

Phase 4 – The Next 500 Hours

Getting Going in Phase 4: 500 Hours of Deep Life Sharing, and Hundreds of Hours of Shared Life

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Version 0.8

August 2007

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

We approach “language learning” as a matter of *growing participation in a host world*, thus challenging expats living abroad to see themselves not as “language learners” but as *growing participators*. In order to grow quickly, we have special times with special host people that we call *supercharged participation* times. The first five phases of the Six Phase Programme of Growing Participation ideally involves 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, if the growing participator is allowed to concentrate his life on growing participation.

We’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, we’ll 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 counterintuitive, 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

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:

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 that 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:

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:

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. (*What is shown here is the first ninety second excerpt of a ten-minute life story.*)

Step 2: Listen to the recording on your own

This step is not essential but people often express a desire to do this. Among other things, you can

1. Identify parts that you cannot understand.

2. Write down ideas for parts of the story that could be expanded on. (This will depend on how much you understand already.)
3. Formulate questions you want to ask (following the Step 4 guidelines).
4. 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 out

In George's story above, let's imagine that you don't understand parts discussed below. We are also assuming 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 *fish*. You are also aware of the practice of recreational fishing, so you have a general concept already to go with the new 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, *spending* 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 *spending* time together, talking, getting to know each other, perhaps *becoming close*.

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 *keep/kept*, and *myself*, and *to*, but you don't understand the phrase *kept to myself*.

How you deal with it: Your host friend gives a simple explanation.

Etc., etc.

Keeping your word log growing

During this process all new words are recorded 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.

The following might be words you encountered for the first time in the above story excerpt, and therefore entered into your word log.

- 1) spent
- 2) became really close
- 3) ranchers
- 4) wilderness
- 5) ranch
- 6) socialised
- 7) school break
- 8) 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.

Etc.

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. You 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. (You generally 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.) 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 very much about it?
- 3) Tell me all about those two months in 1957. That must have been really exciting.
- 4) *What happened in 1958?*
- 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) *Did you graduate from High School? When?*
- 11) *Did you have any girlfriends?*

Note that in planning these questions, we generally drew on things George said, but we've also included (in italics) some questions that we 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 we felt curious about.

This technique works best if we stick to things that the story teller cared enough about to mention, rather than giving priority to satisfying our 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—*understanding host life by understanding individual host lives*, learning more by following up on things that were already mentioned.

Step 5: Expand the Story—recording the expansions.

Your first question for expanding the story was

1) 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)

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

- 1) Expanding the story (filling in the story) with a new story
- 2) 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

and 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. We 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). We 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 the whole story is ten minutes long (we just showed you the first ninety seconds), if we continue expanding it at that rate, we'll end up with over an hour and a half of expansions from the first ten-minute story. But we also saw that the first expansion might provide ten more opportunities for expansions, such as, what the person knows about his father's experience in the army. Now if the ten-minute story led to ninety minutes of expansions, then the ninety minutes of expansions could in turn lead to nine hours of further expansions. So the original ten-minutes has now "exploded" into nine hours.

In fact, the expansions of life stories will explode so much that soon we'll be very selective about what we want to expand, and in a very short time we may have ten or twenty hours of story and explanation recorded from a single individual.

Step 6: Listen to the recordings you have massaged

As you massage these stories and their expansions, you come to be able to understand them fairly well. (If you find that you do not fairly readily reach the point where you can, after a moderate amount of massaging, understand them well then you are probably not ready for Phase 4 activities.) At least once or twice more, the same day or within a few days, you will want 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 come before you again in their original contexts.

(These recordings become part of your listening library. You will find that years later you can go back and listen again to these recordings and continue to benefit from doing so. Because they were geared toward you at a particular stage of your development, they are soon relatively easy to listen to, and inherently interesting, often fascinating.)

Step 7: Summarise

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

A helpful form for organising these activities

Below you will find a form that provides a way to keep in mind the steps and substeps in the Life Story Activity that we have been discussing. Please refer to that form as you read this. 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

we have been using, the first, wide column “Stories to Record, Parts to Expand, Topics to Explore” you might now add 2 through 8 to 1.

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

Line 1 is what we started with. Lines 2 through 7 are related to the questions suggested under Step 4, Expanding the Story. Next we 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 we 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 we also keep track of what we 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 we suggested, until they become second nature. That’s when you are ready for the alternative approach discussed next.

