

Report from the Field
on the 2004 Team Research Phase
of the Iquito Language Documentation Project

by Chris Beier
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Between June 15 and August 15, 2004, four linguists and two linguistic anthropologists carried out another highly productive field season of the Iquito Language Documentation Project (ILDP) in the community of San Antonio on the Pintuyacu River in the department of Loreto, Perú. For eight intensive weeks, the visiting researchers worked in close collaboration with four native speaker specialists of Iquito and two community linguists based in San Antonio. From August 15, 2003 until June 15, 2004 the six community-based research team members carried out crucial basic language documentation work, generating resources that the visiting team subsequently used for linguistic analysis, teaching materials, and descriptive modules on Iquito.

With only 26 remaining speakers, the Iquito language is highly endangered. Fortunately, positive changes in the social perception of indigenous languages in recent years, together with significant shifts in the political climate in Loreto, enabled the remaining Iquito community to seek out professional assistance with the linguistic aspect of their language recuperation efforts. Iquito is a member of the Zaparoan language family. Of the family's seven original members, only three languages survive – Iquito, Arabela, and Záparo – and all three are highly endangered.

This year's team of visiting researchers included four graduate students from the University of Texas at Austin and two from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima, Perú. Christine Beier and Lev Michael, linguistic anthropologists from the University of Texas at Austin (both doctoral candidates), returned to San Antonio for a fourth time this year to continue in their roles as coordinators as well as researchers for the ILDP. Edinson Huamancayo Curi, a pre-professional linguist from San Marcos, returned to San Antonio for a third time and continued his ongoing research on Iquito morphology. Three new researchers joined the team this year. Linguists Cynthia Anderson and Taryne Hallett from UT-Austin each made significant advances in our understanding of Iquito syntax. Pre-professional linguist Karina Sullón Acosta from San Marcos made a significant contributions to our work on Iquito phonology. In addition to pursuing topics related to their individual descriptive research interests, each visiting researcher dedicated part of their time to developing pedagogical materials and producing textual materials in the Iquito language.

By the close of this year's phase of research, the team produced more than 800 pages of documentation, including 30 descriptive grammar modules, the first 6 chapters of a pedagogical grammar, and numerous texts transcribed in Iquito and translated into Castellano. In addition, the team has advanced to a 3000-word Iquito-Castellano (Spanish) dictionary, and has produced various resources for use in the community's bilingual primary school.

Between August 15, 2004 and June 15, 2005, the community-based team of four specialists

and two linguists will continue their ongoing documentation work. Community linguist Hilter Panduro Güimack was trained in basic descriptive linguistics by Beier and Michael in 2002 and will continue his lexicographical research, focused on building the Iquito-Castellano dictionary. Community linguist Marcelo Inuma Sinchija, himself a semi-speaker of Iquito, joined the team in 2003 and will continue his work recording, transcribing, and translating texts in Iquito. The project's four language specialists, Hermenegildo Díaz Cuyasa, Ligia Inuma Inuma, Ema Llona Yareja, and Jaime Pacaya Inuma, will work closely with the linguists as consultants as well as assist them in teaching basic language classes in the community's primary school

The Iquito Language Documentation Project (known in Castellano as El Proyecto de Recuperación del Idioma Iquito, PRII) is a five-year, team-based, community-oriented language documentation project. The ILDP was launched in July 2001 through an agreement between the Iquito community of San Antonio and Beier and Michael in their capacity as field researchers for Cabeceras Aid Project. Under this agreement, Beier and Michael agreed to coordinate a team-based project oriented toward both documenting and recuperating Iquito.

Between June and August 2002, Beier and Michael returned to San Antonio with two additional graduate student linguists from UT-Austin, Mark Brown and Lynda DeJong. This group of four students carried out preliminary research on Iquito over an eight-week period and trained a group of community members in basic descriptive linguistics; in that year, the Centro del Idioma Iquito (Iquito Language Center) was built in San Antonio with funds from Cabeceras Aid Project. In May 2003, Beier, Michael, and Dr. Nora England received a grant from the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project to support the ILDP through December 2006. Between June and August 2003, Beier and Michael returned to San Antonio with Brown, DeJong, and another linguist from UT-Austin, I-wen Lai. During that eight-week period, the ILDP initiated an innovative collaborative research strategy oriented around daily group seminars, which allowed the team to share research results and make significant progress on various aspects of the language simultaneously. The 2004 team continued the seminar model for our collaborative research activities as well as improving several logistical aspects of our collaborative activities. Now, at the close of the 2004 field period, the ILDP is in excellent form for the coming year's research activities.

The ILDP is being brought to fruition by a highly successful collaboration among the indigenous community of San Antonio de Pintuyacu, the Departments of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin, the Centro de Investigaciones de la Lingüística Aplicada (CILA) at La Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima, Perú, and the Austin, Texas-based non-profit organization Cabeceras Aid Project. Dr. Nora England, Professor of linguistics and Director of the Center for Indigenous Languages of Latin America (CILLA) at UT-Austin is the principal investigator and primary scientific advisor for the ILDP. A Major Documentation Project Grant from The Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project (based at SOAS, University of London) provides the majority of the ILDP's financial support. Cabeceras Aid Project provides logistical, administrative, and minor financial support. UT-Austin and San Marcos provide invaluable scientific guidance and human resources, particularly in the form of the excellent student linguists from these institutions that participate in the ILDP's field research. Finally, the ILDP expresses its profound gratitude to Profesor Gabel Daniel Sotil García, Sub-director of La Dirección Regional de Educación de Loreto

(DREL) in Iquitos, without whose tireless aid and attention the ILDP could not function year round as it does.