

Learning from “Hai Maidan and Tai Maidan”

1 Introduction

Suppose that LCP wanted to send someone around the country produce videos to capture local culture and regional variations in speech. Imagine the expense that would be involved, the logistical difficulties, the security concerns, the difficulty in finding the right people and training them. As helpful as such a resource would be, we all know that it could never be produced. It's nothing less than providential, then, that this very resource has been produced by TOLO Television, and that it is available for free on YouTube.

1.1 Proficiency focus

- ❖ This activity develops your **interpretive listening** proficiency. Interpretive listening is your ability to absorb information from speech that you hear.
- ❖ Interpretive listening differs from interpersonal communication in that, with the latter, the person you're speaking with will try to use words you can understand (“foreigner talk”), and you can figure out the meaning by asking for clarification. Interpretive listening is therefore a harder skill to develop.

1.2 Competence focus

- ❖ To the extent that you learn new words and grammatical expressions, this activity will develop **formal linguistic competence**.
- ❖ These videos will help develop your **sociolinguistic competence** because of the many varieties of formal and informal speech you will hear in different situations: reading from a page during a voiceover, speaking directly to the camera, giving a formal interview, and having an informal conversation.

1.3 The Four Strands

- ❖ Since there will be a great deal of new vocabulary and grammar, this activity is **language-focused learning**.
- ❖ If you go through large portions of the videos without finding new vocabulary and grammar, then the lesson is **meaning-focused input**.

1.4 Skill level required

- ❖ In terms of the ACTFL proficiency indicators, this kind of activity falls in the **Intermediate High to Advanced High** range (depending on the topics discussed and how much you get out of it).
- ❖ In the Growing Participant Approach, consuming local media is an activity for **Phase 5 or Phase 6**, i.e., a fairly advanced activity.
- ❖ The ease of this activity will probably have much to do with your own background as well, e.g., which ethnic groups you generally interact with, and what you tend to talk to people about.

2 Instructions

2.1 Materials you'll need

- ❖ The “Hai Maidan and Tai Maidan” videos. You can get these either from YouTube, or you can copy them from LCP on a flash drive.¹ They're around 100 MB apiece. Choose a province where your target language (Dari or Pashtu) is spoken.
- ❖ A laptop to watch the videos on, and software that lets you pause, rewind, skip around, etc.²
- ❖ Pen and paper to record new words

¹<https://www.youtube.com/user/TOLOTV>

²For instance, VLC Media Player: <http://www.videolan.org/>

2.2 Time required

- ❖ One hour before you work with a teacher
- ❖ 1–3 hours of lesson time
- ❖ One hour after your lessons

Note that the first episode of the show is for some reason twice as long as the other episodes. Since each show is a series of short interactions, there’s no disadvantage to watching or studying part of an episode.

2.3 Step-by-step

1. Schedule time with a teacher.
2. Two days before your lesson, watch the program on your own.
3. A day before the lesson, watch the program again. (This is optional, but recommended: you’ll absorb more on your second time through, even without studying.)
4. Bring your laptop to the lesson and massage the text:
 - a. Watch a portion of the video.
 - b. Pause the video when you don’t understand something, especially words or grammar.
 - c. Write down new words (or new grammatical constructions) as you learn them, with a translation in your native language.
 - d. Repeat these steps until you finish the video. This may take several lessons.
5. After the lesson, enter the new words or expressions into your flashcard program, language notebook, or whatever you use.
6. A day or so later, watch the video again.

2.4 Possible pitfalls

- ❖ Don’t forget to write down new words and practice them!
 - If you don’t write down the new words and grammar to practice later, they won’t stick.
 - If you have any ability to communicate in these languages, you’re able to work around words you don’t know. You’ll be tempted to do that in your lessons. But that will be practicing *interpersonal communication* instead of *interpretive listening*. Instead, focus on the unknown words and grammar so that you learn language.
- ❖ Make your own sociolinguistic observations: you shouldn’t necessarily expect a teacher to be able to explain the subtle differences between the interview’s speech when he’s speaking to the camera and when he’s speaking to a villager. Make your own observations and develop your own hypotheses.
- ❖ As always, everything you hear should be taken with a grain of salt.
 - The frequent mention of USAID projects and other assistance from the United States is not coincidental: there’s a note at the end of each program indicating that it is funded by USAID.
 - Interviewees will be disposed to put their region in the best light. An occasional exaggeration is to be expected!