Pattern Languages as Media for Creative Dialogue:

Functional Analysis of Dialogue Workshops

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In this study, I introduce the Dialogue Workshop as an application for using pattern languages as media for creative dialogue. The workshop provides participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, talk about them with others, and visualize the future using pattern language. In this workshop, first, participants are asked to recall their experiences in terms of the provided pattern language. They are then asked to choose five patterns they wish to master in the near future. Next, participants are free to mingle and to find and talk with other participants. When they find someone who has experienced a pattern they want to master, they listen to the other participant's story. Using Merton's method of functional analysis, this study elucidates the functions of Dialogue Workshops. Based on my intent, the manifest functions (i.e., the distinct functions of the subject) of Dialogue Workshops are as follows: [M1] Good Opportunity for Dialogue with Others, [M2] Building Images of Actions from Stories, and [M3] Rediscovering Self. The latent functions, i.e., the unintended results, of the Dialogue Workshops are as follows: [L1] Discovering the Pleasure of Dialogue, [L2] Becoming Encouraged toward the Future, [L3] and Discovering Meaning. Finally, these functions are confirmed by feedback from the workshop participants.

1. Introduction

The unique idea of using pattern languages to describe design knowledge was proposed by Christopher Alexander (Alexander *et al*., 1977; Alexander, 1979). His intent in creating pattern language was to help people become involved in the design process for their towns and buildings (Alexander *et al*., 1985). Namely, at the stage (in about 1985) that I call "Pattern Language 1.0" (Iba, 2011a, 2012, 2014), architects used pattern language for sharing design knowledge with laypersons. Ten years later, Alexander's concept of pattern languages was adopted in software design field (Beck and Cunningham, 1987). When the era shifted to a new stage, which I call "Pattern Language 2.0," pattern language began to be used differently. Although it described design knowledge for software development, its main purpose became filling the technical gap between expert and less experienced designers.

Thereafter, pattern languages expanded into creative human actions such as education (Pedagogical Patterns Editorial Board, 2012), organizational change (Manns and Rising, 2005), collaboration (Iba and Iba Laboratory, 2014a), learning (Iba and Iba Laboratory, 2014b), and presentation (Iba and Iba Laboratory, 2014c). At this stage, which I call "Pattern Language 3.0," the use of pattern languages has taken a turn to sharing stories of experience. In stages 1.0 and 2.0, people learned from the description of a pattern itself. In 3.0, the patterns help illuminate to less noticeable parts of an experience, so one can reconsider the experience, talk about it, and share it with others. In this way, people become familiar with others' diverse experiences, and therefore, they can learn much more than the content of the patterns themselves. In addition, based on the patterns, there is room for one to think creatively about one's own ways. Thus, stated simply, pattern languages acted as media for creative dialogue on experiences.

In this study, I introduce the Dialogue Workshop as an application using pattern languages as media for creative dialogue. This study conducts a functional analysis of the workshop and confirms the analysis with feedback from the workshop participants.

2. Dialogue Workshop with a Pattern Language

The easiest implementation of pattern languages as media for creative dialogues is organizing a Dialogue Workshop (Iba, 2011b, 2011c; Iba *et al*., 2012). The workshop provides participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, talk about them with others, and visualize the future using pattern language. In this workshop, first, participants are asked to recall their experiences in terms of the provided pattern language. They are asked to choose five patterns they wish to master in the near future. Then, participants are free to mingle and to find and talk with other participants.

When they find someone who has experienced a pattern they want to master, they listen to the other participant's story.

Until now, in Japan and at international conferences, I have held over 70 workshops for various groups, including college students, teachers, businesspersons, designers, and engineers, using the Learning, Collaboration, and Presentation patterns. Since 2011, Dialogue Workshops with Learning Patterns have been exclusively and officially held for all freshmen—900 students annually—at the Faculties of Policy Management and Environment and Information Studies, Keio University (Figure 1). The same workshops have been organized at U.S. universities and international conferences (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1. Dialogue Workshop with Learning Patterns (Keio University, Japan, 2013)

Figure 2. Dialogue Workshop with Learning Patterns
(University of North Carolina at Asheville, USA, 2014)

Figure 3. Dialogue Workshop with Learning Patterns
(International Conference on Collaborative Innovation Networks, Switzerland, 2012)

