

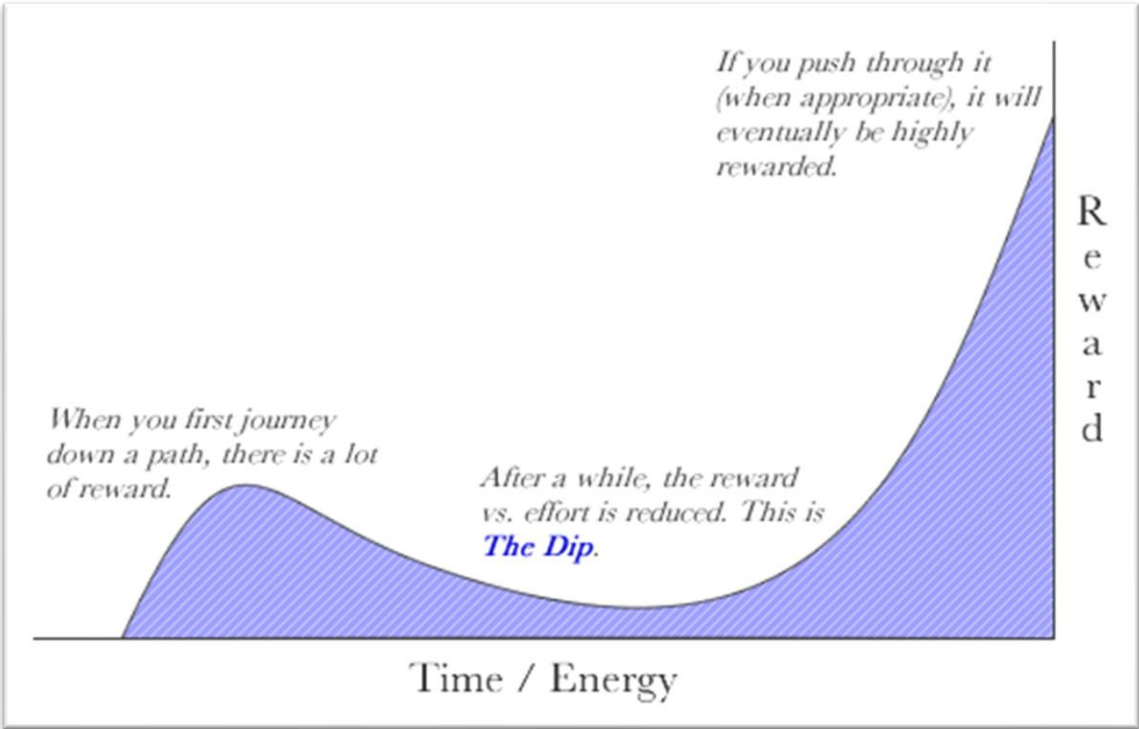
# LANGUAGE DRILLS + ACTIVITIES

Containing suggestions, ideas, and resources with corresponding explanations.

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## Principles



### Should You Go to Language School?

“No single answer is right for all people in all situations. However, we strongly believe that the majority of new language learners will experience their greatest degree of success when they take advantage of all available resources—language

school and/or tutoring arrangements, language textbooks and other materials, a variety of native-speaker helpers, and the broader community of native speakers. In this view, then, language schools can be a part of the total picture, perhaps even an important part.”<sup>ii</sup>

Ultimately, developing RELATIONSHIPS with native speakers will carry you long-term in learning the language of the people.



**Creating Language Margin:** Life fills up with all kinds of things, so you need to find ways to keep learning at a steady pace. It can feel like a waste of time to work on Pashto for an hour or two when you’ve got a whole bunch of other important things to do. But these regular little inputs are crucial. **Convince yourself that spending 30 mins watching a Pashto cartoon is more important than answering those pressing e-mails.** Make your schedule suffer for Pashto, not the other way around.

Fluency takes a huge amount of time to achieve, so take every bit you can get! It’s always a good investment to spend little chunks of time learning, no matter what you’ve got going on. Don’t wait for a nicely cleared schedule, or an official course time. Make it a constant priority to learn whatever you can, whenever you can.

