

Understanding of Algebraic Proofs Including Literal Expressions: Expressions or Contexts?

Chang, Hyewon (Seoul National University of Education)

Kang, Jeong Gi (Namsan Middle School)

Students' difficulties and errors in relation to mathematical proofs are worth while to say one of the dilemmas in mathematics education. The potential elements of their difficulty are scattered over the process of proving in geometry as well as algebra. This study aims to investigate whether middle school students understand the context of algebraic proof including literal expressions. We applied 24 third-grade middle school students a test item which shows a proof including a literal expression and missing the conclusion. Over the half of them responded wrong answers based on only the literal expression without considering its context. Three of them were interviewed individually to show their thinking. As a result, we could find some characteristics of their thinking including the perspective on proof as checking the validity of algebraic expression and the gap between proving and understanding of proof etc. From these, we also discussed about several didactical implications.

* Key Words : algebraic proof(대수 증명), understanding of proof(증명 이해), literal expression(문자식), proof context(증명 문맥), middle school mathematics(중학교 수학)

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