3. Functional Analysis of Dialogue Workshop

Based on my intent, the manifest functions of Dialogue Workshops are as follows: [M1] Good Opportunity for Dialogue with Others, [M2] Building Images of Actions from Stories, and [M3] Rediscovering Self. The latent functions, i.e., the unintended results, are as follows: [L1] Discovering the Pleasure of Dialogue, [L2] Becoming Encouraged toward the Future, and [L3] Discovering Meaning. A functional overview of Dialogue Workshops is shown in Figure 1. In what follows, I provide feedback on each function from workshop participants.
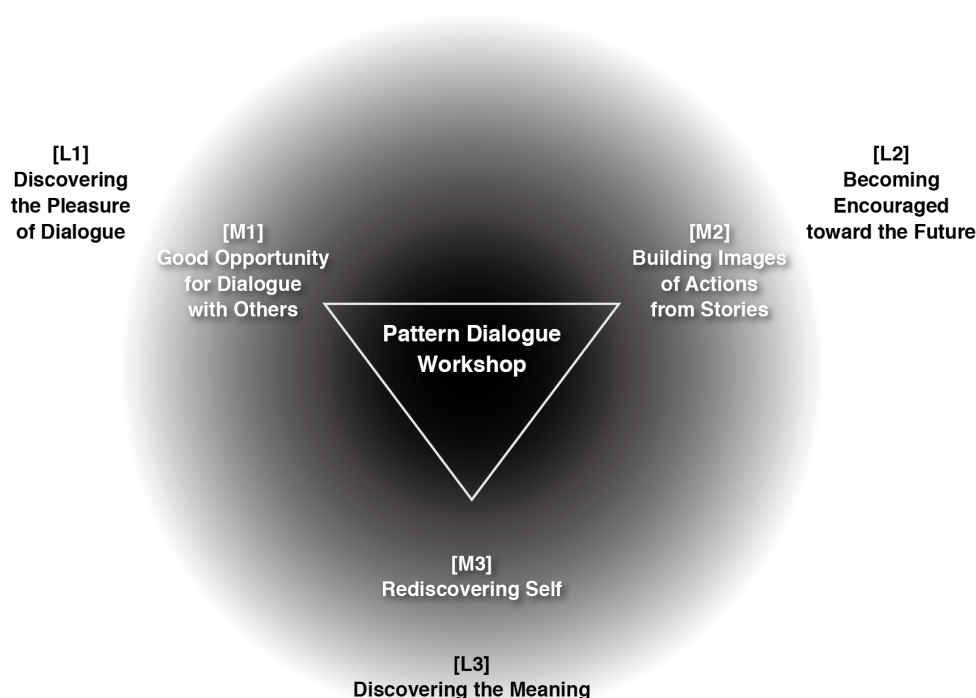

Figure 4. Overview of the functions of Dialogue Workshops

4. Confirmation of Functions with Participants' Feedback

The following are the examples of feedback from participants of the Dialogue Workshop with Learning Patterns at Keio University in April 2014. In total, 912 freshmen participated. The author translated the comments and added the highlights by underlining them.

[M1] Good Opportunity for Dialogue with Others. In the workshop, participants are instructed to talk only to people they do not know. This rule provides them a sense of the

extraordinary. Of the many survey comments received, many workshop participants have said that they were able to talk to people they had never talked to before. About 20% of participants wrote the following comments.

- This workshop was a good opportunity for me to meet and talk to many new people.
- The talks in the workshop were a precious experience for seeing the different values that people have.
- It was such a surprise to find out so many people around me had ideas that I never thought of before. Talking to people who would listen closely to my stories and answer my questions generously made the workshop a very inspiring time.
- At first, I felt uneasy talking to new people, but once the workshop started, it was a lot of fun.
- Honestly, I am very shy and usually don't speak to anyone I don't know. However, once I started to talk with my peers, it was interesting to find out about their thoughts and values that that were clearly different from mine.
- At first, I felt resistance in speaking with people I didn't know. However, once the workshop started, I realized how much fun it is to learn about different viewpoints that people have and also to talk to these people with pure interest. This workshop, which provided me a good experience of talking to people without any hesitation, was truly fun.

[M2] Building Images of Actions from Stories. Another type of comment participants commonly provided involved how they gained ideas about specific actions they could implement.