Stories to Record, Parts to Expand, audio	message	number	checked	listened	listened
Topics to Explore	recorded	of new	for new	to again	to later
		words	topic		ideas

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 as discussed 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: 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*. 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 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. 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, you want to stop interacting so much, and proceed as though this is a new primary recording—show lots of interest, but encourage your friend to talk as much and as long as they want, and don't divert them from what they are 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 your massaging and discussing 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*. (We'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, the recording process fades from awareness very soon, 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.

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, they 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 should 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 all societies different people fulfill different roles, and 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.

A “typical” “grand tour” question.

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.

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

Two things you want to keep emphasizing: 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 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:

Interviewer: Jack, you have agreed to tell me all about the work of a rancher—your work in particular. You know that I don't know very much about your work—green as they come. But actually, I probably know a lot less even than you'd think. Some parts of your life may seem too obvious to mention, but they probably aren't at all obvious to me, and I'm so interested in understanding all I can. You said you don't mind if I catch all this with my tape recorder. So here's my first question: *Tell me what you do in a typical day from the time you get up to the time you go to bed.*

Jack: Uh-huh. Well, there ain't no typical days.

Interviewer. Well, how about nowadays, in the middle of January. What do you generally do from morning to night.

Jack: Well the main thing—this is the time you gotta feed. So it's mostly about feedin', ya know. I generally go out and feed the cows in the morning. Then I work on whatever needs workin' on.

Interviewer: I see, well, maybe this will help. Just go through the day, from the time you get up, even, until you go to bed. From morning to night. Tell me what is involved in life when it's mostly about feedin', but also what all is going on all day, including the feedin'. Like when do you get up. What do you do first, then next, and so on.

Jack: Well, it's cold of course. But them cows is hungry as heck, that's for sure. So ya gotta get goin'. Well I s'pose I get up around seven—not like hayin' when you get up at five and start wranglin'. So I get up at seven and make the fire in the cookstove, and put on the coffee. Then Ellen gets up. She don't like to get up before the coffee is done. And then she cooks up breakfast. Then about eight o'clock I go get the team and hitch 'em up and head for the meadow. I pull up by the stack and get up and start throwin' a bunch of hay down into the rack. When I got enough, I head out into the meadow, and the team pulls the load, while I toss hay down. The cows come bawlin' and start eatin'. When I've tossed all the hay out, I head home again. So by now it's oh, maybe ten o'clock. I head back for coffee time. So then there's always work to do. For example, I might work on fixin' whatever's broke. Or I might work on fencin'. Well, if the creek's froze over—which it is—you gotta break some holes for the livestock. Now we have to bring hay down from the high meadow, so I might make a run up there and get a load. It's not worth takin' them cows up there. Not that much hay up there this year. So I'm just bringin' it down, a bit at a time, you know. Well, I work on something or other till one. Then it's dinner time, and Ellen's grubbed up something or other. So we have dinner. After that, I usually rest a bit. Then back to whatever I'm workin' on, and that's pretty much it till evenin'. Well, you know, I'm not gonna kill myself, 'cause it's winter, and there ain't that much that ya just gotta do, and that's a damn good thing, too, cause you can freeze your ass off out there. Well, I might do something in the barn, ya know, or in the shop. Always somethin' needs fixin'. So I act like I'm workin' till close to supper time, ya know—well, of course always coffee time—and then after supper I might read somethin or listen to the radio, and then hit the sack. Guess that's about it, ya know.

Interviewer: Thanks Jack. You talked about a lot that is new to me, and I'm looking forward to hearing more.

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 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
- Typical day during other times of year
- A description of the layout of the ranch
- A description of fencing (building fences—this sounds like a rather lengthy activity, longer than even a single afternoon)
- Bringing hay down from the high meadow
- 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
- putting on the coffee
- eating breakfast
- getting the team and hitching them up
- throwing hay down into the rack
- tossing hay down
- coffee break

- eating dinner
- breaking holes in the creek
- eating supper
- description of the barn
- 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 an activity take 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!

Anything I missed?

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

Etc.

Spotting and filling in cultural domains

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

Take the example of evening 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.

Grand tour questions, mini-tour questions, cultural domains to explore	audio recorded	massage	number of new words	checked for new topic ideas	checked for cultural domains	listened to again	listened to later
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You'll use this chart as you used the chart for the Life Story Activity. You may find it of much value to continue using the chart 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

Activity 3: Observing and Describing

Introduction.

