



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

TAXONALITY: A USEFUL NEOLOGISM

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From the year 1997 the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC) and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) are using the concept and term “taxon” in their joint series of documents on nomenclature, properties and units in clinical laboratory sciences to design a nominal kind-of-property related with the classes of equivalence to which some components belong, specially for describing properties related to microorganisms and some chemical species in clinical laboratory reports. Generally, in some documents in the series the concept (and term) “taxon” is used without explanations neither definition (1-5), in other documents in the series, in which the concept (and term) “taxon” is used, one or more comments —but not a definition— have been included (6-8), and in only two documents in the series the concept “taxon” has been defined (9, 10).

Consistently with the previous documents, the IFCC-IUPAC Committee on Nomenclature, Properties, and Units recently has proposed the following official definition for this concept: “nominal kind-of-property indicating classification of properties according to nominal property values of a given nominal property value set” (11).

As stated by Forsum et al. (12), the IFCC-IUPAC Committee on Nomenclature, Properties, and Units has introduced the concept of “taxon” as a kind-of-property in order to include taxonomical classifications on a nominal scale of observations.

However, this term, born within the frame of the branch of science called taxonomy, is almost universally used in biology, biotechnology, geology and paleontology to refer to a group, rank or category (13), and by extension also to refer to chemical species. Accordingly, the concept “taxon” is a physical object rather than a kind-of-property.

For all the aforementioned reasons, I propose the use of another term (different from taxon) to refer to the kind-of-property improperly called taxon. The new term (a neologism) may be established by analogy with the pair nation – nationality, accepting that nation is a physical object and nationality is a kind-of-property.

Thus, the neologism taxonality might replace the term taxon in the IFCC-IUPAC documents. Though, for practical conservative reasons, the abbreviation of taxonality might be “taxon.”

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