

Consideration of the Possibilities of Open Dialogue Patterns: through Creating and Performing the Learning Program of Dialogue

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Abstract There are many problems occurring in modern society due to complications among human relationships. In order to resolve such conflicts, it is necessary to not only find causing factors within the individuals who are involved, but to also gain perspective of surrounding relationships. Therefore, the authors of this paper examined the method of "open dialogue", a dialogue-based approach proposed in the field of mental health care, and created "Open Dialogue Patterns", a language of the tips on how to enable dialogue that improves human relationships for the people directly involved as well as their surrounding relationships. Furthermore, the authors of this paper also implemented a program to explore the possibility of applying "Open Dialogue Patterns" in other fields such as collaboration and human relationships in general. As a result, it was suggested that the patterns are effective in the following three ways: "Utilization to deepen understanding in interpersonal relations", "Induce the Inquiry of Effective Dialogue", and "Recognize the dialogue as a design issue".

1 Introduction

There are many problems occurring in modern society due to complications among human relationships. Issues such as bullying and power harassment, arising from problems in human relationships are constantly occurring in workplaces and schools, and dilution of human relations is becoming a noticed problem in people's everyday lives. When trying to resolve these problems, the common approach is to seek the causes in the particular individual that is involved. It is generally considered that the problem exists within the individual, and that the

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problem could have been solved if the person's behavior was better. Some may even blame the individuals, saying that "The problem happened because of your behavior," or "The problem would have not happened if you had done better". Although the guidelines for improvement of such approach is easy to understand, it ignores the fact that individuals exist within various relationships. In a certain relationship, he/she may have been forced to take the action that resulted in problems. Under these circumstances, it is necessary not only find causing factors within the individuals who are involved, but to also gain perspective of surrounding relationships.

2 Open Dialogue Patterns

Therefore, the authors of this paper examined the method of "open dialogue", a dialogue-based approach proven to be effective in the field of mental health care, and created "Open Dialogue Patterns", a language of the tips on how to enable dialogue that improves human relationships for the people directly involved as well as their surrounding relationships. In organizing the knowledge, a method called the "Pattern Language" was used. Pattern language was originally created by architect Christopher Alexander, as a method of knowledge documentation to make it easier for residents to participate in the design of urban buildings and towns. A pattern language consists of patterns, which each contain a piece of knowledge that is labeled with a "pattern name", and described in the order of "context", "problem", "solution", and "consequence". It is a method that has been applied outside of the architecture domain, including software design and human action (Alexander. et al, 1977). The purpose of "Open Dialogue Patterns", the pattern language presented in this paper, is to solve individuals' problems by inducing dialogue that involves various people related to the situation (Iba. et al, 2017; Nagai. et al, 2017).

2.1 Open Dialogue

Open Dialogue is a family therapy method developed by a team led by Mr. Jaakko Seikkula of Jyväskylä University, which has been implemented at Keropudas Hospital in the West Lapland region of Finland from 1980s. Traditionally, medical doctors diagnosed symptoms such as schizophrenia and took approaches such as medication treatment and hospitalization. The open dialogue approach, however, is a treatment done through performing open dialogical meetings with people related to the situation. In other words, it treats patients as part of a larger social network, rather than isolating them as one independent individual. Therefore, the dialogical meetings convene important people around the patient as well as the medical professionals, instead of having a

one-on-one medical examination with the patient. Furthermore, it is not a one-way conversation like a diagnosis, is rather an interactive conversation. By repeatedly conducting dialogical meetings and trying to talk about experiences that had been difficult for the patient alone to express, the symptoms get better and behaviors that have caused problems gradually cease to exist. The effectiveness of this approach has already been demonstrated in Finland. The recurrence-prevention rate is high, and the hospitalization period is shorter than the patient receiving normal treatment such as Pharmacotherapy (Seikkula & Olson, 2003).

