

Open Dialogue as Coupling of Psychic, Social, and Creative Systems

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Abstract In this paper, we study Open Dialogue, a psychiatric program developed in Western Lapland of Finland, with the theory of autopoietic systems. Although Open Dialogue approach is originally a psychiatric program developed, we believe that the approach can be applied not only to psychotherapy but also educational and organizational situation as the way of collaborative problem dissolving, because it is based on philosophy of dialogism, which is not limited to psychotherapy. For understanding the applicability, we analyse the function of Open Dialogue in higher level of abstraction with concepts of systems theories: Social Systems Theory and Creative Systems Theory. As a result, Open Dialogue can be understood well with the framework of the combination among chain of consciousness in psychic system, chain of communication in social system, and chain of discovery in creative system. To put this understanding into practice, we created a pattern language for collaborative problem dissolving, which we call “Open Dialogue Patterns.” In this paper, we presents the summary of each pattern of 30 patterns.

1 Introduction

Recently in Japan, one psychotherapy method is attracting a great deal of attention, which is called Open Dialogue. Open Dialogue is originally a psychiatric program developed in Keropudas Hospital in Western Lapland, Finland. The founder of Open Dialogue is Jaako Seikkula, who is a clinical psychologist and family therapy trainer and also a professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Jyvaskyla and Tromso.

Open Dialogue approaches to those involved in a crisis including significant others in patient’s life such as families and social networks to be together and to engage in meetings (Seikkula & Olson,2003; Seikkula & Trimble, 2005; Seikkula

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& Arnkil, 2006, 2014). The aim of the meetings is to develop a dialogue, giving a voice to all concerned putting the person at the centre without strategically trying to change them. Whereas in the old system, appointments and intervention by their psychiatrist are the only way to seek solution. The effectiveness of Open Dialogues measures includes number of relapses, rating of psychotic symptoms and social functioning, employment status and hospital days.

Open Dialogue is related to so-called Narrative and Collaborative therapies. As well as these approaches (Andersen, 1991; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Anderson, 1997; Malinen, et al., 2012; McNamee & Gergen, 1992), Open Dialogue is carried out not for problem solving (proposing solution) but for problem dissolving by dialogue.

Although Open Dialogue approach is originally a psychiatric program developed, we believe that the approach can be applied not only to psychotherapy but also educational and organizational situation as the way of collaborative problem dissolving. For us, to apply the Open Dialogue approach into education and organization looks appropriate, because the approach is based on philosophy of dialogism, which is discussed for wider consideration about communication and human relationship than psychotherapy, as the books and papers by Jaakko Seikkula show the relation to the wider literature (Bakhtin, 1981; Bakhtin, 1990; Gergen, 1999; Holquist, 1990; Maturana & Varela, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1986).

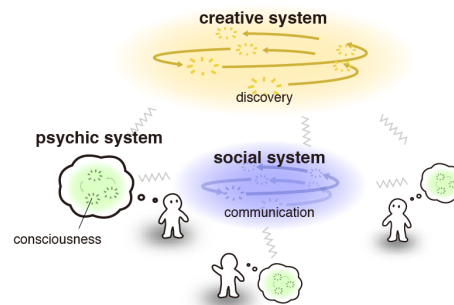
For understanding the applicability, we analyse the function of Open Dialogue in higher level of abstraction with concepts of systems theories: Social Systems Theory (Luhmann, 1984; Luhmann, 1997) and Creative Systems Theory (Iba, 2010).

2 Autopoietic Systems Theory

In the literature of Open dialogue, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, and Niklas Luhmann is indeed referred (Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006). Autopoietic systems were proposed by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in biology (Maturana & Varela 1980) as a unity where the organization is defined by a particular network of production processes of elements. Although the original area of autopoietic systems is biology, Luhmann generalized the theory and used it to enhance his theories of social systems as autopoietic systems that include communication as an element.

