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## Theoretical Perspectives and Preliminary Results on the Feasibility of Using Uchinaaguchi in Okinawan Karate and Kobudo Classes

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【研究論文】

## Theoretical Perspectives and Preliminary Results on the Feasibility of Using Uchinaaguchi in Okinawan Karate and Kobudo Classes

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### Abstract

Uchinaaguchi, along with five other Ryukyuan languages, is on the UNESCO endangered languages list. As Japanese is currently used in almost all areas of daily life, people need specific motivation and a domain in which to use Uchinaaguchi in order to maintain it. One possible domain is that of Okinawan martial arts. Since karate and kobudo were originally developed and taught in Uchinaaguchi, martial arts practitioners may believe that they can improve their martial arts techniques through knowledge of this language. However, does sufficient support exist to warrant an attempt at Okinawan language revitalization through martial arts? A pilot study was conducted with members of the martial arts community from Okinawa and abroad to determine the level of support for using Uchinaaguchi in their practice. Preliminary data from interviews, written correspondence, surveys and participant observation indicated that the martial arts community in Okinawa and abroad was strongly supportive of the idea of using Uchinaaguchi in karate and kobudo classes. Although participants lacked awareness of Uchinaaguchi as a distinct language, the martial arts community generally valued teaching and learning Uchinaaguchi as it related to their practice, and was found to already be using this language in dojos within Okinawa and abroad. Okinawan cultural interest and martial arts learning were the most frequently reported Uchinaaguchi learning motivations among international participants. However, more international participants wished to use Uchinaaguchi to describe Okinawan cultural concepts than martial arts-related concepts, suggesting possible relationships between learning motivation and interest in Okinawan martial arts, culture, and language.

**Key words:** Ryukyus, language minority, language maintenance, martial arts

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## **Introduction**

Okinawa is home to six Ryukyuan languages on the UNESCO endangered languages list (Moseley, 2010). Of these, Uchinaaguchi is spoken on the main island of Okinawa and has the largest number of speakers. The use of Japanese in almost all domains of daily life has been accompanied by the loss of Uchinaaguchi fluency and specialized vocabulary (Heinrich, 2005; Osumi, 2001). However, the process of language shift may be reversed by expanding the number of domains in which Uchinaaguchi is used. One possible domain is that of Okinawan martial arts.

As most Uchinaaguchi-speaking martial arts instructors are in their 60s or older (Heinrich, 2005), it is imperative that research into this area proceed quickly. Although the Ryukyuan language database (Okinawan Centre of Language Study, 2013) contains some martial arts terms, it is not a specialized martial arts lexicon and cannot take the place of these terms in use in a martial arts context. Since there are no other studies on Uchinaaguchi learning and revitalization through Okinawan martial arts, this article is intended as a pilot study. If there is sufficient interest among members of the martial arts community, the present research would lead to the development of martial arts-related Uchinaaguchi language learning materials for use in karate and kobudo classes in Okinawa and abroad.

Preliminary interviews, written correspondence, surveys and participant observation from both international and Okinawan members of the martial arts community assessed 1) the martial arts community's response to Uchinaaguchi use in karate and kobudo classes, including 2) the sociolinguistic milieu and general perceptions surrounding Uchinaaguchi in Okinawa and abroad, 3) current applications of Uchinaaguchi in dojo in Okinawa and abroad, including specific areas of use, 4) participant motivations for using Uchinaaguchi, and 5) participants' desired areas of Uchinaaguchi use.

## **1. Theory**

### **1-1. Motivation**

Building on Gardner's (1985) theories of language learning motivation, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) identified several factors which may affect language learning motivation. Instrumentality, attitudes towards L2 speakers, cultural interest and sociolinguistic milieu have particular relevance for this study. For example, it is suspected that instrumentality is a primary motivation for martial arts students, who may view Uchinaaguchi as a means of improving their martial arts knowledge and technical prowess. Additionally, foreign martial artists' repeated trips to Okinawa in order to interact with their Okinawan instructors (May, 2012), indicate a positive attitude towards Uchinaaguchi speakers. Furthermore, martial arts such as karate and

kobudo are part of Okinawan culture. Martial artists' cultural interest may well extend to Uchinaaguchi, especially martial arts-related vocabulary. Finally, the international martial arts community fosters its own linguistic milieu which may encourage learning Uchinaaguchi.

For international participants, learning Uchinaaguchi represents a classic L2 learning situation, whereas for Okinawan martial artists Uchinaaguchi is a mother tongue or heritage language. Thus, only the motivational concepts of instrumentality, cultural interest, and sociolinguistic milieu will be used to examine the data as they apply to both groups.

### **1-2. Total Physical Response**

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language learning methodology developed by James Asher (1969) after he observed that most early childhood language acquisition involves physical responses to utterances. TPR emphasizes the following points:

1. Understanding the spoken language should be developed in advance of speaking.
2. Understanding should be developed through movements of the student's body. The imperative is a powerful aid because the instructor can utter commands to manipulate student behaviour.
3. Do not attempt to force speaking...the individual will spontaneously begin to produce utterances. (Asher, 2000, p. 4)

Asher noted that “the listening comprehension of a language was significantly better if [students] physically acted in response to the commands than if they translated, orally or in writing, the commands into English”, that “[t]he intact pattern of the motor act seemed to be necessary for the increase in learning”, and that “[t]he motor act became a powerful facilitation to learning only as the complexity of the learning task increased” (Asher, 1969, abstract). Since the karate and kobudo learning environment offers an ideal TPR scenario in which the instructor utters imperatives in the target language language while students listen and physically respond with a specific movement or series of movements, Asher's conclusions about the effectiveness of TPR as a learning strategy may well apply to the case of learning Uchinaaguchi through karate and kobudo.

