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Iñapari (Peru) – Language Snapshot

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Language Name:	Iñapari
Language Family:	Arawak, Southwestern branch
ISO 639-3 Code:	inp
Glottolog Code:	inap1243
Population:	5
Location:	-12.319931, -69.272822
Vitality rating:	Endangered

Summary

Iñapari is an Arawak language spoken by four siblings in the village of Sabaluyoc along the Las Piedras River in the department of Madre de Dios, Peru. In catalogs and other literature, Iñapari is often incorrectly classified as being (possibly) extinct. In response to the lack of information, an intensive five-week field research scenario in July 2019 was conducted with the primary goal of ascertaining the vitality of the language and if possible to collect information and resources on its morphosyntax. Information was recorded through elicitation, conversation, and naturalistic storytelling. This paper outlines the current language ecology and ongoing research on the language.



Figure 1: Geographical Location of Iñapari © 2020 Chris Rogers

Resumen

Iñapari es un idioma arawak hablado por cuatro hermanos en el pueblo de Sabaluyoc a lo largo del río Las Piedras, en el departamento de Madre de Dios, Perú. En catálogos y otras publicaciones, el iñapari es a menudo incorrectamente clasificado como (posiblemente) extinto. En respuesta a la falta de información, se llevó a cabo un escenario intensivo de investigación de campo de cinco semanas de duración en julio de 2019 con el objetivo principal de determinar la vitalidad del idioma y, de ser posible, recopilar información y recursos sobre su morfosintaxis. Los datos se obtuvieron mediante elicitación, conversación y narración espontánea. Este artículo describe la ecología actual de la lengua iñapari y la investigación en curso sobre la gramática.

1. Overview

Iñapari is a critically endangered Arawak language spoken by four siblings in the village of Sabaluyoc along the Las Piedras River in the department of Madre de Dios, Peru. Speakers of Pano-Tacanan, Quechuan, and other Arawakan languages also occupy this area in a context of extreme language shift towards Spanish (see Figure 1).

In catalogues and other literature, Iñapari is often incorrectly classified as being (possibly) extinct (Aikhenvald 1999; Payne 1991) and most of the information about this language has been based on one grammatical sketch with accompanying Spanish-Iñapari and Iñapari-Spanish vocabularies (Parker 1995). This grammatical sketch is an invaluable resource produced in conjunction with *SIL International* and is based on data collected from one speaker, Jorge Trigoso Silvano, who is the oldest of the four living Iñapari-speaking siblings. Parker (1995) itself lays out the basic properties of the phonology and morphosyntax and presents language data that was probably elicited, plus a few short texts with Spanish translations. In-depth analyses of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships in all areas of the grammar are missing, resulting in a significant gap in our understanding of Iñapari. However, the field notes and audio recordings on which this resource is based have recently been deposited in the *California Language Archive* (Trigoso Silvano & Parker 2020)

Two other short wordlists of the language are available (Hart & Russell 1956; Stiglich 1904), each containing only a handful of Iñapari words translated into Spanish. Stiglich (1904) is an overview of the social, political, religious, ethnographic, and geographic contexts of the eastern jungle regions of Peru. The information includes a catalogue of 190 indigenous groups present in the eastern part of Peru at that time and is supplemented by wordforms in only a few languages. Twenty-two Iñapari words are listed,

though the source is not indicated. Hart & Russell (1956), working as SIL linguists, collected 73 elicited wordforms using a Swadesh-wordlist questionnaire. All the data in these sources has been replicated in Parker (1995), which has stood as the most comprehensive source on Iñapari.

The name Iñapari does not have a meaning within the language; in fact, <ñ> [ɲ] is not a contrastive phoneme in any word. However, note that Stiglich (1903) called the language *Inapari*; he represented the <ñ> in other words and languages within his discussion, suggesting his representation of the name was not a mistake. In any case, the word can be partially glossed as *i-ña-pa-ri*, 3sg.m.subj-?-thither-3sg.m.obj. The exact meaning is unknown and while this is the name used by the Iñapari speakers to refer to themselves and their language, it is likely not a borrowing since it is morphologically complex in the language itself. Lastly, the word Iñapari also is the name of a village in the Tahuamanu province in the Department of Madre de Dios, though no known connection between speakers of the language and this district is known.

While the synchronic phonology is relatively well established (Parker 1999), the description of the morphosyntactic patterns remains in its infancy (see Rogers 2020). Furthermore, the diachronic development of both phonological and morphosyntactic properties has only been superficially studied. For example, Iñapari has been shown to belong to the Southwestern branch of the Arawak language family, also referred to as the Piro-Apurinã or Purus subgroup (Aikhenvald 1999: 68; Facundes 2000:673, 2011; Facundes & Brandaõ 2011; Valenzuela 1991; Hanson 2010; Payne 1991: 364; Parker 1999; Noble 1965). Figure 2 represents a genetic organization for this subgroup, and further internal classifications have not been supported (Aikhenvald 1999; Facundes & Brandaõ 2011; Hammarström, Forkel, Haspelmath & Bank 2020; de Carvalho to appear).

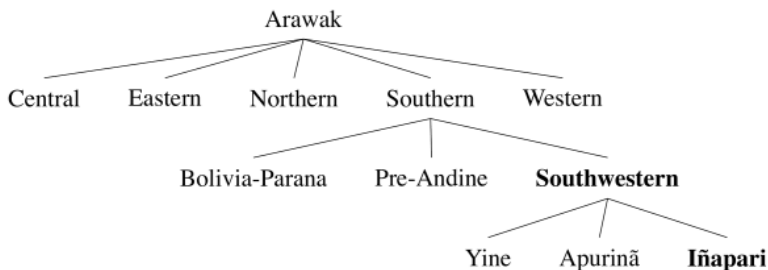


Figure 2: Iñapari family tree

In response to this lack of information, intensive five-week field research was conducted in July 2019 with the primary goal of ascertaining the vitality of the language, and if possible, recording information on morphosyntax. Fieldwork was conducted in Sabaluyoc, with Spanish as a working language (the current Iñapari speakers are fully bilingual). During this time information was collected through elicitation, conversation, and naturalistic storytelling, as in Table 1.

