

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

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# Embodied Language Revitalization:

## Linking Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan Martial Arts, and Well-Being

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)



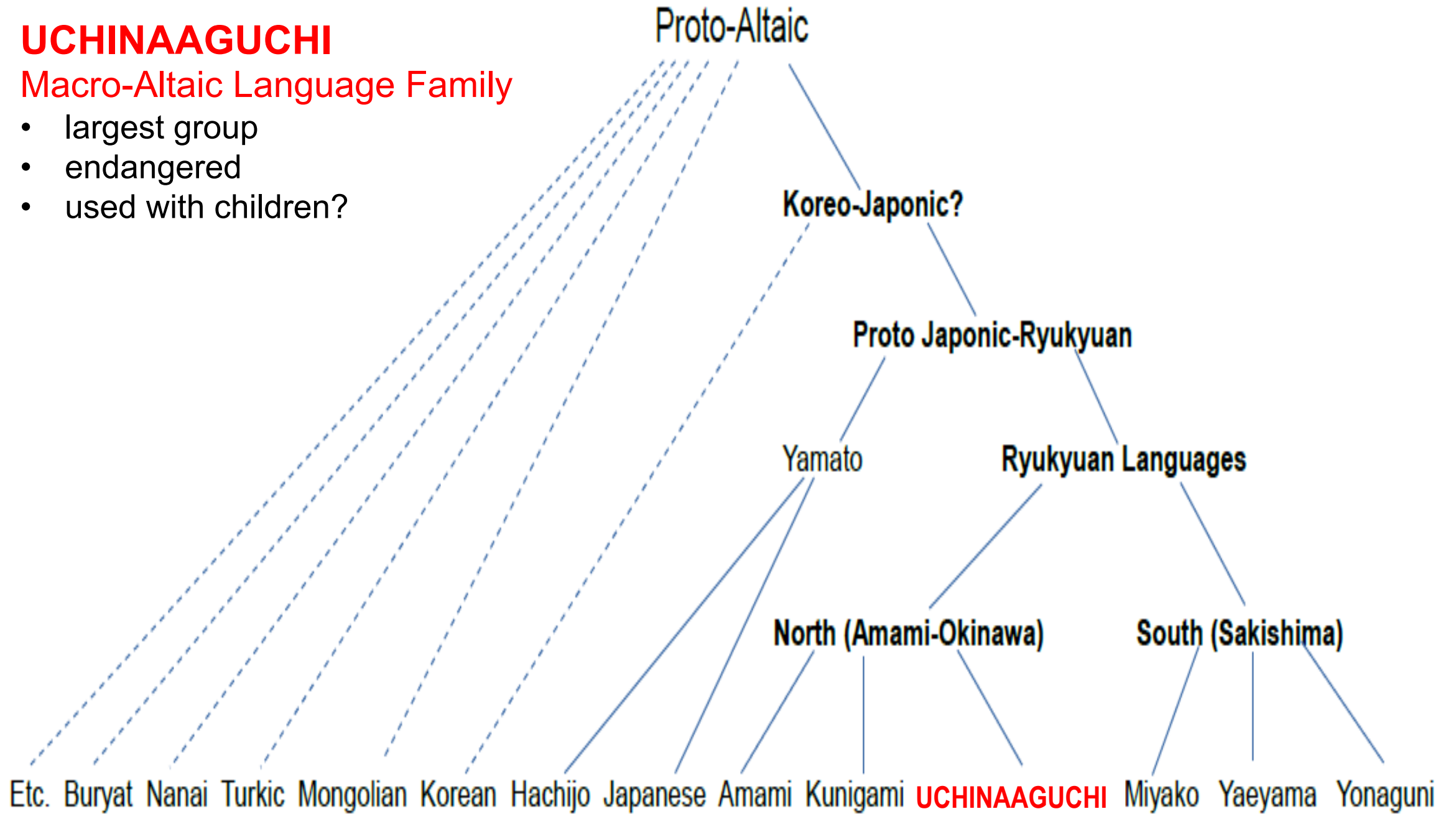
# OKINAWA



# UCHINAAGUCHI

## Macro-Altaic Language Family

- largest group
- endangered
- used with children?



# Embodied Language

“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).



Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1969, 2000; Billy, 2003)

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)

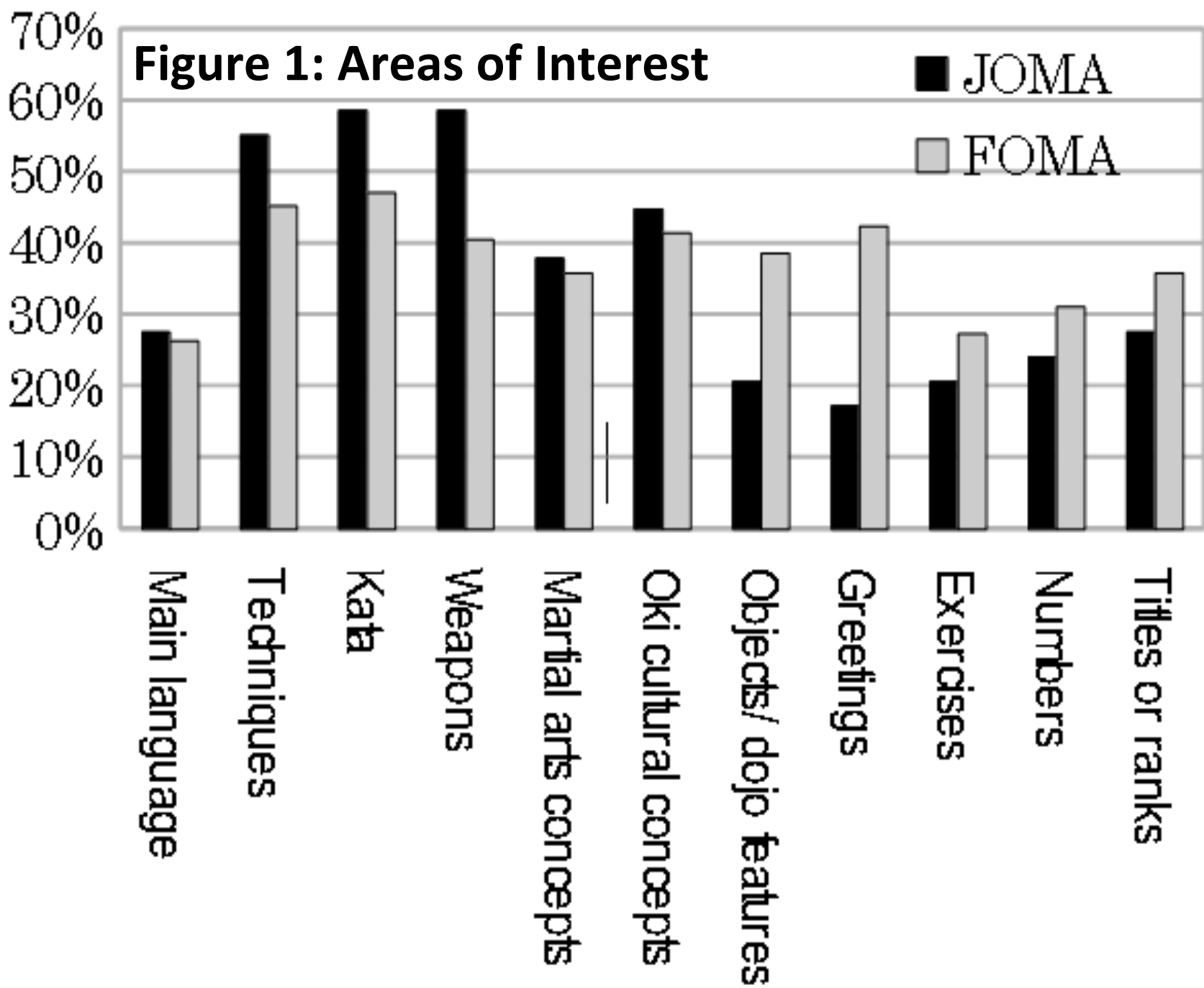
# Martial Arts-Related Uchinaaguchi Learning Motivations

Foreign Martial Artists	Japanese Martial Artists
Q.28b I want to learn Okinawan...to learn martial arts	
64%	45%
Learning about the Okinawan language is beneficial for martial arts practice	
8.56	8.29
Learning about the Okinawan language is beneficial for other reasons	
7.98	8.24

