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**The relationships between man and plant in Polish folklore (on the example of shrubs).
Studies on the border between ethnolinguistics and ethnobotany
Project summary for the general public**

How is the juniper related to devil and why digging up the black elder bush is not a good idea? Why is it not recommended to sleep under the yew tree? And why does the lightning not strike the hazel? Is the femininity of the viburnum and the masculinity of the juniper determined only by the grammatical gender? What is the relation between the name of *czerecha* [bird cherry] and the already forgotten noun *czerechere*, used jokingly in the past to describe post-alcoholic lethargy? And why are blackberries called *bears* and the black elder – *watered lilac*? Why are *raspberry thickets* a space of love in folklore? And why are *yew tables* and *yew benches* in wedding songs not pieces of furniture made of yew wood? What was the importance of shrubs in the human world? What were the practical uses of shrubs – how were they used in folk rituals, in magic and in healing? What symbolic meanings were given to them? Finally, can an ethnolinguist speak about issues that have so far been only reserved for natural scientists? And can representatives of the humanities conduct research together with representatives of the sciences?

The proposed project aims to show, firstly, the relations between people and plants (selected shrubs) in colloquial Polish and in Polish folk culture, and secondly, through the linguistic narrative about shrubs – the close relationship between ethnolinguistics and ethnobotany. Within this project, ethnobotany – a scientific field that studies interactions between people and plants – will be treated as part of ethnolinguistics – a subfield of linguistics studying the relationship between language and culture. The ethnobotanic issues addressed in the project will be examined using the cognitive definition, which is a proven research tool developed in the field of linguistics.

Although ethnolinguists do not adopt botanical nomenclature in their description of the world and they prefer cultural over botanical facts, while ethnobotanists rather do not interpret the symbolical meanings given to plants in folk songs, there are many commonalities between ethnobotany and the Lublin school of ethnolinguistics: the object of research, which is the plant world; the relationships holding between the plant and human worlds; the focus on the study of a popular/colloquial way of thinking and a special treatment of language, which – as it turns out – is natural not only for linguists, who – while constructing plant descriptions – use hard ‘linguistic evidence’ allowing them to verify many of the hypotheses made, but also for ethnobotanists, who in their research often prioritise aspects of knowledge encoded in language.

The author of the project, referring to the concept of the linguistic worldview and the methods of its reconstruction (with the use of the cognitive definition mentioned above), aims at (i) reconstructing the characteristics of shrubs that is entrenched in their standard Polish and dialectal names, and (ii) the “gender” of shrubs encoded in colloquial and folk Polish; (iii) marking out a linguistic and cultural boundary between man and plant (shrub); (iv) reconstructing the relations between man and plants (shrubs) in the context of the idea of “solidarity with life” and the concept of “associated species”, and (v) analysing semantic changes taking place in selected adjectives formed from the names of shrubs, which appear in specific genres of folklore.