

Genitive compounds in botanical terminology: Evidence from English and Slovak

Genitive compounds in English constitute a type of nominal compound with the structure [N's N] and are frequently made use of as plant names in botanical terminology (Taylor, 2000), examples being *goat's beard* or *baby's breath*. Slovak also forms nominal compounds, e.g., *vodovod* ('water tap'); however, genitive compounds in English do not find their corresponding constructions in the form of compounds, but rather multi-word expressions, as shown in the genitive compound *women's movement* in (1).

- (1) a. ženské hnutie women's - ADJ movement - N ('women's movement')
b. hnutie žien movement - N women - GEN ('movement of women')

Both constructions in (1a, b) in Slovak correspond to the English genitive compound. The meaning of both multi-word expressions is the same, denoting a movement to secure economic and social equality for women, as well as their frequency of occurrence in the *Slovak National Corpus*. In (1a), a relational adjective renders the non-head of the compound, while in (1b) it is a genitive noun. This example illustrates that genitive compounds tend to have a conventionalized status in the lexicon, with a fixed meaning. In contrast, the meaning of genitive compounds in botanical terminology is quite unpredictable, as shown in (2) on the compound *angel's trumpet*:

- (2) a. anjelské trúbky angel's - ADJ trumpets - N.PL ('angel's trumpet')
b. trúbky anjelov trumpets - N.PL angels - GEN.PL ('trumpets of angels')

In (2a), the Slovak construction consisting of a relational adjective and a noun corresponds to the English plant name, while the construction in (2b) in the genitive case denotes trumpets belonging to angels.

The aim of this presentation is to examine genitive compounds in English botanical terminology in regard to their structure, frequency of occurrence and correspondence to Slovak terminology. The analysis is carried out by compiling a specialized corpus consisting of texts from English botanical terminology, English general texts, and texts from Slovak botanical terminology. The compiled botanical texts each pertain to one of the 15 randomly selected plant names extracted from *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Using *AntConc*, a corpus analysis toolkit, I created three separate corpora in order to compare 1) the frequency of occurrence of genitive constructions in English botanical and general texts, 2) the occurrence of regular possessives in contrast to botanical genitive compounds in English texts, and 3) the types of Slovak botanical constructions corresponding to English genitive compounds. *AntConc's* interface allowed for a concise search of possessive constructions through the possessive 's.

The results of this project contribute to the study of genitive compounds through a corpus-based comparison of general English and English botanical terminology, as well as examining which Slovak type of multi-word expression constitutes the corresponding construction to English genitive compounds in botanical terminology.

References:

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