Thus the open dialogue has a characteristic similar to COINs. That is, it brings results by collaborating and sharing opinions directly with each other, rather than through hierarchies and boundaries. In Open Dialogue, the patients' problems are solved by convening various stakeholders under the shared vision of "improving the patients' symptoms", and getting them to continuously share their opinions. In both COINs and Open Dialogue, flat interaction brings results that are beyond the boundary, which would not have been born through a conventional approach.

2.2 The creation process of Open Dialogue Patterns

This section overviews the process of creating the Open Dialogue Patterns. The project was organized by a total of six members who belong to same laboratory, from September 2016 to January 2017. Referred literature is Seikkula's papers and "Dialogical Meetings in Social Networks" (Seikkula, 2002; Seikkula and Olson,2003; Seikkula, J. and Trimble,2005; Seikkula and Arnkil, 2006). First of all, each member read Seikkula's papers and brainstormed the tips from the viewpoint of "what should be done in open dialogue," for example "to invite the patient's family." As a result, we got 308 ideas, including some that overlap or have similarities, and wrote each of them down on sticky notes. Taking the 308 sticky notes, we then went through a "Clustering" process, which is based on the KJ method invented by Jiro Kawakita in 1967. During this phase, we grouped together the sticky notes that had similar ideas. As a result, all of the data was grouped into 57 groups. Then we proceeded with writing patterns in the format of "Context", "Problem", "Solution", "Consequence", and "Pattern Name." Simultaneously, we also worked on putting the patterns into a structure, in order to capture and create the whole language of Open Dialogue Patterns. First, we made groups each consisting of three patterns in order to capture the components of the structure, after which, we came up with three categories that represent the most important key elements of the wholeness of Open Dialogue Patterns. In this phase, the integration of similar patterns was done more clearly, resulting in a structure with a total of 30 patterns (Ishida. et al, 2017).

2.3 Core Concepts of Open Dialogue Patterns

The Open Dialogue Patterns consists of 30 patterns in total. The core patterns are **‘Experienced World’**(No.1), **‘Various Voices’**(No.2), and **‘Co-Created Understanding’**(No.3), supplemented by nine patterns for each core pattern that provide suggestions of specific practices (Iba, et al, 2017). Each category, along with a brief description of the pattern name and contents will be provided in the upcoming paragraphs.

The first core pattern, ‘Experienced World’(No.1) is about understanding the speakers’ way of perceiving things through dialogue and using that frame to grasp their experiences. To practice this pattern concretely, you can use nine patterns as below. You do not let labels and expertise stop you to be ‘As a Living Person.’ This also means recognizing others ‘As a Living Person’ too. It is important to have a ‘Deep Listening’ to their pace of thoughts and utterance as well as choice of words so that you can have an ‘Adaptation of Words.’ During the dialogue, questions should not have Yes/No answers, so practice question that will allow us to answer in own bare words such as ‘Open Question.’ Also, make a ‘Pause for Thinking’ so that the person you are in a dialogue with can have a time to think about what they want to say. When they have finally answered to your question, make sure you also ‘Respond to What is Said.’ In order to understand their ‘Experienced World,’ use not only your own point of view but also their ‘Inner Frame.’ Sometimes there may be strong emotional expression, which is a great opportunity to put those experiences that could not be expressed into words through ‘Tunnel of Emotion.’ In case of these situation, make sure you settle a ‘Respectful Mind’ towards dark and tough experiences they have had faced in the past.

‘Various Voices’(No.2) means to have a dialogue with people in same situation to share a variety of narrative from the person, and the various interpretations from the surrounding people. To practice this pattern concretely, you can use nine patterns as below. First of all, we must have our ‘Significant Others’ to join in and have everybody ‘Working as a Team.’ Then, gather those members in one place and let them ‘Sitting in the Circle.’ As for dialogue, send out ‘Invitation for Utterances’ from the beginning and ask them questions. Rather than trying to quickly summarize the story, it is important to proceed with ‘Slow-Paced Conversation’ and to create gaps that anyone can speak frankly. Make sure to respond back to any utterance so that we can create ‘Chain of Responses.’ Also, not only paying attention to words, but also pay attention to the ‘Tiny Sign’ that each person gives, such as a little expression and tension. Moreover, thinking that the move of your own feelings is more natural than ‘As a Living Person’ participation, express it and let ‘Emotional Resonance’ happen. Showing ‘Reflecting’ with the supporting team members will create a gap to think for themselves which leads out to a new voice.