Wolfe and Jones (1982) also noted the success of the TPR approach in their own work involving students of high school Spanish. They reported that students who were instructed half the time using TPR significantly outperformed the control group on all standard unit tests. Furthermore, the TPR students evaluated their

instructor, their own performance in the class and, perhaps most importantly, their interest in the class significantly more favourably than the control group by the end of the experiment. The reliance on the use of the imperative and complex physical actions in both TPR and Okinawan martial arts learning environments, as well as the apparent effectiveness of TPR in increasing language learning motivation, suggest that learning Uchinaaguchi through Okinawan karate and kobudo may be an effective strategy.

### **1-3. Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory accounts for learning as participation in the practices of a social community that “shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Wenger defines communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (website, 2006). Since Okinawan martial arts practitioners already strive to improve their practice through Okinawan cultural knowledge (May, 2012), and since motivation is a key factor in language learning (Gardner, 1985; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), martial artists represent an ideal community in which to revitalize Uchinaaguchi.

Etienne Wenger (1998) proposed the communities of practice concept as part of his social theory of learning. A community of practice is a group of people who share a common practice, or activity, which includes a shared lexicon, shared standards, and a shared interest in improving their practice. An understanding of the international Okinawan martial arts community as a community of practice is essential to explain why and how people from diverse national and cultural backgrounds may have a shared interest in using Uchinaaguchi martial arts terminology. This idea suggests that practitioners of Okinawan martial arts will be motivated to learn and use Uchinaaguchi because they believe it will improve their practice. The characteristics and structure of the Okinawan martial arts community make it a uniquely promising domain for Uchinaaguchi language revitalization. The community is large, with over 50 million members (Okinawa Prefecture, 2012), most of whom live abroad. As the birthplace of karate, Okinawa is regarded as the physical and cultural centre of the Okinawan martial arts community, and Okinawan instructors set the standards for the world (May, 2012). Given the structure of the martial arts community, if Okinawan instructors began to use Uchinaaguchi in their practice, their students might soon follow.

### **1-4. Successful Language Maintenance Efforts**

Learning Uchinaaguchi through Okinawan martial arts is part of a larger language maintenance strategy. Literature on existing language maintenance

programs and language acquisition in general suggests that a content-language integrated learning (CLIL) approach in which a subject is taught in the target language (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula, & Smith, 2010), the inclusion of cultural activities related to the target language (Canadian First Peoples' Heritage, Language & Culture Council, undated), and an immersion environment (Hong, 2010; Obadia & Theriault, 1997; Soderman, 2010) also assist with language acquisition. Additionally, government support, community support, parental involvement, and funding (Te Kouhanga Reo National Trust Board, 2011; Stiles, 1997; Warner, 2001) are required to facilitate the involvement or training of linguistic and teaching professionals and the development of appropriate language learning materials (Wilson & Kamana, 2001). Lastly, a domain or domains in which to use the language is also an essential component of successful language revitalization (Crystal, 2002).

From the outset, the idea of using Uchinaaguchi in Okinawan martial arts classes shares many of the components of other successful language maintenance and language acquisition programs. As in other CLIL classrooms, rather than explicitly teaching about Uchinaaguchi, Uchinaaguchi words, phrases or sentences would be used in order to teach Okinawan karate and kobudo. Additionally, Okinawan martial arts are Okinawan cultural activities. The significant overlap between martial arts and other areas of Okinawan culture and daily life provides a highly appropriate and clearly defined domain in which to use the Okinawan language.

This project promotes the introduction and use of Uchinaaguchi words and phrases. Although it does not proscribe a strictly immersion approach, it does not exclude one either. It is hoped that the use of some Uchinaaguchi in martial arts classes will be a stepping stone towards Uchinaaguchi revitalization on a larger scale which will include Uchinaaguchi immersion learning environments. The use of Uchinaaguchi in martial arts classes would entail community support, including multi-generational involvement, the development of appropriate language learning materials, and the involvement or training of linguistic and teaching professionals.

## **2. Previous Research**

Other programs that have successfully combined language maintenance and physical cultural activities include Canadian First Nations language camps (Canadian First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, undated), Welsh language rugby camps (Denbighshire Visitor, 2012), language learning through soccer in Soccerlingua (Lingo, 2005), traditional hula schools in Hawaiian, and Hawaiian language baseball leagues. While there is no shortage of research that recommends language revitalization through cultural or physical activities (Canadian First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, undated; Hong,

2010; Te Khanga Reo National Trust Board, 2011; Warner, 2001), articles that discuss these activities in detail are rare. In an article about the Hawaiian language baseball league that details both the procedure and benefits of a non-scholastic approach, Warner (2001) writes:

[T]he participation, interest and enthusiasm has been extremely high...[T]his program is tapping into one of the core target groups, men who generally would not attend university or community classes...Although the teaching aspect has proceeded cautiously, it is clear that the new Hawaiian terminology created for baseball is appropriate and productive. The participation of families and children not only lays the groundwork for expansion of Hawaiian, but also for the intergenerational use of the language in this domain. (p. 323)

However, unlike Hawaiian and baseball, Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan martial arts arose from the same culture, people and physical environment. Because they are aware of this close relationship, many martial artists may believe that using the original language of karate and kobudo will lead to a deeper understanding of martial arts techniques and actual improvements in their practice. Thus, Okinawan martial arts practitioners, whether Okinawan-born or international, may be motivated to learn Uchinaaguchi for this reason. Testing this theory will help locate the communities in which Uchinaaguchi revitalization is most likely to succeed.

### **3. Methods, Materials and Hypotheses**

In order to gauge the interest of the international martial arts community in using Uchinaaguchi in their practice, this feasibility study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods, including participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, electronic correspondence and the results of a mixed survey. Informed consent was obtained for all survey and interview data, and all research was conducted in accordance with the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

Participant observation took place primarily in karate and kobudo classes in Okinawa and the United Kingdom. Five karate class locations were visited, once each, in the United Kingdom and six locations in Okinawa. All six Okinawan locations were visited at least twice each, three of which I attended as a student on a regular or semi-regular basis for one year or more.

