

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ASSIGNMENT

Cultural Interview

You should interview various people whom you seek out or meet, to get certain information, detailed below. This will give you some practice in setting up learning situations in the context of everyday occurrences with ordinary people. You will have to learn from the people you normally come into contact with, if you want to continue learning and improving in the language.

Some of these phrases will have already been learned in early language texts, if the sequence of *Guidelines for Barefoot Language Learning* is followed. Your emphasis here is on the social aspects.

Your tutors or regular conversants can help you prepare and give you suggestions of places or people to try in the area. This assignment should be carried out between weeks six and eight of language learning.

Goals: To learn how to learn from ordinary people, establishing your role as a learner willing to learn from those you come into contact with.

To help you become independent thereby, from special people (such as teachers and other experts) and from special resources (such as reference materials) so that you can direct and continue your own language development.

To give you practice in dealing with and overcoming the reluctance to put yourself into awkward and difficult positions in language learning and meeting people through a new language and in a strange cultural context (to you as an alien). (Each such experience makes the next a bit easier, though feeling comfortable is at the end of a long process.)

Instructions:

1. Preparation: Since people are indispensable to your learning, you will want them to understand that you sincerely appreciate the help they give you. Just as important is your approach to the person whom you are interviewing. Explain that you are learning the language and want to practice it. Help the person to know that you are the learner and he the teacher.

If you have not already, develop a text with your conversant that will show a variety of ways to:

- a. state your role as learner,
- b. ask someone to help you, and
- c. express your deep appreciation.

You will use these phrases in engaging the people with whom you will conduct the interview.

2. Interview:

Part I: Greeting and leave-taking: You know some ways of opening and closing conversations. Now you should expand and systematize your "encounter competence." Learn the different ways friends, casual acquaintances and strangers greet each other. The following question may be helpful in discovering different greeting settings:

- a. Can this greeting be used any time of day?
- b. Should women be greeted the same way as men?
- c. Does a woman say the greeting the same way a man does?
- d. Is an older person greeted the same as a younger person?
- e. Can you greet a more important person the same as you greet a peer?
- f. Can this greeting be used for children?
- g. Is this greeting appropriate for friends as well as for strangers?
- h. Does the activity of the speaker or hearer influence the form of the greeting?
- i. Are there any other common factors that should cause a change in the greeting?

Part II: Social conventions: Find the appropriate polite expressions you should use in these settings:

- a. How do you announce your presence if a door is open?
- b. What should you say if you bump into a person, or step on his toe, or commit some other social blunder?
- c. What do you say when someone is about to bump into you?
- d. What if you want to pass by someone who is blocking your way?
- e. Should you express some kind of concern when a small mishap occurs to someone near you -- he stumbles; drops something; sneezes, etc.? When someone tells you he/she is sick?
- f. How do you get the attention of a stranger when you need help?
- g. How do you politely excuse yourself after having talked with someone for a while?

3. Reporting and evaluating: Bring your written findings to a session with your tutor. On each of the items investigated, you can compare your findings with those of other learners, and discuss them with your tutor or conversant. This will enable you to find valid variations, incomplete or limited usages, your errors in transcription or meaning.