literary” language to those in which they use normal “slang” language.

📖 Adult literature: newspapers, news magazines, women's magazines, novels, poetry, etc.

📖 Other practical genres of written language that native speakers regularly deal with such as the language in forms that must be filled out, legal documents, diagrams, product instructions, catalogs and so on.

Every language learning resource centre should be collecting a huge set of such materials – particularly the kinds that are hard to collect, or those that take some time to collect, such as live conversations, or a weekly fifteen-minute television broadcasts on practical topics.

Ranking Helps with Self Assessment of Progress

As with materials for the shared story phase, these materials can be ranked according to their difficulty levels, based on the testimonies of those who have used them. Thus, not only do the three Non-Beginner phases themselves reflect the changing ability levels of the growing participators, but

also, within the levels, the rankings of materials can provide another reflection of changing ability levels.

A resource that is too difficult to be of much value today may prove highly useful two months from now.

Changes in the specific activities in which a growing participant can profitably engage at any particular time thus reflect the growing participant's progress without any need to subject the growing participants to language tests.

Producing Resources

In the case of minority languages, there often is not such a range of materials readily available. The language learning resource centre should consider it a sacred duty to make a practice of developing and collecting some of the better materials that growing participants have appreciated over the years.

Often, native-to-native materials for minority languages can be collected by having native speakers talk to one another. The growing participant, or the language learning resource centre, could hire and train a native to arrange and record such informal conversations between other native speakers.

They might be asked to talk (in the absence of foreigners) about some controversial topic. They might tell one another exciting stories from their own lives. A native who is a specialist in some field (say, herbal remedies) might explain her specialty to other natives who are not specialists in that area. Or natives might be asked simply to discuss a wide range of topics, from the afterlife, to family life, to cooking, but only with other natives, and without any foreigners present.

There may also be minority community contexts in which public speeches are made, sermons are preached, or stories are told, and permission might be obtained to record them. For some minority languages there may be some short-wave radio broadcasts that can readily be recorded, or printed materials for new literates as mentioned above.

What Else Is Going On?

What else is going on during this final non-beginner phase of full-time language learning?

Developing Social Network

This is an even greater time for intensive immersion than the ethnographic interview phase. The growing participants' social network should grow as their lives become more and more intertwined with the lives of host people.

Reading, Writing, Grammar

At this point, growing participators should get extremely serious about developing reading fluency if they haven't yet (assuming there is a written form of the particular language). It is also important to start writing regularly. Besides writing being an important part of human relationships, and often a necessary job skill, it is one of the best ways (if not the best way) to get feedback on non-native-like grammatical features.

Choose To Talk About Difficult Topics

As noted, growing participators can choose topics that are difficult for them to talk about, and talk about them repeatedly with different people. It is surprising how much easier it gets to discuss a topic after a few tries, as well as how much improvement there is, as a result of simply repeating a discussion of a topic or the retelling of a story.

Develop Work Role

They should also, if they haven't already, begin getting their feet wet in their future intended work role in the host community. For example, if someone is going to work as a nurse or doctor, they might work one shift per week in a nursing context that requires them to use the language. If they are going to be an instructor, they might prepare a few lectures and deliver them at least to their nurturer, who can critique them. They might well even deliver some for real.

In fact, such work-related learning activities might even begin during the ethnographic interview phase. Besides providing opportunities to improve one's communication abilities in settings that are important for you, this would give you valuable opportunities for reflective participant observation and an increased number of growing relationships.

Those Three Aspects

By the end of the second Non-Beginner phase, how might growing participators be doing with respect to the processing aspect, the vocabulary aspect, and the cultural knowledge aspect of the process of understanding?

With regard to the processing aspect, if they concentrate intensely, they may display a surprising ability to understand much rapid speech between native speakers. They can listen relatively easily to slower speech, such as that common on TV talk shows, with relatively full understanding, easily remembering many new words long enough to look them up, learning the meaning of large numbers of new words simply from hearing them in context, and piling on hundreds, later thousands of hours



Where is the growing participator?

of experience hearing people talk about a huge range of situations and topics. That will make you familiar with how host people speak their language!

Planning Can Become Easy

Planning good language learning activities seems to me to get easier as I progress through the phases.

ü It is clearly the most difficult to plan effective communicative learning activities during the first fifty or one hundred hours of learning (roughly the first half of the Beginner phase).

ü In the second half of the Beginner phase, planning a fruitful activity for a language session is as simple as picking out a picture story (and hopefully, any language learning resource centre has a host of them) or choosing topic for a role play and grabbing some props for it.

