

Dysfunctional Communication between Parents and Child -Convergence Analysis with Transactional Analysis and Communication Theory

Eun-Mi Yang, Hyun-Sim Lee*
Seoul Venture University

부모, 자녀 간의 역기능 의사소통 -교류분석과 의사소통이론을 활용한 융복합적 분석

양은미, 이현심*
서울벤처대학원대학교

Abstract This study tries to figure out the precarious communication types between parents and their children. For this, the linguistic behavioral characteristics of the main characters in the movie “Daughter” were extracted from their dialogues with the matrix analysis and were conceptualized. These conceptual features were analyzed in the convergence way combined with Transactional analysis and Satir’s communication theory. The result shows that the dysfunctional communication between parents and children deteriorates their relation and even could collapse it. Thus, for their whole relation, it is important that they keep the functional communication between them. The study suggested the need for the parental education and youth personality education which let them know how to facilitate their communication.

Key Words : Transactional analysis, Conversation between parents and children, Dysfunctional communication, Ego state, Adolescence

요 약 본 연구의 목적은 가족관계 붕괴를 가져오는 부모와 자녀 간의 역기능 의사소통의 유형을 보기 위함이다. 이를 위해 매트릭스 분석 방법을 활용하여 영화 ‘다우더’의 주요 인물들의 대화와 태도에서 그들의 언어적 행동의 특징을 추출하여 개념화하였다. 이 개념화된 결과를 교류분석과 사티어의 의사소통이론으로 융복합적으로 분석하였다. 분석한 결과는 부모 자녀 간의 역기능적 의사소통이 부모, 자녀 관계에 정서적 붕괴가 일어날 수 있는 위태로운 관계로 악화시킬 수 있다는 것을 보여주었다. 따라서 건강한 부모, 자녀 관계를 유지하기 위해서는 순기능적 의사소통이 중요하며, 이를 위해 수용적 의사소통에 대한 이해와 방법에 대한 부모 자녀 간의 교육프로그램 개발의 필요성을 제안하였다.

주제어 : 교류분석, 부모 자식 간 대화, 역기능적 의사소통, 자아상태, 청소년

1. Introduction

A parent-child relationship is one of the most fundamental social relationships and an important factor in determining a person’s personality development. While growing up and socializing, children are

unconsciously educated by absorbing their parents’ attitudes, beliefs, and values in life through communication with them[1]. Thus, parent-child communication and parental attitudes play a large role in shaping a person’s personality and greatly affect family relationships. A considerable number of mothers

*Corresponding Author : Hyun-Sim Lee(sim7173@naver.com)

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tend to consider their child's achievements to be their own since they are responsible for most of their child's upbringing and education[2]. In particular, Korean mothers tend to identify themselves with their children and view their children as the 'meaning of life'[3]. The mother who tries to find her value in her child's accomplishments is more likely to have psychological control over her child, and the child is likely to develop negative psychology such as high depression, low self-esteem, and aggression[4]. In addition, the dysfunctional communication¹⁾ between mother and child can cause juvenile problem behaviors[6]. Therefore, if a mother has the dysfunctional communication with her child through psychological control due to her distorted obsession with her child and excessive expectations, her child could do something that threatens his family relationships. According to data of the Korea Police Crime Analysis System from 2006 to 2013, immoral crimes such as parent abuse and murder, which threaten family relationships, are rapidly increasing. The most common cause of these crimes is mental illness, but the violent and abusive language in the family develops into immoral crimes of a grown child[7]. Thus, dysfunctional communication in a family puts family relationships at risk. The abnormal parent parenting has brought many immoral crimes in the newspaper. These latest shocking news sends a wake-up call to the South Korean society which encourages excessive competition. The film serves as a mirror reflecting society and reflects reality[8]. Considering the practical reason not to record and secure all family conversations as data, films can be a good medium for analyzing daily conversations between parents and children. Thus, this study used the 2014 film 'Daughter' as a basic resource. Although to a certain degree, the scenes of conflict between mother and daughter in the film 'Daughter' is a popular memory for people who have grown up and familiar to

people who raised children[9]. Therefore, many comments on the movie expressed parents' apologies and reflected on maternal love. The film has shown that obsession with children's education and dysfunctional communication among family members lead to child abuse.