Seventeen people participated in structured and semi-structured individual and group interviews, ranging from one to three hours. These were conducted in Okinawa, Japan, and England, the United Kingdom, using a Sony MP3 recorder and,

if necessary, the voice recorder function of a cellular phone. Data from a further six unrecorded conversations was preserved in field notes and also used in the analysis.

Electronic correspondence, in the form of email or Facebook messages, was either received from informants near the beginning of their participation or from others regarding the project. Although correspondents were from the UK, America, Slovenia, Israel, Japan, India, New Zealand, and Canada, many had visited or lived in Okinawa, or were current ex-patriates in Japan or abroad.

The results from a survey, consisting of numerically scaled, multiple choice and open-ended questions, also provided data for this research. This survey, currently in English only, was designed and collected from international participants using the Survey Face website. Collection began in 2013 and is actively ongoing. Although there were 58 respondents, many skipped several items, resulting in a pool of approximately 30-40 responses for most questions. However, this data is sufficient for the current pilot study.

It was expected that, due to social factors that limited the use of this language in school and elsewhere, Uchinaaguchi use would be infrequent in Okinawan dojo and nearly non-existent in dojo abroad, being likely limited to weapon names and isolated technique descriptors, such as “chirichiri” (springy). Additionally, international participants were thought to be motivated more by the desire to improve their martial arts techniques (instrumental motivation) than by their cultural interest in Okinawa. Thus, it was assumed international martial artists would be most interested in Uchinaaguchi terms that were directly related to Okinawan martial arts, while Okinawan martial artists would be primarily interested in the cultural and linguistic revitalization aspects of the project. Finally, while it was hoped there would be some interest in the idea of using Uchinaaguchi in karate and kobudo classes among all members of the martial arts community, this interest was anticipated to be quite limited.

## 4. Results

### 4-1. Community Response

Okinawan martial artists' response to the idea of compiling a martial arts lexicon and using Uchinaaguchi in karate or kobudo classes was very positive. One interviewee in the Naha National Assembly was also a martial artist and fluent Uchinaaguchi speaker. He remarked:

[I] think this is fantastic, fantastic. Truly. [Doing martial arts] in Uchinaaguchi is good, [I] think [Martial arts] should be taught in Uchinaaguchi. The situation is, to be able to use Uchinaaguchi, [we] must understand it. There are

many cases where [martial arts] instructors don't understand it. (male, 60s, personal communication, February 20, 2013)

Although this interviewee recognized the value of this project, he also recognized the lack of Uchinaaguchi competence among many karate instructors as a likely barrier. Kinjo Takashi, the chief instructor of Uechi Ryu connected with many international branch dojo, also expressed his support for this project:

[I]f [we] use Okinawan dialect in karate, Americans and Australians...will remember all kinds of things...you know, [Uchinaaguchi] is gradually getting lost, it's really too bad, so as much as possible I'm thinking of a way to use Okinawan expressions. From now I think it's time to start going on it. (T. Kinjo, personal communication, February 7, 2013)

Kinjo Sensei's statement reflects regret for the loss of his language as well as his intention to revitalize it by finding ways to use it in his martial arts practice. The lack of Uchinaaguchi knowledge among Okinawan karate instructors mentioned by the interviewee in government as well as Kinjo Sensei's consideration of how to use Uchinaaguchi expressions in martial arts are exactly the issues that a project on Uchinaaguchi revitalization through martial arts could address.

Though conceived of independently, the idea for such a project is not unique. A friend and martial arts student attending Ryudai mentioned that Kakinohana Keishun, her karate instructor in Okinawa City, was also interested in creating an Uchinaaguchi martial arts lexicon. When I interviewed Kakinohana Sensei, he also expressed strong support for the project. Although he claimed to be "only a businessman", he had definite ideas about both the content and methods that should be used in developing Uchinaaguchi language materials:

You should meet a lot of people to give them this book. You are an important person for Okinawa and Okinawan dialect. Don't just talk to one or two people, ok? Communicate with various people...You must also study history. Karate teachers only know technique, but not much about Okinawan culture. People who understand culture can also be involved. (K. Kakinohana, personal communication, February 3, 2013)

Putting his words into action, Kakinohana Sensei arranged interviews for me with many prominent members of the martial arts and Uchinaaguchi literary or language teaching community. These informants also supported the project not only by contributing a wealth of martial-arts related Uchinaaguchi words and sentences,

but also by strongly advocating the inclusion of cultural information, such as Ryukyuan poetry, that might otherwise be unknown outside of Okinawa.

Many Okinawan martial arts teachers recommended that I speak to Tetsuhiro Hokama, a prominent Goju Ryu karate and weapons instructor who was the author of 23 books and considered to be the preeminent local authority on Uchinaaguchi, martial arts and Okinawan culture. He indicated that the Uchinaaguchi sentences I collected were correct, but also urged me to include photographs of culturally significant sites to provide a broader context for the language:

Ichariba, choodee. This is a monument in...Yonabaru...this is a monument...Now island making, river is clear, left side, ichariba, choodee. Writing, this is important. This is research...only talking, talking, where is monument? Everybody no understand. Only books you are reading?... Yonabaru. Ichariba, choodee. It's very important, yo? Insert a picture of ichariba, choodee stone here, monument. Yes (there is a small noise as he points emphatically at a spot on the sheet). (T. Hokama, personal communication, February 12, 2013)

Even when language was the subject of research, Hokama Sensei clearly believed Uchinaaguchi “research” was more than words or talking. His verbal directions to the monument emphasized the importance he saw in taking a picture that would tie a famous proverb to a physical monument in Okinawa. In other words, he wanted the Uchinaaguchi materials to facilitate an understanding of the concrete relationship of Uchinaaguchi to larger Okinawan society and culture.

