



The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork

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CHAPTER

12 Ethnobiology: Basic Methods for Documenting Biological Knowledge Represented in Languages

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Abstract

This article resorts to ethnobiology for documenting biological knowledge represented in languages. Ethnobiology methods are undergoing a certain degree of standardization following Martin's very influential ethnobotany methods book outlining many of the basic field techniques. Among its many useful chapters is one on linguistic methods. The descriptions provided in this article are intended to build on Martin's procedures, but add recent trends that reflect recent important changes in ethnobiological research. It begins with a discussion of some of the sorts of research ethnobiologists are doing around the globe. The primary purposes of this study are to provide encouragement to field linguists considering working with biological materials, and to promote collaboration among scholars, particularly linguists and ethnobiologists. Ethnobiology is the scientific study of dynamic relationships among peoples, biota, and environments. This discipline was developed to understand and explain cultural differences and similarities in the knowledge and use of biota and environments. The study shows that how linguistics can benefit not only from recent developments in ethnobiological techniques, but also from the advances in scientific theory being generated in the above research. An area of past and future research cooperation between linguists and ethnobiologists is a focus on cognitive research. Further, the article outlines a general understanding of this area by ethnobiologists, and this is presented here as a starting point for further discussion and research. Finally, the study focuses on basic methodological aspects of ethnobiological research, particularly as they relate to linguistic researchers.

Keywords: [ethnobiology](#), [biological knowledge](#), [Martin's procedure](#), [biological materials](#), [cultural differences](#)

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