

Student Comments

Renee Sampson, June 15, 2010 My experience learning through ASLA

I was not expecting to be a participant at Dr. Greymorning's workshop... I decided to sit at the back of the room, close to the outlet for my cheap laptop that no longer lasts more than an hour without being plugged in.

I am quite intrigued with Dr. Greymorning's methodology and I am open to anything that I can learn that will help save SENĆOTEN. Seeing other people's expressions and responses to his methodology was interesting in itself... It is so true that telling ones self "I can't speak it" or saying "can't" is such a harmful thing and is a very self-defeating word/attitude. I was told by out mentor John Elliott that if we are serious about learning the language and becoming teachers than you have to be prepared to move outside of your comfort zone because you will be constantly looked to for things by our community. I really think that is true, we need to stop feeling ashamed of our voice and ourselves and start to speak it out loud and in front of people...

Going in to this workshop I knew that I was open to anything coming my way and I think that this type of thinking/mentality made it easier for me to go through the exercise that Dr. Greymorning presented to me on that third day. Just as Dr. Greymorning stated that on the first day, randomly calling on students not only helps on a one-on-one basis for the students, it gets the other students listening incase the teacher calls on them next and I was trying to soak up as much as I could. I did have doubts in my ability to retain or speak Arapaho and thought that I was going to have to try and remember and than speak on my own so when I was up front I started to sweat. Thank goodness I was being... guided through the exercise. I was actually surprised by what I did know but one thing that I did was 'listen'. Listen for patterns in the language... while participating in the exercise... I think this approach is awesome because it is teaching us how to see it from a visual sense like our elders before us. I want to hear and visualize SENĆOTEN in that movie way one day too.

As I stated before I was really surprised with how much was absorbed from sitting in the back of the room. If I can do it anyone can. I am excited to start learning my own language with this method.

Kyra Hall, April 24, 2009 Reflections on Arapaho through ASLA

Professor Greymorning's course Teaching Arapaho Through ASLA has been an amazing experience for me. When I first sat down in the classroom and read the syllabus, I saw that he expected us to have a 2 year olds comprehension of the language by the end of the semester. Having studied language and linguistics before, I paled and almost dropped the class. I waited for a moment to tell Professor Greymorning that I had not taken the pre-requisite for the course. Then he said that there was no pre-requisite, that we were all starting as infants in the Arapaho language. Ever curious, I decided to stay for a few days and see where the class went. After the first class day, I felt confident that I would indeed have the competency of a 2 year old by the end of the semester, and I feel that now.

Dr. Greymorning's method of teaching language is the most logical method that I have ever heard of. So with the ASLA language teaching methodology Mike Redman is using in the Arapahoe school he is providing the best chance for helping students learn the language. ASLA chooses a natural path, rather than one that has been taught by prescriptive elitists. Most of our language rules came from people who believed in how things should be, not how they are. Through ASLA, the method that Mike Redman is using, teaching begins like how children first learn, how the brain was, I feel now, meant to learn, which takes pressure off of the mind and we just learn. An added bonus to ASLA classes, other than learning, is that class tends to be fun. For instance, my classmates and I are eager to learn because of this method. We get into class, have a good time, and leave with a better understanding of Arapaho language and culture. I personally actually think of this course when I'm not in school. I stand at the door at the end of the lecture reluctant to leave, wanting to ask the professor for more time, and notice that my classmates seem to be doing the same.

I studied the Latin language for 3 years. I could not read a modified version of a written Latin document made for 1st year learners to you much less an original. I know nothing of Spanish anymore, and Greek was nearly impossible. Right now, I can and actively do describe the world around me in Arapaho. It doesn't take me very long, I don't have to sit there and think of a word, I see an image, and the word comes. Often the words come when I'm not even thinking of them. Dr. Greymorning's approach requires us to use logic and listen carefully. Some things we in the class figure out because that's the only logical conclusion, and this helps us understand the grammar better.

From a linguistic point of view, this class has helped me hone and understand the training in linguistics that I've gotten over the past 3 years. As an anthropologist/linguist, I may (hopefully) encounter cultures in which there is no English translation, I can't just go to a book and look it up. I have learned how to listen because of this course. I have learned to question my own biases, the hard way, which is much more impressing on the mind than just being told. Before this class I thought that animate meant living and inanimate meant non-living. I had no idea about aspirated W's, and I didn't know how to identify minimal pairs. This class has taught me how to listen and understand, to notice both differences and similarities between words, and ask for etymologies. This class has cemented in my mind how inexpressibly important language is to culture, and vice versa. No other class has ever made me feel so enlightened about humans and the human mind. I feel immensely more confident about my chosen career and my abilities to tackle the obstacles I may encounter. If Mike Redman is pulled away from teaching Arapaho, you will not only be doing a disservice to the language, but also to the many students who would benefit and learn.

Whitney Polich; April 24, 2008

When I walked into class at the beginning of the semester, I was assuming it would be like the other language classes I have taken before, lots of memorizing, repetition, and writing drills. However, I was completely wrong; on the first day of class it was announced that pencils and paper were not allowed and we would not have written tests. Arapaho instantly became a favorite class. Not only was the ASLA method more fun and interactive compared to my previous language classes, but it was also much more effective in teaching a language.

In my opinion, the most important part of this method is that we learn through speaking instead of memorizing translations. This difference from traditional teaching methods was so successful for me because it eliminated the primary language and was fun. I liked getting up and figuring out what was being said to me because it was challenging and I had to think. It was refreshing that we were actually participating. When I look back on my previous Spanish classes, I remember being bored and un-invested as we went through fill in the blank, matching, and writing drills from our books.

