

# Phase 5, Another 500 hours The Phase of Native-to-Native Discourses:

*By Greg Thomson (Version: April 2011)*



*It's not a language to be learned but a life to be lived.*



## Contents

1	A session with a nurturer in early Phase 5.....	5
1.1	Before the session:.....	5
1.2	Once you have the recording:.....	6
1.3	During your supercharged participation session:.....	6
1.4	After your session:.....	8
1.5	That's that.....	8
2	Key skills you already have .....	8
3	Ideas for Native-to-Native Discourses .....	11
3.1	Resources for all situations, including pre-literate, minority languacultures 11	
3.1.1	Recordings of naturally occurring discourse:.....	11
3.1.2	Semi-natural discourse:.....	11
3.1.3	Less natural, but still native-to-native.....	11
3.2	Additional Native-to-Native resources for major languages.....	12
4	A session with a nurturer using ready-made resources .....	15
4.1	Before the session .....	15
4.2	Once you have the resource .....	15
4.3	During your supercharged participation session .....	15
4.4	After your session .....	16
4.5	That's that.....	16
5	A bit more concrete: A Conversation between Mike Huckabee & Michelle Obama .....	16
5.1	Well, to start this session right, do 5 to 10 minutes of small talk.....	16
5.2	Getting on with massaging a native-to-native discourse.....	17
5.3	Transcript of the Beginning of the Interview:.....	17
5.4	Transcript of the Massaging Process, a GP working with an Nurturer and the recording of the interview:.....	17
5.5	Comments.....	22
5.6	Your turn.....	23
5.7	Make the vocabulary recording .....	24
5.8	Also do some more supercharged talking activities .....	24
6	Making the vocabulary recording .....	24

7	Background concepts.....	25
7.1	Discourses .....	25
7.2	Why Native-to-Native? .....	26
8	How long does Phase 5 take and how many hours of recordings should I massage? .....	30
8.1	Hours of supercharged participation activities .....	30
8.2	Hours of native-to-native discourse recordings that are massaged.....	31
8.3	How about hours of ordinary social visiting?.....	31
9	Are there special aspects of the languaculture to focus on in Phase 5? .....	32
9.1	How host-like is our grammar by Phase 5?.....	32
9.2	Other issues related to talking like host people .....	34
10	Literacy and Phase 5 .....	34
	APPENDIX: Other Talking Activities.....	38

The purpose of Phase 5, *Native-to-Native Discourses*, is to get you to Phase 6, *Self-Sustaining Growth*, to get you to the point where you will continue growing steadily through your on-going life experience alone after your life is dominated by a full work schedule, and as you travel the very long road toward host-likeness. (Consistent with more social-centred understanding, in the GPA, “host-like” seems more appropriate in many contexts than “native-like” which has more of an individualistic and cognitivist flavour, at least to me.)

In Phase 6, you keep growing because you understand most of what you hear. You have ever-increasing *familiarity* (a key concept in the GPA) with how host people talk, the words they choose and the ways they combine them, how they talk in specific situations or how they talk when they have particular goals in speaking. This requires that you have a comprehension vocabulary of many thousands of words (probably over ten thousand), and that you recognise and understand them “instantly”. It means that your brain is able to make all the connections between words that are needed to understand sentences, and does this at a high speed. It means that your understanding of most sentences is full enough and quick enough that you can confidently let each sentence go, and tackle the next incoming sentence, and relate it to the previous ones. All of these things result from *experience, experience, experience* in understanding host speech—experience leading to smooth processing and high familiarity (not to downplay the importance of experience in talking as well).

Now many users of this guide are mainly looking for instructions of what to do in the activities of this stage. So we’ll jump right into a typical session.

Phase 5, Another 500 Hours, G. Thomson

## 1 A session with a nurturer in early Phase 5

### 1.1 Before the session:

**Needed:** 1) A host person who can record some native-to-native discourses; 2) recording equipment for them to use.

**The host person records a native-to-native discourse, using either Option A or B.**

#### Option A:

The people you have done life-history interviews with in Phase 4 are thoroughly familiar with what such interviews involve. Hire one of them to record someone you don't know well telling their life story. It is best if the host person recording the life story also does not know the story teller well already.<sup>1</sup> You hope for a recording that is an hour or so in length—twenty minutes at the least. Of course, you will not be present when the recording is made so that it will be told by a host person to a host person with no thought of accommodating a newcomer. If the host person recording the interview does not know the interviewee well, it will be more natural for the interviewee to give a detailed account, since it is not natural to tell someone a lot of details the person already knows.

#### Option B:

Ask your friends what are some topics that a lot of people are talking about currently. You have quite a number of relationships by now. You can arrange for two or three talkative people you know to discuss one or more of these currently “hot topics” (or someone you know can arrange it with someone he or she knows and you don't). Again, you must not be present when the discussion is conducted and recorded so that it will not be adapted or simplified for the sake of a foreigner.<sup>2</sup> You

---

<sup>1</sup> The person eliciting the stories might tell the story teller, “I'm collecting stories of ordinary lives among us. Future generations will be able to listen to them, and understand how hard our life was, and we can use them to help foreigners to understand us better.” (The latter clause was necessary so that those providing the stories will not be offended at growing participators using them. In addition to the host person who requests the story, at the time it is told, there can be a few others around to enlarge the audience. This might result in a more lively story.

<sup>2</sup> The conversation may go off topic in different directions. Those involved should know that it is fine if they end up talking about other things. That would even help the conversation to be more “authentic” (what linguists call *vernacular speech*—the speaker is so into what s/he is saying that she gives no conscious thought to *how* s/he is saying it). A speaker going off on a “rabbit trail” is more likely to be talking

hope for a recording that is an hour or so in length—twenty minutes at the least. It might help if refreshments are provided for the meeting.

## 1.2 Once you have the recording:

Try “massaging” the recording on our own:

Simply listen to it, attempting to understand as much as you can. You will be able to listen to the recording in units of a phrase or two at a time, pausing to give yourself the chance to process what you heard before going on. If the content is within reasonable reach of your current understanding ability, you might manage to achieve high comprehension simply by listening to it a number of times. Everything you manage to understand without help, perhaps by repeated listening, will build your confidence, and, we believe, will improve your understanding machine.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.3 During your supercharged participation session:

Let’s assume a two-hour session. We offer the following suggested breakdown of activities

### 1. Beginning the session: Small talk—5 to 10 minutes

Spend from five to ten minutes just making small talk with your nurturer. Growing participators grow in the context of specific relationships. (You grow into the life of an ethnolinguistic group by growing into the lives of individuals in it.) Find out what is important to your nurturer today. Learn some things about her life that are new to you. Share something of interest about yourself.

### 2. Massaging the recording—80 to 90 minutes

- a. In your own words, summarise the portion of the recording that you massaged yesterday (the technique of *retelling by the GP*, which you’ve been using since Phase 2).

---

about what s/he wants to talk about rather than performing artificially for a recording device.

<sup>3</sup> If you can understand a recording easily the first time you listen to it, then it may not be difficult enough to help you keep growing well, though there is still much value to listening to easy-to-understand speech, as that allows you to understand words, group them into phrases and sentences, and integrate them into on-going stories or arguments. Such experiences will always strengthen your understanding machine, making many processes easier and more automatic so that you have mental energy left over to deal with harder bits.

- b. Listen to a new segment—five to ten minutes of recorded speech, together with your nurturer. Then go back to the beginning. In massaging the recording, you will be
- asking the nurturer to repeat phrases slowly and clearly that were too rapid and “sloppy” or “garbled” for a non-native listener at your level.
  - discussing unknown words and adding them to your word log
  - asking for explanations of longer stretches that puzzle you for any reason (often you won’t know the reason you don’t understand at first)
  - Using the technique of *expanding*, having the nurturer talk in greater detail about something that is said or seen, especially using Phase 4 techniques which might include
    - a descriptive question (grand tour or mini-tour)
    - exploring “domains of life”
    - Simply asking, “Tell me more about this!”
    - asking your nurturer to tell you about areas of life if you can’t understand something in the movie because it involves an area of host life you do not fully understand
  - Possibly having your nurturer give a summary paraphrase in simpler, clearer (native-to-non-native) language (the technique of *retelling by the nurturer*).
- c. Make a vocabulary recording with the new words. (See section 6.)
3. Repeat this with additional segments
4. Supercharged talking activities 20 to 30 minutes

(Increasing our ability to understand normal native-to-native speech is a major goal of Phase 5. At the same time, we shouldn’t ignore the need to improve our ability to talk.)

Examples:

- a. Take some illustrated magazines, such as National Geographic or other sources of pictures. Discuss the pictures with your nurturer for fifteen or twenty minutes, trying to find holes in your speaking ability—activities, objects or situations in the picture that you cannot describe or cannot explain because of a lack of language ability.
- b. Explain aspects of a topic in which you have special training and your nurturer does not.
- c. Discuss a topic on which you hold a firm opinion, supporting your point of view against opposing ones.
- d. See APPENDIX ON TALKING ACTIVITIES for more examples of supercharged talking activities.

