Embodied Language Revitalization:
Linking Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan Martial Arts, and Well-Being

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I. Introduction: Why Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan Martial Arts, and Well-Being?

II. Definitions: Well-being, Okinawan Martial Arts, Uchinaaguchi

III. Goals:
1. Demonstrate importance of documenting and maintaining movement-related conceptual systems in endangered languages
2. Provide Activity-Based Idea Model: Using Uchinaaguchi in Okinawan Martial Arts

IV. Theory: Communities of Practice (Social Learning), Embodied Language

V. Methodology: Survey, Interview, and Participant Observation Data

VI. The Okinawan Karate and Kobudo Handbook

VII. Problems and Solutions

VIII. Outcomes, Benefits

IX. Making a Physical Cultural Activity-Based Project

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Why Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan Martial Arts, and Well-Being?

Background: MA, PhD - University of the Ryukyus
Okinawan Karate in Japanese – Where’s the Uchinaaguchi?!

Well-being:

• maintenance of specialized lexical systems (way we understand the world)
• practice of distinctive cultural and performing arts (community + identity)

Okinawan martial arts originally developed in Okinawa using Uchinaaguchi
→ specialized vocabulary used only in martial arts
→ documentation, promotion, USE in special domain/community
Problem

• **lexical systems about movement may be overlooked**
  • frequently used verbs and prepositions in endangered languages may be maintained or recorded
  • BUT specialized terminology for unique cultural and performing arts remains unknown (requires physical practice and expert knowledge)
  • specialized terminology/ cultural art forms precious - make a culture unique → **embody diversity**

• ex. hula, fencing, tango - media or peripheral participation may use surface-level representations

• **documenting movement terminology associated with highly specialized physical cultural art forms = extremely important, but difficult**
Well-being:

- linked to native language use, specialized knowledge systems
- linked to martial arts participation (Mainland, 2010)

**Okinawan Martial Arts**: Karate, Kobudo

**Martial arts participation linked to**:

- increased self-regulation (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004)
- increased mindfulness (Troyer, 2011)
- decreased in bullying and delinquent behaviour (Twemlow and Sacco, 1998)
- inclusivity for people with disabilities (case study, Rao, 2008)
UCHINAAGUCHI
Macro-Altaic Language Family
- largest group
- endangered
- used with children?
“The interaction between [people], and the world that is the focus of their work is organized through the structured exchange of different kinds of signs. These include not only language but also a variety of diverse signs constituted through the visible organization of the participants’ bodies.”

(p. 1-2, Streeck, Goodwin, LeBaron, 2011)
How do we understand the meaning of words?

“*experiential ground* of linguistic meaning, i.e. the idea that words point at clusters of experiences the subject has had with the objects, actions or situations language is about.”

(p. 70, Buccino, Colagé, Gobbi, N. & Bonaccorso, 2016, as cited in Dor, 2015)

Suggests “most fundamental role of embodiment might be that of *establishing commonalities among individual experiences* of different members of a linguistic community, and that those experiences ground shared linguistic meanings.”

(Buccino, Colagé, Gobbi, N. & Bonaccorso, 2016, abstract)
Social Learning Theory (Wenger, 2000)

Communities of practice

1. Community (Okinawan martial artists)
2. Domain (Karate, Kobudo, Te)
3. Practice (doing Okinawan martial arts)

Communities of practice “offer an opportunity to negotiate competence through an experience of direct participation. As a consequence, they remain important social units of learning even in the context of much larger systems” (p. 229, emphasis added).

Language Use with Cultural Activities (Canadian First Peoples Heritage, Language and Culture Council, n.d.)
collaborative Design-Based Research (DBR) (Hermes, Bang, and Marin, 2012)
Content Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula, & Smit, 2010).
**Surveys:** mixed, longitudinal, bilingual

**Total: Round 1**
146 foreign and 51 Japanese

**Martial Artists**
106 Foreign 29 Japanese

**Total: Round 2**
42 Foreign 6 Japanese

**Interviews:** background, elicitation (working on materials)

57 – Interviews total – Okinawan interviewees more than once

Okinawan (26) United Kingdom (7), Israel (2) the United States (2) New Zealand (1) Canada (2) India (3)
Martial Arts-Related Uchinaaguchi Learning Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Foreign Martial Artists</th>
<th>Japanese Martial Artists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.28b I want to learn Okinawan…to learn martial arts</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about the Okinawan language is beneficial for martial arts practice</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about the Okinawan language is beneficial for other reasons</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews

“I really want to keep the Okinawan connection alive and...as the art of Okinawa is Goju Ryu, then the language goes with that...[It] brings us a little closer to keeping this art alive and helping to promote the Okinawan culture as well, [to] promote this language.” (Marchant, UK, 2013)

“If Uchinaaguchi is lost, Okinawan culture will also be lost...So let's use Okinawan dialect...let's start teaching Okinawan dialect to children...'If you don't understand your country's language, you will forget your country.'” (Kudaka, Member of the Naha National Assembly, 2013)
Figure 1: Areas of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>JOMA</th>
<th>FOMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main language</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techniques</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kata</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial arts concepts</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oki cultural concepts</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects/dojo features</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles or ranks</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Foreign Okinawan Martial Artists (FOMA) Interests in Okinawa Pre and Post-Wordsheet Use
Participant Observation/ Sample Lesson: Mi Tuu Dii
Body Parts

Gamaku

Gamaku is the side and front sections of the waist, used to propel techniques.

Gamakus are important when doing both Okinawan martial arts and classical dance.

To protect yourself, keep your fists in front of "gamaku."
muuchimi
sticky rice

むちみさんのにんのはっぱなかなかriceからちくいくひーん。
Muchi ya sannin nu happa wrapped in muchimi nu rice
cara chikuibiin.

「むち」はさんにんの葉っぱで包まれている餅米で作った
物である。
Muchi are made of sticky rice wrapped in sannin leaves.

「はにんにんの葉っぱで包まれている餅米で作った
物である。

Yaibukun, 「muchimi ten」はsticky?? tji refers to??.
Kuree ya opponent catching hold of concept yaibin.
ゆえに、「むちみ しゅ」は粘着性の手であることである。こちらは
相手を掴むことの概念がある。
Therefore, “muchimi ten” refers to “sticky hands.” This is
the concept of catching and holding one's opponent.
Common Objects/Flora

muchi
supple/flexible/resilient

Bamboo in Fukuoka, Japan. Photograph by S. May 2014.

波は柔らかい水で作られていますが、むちのような力を保っています。

Waves represent hard power contained in something soft. This is muchi.

じっとしていっさいや やふらら むちつよくとう、やしが早くてつも

Shitai tisaji ya yataara muru nu gu, yasashi ga heeku ucchi nee
muchi nu gu nu shi chichun.

A wet towel is soft, but it can snap with whip-like force if moved suddenly.

柔らかいものは柔らかいが、速くにつくと、ムチのような力をはっつけます。

その一方で

剛性の骨や骨の骨がなかなか、むちみむあん。

Toodii chikaya nu uchi nu nakan kaiya, muchi nu an.

柔柔の骨や、つつきはじめはやかなだんりよくがある。

At the core of a karae master's defence and offence is muchi.

ぼちがやあつぼうや ちんぶくぬぐとうし むちみむあん。

Boo chikayaa nu boo ya chinbuku nu gu tu shi muchi nu an.

達人のボウはふわりの中にはしなやかなだんりよくがある。

In the hands of a professional, the bow is flexible like a bamboo stick.
Actions/Spatial Relationships

**nuchun** 突き刺す pierce, go through

えいごで一、「バンチ」でい いーしゅー くぶし さーにちゅん。
Eigoで、「punch」をishee kubushi saani chichun。
英語では、「バンチ」は拳で打つ、という。
In English, a punch is a strike made with a closed fist.

日本口やれー、「突き」や「ちゅん」またや「ぬちゅん」でい いーさ。
Yamatoguchi yaree, 「tsuki」ya 「chichun」mata ya 「nuchun」di iisa。
日本語では、「突き」は前に突き刺す動きをいう。
In Japanese, “tsuki” is a forward thrusting or stabbing movement.

沖縄口やれー、「ぬちゅん」や ぬきとうしゅー んでいーさ。
Uchinaaguchi yaree, 「nuchun」ya mukutumire ndisa。
沖縄では、「ヌチユン」は射場を広ぐことまたは突き抜けることという。
In Uchinaaguchi, "nuchun" means piercing or hitting through the target.

