Understanding the role of tasks and adapting them in practice has been considered one of the contributors to
development of teaching proficiencies in mathematics. However, most teachers tend to use tasks without
modification rather than adapt them for their own mathematics teaching. Enhancing the mathematical and
pedagogical knowledge that teachers need to be adaptable in task use has been sought in various ways.
Inadaptability in teaching with tasks has been a persistent problem that I have grappled with for several years.
To tackle this problem, I built a co-learning partnership with two Korean secondary mathematics teachers,
intending to help them understand the necessity and ways to modify tasks rather than just following
instructional materials. Over the course of eight months of exchanging ideas by e-mail and meetings 12
times, I came to understand why and how the two teachers developed a passive and reluctant attitude toward
task use. My role in the co-learning partnership was not only informing the teachers of related theories and
strategies of task use, but also listening to whatever the teachers wanted to talk about.
A part of research findings will be shared in the presentation. First of all, I will relate what I have identified
as the teachers’ reasons for being reluctant to modify tasks. The reasons the teachers described in our
discussions online or in person fall into three categories: (a) tasks or mathematical knowledge, (b) students
or student learning, and (c) the teachers’ views of themselves as teachers or teaching. Second, I will
introduce what the teachers used as kinds of panaceas whenever weak points of their teaching were
diagnosed and they were encouraged to modify instructional materials: one is “to prevent unexpected
difficulties in learning” and the other is “to sustain learning possibilities.” The dominance of these two of the
teachers’ considerations could be poisonous if teachers cannot see the complexities and depend only on these
two. Third, I will relate how the question, “Does the answer deal with the complexities?” stimulated the
teachers’ reflective modification of tasks. As a conclusion, I will show that enhancing teachers’ self-
awareness of why and how they depend on the limited and defensive diagnoses of their teaching and
focusing their attention on the complexities of the teaching and learning processes can facilitate looking at
familiar tasks from unfamiliar point of view, which may lead teachers who are passive to be more active in
the task modification.