## 1.4 After your session:

Listen to the whole portion of the recording that you massaged in the session and to the vocabulary recordings. Do this soon afterward, such as the same evening. Also, listen to some recordings that were massaged previously, and previous vocabulary recordings. As you accumulate more and more massaged recordings of native-to-native discourses and vocabulary recordings in your listening library, listen to all of them periodically.

## 1.5 That's that.

For Phase 1 we gave you detailed instructions for a hundred hours of activities. In subsequent phases we gave enough detail to get you through a few sessions, and then be able to carry on without our detailed instructions. At last, we are in Phase 5, the final *one-third of the recommended 1,500 hours* for Phases 1 through 5, and the "detailed instructions" we just gave you took about two and a half pages. From there you are on your own! This brevity is due to the fact that you are simply extending familiar activities from earlier phases to and applying them to Native-to-Native Discourses. However, we'll give you more ideas for native-to-native discourses that you might record.

## 2 Key skills you already have

There is not much new about Phase 5 in terms of the techniques that you use with nurturers. Some of them you have been using since the beginning, others since Phase 2, Phase 3 or Phase 4. Here is a list of them.

- Massaging recordings
- Expanding what is said
- Detailed observation and description
- Applying the iceberg principle to vocabulary learning
- Using Deep-Life-Sharing interview questions
- Making and using vocabulary recordings
- Retelling, summarising by the nurturer
- Retelling, summarising by the GP
- Enlarging your listening library and using it
- Recording yourself for feedback

If you've been doing all of these things, you can skip this section.

**Massaging a recording** means taking a text (usually an audio recording) that is a bit beyond your comprehension ability, and discussing it with a host person until you understand it. That is, you may understand very little of it on first listening. However, if you are able to pause the recording frequently, have a nurturer repeat

the utterances more slowly, ask about words you don't know or unfamiliar aspects of host life, then your understanding of the text will rise quickly and markedly.

**Expanding what is said** means asking the nurturer to “tell me more details.” For example there may be a single sentence referring to an event, and in expanding, the same event is described, but with many more of the details.

**Detailed observations and description** means observing a situation and describing it in abnormally great detail. The GP describes what s/he sees and the nurturer helps the GP to say what s/he is trying to say, and also gives an insider's interpretation of what is described. In Phase 5 this might be done as the GP and nurturer watch a host movie together, and the GP attempts to describe scenes and events in it. The GP will especially be on the lookout for details s/he is unsure how to describe, thus finding holes in his/her knowledge of the language, and filling them in (what we call a “hole-finding activity”).

**The Iceberg Principle** is the assumption that memorising all vocabulary to the point of permanent, easy, rapid recall is unnatural and inefficient. Rather we should see to it that new vocabulary make a strong impression on us when we first encounter it—getting it “into the iceberg”. In addition to strong initial encounters, multiple repeat encounters with words are needed to cause them to strengthen—to rise higher. If I have a massive number of words in lower parts of my iceberg, and if I am hearing many hours per week of speech that I can understand, then I will be constantly re-encountering words, in line with their overall frequency in the host community (or in discourses on particular topics) they will keep rising, and many (though by no means all) will reach the tip of the iceberg—the point of permanent, easy, rapid recall which enables me to use them fluently in my own speech.

In massaging recordings of native-to-native discourses, there will be many opportunities to use **other skills from Phase 4, Deep Life Sharing**. For example, you will spot “domains of life” in these discourses, and ask for more examples (see the Guide to Phase 4). You will also meet with opportunities to ask descriptive questions (as in “walk-of-life interviews”, such as “grand tour questions” and “mini-tour questions”) or to ask for first-person narratives (“Can you tell me a story about when something similar happened to you?”).

**Vocabulary recordings** are more important than ever. Even if only one-percent of the words encountered while massaging a recording are new, that could amount to ten or fifteen new words in thirty minutes of a supercharged participation session during which ten minutes of recorded speech are massaged. That comes out to perhaps 1,500 new words per twenty hours of recording. It is not unreasonable to expect to massage a hundred hours of recordings. That is a lot of new vocabulary that you want to be able to refresh from time to time by listening to vocabulary recordings. A vocabulary recording contains new words that were encountered and discussions of those words (this is sometimes called “elaboration” and is known to benefit vocabulary learning). Suppose the word *whetstone* was encountered in a

story. The recording might go, “Whetstone. In the story, Jack sharpened his knife on a whetstone. Whetstones are usually rectangular, though sometimes they are round, made of black, coarse material—stone-like. They can be small enough to carry in your pocket (a small whetstone for sharpening a pocket knife) or too large to carry with you (a large whetstone for big knives). You put oil on the whetstone and rub the knife blade on it to sharpen it.”

***Story retelling by the nurturer for simplification or summarising.*** This is used to get a simpler version of a native-to-native recording. Getting an overall grasp in this way can aid the process of understanding the native-to-native recording. ***Story retelling by the nurturer in order to say what the GP meant!*** In this case, the GP has told a story, provided an explanation, etc., and now wants to hear it told in a more host-like way (a way that host people would tell it).

***Story retelling by the GP*** is used in various ways in earlier phases, possibly since Phase 2b. Sometimes after you grasped a story, you would retell it to the nurturer in your own words. This was a stretching activity that helped you grow in your speaking ability. Any activity that has you talking a lot can be used in the following technique.

You can use ***Record yourself for feedback*** with various activities in which you are able to record yourself speaking, such as story retelling. Record yourself speaking for several minutes, and get feedback regarding ways your speech was not like that of host people. A system for doing this is presented in the Guide to Phase 4, Deep Life Sharing. In short, the good news in Phase 5 is that you don’t need to develop many new skills for carrying out the supercharged participation activities. You simply carry on using familiar techniques, applying them now to native-to-native discourses. You typically meet with a paid nurturer for the sake of massaging such recordings, and during the five hundred hours of Phase 5, you will process a huge volume of recorded speech, greater than in previous stages.

Because you are collecting and massaging native-to-native discourses, and possibly making other recordings, such as when the nurturer retells something in simpler form, you will add greatly to your ***listening library*** in Phase 5, as the recorded texts become highly intelligible to you through the process of massaging them. Your experience with these recordings, including your discussions of them with nurturers, will have a significant impact on your ability to understand speech, and as you are encountering words, word combinations, and patterns of words (constructions) with such increased frequency, these words, word combinations and patterns increasingly emerge in your own speech.

### 3 Ideas for Native-to-Native Discourses

The first set of examples apply to all situations, including minority languages. The second set apply in “major language” situations where there are radio and television broadcasts in the language, and possibly widespread literacy and literature.

#### 3.1 Resources for all situations, including pre-literate, minority languacultures

The great majority of the world’s languages are known to a decided minority of the world’s population. Yet to members of minority languacultures, there is no more major language in the world than their own. It is their breath of languacultural life, in which they live and move and have their being. We trust many users of these materials will have the unique joy of being growing participators in such special ethnolinguistic groups.

##### 3.1.1 Recordings of naturally occurring discourse:

- Conversations in regular “hangouts”<sup>4</sup> that someone is able to record
- Family conversation times (at least one linguist got an American family to agree to make daily recordings of their supper-time conversations)
- Public speeches, sermons, other talks (say, a talk addressed to a group of village women by a community health worker on the subject of sanitation), public announcements
- “Campfire” stories, legends
- Stories of memorable life incidents told by host people to host people

##### 3.1.2 Semi-natural discourse:

- Autobiographical narratives told by host people to host people
- Walk of life interviews conducted by host people with whom you have conducted such interviews yourself, so that they have the basic idea of how to do it.

##### 3.1.3 Less natural, but still native-to-native

- Pairs or groups of host people are asked to talk about a designated everyday topic, perhaps one that became known to you in Phase 4, or through previous discourses in Phase 5.
- Unplanned small talk between people who are asked to “just converse about whatever you want”.

---

<sup>4</sup> As I type this, I’m in a small café in Nepal and a happy, free-flowing conversation is going on in the booth next to me. One man came in and sat down. A while later another came in who obviously knows him, and off went the conversation.

Keep in mind that there is value in collecting conversations between people who know each other extremely well, and people who are new to each other. Those who know little or nothing about each other may talk in more detail, as there is more they don't already know about each other. They will leave less details implicit (unstated) which makes their discourses easier to understand than those of people who know each other well. Over time however, we try to move from easier discourse to more challenging discourse, and so eventually we will value those conversations between people who know each other well, and are therefore extra hard to understand!

