

Convergence Analysis on Conversation between Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law in EBS ‘Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography’

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EBS ‘다문화 고부 열전’에서 나타난 고부간 대화에 대한 융복합적 분석

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Abstract This study tries to figure out the communication types between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law through their ‘confrontational conversation.’ For this, three episodes of ‘Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography’ aired by EBS (Education Broadcasting System) were monitored. The dialogues between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law were written down and analyzed. According to the result, there were ‘dysfunctional communication’ styles during their conversation. These styles deepened their conflict. Thus, to abate the conflict between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law, this study suggested that it was necessary to develop the convergence counseling program and the family therapy for their functional communication.

Key Words : Multicultural family, Confrontational conversation, Conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, Convergence conversation analysis, Communication

요 약 본 연구는 다문화 가정 내의 고부갈등을 심화시키는 ‘갈등대화’를 통해 다문화 가정 내의 고부 간 ‘의사소통’의 유형을 보기 위함이다. 이를 위해 3편의 EBS ‘다문화 고부열전’ 에피소드를 모니터링 하고, 대화 내용을 기록하여 융복합적 분석을 하였다. 분석한 결과 다문화 가정 내의 고부 간 대화에서 ‘역기능적 의사소통’ 유형이 나타났으며, 이런 의사소통의 유형은 고부갈등을 더욱 심화시키고 있었다. 따라서 다문화 가정 내 고부갈등을 완화하기 위해서 순기능적 의사소통을 위한 융복합적 상담 프로그램 개발 및 가족 상담 필요성을 제언하였다.

주제어 : 다문화 가정, 갈등대화, 고부갈등, 융복합적 분석, 의사소통

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1. Introduction

The more closely related people more easily hurt each other by their words[1]. Likewise, family members frequently hurt the other's self-esteem by neglecting proper manners in their 'confrontational conversation¹⁾.' The 'confrontational conversation' brings 'dysfunctional communication' into the family. The 'dysfunctional communication²⁾' disturbs the family interaction and even breaks the family relationship. Communication is closely related to the conflict and manages it[3]. Therefore, managing the 'confrontational conversation' in a family is critical to the healthy family relationship.

The 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law' is a chronicle problem in Korea. Because they have grown up in different cultures and have different values, they suffer difficulties in understanding each other[4]. In traditional Korea, it was culturally prevalent for a daughter-in-law to endure her mother-in-law's excessive meddling and abuse. Under this social atmosphere, it was difficult to reveal the 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law.' But recently, as nuclear families become familiar and daughter-in-laws are more educated, the thought of filial piety becomes weak. Due to this social trend, the 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law' emerged as a social issue. Besides, a mother-in-law in a multicultural family plays a major role in her son's marriage, and her effort often seems the interference in his marriage[5]. Thus, the multicultural family is not free from the 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law' problem. Particularly, the daily life in a multicultural society has the higher possibility of

conflict and collision[6].

There is remarkable progress in the studies on the acculturation stress and the conflict between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law. But there are few advances in the studies on the 'confrontational conversation' that deepens the conflict and the stress. Therefore, it is meaningful to study on the 'confrontational conversation' and the communication styles between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law. This study monitors the actual dialogues between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law in 'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biograph' aired by EBS to analyze the communication types in a multicultural family.

2. The theoretical basis

2.1 Structure of 'confrontational conversation'

The proverb 'it takes two to tango' means that both people are responsible for their conflict[8]. In other words, a conflict occurs when both people exchange their complaints. Similarly, a 'confrontational conversation' is composed of give-and-take 'adjacency pairs' of 'dissatisfaction utterances³⁾.' Thus, if one doesn't respond the other's complaint keeping silent, there can't be any 'confrontational conversation.' The role of silent in a conversation is 'indirect reject[10].' Thus, to form a 'confrontational conversation,' people should verbally exchange their complaints instead keeping silent. In the 'confrontational conversation,' a 'dissatisfaction utterance' rouses another 'dissatisfaction utterance.'