Although community support was greater than anticipated, there was also some confusion about the idea of using Uchinaaguchi in martial arts. It took some explanation, which at times required the assistance of a native Japanese speaker, before Okinawan interviewees could understand the goals of the project. Moreover, some international martial arts practitioners were not interested in my initial suggestion to replace Japanese terminology with Uchinaaguchi using a martial arts-related Uchinaaguchi dictionary. They had already invested the time in learning Japanese and saw no advantage in switching to a new language. However, like their Okinawan counterparts, these international martial artists did express a strong interest in learning Uchinaaguchi concepts related to martial arts and culture on a word-by-word basis:

Dear Samantha!

This is really great work, fantastic idea and excellent way to get broader audience and recognition for Okinawa and Uchinaaguchi [and make] the Ancient Okinawan World of Karate truly Worldwide....I don't know for others,

but I am proud to be invited and participate but to be able to give my small contribution to Your project from myself and from our small group, too.

We are delighted to have the Insight into the Heart and Soul of Uchinaanchu people with help of Your research materials and new acquired knowledge...

Kind regards

(You must find and send as proper Uchinaaguchi words/phrases for that too!)

(V. Yukich, personal communication, November 16, 2013)

Interestingly, like the Okinawan martial artists, this international participant expressed multiple motivations for participating in the project in his email, including a desire for broader recognition for Okinawa and Uchinaaguchi, an interest in contributing to the project, an equation of Uchinaaguchi with “the Heart and Soul of Uchinaanchu people”, and a desire to use “proper” Uchinaaguchi words in written correspondence.

#### **4-2. Sociolinguistic Milieu: Conditions Affecting Current Uchinaaguchi Use?<sup>1)</sup>**

Interviewees, who were native Uchinaaguchi-speaking males and females in their 40s and older living in Okinawa, described a range of circumstances affecting their Uchinaaguchi use. Kinjo Takashi, a 74 year-old male from the Naha area, described his school's transition from Uchinaaguchi to Japanese:

Our generation was told to get used to not using Uchinaaguchi...[we] had to do everything in Japanese, the national language...Also, at school if we used the Okinawan dialect, we wore the dialect plaque. We learned Japanese, but the teachers also used Okinawan dialect such as 'kumaa kanshi yasa' (this way) or 'koo da yoo' [in Japanese]. And so we were able to learn various things in Uchinaaguchi as well. (K. Takashi, personal communication, February 7, 2013)

In addition to many other reports of being made to wear the hougen fuda (dialect plaque), most male interviewees in their 50s or older also immediately reported being physically punished for using Uchinaaguchi in school when asked if they spoke this language. Moreover, as reported in endangered language literature concerning indigenous languages outside of Okinawa (Wilson & Kamana, 2001), some native Uchinaaguchi speakers who attended school under such circumstances never achieved full fluency in the new dominant language, even as adults. A dojomate in his late 60s, who had been raised on the mainland and had little exposure to Uchinaaguchi, one day remarked that he found it difficult to understand a native Uchinaaguchi-speaking dojomate of the same age because of his accented Japanese. On separate occasions, others in the dojo had also mentioned difficulty

understanding the same man. At a dojo party, this fellow took his turn to give a speech in Japanese. He professed that, like the foreigners at the gathering, Japanese was difficult for him, but if he could do a speech in Uchinaaguchi it wouldn't be a problem at all. However, he acknowledged, most people didn't understand Uchinaaguchi and so proceeded to do his speech almost entirely in Japanese.

When asked about Uchinaaguchi, this man had also immediately mentioned being beaten in school for using it, but, like all other informants, was nevertheless happy to share his knowledge. Given these experiences, not to mention the current predominance of Japanese, it is not surprising that those who do speak Uchinaaguchi may be reluctant to do so in public, much less teach it to their children. Although there are fluent speakers across all age groups, the majority of Uchinaaguchi native speakers are in their 60s or older (Heinrich, 2005). Since there are few opportunities to use Uchinaaguchi, the aging speaker population is no longer being replaced with child speakers. Consequently, Uchinaaguchi has become an endangered language .

The male interviewee in national government argued the special importance of children learning the language, emphasizing the link between Okinawan language and culture:

If Uchinaguchi is lost, Okinawan culture will also be lost...children these days don't understand [it], because adults don't use [Uchinaaguchi]...So let's use Okinawan dialect...let's start teaching Okinawan dialect to children...gradually...[For example] we must understand Okinawan dialect in order to understand sanshin songs. It is said...'If you don't understand your country's language, you will forget your country.' (60s male from Naha area, personal communication, February 20, 2013)

Table 1 below shows that international martial artists also perceived a link between Okinawan culture, Uchinaaguchi, and the study of martial arts:

Table 1: International Martial Artists Interest in Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan Culture as Related to Martial Arts Training (0 = not at all, 5 = maybe, and 10 = very much)

<b>19. Learning the Okinawan language is beneficial...</b>			
...for martial arts training.	7.55 (n = 33)	...for other reasons.	6.45 (n = 31)
<b>20. Learning about Okinawan culture is beneficial...</b>			
...for martial arts training.	9.58 (n = 33)	...for other reasons.	8.13 (n = 31)
<b>21. I want to use the Okinawan language...</b>			
...in martial arts practice.	7.48 (n = 29)	...elsewhere.	5.04 (n = 26)
<b>22. I want to learn more about...</b>			
...Okinawan culture.	9.44 (n = 32)	...the Okinawan language.	8.42 (n = 31)
<b>26. Do you want to learn these languages?</b>			
Uchinaaguchi	5.87 (n = 38)	Japanese	7.82 (n = 38)

A very strong interest in Okinawan culture, followed by the Okinawan language, was evident among members of the international martial arts community, particularly as it related to martial arts training. A fairly strong interest in the Okinawan language was also noted, particularly for Item 22 (8.42), but not for Item 26 (5.87). This may be a result of the phrasing of the question. International participants were much more interested in “learning about” Uchinaaguchi than “learning” this language directly, perhaps because of the tremendous amount of work language learning entails. Item 21 is also of great interest. The respondent average of 7.48 indicates some desire to use Uchinaaguchi, but it is the differential between using Uchinaaguchi “in martial arts practice”(7.48) and “elsewhere”(5.04) that shows participant motivations to use Uchinaaguchi may be greatly strengthened within a martial arts context.