In this paper, based on these autopoietic systems theories, we suggest what happens in dialogical meeting on Open Dialogue approach can be explained as phenomena with coupling of Psychic, Social, and Creative Systems (Fig 1). For reaching the conclusion, we first overview Social Systems Theory, focusing on the parts of theory to understand the function of Open Dialogue, then move to Creative Systems Theory, which is necessary to understand another side of Open Dialogue.

Fig. 1. Coupling of Psychic, Social, and Creative Systems.



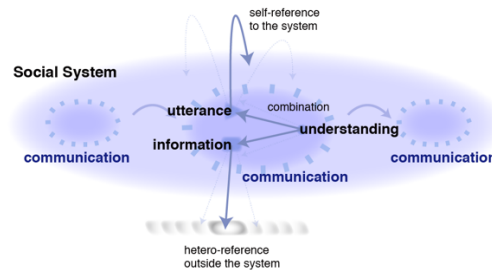
In the social systems theory, Luhmann formulate the human mind as an autopoietic system, which is called as a “psychic system,” where the primary element is consciousness; Psychic system is a nexus of consciousness, and the system reproduces consciousness by consciousness; The consciousness can have no duration because of its momentary operation and requirement to be reproduced constantly. Moreover, from an operational viewpoint, such a psychic system is a closed system as it cannot send or receive communication outside the system. Since the psychic system is closed, so you cannot directly access to the elements of psychic system (psychic systems are mutually inaccessible), certain type of communication is required.

In the theory, communication is considered as the element of social system and emerges between people. According to Luhmann (1984), communication is emerged from the synthesis of three-part selection in social systems: selection of ‘information,’ ‘utterance,’ and ‘understanding’ (Fig 2).

Note that such a definition of communication is much different from conventional definition that is based on a metaphor of transference. In the metaphor, a sender passes a message (information) to a receiver, and then the information moves from the sender to the receiver. Luhmann pointed out the limitation in this perspective because the idea is prepossessed with existence of information, and there is a concern that the information transferred between sender and receiver is thought to be the same one. He claims that this perspective misses to understand the nature of communication as social phenomena; instead, communication should be considered as the social phenomena related to meaning. Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that Luhmann’s conceptualization of communication is distinguished from so-called “communicative act”. The concept of communicative act, as the name implies, is based on action theory rather than communication as mutual selection.

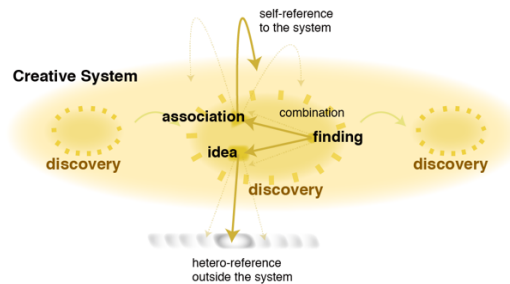
Communication can have no duration because it is momentary operation, so it must be reproduced constantly; From an operations viewpoint, such a social system is a closed system as it cannot send or receive communication outside the system, even from psychic systems.

Fig. 2. Communication emerged by the synthesis of three-part selection: information, utterance, and understanding.



In the Creative Systems Theory (Iba, 2010), a creative process is defined as an autopoietic system where elements are discoveries; In other words, a creative process is a reproduction network of discoveries. Each discovery is emerged only when a synthesis of the following three selections occurs: idea, association, and finding (Fig 3).

Fig. 3. Discovery emerged by the synthesis of three-part selection: idea, association, and finding.



3 Understanding Open Dialogue with Autopoietic Systems Theory

We here present how we can understand open dialogue with autopoietic systems theory introduced in the last section, Social Systems Theory and Creative Systems Theory.

In dialogical meeting, to understand experienced world of the people who is annoyed with the problem to dissolve is quite important but difficult. It is because psychic system (chain of consciousness) is closed, as we seen in the last section. When you are trying to understand the problem the person concerned is facing, you may often listen to his/her stories behind the

problem from your point of view, however that may not be able to grasp his/her experiences completely.