1) 'Confrontational conversation' is a dissatisfaction utterance continuum that causes conflict[2].

2) People adopt 'dysfunctional communication' as survival stances to defend their self-esteem against verbal and non-verbal threats[7].

3) The 'dissatisfaction utterance' types are the 'aggressive utterance' and the 'defensive utterance.' The 'aggressive utterance' types are 'scolding,' 'reproaching,' 'accusing,' 'grumbling,' 'blaming,' 'comparing,' 'ignoring,' and 'insulting,' etc. The 'defensive utterance' types are 'pouncing on,' 'excusing,' 'denying,' 'asking back,' etc.[9].

2.2 Satir's 'dysfunctional communication' types

Communication means 'people contact with words, texts, other voice, facial expressions, gesture, etc'[11]. While communicating, people exchange their ideas and feelings with verbal and non-verbal means. Thus, wrong communication conveys incorrect messages. Besides, it would raise misunderstandings and conflicts.

When family members suffer from severe conflicts and stress, they tend to use 'dysfunctional communication' ways: 'blaming,' 'placating,' 'distracting,' and 'computing.' These ways have an adverse impact on the family relationship. Unlike these ways, 'leveling' is a desirable one[12]. Thus, when 'leveling' doesn't occur, people become problematic and dysfunctional taking four other roles: 'blamer,' 'placater,' 'distractor,' and 'computer[13].' The 'blamers' are self-righteous and stubborn. They try to dominate others and tend to blame and ignore them. The 'placaters' are non-assertive and submissive. They stifle their desire to express themselves and have a little sense of self-worth. The 'distractors' do irrelevantly to what others are saying or doing. Their saying is out of focus on the subject. The 'computers' believe in the rational thought and tend to analyze the situation. They seem very calm and super-rational on the outside but hide fiery emotion inside. They can't overlook others' mistakes. Unlike the 'dysfunctional communication' roles, the 'leveler' is assertive and emotionally balanced. They can well communicate with others by the congruent non-verbal and non-verbal expressions. They can positively interact with others[14].

3. Methodology

'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography' has weekly aired by EBS since October in 2013. Each episode tells the life of a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law. The documentary intends

that two women deeply understand each other and figure out how to resolve their conflict through the special trip to the daughter-in-law's hometown.

This study used the replay service on the EBS web page. It monitored three episodes: 'Meddling Mother-in-law and Stay-at-home Daughter-in-law,' 'Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid,' 'Mother-in-law Who Expects Well-rounded Daughter-in-law,' and 'Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid.' The conversations in between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law in each episode were written down. The transcribed texts were analyzed in a convergence way based on the 'confrontational conversation' structure and the Satir's 'dysfunctional communication' types. For objective evaluation of the relationship between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law, the comments on the viewers' board were referred. Many dialogue sentences showed 'confrontational conversation' structure. These sentences were classified by the 'dissatisfaction utterance' types. Each character's 'dysfunctional communication' style was analyzed based on her 'dissatisfaction utterance' types in the 'confrontational conversation.'

4. Conversation Analysis

'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography' spotlights the 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law' in a multicultural family. Regardless of the weekly subject of the episode, it shows the conflict between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law and provides them an aboard trip. In spite of the conciliatory trip, their conflict still becomes worse. But the mother-in-law gradually understands her daughter-in-law's ethnic background and culture. They open their heart and find a clue to resolve their conflict

<Table 1> The common features of the analysis targets

Broadcast Date	Title	Nationality	Marriage Duration	Conflict Cause
2014. 2. 7	Meddling Mother-in-law and Stay-at-home Daughter-in-law	Vietnam	5 years	The restrictions on the daughter-in-law's going out ('Prejudice and oppression of the foreign daughter-in-law,' 'communication problem')
2015. 4. 2	Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid	Cambodia	6 years	The mother-in-law' excessive affection ('treating like a child')
2015. 10. 8	Mother-in-law Who Expects Well-rounded Daughter-in-law	Cambodia	8 years	The mother-in-law' excessive affection and expectation ('treating like a child')

and the misunderstandings at the talk prepared by the production crews. <Table 1> shows the common features of the three episodes. The causes of conflict in 'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography' don't deviate from the result of the earlier studies: 'communication problem,' 'conflict from cultural differences,' 'treating like a child,' and 'prejudice and oppression of the foreign daughter-in-law'[15].