Because fast-growing adolescents go through rapid mental changes, their short-term and long-term changes are both important for the counseling purpose. Transactional analysis is proper for a short-term counseling and Satir's communication theory is good for a long-term one. It would be useful to apply a converged method of both theories to counseling parents and teenagers. However, there are many previous studies on parent-child relationship based on Satir's communication theory, but few ones based on the convergence analysis of Transactional analysis and Satir's communication theory. Thus, It is meaningful that this study analyzes the conversation patterns of the characters in the film 'Daughter' to see the effects of the mother's personality and communication way on the characteristics of her daughter during her upbringing based on the convergence analysis of both theories.

The purpose of this study is to provide basic data on the development of educational programs for parents and their children to enhance their functional communication.

2. The theoretical basis

2.1 Transactional analysis

People communicate and interact with each other exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages. This kind of interaction shows the ego state and attitude towards life. The transactional analysis initiated by Eric Burne is known to be effective in learning about the communication style in human relationships and in changing the communication pattern in the right direction[10].

1) Dysfunctional communication is a survival stance to defend their self-esteem against verbal and non-verbal threats[5].

2.2.1 Ego–state

Ego–state is the behavior, thinking, and emotion that reveals the personality of a human being. It is composed of Parent ego–state(P), Adult ego–state(A), and Child ego–state(C). P is created under the influence of leading figures and tends to use imperative words to force oneself or others. Parent ego is made up critical parent ego–state(CP) that disciplines functionally based on the established moral value judgment and nurturing parent ego–state(NP) that encourages, supports, and consoles others. Adult ego mediates between Parent ego and Child ego. Also it makes decisions on the rational judgment of reality gathering useful information. Child ego is an internalization of the emotions and response patterns experienced in childhood relationships with parents. It is composed of free child(FC) and adapted child(AC). Free child is functionally instinctive, self-centered, immediate, and curious. Adapted child(AC) suppresses feelings or desires, adapts to, and relies on others[11]. These egos may be healthy if they independent and fluid in their role. And if they are biased to one ego–state, unhealthy personality or pathology[12].

2.1.2 Structural analysis and functional analysis

A way to analyze and understand a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions from the perspective of PAC (parent–adult–child ego–state) model is called structural analysis. With structural analysis, three ego–states analyze how they form a personality. P–led, A–led, and C–led can be categorized according to the bias in the ego–state.

P–led is stubborn and has trouble expressing his feeling freely. He has a tendency to over–involvement and over–protection. A–led is reasonable and objective, but is likely to lack humanity. C–led's lack of practical ego condition makes it difficult to solve problems or deal with them, and can cause emotional fluctuations. Accordingly, a person who only continually reflects a particular ego–state can not function effectively[11].

Functional analysis is a way to figure out how an individual to use each ego–state. With functional analysis, people could be categorized as critical parent ego(CP), nurturing parent ego(NP), adult ego(A), free child ego(FC), and adapted child ego(AC)²⁾. Functional humans make good use of five ego–states. It is important to analyze how these five features are being used. Because people could be dysfunctional if one of egos fails to work.

2.1.3 Functional analysis

While structural analysis focuses on analyzing an individual's inner ego, transactional analysis concentrates on analyzing the interactions in interpersonal relationships. When two people interact, they exchange messages by choosing one of the ego–states: parent ego, adult ego, and child ego. Interaction types of transactional analysis can be categorized as complementary transaction, crossed transaction, and ulterior transaction. The complementary transaction is a form of smooth communication and is a way to exchange the responses in the expected ego–state. It happens when two people exchange stimuli and responses in the same ego–state or complementary ego–state. Thus, when the complementary transaction happens, people can feel sympathy and satisfaction. The crossed transaction, on the other hand, is a form of communication that takes place in a very different direction from the sender's intention. It gives the other person a feeling of communication failure and causes a rupture in the conversation because of strange reactions and wrong answers. The ulterior transaction