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## Tools

- **ANKI:** Digital flashcards for computer and phone using a spaced-repetition learning model to enhance retention
  - [Video:](#) Introduction to using Anki
- **SHAREX:** An all-purpose computer-based clipping tool that allows real-time clipping and pasting of video and audio (e.g., from a recorded audio into an Anki flashcard)
  - [Video:](#) How to set up the ShareX audio clipping feature

## Listening

- **TAP OUT:** tapping your finger or your foot to the natural stress and rhythm of what you hear.
- **WALK:** Choose quality listening material and go for a walk. The key is having your mind relaxed while you listen. Search for familiar words and phrases and repeat as you listen along, attempting to mimic the speaker’s pronunciation and intonation.
- **GRAB AND GO:** harvest one word or useful phrase from what you hear.
  - Online dictionary: [dictionary.lingdocs.com](http://dictionary.lingdocs.com)
- **SLOWING DOWN:** Use VLC to slow tricky sections of speech then learn full speed.
  - “For every drama episode I watch, I choose certain things to mimic. It might be a phrase with a new word in it. Or it might be a short dialogue between two characters. I will listen and when I find something I want to mimic, I stop and repeat the lines many times. I watch it on YouTube so I slow it down to 75% and mimic. I set a bit of a rule that if I can complete the sentence 3 times successfully, without fumbling my words at that speed, then I go up to 100% and try to mimic there the same way, once I get 3 good pronunciations in a row I move on. Sometimes I don’t do this, but I have found it is a good number to slow me down and make sure I am getting the right rhythm. Sometimes I find certain phrases are very hard to get my tongue around. Slowing it down gives my tongue a chance to practice the phrase. I try not to pick a sentence

with lots of new vocab. Sometimes I write down the sentence I am mimicking, sometimes I just mimic as I listen. I have found my ability to form the words is slowly improving. I also write down some key phrases and mark them so that the next day, I can ask my teacher about them. This has been SO helpful, as once I hear the word in a new context, I remember it more easily. And added bonus is my teacher sometimes find the phrases I learn funny.”

- **DICTION:** Use short audio which you have the text for. Test yourself by transcribing the audio and checking how you did. Phonetics or the language’s script.
- **TEACH A HELPER:** A bi-lingual friend can be a great help in listening well. Here are three easy techniques.
  - MINIMAL PAIRS: help in distinguishing similar sounds. See the last video.
  - PICTURE GAMES: The “direct” or “natural” learning method that does not use any translation. Great for gaining vocabulary. It will require you to download images of concrete nouns and adjectives. Skim through each chapter to harvest the images and train your helper to teach you in the language what they are.
  - TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE: Your helper is the drill sergeant, giving you instructions in the language (Stand up! Sit down! Etc).



**TPR (Total Physical Response):** This is the vital skill of getting a friend to teach you a whole lot of related new words in one go. It is especially good for learning actions and body parts. Your response is physical (standing up, touching your nose, counting out five coins etc). This kind of drill is conducted entirely in Pashto and involves training a helper to slowly add new words.

Studies show that the more vigorously perform your physical response, the more quickly and permanently you acquire new vocab, so go for it! Don’t hold back! Get dramatic!

- **FUN VIDEOS:** Using context-rich video in which you know the story being acted out. Again, no translation.<sup>iv</sup>
  - Harvest sentences from a video and send to various contacts to explore the meaning
- **PRACTICAL METHODS FOR USING VIDEOS:**
  - (1) UNINTERRUPTED WATCHING: Watch the whole video from start to finish just for the joy of watching. Although this kind of passive watching is the lowest level of learning, it is still valuable, especially in terms of softening the brain to new patterns of language. If the action in a video is compelling it is surprising how new words and the emotions of the plot get subconsciously fused in your brain.
  - (2) REPEAT WATCHING: If you can stomach it, there are huge benefits of watching videos again. The human brain is a natural mimic, and after listening to something many times you will subconsciously absorb rhythm and intonation. Wallow in the sound for as long as you can, as many times a day as you are able. Don’t sweat the details of meaning too much, just swim in it.
  - (3) PLAY ACTING: Active interaction of any kind ups the benefits of video watching in great strides. Pretending you are in the plot, repeating phrases out loud, copying the accent and intonation of voices are all super ways to get that interaction. The more energy and volume you use, the more the voice patterns will be cemented.
  - (4) WORD DISCOVERY: To start with, your comprehension will be low. Relax. The key is to steadily find out the meaning of a few new words or phrases at a time. Use the loop tools on VLC or cut out a segment of the video that has the new word/phrase to help you explore the

words/sentences you are focused on. Start a 'movies' notebook and write down the useful/interesting phrase you're studying. Don't despise the struggle to decode new words. Linguists tell us that having to work hard to decode words cements them more firmly in our memory. To help decipher what you hear, try Adam's dictionary, ask a friend what the word/phrase means or cut out a short section of the video to send to a friend. What to do with the new words you discover? There are a whole host of ways to accumulate vocab. Make yourself a dictionary in a notebook, use flash cards (paper or electronic), make sentences using the words, or, if you are in the language environment purposely drop in your new words in conversation.