### 3.2 Additional Native-to-Native resources for major languages

Mandarin Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Thai, Kazakh, Tatar, Wolof, Somali, Kinyarwanda, Guarani, Aymara... What do these have in common? All of them are major, official languages in some national or local jurisdiction, with television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, newspapers, school textbooks and other readily available native-to-native discourses. Although it is still valuable to collect your own native-to-native recordings, the ease with which it is possible to accumulate valuable recordings in major languacultures simplifies life for growing participators. In the extreme case, there is round-the-clock broadcasting and dissemination accessible in all parts of the world by satellite TV and the Internet. In some cases, however, the language of radio and television will be a formal variety, not the language of everyday life into which you are being primarily nurtured. If you are around enough you will ultimately be nurtured into all the varieties of speech that you need to use yourself in the roles you play, but in Phase 5 you may not want to suddenly massage hundreds of hours of speech that is quite different from normal spoken language.

*Electronic media from which direct recordings can be made, or which can be purchased "off the shelf".*

Here are some sources of native-to-native speech in larger, more literate groups. The ones at the top of the list are likely to exist for all such languacultures. As we go down the list, we encounter resources that are available mainly in national and international languages.

- Shortwave radio broadcasts (These are available in hundreds of languages, with political or religious motivations, but including news and general interest content, often now archived and available on the internet for listening on-line or downloading.)
- Local AM or FM news broadcasts, interviews, talk shows, phone-in shows, general interest, religious programs, radio plays, children's stories (sometimes these local channels are available as streaming audio on the internet worldwide).
- Television broadcasting with a wide variety of material such as news, dramatic movies, sitcoms, soap operas, stage shows, historical documentaries, nature shows, cooking shows, reality shows, talk shows,

“how-to” shows, speeches, sermons, stand-up comedians, cartoons, children’s shows, sports, etc. (Often available by satellite or streaming video on the Internet.)

- Commercial CDs, not just music, but also children’s stories, humour, and audio books. (Also often accessible through torrent sites)
- Commercial DVDs, including sets of episodes of popular TV programs, feature films, documentary, instructional, cartoon, etc. (again, sometimes accessible through torrent sites).

I sometimes visit countries where the expats insist that various kinds of resources are not available there. If I have an extra couple of weeks to poke around, however, I often find many of the resources people said were unavailable. I thus learned that it is best to get there two weeks early, and find such resources before meeting and consulting with expats, so that they never get to deny that they exist! (Something about living abroad a lot can foster habits of naysaying.) For some concrete examples of what I have found, I’ll illustrate from Russian, Urdu and Kazakh.

In the case of Russian in the late 1990s, I collected suitcases full of videotapes (this was before DVDs—and now my large wallet of DVDs is all reduced to a 640GB pocket-size hard drive) especially educational and documentary films on topics such as clay modelling, aerobics, guitar playing instructions, fishing, auto care, sewing, childbirth education, baby care, baby massage, origami, drawing, dogs and their care, gardening, wildlife, fishing, clear speech (three hours of *The Home Speech Pathologist* addressed to small children, and including much to keep them interested), school subjects such as mathematics and grammar, humourists, historical documentaries, stages shows, and much else. This was in addition to popular cinema films, which were also numerous, and videos of multiple episodes of popular TV shows.

In the case of Kazakh in the early 2000s, retail offerings only included cinema films, humourists and music, along with audio cassette or CD collections of children’s stories. Now there are also audiobooks available.

In the case of Urdu, I’ve primarily found cinema feature films, television drama serials (they go on for many hours), humourists, music and Islamic preachers. In the 1980s I found twenty-four hours (!) of children’s stories on audiocassettes widely available in music kiosks in bazaars. Lately they are downloadable through torrent sites (though the sound quality leaves a bit to be desired). They are, in a word, wonderful!

These examples illustrate how commercial DVDs and CDs will vary from country (or ethnolinguistic group) to country (or ethnolinguistic group). For national languages, there is likely to be more variety on TV than anywhere else, though many of the TV documentaries and movies may be dubbed from other languacultures. As noted, many TV stations are now broadcasting over the internet, so that with the right software you can readily capture recordings of television broadcasts. Where

internet broadcasting does not exist, a USB TV device or internal TV card in your computer plus appropriate software can allow the same basic possibility. Or if you're not quite up to that, a DVD recorder can be attached to an ordinary TV. (These technologies may be obsolete by the time you read this, with easier-to-use technologies replacing them.)

### *Printed media*

These too will differ in quantity and variety from country/people to country/people.

- Newspapers
- Magazines on many topics
- Textbooks
  - Elementary school
  - Middle and high school
  - University
- Children's books and comic books
- Technical books
- Popular interest prose (health, recreation, crafts, cooking, historical, current events, etc.)
- Fiction (novels, short stories, plays)
- Humour (collections of jokes useful in that they likely contain everyday vernacular language in a written form)
- Internet sites (educational, news, blogs, Wikipedia in other languages, etc.)
- Poetry, proverbs, etc.
- Plays (may contain everyday language in a written form)
- Religious books

Again, in many languacultures the language of publications may not be the language of everyday life. We'll have more to say about reading below. If you use such printed materials as native-to-native discourses, and massage them with a nurturer, you should have them read aloud, as naturally as possible, and massage the voice recordings. Don't follow the written text with your eyes as you listen, or your listening process may be short-circuited, if you are able to "figure out" what is printed more readily than you can hear and understand what is spoken. (As is the case with me right now in Kazakh, though not in Russian. I read Russian more easily than Kazakh, and yet my Russian listening comprehension is much better than my Russian reading ability, while my Kazakh reading ability is better than my Kazakh listening comprehension. Figuring out how this situation might have come about is left as an exercise for the reader.)

## 4 A session with a nurturer using ready-made resources

### 4.1 Before the session

Make a video recording of a TV broadcast, say, a drama

### 4.2 Once you have the resource

You can try massaging it on your own, by pausing a lot, rewinding, using a dictionary for unknown words.

### 4.3 During your supercharged participation session

Here's what a supercharged participation session looks like using a movie or TV drama:

In addition to the native-to-native speech in a host film and the opportunity to massage it, there is a natural, built-in supercharged talking activity awaiting you. Much of the movie is non-verbal, which allows you to provide the nurturer with a highly detailed description of what you see. The nurturer, like a Phase 4 interviewee, will share her understanding of the *meanings* of what you observe, providing the “insider’s view” on the scene, after you do your best to describe what you see simply, interpreting it as little as possible.

(Let's again assume a two-hour session. We offer the following suggested breakdown of activities.)

1. Beginning the session: Small talk—5 to 10 minutes (See section 1.3)
2. In your own words, summarise the portion of the recording that you massaged yesterday (*retelling by the GP*)
3. Massaging the recording—80 to 90 minutes.

In a movie, less needs to be expressed verbally than in, say, a radio play. The visual aspect of the movie provides a lot of the meaning. Beware though, that you are misunderstanding the visual part. We say to beginners, what you hear is a wall of noise, and what you see is an illusion—you know you don't understand what you hear, and mistakenly think you understand what you see! Now if you are massaging a foreign movie that has been dubbed into the host language (not our first choice if there are plenty of host films to massage), you may still be surprised to see that often the nurturer is not seeing what you are seeing.

As you massage the movie, you will watch and listen to a segment together with your nurturer to get the overall idea, and then go back through it bit by bit,

- asking the nurturer to repeat phrases slowly and clearly that were too rapid and “sloppy” or “garbled” for a non-native listener at your level.
  - discussing unknown words and adding them to your work log
  - asking for explanations of longer stretches that puzzle you for any reason (often you won’t know the reason you don’t understand at first)
  - Using the technique of *expanding*, having the nurturer talk in greater detail about something that is said or seen, especially using Phase 4 techniques which might include
    - a descriptive question (grand tour or mini-tour)
    - exploring “domains of life”
    - Simply asking, “Tell me more about this!”
    - asking your nurturer to tell you about areas of life, if you can’t understand something in the movie because it involves an area of host life you do not fully understand
4. Repeat this process with additional segments of the movie
  5. Make a vocabulary recording (see section 6)
  6. Possibly have your nurturer give a summary paraphrase in simpler, clearer (native-to-non-native) language (the technique of *retelling by the nurturer*).
  7. Spend another 20 to 30 minutes on more supercharged talking activities (as in the example in section 1.3)

#### 4.4 After your session

Listen again, the same evening, for example, to the segment that you massaged, and other recordings you made, including the vocabulary recording. (See section 6)

#### 4.5 That’s that

Again, you are just applying techniques from earlier phases to native-to-native discourses, in this case from television.

## 5 A bit more concrete: A Conversation between Mike Huckabee & Michelle Obama

### 5.1 Well, to start this session right, do 5 to 10 minutes of small talk.

The GP asks the nurturer, “What are you thinking about?” and waits for five seconds, and the nurturer mentions that she is worried about the future of her country (America). You talk about this a bit, and just a bit about how you are both doing, for ten minutes.