- By having other people explain the patterns that I want to adopt with their stories, the rather abstract image of the patterns became more concrete and started to seem feasible.
- Although I felt I understood the patterns in my head, it was a good experience hearing actual stories from other people, since doing so added reality to the information.
- By hearing stories of other peoples' experiences, I was able to get a clear image of the process of how the patterns I want to take in will be actually be pursued. Until then, I just had a vague goal of using the patterns, but the stories provided me ideas and a chance to think about what types of specific actions to take or how I should face my study themes.

With a limited number of patterns, the participants tended to think that only similar stories would emerge. In contrast, however, numerous stories arose from the same pattern. In addition, the

participants discovered that the same pattern could have various applications, since the workshop asked participants to collect as many stories as possible about their five chosen patterns.

- I was thinking about the amount of experience everyone has. The stories from my peers made me <u>realize how much more there still is for me to experience and learn</u>.
- I was <u>surprised at how much diversity</u> there is in what people have experienced in their lives, just in Japan.
- The workshop made me <u>realize one simple fact: All human beings are living a different life</u>.
- I found out through the workshop that <u>people could have different types of stories even though they are based on the same pattern</u>.
- <u>We all had different styles of learning, which we each found to fit us best.</u>
- When I was reading through the Learning Patterns in preparation for the workshop, I was imagining how I would put the patterns to use. I participated in the workshop thinking that other people would have experienced the patterns similarly, but in reality, <u>the stories I heard were all different, which made the workshop an interesting experience</u>.

Not only did the workshop participants listen to the stories, they were able to share and solve problems they faced.

- We usually don't get a chance to talk about how we face learning and what types of thoughts or experiences we have with it. Therefore, <u>listening to stories of my peers in this class provided me new perspectives</u>.
- By sharing each other's stories, I was able to <u>discover interesting learning styles from my peers</u>.
- Talking to my peers, I found many who have similar learning styles, goals, and plans as I am. I also <u>found out that they were facing the same problems and worries as I am</u>. Talking to them about these topics, I felt my worries that I had since I started this school being washed away.
- The workshop was a <u>good chance to talk to each other about worries we were keeping to ourselves</u>. Interestingly, since the conversations are not one way but more about sharing our thoughts, everyone was accepting of each other.
- Through the workshop, I was able to <u>find a solution to a problem I had been worrying about</u> since I started college.

[M3] Rediscovering Self. Interestingly, in addition to learning new things from other people's stories, some people commented that they discovered new aspects of themselves.

- This workshop was a <u>good opportunity</u> for me <u>to organize my experiences up until now</u>. I was able to <u>figure out things I still need to work on and things I want to start working on</u>.
- I thought I had only a typical "have-experienced" list of patterns, but at the workshop, more people asked me about the pattern "Firm Determination" than I expected. This made me <u>realize how each one of us is full of different experiences</u>. This also made me <u>realize how valuable my actions in the past are</u>, and they <u>became a source of confidence for me</u>.
- Through today's workshop, I was able to <u>realize the originality in my experiences</u> and the fact that these experiences would become a "weapon." I have experienced the pattern "Be Extreme" multiple times before, and it was something I could enjoy without any special effort. But the workshop became <u>a chance to look back at these experiences</u> since "Be Extreme" was the <u>most frequent pattern I was asked about</u>.

In some cases during dialogues, participants gained better understanding of a pattern that led them to discovering they did have experience with a pattern they thought they didn't have experience with. Dialogues using patterns led to better understanding of the patterns; therefore, a better understanding of the self.

- <u>Even at first, the pattern didn't seem fitting for me</u>, but <u>after hearing stories about it, there were cases where I realized I had a similar experience as the story</u>.
- I thought <u>hearing stories about the patterns we don't have experience with</u> would <u>provide us a better understanding of the pattern</u>. This is because, when I was listening to someone's story, I thought, if that is what this pattern means, then I have a similar experience. I was probably thinking of each pattern too complicatedly, but at a smaller and local level, <u>I had already achieved the pattern</u>. This provided me confidence for further challenges in the future.
- My biggest finding was the fact that <u>even though I might think I haven't done something before, I still have experience with it.</u>

Such findings by workshop participants were due to using the patterns to talk about themselves.

- By talking to other people about my experiences with the patterns, I <u>found new aspects of myself that I didn't know before</u>.