Whatever your approach, be systematic and think of how to amass the vocabulary in a way you can

review it easily and recycle in real use.

- (5) **SEARCHING FOR LOST MEANING:** Once your vocabulary has increased you will stumble into a new challenge: you understand all the words in a sentence, but can't figure out what the meaning of the whole is. The misunderstanding will often come either from idiomatic speech or grammar.
  - **Unpacking Idioms:** Understanding and using poetic phrases properly is a challenge. We may hear an expression like but not have the slightest notion of what people understand by this phrase. Figuring out these clever idioms is a vital part in being able to understand and speak colloquially. Use the same techniques in the section above about word discovery to figure idioms out. Keep a collection of them. Use them purposely. You will be amazed how much they will sweeten your interactions.
  - **Untangling Grammar:** Having an inquisitive approach to listening is huge. Asking yourself questions like: Why does the verb end that way? Why does that word turn feminine? What happened to the subject? and so on, are the start of grammar exploration. Spotting the moment you don't understand the reason for a certain word combo is the key here. What to do with tricky grammar things? Here is one approach. Start your own grammar notebook. Write out each tricky sentence, work out what it means and why. Then play with the sentence, substituting different useful parts in the sentence and make yourself a substitution drill. Teach a P friend how to drill you on substitution drills and go at it.
- (6) **DELAYED SUBTITLES:** This is a clever approach. I suspect, though, that it works way better when the subtitles are in The language. The few videos I could find with English subtitles may not be nearly so useful. Having English translation disrupts the natural flow of languagethought in your mind.
 

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH1aDCjypKg>
- (7) **OUTPUT:** In the end, pages and pages of notes and vocabulary derived from videos are way less useful than phrases you actually recycle from what you've heard and then **use in live conversation**. For this to work well you will need to harvest short audio segments of the phrases/sentences you want to use. Then perfect your delivery. Your goal is to get space, intonation, pronunciation of the phrases perfect by overlearning. One of the challenges is that you may not find an easy way to naturally deliver your new phrases. Here some ways to do that:
  - **The Card Game:** I've found it's a help to have new phrases/idioms kept in front of me – I use the back of visiting cards for this – and as I'm on the phone or on WhatsApp I play a

little game. I try to drop the new phrases in the conversation by the end of the day, and turn the cards over when I'm successful

- **Turning the Conversation Around:** If you've been watching a video on a theme you'd like to recycle, you can shamelessly direct conversation to your new topic by asking questions about it.
- **Memory Magic:** I've been wondering how some of my illiterate friends learn other languages so fluently from their video binging. One conclusion I have is that they are excellent at parroting. Their memory is sharper than a tack. This approach is a bit neglected in Western education, but it is helpful to find ways to challenge ourselves to memorize lots of fluent natural sentences. Anki is one way to do that.<sup>v</sup>
- **GRADUAL COMPREHENSION (ICEBERG/WELL):** As you listen to a new phrase or story, listen for at least one word you do not understand and then look it up after listening. Next time you listen, pay attention for that word and then also listen for another new word. Repeat the process. Can record each time you listen and mark the new word you learned for that listening session.
  - A well or iceberg conceptually provides energy and a feeling of success when a word is on the tip of your tongue but you can't remember it. Each time you hear and use a word, it gets closer to the surface and towards regular use!
- **DIRTY DOZEN:** Start with 2 objects or pictures. For example, a door and window. Your teacher points to and says (a few times), "This is the door. This is the window." Then your teacher asks you, "Where is the door? Where is the window?" You respond by pointing, not speaking. Then, a third item is added: "This is the table." Your teacher then mixes them all up: Where is the door? Where is the table? Where is the window?" and so on. You respond by pointing, not speaking. After deeply learning a dozen words, your brain is most likely full for the day.
- **PIMSLEUR METHOD:** [Review](#)
- **VARIOUS FROM "AK 2020" DOC:**



**In the Moment:** This skill helps you master present tense verb forms; which can be surprisingly varied. It can be done just by listening as your teacher describes something you or other people are doing. For example, "She is cutting vegetables."

