LIFE WITHOUT TIME OR NUMBERS

Posted on May 6, 2006 by Eddie

Categories: Bible Translation, Languages

There is a very sympathetic article about the work of linguist Dan Everett in the Independent today. The article discusses Everett's work with the Piraha people of Brazil and describes how his research has the potential to radically change our understanding of how language works. The article has some interesting stories about Piraha culture which make fascinating reading. There is a mention in passing that Dan Everett (now a Professor of Ethnology) started his work as a missionary.

Some might be tempted to ask why a missionary would want to get involved in language theory in this way. There are two broad answers to that question.

- Firstly, language is one of the wonders of God's creation and it is good and right that Christian people learn about it, understand it and share their understanding with others.
- Secondly, and more pragmatically, Dan actually worked with SIL and has helped to train Bible translators over the years. It is people like Dan, with a deep understanding of how language worked, who helped to train us and helped us analyse some of the difficult aspects of Kouya. Without the help of these experts, it would have been almost impossible to develop an alphabet and produce an understandable translation.

Go on, read the article, it's a good one. But remember that research like this is part of what makes Bible translation into minority languages possible.