

Re: map/filter/reduce/lambda opinions and background unscientific mini-survey

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- *From:* Terry Hancock <hancock@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Tue, 5 Jul 2005 09:46:41 -0500
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On Tuesday 05 July 2005 08:17 am, Steven D'Aprano wrote:

> Sorry, but you are mistaken. "lambda" is a `_reserved_` word in the
> Python language, while "function" etc are not, but they are certainly
> part of the language. Try explaining what `def` and `import` do without
> using the words "function" or "module". Maybe you can do it, using
> circumlocutions, but it isn't easy, and costs clarity.

This is still a relevant distinction. One relevant point is that I am perfectly free to use, say, the Spanish or Chinese word to describe "module" or "function", but the keywords "def" and "import" will remain the same.

>> The second error is that I believe most english speakers COULD provide
>> a definition for the fairly common words "function", "class", and
>> "decorator". The exact meaning of "class" might not be what they expect
>> at first,
>
> Function, in the sense of a mathematical function, I agree. Class as in
> the thing you go to at school and decorator as in the person who advises
> you what colour curtains to have, certainly. But in the Python sense? No.
> Especially not decorator, which I believe most `_programmers_` would have
> trouble explaining, let alone non-programmer English speakers. I know I do.

The "Python sense" is not arbitrary. There are very direct visual or logical (i.e. INTUITIVE) connections between these words' *English* meanings (not just mathematical, either) and their meanings in Python.

A "Function" is (in English) (`kdict-gcide*`):

- 1.) The act of executing or performing any duty, office, or calling; performance....
- 2.) The appropriate action of any special organ or part of an animal or vegetable organism...
[...]
- 5.) (math) A quantity so connected with another quantity, that if any alteration be made in the latter there will be a consequent alteration in the former.

The programming use is probably **closer** to the English meaning

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than the math jargon meaning (except in the sense of "functional programming" which leans more on the math meaning.