For more active listening practice, use pictures. Your teacher can ask you to identify the people who are sitting, for example. For fully active listening (TPR) your teacher says what you are doing and you do it, or make it true.



**Hear the Difference:** This skill helps you hear sounds more accurately, and to differentiate between words that are easily confused with each other.

Start building a list of words you often confuse. Find pictures representing both words, and ask your teacher to use one of the words at a time and have you point to the correct picture.

If you get a word wrong, have your teacher correct you using full sentences and repeat the correct pronunciation of the words again.



**Active listening skills:** how to make the most of listening when people are talking to each other, or you are watching a video and you've no idea what they are saying? Now is the time to listen closely and do one of these four things:

- (1) **Mimic** what you hear under your breath and/or mimic the rhythm of speech – tapping your finger to the beat
- (2) **Repeat** back to people exactly what they ask you!
- (3) **Aaron's SECRET** – talk to yourself. Yes, the habit of imagining how you can use new words and phrases by picturing a scenario in your head and acting it out, either silently or, even better, out loud. This is not as crazy as it sounds!

**Mnemonics:** When learning new words, it really helps to use your imagination to create weird associations or links.

## Pronunciation

- **MIMICKING:** Repeat as is. VERY good for starting off, as it gets cadence, pronunciation right
- **MIMICKING WITH DIFFERENT VOICES:** Surprisingly effective. We are trying to be parrots.
- **SUBSTITUTION DRILLS:** An absolute KEY is only to add words that are known. Only adding one thing, so staying in the vocabulary range. VITAL IF we are drilling masculine nouns, ONLY adding masculine nouns - SO A GOOD TEACHER HAS MADE A LIST OF WORDS AHEAD OF THE DRILL
- **TRANSFORMATION DRILLS:** Super powerful when you have got a bit further. Again, STAY WITHIN what is already known!
- **BACK CHAINING:** Building up long sentences in reverse!
  - \*These first five types of drills are brilliantly taught in this [video](#).



**Substitution Drills:** this is one of the easiest ways to play with language when you have time to get organized ahead of time. The skill of organizing substitution drills with a helper is a key to learning how language works in practice. It's a way of learning without using English.

First collect any objects or pictures you need.

The three steps are (1) Learn any new vocabulary you need before starting the drill (2) Get fluent in saying the basic sentence (3) Then have your helper prompt you with one new word at a time. See if you can make a sentence substituting the new word into the basic sentence.

In this first drill you will need to make use of a picture of a man and a woman so it is clear who you are talking to; point to one or the other as you talk. Teach your helper to slowly introduce new words and keep doubling back on stuff you already kind of got.

- **SUBSTITUTION DRILLS CONTINUED**
  - For example, use a basic sentence that you know well. Then substitute one word for a different word. Each time you substitute, replace the same word. Tish helps drill grammar or vocabulary depending on how you do it. In English, this might sound like...
    - "He *goes* to the mall. He *went* to the mall. He *will go* to the mall. He *has gone*...
    - "Do you like going to the *mall*? Zoo, *markaz*, gym, office, park...



## THE NEED FOR SPEED

Repetition is one way to boost fluency, but speed is another very powerful way to build new language habits. Get your helper to push you faster and faster on this drill to see how fast you can go!

