Structural Equation Modeling for Korean Elementary School Students' Achievements of English Capacity

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to find out causal relationships among Korean elementary school students' achievements of English capacity, their motivation and attitude for study, their self-directed methodology, the level of self-esteem, and such parent factors as parental education. For this, we used the Korean government's official survey data of 5,059 4th graders and their parents in the year of 2010. The questionnaire for students comprises 190 detailed questions about each home/school environments, psychological factors like the level of self-esteem, academic performances of English. Likewise, the questionnaire for parents comprises 94 questions about their education, socio-economic status, and general thoughts about life and education. Using the survey data, we built up a causal model for Korean elementary school students' English capacity, where (1) parents' educational background affects the level of parental support, (2) the level of parental support affects the children's self-esteem, (3) the children's self-esteem affects their motivation for study, (4) the motivation affects their attitude and study methods, (5) the attitude and study methods affect their English capacity. The proposed model includes several causal chains or paths, and is called a path model. We analyzed the path model using the structural equation modeling technique, and found out that children's level of self-esteem played an important role in boosting up their positive attitude and self-directed methods of study, that the attitude made a significant contribution to their English capacity, but that the self-directed method did not explain much of the children's English capacity.

Keywords: English education, Korean elementary school, Structural Equation Modeling, causal model

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1. Introduction and Research Methods

The goal of this paper is to find out causal relationships among Korean elementary school students' achievements of English capacity, their motivation and attitude for study, their self-directed methodology, the level of self-esteem, and such parent factors as parental education, etc.

For this, we used the SERII Dataset, which is the Korean government's official survey data of 5,059 4th graders and their parents in the year of 2010. The questionnaire for students comprises 190 detailed questions about each home/school environments, psychological factors like the level of self-esteem, academic performances of English. Figure 1 shows the cover page and one content page of the detailed 15-page-long questionnaire for students.

Figure 1. Questionnaire for students (Sample pages)

	하새 성무지 (大도하고)						
	학교명			초등학교			
	반		번호				
	성명						
안녕하십니	까?						
서울시교육	청에서는 서울대!	학교 연구진과 함께	서울교육의	발전 방향을 모색하	·고자 중·장기		
연구를 계획해	하고 있습니다. 이	연구의 결과는 서	울교육의 실태	를 파악하고, 궁극적	계으로는 서울		
교육의 책무용	를 높여 가기 위한	정책 수립의 기초;	자료로 활용될	것입니다.			
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참여, 함승시	간, 여가시간, 최	퓨터 사용, 공부와 :	진로에 대하	생각 등이 조사된니다	다. 본 설문으		
시험이 아니며	며 서울교육 발견을	* 위한 중요한 자료	가 되므로 성	실하고 솔직하게 응답	과하여 주시기		
바랍니다.							
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노력에 큰 보	템이 될 것입니다	81.					
					2010년 7월		
설문지에 관	하서 문의하실 나	용이 있으면, 다음s	으로 연락주시	기 바랍니다.			
⑦ 문의처 :	서울특별시교육종	성 기획에산담당관실	(02-3999-343)			
	서울대학교 박현	정 교수(02-880-763	18)				
ÿ	서울특별	시교육청	Ø	서울대힉	Ъ		

 학생이 현재 학교에서 받고 있는 "<u>수학 수업"</u>에서의 태도에 대한 질문입니다. 해당하는 곳에 √표 해 주십시오.

항 목	전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	보퉁이 다	그렇다	매우 그렇다
나는					
1) 수업 시간에 집중한다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	9
2) 수업 시간에 적극적으로 참여한다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	9
3) 숙제를 꼬박꼬박 한다	٢	Ø	3	Ð	9
4) 수업시간에 배운 것을 복습한다	D	Ø	3	Ð	9
5) 수억시간에 배운 내용을 미리 예승하다	0	Ø	3	Ø	5

 학생이 현재 학교에서 받고 있는 "<u>수학 수업"</u>의 분위기와 만족도에 대한 질문입니다. 해당하는 곳에 √표 해 주십시오.

항 목	전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	보통이 다	그댁다	매우 그렇다
1) 수업시간에 학생들이 시끄럽고 무질서하다	Θ	Ø	3	Ø	S
2) 수업시간에 학생들은 수업에 집중한다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	9
3) 나는 이 수업시간이 재미있고 기다려진다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	9
4) 이 수업은 내 공부에 도움이 된다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	9

9. 학생의 현재"<u>담임 선생님"</u>에 대한 질문입니다. 해당하는 곳에 √표 해 주십시오.

항 목	전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	보풍이 다	그렇다	대우 그루다
우리 담임 선생님은					
1) 아는 것이 많으시다	٩	0	3	Ð	S
2) 학생들이 열심히 공부하기를 원하신다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	6
3) 수업을 열심히 하신다	Ð	Ø	3	\oplus	5
4) 수업내용을 알기 쉽게 잘 가르치신다	Ð	Ø	3	Ð	\$
5) 학생들이 수업 중에 얼마나 잘 이해하고 있는지 확인하신다	Ð	Ø	3	Φ	\$
6) 파제를 공공하게 검사 하신다	٢	0	3	Ð	5

Also, the questionnaire for parents comprises 94 questions about their education, socio-economic status, and general thoughts about life and education. Figure 2 in the next page shows the cover page and one content page of the detailed 10-page-long questionnaire for students.