2) The characteristics of critical parent ego are 'responsibility,' 'control,' 'conscience,' 'authority,' 'punishment,' and 'ordering.' The characteristics of nurturing parent ego are 'caring,' 'kindness,' 'mild,' 'frequent meddling,' 'excessive scolding,' and 'overprotection.' The characteristics of adult ego are 'rational,' 'objective,' 'logical,' 'cool-minded,' 'calculating,' 'inhuman.' The characteristics of free child ego are 'joyful,' 'optimistic,' 'positive,' 'spontaneous,' 'active,' 'selfish,' and 'impulsive.' The characteristics of "adapted child ego are 'fitting in,' 'cooperating,' 'compromise,' 'compliant,' 'hesitation,' 'depression,' and 'avoidance'[11].

is a complex interaction that people in two ego-states activated simultaneously exchange messages in a double-meaning on a single stimulus. In the ulterior transaction, people seems to use a complementary and social message, but its main demands and intentions are hidden behind it. In order for two people to have a healthy relationship and smooth communication, they need to find out what kind of transaction model the other person use in the conversation[12].

2.2 Satir's communication types

According to Satir, communication is the transfer of facts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts between the two people. People influences each other through communication. People have common communication ways under stress and tension. Satir named them 4 dysfunctional communication types: Placater, blamer, computer, distracter. Placaters tend to ignore their feelings and thoughts to adapt themselves to other people's feeling. They often use words they agree with or think it is their fault or apologize for. Blamers ignore and order other people pointing out their mistakes. In addition, blamers become easily angry and aggressive. But they fear that their weaknesses will be revealed. A computer respects the principle and tries to deal with problems logically rather than emotionally. Computers are stubborn, callous, rigid, and authoritarian. Inside, they want to have warm emotional exchanges, receive injuries easily, and feel isolated. A distracter replies irrelevantly in conversation. Distracters are confused and show an uncongenial attitude and behaviors. Inside, they feel no one cares about them. A lever's nonverbal expressions all give the same message[13]. In other words, words and emotions coincide in the delivery of information. Levers form healthy relationships. When communicating in conflict situations, four communication styles are switched rather than one type[14].

3. Methodology

This study used the film 'Daughter' as analysis data

which describes the daughter's struggle to become independent from her mother's obsession with possession and control. It shows that the distorted parenting attitudes could disrupt the relationship between mother and daughter.

This study has conceptualized the major characters' lines and attitude in the main scenes of the film 'daughter' using the time-ordered meta matrix and network suggested by Miles and Huberman[15]. Based on these, this study performed functional analysis and structural analysis by applying the principle of transactional analysis on the main characters' characteristics and analyzed their communication types by using Satir's communication theory.

4. Analysis Result

The film 'Daughter' showed San's struggle to get out of her mom's influence. San as a main character spent her painful and abnormal childhood because of mom's strict control of her life and forceful upbringing. In this process, San was mentally destroyed by verbal abuse and physical abuse and seriously damaged her self-esteem[16]. Because the piano teacher experienced a childhood like San, she felt sympathy for San. So, she emotionally supported San and provided San mental refuge. Due to the teacher who overcame her miserable childhood and successfully became independent from her parents, San could have the courage to free herself from the tyranny of mom. The ego-state and communication type of mom had a great effect on those of San while San grew up. Likewise, those of the teacher meaningfully effect on San, too. Mom's dysfunctional communication type and unbalanced ego-state caused a rupture in the mother-daughter relationship. The film showed that the fosterer's personality and the communication style had a significant effect on the child's personality formation and family relationships. In order to find out the characteristics and communication type of the three main characters in the film, this study conceptualized

the characteristics of the characters’ messages in the main scenes and analyzed them to figure out each character’s ego-state and transactional form. Based on these analysis result, each character’s communication type was categorized.

4.1 The functional and structural analysis of the main characters’ ego-states

As shown in Table 1, the conversation analysis on main scenes yielded 17 sub-categories that described the linguistic and behavioral features of each character. Also, there are five middle categories that show ego-states and three higher categories that show the bias of the ego-state to dominate the personality as a whole.