4.1 The episode 'Meddling Mother-in-law and Stay-at-home Daughter-in-law'

In this episode, the serious conflict came from 'prejudice and oppression of the foreign daughter-in-law' and 'communication problem.' The mother-in-law has felt uneasy with 'runaway anxiety' since the first foreign daughter-in-law ran away. Thus, she restricted the new daughter-in-law's going out. The daughter-in-law has been in Korea for more than five years, but she still had difficulty to communicate with others owing to a lack of Korean proficiency. Besides, she couldn't clearly understand her mother-in-law's saying. The mother-in-law felt stodgy when she saw her daughter-in-law working. She often ignored and abused her daughter-in-law. Because the daughter-in-law couldn't adequately convey her thought to her mother-in-law, the conflict and misunderstandings occurred. Their conflict got worse. According to <Table 2>, the mother-in-law mostly used 'scolding' and 'ignoring' in the

'confrontational conversation.' The daughter-in-law often kept silent or used simple 'excusing' against the 'dissatisfaction utterance.' It was owing to her lack of Korean proficiency, but she used similar 'defensive utterance' in spite of the interpreter's help at the talk during the trip. Owing to her persistent dialogue pattern for 5 years, her 'defensive utterance' types have been stuck. She timidly used 'reproaching' when she complained to her mother-in-law. To cope with the complaint, the mother-in-law often shouted and used 'denying.' Considering their verbal and non-verbal responses in 'confrontational conversation,' the mother-in-law seemed stubborn, self-righteous, and imperative. She showed the aspect of a strong 'blamer.' On the other hand, the daughter-in-law showed a 'placater' appearance because she usually controlled herself and obeyed her mother-in-law. Many viewers empathized with the mother-in-law's 'runaway anxiety,' but they felt more pity for the daughter-in-law. They thought this family relationship was undesirable and adverse.

4.2 The episode 'Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid'

This episode showed the conflict from 'treating like a child.' The mother-in-law took care of her daughter-in-law hard. Even she often helped her daughter-in-law prepare going out at the son's house and cleaned the house after the daughter-in-law had left. In spite of such support, the daughter-in-law felt

uncomfortable and inconvenient because of the mother-in-law's 'treating like a child.' Because the mother-in-law meddled in the housework with calm and warm voice, her daughter-in-law knew that the mother-in-law had no adverse intention. Thus, their conflict was insignificant outwardly. But the mother-in-law's excessive attention was a burden to her daughter-in-law and made the conflict worse. According to <Table 3>, the mother-in-law frequently made use of 'blaming' as 'dissatisfaction utterance' while taking care of her daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law used 'silent' or 'denying' to handle the 'dissatisfaction utterance.' She used 'reproaching' to complain the mother-in-law's excessive interest. The mother-in-law distractively responded to her daughter-in-law's complaints by 'pouncing on,' 'copying,' and 'grudging.' She forced her own thinking way and lifestyle to her daughter-in-law and showed indifference and discursive attitude in 'confrontational conversation.' The mother-in-law showed a

combination of 'distractor' and 'blamer.' Thus, she seems a distractive 'blamer.' The daughter-in-law hated her mother-in-law's meddling and nagging, but she tended to keep 'silent' not to aggravate their 'confrontational conversation.' Although she controlled her emotion and obeyed her mother-in-law, she expressed her opinion and feelings to the mother-in-law in some degree. Thus, the daughter-in-law seems a weak 'placator.' According to the viewers' board, because the mother-in-law took good care of her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law respected her mother-in-law, many viewers evaluated their relationship desirable.