## Speaking/Chatting

- **POWER PHRASES & WORDS:** Keep a list of key phrases and words for everyday situations. Organize them topically in a notebook or document, and master them. Think of this as your personal dictionary. [see Andrew's Chat Phrases]
  - **ERASE VERB MIS-MATCH:**
    - (1) Ask your helper to say the phrase you want naturally - explain the setting rather than ask for word-for-word translation.
    - (2) Record several times at NATURAL speed
    - (3) Write phonetics or in language
    - (4) Overlearn
    - (5) Go out and use the phrase purposefully - have a prompt card to help you say it the first time
    - (6) Use the phrase a lot with lots of people
    - **OUTCOME** - You will forever have a link in your mind with the verb and the phrase, and importantly, skip the translation thing altogether.
  - **3X3 FOR LANGUAGE PRACTICE:**
    - (1) **PICK THREE:** Think of 3 sentences you want to say this week in live conversation. Elicit the phrases in fluent, full speed language with a helper. Overlearn them until they are perfect. If you need help on how this process goes read the intro to *Chatting Your Way to Fluency*, and/or watch this [video](#).
    - (2) **SEND THREE:** Send mentor your three sentences on Signal or other audio file once you are satisfied they are fluent.
    - (3) **SPEAK THREE:** Use each sentence with three different local speakers. Reflect on how it went.
  - **MIMICKING FOR 3X3 PREP:** "Schools in Pakistan rely on book work and rarely produce fluent speakers. The stress, rhythm and pronunciation of Pakistani English is generally poor. "How did you learn such good English?" I asked him. "Oh, I like to watch films." "Just watching?" "Well, I copy what they say." Active listening of real spoken language includes this tool. As you are listening to a drama, mimic it back. I have found that having headphone/earphones on helps you focus."
    - "The same skill is vital for your 3x3 practice. Overlearn these phrases. Start with short things. Dazzle them with your spoken parrot-like fluency. When it is all perfect, put your notes aside and from memory alone speak the phrases to mentor this week."
  - **CROWD-SOURCING PHONE CALL TALK:** "Several of us are using phone gup-shup to get live talk time. This is a massively useful way to boost fluency...but we are missing the ready-to-go tools for the phrases we need. How about us all contributing useful phrases as a group?
    - Think of some things you want to say (Are you free? I'm a friend of \_\_\_\_, I'd like to chat with you. I can't hear you. What did you say? When are you normally free? Is this your own phone? Etc.)
    - Get a local friend to record some phrases. Remember, have them say a phrase three or four times and record the best, most natural version.
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- **NOTECARDS:** Make with a few sentences each covering a few "threads" – SFO:

- S: STRUCTURE: Make cards with sentences that contain the “skeleton” of the language. Some meaty, very quick to resource sentences that are powerful.
- F: FLEXIBILITY drill bits on a 3x5, like changing subjects and verb endings; various verbs/ nouns that you would like to practice in quick, rapid sentences (mimicking how the SR says them and playing with them: changing the pronoun from say "I" to "you" and the verbs accordingly).
- O: OBSERVATION QUESTIONS: The super "power tools" like "why is he doing that" (pointing to someone doing something); "how do you suggest I learn SR?"; "what was your childhood like?"; "how do you show appreciation?" etc.<sup>vii</sup>
- **ROLEPLAY SCENARIOS**
- **TOPICAL**
  - *Chatting Your Way to Fluency* book
  - [Keep the Conversation Going](#) Handout



**Playing with Language:** think of new words as toys to play with, and keep trying them in new ways in conversation. Keep extending your language boundaries with people you meet out and about by recycling words you are discovering.



**Spotting Weirdness and making in Normal :** Whenever you learn new words, pay attention to how they are linked to other words in their context. Don't assume you can use them like you can use them in English!

## Reading

- **READ ALOUD:** Reading is an extension of speaking, and reading aloud helps you speak more accurately by helping you to hear your own pronunciation and rhythm. Reading aloud also helps in pin-pointing the words that make you stumble.
- **READ WITH A FRIEND:** Reading to someone else is the ultimate test of your fluency, and allows you to get instant feedback in ways that are not possible from reading silently to yourself. Encourage your friend to insist on excellent pronunciation and rhythm. Mimicking the natural poetic flow of the language is an important step towards being understood.
- **READ IN STAGES:** One of the most fruitful approaches to reading is to use a three-part pattern of: Fast—Slow—Fast.
  - STAGE ONE: Read a short passage quickly. The idea is to get the gist of the words without pausing to look up any unknown words, or puzzle over meaning. When you are first learning to read it is helpful to do this quick read as a sandwich of audio/reading/audio. First listen to the passage, then read it yourself, and finally replay the audio as you follow the text with your finger.
  - STAGE TWO: The slow inspection. Go back over the same passage and dig in to the meaning. Use a dictionary to look up any unknown words... It helps to write down the words you unearth. Another useful tip is to make your own vocabulary notebook—either digitally or on paper.
  - STAGE THREE: Re-read again. This time try to steadily increase your reading speed. By re-reading passages that you are already familiar with, your reading fluency and accuracy will quickly improve.<sup>viii</sup>

## Activities

- **MAKE YOUR OWN 5-MINUTE STORIES**
  - Prepare basic vocab
  - Record yourself saying it
  - Relisten and look for words or phrases missed
  - Look up new vocab and add to Anki
  - Record again and again until smooth story telling
- **QUICK VERB CONJUGATIONS**
  - *Game:* Use pronoun chart/cards to randomly pick a subject and use a verb chart/cards to randomly pick a subject + verb combination in a desired tense. Add in pronouns and objects with a chart/card for transitive verbs.
  - *Game:* Use picture booklet and describe the scene using different verb tenses each time



**THE SKILL OF LEARNING FROM VIDEO:** We will be using short cartoon clips to help focus on real language use. Watching video makes unknown words much more understandable. But how to do this?

