

## **The nature and nurture of grammar**

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### Abstract:

In this talk I will discuss ongoing research into the connection between culture and grammar, focusing on recent experimental work conducted by myself, E. Gibson (MIT), M. Frank (MIT), and E. Fedorenko (MIT) on numbers and recursion in Piraha, focusing on number. Work conducted in January 2007 with the Piraha demonstrates clearly that they lack any numbers or counting whatsoever. This is a very interesting result, partially confirming, but significantly refining research by Peter Gordon in 1989 to test the claim by D. Everett that the Pirahas lack number. As time permits, I will also describe the experiments being carried out to test recursion and other cognitive-linguistic-cultural features of Piraha behaviour. I argue, in support of Everett (2005) that culture can exercise an architectonic effect on grammar and that there are serious problems for any theory of Universal Grammar.