Mom had a strong desire to own her daughter, wanted her to grow up and succeeded in society according to her framework. She made up her own life through her daughter’s success. Mom tried to be a dedicated and strict mother to her daughter, although she harshly criticized and abused her daughter when the daughter left out of her frame. As shown in Table 1, mom seemed to be calculating and self-interest in communication with others because her adult ego worked for her own position and interests. On the other hand, mom’s critical parent ego played a leading role in communicating with San and used imperative, critical, insulting, and punitive messages. Considering these rearing attitude and communication type, mom was a strong P-led character because her parent ego played

Table 1. Extracting and classifying component concepts of the major characters

Characters	Concepts on the characteristics of linguistic behavior	Features	Functional analysis	Structural analysis
Mom	To act as one pleases and to force values ex) She is satisfied by forcing San to eat unconditionally when she has no appetite, or forcing her to smile	imperative	critical parent ego	P-led
	To humiliate San without considering the honor ex) Swearing and assaulting in front of San’s boyfriend	insulting		
	To blame San’s behavior without asking the reason ex) As soon as Mom saw San’s new bag, she was convinced it had been stolen and immediately criticized and assaulted.	blaming		
	Swearing and battering if San don’t meet Mom’s criteria자 ex) As soon as San responded differently from what Mom expected, Mom used swear words and violence	punitive		
	doing something calculating and hypocritical for decency’s sake ex) Mom lied to Teacher to cover up the abuse of San and hypocrisy as a mother dedicated to San’s friend.	calculating	adult ego	
	to become impatient with anger and immediately become enraged. ex) Mom came on impulse with a knife and tore the bag.	impulsive	free child ego	
San	To easily admit you were wrong with fear. 예) San tended to think she got beaten up for what she did.	pliable	adapted child ego	Growing San C-led
	Low self-esteem and self-deprecation 예) A low spirits before one’s friends	low spirits		
	A rational explanation of one’s actions and circumstances ex) San tried to reason with one’s mother about one’s behavior	rational	adult ego	Grown up San P-led A-led
	To criticize the unfair words and actions of Mom ex) San’s criticized the behavior of his mother, who does not care about him.	blaming	critical parent ego	
	A cynical reaction to the injustice and behavior of Mom 예) San was cynical about the negative Mom’s behavior of his pregnancy and marriage.	cynical		
Teacher	To answering questions logically ex) She explained the question of San logically and gently	logical	adult ego	P-led
	To listen to others carefully and respond with empathy 예) She listened to San and sympathized with the feelings.	caring	nurturing parent ego	
	To take good care of the warm side ex) She always gave advice to the troubled San in a friendly manner.	mild		
	To be sympathetic and concerned 예) She provided emotional support for San and protected San from violence by San’s mother.	nurturing		

a leading role and contaminated her adult ego. When mom acted imperatively, her child ego contaminated her adult ego making mom mentally ill[12]. As such, mom showed a dysfunctional human form who had unbalance ego-state because her adult ego failed to play its role.

The teacher has experienced through a period of development similar to San under the violent father. So she played San's emotional home with sympathy. As shown in Table 1, the teacher was a P-led person and used mostly caring, mild, and nurturing messages because her nurturing parent ego played a leading role. Even in conversations with San and mom, the way in which the teacher persuaded and responded using logical messages showed that her adult ego worked well. Thus, the teacher was a functional person whose three ego-states operated in a balanced way.

San had a low sense of self respect and was compliant because she had an unhappy childhood. San was so angry and resentful that she even hoped her mother would die. After confirming her pregnancy, she self-deprecated saying, "I can't be a good mother." As Table 1 shows, growing San was a C-led person who used conformist and depressive messages in communicating with adults, and her adapted child ego played a leading role. Adapted child ego could show aggressive behavior suddenly resisting. This is because rebellious child ego is included with adapted child ego[11]. As San entered puberty, she resisted mom's improper act and explained her thought logically under her adult ego. But San is forced to readapt herself to avoid worsening the conflict with mom because of the strong backlash from mom. The growth environment in San's family had a detrimental effect on San's personality formation. Because San's child ego contaminated her adult ego, it caused the imbalance in her ego-state. However, the warm and caring teacher provided an emotional haven for San's adult ego to mature and prevented the extreme imbalance of San's ego-state. As time went by, San's biased ego-state changed through the interaction with surroundings that

