

Ethnolinguistics, Ethnobiology and Biodiversity

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Origin

This workshop is the continuance of two previous workshops, namely, “Linguistic approaches to the documentation of indigenous ecological knowledge: A mobile training workshop at the University of Dodoma in Tanzania” held in September 2023 and “The contribution of ethnobotany to Bantu linguistics” held in August 2024 during the Bantu 10 conference at the Dar es Salaam University College of Education in Tanzania. Based on the previous discussions during workshop presentation and publication of special issue of ethnobotany and ethnology, the current workshop wants to fulfill four purposes.

Purpose

Firstly, the contribution of the information on ethnobotany to the study of the structure of nouns of Bantu languages is offered in few studies (see Koopman 2015; Legère 2020; Lusekelo & Amir 2022). Since research has shown that there are variations on the classification of the plant names across languages of the same language family (see Bostoen 2007; Utenga & Lusekelo 2025), it follows, therefore, contributions to the structure and classifications of names of plants based on new data from other Bantu languages is still required.

Secondly, the medicinal values of the plants is another ethnobotanical contribution already provided for in the previous publications covering the Bantu area (see Charwi et al. 2023; Heine & Legère 1995; Pakia 2005; Pakia, Cook & van Staden 2002; Mziray & Lusekelo 2025, among others). However, research has shown that each society appears to have developed at least some knowledge of specific medicinal plants and specific kinds of ailments which are treated thereof. Therefore, contribution to the medicinal value of plants and the societal knowledge of the value of plants in individual ethnic groups in the Bantu area is a welcome contribution to this workshop.

Thirdly, African languages contribute to the understanding of onomastic as a result of onomatopoeic and linguistics as a result of conative animal calls (Akumbu & Andrason 2024; Andrason & Karani 2022; Koopman, Porter & Turner 2020). The contribution of this study is relatively narrower in the Bantu family; hence the call for the present workshop.

Lastly, the Bantu speaking area occurs adjacent to the speakers of other languages, which eventually leads to language contact and exchange of linguistic materials (Kiessling, Mous & Nurse 2008). Both ethnobotanical and ethnozoological materials are exchanged between Bantu and non-Bantu languages. Thus, penetration of ethnobotanical and ethnozoological linguistic materials into Bantu from non-Bantu is a welcome contribution to the proposed workshop.

This workshop aims to foster cross-disciplinary approaches between ethnolinguistics and ethnobiology to better understand Bantu biocultural diversity, valorize indigenous knowledge, and contribute to ecological and community resilience within the *One Health / One Planet* paradigm.

Objectives

- Promote an integrated approach between ethnolinguistics and ethnobiology in the study of relationships among languages, plants, and societies.
- Document and compare vernacular classifications and uses of living organisms in Bantu languages.
- Valorize the medicinal and ethnobotanical knowledge of local communities.
- Study the linguistic expressions of life (onomatopoeia, conative calls) from a comparative perspective.
- Examine linguistic and biocultural contacts between Bantu and non-Bantu languages.
- Promote an *ecology of knowledge* integrating language sciences, indigenous knowledge systems, and biodiversity conservation.
- Strengthen local capacities for ecological and cultural resilience.

Thematic Areas

- Languages, taxonomies, and vernacular classifications of living organisms.
- Ethnobotanical knowledge and the medicinal value of plants.
- Onomatopoeia, expressions of life, and interspecific communication.
- Linguistic contacts and biocultural exchanges in the Bantu area.
- Indigenous knowledge, resilience, and adaptation to climate change.

Keywords

Ethnolinguistics – Ethnobiology – Biodiversity – Bantu Languages – Indigenous Knowledge – Climate Change – Intangible Heritage – One Health / One Planet

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