



Play is a necessary part of the creative process, and, we've been told that if you cannot play with your material and resources, it's unlikely that creative ideas will be generated. Those of us living within reasonable driving distance of Albuquerque, New Mexico who choose to "carpool" to the Ethnobiology Conference there have an opportunity to have fun—to play—with ethnobiological word games. Insight and new patterns of information are likely to surface. Here are some games I have enjoyed in the past.

Twenty Questions. As a botanist I have most frequently played "Botanical" Twenty Questions. It's interesting to observe yourself becoming increasingly adept at getting the most mileage out of a question. For example, it's better to ask "Does your plant require double fertilization?" than "Is your's a seed plant?" And, since variety is the spice of life, it becomes more interesting to ask "Does your plant belong to a largely wind pollinated family?" instead of "Is your plant in the Compositae?" With a little thought, one can easily play Ethnobiological Twenty Questions.

Tom Swifties can be fun, and modified for ethnobiology, a challenge. Browsing through recent issues of the *Journal* brought forth these rather obvious examples. Perhaps you will find more exacting ones. Have you ever heard:

A tree ring? (Swetnam, 4:77-199, 1984).

A birch bark? (Holman and Egan, 5:65, 1985).

Have you ever seen:

Data bank? (Shuster and Bye, 3:157-174, 1983).

A seed bank? (News and Comments, 5:83, 1985).

Malapropisms, modified for ethnobiology, may be more difficult than Tom Swifties and, once started, perhaps more satisfying. A malapropism is the inappropriate or incorrect use of a word, and in the play from which the term was coined, Mrs. Malaprop—quite accomplished at this questionable art—told her daughter that it was impolite, when surprised, for her mouth to be open like an allegory. As an editor, I have been remiss in allowing the inappropriate use of "methodology," which means something other than a description of the methods used in a study. This malapropism is not humorous because we do not perceive that it is illogical. It's in the same category as saying "Excuse me, I must take my medication," and then swallowing a pill. Admittedly, both methodology and medication sound more involved and hence, I suppose, more important or more "scientific," than method and medicine, and, in most instances, the simpler word is the appropriate one. (All of this reminds me of a friend who, on a recent trip to England, just had to try scones because the word sounded so elegant. He concluded that elegantly though the word may sound as it falls from the lips, they are, afterall, simply soda biscuits and, in his opinion, not all that pleasing to the palate.) To return to malapropisms, I'm sure you can find or think of many that are humorous.

Composing limericks is, for some, a greater challenge than any of the amusements mentioned above because of rhyme and meter requirements. In keeping with the thesis in the paper by Farrington and Urry (this issue) and with a plea for forgiveness from the Muse of Poetry, I offer this untitled piece.

A woman with pretty beans in her nose
Asked "Why must I go where this grows?"
So she buried a seed
And before long indeed
She had enough for her fingers and toes.

Perhaps some of your efforts will be suitable for inclusion in Gene Hunn's column,
News and Comments, in the *Journal*.

W.V.