

THE CONCEPT OF THE WORD *FLOWER* IN PUBLIC USAGE

Summary

The object of study of this article is the usage of the word *flower* (Lith. *gėlė*) in the *Corpus of the Modern Lithuanian Language* (CMLL) and data from student surveys. The goal of the article is to analyse the semantics of the word *flower* in the modern written language and the modern conception of *flower* based on student surveys, and to present suggestions to distinguish and formulate the meanings of the definition of this word in the *Dictionary of the Standard Lithuanian Language* (DSL).

Analysis of the CMLL and survey data has showed that the word *flower* does not have an established conception in the Lithuanian language. Some diametrically conflicting attitudes have become apparent. Some data suggest that a flower **is not** a 'decorative plant', 'sward', 'vine', 'cactus', or 'shrub'. Other data point that a flower **is** a 'herbaceous plant', 'decorative plant', 'vine', 'cactus', 'water plant', 'subshrub', 'shrub'. Notably, such conflicting data have been derived from the same sources or even from the replies of the same respondents.

The study aimed to identify the most typical attributes of a flower. The surveys have showed that a flower is most often recognised by its typical exterior attribute, the 'blossom'; it is a blossoming plant.

The study also sought to find out whether a flower is merely a blossoming plant, or a decorative plant that does not necessarily has a (clearly visible) blossom but rather stands out, say, in its lovely leaves. Some examples and answers imply that a flower **must** have (a unique) blossom, others, that no blossom is strictly necessary: all that matters is that the plant referred to as a 'flower' ought to be decorative, for instance, have extravagant leaves, which makes 'leaves' a typical attribute of a flower as well. Such mutually contradicting opinions indicate that the perception of what a flower is has not yet been established in the human consciousness.

Other typical attributes of a flower are a ‘stem’ and ‘smell’. The examples picked out in the CMLL show that the purpose of flowers is important, too: flowers can be given as a present, they can be used as a home decoration or an expression of respect.

Having analysed the CMLL material and survey data, as well as with reference to the presumptions brought forward in the authors’ previous article about the conception of flower in dictionaries, we can state that the word flower has three meanings in the Lithuanian language: a ‘plant’, a ‘part of a plant’, and a ‘blossom’. The following definitions of the meanings of the word were proposed for the DSL: (1) *a small wild, garden, or potted plant that blossoms or has extravagant leaves and is often distinguished by a pleasant smell*; (2) *the stem and blossom of this plant intended as a gift, an expression of respect, a home decoration, and so on*; (3) *the blossom of the plant*. Furthermore, a third shade of the meaning of *flower*, that of *a plant having a blossom of a particular colour*, was identified as well.

KEYWORDS: corpus, survey, meaning, shade of meaning, definition, flower.

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