The Words WE Use and the Impact on Students’ Understanding
Kostas D. Stroumbakis, Whan Ki Lee

Abstract:

Mathematics terminology poses difficulties for students’ conceptualization and problem solving. Misconceptions can arise from sheer complexity of the meaning of a term, but also because the common-language use of a term may be blurred with its precise mathematical meaning. This article describes misconceptions that can arise from imprecise language that may be used as part of classroom instruction.

Kostas D. Stroumbakis (kstroumbakis@qcc.cuny.edu) is an associate professor in the mathematics and computer science department at Queensborough Community College, CUNY. Previously, he had a career as a software and database developer for Internet applications. He holds an MA in mathematics from The City College of New York, CUNY and an EdDCT, from Teachers College, Columbia University. He is interested in increasing student engagement and success through emphasis on conceptual understanding.

Whan Ki Lee (WKLee@qcc.cuny.edu) is an assistant professor in the mathematics and computer science department at Queensborough Community College, CUNY. He received a master’s degree in mathematics from Seoul National University in Korea and a Ph.D., from the Graduate Center, CUNY. His research interests include mathematical logic, especially model theory of Peano Arithmetic and understanding how logical thinking is related to students’ mathematical achievement.