

Sept. 29 A MFX3 (younger guy)  
Comments on Pirahã video.

In the discussion of quantity, numbers and so on in any pre-literate society, especially a monolingual society such as the Pirahã, it is vital that hypotheses both emerge from and are evaluated by several kinds of evidence, including natural discourse, experiments, and a written grammar of the language, itself rigorously tested.

I am providing here two links to low-resolution video clips taken from a documentary about Pirahã currently in production by Essential Media and Entertainment of Australia. These particular clips focus mainly on quantity and numbers. The fact that they were not planned to investigate these topics gives them even more credibility as data because the speakers' comments in each of the videos are spontaneous.

The first video (0001C6) is by Kaioá, a man in his late thirties (whom I have known since he was a young boy). Kaioá is talked about in my book, *Don't sleep there are snakes*. As a young boy he learned how to count in Portuguese from my ex-wife, Keren, and me. He could count well in Portuguese from 1-10 and could use that knowledge well. I tried to teach him to use 'hói' as the number one, 'hoi' as the number two, and then all the rest of the numbers in Portuguese. But he preferred to use 'um' and 'dois', Portuguese for one and two. In this video he uses 'hoi' and 'hói' for small and few, respectively, and it is clear that they are never synonymous with English 'one' or 'two'. Items in ()s in the video transcription are implied in the context, but not stated overtly by the speaker.

Also, he uses words that I at one time understood to mean 'only' and 'alone' in ways that clearly do not mean only and alone. My further commentaries are found in {}s in the transcriptions of each speaker says. Readers can extract sound (intonation in particular) and try to come to their own conclusions about Pirahã recursion. I haven't gotten around yet to providing morpheme by morpheme glosses.

These transcriptions and tapes are clearly still rough. But more and more Pirahã data of this kind will be making its way to my personal webpages over the next couple of months. People wanting to look at field data should continue to check this website.

Symbols: x = glottal stop; ´ = high tone; no diacritic over the vowel = low tone.

1. 0001C6.MP4

00:00:17 **Tii baábiha saagoái** 'Am I getting ill?' {joking comment made by Kaioá to himself as he waits}

00:00:25

Dan to Kaioá: **Báihiiǵi'** (taping) goes slowly'

Kaioá to Dan: **Xai báihiiǵi. Xaió.** 'Yeah. Slowly. That's right.'

00:00:30

Kaioá to himself: **Xitaíbígaisi kapiigakagakaá** 'Sarah {documentary producer} writes a lot'

00:00:43

Dan to Kaioá

**Xai xigíaoaxáixi gíxai xahoaáti topagahai. Xai xaoói xaaíbái xoíkapióxiái kobaisogabagai hiaitíhi xigíaoaxái?**

*Yeah, is it OK for you to speak to the recorder? There are many foreigners in other jungles who want to see the Pirahãs. Is that OK?*

Kaioá to Dan: **Xigíai** 'OK'

00:01:01

Kaioá to Dan: **Xai xigíai kapiiga hiahoái.** 'OK I will talk to the paper/image'

00:01:04

**Xoogíái hi go gáísai. Xaoói xaaíbai xaí hiaitíi. Xaíbaisi?** *'Dan, what did you say? There are foreigners (who want to see) the Pirahãs? Many?'*

00:01:07

Dan to Kaioá

**Xaoói xaoxaagá xoí kapióxió. Hi gáísai. Kobaisoogabagaí hiaitíihí. Xai saaíbasi kobaisai.**

*'There are foreigners in another jungle. They say we want to see the Pirahãs. Thus into the camera they look.'*

**Xai gixai xaahoaiso. Xigihai xoi kapioxiai. Xigioawaxai?** *Thus when you finish speaking, I will take it to another jungle (for them to see). OK?'*

00:01:20

Kaioá to Dan: **Xigíai 'OK'**

00:01:23

Kaioá to Dan: **Xai xigíai xáaga. Xaí. Ti gáísai. Xigíaixáaga. Xaoóii xoái?** *'Well, OK then. I speak. OK then. Foreigners in the (other) jungle?'*