4.3 The episode 'Mother-in-law Who Expects Well-rounded Daughter-in-law'

In this episode, the conflict came from 'treating like a child,' too. Most mothers who had a struggling life don't want her children to suffer from similar experience[16]. The mother-in-law in this episode had

<Table 2> strong 'blamer' vs strong 'placator'

At the bathroom in the morning	
mother-in-law ('scolding')	Have a shampoo!
daughter-in-law ('excusing')	I'm cold.
mother-in-law ('denying')	But you have to shampoo.
mother-in-law ('scolding,' 'ignoring')	So, dirty! You shampooed uncleanly!
daughter-in-law ('silent')	...
mother-in-law ('scolding,' 'ignoring')	(Pouring water over the hair) Wash cleanly. Here and there, do it! In spite of washing, your hair is still dirty!
daughter-in-law ('silent')	...
At talk prepared by program crews in Halong bay	
daughter-in-law(through an interpreter)	Mother-in-law, can I go out to meet my friends?
mother-in-law ('denying')	No! Never!
daughter-in-law ('asking back')	Why not? Why?
mother-in-law ('blaming')	You don't smile after meeting the friends. No.
daughter-in-law('reproaching')	What will you do if I leave because you don't permit my outgo?
mother-in-law ('scolding,' 'blaming,' 'ignoring')	You! Are you saying outgo because you want to play outside? Leave with your kid! Raise your kid until he enters a collage. If you can do, leave it! But you can't do anything. So, you have to learn how to act! If you go out, you will be worse. If you start to go out, you want more frequently to do it. I go to Senior Center. You know? After I go, I want to go there again and again. So I don't (Shouting)
daughter-in-law ('silent')	(silent) ...
mother-in-law ('blaming')	I won't talk more. Stop now! If you want to stay here, stay! If you want to go Korea, follow me! (shouting)

<Table 3> distractive 'blamer' vs weak 'placator'

At son's house, the mother-in-law helps the daughter-in-law's going out	
mother-in-law ('blaming')	You shouldn't go out with this hair. (combing her daughter-in-law's hair)
daughter-in-law ('silent')	...
mother-in-law ('copying')	You shouldn't go out with this.
daughter-in-law ('silent')	...
mother-in-law ('blaming')	How are your nails? Bring a fingernail clipper!
daughter-in-law ('denying')	They're OK.
mother-in-law ('denying,' 'excusing')	Bring it. You should keep your hands clean while going out. Others shouldn't see these. They shouldn't backbite you. (trimming the fingernails)
The daughter-in-law cleans the kitchen	
daughter-in-law ('reproaching')	Mom, What happens? Did you rearrange, again? I already organized them. Why? You should just leave them as they are. (in the kitchen)
mother-in-law ('pouncing on,' 'grudging')	I should leave them as they are. But I often arrange them. That's problem! I shouldn't do that.
daughter-in-law ('reproaching')	Mom, because of your doing, I couldn't find what I need.
mother-in-law ('pouncing on,' 'grudging')	Right, you couldn't find it. I won't do again.
daughter-in-law	Have some dinner before going home.
mother-in-law ('grumbling')	I won't. I have to go home. I don't know. Do what you want. I don't know. I'm going.