## 5.2 Getting on with massaging a native-to-native discourse

Our growing participator in Anglo-American languaculture will be massaging a TV interview together with a nurturer for the next ninety minutes. We'll use a bit of an interview from Fox TV, published on their website on Feb. 21, 2010. MH stands for Mike Huckabee, the interviewer, and MO stands for Michelle Obama, the interviewee. We first present the initial bit of the interview. This is followed by a fictitious transcript of a fictitious massaging session. The paragraphs in the transcription of the massaging process are numbered for ease of reference. Segments of the interview of Michelle Obama by Mike Huckabee are in bold-face type, while the conversation between the GP and the nurturer are in italic type.

### 5.3 Transcript of the Beginning of the Interview:

**MH: Mrs. Obama, thank you very much for joining me here today. Your initiative, the Let's Move Initiative. Focused on children. I want to ask you, is your passion for Let's Move primarily a policy passion, or is it a parental passion because you're a mom?**

**MO: Yes, that's a good question. I come to this issue more so as a mom than a first lady. And I shared my story before, because this is really how I became aware of the issue. Just in my own kids.**

**You know, life has changed for families in a way that I can see. You know, we're busier. We're less active. Our kids watch more TV. Sometimes it's hard to get outside. Drive-thru fast food is easier and cheaper.**

### 5.4 Transcript of the Massaging Process, a GP working with an Nurturer and the recording of the interview:

Now let's listen in as a GP (*he*) massages it with a Nurturer (N, or *she*).

1. **MH: Mrs. Obama, thank you very much for joining me here today.**
2. GP pauses recording. Repeats the sentence to make sure he heard it right. Then he asks, *"President Obama's wife join? I don't think I understand."*
3. *N responds, "Mrs. Obama didn't join anything. She just joined Mike Huckabee. It means she came to him and did something with him. For example, I joined you here in your home to talk about this interview right now."*
4. *GP: You can say, "Thank you very much for join me in my home".*
5. *N: Well, it sounds really fancy. No I wouldn't say that here. They are on national television. Millions of people are watching. It is different. It sounds fancy.*
6. *GP: Let's go on...*

7. **Your initiative, the Let's Move Initiative.**

8. GP: *I don't understand it.*

9. N: *He didn't finish. Can I hear what come next?*

10. **Focused on children.**

11. N: *O.K., he said "Your initiative, the Let's Move Initiative, focused on children." Do you know what an initiative is?*

12. GP: *I know "initials".*

13. N: *No. Well, "initiative" means a program? Initiative sounds like they started really trying to do something, something official, a program.*

14. [at this point, the GP adds the new word, "initiative" to his word log]

15. then N continues: *Her initiative—she is the leader of it, it means—it is called the Let's Move Initiative. That is the name of the program she organised.*

16. GP: *It is called...*

17. N repeats: *Let's Move Initiative. Let's Move. I've never heard of it. But from what we listened to, it means it is to get children to be more physically active. Let's move. It's like let's quit sitting around. Let's be active. Let's get exercise.*

18. GP: *Let's move means let's get exercise? I tell you "Let's move. Let's exercise."*

19. N: *Well, no. If I tell you here, "Let's move," probably I mean, let's go from the table here and sit on a chesterfield in the living room. "Let's Move" is just the name of the initiative. It is not the usual meaning of the phrase "Let's move".*

20. GP: *One more word I don't know [plays this segment once more, then mispronounces the word] hocus?*

21. N: *Focused. Hmm that's a hard one. Well, it means the Let's Move Initiative is all about children. It emphasises children. Especially about kids, not adults. Emphasises?*

22. GP: *Focus children mean emphasis children.*

23. N: *Something like that. Focused on children means especially for children. Especially about children.*

24. [GP adds "focused" to his word log]

25. **I want to ask you, is your passion for Let's Move primarily a policy passion, or is it a parental passion because you're a mom?**
26. GP: *I'm sorry. I can't understand that. Please repeat slowly.*
27. N: *"I want to ask you..." Can I hear it again?*
28. [GP rewinds and plays it again.]
29. N says, *"I want to ask you, is your passion for Let's Move primarily a policy passion..." Again?*
30. [GP rewinds and plays it again.]
31. N: *"...or is it a parental passion because you're a mom?" "I want to ask you, is your passion for Let's Move primarily a policy passion, or is it a parental passion because you're a mom".*
32. GP: *Wow!*
33. N: *"O.K., do you know what a passion is? It means something you feel strong feelings about something. Emotions—excitement, joy, anger, whatever—you really want to do it a lot, you feel strongly. It's a passion. Let's hear it once more.*
34. [GP plays it once more. Writes passion in the word log.]
35. N: *So he is asking, it is a passion, but what kind of a passion: 'Is it primarily a policy passion?'*
36. GP: *Policy? Police?*
37. N: *This is a real political interview. Policy. A politician says, "This is what we will do because this is what we believe. It is our policy". It is something the government has said, 'This is what must happen'—a government thing. Is this Michelle Obama's passion because she is part of the government, because it is a government policy? Or is it because Michelle Obama is a mom? That is, does she think it is important for her children and other people's children? Or is it just about politics?*
38. [GP adds "policy" to his word log.]
39. GP: *Something I miss. [replays the segment once more]. Parental?*
40. N: *Parental. It's from the word parent. It is the same as saying it's because she is a mom. Because she is a parent.*
41. GP: *Parental. I am not parent. I am not parental?*

42. *N: No. We don't talk like that. It means "having to do with parents". For example, parental responsibility, parental rights, parental love. Parental responsibility means the responsibility parents have. Parental love means, the love parents have.*
43. [GP writes in his word log]
44. *N: Huckabee is asking, "You feel strongly about this program, you really want it—it is a passion with you—it that because you are part of the government or because you are a mom?"*
45. *GP: Maybe for her children? She is president's wife, so she help for her children?*
46. *N: That's not really what it means. Because she is a mom, children are important to her. Moms care about all children. And so she wants the government to do good things for all children because she is a mom herself. Well, that's what Mike Huckabee is asking her. Is her passion for the Let's Move Initiative because she is a mom, or because it is what the government wants and the president's wife is part of the government?*
47. *N: "I understand".*
48. **MO: Yes, that's a good question. I come to this issue more so as a mom than a first lady.** [GP: I come?]
49. *N: I come to this issue.*
50. *GP? Where come?*
51. *N: [Groans]. An issue—that's something we talk about, something people think is important. For example in America immigration is a big issue now. People talk a lot about it, and think it is very important. Different people have different opinions about an issue—such as immigration. When Michelle Obama says, "I come to this issue" she just means, I think about this, talk about it, as a mom, not as a first lady. This issue—the need for children to get more exercise—that is the issue. It's like a question that people have opinions about. An issue. The issue of immigration. The issue of corruption in some countries, the issue of nuclear energy. Something people discuss a lot. The issue of children's need for exercise.*
52. *GP: I come to this issue.* [GP writes "issue" and "come to this issue" in his word log]
53. *N: she comes to the issue of children's need for exercise as a mom—she thinks about it as any mom would. Not just the president's wife.*
54. [GP plays the whole sentence again].

55. N: Do you know “First Lady”? It means that she’s the president’s wife.
56. GP: *First lady?*
57. N: *We call her the first lady. I come to this issue, I think about it as a mom, not only as the president’s wife.*
58. GP: *Who is Second Lady?*
59. N: *Well, that is the vice president’s wife. But you almost never hear “second lady”. And there is no third or fourth lady. No, there is mostly just a first lady! The president’s wife. We might also say the first lady of our city is the mayor’s wife and the first lady of the state is the governor’s wife. It’s pretty sexist, isn’t it?*
60. GP: *Sexist?*
61. N: *Never mind. Sexism is another issue. It’s too complicated. But really, normally “First Lady” just means the wife of the president. It’s very common.*
62. [GP adds “First Lady” to his word log.]
- 63. And I shared my story before, because this is really how I became aware of the issue. Just in my own kids.**
64. GP: *An eye shed?*
65. N: *I shared my story. Do you know ‘shared’?*
66. GP: *Yes. “The bird shared the worm with the fish.”*
67. N: *Exactly. But when I share a story, it means it is my story, but I tell it to other people, I share it.*
68. GP: *That’s interesting. What else people share? A worm, a story, what else.*
69. N: *“Well, sharing a worm—a thing—that’s different really. But you might share a joke. Or your dreams—not dreams that you have at night—what you would like to do in the future, you can share your dreams. It’s things you share by telling someone. You can share a secret. You can share a problem—things you do when you talk. In fact, suppose I tell you, “Can I share something?” I’m asking if I can tell you something.*
70. [GP adds “share” to his word log, this seems to be a new meaning of “share”]
- 71. You know, life has changed for families in a way that I can see. You know, we’re busier.**

72. GP: *life has...*

73. N: *life has changed for families.*

74. GP: *How they change?*

75. N: *She is going to say.*

76. GP: *What you think? How have things changed-uh—for families?*

77. N: *Well...* [N goes into long digression about families and how family life has changed]

78. GP: *Let's go on*

**79. We're less active. Our kids watch more TV. Sometimes it's hard to get outside. Drive-thru fast food is easier and cheaper.**

80. GP: *Can't get it.*

81. N: *"We're less active. Our kids watch more TV. Drive-through food... Play it again..."*

82. [plays it again]

83. N: *Sometimes it's hard to get outside. Drive-through food is easier and cheaper. These are all examples of how kids are less active.*

84. GP: *More examples this, kids less active?*

85. N: *Well, really it's not just kids. We're all like that. We are less active. One, we watch T.V. more. Two, it's hard to get outside. Play it again. [plays it again], Three, they eat drive-through food.*

86. GP: *Please right these down*

87. [writes them down]

88. *Can you think of other examples? How we less active.*

## 5.5 Comments

A few comments on this fictitious supercharged participation session. Perhaps the GP's English may be sometimes a bit too good to be realistic. And the nurturer is probably often talking just a bit over the head of the GP. The GP will generally be getting the point, but missing a lot of the details. Most of what you read is typical massaging—asking to have things repeated, rewinding, discussing difficult bits in order to understand them.

