

Erik's Story

Robert: Hello friend

Erik: Hello friend, I'm going to tell you a story: *One day an Indian was walking down along a creek, when he saw this man using his hand like a cup because he was drinking water from a pond.*

That Indian told him, "Don't drink that water, cows crap in this pond!"

This man yelled at him, "I'm a Whiteman, Talk English, you turkey because I don't know Indian talk!"

That Indian smiled and said to him, "Alright go and drink that water but, (use (this word was dropped)) two hands, because you can get more."

Don't drink the water

Robert's variation of story

Robert: "Hello friend

Erik: "Hello friend. Where did you come from?"

Robert: I was walking down along the creek when I saw this man using his hand like a cup because he was drinking water from a pond. I said to him, don't drink that water cows poop in that water.

That man yelled at me, I am a Whiteman. I don't understand Indian talk. Talk English you turkey.

I smiled and said to him. "go drink that water, (but) use two hands and you can get a lot more.

Erik: That man is crazy.

Robert Crazy Whiteman, brown water man.

Background on learning the story

Erik and Robert took my Arapaho class through ASLA spring term 2010. From February to the first week of May, about 13 weeks total they were in class on an average of 1.75 hours a week or roughly 23 hours of instruction for the entire term. Toward the end of class I told the class the joke in Arapaho and started to get them to understand and tell it. English was never used to explain any part of the joke. The translation of the original joke that was told in Arapaho went like this: *An Indian was walking somewhere down along a creek, when he saw this man using his hand like a cup because he was drinking water from a pond.*

Well that Indian told him, "Don't drink that water, cows poop in this pond!"

This man yelled back at him, 'I'm a Whiteman! Can't you talk English, you turkey?'

That Indian said to him, "Alright then, use two hands, and you can drink a lot more water."

As students learned this joke small changes were made and Robert and Erik enhanced it on their own, until it took the form as told in the video clips. I went away for two weeks but before I left we decided that I would tape them in the newly opened and dedicated Native American Center building at the University of Montana. On Saturday June 5, 2010, we met at noon in the building and based on how they each told the joke it was decided to set it up as a skit with Robert telling the story in the first person as if he had just experienced it. This is a wonderful example of how fluency is built; not by mimicking words or sentences but by creating speech that has not directly been taught.