00:01:43

Kaioá to Dan

**Tíi hi aíbásigíi kobaisoogabagaí. Hi hóihí. Hi hóihíái gáihí.** {he holds up two fingers though he shouldn't if (i) he knows how to count in Piraha and (ii) the word **hói(hí)** means 'one'.}

*'I a whole lot want to see. There is a small (amount here). There is a small amount here.* {Again, notice that even though he holds up two fingers, he clearly doesn't mean two, since he is referring to the entire population of the Pirahã (!). He is here talking about his desire to see a lot of people together, which is something the Pirahãs never see in the village.}

00:01:53

**Paóxai hi obaisogabagaí. Hiaíbásigíi. Xai hiaíbásigíi hi kobasoogabagaí. Hiaíbásigíi. Hi obaisoogabaí. Gíi. Xoopai hi obasoogabaí. Hi aíbásigíi.**

*'Paóxai wants to see. A whole lot (of people). Thus a whole lot he wants to see. A really whole lot. He wants to see. Here. Xoopai he wants to see. A whole lot (of foreigners).'*

00:02:09

**Xai píiaikóoi. Boitóhoi xi igópíhiabikoí. Xai boitóhoi kahápihiabaá. Xao hi obasoogabaí Hi aíbásigíi. Hi aíbásigíi.**

*Yes. The water is shallow. The boat cannot go up there. Thus the boat will not go. The foreigners want to see a lot. A lot.*

**Hi hóihiai gáí. Xai hi hóihiai gáí. Pasabíi** {Passar Bem - the name in Portuguese of a beach just down river.}  
*There are only a few here. {literally, there is one here, if hói meant one as I had originally thought.}*

**Xaoói hi xao kasabíi pasabíi, gáí.**  
*'Foreigners he calls this place Passar Bem.'*

**Xaí Hoagahíai hiatíi hi xaaíbaái. Xaí xaaíbaái.**  
*'Thus at Hoagahíai (Passar Bem) there are many Pirahã. Thus a lot.'*

**Hoagahíai xíga xai. Xaí Hoagahíai xíga xaaíbaái. Hoagahíai xai gíxai soxóá.**  
*'At Hoagahíai. Thus at Hoagahíai there are many. You already know Hoagahíai.'*

**Xaí tí xabaxái hi ahoái topaaga. Xaí gáí. Tíi.**  
*'Thus I alone speak to the recorder. Thus here. Me.'*

**Kabahá. xaaíbahiabahá gáí. So tíi xabaáti. Xioitabíi gáí.**  
*'There is nothing. Not many here. I stay. Xioitabíi (his wife) here.'*

**Bahaio píaii. Xaí hoaówíi. Tíiowi píaii. Xaí Tíiowi saíu ai morar, goó. Xabaxáigio. Kaahai kabahá xaaíbasi. Hói.** {one - but here he holds up TWO fingers} **Hóihí.**  
*'Bahaio (his child) also. Thus Hoaowii (shotgun; name of another of his children). Thus Shit (the name of another of his children) went to live there (goo is also used as a question word.) Alone. At Kaahai there is not a lot. One. Just one.'* (Or a few. But a few.) {Since the place Kaahai is populated by at least a dozen people, 'one' here can only be 'relatively few')}.

**Xaí Palhal hóii. Píaii. Agora, gáíhi. Tí píaii. Hóihí. Hóihí. Kabahá. Xaái bahiaba.**  
*'Thus (at the place called) Palhal there are few. Now, here. I also. Few. Few. None. Not many.'*

**Agora Hoagahíai xaaíbaái hiaitíihí. Xai hiaitíihí hi aaíbaái hiaitíihí. Hoagahíai xiga. Xai gáíhi.**  
*'Now at Hoagahíai (there are) many Pirahã. Thus Pirahã are many Pirahã. Hoagahíai at. Thus here.'*

**Hoihiigíai hi. Hoihiigíai hi. Xaoói xaokasabíi flechal. Xai hiaitíihí xaaíbaái píaii.**  
*'Hoihiigíai (lit: at the place of arrows or arrow shaft material) here. Hoihiigíai here. Foreigners call this Flechal (at the place of arrows or arrow shaft material). (Names in Portuguese and Pirahã match up in this case!)*

**Hoihiigíai. Hoihiigíai píaii. Hi aaíbaái. Xaí hiaitíihí, xoí hi aokasái Hoihiigíai. Xaí, flechal. Xaí xaoói xao hiaokasabíi. Xai hiaitíihí hiaokasabíi Hoihiigíai. Hoihiigíai** (in answer to me).