Those who already have a special interest in Okinawan culture may already perceive Uchinaaguchi learning and revitalization more positively. However, the lack of knowledge about Uchinaaguchi, noted among both Okinawans and international participants, may be detrimental to revitalization efforts. Most Uchinaaguchi-speaking interviewees and other informants with some ability in Uchinaaguchi referred to the language as “hougen” (dialect), rather than “Uchinaaguchi”, reflecting the widespread belief within Japan that Uchinaaguchi is a dialect of Japanese rather than a separate language. However, results from the survey indicated that international respondents did have some degree of awareness of Uchinaaguchi as a separate language from Japanese. 21.4% indicated that they believed Uchinaaguchi was a separate language related to Japanese, while only 1.7% believed that Uchinaaguchi was a dialect of Japanese. A further 14.2% indicated that they did not know, while 62.5% skipped the question, perhaps because of lack of knowledge. The following survey comments summarized the perceptions of many international martial artists:

I've been told (by Japanese speakers) that it's a dialect of Japanese that is almost impossible to understand to anyone not from Okinawa. However, I would say that this makes them different languages. I don't really know much more than that. (survey participant, 2013)

I did not exactly understand the meaning of Okinawan-language, I know that they talk mainland Japanese with some local dialect. (survey participant, 2013)

Weinreich's famous definition of a language as “a dialect with an army and a navy” (1980, as quoted in Crystal, 2002, p. 38) illustrates that the line between “language” and “dialect” is arbitrary and uncertain. However, since there is little talk of “dialect rights”, “dialect maintenance”, or “dialect revitalization”, it seems

likely that an awareness of Uchinaaguchi as a separate language must be established before the work of Uchinaaguchi language revitalization can proceed effectively.

#### **4-3. Current Uchinaaguchi Usage in Okinawan Martial Arts**

Uchinaaguchi usage in Okinawa and abroad ranged among the dojo visited, but seemed independent of dojo location. For example, three prominent karate instructors, all with many international branch dojo, and all from the Naha area, each demonstrated different levels of Uchinaaguchi use in the dojo. The instructor from the Kume District was in his late 30s. He mentioned that when he was a child his grandfather, who had founded his karate school, taught classes entirely in Uchinaaguchi, but that he and the other children at that time couldn't understand him. At the time of the interview, he said he spoke "Uchinaayamatuguchi...a kind of casual Uchinaaguchi" with his friends, but not Uchinaaguchi, which he wanted to learn (30s karate instructor, personal communication, April 4, 2013). No Uchinaaguchi was observed in this dojo, except at dojo-related parties where he encouraged participants to say "kari!" (cheers) instead of the Japanese "kanpai" for toasts to the occasion.

Another instructor from the Tsuboya area, who was in his mid 70s, was reported to demonstrate code switching between Japanese and Uchinaaguchi. One of his many international students, who is fluent in Japanese, mentioned that he had a translator present during seminars for his international students, but that when he switched from Japanese to Uchinaaguchi she was lost, and so was the translator.

The third instructor, Takashi Kinjo, was also in his mid-70s and from the Naha area. As the head of Uechi Ryu karate and his own style of kobudo, Kinjo Sensei made a point of teaching his international students Uchinaaguchi phrases for daily use in the dojo. During an interview, he said:

Karate and kobudo terminology is different, different. So as much as possible, [I] use Uchinaaguchi with everyone in America...[My student] On-san says "chuhara" (I'm full - Uchinaaguchi) for "onakaippai" (I'm full - Japanese), On-san often speaks Uchinaaguchi. ( T. Kinjo, personal communication, February 7, 2013)

Contrary to the hypotheses, Kinjo Sensei's statement shows that some Okinawan instructors already try to teach Uchinaaguchi to their international students.

Once my karate and kubudo instructors realized I was interested in Uchinaaguchi martial arts terms, they began to occasionally use them in our practices. Though he expressed his approval of the use of Uchinaaguchi in kobudo (weapons), the kobudo instructor initially did not think he could contribute to an

Uchinaaguchi martial arts lexicon because he spoke Miyako language, not Uchinaaguchi. However, when we practised a bo (staff) kata that involved many deep circular movements, he introduced the word “ufuisugui”, then demonstrated a short sequence from the kata, emphasizing the particular depth and breadth of the circular movements with the bo. He then repeated the word, indicating that it was unique to Ryukyuan languages. His purpose may have been twofold: to help me understand the essence of the technique in order to improve it, and to give me some martial arts-related vocabulary for my research.

Several international karate teachers from both England and Canada also reported using Uchinaaguchi in their dojo abroad and during trips to Okinawa. In response to my request to use a photo to illustrate the proverb “icharibachoodee”, a female instructor from a Canadian dojo wrote, “We learned during our visit to Okinawa last year just how true the phrases on the page you enclosed are” (Canadian female instructor, personal correspondence, April 25th, 2013). Another male instructor from the same dojo wrote, “[w]e teach in the Okinawan language as much as possible in our dojo. There is much room for improvement but it really helped us when we visited Okinawa last year” (Canadian male instructor, personal correspondence, April 24th, 2013).