**atifa** 衝撃波 energy transfer/shockwave

"あていふぁ" でい いげーしゅー、 相 手んかいふえすする
「あていふぁ」 でい いげーしゅー、 相 手んかいふえすする
「Atifa」 adhi višehe, bhangi chikaraarshihun kutsuwataru un albihn。
"Atifa" is the principle of transferring energy to one's opponent.

Atifa may be applied using weapon or empty hand techniques.
Okinawan Places

Hamafija

Hamahiga

"Hamafija" ya Uchinau agarinu umine shikoku, Kesshina osebankaiu shimamu nayaybin.

Hamahiga is the name of an island near the Katsuren Peninsula on the east coast of Okinawa's main island.

Ichariba, choodee

Once we meet, we are brothers and sisters.

Parents and children teach (advise) one another.

Therefore, the members of a dojo are like a family.
Experiential ground of linguistic meaning
concepts from all areas of life extend to physical martial arts practice

Okinawa's martial arts are known using the body’s experience of language
Problems
Uchinaaguchi in the Martial Arts

“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.” (Kudaka, personal communication, February, 20, 2013).

“I spent a couple years learning the language, like the Japanese language, not Okinawan. You've got to. It's part of the art” [Regarding learning Uchinaaguchi]
“I've got to master the Japanese language first” (Hegarty, UK, 2013).

Much more actual interest in Uchinaaguchi than perceived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How interested do you think the following groups are in Uchinaaguchi?</th>
<th>Youth (~30s)</th>
<th>Foreign Martial Artists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception (n=49)</td>
<td>Actual (n=21)</td>
<td>Perception (n=49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average /10</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More Problems

- Shortage of specialist consultants, and specialist linguists - deep understanding of art form is required
- Outsider involvement?
- time limit
- Who decides if Uchinaaguchi should be part of OMA?

Solutions in the Community

- Train martial artists/others as linguists (elicitors)
- Benefits to outsider involvement - apolitical, add outside resources, draw global attention, enlist allies, work in role of consultant
- Work quickly and globally
- Complex, sometimes fractured community, Ensure initiatives are community directed and supported by many Okinawans
Using Uchinaaguchi in OMA: Implications for Well-Being

Outcomes:

- doing language reclamation projects gets people using the language (good for well-being)
- Okinawan karate teacher used it more with me, more in class, and more in private with granddaughter
- Okinawan participants asked about where they could take Uchinaaguchi language classes
- building international awareness – Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan Martial Arts facebook community has 929 likes, 918 followers
- Online Community provides place for exchanging information – translations of Wordsheets into Italian, Portuguese, 2900+ views of some articles
Benefits of cultural activity-based project:

- Promotes natural language use
- Community-based → doesn’t depend on government
- Outside of school
- Adds interest/enrichment – hobby or extra curricular activity
- Social activity
- Reconnects people, culture and language
- Assists in language and culture revitalization, keeps specialized language in use
- Improved health – physical activity
- Improved visibility (you can see poi, fry bread on the buffet table)
Making a Physical Cultural Activity-Based Project:

- Collaboration – *with* the community not *for* the community
- Ask Questions and Listen – (Linguists?) What do people really want?
- Pick an Activity
- Pick a Multi-generational Activity
- Commitment to an activity (ie “serious leisure”) able to access deeper levels of cultural concepts and terminology = Community of Practice
  
  ex. foreign Uchinaaguchi supporters taught martial arts, have practiced longer, and been to Okinawa for martial arts training
  
  → deeper participation and commitment to the community
- If possible, be inclusive, expand borders (“Spartans of the Internet”)
- Financial incentives? Can community make money now or in the future?
- Can you get government or band funding?
- Is there a public or display component? → more awareness → community grows
  
  ex. Okinawa Martial Arts practitioners 50 million
- Other Examples: hula and baseball in Hawaiian, fencing, Ukranian dancing
What is the Link Between Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan Martial Arts, and Well-Being?

Language is our link because we use language to communicate between people while doing some activity.
いっぺーにふぇーでーびる!
Thank you for listening.

For more information, please contact:

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Facebook Community: Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan Martial Arts
Selected References


Selected References