Note how the GP has strong encounters with new words (see 11-14; 20-24; 33-34; 35-38; 39-43; 49-52; 55-61, the only exception is “sexist” in 59-61). These encounters with new words are mainly strong because this is a very gifted nurturer. Often you will find that you have to coax the elaborations of new words out of the nurturer.

In addition to normal “massaging” interchanges, did you notice some Phase 4 stuff?

Talking about “kinds of abstract (verbal) things that we can ‘share’” such as dreams, secrets, problems,” in 68-69 is asking a “domain of life” question. A clearer example is in 76, asking for “ways life has changed for families.”

There are other possibilities: The GP would ask for other examples of initiatives. For other kinds of “passions” besides policy passions and parental passions. For other ways/reasons we have become inactive. The discussion of “First Ladies” is the best example of a clear domain of life: different levels of government and their leaders. This could lead to huge exploration, if it wasn’t dealt with in Phase 4.

There are also opportunities for expansion, or descriptive questions (mini-tour questions). For example the GP could ask, “Tell me about drive-through food”.

## 5.6 Your turn

Now we’ve shown you what massaging a native-to-native discourse looks like. Find a partner and continue a simulated massage of the portion of this interview just below. The GP should assume there is still a lot he doesn’t know about American life.

**And as a result, we’re seeing the effects on our kids, and I saw it on mine. And it was because my paediatrician that just sort of waved a red flag...**

**MH: What did he say?**

**MO: He said, you know -- he monitored our kids’ body mass index. He didn’t just do it for our kids, but he did this throughout his practice because he was seeing obesity rates increase. It was in an urban, African-American setting, and he saw those trends. So, he did it for all of his patients.**

**And he just said, “You know, the trajectory isn’t what it should be. So you may want to think about doing something.” And I didn’t know what to do. So, we just started making some really small changes in our diet.**

**More water, less fruit juices. More vegetables. I cooked a little bit more, even though we still had to go out because we were busy. Made sure my kids weren’t sitting in front of the TV. No TV during the week...**

**MH: No TV for your kids during the week?**

**MO: During the week. Just on the weekends...**

**MH: Mm-hmm.**

### 5.7 Make the vocabulary recording

More on this shortly

### 5.8 Also do some more supercharged talking activities

We suggested 20 to thirty minutes.

## 6 Making the vocabulary recording

This section relates to sections 1, 4 and 5. We talked each time about the vocabulary recording that is made after the day's massaging is finished. We describe the vocabulary recording in section two, using the word "whetstone" We can give more concrete examples now, as we just saw our GP encounter "initiative," "focus," "passion," "policy," "parental," "issue," "share" and "First Lady" as new words, and add them to his word log. As noted, in Phase 5 we are often encountering lower frequency words, such as "initiative" and "parental" ("focus", "policy," "issue" will be pretty high frequency in formal or academic discourse). The rarer a word is, the less opportunities there will be to re-encounter it naturally in life, and have it move up in the iceberg. Specialists in vocabulary learning see "elaboration," expanding on a word and using it in different contexts, as an aid to learning. Our GP did that as each word arose, or rather, the nurturer tended to do it for him. In order to revisit all of the words forcefully from time to time, we like to make a vocabulary recording in which each new word is discussed. Here is how the discussion of "initiative" and "policy" might go.

*GP: Initiative*

*N: Initiative. Well, here it is talking about a new government program for solving some current problem. That is the initiative. But we also say that in everyday "English" we must show initiative. Then it means "effort". Trying to do what should be done. So I suppose the Let's Move initiative is also an effort—the government trying to overcome a problem. Someone who isn't lazy, who tries actively to solve problems, we also say he has "initiative". So it seems to also have a lot to do with overcoming problems, but in the Let's Move initiative it means a new government program, I guess a new government effort. But it's a pretty fancy word. We don't use it that much.*

*GP: O.K. I will understand it when I hear this recording after one year! Now, the focus.*

*N: Focus. That's a common word. We focus a camera or binoculars, and glasses help our eyes to focus. If something is not in focus it is blurry. It is not clear. Like when I try to read without my glasses, the words are not in focus. I can't tell what they are But I put my glasses on, and then they are clear, they are focused. But they said the Let's Move initiative is focused on children. When we focus on something we look at it especially—think about it especially, talk about it especially. Focus on children. We specially look at children, think about children, talk about children, help children. Not adults. Not babies. Children. That is focusing. The Let's Move initiative focuses on children. That is, the people who are carrying out this program are trying to help children—not everyone, just children—to become more active, get more exercise. If you focus on something you emphasise it. That is what you think about. It is what is important.*

*GP: My children are important. I will focus on my children.*

*N: That means you'll think mainly about your children, not about other things or people in your life.*

And so on, with “passion,” “policy,” “parental,” “issue,” “First Lady,” “Share”.

These recordings make fascinating listening months and years later. You can make a copy of the sound file, and gradually delete discussions of words that are already highly familiar. Then when you listen to the recording again it will be shorter. It may get shorter and shorter in that manner until there is nothing left in it. This really helps you to emphasise more those pesky words that you just have trouble learning well, for whatever reason.

## 7 Background concepts

More people are interested in the “practice” than the “theory”. So we postponed the explanation of the key concepts of “native-to-native” and “discourse”. I thought you would be able to understand the instructions without them. And their simplest meaning is probably obvious enough. Now we'll go into these concepts a bit, as they help some readers to see the logic of Phase 5. Others may not read this section. We talk about discourses first, and then about native-to-native.

### 7.1 Discourses

The word *discourse* is used in a variety of ways. Firsts, for many linguists, it means whatever is said (or written) in real life (as opposed to sentences linguists make up out of context to illustrate their theories). Second, for other linguists it means a stretch of speech or writing larger than a single sentence. Third, some people in the social sciences talk about all of the on-going, society-wide “conversations”, as discourses, for example, “the discourse about women's role; the discourse about sports; the discourse about politics” and so on. In the run up to a national election

there is a nationwide election discourse going on, in homes, in work places, in taxis. Something everyone is talking about (and the different opinions that are taken by different groups, and the common ways the election is discussed and so on), it is a discourse in this third sense. Finally, discourse analyst Paul Gee makes a helpful distinction between “discourses” (small “d”) and “Discourses” (large “D”). Whereas discourses (small “d”) are what is *said* in a situation, Discourses (large “D”) include the setting, roles, actions that go on in the situation which includes, of course, what is said. For example, the discourse at a check-out stand in Canada right now might include, “Do you need a bag,” and “credit or debit” and “thank you” and other things that are said, including the jokes I make with the cashier. The Discourse includes all that plus the code reader, the acts of swiping barcodes across the code reader, the act of inserting the credit or debit card and keying the pin code, and the roles of customer, fellow customer, and cashier, and so on.

When we talk about native-to-native discourses we mainly mean the way host people interact verbally, though those other elements of Discourses, and also gestures and other “body language” would be part of a more adequate picture.

I have spent 1,000 hours on supercharged participation activities before focusing on native-to-native discourses. This reflects an important concept in the Growing Participator Approach: the temporal dimension. Some approaches pride themselves in using “authentic” language samples (a limited variety of native-to-native discourses) for language learning activities from the very beginning. In the GPA, native-to-native discourses aren’t relevant until they are in your “growth zone,” and that is basically in Phase 5, and possibly later portions of Phase 4.

## 7.2 Why Native-to-Native?

If you have grown through the previous four phases of the Six-Phase Programme, then you’ve spent those *thousand hours*, plus or minus, in a sequence of “supercharged participation activities”. The evolving activity types required deepening levels of relationships with special nurturers and other host people. Through such “supercharged participation activities” and other interactions with host people, and, in later phases, perhaps through some healthy *solitary listening* (and maybe even reading), your mental processes for comprehending speech and for expressing yourself readily in your own words became increasingly complex and rapid. At the same time, you gained a lot of understanding of the “story” the host people are collectively living out. Primarily through these activities, you became at least somewhat familiar with many thousands of host words. You developed a richer and richer identity that has allowed you to increasingly participate in host life.