to give up her school life to support her younger siblings. She didn't want for her daughter-in-law to experience the same pain and helped her daughter-in-law keep studying for a better life. The daughter-in-law appreciated the support but felt the support and expectation a heavy burden. She was annoyed at being compared with her Cambodian neighborhood who was a good model of a foreign daughter-in-law. When the mother-in-law supported and encouraged her daughter-in-law, a 'confrontational conversations' often occurred. According to <Table 4>, the mother-in-law used 'comparing' and 'reproaching' as 'dissatisfaction utterances.' To defend against these, the daughter-in-law used 'denying' and 'grudging.' She rarely used 'blaming,' and slightly complained with her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law used 'denying' against the 'dissatisfaction utterances.' In spite of harmless scolding, the mother-in-law was authoritative and imperative in the 'confrontation conversation.' She showed the aspect of a 'blamer.' Besides, because she argued logically, she seemed a 'computer.' Thus, the mother-in-law is a computing 'blamer.' The daughter-in-law obeyed her

mother-in-law controlling her complaints about the excessive expectations and interference. She showed the aspect of a 'placator.' But when she defended herself, she tried to convey her message clearly with proper verbal and non-verbal expressions. She showed a 'leveler' appearance, too. Considering all these, she is a leveling 'placator.' The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship seemed desirable according to the viewers' comments.

According to the analysis result of the three episodes, the mother group and the daughter-in-law group showed distinct 'dysfunctional communication' types in the 'confrontational conversation.' The mother-in-law in 'Meddling Mother-in-law and Stay-at-home Daughter-in-law' is a strong 'blamer,' and the one in 'Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid' is a distractive 'blamer.' And the one in 'Mother-in-law Who Expects Well-rounded Daughter-in-law' is a computing 'blamer.' Although there is a slight difference, the mother-in-laws showed the aspect of a 'blamer.' In the case of the daughter-in-laws, they tended to be a 'placator.' The daughter-in-law in 'Meddling

<Table 4> computing 'blamer' vs leveling 'placator'

On the way home	
mother-in-law	Uh, Bbuy got a license to be a care worker. Did you know it?
daughter-in-law	I know.
mother-in-law ('reproaching')	You know? Don't you envy?
daughter-in-law ('excusing')	I want to try it. But, baby is too young. After baby grows more...
mother-in-law ('comparing')	Although you can't do as she did, please get a license this time!
In the livingroom, the daughter-in-law prepares going out to study	
mother-in-law ('reproaching')	Do you doze off at class, don't you? Sleepy?
daughter-in-law ('excusing,' 'grudging')	I may feel drowsy. Mom, such early morning I have to get up although I take care of my baby lately at night.
mother-in-law ('reproaching', 'denial')	You are making an effort even bringing your baby. How can you doze off? I got up 4 o'clock in the morning when I was young. You get up 6 o'clock! How can you be sleepy? Don't talk nonsense!
daughter-in-law ('grudging')	(silent)
mother-in-law ('reproaching')	You attend school even carrying a heavy bundle on your back. You shouldn't neglect your studied. You should study hard.
After coming back from the learning center	
mother-in-law	When will you have the test at Guryea? April, too?
daughter-in-law('denying')	I gave it up. This opportunity is over. Done!
mother-in-law ('blaming')	So, you're bad! Because I take care of your baby, you have to hurry up! (Voluming up her voice) You put off the exam as your baby. Because of the baby. So, you missed this year test!
daughter-in-law ('denying,' 'excusing')	I want to. But I can't because of the baby. You can take care him, but I feel uncomfortable. You have backpain...
mother-in-law ('reproaching')	Stop making excuses. Why can't you say it's your fault. Why do you give me the excuses!

Mother-in-law and Stay-at-home Daughter-in-law' is a strong 'placator,' and the one in 'Mother-in-law Fixated on Her Daughter-in-law Who Wants to Avoid' is a weak 'placator.' And the one in 'Mother-in-law Who Expects Well-rounded Daughter-in-law' is a leveling 'placator.'

Considering the comments on the viewers' board, many viewers had the paternalism⁴⁾ on the foreign daughter-in-law. The viewers felt pity for the strong 'placator' daughter-in-law but gave a negative reaction to the strong 'blamer' mother-in-law. The viewers heaped praise on the daughter-in-laws who respected her mother-in-law. In other words, Koreans give a

positive assessment to the foreign daughter-in-laws who play the role of a traditional Korean daughter-in-law.