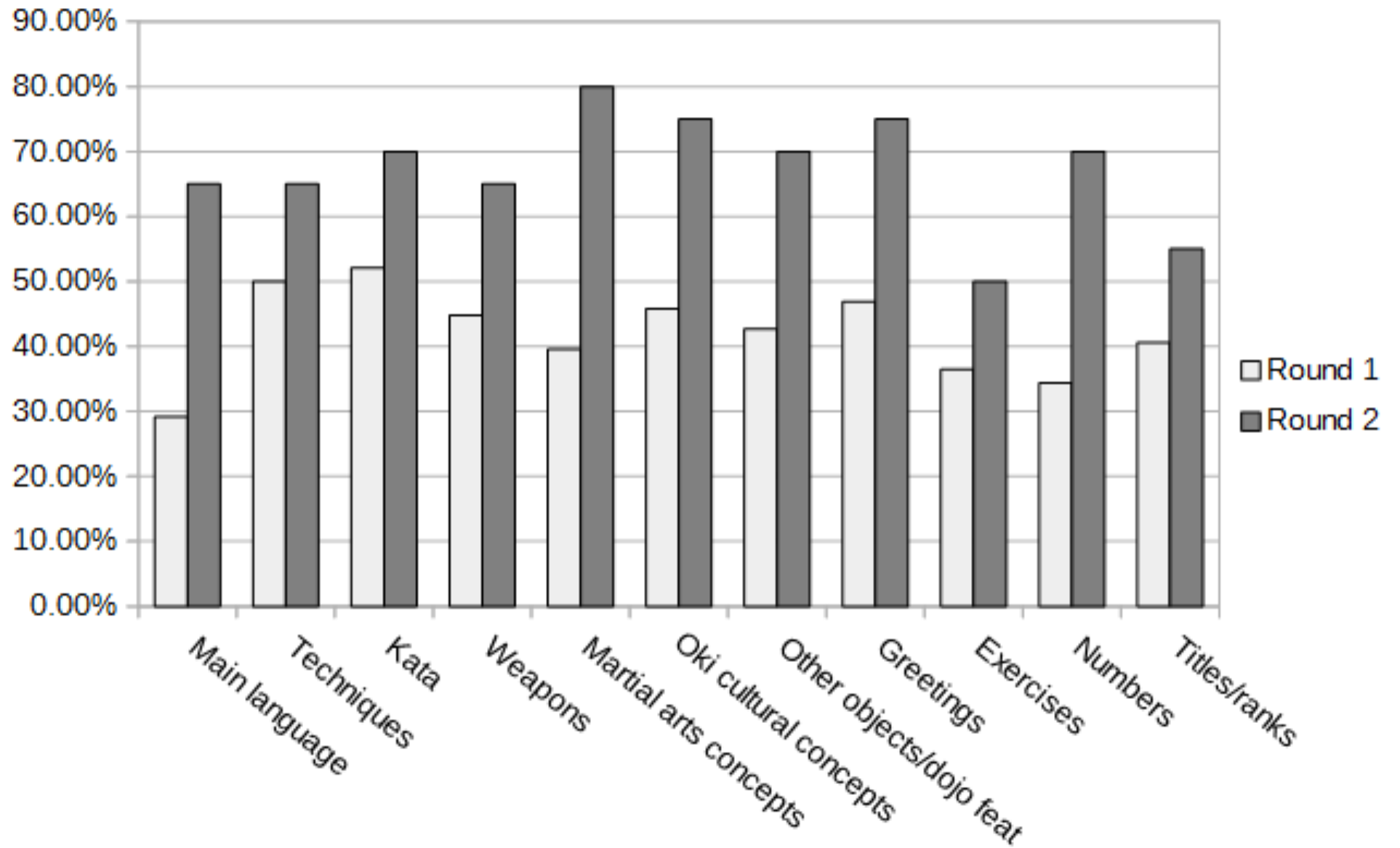
## Interviews

*“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 Uchinaguchi 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 2: Foreign Okinawan Martial Artists (FOMA) Interests in Okinawa Pre and Post-Worksheet Use**

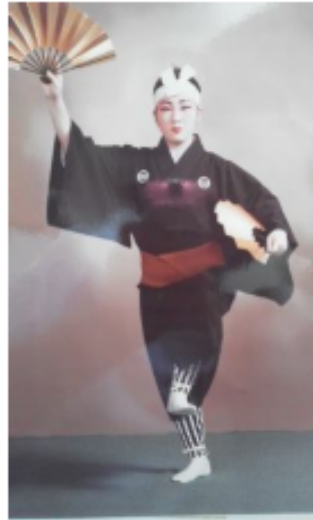


# Participant Observation/ Sample Lesson: Mi Tuu Dii



# Body Parts

が ま く  
gamaku よこっばら  
横っ腹 side/front of waist



Miyagi Masako, a professional Okinawan dancer.  
Photo courtesy of Miyagi Masako, 2015.