influenced her life. In the process of growing, San grew from a C-led to a P-led and A-led person, San in a growing up period was a dysfunctional person where adult ego was contaminated by child ego and could not protect herself against the unfair situations. Luckily, through functional interaction with the teacher, San's adult self was able to grow, and San grew up into a functional human being. However, San could not overcome dysfunctional relationship with her mom and suffered from nightmares and hallucinations before the reunion with her mom. After all, she could not restore the dysfunctional relationship in the face of mom's death.

4.2 Transactional analysis and communication type for main characters

Transactional analysis was performed on major characters' interaction, and the analysis result was schematic to the following network.

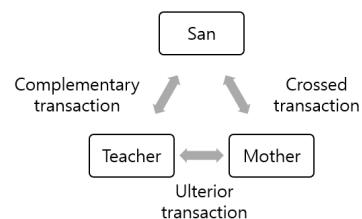


Fig. 1. the transactional analysis between the major characters

As in Fig. 1, mom and the teacher commonly used ulterior transaction in their conversation. For example, in the conversation about San's piano lessons or the scars on San's palms, they did ulterior transaction exchanging messages different from the hidden intention. In the conversation between mom and San, they had trouble communicating with each other because of crossed transaction. If San explained the reason for the situation in adult ego, a sudden change in the mood of conversation caused dysfunctional communication because mom's free child ego suddenly worked and used abusive language or violence on

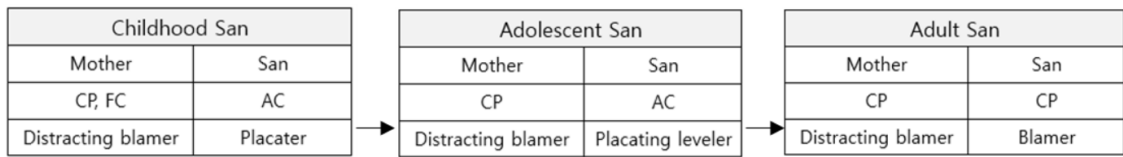


Fig. 2. the ego-state and communication type network of the main characters

impulse. On the other hand, complementary transaction was used in the conversation between San and the teacher. According to the verbal and behavioral characteristics of Table 1, the teacher paid attention to San, shared San’s situation, and responded properly. As such, by exchanging reactions and stimuli expected by each other, communication is stable and functional.

According to Su-bok Park study, placating can be seen in people who are communicating between child ego person and parent ego person[10]. It can be found in the conversation between c-led San and P-led mom. San in adapted child ego showed a placater because she always responded in a conforming manner to mom. On the other hand, a blamer is based on the stubborn parents in child ego-state. A distracter can be seen in people whose adult ego is tainted by child ego[10]. Mom was a constant critic of San and had an impetuous reaction in communicating with San, leading to frequent dialogues. At this time, mom used a blamer type in communication. Thus, mom could be a distracter. As such, mom was a dysfunctional person because mom’s adult ego was contaminated by parent ego and child ego. In addition, mom had dysfunctional communication with San. This supports Su-bok Park’s findings that if the three egos don’t work well and adult ego is contaminated by the other ego, dysfunctional communication occurs[10]. The film ‘Daughter’ which described the growing phase of San showed how her communication type changes as she grew. San at puberty defended mom’s misconduct by giving her a rational reason as he grew up. At this point, San showed a placating lever that matched the language with nonverbal messages. When grown-up San interacted with mom, San showed blamer type; San taught mom blaming mom’s wrong behaviors

because San’s critical parent ego was working. According to Fig. 2, as San grew, the communication patterns with mom changed from a placater to a placating lever and a blamer.