‘Co-Created Understanding’(No.3) means to capture the circumstances behind that has generated the problem, and by re-speaking it in the dialogue, we will start

to gain new understanding and dissolve the problem itself. To practice this pattern concretely, you can use nine patterns as below. We will first have ‘First Meeting in Crisis’; a meeting from the timing when the person's emotions and speech are easy to come up. In addition, because it is an unstable period, ‘Everyday Meeting’ and ‘Continuous Engagement’ with the same members are required. It will bring psychological continuity and security. In the dialogue, we grasp and share that there are ‘Diverse Ideas,’ not like who is right or wrong. In the middle of the process, ‘Tolerating Ambiguity’ will continue for a while, but rather than trying to quickly summarize it, it is necessary to endure the uncertain state. By doing so, you and your ‘Significant Others’ will finally lead to ‘Construction of Meaning’ of the situation. Furthermore, important thing is to have a ‘Joint Decision’ where everybody in the team is asked to discuss at the meeting. And not converging to one agreement point, continue the dialogue with the image to bring ‘Ever-Widening Perspectives’ so that it will eventually be a ‘Co-Created Understanding.’ The experience of such a dialogue creates ‘Community of Narrative’ which will be the foundation for their future.

As mentioned above, with a total of 30 patterns of three core patterns and nine practical patterns for each support the practice of Open Dialogue.

Fig. 1. The Whole Structure of Open Dialogue Patterns.



3 Application of Open Dialogue Patterns into other fields

Open dialogue is a method used in the field of mental health care, but the significance of this approach is that an individual's problem is regarded as an issue arising from various relationships with surrounding factors, and takes the approach of resolving the problem by continuous dialogue. Therefore, by writing patterns that capture the method on a more abstract level, it is possible to utilize it outside the specific field of psychiatric care.

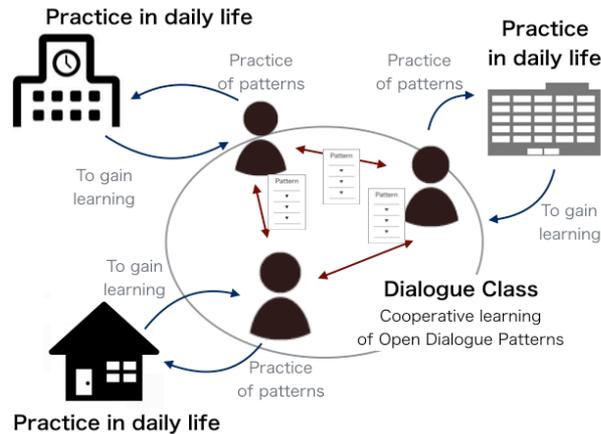
3.1 Outline of “Dialogue Class”, a Learning Program of Dialogue

In order to know how the Open Dialogue Patterns can be effective when applied in other contexts such as collaboration or human relationship, we held "Dialogue Classes", a program targeted toward those with interest in Open Dialogue, and those that want to train their dialogue skill in general "Dialogue Class" is a learning community with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and skills of dialogue, using "Open Dialogue Patterns" as a support tool for learning. In this program, each participant first decides the area in which they wish to gain skill, upon which they apply the "Open Dialogue Patterns" during the classes. Each participant learns from each other's experiences by periodically sharing their learning based on their practices. Through this system, we promote the participants to put the patterns into practice and ultimately aim to improve their dialogue skills. There are two key characteristics in this "Dialogue Class." The first is that it uses a pattern language as a learning tool, and the second is that a "generator" plays a role in the classes.