What’s so special about native-to-native speech? We understand that “communication ability” is always a joint ability which comes about by combining two specific conversation partners in a pair, or several communicators in a group. Communication ability is not simply a private, personal matter. Here is what we mean by that. Imagine the two people in a conversational pair are a young mother

talking to another young mother, her close friend, about the baby in front of them at that moment. Together, they have a certain communication ability. Now imagine a different pair: the same young mother talking about her baby over a CB radio to an unmarried truck driver she has never met. This pair will have a strikingly different level of communication ability. Were the trucker to try to take the role of a natural participant in the mothers' conversation it would be obvious he didn't fit! Now if he could spend a large amount of time listening to young mothers talking about babies, this trucker (or alternatively, a motorcycle gang member) would eventually be able to join the conversation with a naturalness that would surprise the mothers!

We can think of many other example of conversation ability differing depending on the participants. Two astrophysicists arguing a fine theoretical point will jointly have a different level of communication ability from an astrophysicist and a classroom full of high school students.

The interactions of the young mothers, the young mother and the single trucker, the two astrophysicists, and the astrophysicist with the high school students—all of these are, in fact, native-to-native discourses. They involve host people talking to/listening to/interacting with other host people without any concessions to foreign listeners.

The idea that communication ability resides in a pair of communicators jointly, or a group collectively, rather than in the isolated individuals separately, applies to your experience communicating with host people. Each time you participate in a one-on-one conversation, you form part of a pair with a host person. The communication ability that results belongs to the pair of you, not to you as an isolated individual. That means that the level of success in communication has depended on the combination of you and the person you were communicating with.

With the host mothers, truckers, physicists and high school students, differences in life experience, background knowledge, and each person's history of communication experiences (in many pairs and groups), determine the communication ability the pair or group in the discourse at hand. However other factors also affect the communication ability of any pair of people. To take a simple but relevant example, a pair of host people will automatically simplify their speech to one another in a noisy environment. Imagine if your way of talking was limited to sounding like host people sound when they are shouting in a noisy environment (except without the shouting). That would be an unnatural model! To take another example, host communicators modify their communication strategies if one member of the conversational pair is really hard of hearing. Or suppose a thirty-month-old child is lost and an adult is trying to get information from her. That would be an inadequate model for you as well. Well, suppose the pair who are communicating consist of a host person and a foreigner who has less than fully host-like understanding ability. Their joint communication ability is going to vary greatly depending on the particular host person (even if we are talking about the very same foreigner—let's say you!). Now during Phases 1 through 4, you had a lot of experience in such

conversations. They were the ones you could understand and learn from, but they are not the model you want as you continue to grow. A widespread observation among expats abroad is, “I can do pretty well communicating with one host person who knows me, but when host people are talking to one another and ignoring me, I understand very little.” That brings us to Phase 5!

So far, you’ve been able to participate in conversations with host people who deliberately included you. That puts a cap on the level to which you can grow. You want to be apprenticed into host life *as lived by host people* when they are participating in their joint life with other host people. You are trying to become more and more like host people in the ways you understand and talk, but your main model is host people talking to a foreigner. And what else can it be? You can only learn from speech that you can understand, and you just can’t understand normal host-to-host speech by the end of Phase 4. However, it has become possible to change that. Normal native-to-native speech is really getting to be in your growth zone—with a bit of help you can understand all sorts of native-to-native speech that you can’t understand without help. If you get that help, you can start conforming to the model of host people talking to host people.

Think of the way your participation in host life has been evolving. You have gone from mainly communicating through play (Phases 1 and 2) to dealing with more abstract explanations (Phases 3 and 4) which grew to me quite complex by the end of Phase 4. None of this, however, represented what normal host adults do in interacting with normal host adults in their normal discourses (in all four senses of “discourse” that we discussed). In Phase 5 you want to move on with participating in increasingly host-like ways in ordinary host-adult activities. Let’s say you’re going to shed your training wheels and ride with the gang! This will happen best when you are able to participate in host communities of practice as a “belonger”. Very briefly, a community of practice is a group of people who spend time together for some particular purpose. It might be a group of workers on a job, or a leisure-time club (say, an aerobics group) or a class (consisting of host people) in an educational institution, a church or mosque, a group of regulars in a teashop, etc. It can also be a small group that you yourself organised, as long as it is dominated by host people doing things their way, such that you initially seem like an outside guest to the group, but steadily move toward being a clear believer whose role in the group is valued. Phase 5 “supercharged participation” activities are still essential to rapid growth, but by the end of Phase 5, communities of practice will be “supercharged” in that you’ll understand all that is going on, even when people are talking to one another and not you. Now you can indeed learn from a model of normal adult interaction.

You need particular resources for supercharged activities in each phase. In Phase 1 the resources included toys and other objects and pictures. In Phase 2, picture stories. In Phase 3, world stories, shared experiences, etc. In Phase 4, we might say the resources were techniques for interviewing. In Phase 5, the resources you use for supercharged participation sessions are recordings of native-to-native

discourses. You will expose yourself to massive amounts of host-person-to-host-person speech (and possibly writing). You will massage large samples of host-person-to-host-person speech that is a bit beyond your current ability to understand without help—in your growth zone.

In Phase 5 we hope to reach the point where whenever host people are talking to one another and we are listening, what we hear feeds our growth, since we understand it, and whenever we are talking, and interacting, whether just making small talk or communicating for more specific purposes, we are growing. In speaking, we will be seeing words and patterns *familiar* to us through listening become part of our own speaking as we improve by struggling to express ourselves. What I am describing is “self-sustaining growth”. That is Phase 6. All of life with host people then feeds our growth. All of life has become supercharged.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Nature of communication/participation activities</i>
1. Here-and-Now	Toys, objects, actions, pictures	Playing
2. Story-Building	Wordless picture stories	Playing, survival communication ability
3. Shared Stories	World stories, shared experiences, host stories know from translations	Getting simple explanations; simple conversational interaction on many topics
4. Deep Life Sharing	Kinds of interviews	Getting rich, complex explanations; becoming a conversationalist
5. Native-to-Native Discourses	Recordings of host to host speech	Increasingly normal conversation; growing participation in host communities of practice.

We recommend 500 hours of special supercharged participation sessions with special nurturers in order to get from Phase 4 to Phase 6. That is, Phase 5, like Phase 4, makes up one-third of the recommended 1,500 hours of special activities of Phases 1 through 5. Phase 6 then goes on for as long as we are involved in host life.

## 8 How long does Phase 5 take and how many hours of recordings should I massage?

Individual needs and opportunities vary greatly.

### 8.1 Hours of supercharged participation activities

*Li Fang:* She had the ideal opportunity. She consistently had 25 hours per week for supercharged participation throughout Phases 1 through 5.

*Amelia:* She is on a business visa, and has major work responsibilities. However, she managed to spend an initial ninety days in the host country on a tourist visa, during which she spent thirty hours a week doing supercharged participation activities, arranged for her by a language learning advisor. Once she was working at her job, she managed ten hours per week for supercharged activities.

*Sam:* He is also on a work visa, teaching English. He managed ten hour per week for Phase 1 activities, and then cut back to six hours per week until Phase 5, when he decided to cut back further—to three hours per week.

	hrs/ wk	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Total
Li Fang	25 hrs/wk	4 wks	6 wks	10 wks	4.5 mo	4.5 mo	15 mo
Amelia	30 hrs/wk for 90 days; then 10 hrs/wk	3 wks	5 wks	15 wks	1 yr	1 yr	2.5 yr
Sam	10 hrs/wk for 2.5 mo; then 6 hrs/wk; then 3 hrs/wk	10 wks	5.5 mo	9 mo	9 mo	3 years	5 yrs +

In the table above are three scenarios presented in terms of how many hours per week people spend on supercharged activities, and the implications in terms of how long they will spend in each phase. These are all viable scenarios. Not everyone has the opportunity to be Li Fang. The Growing Participator Approach gives the Sams the opportunity to do well, too, within the constraints of their particular opportunities. At the end of five years, Sam will be so thankful that he stuck at it and kept growing.

Analyse your own plans in such a table as the above, even if you need to speculate somewhat. Keep in mind that if Li Fang, Amelia and Sam are all in the host world for seven years, Li Fang will grow considerably farther than Sam. The quicker you get into Phase 6, Self-Sustaining Growth, the farther you will grow in the end. Li Fang will have perhaps four years of significant growth by the time Sam reaches Phase 6. Therefore, we urge growing participators to come up with a strategy that will allow them to get as far through the phases as possible before taking up work responsibilities in the host world. Amelia's ninety days on a tourist visa allowed her to get into Phase 3 before having to start her work responsibilities. That means she Phase 5, Another 500 Hours, G. Thomson

may have had “basic conversational ability” (not just “survival ability”) by the time she took up her work role. Others may find host people outside of the host country among whom they can grow far before even travelling to the host country.