5. Conclusion

Building a healthy family requires functional communication[17]. San’s family was an unhealthy one that externally maintained a parent-child relationship, but has already emotionally collapsed due to dysfunctional communication. After growing up in such a family environment, San lived an independent life away from her parents even without any interaction with them. Although San met mom again at the hospital because of the impending death of mom, she could not recover her family relationships because San and Mom only hurt each other’s feelings. The film shows that dysfunctional communication between parents and children creates tragedy at home and supports the study that violence and abuse against children at home can cause parent abuse or murder after they are grown up[7]. Thus, parents of growing children should pay attention to the communication type that they use to talk to their children and make efforts for functional communication.

The relationship between mom and San was full of conflicts. Their continuous crossed transaction caused dysfunctional communication between them. According to the previous studies, important factors that can cause dysfunctional communication between parents and children are ‘An immediate anger over one’s child’s fault,’ ‘Insulting children ignoring their honor,’ ‘The difficulty of sharing one’s mind,’ and ‘The

suppression of emotion in communication'[18]. These causes can be found in the conflict between mom and San. On the other hand, the relationship between the teacher and San maintained functional communication through complementary transaction. It is an open communication that enables functional communication. There is the study that effective and open communication ways between parents and children are 'A confession,' 'Accepting the feelings and opinions of children,' 'Taking sides with the child and showing sympathy,' 'Conveying one's position honestly'[19]. These ways appeared in the conversation between the teacher and San. Thus, their communication ways suggest a great deal to those who consider effective parent-child communication. Teens are in the process of transition from childhood to adulthood and undergo significant physical and psychological changes[20]. Therefore, families with adolescent children should prepare for emotional and cultural changes caused qualitatively different generation gap. Young children are dependent on their parents but try to be independent going through drastic changes. So, the parent-child relationship becomes a relationship of growth and conflict[19]. As a result, the communication patterns in the family should also be changed according to the stage of development of the growing child. Many families suffer from a lack of family communication as their children go through adolescence. Like San's in the film, many families fail to overcome such difficulties wisely and suffer from the break in family relationships. In order to prevent family relationships from collapsing and to have a healthy family, both parents and children should strive for functional communication. Non-functional humans communicate with dysfunctional communication, and functional humans communicate with functional communication[14]. Accordingly, it is necessary to create an environment in which acceptable communication is carried out in the family so that young people who seek to find their identity can develop into a fully functional human being. Also, adolescents need to have educational

opportunities to reflect on themselves and meet proper communication role models. In the United States, there are several education programs for high-risk teens and their parents such as Adolescent Transitions Project. It is a middle school prevention program to reduce high-risk adolescents' problem behavior and to work with their parents. It focuses on signs of the problem behavior including communication, problem-solving, coping with negative peer influence, and goal setting[21]. That is, this study proposes developing an adolescent education program and a parent education. The adolescent education program should give adolescents some opportunities to reflect on the pros and cons of their personality and learn how to communicate effectively. The parent education should include how to communicate properly with the growing adolescent children. This study suggests the development of educational programs of the acceptable communication ways between parents and children. Therefore, it is hoped this study will serve as a fundamental resource for the development of educational programs between parents and their children. However, because this study analyzed only one case of 'Daughter,' it has limitations to generalize the results of this study to all teenagers. In addition, because the scenes in which fathers appear are too few to analyze, this study can't show the father and the daughter relationship. Therefore, it is expected more further studies on similar cases in the future.

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양 은 미(Yang, Eun Mi)

[정회원]



- 1999년 6월 : Pratt Institute 석사 졸업
- 2010년 8월 : 서울국제대학원대학교 석사졸업
- 2016년 3월 ~ 현재 : 서울벤처대학원 대학교 박사과정.

- 관심분야 : 노인복지 및 상담, 치매예방교육, 웰다잉 교육
- E-Mail : yangeunmi10@gmail.com

이 현 심(Lee, Hyun Sim)

[정회원]



- 2006년 2월 : 연세대학교 대학원 석사 졸업
- 2010년 2월 : 백석대학교 대학원 박사 졸업
- 2012년 3월 ~ 현재 : 서울벤처대학원 대학교 교수

- 관심분야 : 노인복지 및 상담, 가족상담
- E-Mail : sim7173@naver.com