Initial observations which took place at two Canadian dojos and three Okinawan dojos suggested that the use of Uchinaaguchi was non-existent to minimal in karate and kobudo classes, limited to the names of weapons, such as “sai” (three-pronged daggers) or “tunfa” (police baton), and descriptors of techniques, such as “muchimi” (a state of whip-like softness). However, the findings above show that other Uchinaaguchi words and phrases are also being taught in international dojo for use in Okinawa.

However, despite these promising signs, learning Uchinaaguchi is often overshadowed by the utility of learning Japanese. Steven Hegarty, the head instructor of over 200 students in England, taught counting and other words in Uchinaaguchi, but remarked, “I spent a couple years learning the language, like the Japanese language, not Okinawan. You've got to. It's part of the art” (S. Hegarty, personal communication, February 12, 2013). When asked if he was interested in learning the Okinawan language as well, Hegarty replied with an often-heard sentiment “I've got to master the Japanese language first” (S. Hegarty, personal communication, February 12, 2013).

Survey results, based on 38 responses as summarized in Figure 1 below, were collected from international dojo on self-assessed Uchinaaguchi ability.

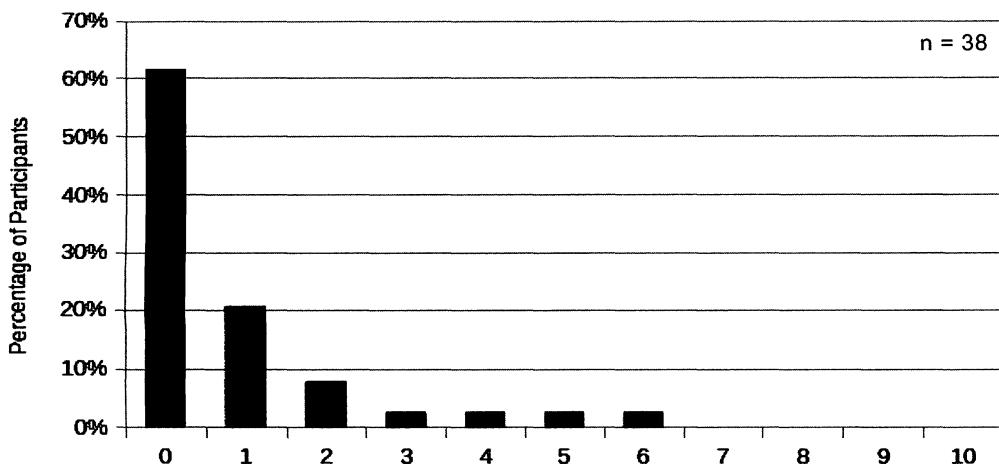


Figure 1: International Martial Artists' Self-Assessed Uchinaaguchi Ability

Contrary to the hypothesis that little or no Uchinaaguchi was used in dojo abroad, the average of international participants' reported Uchinaaguchi ability was 1.84, or around beginner level. Individual abilities ranged from none (62% of participants) to intermediate (5% of participants). Although the current stage of Uchinaaguchi ability among non-martial artists was low, it could become higher through additional Uchinaaguchi study in the dojo.

#### 4-4. Participant Motivations for Using Uchinaaguchi

When asked why she was interested in using Uchinaaguchi in her dojo, a female karate instructor from the United Kingdom said:

I really want to keep the Okinawan connection alive and...as the art of Okinawa is Goju Ryu, then the language goes with that...[I]t would have been something Miyagi Chojun Sensei would have used for example, the founder, in his dojo...more so than Japanese, because in his day...not many spoke Japanese...so in terms of that connection, I think that...brings us a little closer to keeping this art alive and helping to promote the Okinawan culture as well, [to] promote this language...Okinawa is the home of where we come to, we rarely go to Tokyo.  
(L. Marchant, personal communication, October 16, 2013)

The interview data above also suggests that, similar to Okinawan martial artists, international practitioners' motivations are also connected to a larger interest in Okinawan culture. The precise motivations of international martial artists may be further clarified with the survey results. Figure 2 below summarizes the motivations of 38 international respondents.

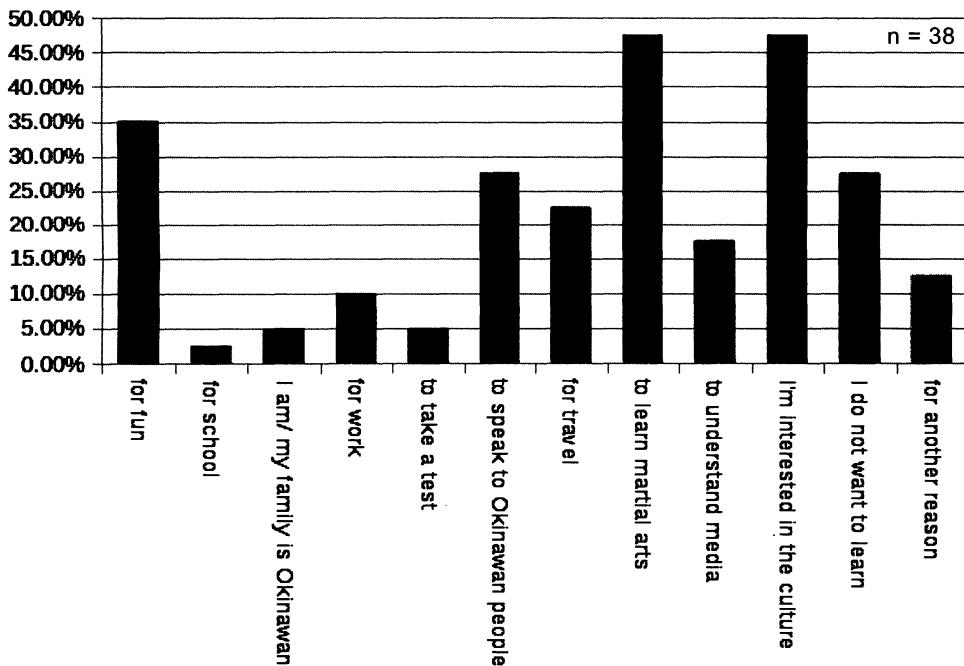


Figure 2: Uchinaaguchi Learning Motivations of International Martial Artists by Percentage of Participants