It is a challenge to try and understand what is being spoken to us without any English translations, but I enjoy the challenge and I can see a huge difference in the amount I have learned compared to my other classes. In Arapaho, after two weeks we had learned similar concepts that what would have taken at least one year in Spanish to learn. I took 4 years of Spanish in high school and 2 years of Spanish in college compared to one semester of Arapaho, and I feel like my fluency in Arapaho is surpassing my Spanish fluency.

Lacey Minton April 21, 2008

From the very first day of ANTH395 I knew I was in for a new experience. There we sat, our class anxiously awaiting the arrival of Prof. Greymorning for our first Intro to Arapaho Language class. Notebooks and pens ready, none of us knew what to expect—we had no textbooks, no insight into the class we were about to take. Suddenly, Prof. Greymorning strode in, carrying a satchel o folders and a video camera. Within a few minutes, he told us to put away our pencils and paper—he told us we would not need them for the rest of the class, and instructed us where to pick up a copy of the movie Bambi (only it was in Arapaho!). From there, all of us 11 students have taken our first steps into the Arapaho

language, as taught by Prof. Greymorning using his ASLA method. ASLA, Greymorning explained to us, was his own method of language instruction that he was perfecting to use in helping Indigenous people keep teaching their native languages to their children—and that this class was to help him build upon this method. From this class, we not only have learned volumes of the Arapaho language, but also about ASLA itself—it's pros and cons, and how Prof. Greymorning is striving to perfect this language method.

As pertaining to my personal experience in ANTH395 and watching my classroom peers, the first and foremost pro concerning ASLA is that it is *highly* effective in teaching a language at an accelerated pace. As I have been instructed by Prof. Greymorning it is obvious in every part of his teaching that he has done all his research. Prof. Greymorning not only got me speaking in Arapaho, but he got me to think in Arapaho. By taking one semester of Arapaho through Dr. Greymorning's ASLA method I have at least matched, if not surpassed, the vocabulary I amassed through an entire year of Spanish instruction through my high school, and Arabic instruction here at the U of M. It's my personal belief that ... ASLA could easily become a household word... ASLA is effective, efficient, fast, easy (for students, anyway) and fun! I feel like I learned so much in so little time, it is truly empowering—and I am so happy to have been a part of ANTH395.

Robert Hall, April 2008

I learned things, and, to a degree, how to teach myself my language by seeing and hearing how you present Arapaho to the class. It is hard to explain; you say the word... then you tell the class where else you heard the word. That taught me to examine the environment of the word and how it interacts with others. However, and most importantly, in the Arapaho language class you taught me a language without the need for translations. That taught me something very important; I can make descriptions of a language in English, but I must *use* that language 'fluidly' to be able to *think* in that language; the most important part of being fluent. I have learned from you many of the protocols and correct steps I have to take if I'm going to be a part of the language revitalization process. I have the privilege to learn my language and if I don't accept it then the next generation of Blackfeet will be born in a world without our ancestor's tongue.

You educated me. When I was right you told me and, most importantly, you '*enlightened*' me when I was wrong. Finally... not everything is pleasant but rewards do arrive if you work hard enough. Keeping the language alive is the primary objective.

Nova Daniels, 05/01/06

In high school I took 3 years of Spanish. We memorized written vocabulary, learned to read and write, and a lot of importance was put on learning sentence structure and how to conjugate verbs correctly. I joined Dr. Greymorning's class to test myself in the ASLA method as well as to study the method. I was sold in the first class. In the first half hour of the ASLA class I knew and understood about 20 Arapaho words, and have not forgotten them since. I am amazed at what I have learned in only 24 hours spread over 13 weeks.

Randy Daniels

My name is Randy Daniels and I have been learning the Arapaho language through the *Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA)* method with Dr. Greymorning for seven weeks. What I have find amazing about learning through this method is how 1) we learn how to identify & recognize objects and

actions through no other language but Arapaho, 2) when we make mistakes it is not shown outright but we are guided in such a way that we correct ourselves, and 3) this in turn develops a problem-solving quality so that we can hear words and phrases that we have not heard previously and still be able to understand. I have studied one other language prior to this class and the focus was on a vocabulary/common phrase method. What I learned in roughly 1-semester of that class it has taken us seven weeks to learn in Arapaho through ASLA with Dr. Greymorning.

I enrolled in this class because of my desire to be involved in Indigenous language revitalization efforts. I became aware of Dr. Greymorning's method and work after attending an Indigenous language conference last year in Missoula, MT. I was absolutely blown away by a presentation about a Canadian Cree child who has become fluent in his language after exposure to Dr. Greymorning's ASLA method. My first thoughts after seeing this presentation were, "how is it that this boy has devoted such a short amount of time to learn his language and he becomes fluent when native language programs have been around for years and few if any people become fluent speakers". After attending this conference I knew that when the opportunity came I wanted to be learn more about this method.

Being apart of this class has been highly enjoyable and rewarding. The class is made up of a mixed group of males and females, natives and non-natives. Regardless of the differences, everyone in the group has progressed beyond expectations. This is all due to the way Dr. Greymorning teaches the class. There is a high level of respect between the class and our teacher and a growing sense of community among the students.

Louis Hooker

Only half a semester has passed, and I have already learned hundreds of phrases in Arapaho under Dr. Greymorning's instruction. The environment he creates in the classroom through the ASLA method, for three hours a week, changes my thinking from an adult English-speaker to an adolescent Arapaho-speaker. In these first few weeks of class, my understanding of Arapaho has reached the point equivalent to what I could understand of German, after studying that language for two years. The immersion-style format influenced the whole class from day one. This method is a welcome change from the routine lectures in English about grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation. All of these fall into place through repetition and our own innate abilities. It is indeed a new and wonderful experience to correct mistakes for the first time in Arapaho without prompting in my native tongue.