ü In the first Non-Beginner phase (the shared story phase), preparing for a language session (or a long stretch of them) is a matter of picking a shared story (again, hoping that a language learning resource centre can help) or an action cartoon video.

ü For the second Non-Beginner phase (the ethnographic interviewing phase), The growing participator mainly needs a few talkative informants, and some very simple skills, and then she can watch the world unfold before her eyes for hundreds of pleasant hours.

ü For the second Non-Beginner phase (the native-to-native discourses phase) it is as simple as recording a TV show and going over it with the nurturer.

When it is so easy to do so much, it seems a little sad that growing participators often appear to end up doing so much less. Hopefully, these few pages can help you to have more fun learning more language, becoming more truly a person who shares totally in the ebb and flow of life in a different speech community. Meanwhile, however far in this direction you have managed to come, be thankful for it. Hundreds of millions of people miss out on the experience of carrying on relationships in a second language. You are blessed. Be a blessing in your new community, among those with whom you are co-experiencing life.

Part 5: Self-Sustaining Growth in Community or Language Learning After “Language Learning” (Welcome to Phase Six!)

1. Beginners	2. Beginners	3. Non-Beginners	4. Non-Beginners	5. Advanced	6. Advanced
Here-And-Now Phase	Story-Building phase	Shared-Story Phase	Deep-Life-Sharing Phase	Native-To-Native Resource Phase	Self-Sustaining Growth In Community
first 100 hours with Language Helper (6% of total Language Sessions)	150 more hours (11% of total Language Sessions)	250 more hours (17% of total Language Sessions)	500 more hours (33% of total Language Sessions)	500 more hours (33% of total Language Sessions)	sessions as needed

Thus you bring your full-time language learning to a close, with a twinge of sorrow. In a lot of ways though, it could be that the biggest part of the language learning is yet ahead. Only, it doesn't require the same level of special attention.

If things have gone O.K. through the three Beginner phases (not discussed here) and the two Non-Beginner phases, the growing participators will now have some familiarity with 8,000-10,000 vocabulary items, without having memorized them. Some word or other which an individual as yet know only weakly, will be getting strengthened practically every time he/she hears a native open his/her mouth, or turns on the television.

The 'Who Cares?!' Mindset

Even after these phases, there will continue to be many situations in which the growing participators

<i>I said</i>	<i>Host Speaker said</i>	<i>Insight?</i>

are not yet familiar enough with the language to be sure of how to express many ideas. For example, recently I wanted to say, "Someone was on the party line, and so I couldn't phone you". I didn't know how a native speaker might say that (though I knew some of necessary individual words). Unless you have heard people talk about some particular situation (such as having someone using the party line) a few times, how would you know what they would say?

I often meet growing participators who respond to my mention of such aspects by saying, "Who cares, as long as you can get the point across."

Well, if that is a person's goal, then that person could probably have stopped her language learning after about three months, provided she continued to interact with people extensively after that. She may never understand most of what she hears natives saying. Her language learning strategy might

have been to learn a few hundred words, learn a lot of survival expressions, learn some “grammar rules” and then talk a lot.

Getting to the point where one can express most things one wants to express is much easier than becoming a full-blown participant in the host speech community. It seems that a lot of people end up not becoming full-blown participants in the host speech community who would like to have, and surely could have, if they had had a viable strategy for becoming highly familiar with the host language. Perhaps this essay will help some growing participators to find such a strategy.

Lifestyle Choices, Communities of Practice

What is a growing participator growingly participating in? There are different kinds of social relationships that can facilitate growth. One of the most powerful has been called a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). A COP is a group of people who have a strong ongoing connection with one another, where members have a history of shared experiences. Outsiders can recognize a community of practice by the fact that these people often all seem to know what one another when the outsider can't really tell what they are talking about.

To become an insider, there is a process of interacting with members of the COP, at first being a clear non-belonger, then becoming recognized as a legitimate participant, but only as a peripheral one, and then gradually continuing to learn the “rules” and knowledge shared by the COP until one is a full-blown, total member.

COPs include: groups of workers with a common purpose in the same office, a group of regulars and workers at a pub, a sports team, a class, a knitting club, an elementary school class and so on. They are important for growing participators in that few other contexts allow the richness of relational growth—both the opportunity to interact with others richly, and the exposure to how others interact with one another—that is necessary to reach a high level of participation ability. Much of what an expatriate growing participator will be learning in a COP will apply to relationships in the larger community, even while it is not possible for them to participate so richly in a larger community.

A local family can certainly be a COP. It is hard to become a full member of a family apart from being born into it or adopted as a child, and yet a learner can sometimes go very deep into participation in a host family if they set their mind to such matters as learning the family's myriad “rules” and common “insider” knowledge.