Therefore, in the dialogical meeting on Open Dialogue approach, you understand his/her way of perceiving things and use that perspective to grasp his/her experiences, through dialogue. In other words with the term of systems theory, you need to understand the chain of consciousness in psychic system the people who is annoyed with the problem through the chain of communication. It is, in principle, impossible to capture the chain of consciousness itself, but you can acquire better understanding if you imagine the chain of consciousness behind words and body expressions.

In the dialogical meeting, generating various voices is significant, because there are many interpretations as there are people. Even if you are having a conversation with them one on one, that will only bring personal views of each other; The conversation will remain deadlocked/dead end. Their talk is based on their experienced world and it is one of perspective to see the situation. Since the content to be drawn by the talking partner will be decided to some extent while having conversation; especially if it is a one-on-one conversation, the range of narration becomes narrow. Therefore, it is necessary to invite multiple people related to the person facing with the problem into the dialogical meeting, and get a variety of perspectives on the narrative. Each individuals should not be locked up inside of their experienced world but to interact with various voices surrounding ourselves so that we can get out of a dead end of a problem situation.

In dialogical meeting, new understanding shared among participants in the meeting are generated. This can be considered as creation of new understanding in creative system (chain of discovery). When you are having meeting with members to get rid of problems, the solution to deal with the problem and to remove it does not deal with the underlying causes and the same problem will recur later on. As a mainstream way of thinking about dealing with problems, we tend to identify the cause and to solve it. However, even if a solution is taken for problems in which feelings and relationships are complicatedly affected, there are cases where the situation does not change or it is temporary in practice.

Therefore on the Open Dialogue approach, you capture the circumstances behind that has generated a problem, express it with words in the dialogue, and create a new understanding dissolving the problem. Capturing experience and trauma that has been covered up to now, and by engaging in dialogue about it, it makes it possible to express by words. As a result it resolves problems and symptoms that had appeared on the surface. Thus, the Open Dialogue approach offers not collaboration for finding solution to the problem, but collaboration for co-created understanding, which results on dissolution of the problem.

As we discussed above, Open Dialogue can be understood well with the framework of the combination among chain of consciousness in psychic system, chain of communication in social system, and chain of discovery in creative system.

This shows, on one hand, how dialogical meetings on Open Dialogue approach is successful in psychotherapy. On the other hand, this also shows the Open Dialogue can be considered not only as psychotherapy method, but also as a collaboration method in more broader range of social domains, because the systems we discussed are not limiting to psychotherapy, but considering as fundamental systems of mind, communication, and creation.

4 Open Dialogue Patterns

We here present a pattern language for Open Dialogue. First, we overview what is pattern language, then present a pattern language for Open Dialogue, which we call Open Dialogue Patterns. Pattern language is a method to share such practical knowledge among people in a target domains. Patterns in a pattern language are written in the same format. For example, our typical pattern format comprises a pattern name, an introduction, an illustration, a context, a problem, a solution, a consequence and related patterns.

The pattern name defines the pattern with a short memorable word for easy reference, and an introduction assists in understanding a living image of the pattern. Pattern illustration expresses the pattern's essence, including characters that express human movements and feelings. The context describes situations in which the pattern should be used. Followed by the words 'In this context', a problem that is likely to occur in the context is written. Then, followed by the word 'Therefore', a solution of the problem is presented. Finally, the consequence describes how things can change when this pattern is put into practice.

Based on the papers and book on Open Dialogue (Seikkula, 2002; Seikkula & Olson, 2003; Seikkula, J. & Trimble, 2005; Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006), through deliberate process of creating pattern language (Iba & Isaku, 2016), we got 30 patterns shown in Fig 4; sources of the contents of each patterns is shown in Tab 1.

In the top level, there are core patterns: '*Experienced World*,' '*Various Voices*,' and '*Co-Created Understanding*.' What these patterns mean is already discussed in the previous section in this paper. The followings are summaries of patterns in each category, with using the pattern names of Open Dialogue Patterns.

