

Dear Friends,

Wapishana is an Amerindian language spoken in Guyana, a country on the northern coast of South America. Our colleague Bev Dawson, who was at the JAARS Center with us this summer, began working with the Wapishanas (population about 6000) in 1973 and the New Testament has now been completed and printed! The Wapishanas are planning to “launch” their New Testament this November for the entire community, which is eagerly anticipating the release of God’s Word in their language.



Bev Dawson working with Richard and Charlene Hicks

Other colleagues of ours who served with the Wapishanas were Rich and Charlene Hicks. We met Charlene years ago when we were in training together, and Rich after he married Charlene and before they went to the field. Rich and Charlene contributed to the Wapishana translation project, and Rich also collected material to compile a dictionary. In 2005 our friends were brutally murdered at their home in Wapishana territory, not by Wapishanas but by a local ranch hand who went to their house to rob them. Their home was completely burned down, including their translation work and the data Rich had collected for the dictionary. Bev’s house was

close by, but in God’s providence she was on a trip out of the country at the time.

Together with her Wapishana colleagues, Bev was able to complete the Wapishana translation, and then resumed the dictionary project. Rich had completed the foundation of a good dictionary, but it needed to be refined and expanded. Fortunately, Bev was able to retrieve an earlier revision of Rich’s dictionary work. I (David) have been privileged to serve as a linguistics consultant in reconstructing the Wapishana dictionary and putting it into a new, sophisticated computer program suitable for compiling dictionaries called FieldWorks. Here is a sample of the Wapishana dictionary:

<p>aidan₂ (see also: tukapa-kidan) <i>vi</i> show <i>Uruu aidanii ō'ati na'apam kabaun toma-kaō. He showed me how to make a house.</i></p> <p>aidinan [aidīan] <i>vi</i> 1) seem <i>Kakupa zii atamun aidinpan. The tree still seems to be alive.</i> 2) appear <i>Isha'uz dobatan dauna'an zii wiinao aidīan. After the clouds passed the Pleiades appeared. Kaiman uaidīpan. It looks good.</i></p> <p>aiini'i <i>n</i> sisal; karawa</p> <p>"aikuo var. of "aukuo</p>

One interesting characteristic of the Wapishana language is that it has *postpositions* instead of prepositions. There are other non-IndoEuropean languages such as Japanese that have postpositions as well. Another interesting feature is that Wapishana has a class of nouns that are obligatorily possessed. That means that it isn’t natural in Wapishana to talk about arms or

ancestors or souls or shadows as though they existed independently from individuals. These nouns must have a possessive pronoun prefix that specifies to whom they belong. In the dictionary sample here, "*aukuo* means 'brain,' and the superscript u in the dictionary represents any one of a set of required possessive pronoun prefixes. There are other languages that have obligatorily possessed nouns. You can imagine how that grammatical feature would affect the translation of verses such as "If the ear says, 'I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,' would that make it any less a part of the body?" (I Cor. 12:16). Unattached body parts cannot be discussed in Wapishana, nor parts of a plant (fruit, sap) or of an animal (fur, footprint). For example, instead of saying "I saw a footprint," you would have to say something like "I saw a *tapir's* footprint" or "I saw *its* footprint."

Another friend of ours, Dr. Dick Watson, began working in Vietnam with the Pacoh language in the early 1960s, and he and his Pacoh colleagues published a dictionary in 1979. Over the past two years, Lynn has edited a revision of this dictionary as Dick continued to add to it. Thanks to members of the SIL computer department, the Pacoh dictionary has been transformed from a printed dictionary to an interactive online version. SIL recently published this dictionary! It can be viewed online now at <http://pacoh.webonary.org/>.

Thank you for partnering with us through your prayers and gifts. We are thankful to be part of this ministry serving speakers of minority languages around the world.

In Christ,



Praise:

- ◆ The Wapishana New Testament has been completed.
- ◆ The Wapishana dictionary is progressing.
- ◆ The Pacoh dictionary has been published.
- ◆ We and our families are well.
- ◆ We are enjoying our work.

Pray:

- ◆ The Wapishana translation will bless many people.
- ◆ God will continue to bless and guide us.
- ◆ Lynn will make good progress with her new editing project, an ethnography of the HIV and AIDS community in Nepal.
- ◆ God will watch over our son Mark, and Maria and little Katya, in Champaign, Illinois, for grad school.
- ◆ God will bless and guide Kimberly, our daughter, living and working in Washington, D.C.
- ◆ God will lead and protect Michael, our youngest, in his extended, dangerous training with the National Guard in Florida.

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