ON BAREFOOT LANGUAGE LEARNING
From Donald Larson, PhD

PHASES OF LANGUAGE USAGE
Bi-passing — when two persons communicate using their two languages.
- Start with a language helper with whom you have a language in common.
- Learn how to ask while pointing, "What is this?" "What is that?"

Passing — when two persons communicate in one of their languages.
Critical point — when you can continue language learning using only the language.

PRESUPPOSITIONS
Language learning happens best within *social* relationships, about *cultural* experiences, using actual *linguistic* expressions. Stick to everyday topics and public topics. This presumes that:
1. Language in intertwined with culture; language is not mainly an academic subject.
2. We learn best through interdependence with ordinary people; we should not be passively dependent on a teacher.
3. The local community is the context for our language learning; we use schools or formal courses as explanatory aids.

FIVE STEPS TO DE-ALIENATION
1. Start — Meet somebody, do something, speak simply, process new input.
2. Fit in — Five kinds of groups:
   family, neighborhood, work place, social events, faith events. There are 25 combinations.
3. Seek closeness —
   detect bonds and barriers, sense and nonsense, routines and interruptions, rules.
4. Seek membership in the five kinds of groups.
5. Seek leadership in the five kinds of groups.

GLUE: Get what you need,
          Learn what you get,
          Use what you learn,
          Evaluate what you learn.

CONSTRUCT TEXTS
With a language helper, construct texts of dialogues that include your part and likely
        responses. For examples:
- How to respond to requests for help.
- How to solicit help.
- Greeting, while coming and going, people according to their age, sex and status.

USE TEXTS
1. Grow the text over several days.
2. Let your helper explain both the language used and the social reasons for the expressions.
3. Role play the text together.
4. Record the text on tape with pauses during which you will mimic what you hear. (Record it with two helpers, if possible.)
5. Transcribe the text, using symbols to represent sounds, tones, accents.

MIMIC SOUNDS
- Melody (intonation)
- Rhythm (emphasis)
- Beat (syllables)
- Onset — peak(s) — codas (all the other parts)
- Note consonant and vowel patterns: CV, VC, CCV, CCVV, VVC, VCC, CVC, CVVC…

EDIT YOUR TEXTS
Check all changes with your helper.
- Delete (undress)
- Arrange
- Replace
- Add (dress)

COMPILE WORD SETS
- This is usually much better than vocabulary lists.
- Begin with your texts, and elicit related words from your helper.
- Include things, events, abstract words.
- Then put the new words into sentences that you understand.

Remember: get fluency before accuracy.

LISTEN OFTEN
- Passive listening — go where the language is being spoken and hang out.
- Selective listening — listen for sounds and for meanings of words, phrases, sentences.
- Listen to your hosts (kin), to people you meet often (neighborhood), and to strangers with whom you have legitimate business.

CLASSIFY propositions & simple sentences

	Statements	Questions	Commands
Identify things			(rare)
Describe things			(rare)
Report actions			

"THE STICK LITTLE BALL"
1. In each of the classification cells, let you helper formulate simple sentences that:
2. Identify things and persons as present, as absent, asking and confirming.
3. Describe things and persons by attributes, then comparatively.
4. Progressively introduce things, persons, possessives, activities.
5. For activities, first make sentences about persons alone, then persons acting on things, later persons acting with other persons.
6. Permutate the sentences to include singular, dual and plural; then past, present and future tenses.
7. "Dress up" your sentences, adding in descriptive words and phrases.
At all stages: CREATE SUBSTATION TABLES AND PRACTICE COMBINATIONS.