5. Conclusion

The 'conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law' is a big social issue in Korea. The multicultural families, which begin to take root in Korea, suffer from the similar conflict, too. A multicultural society implies more possibilities for conflict[18]. The conflict and acceptance between a mother-in-law and her foreign daughter-in-law is a rite of passage to healthy family culture[19].

This study showed the same causes of conflict between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law that the earlier studies found;

4) According to the earlier study on the EBS documentary, Korean multiculturalism shows 'assimilation' and 'paternalism' features. Because the foreign daughter-in-law is forced 'Koreanization,' paternalism has continued affecting the conflict between a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law[17].

'communication problem,' 'conflict from cultural differences,' 'treating like a child,' and 'prejudice and oppression of the foreign daughter-in-law'[20]. Further, this study showed that the conflict gap was deepened and widened by 'dysfunctional communication' in the 'confrontational conversation' although the conflict started from those causes. The mother-in-laws had the tendency of 'blamer' because they had an authoritative and coercive attitude. Traditionally, the son inherits the patriarchal position under the patriarchal cultures, and his mother gets a high position in the family[21]. In addition, the vertical family relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law has been kept for a long time because the confucian culture puts importance on filial piety. Besides, the mother-in-law tried to help her foreign daughter-in-law successfully settle down in Korea. Her effort often forced the daughter-in-laws 'assimilation' to Korea. Thus, the mother-in-law's voice and attitude frequently seemed authoritative and imperative. On the other hand, although there were differences depending on the level of Korean language, the daughter-in-law's attitude was accommodative like a 'placator' type. Owing to low Korean proficiency, she kept 'silent' instead of excusing and controlled her feelings in the 'confrontational conversation.' Despite her fluent Korean, she highly tended to adjust herself to her mother-in-law, too because she desperately needed help from her mother-in-law to settle down in Korea. Thus, these 'dysfunctional communication' types such as the 'blamer' and the 'placator' easily caused their conflict and deepened it. If a mother-in-law and a foreign daughter-in-law can effectively communicate, their intimacy is increasing[22]. The early studies on the improvement of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law show that their good communication is a useful resource to solve alleviate their conflict[23]. Thus, the supports for their positive communication is necessary.

In 'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law

Biography,' the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law tried to resolve their conflict with the trip that gave them an opportunity to understand each other. According to the early study, if the parents-in-law in a multicultural family have high 'cultural competence,' the relationship between the parents-in-law and the daughter-in-law is positive. And if the daughter-in-law has a positive relationship with her parents-in-law, her 'acculturation stress' is low [24]. Thus, it is desirable that two women tried to understand their cultural differences through a trip in 'Multicultural Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Biography.' This effort can enhance the mother-in-law's 'cultural competence' and make their relationship positive. But this way is not a fundamental solution but a one-off treatment. Thus, the sustainable program is needed.

This study is meaningful because there are little progress in the studies on the 'confrontational conversation' and 'dysfunctional communication' style that deepens the conflict and the acculturation stress between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law. There is a limit on the data because this study examined only the contents presented on the screen and the insufficient amounts of episodes. Also, there might be a lack of integrity on the behaviors and attitude of the mother-in-laws and foreign daughter-in-laws due to the presence of cameras. Thus, because this study used the empirical analysis instead of the conversation analysis of the qualitative research, it can not be applied generally to all mother-in-laws and foreign daughter-in-laws who have different experiences. But, this study shows that the 'dysfunctional communication' and low 'cultural competence' aggravates the conflicts in a multicultural family. Therefore, to improve the communication and overcome their cultural differences between the mother-in-law and the foreign daughter-in-law, this study shows the need for the convergence counseling program that implements functional communication

between them. With this study as a momentum, more studies on the family therapy such as a convergence counseling program for multicultural families.

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