Pattern language has functions as a "media of conversation" and a "discovery media" (Iba, 2013). Even those who have completely different experiences in a specific context can learn from each other's experiences by using pattern language as a "common language". This is the function as the "media of conversation." Furthermore, the patterns allow people to perceive their current situation from the "Open Dialogue" point of view, which enables them to come up with ideas from a different approach. This is how pattern languages function as a "discovery media" that enables you to procure "discovery" that advances such creative activities. With such a tool, it is possible to acquire concrete practices and discoveries based on your current situation.

Also, "generators" are placed in "Dialogue Class" to support the participants' practices and learning. A "generator" is a person whose role is to assist the process of inquiry (Nagai. et al, 2016). A generator not only supports to proceed with the opportunity like a facilitator, but also actively participates in the creation of new discoveries and ideas along with participants, and is a role found in the field of education, workshops, co-cooking, etc. By having a generator, it is possible to provide opportunities for each participant to practices and learn effectively.

Fig. 2. The Image of “Dialogue Class”



3.1.1 Contents of ‘Dialogue Class’ as a case study this time

The "Dialogue Class" conducted was done as a program consisting of four rounds of classes. Each session was carried out in two and a half hours, over online video call. The first author of this paper took on the role of the generator, and a total of 4 people who with an interested in dialogue around 20 to 30 years of age participated. In the first round of the class, the 10 patterns regarding the "Experienced World" category was shared with participants as a textbook, supplemented by an oral explanation, and the area upon which each participant would use the patterns was decided. By deciding the area, it becomes under to participants what circumstances the Open Dialogue Patterns should be used, thereby making it easier to take into action. The second round of class was conducted in two parts. The first part is "practices and learning sharing". During this time, each participant share their practices and learning, so that they can look back on their experiences and also learn from others' success stories. In the second part, we shared the 10 patterns from the "Various Voices" category as a textbook and explained its content. In the third round of the class, as in the second round, we shared the patterns of the "Co- Created Understanding" category as a textbook and explained its content and had another "practices and learning sharing" session. In the last round of the class, after the "practices and learning sharing", we conducted a "dialogue on dialogue" session. Based on the skills and knowledge accumulated during the course of the program, each participant captured what "dialogue" is for themselves once again.

3.2 Results

This time we carried out this program for about a month with a total of 4 participants. The result of the program is shown below.

3.2.1 Utilization examples of each pattern

During the course of the “Dialogue Class”, a total of 10 cases in which the patterns were utilized, were confirmed. Regarding the utilization results of the patterns, they are summarized in the form of “Patterns performed”, “Area of practice”, “What was practiced”, “Consequence”, and “Learning”. These criteria aim to make participants become aware of the influence of their actions, and get discoveries from it. Since detailed contents are listed in the Appendix as a table, here we introduce the contents lightly.

The breakdown of "Patterns performed" is the following: 7 patterns from the category of “Experienced World”(‘Experienced World,’ ‘As a Living Person,’ ‘Deep Listening,’ ‘Adaptation Words,’ ‘Open Question’ and ‘Response to What is Said’); 1 pattern from the category of “Various Voices”(‘Emotional Resonance’); 2 from the category of” Co-Created Understanding”(‘Diverse Ideas’ and ‘Joint Decision’).

"Area of practice" is diverse. For instance, there were things like "When to advice colleagues", "Relationship with girlfriend", "About human relationships within the share house", "Relationship with friends from the same project", "at events to hold" and so on.

Regarding "What was practiced", basically they are practicing Solution and Action of patterns according to the situation at that time. For instance, there were examples of participants practicing the patterns’ solutions and actions according to their circumstances, such as one participant who noted, "I had always been advising my colleague in the form of 'you should try ~~,‘ but this time I consciously talked to him in a way to encourage him to think for himself what he wanted to do.” Another participant said, “even when we are fighting, I brought myself to respond to what my girlfriend was saying.” There were also results that did not work. For example, for “Diverse Ideas”, although they are behaving according to the "Solution" which is "Talk while distinguishing each other's opinions and perceptions consciously, it resulted in them only claimed their own perceptions and their opinions never matching up, ending up in a dictatory conclusion.”

