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The slogan “difficult”. (Le parole “difficili”.)

Boll. Docenti Mat. 68, 33-48 (2014).

Summary: In mathematics, but not only, you can encounter “difficult” words as apothem, homothety, parallel, trapeze, . . . which, for a novice student, represent an additional difficulty in learning the discipline. However, if one knows what the etymology of these words is, confusion would most likely be avoided and one would understand these terms better. In this paper we will present the etymology of some “difficult” words, thinking mainly about the students in the first 9–10 years of schooling, and we show how words “external” to mathematics are related to some “internal” words. One will also draw the attention to “false friends”, words which seem to have the same origin but that, in fact, originate differently.

Classification: E40 D70

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