	Topic	Data Type	Media Type
1	Adpositions	Elicitation	Audio, Video
2	Animals	Elicitation	Audio
3	Body parts	Elicitation	Audio
4	Comparatives	Elicitation	Audio
5	Environment	Elicitation	Audio
6	Example Sentences	Elicitation	Audio
7	Ideophones and Onomatopoeia	Elicitation	Audio
8	Vocabulary	Elicitation	Audio
9	Noun Phrases and Possession	Elicitation	Audio
10	Questions	Elicitation	Audio, Video
11	Numbers	Elicitation	Audio
12	Verbal tense	Elicitation	Audio
13	Conjunctions	Elicitation	Audio
14	Nature Hike	Stimulus	Audio, Video
15	Working	Naturalistic Storytelling	Audio, Video
16	Life before	Naturalistic Storytelling	Audio, Video
17	Hirimatiri	Naturalistic Storytelling	Audio, Video

Table 1: List of Iñapari information collected

These materials are being used to create a preliminary dictionary, grammatical sketch, and online resources for the language.¹

¹ The materials are archived at <https://languageconservation.org/index.php/projects/inapari> (accessed 2020-09-17).

2. Sociolinguistic sketch and vitality

The following discussion is an overview of the current language ecology observed during the field research.² While according to the 2017 Census, thirteen people self-identified as ethnically Iñapari (Base de Datos de Pueblos Indígenas u Originarios, Ministerio de Cultura, <https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/pueblos/inapari>), only five people identifying as Iñapari speakers are known to be alive in September 2020. Four are siblings ranging in age from 50 to 70 years old, while the fifth is their uncle, but he has suffered from an age-related illness that does not allow him to speak. The fieldwork discussed above was conducted in collaboration with two of the four speakers: the oldest and youngest siblings of the group (Jorge Trigoso Silvano and María Trigoso Silvano, respectively) who live in the village of Sabaluyoc, Tambopata, Madre de Dios, Peru.³ Sabaluyoc is a village of about 50 Spanish-speaking families about two hours north of Puerto Maldonado, Peru. The other two siblings live elsewhere, work in the lumber industry, and only come to Sabaluyoc occasionally; it is hoped that collaborations with them will be possible in the future. Both Maria and Jorge affirm that all four siblings speak the language when they are together, but that they do so with decreasing frequency. They report that there are no cultural behaviors or social practices (other than personal conversations) that they use the language for.

Their parents both spoke Iñapari, though they are now deceased and their uncle, mentioned above, is their only known relative of their parent's generation. Jorge and María (and their two brothers) lived what they call a 'traditional lifestyle' in the forests in and near the Department of Madre de Dios until they were between the ages of 11 and 13, after which they worked as farmhands and at various odd jobs (both María and Jorge remember their first contact with a non-indigenous person around this age). Before this, they report living with their parents and some aunts and uncles, though neither recalled having any cousins. They further report that all individuals in this group identified as being ethnically Iñapari. Lastly, the family group exclusively spoke Iñapari, though the four siblings were not allowed to learn culturally-salient stories and legends, as their father was somewhat abusive and required them to leave whenever adults were speaking. Upon leaving home, they quickly shifted to the regional Spanish dialect (which contains

² I gratefully acknowledge funding from the BYU Office of Research Activities.

³ Jorge was also the language consultant for Parker (1995).

loans from other indigenous languages, particularly Quechua) and used it as their primary means of communication.

With this background and in the context of Peruvian educational policy where languages are seen as resources, the process of language documentation is approached by both Jorge and María as a resource-collecting exercise. They are aware that many languages spoken in the region are being lost in favor of the local Spanish dialect. However, they are not overly concerned with such a widespread shift. They value their language as a representation of their past, but not necessarily their future or the future of their children. Consequently, they are careful to get ‘all of the words’ and to have the ‘correct forms’ represented in the documentation, with no real expectations of revitalization. Nevertheless, both Jorge and María have a lot of pride in the recent development of an orthography, and recognized value in their language from the Peruvian government. This orthography was developed by the *General Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual and Rural Education* (DIGEIBIR). While they value this development and show a poster about it whenever asked, they do not use it themselves. They indicate that the orthography is a symbol of something unique they share as siblings but is of no practical use for them. So far, no literacy exists in Iñapari.

Both Maria and Jorge are married to non-Iñapari speaking individuals. Jorge’s wife, Griselda, is ethnically Yine, but only speaks a few words of Yine and considers herself a monolingual native speaker of Spanish. Maria’s husband, Federico, does not have affiliations with any indigenous group and speaks only Spanish. Both Iñapari speakers have children who speak only Spanish, and none of them is interested in learning the language beyond a passive novelty. Because of the restricted possibilities of using it, the almost complete shift to Spanish, and their ages, both speakers occasionally forget words in Iñapari. In these cases, both speakers think aloud about how their ‘father would have said’ something, as a guide to remembering. Furthermore, they have slightly different pronunciations from each other, e.g., while Iñapari does not appear to have a contrastive [l], Maria uses one frequently in places where Jorge only ever uses [r] (e.g., Maria [awítali] and Jorge [awítari] ‘tree bark’) In their Spanish both contrast [l] and [r]. In only a few instances did they disagree on expressions, and every time Jorge’s forms were deemed to be correct by both of them.

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