Here's how: watch a video repeatedly and slowly decode the meaning using the word list and intuition. Be relaxed about what you don't get at this point...think of yourself as swimming in language rather than trying to catch every passing word.

When you've exhausted your mind, finally turn to Appendix part 2 to see the transcription and watch again a few times.

Keep on going back to the video, gaining slightly in comprehension each time. Start using "Aaron's Secret" to play mental games as you listen.

*This method works miracles!* The most fluent speakers of English you bump into in outlying places of the world, whose pronunciation and spoken use of the language shocks you have one thing in common. "How did you learn such amazing English?" "Well, there are no courses here, so I just had a steady diet of watching English films."



**Mining Video/Audio Resources Down Deep:** With today's technology, you can easily comb through, examine, and browse things in audio and video. We're not limited to books anymore for this kind of study! Now audio is even more pliable than the printed page. This is really important to take advantage of, because while audio/video provides you with the most direct, "real" form of the language.

See Appendix 5 for ideas of where to find videos. Try to download them, so you can repeatedly listen and manipulate them.

Use a media player like **VLC** and learn how to skip back and forth, slow down, speed up, and loop using keyboard shortcuts so that you can really dig in and listen carefully to new or tricky parts. You can even use the record button in VLC to gather little snippets from your audio/video clips that you want to save and review.



### TSUNAMI LEARNING: 津波!

When you're learning a language, you're constantly getting in "over your head." You will encounter conversations, videos, and materials full of things you don't understand. Try not to let this overwhelm or discourage you, but rather embrace the waves of ambiguity and confusion! Trying to learn and master everything you encounter is a little bit like trying to catch all the water of a wave as it hits you. Don't worry about trying to grab all the water, just keep walking out and getting wet!

When you encounter some bit of conversation, read something, or listen to a program try to:

**#1 Understand** as much as you can. Ask about words. Look them up in a dictionary. Try to guess at what words might mean.

**#2 Notice** the few phrases or ideas that really stick out to you, or that you think would be useful or fun to use

**#3 Learn and practice** a few of these new phrases and words.

Then keep getting out there and exposing yourself to more and more waves of new language!

*Language learning is 90% exposure and understanding, 10% memorizing and hard work.*



**Curiosity:** Asking the Who? What? Why? When? Where? questions is a key part of moving ahead in language and culture learning. Boldness and persistence in this skill pays huge dividends, especially when you begin using Pashto to investigate your new world. Cultivate the curiosity of Sherlock Holmes.

## Outing Ideas

- Go to a restaurant
  - Make the order in target language
  - Learn foods on the menu
  - Ask cooks how things are made and if you can watch
- Get shoes shined regularly in the same place
- For ladies:
  - Sit in waiting or front room in hospital
    - If appropriate, offer to show people around or get food for them
  - Visit the park when ladies are usually free (e.g., not at home for meal prep)
  - Guys ask their friends about their wives, sisters, mothers, or daughters' availability
  - Knock on doors – some men don't allow their wives to leave the home much so you must go to them
    - Build the relationship by bringing food – culturally it is appropriate and even preferred to come by unannounced
    - Come with a request
  - Hang out/rest near apartments
  - Shop when ladies are usually out

- Take young children with them to do activities
- Do something persistently (e.g., walk the neighborhood) until you are known/recognized

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<sup>i</sup> “Learning Curve” – Seth Godin

<sup>ii</sup> “Planning for Success in Language Learning” - Lonna J. Dickerson, rev. 2008, *ICCT, Second Language Acquisition Handbook*

<sup>iii</sup> “AK 2020” Document

<sup>iv</sup> Bullets 1-6 under “Listening” from: <https://robertsampson9.wixsite.com/pakistani-pukhto/006-listening-well>

<sup>v</sup> RS

<sup>vi</sup> Bullets 3-7 under “Chatting” from RS

<sup>vii</sup> M

<sup>viii</sup> Bullets 1-3 under “Reading” from RS