## 8.2 Hours of native-to-native discourse recordings that are massaged

How many hours of native-to-native discourse recordings should people massage in Phase 5? A rule of thumb (subject to modification) would be that you will need to spend about three hours in order to massage one hour of recording. With that in mind, Li Fang, Amelia and Sam might want to collect at least 100 hours of native-to-native discourse recordings which will become part of their listening libraries once massaged. Now accomplishing this will be a bigger challenge for Li Fang than for the others. Do you see why?

For each hour of session, twenty minutes of native-to-native discourse must be recorded. For Li Fang, her 25 hours of supercharged participation session per week, might include 16 hours of massaging recordings (as we recommended about two thirds of the supercharged participation time be used for this purpose). That in turn might require 5 hours of recordings per week to massage (assuming one hour is spent massaging each twenty minutes of recording). Just organising and managing that amount of recording every week will be a challenge (keep in mind that the growing participator needs to have host people doing the recording, and doing this without the growing participator present, if they are to be truly native-to-native discourses).

One solution to this challenge will be for Li Fang to begin compiling these recordings much earlier—during Phase 4, or even Phase 3. It would be a wonderful boon to Li Fang if she found that other growing participators who have gone ahead of her have already compiled a large collection of native-to-native discourse recordings. If she has not been so fortunate, then those who come after her will indeed be this fortunate, having Li Fang’s recordings to make use of. Of course, if Li Fang is learning a major language and can record native-to-native discourse from television, etc., then there should be no problem recording five hours per week.

We are tentatively suggesting you massage 100 to 125 hours of native-to-native speech in Phase 5. (If that takes 330 hours, it leaves 170 hours for other Phase 5 activities.)

## 8.3 How about hours of ordinary social visiting?

A common question is whether we can count ordinary social visiting time toward our 500 hours of Phase 5 activities. If our social visiting involves us in interaction, then it is indeed a key part of our growth process, and should count for something, in fact for a lot. Normal social interaction will have a significant impact on both our understanding ability and our talking ability if we have patient, committed conversation partners who will meet us in our growth zone. There are no

guarantees however. Sometimes growing participators will use the fact that, say, they have a host person living in their home, as a basis for saying they are “done language learning”. However, they have not reached the condition of self-sustaining growth, and in actual fact, after a few weeks, they don’t grow very much anymore through mere interaction with their tenant. In general, before we reach the stage of self-sustaining growth, we grow much, much more if we have a number of hours per week of supercharged activities. One area where this makes a huge difference is vocabulary learning. Without special effort, unless we already have quite a large vocabulary (say, in the vicinity of 10,000 words) our vocabulary just doesn’t grow much without special effort.

In other words, depending too much on ordinary social visiting may spell the end of our growth, or at least greatly retard it. Therefore, we suggest you place a limit on how many hours of ordinary social visiting that you count toward your 500 hours—not more than 100 or 200 of the 500 hours, though it will be wonderful if during the time of Phase 5 you have many hundreds of hours of social interaction. (Just don’t count all those many hundreds of hours toward your goal of 500 supercharged hours!)

You may, however, need to increase your motivation for having a healthy social life with host people, and so you can allow a hundred hours or even two hundred to count toward this end. In fact, if you find you are retreating into a reclusive life, or a life dominated by the expat community more than by the host community, then by all means allow up to 200 hours of Phase 5’s 500 hours to be ordinary social relating with host people. Just don’t lull yourself into thinking supercharged activities are no longer needed when in fact, you just aren’t ready to grow all that much without them.

## 9 Are there special aspects of the languaculture to focus on in Phase 5?

### 9.1 How host-like is our grammar by Phase 5?

If you follow the Six-Phase Programme, you’ll still be making lots of grammar errors still even when you are in Phase 5. So, you ask, why not follow a different approach? Well, people who do will also be making lots of grammar mistakes for a comparable period of time—and well beyond. That is how language learning works. No one has been able to change it.

Even graduates of the grammar-intensive language programmes don’t speak right! This is how language ability actually develops, regardless of how “traditional” or how “communicative” the approach may have been: “proficiency” develops following a particular pattern regardless of the approach. The U.S. government data show that in their “state-of-the-art” programmes, it takes about 480 hours to reach their *Level 1* (“Elementary Proficiency”) in most languages that we’d be concerned

with.<sup>5</sup> Now after those nearly 500 hours, the grammatical ability is described in the following terms:

“Structural accuracy is likely to be random or severely limited. Time concepts are vague. The individual often speaks with great difficulty. By repeating, such speakers can make themselves understood to native speakers who are in regular contact with foreigners, but there is little precision in the information conveyed.” (From the Interagency Language Roundtable guidelines)

Now this is a description of the grammatical ability of highly motivated and experienced language learners, generally with high aptitude, in programmes that emphasise both communication and grammar. It doesn't get much better than that. Yet one of the most frequent criticisms we hear of the GPA is that people have “poor grammar”. This criticism is sometimes levelled after just the first 100 hours! Or suppose it is levelled after 250 hours. Well, we see now that it is normal for people in highly acclaimed programmes even after nearly 500 hours, which in the Six-Phase Programme puts us into Phase 5. Why are critics expecting GPA-ers to turn straw into gold? We're humans too. If others can't do any better than the description above (including those who criticise us!), why is it demanded of us? Go figure.

Well, then, you ask, when do people come to have “good grammar”? How about after 1320 hours? According to the same U.S. government data, you get a lot of people at *Level 2* (“Limited Working Proficiency” after 1320 hours).<sup>6</sup> Here is how *Level 2* is described in the ILR guidelines:

“There are areas of weakness. In the commonly taught languages, these may be simple markings such as plurals, articles, linking words, and negatives or more complex structures such as tense/aspect usage, case morphology, passive constructions, word order, and embedding.”

In other words the “areas of weakness” sound like most of the conspicuous aspects of grammar that we associate with foreigners speaking our native language. After 1320 hours, things still aren't going that great, grammar-wise, many (most?). In the Six Phase Programme, 1320 hours would be over half way through Phase 5. So again, while it is true that most GPAers speak with a lot of non-native sounding grammar still even in Phase 5, that is generally true of everybody else, too, regardless of what approach they take, after a comparable amount of time. In fact, Betty Lou Leaver who researched fifty-one people who the U.S. government had rated as “*Level 4*” (“Near-Native Proficiency”), found the average time it took for an

---

<sup>5</sup> In the now widely used ACTFL terminology it is misnamed “Intermediate” proficiency”.

<sup>6</sup> In the once again misleading ACTFL terminology, it is called the “Advanced” Level)

adult to reach *Level 4* was 17 years.<sup>7</sup> And having reached that level, they become more painfully aware than ever of how truly non-native-like they sound.

## 9.2 Other issues related to talking like host people

Phase 4 was really wide-ranging in terms of understanding host life, and in Phase 5 you are filling in more gaps in your understanding and experience. However there are areas more traditionally discussed in relation to language. These include *sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, textual competence, conversational turn-taking, stylistic varieties of language, and kinesics (body language)*. These have to do respectively with 1) how language expresses social factors in relationships (*sociolinguistics*); 2) how language is used appropriately, politely, indirectly (*pragmatics*); 3) what it means in this language for a story, a set of instructions, an explanation, argument, etc. to be well constructed (*text grammar*); 4) how to take turns appropriately in a conversation, how to “hold the floor” and relinquish the floor (*rules of conversation*); 5) the way language changes according to levels of formality (*stylistics*) 6) the meaning of facial expressions, hand gestures and other movements that accompany speaking (*kinesics*). All of these aspects of human speech are worthy of attention for growing participants, though a principle in the Six Phase Programme has been not to expect growing participants to become students, scholars, linguists, intellectuals in order to keep growing in host-likeness, and unfortunately, as normally discussed, these are all technical topics. In any case, surprising as it may seem, we don’t really see them as a major issue in Phase 5, but rather in Phase 6, where most of the “seventeen-year path” (and more) to “near-native” ability happens. That is because research in these areas of language learning tends to indicate that second language learners only become really good at these aspects of language at a highly advanced stage, perhaps the near-native level. So in our Phase 6 guide we’ll talk of these areas as “some other things to pay attention to” besides grammar and vocabulary. After all, we hold that paying attention is better than not paying attention. However, greater host-likeness in these areas is apparently learned through extensive participation in life (and in the case of textual competence and stylistics, with lots of experience in writing and being corrected as well), though efforts have been made to teach them more directly and at earlier stages. As with grammar, though, no clear shortcuts to host-likeness have been found. It’s a long road!