Busaganashi (aka the Bubishi) in Higoonna Morio Sensei's dojo. Photo by Linda Marchant, UK, 2015.

「がまく」でいーしえー 腰ぬ上ぬ横ぬくとう。

「Gamaku」 ti iishee kushi nu ue nu yuku nukutu.

「がまく」と言うのは横っ腹です。

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

がまくぬ 筋うでいじからや 手とう 踊しーねーてーしちやん。

Gamaku nu chin udjikara ya ti tu wudui shinuunee tee shichiyan.

がまくの筋肉は沖縄の武道と組踊りをするためのために大切です。

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

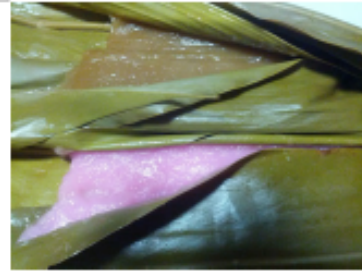
どうまわいぬ たみに、手や がまくんか いう さみり。

Dumamui nu tami ni, ti ya gamakunka iu samiri.

自分の体を守りながら、手は「ガマク」の横に取める。

To protect yourself, keep your fists in front of “gamaku.”

# Describing Movement/Food



むーちーみ  
muuchiimi

餅米 sticky rice

むちやむちみぬさんにんぬはっぱぬなかんちく wrapped  
riceからちくいびーん。

Muchi ya sannin nu happa wrapped in muchimi nu rice  
kara chikuyiibin.

「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.

Yaibiikutu, 「muchimi ten」 ya sticky?? tii refers to??.

Kuree ya opponent catching hold of concept yaibin.

ゆえに、「むちみ 手」は粘着な手のことである。こちらは  
相手を掴めることのある概念がある。

Therefore, “muchimi ten” refers to “sticky hands.” This is  
the concept of catching and holding one's opponent.



# Common Objects/Flora

む ち 柔  
muchī supple/flexible/resilient



Bamboo in Fukushu En, Naha, Okinawa, by S. May, 2014.

な  
うちげーしなみぬ中んかいや くわさしがあてい やふあら むぬぬ あん。くりがむちみやいびーん。

Uchigeeshinami nu nakan kaiya kuwasashiga ati yafara munu nu an.  
Kuri ga muchi yaibiin.

波は柔らかい水で作るんですが、むちような力を持っています。  
こちらはむちみです。

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

しったいていーさーじや やふあら むぬぬぐとう、やし<sup>ん</sup>が早くうっ  
ちーねー むちぬぐとうし ちちゆん。

Shittai tiisaaji ya yafara munu nu gutu, yasashi ga heeku ucchii nee  
muchu nu gutu shi chichun.

濡れたタオルは柔かいが、素早くにうつと、ムチのような力をはっきします。  
A wet towel is soft, but it can snap with whip-like force if moved suddenly.

とーでいー

唐技ちかやぬうちぬなかんかいや、むちみぬあん。

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

達人のうけや、つきにはしなびやかなだんりょくがある。

At the core of a karate master's defence and offence is muchimi.

ぼうちかやーぬ ぼうや ちんぶくぬぐとうし むちみぬあん。

Boo chikayaa nu boo ya chinbuku nu gutu shi muchi nu an.

達人のポーは人ぶりの中にしなびやかなだんりょくがある。

In the hands of a professional, the bo is flexible like a bamboo stick.

# Actions/Spatial Relationships

nuchun 突き刺す pierce, go through



えいごうてー、「パンチ」でい いーしえー くぶし さーに ちちゅん。

Eigo de, 「panchi」 di iishee kubushi saani chichun.

英語では、「パンチ」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」やぬきとうしえー んでいーさ。

Uchinaaguchi yaree, 「nuchun」 ya nukitoushee ndiisa.

沖縄語では、「ヌチュン」は的場を貫く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.

あていふあ

atifa 衝撃波 energy transfer/shockwave



「あていふあ」んでいしえー、相手んかい力移する理ぬあいびん。

「Atifa」 ndhi yishee, yeethi nkai chikarauchisuru kutuwari nu aibiin.