Other relationships include deep friendships, neighbourly relationships, regular relationships with service providers like shopkeepers, and one-time relationships with taxi-drivers. Taking time to cultivate any relationships are greatly superior to cultivating no relationships in terms of the opportunities that are then available to participate in host people's lives and thus to grow in communication and understanding skills.

Making Helpful Lifestyle Choices

Unfortunately, we often make unnecessary lifestyle choices that decrease our participation in local life and lives. We may make our workplace a COP within our expatriate culture, even though there are plenty of host people working there. With a little effort, we might find a small church congregation or a special interest club. We may walk to work or ride a packed bus in silence. We might very affordably be interacting at least with taxi drivers. In terms of friendships, we might be able to be able to make new contacts through old ones until we find the right friends, especially if communication has become easy enough that we enjoy using a lot of our leisure time for friendships. We often have a desperate need to wake up and rearrange our lives if we are serious about not just learning language, but becoming yet more active participators in the community.

We can often find so many opportunities to continue participating and growing, or we can make choices that let us die on the vine in “Phase 6”, the phase after “full-time language learning” when most of the language learning still lies in a future filled with ongoing participation and growth, if there is in fact to be much of a future. Much hinges on our making various positive life choices that will help to steadily move us higher and higher, making a noticeable difference in our language ability will be noticeable from year to year.

- ◀ For your social life, you can hang out with locals.
- ◀ For recreation, you can join local clubs.
- ◀ For enlightenment, you can take local night courses.
- ◀ For edification, you can attend religious activities.
- ◀ For transportation, if you can afford it, you can always take a taxi rather than a bus, and talk non-stop to the driver.
- ◀ For housework, if you can afford it, you can hire a domestic helper, and talk to her all the while she is doing the housework.
- ◀ For employment, you can rent desk space in a place where you are surrounded by host nationals.
- ◀ For relaxation you can watch TV, watch videos, listen to the radio or read in your new language. (Growing participators at lower levels of ability sometimes laugh at the idea of relaxing by watching TV in the host language. Well, that can change.)
- ◀ For entertainment, you can go to movies or plays. All of this in your new language.

No one person will adopt all of these life choices, but the more any growing participator adopts, the more you are likely to grow steadily, at least, provided you has the sort of foundation I have described.

[Appendix: Recording for Feedback](#)

Recording for Feedback is an activity during which you, the growing participator, record yourself for the purposes of detecting 'holes' in your ability to communicate in a native-like way, so that you can plan activities in which your nurturer can aid you in moving forward.

This can be more helpful than general diagnostic tests commonly used to identify weaknesses in language ability, because you take responsibility for identifying your own weaknesses and seeking correction, rather than leaving it to the Advisor or Agency to make you do this.

Steps for Use in Self-Assessment

Step 1. With the recorder recording, you, the learner, talk freely, for example, telling of an interesting incident in your life, telling of a time a problem arose while you were in this new country, etc. It will be more easy to detect progress if you settle on three stories or topics, and tell the same story once every three months, cycling through the three repeatedly.

Step 2. The recording is then rewound and played to your nurturer, pausing after every sentence.

Step 3. The nurturer has to ask him/herself, "Could I have said it that way?" If the answer is no, then the nurturer tells how s/he might have expressed the idea.

Step 4. Divide a piece of paper into two columns (add the third later). Wherever the nurturer makes a suggestion, write in the first column what it was that you yourself said, and in the second column what the nurturer's corrected version was.

Don't try to get the nurturer to explain the grammatical points in question. If s/he wants to offer an explanation, it should be brief and to the point, not a lecture at the board on everything related to the topic.

The reason you don't want to ask for explanations is that it may put the nurturer under pressure to give an explanation of something s/he doesn't really understand (there are tons of things in any language that even trained language teachers with university degrees can't really explain). If s/he offers to explain something, it probably means either that it is a clear, concrete issue, or that there is a well known conventional explanation (that may not be really right).

Step 5. Afterwards, reflect on where you see gaps in your understanding (was it cultural information you misunderstood?), gaps in vocabulary (do you need to focus on this topic and be exposed to relevant words and phrases?), gaps in ability to express an idea (do you need a grammar-focused learning activity, or to role-play the situation?). Jot down your ideas, and plan your next language sessions to address these 'holes'.

Step 6. Save this record in your learning portfolio, to be able to discuss with your language facilitator when you assess your progress.

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For easier reading the contents of this article can be downloaded here — [Phases 4, 5, 6 Manual](#)

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