For understanding '*Experienced World*': Through dialogue, understand his/her way of perceiving things and use that perspective to grasp his/her experiences. Through dialogue, understand his/her way of perceiving things and use that perspective to grasp his/her experiences. Find out his/her way of perceiving the world and behind stories to those perspectives through dialogue. After so, listen to his/her experiences and events based on those perspectives in order to elicit more stories. Specifically, do not let labels and expertise stop you from being '*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 a Yes/No answers, but practice question that will allow us to answer in own bare words such as *'Open Question.'* Also, make a *'Pause for Thinking'* so that person you are in a dialogue with can have a time to think about what they want to say. When he/she has finally answered to your question, make sure you also *'Respond to What is Said.'* In order to understand his/her *'Experienced World,'* use not only your own point view but also his/her *'Inner Frame.'* Sometimes there may be strong emotional expression though that is a great opportunity to put those experiences into words he/she couldn't before through *'Tunnel of Emotion.'* In case of those situation, make sure you settle a *'Respectful Mind'* towards dark and tough experiences he/she have had faced in the past.

For generating *'Various Voices'*: Invite multiple people related to the person facing with the problem into the dialogical meeting, and get a variety of perspectives on the narrative. Each individuals should not be locked up inside of their *'Experienced World'* but to interact with *'Various Voices'* surrounding ourselves so that we can get out of a dead end of a problem situation. First of all, we must have our *'Significant Others'* to join in and have everybody *'Working as a Team.'* Then, have those members gather in one place and *'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 only to words, but also to the *'Tiny Sign'* that each person gives, such as a little expression and tension. Moreover, thinking that your emotional response 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 and leads out a new voice.

For achieving *'Co-Created Understanding'*: Capture the circumstances behind that has generated a problem, express it with words in the dialogue, and create a new understanding dissolving the problem. Capturing experience and trauma that has been covered up to now, and by engaging in dialogue about it, it makes it possible to express by words. As a result it resolves problems and symptoms that had appeared on the surface. Doing so, 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. And, 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,'* no right or wrong. During the process you will need *'Tolerating Ambiguity,'* but rather than trying to quickly summarize, 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 on the team is asked to discuss at the meeting. And not converging to one agreement point, continue 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 is that experience itself creates *'Community of Narrative'* which will be the foundation for their future.

Fig. 4. Overview of Open Dialogue Patterns

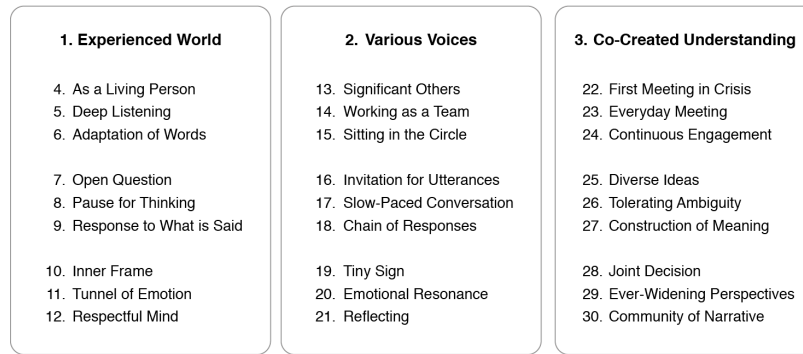


Table 1. Sources of Problem, Solution, and Consequence statement in each pattern (page numbers)