In "Learning", there was also "Learning about the pattern itself" and "Learning about the relations of each patterns”. Regarding "Learning about the pattern itself", there was an impression from the participant like "By being conscious to respond to what she says, I could listen carefully to what she meant". Regarding "Learning about complementary relationships of each pattern,“ there was evidence of learning from a participant who noted, "At some timings, I said 'It is better for

you to do this'. I think it would have been better to practice 'Deep Listening' or 'Pause for Thinking'."

3.2.2 Impressions from participants

As written below, we collected feedback from participants after the program was over. The participants were asked through a free description questionnaire about the Open Dialogue Patterns and about the dialogue class.

About "Open Dialogue Patterns": "Although it is difficult to actually use the patterns as written, it is quite effective in applying to many cases and getting to know open dialogue. I actually learned more from patterns that I could not practice than those I was able to practice." "Since it is possible to recognize the method of each dialogue as a pattern, I think it will be easier to judge what I am doing right or not doing right" " I thought the Open Dialogue Patterns is a way to show the direction of communication to deepen understanding with others."

About "Dialogue Class": "There were difficulties due to the short duration of the program. I think that I could have learned more deeply if I got a double structure of having a look at the actual opportunity of dialogue and observe it." "I think that if you talk about what you have experienced, you will discover more things because others will refer to it from a different viewpoint. However, we may spend too much time for one episode, which is inevitable since I think that it will depend on the flow of the conversation." "I think that the dialogue is also influenced by the relationship with others. I think that it was good to do it in a period of one month because it is possible to see others only from my own sense of values since the other participants were people who I met only once or twice." "I thought that it is better to have two-week intervals between the classes. I feel like one week is a bit short to put what I learned into practice."

3.2.3 Consideration

From the results and impressions of the program we have conducted, we consider the effect of Open Dialogue Patterns in the following three points.

The first point is "Utilization to deepen understanding in interpersonal relationship." It was examined that it is relatively easy to utilize the Open Dialogue Patterns in everyday life to deepen the understanding of an individual. The patterns which were practiced many times were patterns from "Experiencing World" where "context" assumes one-on-one conversation. There was also an impression, which said, "I thought the Open Dialogue Patterns is a direction of communication to deepen understanding with others." From these feedbacks, it could be said that the Open Dialogue Patterns is useful in deepening understanding with others in daily life. Open dialogue itself is intended to resolve symptoms through the dialogue with stakeholders, but the aspect of having

common words to share with others seems to have made it more useful in everyday life.

The second point is “Induce the inquiry of effective dialogue.” By choosing to use patterns, you can become aware of your actions that you were doing unconsciously before. Then you can know what kind of influence your action impacts, so you can use it as a trigger to explore better dialogue. For example, when the practice goes well to a certain extent, there is learning about the effect of a pattern such as “By being conscious to respond to what she says, I could listen carefully to what she meant.” On the other hand, even if the participant feels that he/she did not do well like "Diverse Ideas" or "Experience World" examples, the participant says "I often learned from the patterns I could not practice". From these facts, it can be regarded that the significance is not about whether what is written in the pattern is exactly feasible, but that the guidance of exploration and learning is directed by the patterns.

The third point is “Recognize the dialogue as a design issue.” Although "dialogue" is an act that is not physically visible, participants were able to think about how to combine different elements to “design” better dialogue. For example, one participant noted, “not only claiming 'Diverse Ideas', but also 'Deep Listening' and 'Tunnel of Emotion' must be carried out at the same time” and "In some timing, I said 'It is better for you to do this'. I think it would have been better to practice 'Deep Listening' or 'Pause for Thinking'.” These comments show that participants were able to think that combining and using the patterns can improve the quality of his/her dialogue. Therefore, we can conclude that the Open Dialogue Patterns enables people to think about dialogue, as something that can be designed upon will.