「あていふあ」は力を相手に移す原理です。

"Atifa" is the principle of transferring energy to one's opponent.

初めー、ゆるつとうし、相手触いがやー触らんがやーんでいちする時に、いふいで一触たる所んかい力まったきー出じゃしーねー、相手んかえー衝撃波なてい行ちゃびん。

Hajimee yuruttusshi, yeeti saaigayaa saarangayaa ndhichisurutuchini, ifin deesaataru tukurunkai chikara mattakii 'nnjashiinee, yeetinkaee shoogekihanati ichabiin.

最初は力をぬき、相手と接する時にすばやくその接触部分に全身の力を集中させると、そこから相手全身へ伝わる衝撃波になります。

Staying relaxed, then briefly tensing at the point of contact creates a damaging shockwave that travels through the target.

「あていふあ」んでいしえー、武器使いる事んあいねー、空手さーにする事んあいびん。

「Atifa」 ndhi yishee, buki chikairukutun ainee, 'nnadhiisaanisurukutun aibiin.

「あていふあ」は武器を使って用いられることもあれば、素手で用いられることもあります。Atifa may be applied using weapon or empty hand techniques.

# Okinawan Places

は ま ふ い じ や

## Hamafija 浜比嘉 Hamahiga



てぐあぬかた 古武道の型  
 Hamafija nu kata  
 Hamafija nu tunfa  
 Hamafija nu sai  
 Hamafija nu sai  
 Hamafija nu bo



浜比嘉」や、うちなぬ東ぬ海ぬ近く、勝連ぬ側んかいある島ぬ名やいびん。

“Hamafija” ya Uchinaanu agarinu uminu chikaku, Kacchinnu subankaiaru shimanu naayaibin.

「はまひが」は沖縄本島の東海岸、勝連半島の近くにある島の名前です。

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

伝らつとーる話しえー、浜比嘉ぬ島や、アマミチュンでいる女ぬ御神とう、うぬ夫やるシルミチュどう、琉球ぬ島々作たる時に、初みに暮らちやる所やる如いびん。やいびーくとう、浜比嘉ぬ島、うちなぬ文明ぬ御立口んでいち言つとーいびん。

Chiteerattooru hanashee Hamafijanushimaya Amamichu ndiru yinagunu ukamitu unuwutuyaru Shirumichu du Ruuchuunushimajima chukutaru tuchini hajimini kuracharu tukuryaru gutooibin. Yaibiikutu Hamafijanushimaya Uchinaanu bunmeinu utachikuchi ndichi yattooibin.

伝説によると、浜比嘉島は女神アマミチュと彼女の夫シルミチュが、琉球諸島を作った際最初に住んだ場所だそうです。よって、浜比嘉島は沖縄文明の発祥の地であると言われています。

According to legend, Hamahiga Island is the place where the goddess, Amamichu, and her husband the god, Shirumichu first came to live when they created the Ryukyu Islands. Thus, it is said to be the birthplace of Okinawan civilization.

## いちや りば ちょー でー Ichariba, choodee

一度会えば、みな兄弟。Once we meet, we are brothers and sisters.



Texas A&M University—Commerce website —  
The American Years, 1945-1972



Photo courtesy of Gorge Karate  
(www.gorgokarate.com).

うやゆ 仲 いゆ うや つくわげーならー い  
 親寄し、つくわ寄し。あんでい言しえー、親ん、子ん互に習するくとうい言ちよーいびーん。  
 Uyayushi, kkwayushi. Andiyishee, uyan, kkwan tagee ni naraasuru kutu ichooibiin.  
 親寄せ子寄せ（親や子が互いに教えあうのです）。

Parents and children teach (advise) one another.

いえーじゆー ちゃーや  
 やいびーくとう、道場 ぬ 相中、  
 やーにんじゆ 仲  
 家人 数とう 様 むん やいびーん。  
 Yaibiikutu, yeejuu nu chaaya,  
 yaanjinu tu yunumun yaibin.