No.	Pattern Name	Problem	Solution	Consequence
1	Experienced World	B1 (41, 115), B2 (139, 143)	B1 (69, 115), B2 (123, 102, 121, 149)	B1 (115), B2 (95, 102, 172)
2	Various Voices	B1 (41, 42)	B1 (17, 28, 109, 119, 129), B2 (95, 98)	B1 (7,17,101), B2 (158, 159, 164)
3	Co-Created Understanding	B1 (52), B2 (94)	B1 (117, 127, 119), B2 (94, 99, 151)	B1 (66, 100, 105, 123), B2 (123, 143, 151, 171)
4	As a Living person	B1 (48, 118, 119)	B1 (47, 48, 94, 116), B2 (94)	B1 (94)
5	Deep Listening	B1 (121, 131, 139)	B2 (94, 97, 98, 120, 121)	
6	Adaptation of Words		B1 (119, 139), B2 (120, 151, 174)	B1 (130), B2 (151, 174)
7	Open Question		B1 (68, 116), B2 (96, 120, 151, 152)	B1 (68)
8	Pause for Thinking	B2 (93)	B1 (103), B2 (94)	
9	Resonance to What is Said	B1 (113, 118), B2 (132)	B1 (69), B2 (96, 121, 132, 151)	B1 (65,69), B2 (143, 172)
10	Inner Frame		B1 (101), B2 (123)	B1 (101), B2 (164)
11	Tunnel of Emotion	B1 (121)	B1 (122, 131), B2 (151)	B1 (101)
12	Respectful Mind		B1 (70, 119)	B1 (50)
13	Significant Others		B1 (59, 60, 61, 116, 119), B2 (61)	B1 (59, 60, 173)
14	Working as a Team	B1 (132)	B1 (57, 63), B2 (89)	B1 (63, 65), B2 (167, 170, 171)

15	Sitting in the Circle	B2 (161)	B1 (67), B2 (88, 89, 161)	B1 (50, 108~109)
16	Invitation for Utterances	B1 (118)	B1 (47, 69, 109, 119), B2 (96, 151, 152, 159)	B1 (109)
17	Slow-paced Conversation	B2 (152, 165)	B1 (131), B2 (165)	B2 (102, 152, 163)
18	Chain of Responses	B2 (132)	B1 (112, 113, 149), B2 (132, 112, 113)	B1 (120), B2 (134)
19	Tiny Sign		B1 (103, 108, 131), B2 (155)	
20	Emotional Resonance	B2 (165)	B1 (131), B2 (164, 166)	B1 (122), B2 (164, 166, 171)
21	Reflecting		B1 (148), B2 (106)	B2 (98, 155)
22	First Meeting in Crisis	B1 (58, 59)	B1 (57, 58, 59, 62), B2 (88, 89, 117, 150)	B1 (58, 59, 60, 143)
23	Everyday Meeting	B1 (65)	B1 (65), B2 (93, 150)	B1 (65), B2 (93)
24	Continuous Engagement	B2 (64)	B1 (57, 63, 64, 102), B2 (90, 118, 150, 165)	B1 (64, 133), B2 (90)
25	Diverse Ideas	B1 (38, 42, 52, 100, 102, 118), B2 (99)	B1 (41, 42, 61, 67, 100, 111, 132, 140), B2 (99, 164)	B1 (42, 100, 101, 111, 132), B2 (163)
26	Tolerating Ambiguity	B1 (143), B2 (94, 154, 163)	B1 (102, 115, 143), B2 (94, 151, 163)	B1 (115), B2 (101, 151, 163)
27	Construction of Meaning	B1 (100, 127)	B1 (66, 100, 127, 137, 143), B2 (95, 163)	B1 (101, 137)
28	Joint Decision	B1 (23, 24, 143)	B1 (23, 24, 25, 32, 63, 67, 101, 116, 138, 143, 144), B2 (90, 117, 119, 120, 125, 152, 155, 156, 143, 144) 165)	B2 (24, 63, 101, 133, 144)
29	Ever-Widening Perspectives	B1 (38, 104, 107)	B1 (66, 70, 104, 107, 111, 131, 138)	B1 (100, 138)
30	Community of Narrative		B1 (100, 123, 124, 132, 133, 135, 148), B2 (126)	B1 (133, 134)

B1 stands for Seikkula & Arnkil (2006), and B2 for Seikkula & Olson (2003) and Seikkula & Trimble (2005)

5 Conclusion

In this paper, we studied Open Dialogue approach as a psychiatric program with the theory of autopoietic systems. Also, we presented a pattern language for Open Dialogue. We anticipate that our patterns will be applied not only to psychotherapy but also to educational and organizational situations.

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