- The experience of talking to other people about my experience itself became an experience of "Talking Thinker" from the Learning Patterns. <u>Since I don't usually get to speak about such experiences in an organized manner, by talking about them in the workshop, I thought I got a better understanding of myself.</u>

- New ideas kept coming into my head even while I was talking to someone else. <u>This helped me organize my thoughts</u>.

[L1] Discovering the Pleasure of Dialogue. Of the participants, 20% commented that the workshop was "fun" or "interesting." This is significant since the workshop's theme was learning—something students do not usually consider fun or interesting. In addition, over 10% participants said they were shy and did not like talking to people they did not know. Soon, however, they experienced feelings of fun.

- Speaking to someone new about a story of my experience was something I have never done before and was <u>fun</u>.

- Listening to a story of someone I have never met, and then telling them a story of my own was a fresh new experience for me. I found out how much <u>fun</u> it is to communicate with others.

- The workshop was <u>simply fun</u>. At the beginning, I felt shy and couldn't keep from hiding behind my friend, but once I came near the pond [where the workshop was held] and started the workshop, I found out it was fun listening to other people's stories and speaking of my own. I felt I found a new part of myself through the workshop.

- First of all, the workshop was <u>very fun!!</u> I am usually very shy, and therefore was afraid when I heard I would have to talk to people I didn't know in the workshop. But this fright disappeared within the first five minutes. Everyone was full of ideas I would never have thought of, and I thought I saw a whole new part of the world I didn't know before. I felt I was able to break out of my shell, and I understood what it means to "learn through dialogues."

Why were these shy people able to talk and enjoy the workshop? One answer might be that the workshop's atmosphere and rules made it comfortable for people to talk.

- Although it is usually tough to start talking to someone I don't know, the workshop's providing a common goal among the participants made it easy to start talking.

- When I try to start talking to someone, I usually hesitate from the fear of annoying them or of them having no interest in what I say. However, in the atmosphere created by this workshop, everyone had a legitimate reason to have interest in anyone else there. Therefore, even I, who usually hesitate to talk to other people, was able to become enthusiastic about talking, so much so that I found the end of the workshop a little disappointing.

- Since I am very shy, I was nervous about this workshop. However, I was surprisingly able to speak naturally to the other participants. I think this was due to the preparation we did where we wrote down specific episodes with the patterns beforehand. With the written down note in hand, I didn't have to get nervous every time I had to tell my story. This rule was only a small preparation, but its effect was huge. The achievement of being able to speak to other people without getting nervous raised my confidence.

- "Rule No. 1: You must speak only with people you don't know." The moment I saw these words, I started to get scared. I am very shy and don't like talking to people I don't know. However, since this is a class assignment, I had to stand up and start talking. I probably never had spoken to so many people I don't know on the same day. Once the workshop began, the warm and fun atmosphere helped me to start speaking to different people.

Furthermore, interestingly, some participants said they made new friends through the workshop.

- I actually made several new friends.
- Although only a few, I made some new friends in the workshop.
- Surprisingly, I met a peer who wanted to study something close to what I wanted to do in college, and we were able to trade email addresses too.

[L2] Becoming Encouraged toward the Future. The dialogue workshop using pattern language brought out more than just the sharing of stories between participants. The participants became stimulated by their peers and brought up their motivation.

- I was <u>simply astonished by the people who had abilities in things I can't do</u>, and at the same time, <u>I hoped others would think the same about me</u>.
- There are many people around me who have experienced many different things. They also have different ways of thinking. These are not visible in their plain looks, and we must listen to their stories to truly understand them. <u>I was impressed by them, and they became a good stimulus for me</u>. I sometimes even envied them. "I want to exceed beyond them," I thought; "I want to become able to compete equally with these great peers."
- From listening to the stories of my peers, I was <u>surprised to find something I can respect in each one of them</u>. <u>I found out there is no need to underestimate my possibilities, nor should I be afraid of and avoid making any mistakes. I should step forward aggressively and accept my mistakes gracefully.</u>

How did the participants change through the workshop? The survey shows that they gained a wider viewpoint on others and their "worlds."

- I met people who had a whole different view of the world, and <u>they became a great inspiration for me</u>.
- I <u>realized what a small part of the world I was looking at</u>. By listening to other people's experience with the Learning Patterns, I can see what type of background they have. <u>This becomes a good source of inspiration for thinking how I want to be in the near future</u>. I thought it would be good if we could continue this workshop periodically to widen and deepen our thoughts and views even more through synergy.
- <u>I realized </u>through today's workshop <u>that the world I have experienced until today is only a small part of the large whole</u>. <u>I also realized how much I don't know</u>. Although I don't know very much, <u>I was able to see the different possibilities that await me, and how much I could grow through the experiences that yet are to come</u>.