4 Conclusion

This research of using the Open Dialogue Patterns suggests that the patterns are effective in the following three points - "Utilization to deepen understanding in interpersonal relationships", "Induce the Inquiry of Effective Dialogue" and "Recognize the dialogue as a design issue". On the other hand, due to the bias in the specific patterns, we also saw the possibility that there may be patterns which are difficult to be practiced in everyday context. For this reason, we would like to continue putting the patterns into practice and closely examining the utilization possibilities of each pattern. Furthermore, it is expected that learning styles like the 'Dialogue Class' we designed for people to learn about the Open Dialogue Patterns, could be applied as a method of learning other pattern languages. From the participant's voice that "I think that if you talk about what you have experienced, you will discover many things because others will refer to it from a different viewpoint", it could be suggested that this way to acquire pattern language through learning with others has potential for future application.

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Appendix All utilization examples of each pattern.

	Patterns Performed	Area of practice	What was practiced	Consequence	Learning
1	As a Living Person	When giving advice to colleague	I had always been advising my colleague in the form of "you should try ~," but this time I consciously talked to him in a way to encourage him to think for himself what he wanted to do.	The intention like "Let's take action" appeared to his mind.	At some timings, I said "It is better for you to do this". I think it would have been better to practice 'Deep Listening' or 'Pause for Thinking'.
2	Response to What is Said	Relationship with girlfriend	Even when when we are fighting, I brought myself to respond to what my girlfriend was saying.	I was able to reconcile because I could understand what she was trying to express, and avoided emotionally replying.	By being conscious to respond to what she says, I could listen carefully to what she meant.
3	Experienced World	About human relationships within shared house	When she said, "I can not understand the meaning of the story", I listened deeply to her opinion.	I noticed the difference of our viewpoints. I talked from the viewpoint of "How does he get better" and she talked from the viewpoint of "her emotions".	If there is a difference in the viewpoint, the discussion will be inconsistent.
4	Deep Listening	About human relationships within shared house	When I heard from her that "I can not understand the meaning of the story", I listened deeply to her opinion.	I understood her argument, "I can not understand anything he is doing, I think he is strange."	
5	Open Question	The opportunity to learn about World Cafe	When the discussion was dead, I asked an open question "What do we want to deepen in the first place?."	A voice, "I wanted to do something like this," came out from other participants and the question was deepened.	When I speak out what I felt, the others might have felt the same sense of incongruity. In that case, the questions will get deeper.
6	Response to What is Said	Relationship with girlfriend	I tried to respond to what she is saying.	I could listen to her story but I lost the timing to say what I want to say.	When saying important things, it is easier for me to make the context in advance, for example "I have something to talk about".
7	Emotional Resonance	Relationship with the partner of a project	I listened to her story with calmness and empathy.	For the first time, the trouble that she could not talk to people so far was put into words.	The result of politely repeating the dialogue did not cause change as an action, but it was occurring inside her.
8	Adaptation Words	At the workshop I held	I got close to the opponent's idea with a smooth attitude. Specifically, I asked using his words and context.		I noticed that the members who also act as mother are good at doing "Adaptation of Words" naturally.
9	Diverse Ideas	About human relationships within shared house	Talking while distinguishing each other's opinions and perceptions consciously.	Talk while distinguishing each other's opinions and perceptions consciously, it resulted in them only claimed their own perceptions and their opinions never matching up, ending up in a dictatory conclusion.	Not only claiming 'Diverse Ideas', but also 'Deep Listening' and 'Tunnel of Emotion' must be carried out at the same time.
10	Joint Decision	Relationship with girlfriend	Regarding our relationship, we found another option, "We will not meet for a while".	The possibility of seeing her someday in our lives will be influenced by whether I experience this or not. There still is a room to meet her as a friend in the future.	I decided to "end the partnership" by myself, but we both were able to have the sense of ownership to the decision because there were opportunities to exchange each other's opinions.