Consistent with other results and as predicted by the hypothesis, the highest percentage of international participants (47.50%) wished to learn Uchinaaguchi in order to learn martial arts. However, contrary to the hypothesis, this percentage matched but did not exceed the percentage who wished to learn because they were interested in Okinawan culture (also 47.50%). Other common motivations included “for fun” (35%), which may be influenced by the perception of martial arts as a leisure activity, and “to speak to Okinawan people” (26.32%), which may include the desire to speak to Okinawan martial arts instructors. This is supported by a comment from one of the participants. Under the category “for another reason,” she wrote “So I can understand what all those old Sensei are actually trying to tell me.” Though it is light-hearted, this comment neatly illustrates how various motivations to learn Uchinaaguchi are intertwined with the transnational and cross-cultural martial arts learning process. Additionally, “for travel” (21.05%) was another strong learning motivation, which could pertain to travel to Okinawa for martial arts-related purposes (May, 2012).

Of some concern is the 28.95% of respondents who said they did not want to learn Uchinaaguchi. However, the results of a previous survey, undertaken from 2011-2012, indicated that 66.67% of Canadian martial artists who travelled for martial arts purposes wished to use Uchinaaguchi in their practice (May, 2012).

#### **4-5. Desired Areas of Uchinaaguchi Use in Okinawan Martial Arts Classes**

It was hypothesized that international practitioners of Okinawan martial arts would place the highest Uchinaaguchi learning priority on language that was directly related to Okinawan martial arts techniques. When approached about this project, Jesse Enkamp, a contemporary martial artist and author of the popular Karate by Jesse website ([www.karatebyjesse.com](http://www.karatebyjesse.com)), also expressed his belief that, in terms of introducing Uchinaaguchi terminology, "counting 1-10+ some words that are directly related to technical principles of Okinawan Karate" would be the highest priority among members of the martial arts community. He reasoned "If we begin with technical principles (priority one) I think it'll be easier for people to resonate with the information - both on a theoretical and practical plane" (personal correspondence, November 25, 2013), later citing these terms as "the most important, interesting, awesome and relevant ones" (personal correspondence, November 27, 2013). Given knowledge of and membership in the Okinawan martial arts community, as well as the survey results reported in previous sections, this would seem to be a logical conclusion. However, when international participants had the opportunity to specify their desired areas of Uchinaaguchi language use in Okinawa and abroad, the results did not support this hypothesis.

Table 2 below reports the most desired areas of Uchinaaguchi language use in Okinawan martial arts classes, by percentage of participants who specified a language preference. Results are divided between desired language use in participants' home countries and Okinawa. Participants could only select one language option for each section, from Chinese, Japanese, Uchinaaguchi, English, the local language of where they are taught, and "it doesn't matter to me." The limitation to only one language per section may have reduced the percentage of participants who would have otherwise selected Uchinaaguchi if multiple language selection had been possible; however, it makes the existing selections of Uchinaaguchi more meaningful.

Significantly more international respondents wished to use Uchinaaguchi for "other Okinawan cultural concepts" than for "martial arts-related concepts" and "technique names" in both their home countries and Okinawa. These results contradicted the hypothesis that Okinawan martial arts practitioners would most want to learn Uchinaaguchi terms that were directly related to martial arts techniques. The percentages for internationals who preferred to use Japanese in their home countries were generally higher than those who preferred Uchinaaguchi in each area. However, with regards to martial arts practice in Okinawa, the majority of international participants indicated a preference for Uchinaaguchi in all but two of the eleven areas surveyed. Thus, preliminary results showed that the international martial arts community already has a strong interest in using Uchinaaguchi in most areas of martial arts practice in Okinawa. This finding contradicts the hypotheses, suggesting

Table 2 : International Martial Artists' Desired Areas of Uchinaaguchi Language Use Within Okinawan Martial Arts Classes by Percentage of Participants

Rank	In participants' home countries	In Okinawa
1	Kata (37.14%)	<b>Other Okinawan cultural concepts (54.55%)</b>
2	Titles or ranks (Sensei, black belt etc.) (32.35%)	Greetings (50%)
3	<b>Other Okinawan cultural concepts (30.3%)</b>	<b>Martial arts-related concepts (45.83%)</b>
4	Weapons (kobudo) (29.41%)	<b>Technique names (waza) (44%)</b>
5	Greetings (28.57%)	Weapons (kobudo) (43.48%)
6	Other objects or dojo features (25.71%)	Other objects or dojo features (41.67%)
7	<b>Technique names (waza) (24.32%)</b>	Kata (41.67%)
8	<b>Martial arts-related concepts (20%)</b>	Titles or ranks (41.67%)
9	Numbers (22.86%)	Numbers (33.33%)
10	Exercises (push ups, sit ups etc.) (8.82%)	Exercises (push ups etc.) (30.43%)
11	Main language of instruction (5.41%)	Main language of instruction (24%)

a much better starting point for Uchinaaguchi language revitalization through Okinawan martial arts than previously anticipated.