The idea of a "social situation" is taken from Spradley (1980). 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.

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. Get out and make a list of places you see with actors and activities.

Social situations you might carefully observe:

1)	11)	21)
2)	12)	22)
3)	13)	23)
4)	14)	24)
5)	15)	25)
6)	16)	26)
7)	17)	27)
8)	18)	28)
9)	19)	29)
10)	20)	30)

Choose from your list one social situation that you will now describe 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 of your head notes there will be that 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 are 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

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 get 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 (words you understand when you hear them) grow steadily, and that you spend an adequate amount of time talking—struggling to express yourself in your own words. In addition, you may be frustrated trying 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, there are particular solutions, and happily, if you have been following the Six Phase Programme, you are already familiar with the activities we will suggest.

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 for which we are familiar with the vocabulary. 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 an 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. 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.)

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 themselves, "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 write down what you said in a chart like the following:

<i>What I said</i>	<i>How a host person might have said it</i>	<i>Optional statement of the nature of the problem</i>
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 input flooding or output flooding.

Phase 4 is also a good Phase 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 in nonnative 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, 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 in Phase 4 and other ways to talk a lot:

- Activity 3 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! They 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 our idealised programme, we recommend five hundred hours in Phase 4. We find that 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 we now consider that activity to be the most fruitful one in many respects, emphasising that we come to know host life by coming to know individual host lives.

We recommend that you 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 4

At the beginning of this Guide to Phase 4, we said we would go right to the action, without pausing for a lot of explanation, and that is just what we did. The Life-Story Activity will keep you profitably busy for some time. So get started using that at least! Part 2 is here to help you understand Phase 4 in more depth.

Are you ready for Phase 4?

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	Phase 4	Phase 5
500 hours	500 hours	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 and 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. 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. And try coming back to Phase 4 after a month or two. We 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 must 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!

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 why not 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 activities from earlier phases, especially

for filling in lots of missing vocabulary and getting experience interacting around 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.

Changing communication ability through the phases

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

Phase 1) You *understood* isolated statements and commands when you can see what the nurturer is talking about, and struggled to *talk* in highly constrained ways.

Phase 2) You started to *understand* sequences of statements that made up simple stories. You were *talking* in isolated statements about what you could see, and starting to *talk* flexibly.

Phase 3) You started to *understand* rich, complicated stories when the content was familiar in advance. You started to *understand* explanations ("expository" language). In your *talking*, you started to tell simple stories.

Can you see how these abilities have led you to Phase 4? In Phase 4 you'll be learning deeply about host life, through learning deeply about individual host lives. This will especially require that you understand lots of explanations. You'll also be summarising what you've been told, and sharing some of it (when it is nonconfidential in nature) with others, retelling moderately complex stories. Most of your focus is 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 nativelylike 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 now 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 nonnative 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 nonnative English user could remember the answers quickly enough to make use of them in speaking. In editing non-native English writing, I notice that nonnatives 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 nativelike 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 relationship can be quite meaningful.

Phase 5) There is considerable freedom in forming meaningful and deep relationships.

Tough times

As we said at the beginning, Phase 4 is a challenging phase. This is the time when it becomes a pressing matter 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 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 is also 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 nonnative.

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, our first questions are broad: “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 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:

- 1) A clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings...greater meaning to one's life.
- 2) ...stronger self-image and self esteem
- 3) Cherished experiences and insights...shared with others
- 4) Joy, satisfaction, peace...
- 5) ...purging, or releasing, certain burdens, and validating personal experience
- 6) ..creates community...
- 7) ...help other people to see their lives more clearly
- 8) Others will get to ...understand [the story teller]..in a way they hadn't before
- 9) A better sense of how we want our story [our life] to end... (pp. 25-26)

The storyteller may indeed come to understand themselves 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.

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.

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 observing

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 our discussion of the Ethnographic Interviewing Activity, we 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. We 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 (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 (he harnesses a horse and tells you what he is doing at each point)
- Mini-tour questions (asking Jack to tell you about lighting the kindling)
- Experience questions (“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 Participant 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 labeling 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, pajamas, 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. Khalats 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 khalats would count as bathrobes, and most bathrobes would count as khalats, 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 khalats, 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 are needing 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 has 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 its 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 socioculturally, 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.

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