Using the survey data, we tested a causal model for Korean elementary school students' English capacity, in which (1) parents' educational background affects the level of parental support, (2) the level of parental support affects the children's self-esteem, (3) the children's self-esteem affects their motivation for study, (4) the motivation affects their attitude and study methods, (5) the attitude and study methods affect their English capacity. To test a causal model, we used the the structural equation modeling technique.

2. The Nature of the SERII Dataset

The data collection was conducted in 2010 by Seoul Education Research & Information Institute, which is the official research center of education of the city government of Seoul, Korea. The purpose of data collection was to investigate the relationship between students' academic capacity and their cognitive and emotional development, and to apply the result of the study to educational policies of the city government of Seoul.

To collect the data, they chose 108 elementary schools in Seoul, and obtained data from 5,059 4th graders and their parents. In fact, the original dataset also includes the survey results of teachers, school principals, and the school administration. But we used only the questionnaires from students and their parents for the purpose of this study.

Figure 2. Questionnaire for parents (Sample pages)



The huge dataset was coded into analyzable formats, and was distributed to professional researchers, who were mostly university professors and doctoral fellows, through the peer-reviewed assessment process of the research proposals.

For the purpose our study, we chose around 100 variables (or factors) from the original SERII dataset, built up a causal model with causal chains, and tested the model by the application of the Structural Equation Modeling (=SEM) procedure.

3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The Structural Equation Modeling or SEM is also called Covariance Structure Analysis. SEM enables researchers to test and assess complicated causal relations and interactions among variables. SEM can also estimate possible amounts of measurement errors and various indirect effects among variables in the model, which cannot be estimated by linear regression. SEM is usually considered as an outstanding, if not the best, analytical tool in empirical sciences these days, and has become a standard tool for data analysis in such fields as sociology and business management.

SEM tests a causal model which includes numerous causal chains. The causal model is also called a path model. In a path model, a path is a graphical representation of a causal chain between two variables by using an arrow mark, i.e. [Cause] \rightarrow [Effect]; e.g. [Big_Income] \rightarrow [Purchase_of_a_Luxury_Car]. A path model of various paths aims at principled explanation of empirical phenomena. Therefore, SEM is a powerful technique of statistics that tests (or works on) a path model.

4. A Proposed Path Model for Students' Achievements of English Capacity

By using AMOS, a standard tool for SEM among many researchers these days, we built up an initial path model in Figure 3.

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Osaka, Japan



Figure 3. Initial path model in our study

In the proposed model, we set up various causal chains that aim to explain Korean elementary school students' English capacity. In particular, the paths in Figure 3 show (1) that parents' educational background may affect the level of parental support; (2) that the level of parental support may affect the children's self-esteem; (3) that the children's self-esteem may affect their motivation for study; (4) that the motivation may affect their attitude and study methods; and (5) that the attitude and study methods may affect their English capacity.

To test the causal chains in Figure 3, we drew the model in AMOS, as shown in Figure 4 in the next page.

Through hierarchical model-building, we eliminated meaningless chains, drew the revised model in AMOS, as shown in Figure 5, and obtained the following results: RMSEA, .050; NFI, .867; IFI, .876; Hoelter(.01), 412.



Figure 4. Drawing the initial model in AMOS





One great benefit of SEM is its capability to show us standardized regression weights among causal chains, which enables us to guess the relative strength of each causal chain. Figure 6 shows us the path model with standardized regression weights.



Figure 6. Standardized regression weights added to the revised model

5. Summary of the Results

(1) The most prominent factor that determines Korean elementary school students' level of English capacity is the <in-class attitude at school> (.291) and the <number of native speaker teachers> (.091).

(2) The <in-class attitude at school> is highly affected by the level of <students' satisfaction of English classes at school> (.715). Also, the level of <students' satisfaction of English classes at school> is determined mostly by <English teachers' qualification> (.604)'.

(3) <Taking private lessons> negatively influence elementary school students' levels of achievement of English capability (-.153). The proposed path model already offers one possible explanation for this: the more private lessons an elementary school child takes, the less <motivation> (-.057) and <self-esteem> (-.054) he/she gets.

(4) <Parents' level of education> influences <parental support for children's education> (.345); <parental support for children's education> affects children's <self-esteem> (.243) and <motivation (.099)> a lot; and the <self-esteem> and <motivation> affects <students' attitude> (.303 from 'self-esteem' + .541 from 'motivation') significantly. In the end, the 'attitude' factor is a single most important factor for elementary school students' achievement of English capacity.

(5) The greater the <self-esteem>, the bigger the <motivation> (.506).

(6) Elementary school students' <self-directed method> is greatly affected by <selfesteem> (.243) and <motivation> (.522), but the <self-directed method> itself does not influence the overall achievement of English capacity significantly (.002).

6. Conclusion

We found out that children's level of self-esteem played an important role in boosting up their positive attitude and self-directed methods of study, that the attitude made a significant contribution to their English capacity, but that the self-directed method did not explain much of the children's English capacity.

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