3.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on existing field guides for morphosyntactic analysis of previously undescribed languages. The first comprehensive modern linguistic field guide was written by Samarin (1967), followed by Bouquiaux and Thomas (1976; 1992), Healey (1975), and Kibrik (1977). Apart from Burling's (1984) small but very useful book, *Learning a Field Language*, there were no fieldwork guides published in the 1980s. Since the early 1990s the rising awareness of the imminent global loss of language diversity, the recognition of linguistic typology as an important discipline of linguistics, and the advances in language recording and processing technology have led to an increasing interest in the documentation of endangered languages and fieldwork methods (Himmelmann 1998; Austin 2003–10; Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel 2006). In addition to new fieldwork guides (Abbi 2001; Bowern 2008; Crowley 2007; Newman and Ratliff 2001; Vaux, Cooper, and Tucker 2007), fieldwork manuals and questionnaires are now also published as on-line resources in the internet (see the end of this chapter for links).

These guides have to be distinguished from publications that inform students on the diversity of language structures, or train them through exercises in the analysis of linguistic data (e.g. Kroeger 2005 and Payne 2006). The borderline between these two kinds of text book, however, is not sharp. Bouquiaux and Thomas (1992: 95–173) devote a whole section of their book to 'concepts of linguistic analysis' before they present their questionnaires, while Bowern (2008: 73–106) briefly explains selected areas of the typology of morphosyntactic structures and gives useful recommendations for further study along with her presentation of data gathering methods. Abbi (2001: 115–220), who focuses on fieldwork in India, structures her chapters on morphology and syntax in a similar way. In each section of these chapters she first explains the morphosyntactic characteristics of Indian languages and then makes suggestions about how they can be elicited. Since the Indian languages belong to different, typologically diverse language families (Indo-European, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan, Austric, and Andamanese), the book is also useful for fieldworkers in other areas of the world.

The following sections will first recommend a number of books that provide basic and specialized information on languages and language structures (§3.2) and then address anthropologists and other non-linguistic researchers who are interested in collecting language data (§3.3) in the course of fieldwork. The next section (§3.4) discusses the interaction of researchers and indigenous consultants, while §3.5 presents an overview of the various methods of collecting data, i.e. language learning and participant observation (§3.5.1), elicitation (§3.5.2), and the collection of texts (§3.5.3). The last section (§3.6) gives a summary of the state of the art. The term morphosyntactic analysis refers in this chapter to the analysis of the structure and meaning of linguistic units from sentence to word level. It does not presuppose any specialized theoretical approach.

Since the collection of data for the morphosyntactic analysis of a previously undescribed language implies that the researcher spends some time in the field, this chapter will not address language surveys and short-term exploratory field trips.