## 10 Literacy and Phase 5

In my last parenthetical remark in the previous sentence I mentioned reading. After language itself, it is hard to think of anything that has had a greater impact on

---

<sup>7</sup>Betty Lou Leaver, *Achieving Native-Like Second Language Proficiency: A Catalogue of Critical Factors--Volume 1 Speaking*, (Salinas, Calif.: MSI Press, 2003).

human mental life and on human history, society and intergroup dynamics than literacy. Reading is a phenomenal skill, which again, can be compared with language itself in its awe-inspiring nature. Many scholars believe the human brain is specially designed for language. After all, there is nothing remotely like it, in any other species, and it is, by contrast 100% universal in the human species, as long as people can hear (and in fact even if they cannot) and live in communities. More than that, the brain's linguistic capacities and performance are astounding. There are no human groups without rich and complex languages of the sort that linguists are by now so familiar with. One psychologist actually argued against the "innateness" of language ability on the basis of reading ability. He said that reading is not universal, and yet it is astounding in the same ways that language in general is, and also limited to the human species. Since it isn't universal, scholars wouldn't think the brain is designed for reading, and so maybe it isn't really designed for language period. I tend to disagree. I tend to think the brain is indeed designed for reading as it is designed for language in general! But that's me. All of this is just to say that reading may have an enormous place in our growing participation.

Notice that I said "may". That is because literacy is indeed not universal, and even where it exists the place it has in life varies tremendously from culture to culture. Therefore we don't want to say, "Reading has such-and-such role in my Canadian life, and so I want it to have the same role in my Quechua life. Rather we want to be nurtured into Quechua (or whatever) life as it is. Now we may be change agents, encouraging the development of literacy and literature for valid humanitarian reasons. But that will happen as we are living the host story with the host people, and sharing in their practices, once they have nurtured us into them relatively deeply.

As an example of expats not being growing participators in this matter, we can look at some Arab countries, where expats want to read the spoken language and speak (fluently) the written language, though neither of these are common Arab practices. Educated Arabs are able to read written Arabic, but reading is a less common practice in daily life than it is for many, say, members of European languacultures, who sit reading massively thick paperback novels on commuter trains.

If you are being nurtured into Chinese practices you have a great challenge in the area of literacy. Literacy dominates childhood experience in a way it does not in, say, Europe. It is estimated that about a third of a child's education during the six years of elementary school is devoted to learning characters. They constitute a rich and valued and ubiquitous part of Chinese life.

Most of our comments will relate to what we think of as simpler situations than Arabic or Chinese. In the more difficult examples, though, community-wide literacy practices are still just part of the practices of host people that we must eventually grow into, with the help of nurturers. Literacy practices that belong only to special groups (e.g., monks) will be important to us if we are trying to function within those groups.

In one sense, literacy skills are quite advanced language-related skills. This is so because until you are quite advanced in your language ability, there is little or no literature in the community that you would be able to read. On the other hand, once you are in, say Phase 5, and reading a lot, you may find that listening is still the bigger challenge. My listening comprehension in Russian is considerably stronger (faster!) than in Kazakh. So if I'm listening to recorded Russian speech and following a written transcription of the same sentences, my listening processes work more quickly than my reading process. In Kazakh, it is the other way around. Because my listening comprehension is so slow, I can commonly "figure things out" when I see them written at a pace that is faster than the pace required for me to understand by listening. In Kazakh, then, I still need to focus more on listening than on reading. In Russian, my listening ability and my speaking ability benefit greatly from reading that I do, and so it is really profitable to read, read, read. With Kazakh, however, I could read, read, read, and get better and better at it, but it isn't helping me to understand people as I participate in their lives and they in mine, which is what the GPA is about.

The reading process begins with decoding. That means getting from the written word to the "heard word" that it represents. Readers have many words in their auditory mental lexicon (the words they know to hear them). Those are in their head before they start learning to read when they hear them, and "instantly" understand them. Decoding means figuring out which of those words already in their head in their "heard" form is the one they are now trying to read in its written form. After decoding is successful, it is as though we have heard the word, and the processes in reading beyond decoding are generally believed to be the same processes that have long been used when listening with understanding. There's nothing new there. Figure what that written word "sounds like" and you get the rest of the understanding process for free. This means that the better your listening ability, the better your reading ability has the potential to become. We see that it can be a big challenge to develop good listening ability for native-to-native speech as it occurs in the rapid waters of everyday communication. If we don't work at it strategically, we may not get there. Reading, on the other hand, is a matter of doing it lots and lots, so that we get very fast at decoding, and at going from that step to full understanding.

For Russian or for Kazakh at this point in my experience, I can improve my reading ability through doing lots of solitary reading. If I have a living, breathing (and especially, a paid) nurturer with me, and want to use a book as a resource in supercharged participation sessions, it makes sense to have her read to me, as that is developing my listening comprehension ability in a way that I cannot do on my own. It doesn't make any sense for me to read to her, as I can practice that at home without paying anyone to listen; and she can read herself more easily than she can understand me reading aloud!

So our practical suggestions for reading in Phase 5 are to do it a lot, but do it on your own, not in supercharged participations sessions.<sup>8</sup> In those, have the nurturer read to you, record it, and massage the recording. At home, you may need to use a dictionary a lot as you read. It can be a bilingual dictionary, such as a Russian-English dictionary, or a monolingual dictionary, where the host language words are defined in the host language. Depending on the language, though, using a dictionary may require a certain level of understanding of the grammar. (For example, you see a word form, but it is not the form that will be in the dictionary, and you have to be able to figure out what the dictionary form will be.)

Reading is wonderful, and especially if it happens to be a major practice of your host community. Betty Lou Leaver, in *Achieving Native-Like Second Language Proficiency: A Catalogue of Critical Factors--Volume 1 Speaking*, (Salinas, Calif.: MSI Press, 2003) studied 51 people who, as adults achieved unusually high levels of language ability in second languages. She said that 86% of them were voracious readers in the host language. We might suspect then, that in such languacultures where reading is a major activity, reading a lot will do a whole a lot of good for your growth! Phase 5 is the point at which you can really get into heavy-duty reading, since your language ability has reached a level where there will be a large amount of materials you can read, with some patience.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See section 3 for suggestions of what to read.

<sup>9</sup> The case of Arabic is different. We recommend working on reading written Arabic in a more traditional manner beginning in Phase 4, with the GP reading together with a nurturer, using Phase 3, “shared story” reading materials as much as possible. It should of course just be one small component of a Phase 4 programme. And not all GPs will need to achieve a “scholarly” level or reading ability. See our separate article on Arabic Diglossia and the GPA. Similar considerations will apply any time the written language differs greatly from the language of everyday life.

## APPENDIX: Other Talking Activities

(for up to one quarter to one half of your supercharged participation time)

I have suggested up to four special talking activities. Every day you should include one or more such activities, taken from the list below, or activities of your own invention. They should stretch you and keep you growing so that every day you are better able to talk about some topic than you were able to the day before.

**Hole finding activities** (Talking with a view to finding what you cannot yet say): Contrast some aspect of life at home with life in the host world. Look at complex pictures (such as those in busy books) and attempt to describe every detail. Watch a cartoon or silent movie (or any movie with lots of meaningful action), and discuss everything that happens and how you understand it.<sup>10</sup>

**On-going discussions of particular topics:** Discuss your *hobbies* and *recreational activities*, your *professional area* (what you do or have done for a living), topics in your area of *special academic training* (if different from 2), or some *area about which you feel passionate* (e.g., the environment, poverty, moral issues, comparison of spiritual experiences, political in your home country).

**Epic Storytelling:** This was a Phase 4 activity, but it can be profitable in Phase 5 as well. It involves telling an on-going story that can be continued for perhaps hours, adding a bit each day. In the Phase 4 version your attempts at telling a given increment of the story improve as you tell it to several separate people, each of whom interacts with you and helps you. This could be done in Phase 5 as well.

**Talks, teaching lectures:** This is similar to 2 and 3, except that you switch from conversational style to lecture style. You can choose any topic to prepare a lecture on. It can be an everyday topic such as “driving safety” or a specialised topic such as “Overview of molecular biology”. A constraint is, however, that it must take the audience’s background into account (in this case the audience is probably a single nurturer). You may especially want to use the Record for Feedback technique with this activity.

---

<sup>10</sup> In discussing a wordless movie, you’ll appreciate how every action is meaningful within the languaculture of the movie, and how many actions, objects and situations are understood differently by your host people. In addition to familiar wordless movies such as Charlie Chaplin and Mr. Bean, I recommend the movie *Kelen* (“Daughter-in-Law”), a recent eighty minute drama by KazakhFilm ([www.meloman.kz](http://www.meloman.kz)). It has no talking but a full plot. It is supposedly set in the second century, but its plot will be fully intelligible only to contemporary Central Asians (if them).

Choose two or three such topics and attempt to continue the discussion of each of them for ten or fifteen minutes each day. Areas about which you feel passionate can serve as a discussion topic. The fact that you feel passionate about a topic, or at least deeply committed to a particular set of values, means you will have the opportunity to engage in argumentative discourse, which is important to your continued growth.