## 5. Discussion

Instrumental motivation, characterized in this case by the desire to learn or use Uchinaaguchi for martial arts training purposes, was noted among international members of the martial arts community. Interview and participant observation of Okinawan martial artists suggests the possibility of negative instrumental motivation among Okinawans; in addition to being punished for using it as children, several Okinawans mentioned either the inability to understand or speak Uchinaaguchi as barriers to its use in martial arts or in other areas of daily life. In Okinawa, instructor age may be the critical factor determining Uchinaaguchi knowledge; if an instructor has little or no knowledge of the language, he or she may not use it in the dojo and it is less likely to be used by their students abroad. However, the need to communicate with the international martial arts community could provide a source of instrumental motivation. Since many Okinawan martial arts teachers and their students cannot communicate with each other in English or Japanese, Uchinaaguchi could become the lingua franca of Okinawan karate and kobudo. If both international and Okinawan martial artists could study the Uchinaaguchi martial arts lexicon, a few mutually understood words or phrases could take the place of a lengthy or half-

understood explanation. The current prevalence of Japanese in dojos worldwide suggests that Uchinaaguchi could be proliferated in a similar way through contact between Okinawan and non-Okinawan martial artists.

That more international participants wished to use Uchinaaguchi to learn about non-martial arts-related Okinawan culture suggests alternative ways to view the relationship between Okinawan cultural interest, interest in Uchinaaguchi and martial arts practice. It was initially hypothesized that international martial artists would place an instrumental value on the Okinawan language as a means to improve their art. However, survey results indicated that significantly more international respondents wanted to use Uchinaaguchi to describe Okinawan cultural concepts than concepts directly related to martial arts practice. Thus, international martial artists may not wish to learn about Okinawan culture and language because they are interested in Okinawan martial arts, but instead may wish to learn about Okinawan martial arts because they are interested in Okinawan culture. Similarly, Okinawan interview testimony suggests that Okinawan martial arts instructors may view their practice not as an end unto itself, but as a means of Okinawan cultural and linguistic proliferation. Without further research, particularly among Okinawans themselves, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about how and why the motivations of international and Okinawan martial arts practitioners may differ with regards to Uchinaaguchi language use. However, the fact that international martial artists have such a great degree of interest in Okinawan culture, which may be greater than or inseparable from their actual martial arts practice, is one of the most significant findings of this research; this may fuel not only the desire to learn Uchinaaguchi in a martial arts setting, but also the desire of Okinawan Sensei to reclaim language use in this domain.

The characteristics and structure of the Okinawan martial arts community make it a uniquely promising domain for Uchinaaguchi language revitalization. Most practitioners of Okinawan martial arts are foreigners living abroad. However, because Okinawa is the birthplace of karate, Okinawan instructors continue to set the world standard for karate and kobudo. Visiting Okinawa and hosting Okinawan teachers are therefore unique and highly sought after opportunities for martial artists from abroad to improve their practice (May, 2012). At the same time, Okinawan martial arts instructors gain prestige and the opportunity to promote their art, and perhaps their language, around the globe. As previously mentioned, if Okinawan instructors began to use Uchinaaguchi in their practice, their students might soon follow.

Lastly, just as the members of a community of practice are not viewed as competitive, but collaborative or complementary, it is crucial that the use of Uchinaaguchi in martial arts should not be thought of as competing with that of Japanese. Since the number of practitioners of Okinawan martial arts is believed to

be 50 million (Okinawa Prefecture, 2012), if only 2% of this community were to use Uchinaaguchi, an additional 1 million people would gain some familiarity with this endangered language. However, since preliminary results showed that 30% or more of international participants wished to use Uchinaaguchi in Okinawa, this number could be 15 million or greater. The fact that so many foreign martial artists are interested in using Uchinaaguchi in their practice could contribute greatly to the motivations of Okinawan martial arts teachers and their domestic students to use it in this domain.

## **Conclusion and Future Recommendations**

Interview data from the Okinawan and international martial arts community indicated strong support for the use of Uchinaaguchi in martial arts training among both groups, as well as desire to contribute to a future project in this area. Despite negative consequences for using it in schools as children, Okinawan interviewees retained some level of fluency in Uchinaaguchi and expressed concern for the potential loss of their language as well as a desire to pass Okinawan language and culture on to the next generation. Although neither group demonstrated a great awareness of Uchinaaguchi as a distinct language, some Okinawan and International participants reported learning or teaching Uchinaaguchi in their dojos as part of their martial arts practice. Survey data indicated international martial artists wished to learn more about this language. Like Okinawans, they wished to promote Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan culture, perceiving a strong link between them.

Thus, a larger-scale project involving the development of Uchinaaguchi learning materials for use in karate and kobudo classes in Okinawan and abroad, as well as the actual effects of learning Uchinaaguchi on martial arts students, could be pursued at this time. The preliminary survey data came from a small pool of international participants, between 30 and 40 for most questions. Although it was cross-checked with results from interviews, participant observation and written correspondence, a larger participant pool that included members of the Okinawan martial arts community would greatly strengthen the data.

Such a project should be viewed as a component of a larger Uchinaaguchi revitalization strategy, and may have immediate applications in the school system. For example, although there are no Uchinaaguchi language classes in the present school curriculum, the materials used in this project could be used to teach Uchinaaguchi in the karate option of the Japanese culture classes that have been required in public schools since 2012.

Future projects in this area should proceed quickly, as Uchinaaguchi martial arts knowledge will be lost forever if it is not collected from the last generation of native Uchinaaguchi-speaking karate and kobudo instructors.

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## Research Ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with the principles of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (2013).

## [Note]

<sup>1)</sup> Originally a separate state and tributary of China, the kingdom of the Ryukyus was invaded by the Satsuma Clan in 1609 and formally became Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. From the turn of the century until after World War II, Uchinaaguchi was gradually replaced with Japanese in the domains of government, school, media, and most of public life (Heinrich, 2005; Osumi, 2001). Although it appears the majority of Okinawa's population is ethnically Okinawan, Uchinaaguchi has a marginal presence most closely associated with leisure activities, cultural pursuits, family gatherings, and the elderly. Uchinaaguchi is not taught in schools, and its' occasional appearance in public domains, such as monorail station announcements, some ATMs, and media, is noteworthy in contrast to the strong majority presence of Japanese.

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