

The Concept of “Nature” in Dictionaries

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Annotation: This article deals with lexemes and lexical-semantic meanings. Today, people on earth use their own words to express their needs and deeds. We all know that in English the speech act "nature" is widely used. The following are explanations and synonyms of this lexeme in various dictionaries.

Key words: lexeme, ambiguity, unambiguous, semantic field, necessity, need, dictionaries.

In linguistics, a *lexeme* is the fundamental unit of the lexicon (or word stock) of a language. Also known as a *lexical unit*, *lexical item*, or *lexical word*. In corpus linguistics, lexemes are commonly referred to as *lemmas*.

A lexeme is often, but not always an individual **word** (a *simple lexeme* or *dictionary word*, as it's sometimes called). A single dictionary word (for example, *talk*) may have a number of inflectional forms or grammatical variants (in this example, *talks*, *talked*, *talking*).

A *multiword* (or *composite*) *lexeme* is a lexeme made up of more than one orthographic word, such as a phrasal verb (e.g., *speak up*; *pull through*), an open compound (*fire engine*; *couch potato*), or an idiom (*throw in the towel*; *give up the ghost*).

The way in which a lexeme can be used in a sentence is determined by its word class or grammatical category.

According to etymology of “lexeme” is from the Greek, "word, speech"

➤ "A lexeme is a unit of lexical meaning, which exists regardless of any inflectional endings it may have or the number of words it may contain. Thus, *fibrillate*, *rain cats and dogs*, and *come in* are all lexemes, as are *elephant*, *jog*, *cholesterol*, *happiness*, *put up with*, *face the music*, and hundreds of thousands of other meaningful items in English. The headwords in a dictionary are all lexemes." (David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, 2003)

"(A) **lexeme** is a linguistic item defined by the following specifications, which make up what is called the *lexical entry* for this item:

- its sound form and its spelling (for languages with a written standard);
- the grammatical category of the lexeme (noun, intransitive verb, adjective, etc.);
- its inherent grammatical properties (for some languages, e.g. gender);
- the set of grammatical forms it may take, in particular, irregular forms;
- its lexical meaning.

"These specifications apply to both simple and composite lexemes." (Sebastian Löhnner, *Understanding Semantics*. Routledge, 2013)

"Definitions are an attempt to characterize the 'meaning' or sense of a **lexeme** and to distinguish the meaning of the lexeme concerned from the meanings of other lexemes in the same semantic field, for example, the 'elephant' from other large mammals. There is a sense in which a definition characterizes the 'potential' meaning of a lexeme; the meaning only becomes precise as it is actualized in a context. Since the division of the meaning of a lexeme into senses is based on the variation of meaning perceived in different contexts, a tension exists in lexicography between the recognition of separate senses and the potentiality of meaning found in definitions. This may well account in large part for the divergence between similar-sized dictionaries in the number of senses recorded and in consequent differences of definition." (Howard Jackson and Etienne ZéAmvela, *Words, Meaning and Vocabulary: An Introduction to Modern English Lexicology*, 2nd ed. Continuum, 2005)

Then let us give definitions of the concept “nature” in dictionaries.

Nature (n) /'neɪtʃə/

1. the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.

Synonyms: "the breathtaking beauty of nature", the natural world, the living world, Mother Nature, creation, the world, the environment, the earth, Mother Earth, the universe, the cosmos, natural forces, wildlife, flora and fauna, countryside, landscape, scenery.

2. the basic or inherent features, character, or qualities of something.

Synonyms: "helping them to realize the nature of their problems", essence, sum and substance, character, identity, complexion, kind, sort, type, variety, description, category, ilk, class, classification, species, genre, style, cast, order, kidney, mold, stamp, grain, stripe.

Besides definition of the concept is given in the dictionary of Merriam-Webster:

Essential Meaning of nature

1: the physical world and everything in it (such as plants, animals, mountains, oceans, stars, etc.) that is not made by people the beauty of nature

For example: She is a real nature lover. = She really loves nature. [=she loves to spend time outdoors]

2: the natural forces that control what happens in the world the forces of nature

For example: Hunger is nature's way of telling you to eat. Gravity is one of the basic laws of nature.

3: the way that a person or animal behaves: the character or personality of a person or animal

For example: She has a competitive nature. [=she is competitive] The difference in their natures was easy to see.

Full Definition of nature

1a: the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing:

ESSENCE: the nature of the controversy

b: **DISPOSITION, TEMPERAMENT:** it was his nature to look after others (F. A. Swinnerton)

her romantic nature

2a: a creative and controlling force in the universe

b: an inner force (such as instinct, appetite, desire) or the sum of such forces in an individual

3: a kind or class usually distinguished by fundamental or essential characteristics documents of a confidential nature acts of a ceremonial nature

4: the physical constitution or drives of an organism especially: an excretory organ or function—used in phrases like the call of nature

5: a spontaneous attitude (as of generosity)

6: the external world in its entirety

7a: humankind's original or natural condition

b: a simplified mode of life resembling this condition escape from civilization and get back to nature

8: the genetically controlled qualities of an organism nature ... modified by nurture. (E. G. Conklin)

9: natural scenery enjoyed the beauties of nature

"In many cases, it makes no difference whether we take a syntactic or a lexical perspective. Lexemes such as *the* and *and* are **invariable**, i.e., there is only one word corresponding to each. Also invariable are lexemes like *efficiently*: although *more efficiently* is in some respects like *harder*, it is not a single word, but a sequence of two, and hence *efficiently* and *more efficiently* are not forms of a single lexeme.

Variable lexemes, by contrast, are those which have two or more forms. Where we need to make clear that we are considering an item as a lexeme, not a word, we will represent it in bold italics. *Hard*, for example, represents the lexeme which has *hard* and *harder*--and also *hardest*--as its forms. Similarly, *are* and *is*, along with *be*, *been*, *being*, etc., are forms of the lexeme *be*. A variable lexeme is thus a word-sized lexical item considered in abstraction from

grammatical properties that vary depending on the syntactic construction in which it appears."(Rodney Huddleston and Geoffroy Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2002)

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