

FUTURE LANGUAGE AS A COLLABORATIVE DESIGN METHOD

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a new design method, which we call “Future Language,” for designing the future of place, community, and life. Future Language is a new kind of language that is composed of *Future Words* to talk about the desired future vision, where each Future Word has three aspects: what is a desired achievement in the future, why it is important, and how to achieve it. With using the Future Words, people can share their vision and conduct good collaborations toward the future based on the words. In this paper, I show some applications of this method: designing workplace, café, and community center, and also drawing the future vision of a regional community.

INTRODUCTION

When thinking and talking about our future, we should use our own vocabulary we have already had. Future must include something that doesn't exist today, so in principle our current vocabulary is not enough to describe the future. On the backdrop, in this paper, I will propose a method to build new vocabulary for describing coming future, which I call this method “Future Language.” In what follows, I will present the composition and the process of Future Language method, and then demonstrate it with some examples.

FUTURE LANGUAGE

Future Language is a new kind of language that is composed of Future Words to talk about the future vision (Figure 1). Future Words have three aspects: first, they are words that represent approaches realizing the vision; second, they are words that represent solutions to the problems in current situation; third, they are words that you can use when talking about the future. Thus, if you create and share those words, you can describe the vision, share it with others, and prototype a part of it. The idea of Future Language was proposed by Takashi Iba in

2013, and its method has been developed by Future Language Project, Iba Lab.

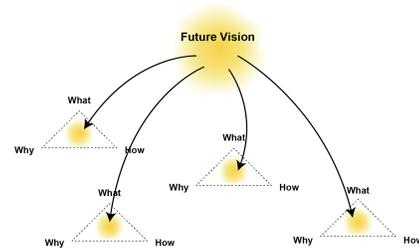


Figure 1: Future Language consists of Future Words that represents future vision

The process to obtaining Future Words through dialogue is called as “Future Mining,” where 1 or 2 facilitators, which we call “generators,” facilitate the process and present their own ideas (Figure 2).

In the Future Mining, for example of designing the future of a community, participants and generators first freely think about the *desired states* of the community and write ideas on sticky notes. Then, they think about the current *problems and difficulties* they feel and write them on sticky notes. After thinking about the future of the community and its issues it holds, they think an idea *how to realize* each of the desired states. Then they label the solutions that they came up with as one of the *Future Words*, which solve those problems (Figure 3,4).

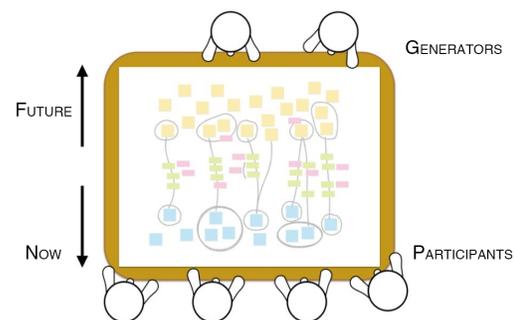


Figure 2: Workshop settings for Future Mining

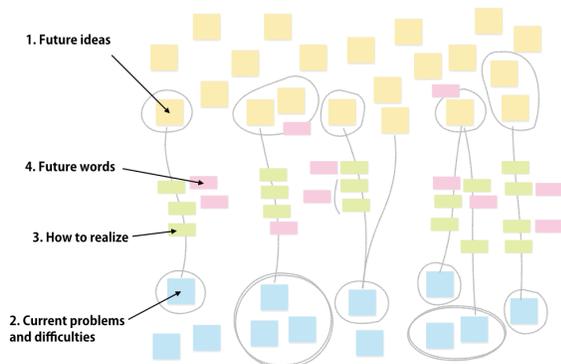


Figure 3: Resulting configuration of colored sticky notes on the craft paper in the Future Mining workshop

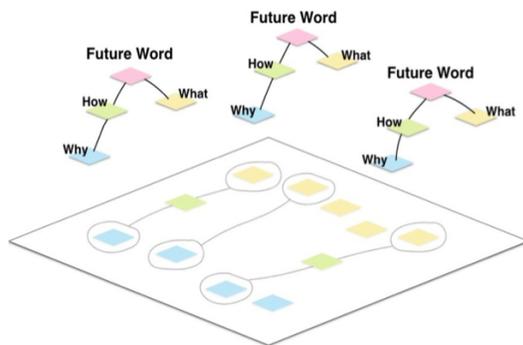


Figure 4: Every Future Words has all three connecting elements: What, How, and Why

The process is designed as that workshop participants always do divergent thinking, however the process of the workshop works loosely as convergent thinking. Therefore, Future Language workshops get lively.

RELATION TO EXISTING METHODS

From the viewpoint of methodology, Future Language is a sister method of Pattern Language. Pattern Language is the way to learn from the Past. On the contrary, Future Language is the way to learn from the Future, while the “future” here means what is the vision of future conceived from the present. Besides, Future Language method can be used as the method for organizational learning like Scenario Planning (Schwartz, 1996) and Theory U (Scharmer, 2009). We anticipate that the Future Language method will be worth practicing in any Future Centers, community, and organization.

APPLICATIONS OF FUTURE LANGUAGE

Future Language method can be used for designing the future of Place, Community, and Personal life. As the cases presented in the following papers, this method works well for involving people and

generating their creative dialogues. Figure 5 shows the Future Language workshop at PLoP2014 conference, they can broaden an image of the future of the pattern community and discover the connection between the present and the future.

- Collaborative Design of workplace of UDS Ltd, Japan (Honda, *et al.*, 2015)
- Collaborative Design of cafe in Ebina City, Japan (Suzuki, *et al.*, 2015)
- Collaborative community development in Cebu City, Philippines (Nakamura, *et al.*, 2015)
- Collaborative community development in Satsumasendai City, Japan (Fujioka, *et al.*, 2015)



Figure 5: Future Mining workshop in PLoP2014 Conference (Iba, 2014)

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