We also conducted a more structured field interview with some Yindjibarndi speakers. In some cases we asked them to tell us if they saw an example of some landscape term of interest. At other times we stopped near features and asked the speakers to explain to us what they would call the feature, and why. This semi-structured field interview was conducted fairly late in the Yindjibarndi project, when the researchers already felt they had an adequate understanding of many, but not all, terms. Some photographs taken that day were used later with other speakers, to confirm or refine our understanding of the meanings of terms.

The approach used by O'Meara in her work with the Seri has included a variety of types of field interview. Her primary procedure to elicit landscape terms was conducting situated route descriptions with native speaker collaborators. This approach involves going to a particular location that has some cultural significance to the collaborator (which is determined in advance of the trip)—see Fig. 16.2. Once at that location, the collaborator is asked to provide a route description from the location back to the village. The

collaborators are reminded ↳ that they are providing the route description to somebody who speaks Seri, but does not know the area, in order to increase the likelihood that collaborators will use landscape terms and not placenames. The advantage of this technique is that the elicited material reveals the way that landscape features are used as natural landmarks in spatial description. Such specific interview techniques augment data collected from informal conversations with collaborators and observations of people in the community going about their everyday activities.

Figure 16.2.

Native speaker consultant in the Seri project, Maria Luisa Astorga near the mouth of Rio San Ignacio (the major arroyo near El Desemboque).

O'Meara also collected personal narratives which feature the landscape as a central theme—for example, stories about people gathering food items or getting lost at sea. These personal narratives not only provide additional examples of landscape terms in a natural context, but also allow for further insight into the cultural significance of parts of the Seri landscape which are not made clear through participant observation.

Another method that O'Meara has employed is landscape diagramming. This approach involves going to a location where the researcher and the collaborator both have a good view of a predetermined landscape feature, such as a mountain range, dunes, or a stream. At that point, the collaborator draws the landscape feature or scene that she is observing.[4] The researcher then begins to label the drawing according to the collaborator's instructions. This leads to identifying names and terms for parts of landscape features, as well as names and terms for entire landscape features, visible in the scene. This approach also allows the collaborators to direct the elicitation, such that they determine the way the landscape feature is represented in the diagram and they direct the researcher how to label the diagram.