*'Hoigiigiai. Hoigiigiai also. Many. Thus Pirahã, jungle ('place') calls Hoihiigiai. Thus, Flechal. Thus foreigners foreigner (prefix) he calls it. Thus the Pirahãs call it Hoihiigiai. Hoihiigiai.'*

**Gáihí. Hoagaihíaihi hiaitíhí. Mais para cá. Hoagaihíaihi. Xaí xaaíbaai hiaitíhí, Hoagaihíai. Hoagaihíai.**

*'Here. At Hoagaihíaii (there are Pirahã). More towards here. Hoagaihíaihi. There are many Pirahãs at Hoagaihíaihi. (At) Hoagaihíaihi.'*

**Xaí gíxai saabi (sabe) Hoagaihíai.**

*'Thus you (already) know Hoagaihíai.'*

00:03:57

Kaioá continues

**Xaí tí igáísai.** (literally, Thus I carry (ig) sound (ai).)

*'Thus I say.'*

**Hi ahoái topaagahai agora.**

*'I speak to the recorder now.'*

**Gái Kabagái xabaxáigio. Xai xabaxáigio Kabagai.**

*'Here Kabagai (Pirahã woman) lives alone (not really - her husband lives with her). Thus alone Kabagai.'*

**Hiaitii kaba. Kapióxai.**

*'There are no Pirahãs. No others.'* (This is not literally true, since her husband is always with her.)

**Xaí quase gáí. gáí passa bem xibagai.**

*'Thus almost here. Here at Passar Bem, at the side of.'*

**Xaaíbaai híai kóihí. Quase xaí muito hiai. Xai xaaíbaai hi oihiai xai hí. Baagi.**

*'Many there are few {the k in place of h, as in the expected hóihi is discussed in my MA thesis and grammar of the language - a common phonological process in the language}'*

*Almost there are a lot. Thus many at this jungle thus here. Many.'*

**Báagiso xaagá gáí.** (holds up five fingers). **Báagiso.**

*'Many are here. Many.'*

00:04:19

**Xaí tí píai hóiho** (one - obviously not literally! He is talking about his entire family).

*'Thus I also am at one.'* {My family has only a few people is what this actually means.}

**Xaí gáihí Tiapáobii píaii. Hói** (one/small amount). **Xaaíbahiaba.**

*'Thus Bernardo also here. One. Not many.'* {Bernardo's family is also small. So there are not many where he lives either. But clearly more than one!}

**Xaí Tiapáobii Xaaibahiaba. gáihí. Kabai.**

*'Thus Bernardo (where he lives) there aren't many. Here. No one/nothing'*

**Hoagaihiai. Xaaibái Hiaitíihí. Xai hoagaihiai xaaibái.**

*'At Hoagaihiai. There are many Pirahã. Thus at Hoagaihiai there are many.'*

**Gái hoihigiai píaii. Xaaibáai. Hiaitíi.**

*'Here at Flechal also. There are many. Pirahãs.'*

**Coatá (Brazilian name) píaii. Xaaibáai hiatíi. Xaaibáai tiobáhai. Xaí xai xíga.**

**Xaaibáai Coatá.**

*'At Coatá also. There are many Pirahãs. Many children. Thus there.'*

**Xaí. Paagagísai, nome xaoói. Gíxai soxóá conhece xai. Xaí Coatá, mais para cá**

**Coatá. Xai Coatá xaaibáai.**

*'Thus. Paagagísai (what we call the foreign name, Coatá) You already know it. Thus Coatá, more towards here. Coatá. Thus at Coatá many.'*

00:04:56

Dan to Kaioá

**Xaí tí xahoái xaoói. 'Ok. I am going to talk to the foreigner (Randall).'**

Kaioá to Dan

**Xigíai. 'OK'**