[L3] Discovering Meaning. What did participants learn from the workshop? Were the patterns really able to help participants in their learning? In the survey, a few participants commented on how they changed their perspectives on learning itself.

- We all have different lives, and <u>everything from big events in our lives—happy or sad—to small and local events in our daily lives shape our experiences</u>. This was <u>my finding through this workshop</u>.
- I <u>found out</u> through the workshop that I am <u>already practicing the Learning Patterns on a very small and daily level</u>. Therefore, I thought I <u>should begin with small things I could start doing to improve how I learn</u>.
- I thought that <u>learning starts from having an intention to change</u>.
- From listening to stories from lots of people, I thought there were two types of stories I found useful—stories of things I like and stories where I found out something new. This led me to notice <u>how important it is to jump into a new, unknown field of study to find something I really like that I could learn about</u>.
- I was able to realize through the dialogues that <u>things I want to learn about are lying in front of me, and it is up to me to grab the chance</u>. I think <u>many of the people I talked to had grown because they took actions with determination</u>. Therefore, from now on, I should not only think in my head but <u>actually take actions</u> based on the thoughts.

In addition, some participants commented on what the Dialogue Workshop actualized for them.

- Not only would the workshop be a benefit to others from hearing stories, I thought it was also helpful for ourselves since the workshop helps us put our achievements from the past into words, which would <u>bring patterns of achievements from the past and connect them to future achievements</u>.
- Talking to people we don't know about our experiences would be something we usually don't do, but it was interesting to do since <u>we were able to connect other people's past experiences to future experiences of our own</u>.
- <u>I learned</u> through today's workshop <u>that something normal for me is not necessarily normal for others.</u> Something abundant and normal for me could be something very precious for someone else and vice versa. It was a good opportunity to realize how important it is to listen to other people. <u>Listening to other people's stories means that you are tracing their life experiences, and for sure, that would let you realize something you haven't seen before.</u> Finding this out was the biggest thing I learned today.
- Listening to someone's story and then telling them a story of my own was something I have never done before. It was a fresh experience, and <u>I was able to feel what "learning through dialogues" means</u>.

Another interesting phenomenon was that the students were already using the pattern names—such as "Open Learning," "Consequential Encounters," "Field Diving," and "Discovery of Growth"—as part of their vocabulary in their comments.

- I thought this workshop itself was an experience of doing <u>"Open Learning."</u> It was a good experience sharing a learning experience with lots of people to mutually enhance our motivation.
- I was able to experience <u>"Field Diving"</u> in this workshop by talking to people I don't know and sharing information in order to find out about things I didn't know about. I was also able to make new friends in the workshop.
- I noticed that even though we each have a different field of study, we still have common aspects that we can share on how to learn. This was a good learning from <u>"Hidden Connections.</u>"

5. Conclusion

In sum, Dialogue Workshops using pattern language have the following merits: First, participants could talk to people they have never talked to before. By setting a rule that participants must talk only to people they do not know, the workshop became an extraordinary and interesting event and was still feasible even if participants were shy and did not like talking to new people. This is because the atmosphere and rules of the workshop made it more comfortable for people to talk. Moreover, the workshop was fun and interesting even though its theme was learning, and the participants even made new friends.

Second, to actualize the patterns they wanted to implement, the participants gained ideas about specific actions they could start taking and also learned that the same pattern can have various applications. In this workshop, participants could become stimulated by other people's attitudes and experiences of learning, and from seeing the diversity of others' experiences. Through the workshop, the participants gained a broader viewpoint of the world and themselves, and it helped them share and solve the problems they are facing.

Third, the workshop not only allowed participants to know about others but also to find new aspects in themselves by using the Learning Patterns to talk about themselves. In the dialogues, they also sometimes discovered they had experience with a pattern they thought they had *not* experienced, and these experiences changed how the participants faced learning itself. Some

participants were already using the pattern names as part of their vocabulary and making emphatic comments about what the Dialogue Workshop actualized in them.

As the comments above demonstrate, the Dialogue Workshop causes not just simple conversation about trading information but becomes a place for "Creative Dialogues."

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