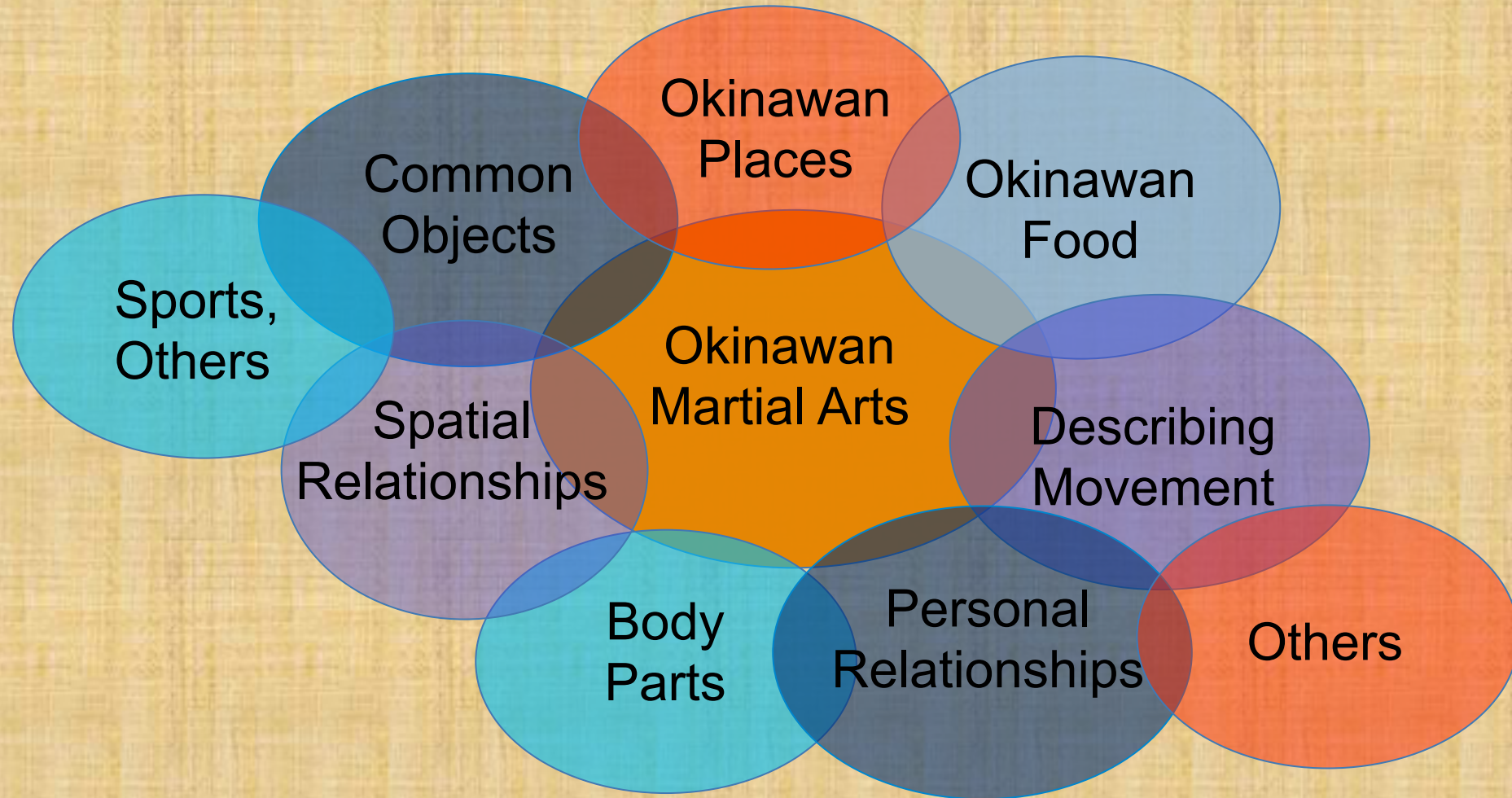
ゆえに、道場の仲間が家族のようなものです。  
 Therefore, the members of a dojo are like a family.



「いちやりば、ちょーでー」の記念碑 与那原、  
"Ichariba, choodee" monument in Yonabu. Photo by S. May.

# 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 Uchinagauchi than perceived**

How interested do you think the following groups are in Uchinaaguchi?				
	Youth (~30s)		Foreign Martial Artists	
	Perception (n=49)	<b>Actual (n=21)</b>	Perception (n=49)	<b>Actual (n=106)</b>
Average /10	5.1	<b>7.95</b>	6.68	<b>8.42</b>

## 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 Worksheets 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, Ukrainian 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**



いっぺーにふえーでーびる!

Thank you for listening.

For more information, please contact:

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**Facebook Community:** Uchinaaguchi and Okinawan Martial Arts

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