

FREE-STYLE SPARRING FIGHTING EXERCISES IN SHOTOKAN KARATE PRACTICED IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES OF BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY

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Abstract. *Background.* In the fighting exercises with a partner practiced in the previous years of study, the students of the University of Bucharest learned coordination through offensive and defensive pre-determined exercises. Jiyu Kumite, representing another form of training, represents that branch of karate that involves direct free fighting between partners. This form of practice offers a strong attraction for most karate practitioners, but only students who are very well prepared physically and mentally are recommended this type of exercise.

Objectives. Students to be able to manifest at the highest level their motor skill techniques as well as their mental capacity in fighting with one or more partners. The partners must use their most effective techniques and try to make them explode just short of the target. They both must respect the dignity of the other and deserve that respect.

Methods. Lessons with students preparing for Jiyu Kumite will be conducted according to prior proper planning and only intensify progressively. Jiyu Kumite it will not be governed by a fixed set of rules. It will be instead regulated by the conscience of the participants and always under the control of the mind that one should display the physical, mental and technical values acquired harmoniously through physical education lessons.

Results. Representing for students the final stage in the hierarchy of karate practice, this category of exercises, practiced accurately, will offer to participants the means for attaining high levels of physical, mental and technical techniques. The students of University of Bucharest will benefit from this kind of exercise and we hope their progress will be notable.

Conclusion. Jiyu Kumite represents the final stage in the hierarchy of practicing karate techniques in the fight with one or more partners. Without a thorough understanding of the concepts of etiquette, self-control, kamae (specific guard posture), maai (combat distance), kuzushi (imbalance), kake (completion of the technique), tsukuri (preparatory action), and strategy, the karate student cannot practice Jiyu-kumite.

Keywords: Free-fighting exercise with a partner, Jiyu Kumite, Karate do Shotokan.

Introduction

Martial arts have successfully completed the range of sports disciplines existing in the curriculum of the Department of Physical Education and Sport, from the academic year 1990–1991. From the beginning, they have been a particularly attractive discipline, a large number of students opting to practice these disciplines (karate, self-defense, judo) in physical education lessons. The sports successes achieved by the students of the university are based on various training methods. One such



specific exercise practiced with great pleasure by students is Jiyu Kumite. This type of practice is a strong attraction for most karate practitioners. They all try as quickly as possible, driven by a perhaps natural curiosity to check "practically" what they have learned so far. If on the one hand this is beneficial for them and their teachers, because in battle you cannot lie and in this way it is easier to notice the qualities and shortcomings accumulated by practitioners, on the other hand, practiced in most cases prematurely, an inexperienced person attracted only by superficial aspects will end up using his hands and feet inefficiently and chaotically. by easily injuring themselves or their partner and all their efforts will end in disappointment. However, practiced correctly, this exercise is an excellent means of checking and self-checking the acquired technique and a wonderful motivating element for further practice.

Objectives

The purpose of this type of exercise is the free practice, without rules and referees, of the techniques learned in the practice of karate. Maintaining self-control and expressing physical and mental possibilities at the highest level are other objectives of this type of practice. In order to lay the foundations of a quality Jiyu-kumite, the technical progression that leads to the appropriate technical expression must be thoroughly studied, which can later be successfully used in karate sports competitions as well. If a strong foundation is not developed through *ki-hon* training, that is, an appropriate and quality level, the gaps in the basic training will later be found, amplified, in the training at higher levels. In many karate physical education lessons, under the pretext of preparing for competitions, the technique is sacrificed or reduced to only a few techniques specific to sports competitions. The art of karate-do, treated superficially from this point of view, sooner or later becomes something similar to boxing of a lower quality, and the cultural, historical context and perfectionism that characterizes the art of Karate-do itself are eliminated from the very beginning.

Methods

According to M.Epuran (Fig.1), the specificity of physical education and implicitly of the Karate-do discipline in particular, require that motor skills (in our case Jiyu-kumite techniques) be learned correctly and thoroughly, in order to give students the opportunity to apply them in the fight with as many and varied opponents as possible. The entire learning process is conditioned by attention and memory, as organizing functions of mental life. The internal factors of learning are presented below.

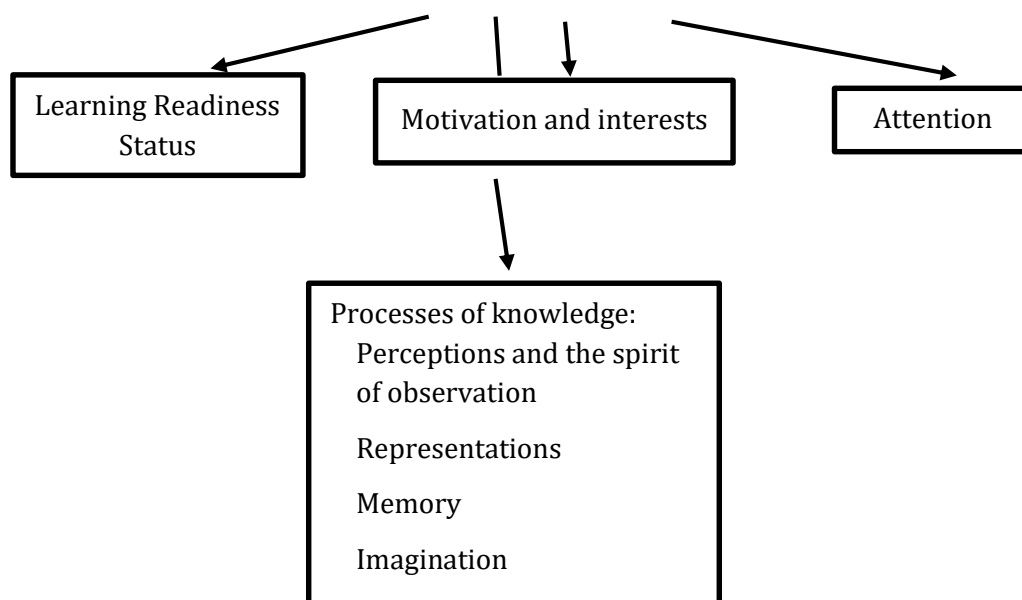


Figure 1. Internal factors of learning.

Jiyu Kumite is a completely free form of sparring in which neither the form of attack nor the attacker is prearranged. It resembles sparring in boxing, except that the attacks are pulled just short of contact with the target. The rules of free style sparring strictly prohibit any needless action which is liable to injure the student, such as stamping his instep more strongly than is necessary, or striking with great force an arm which is not attacking. Obviously, there is danger of serious injury if one of the students strikes one of his opponent's vital points with a focused attack. However, one of the tests of proficiency in karate is the ability to focus even the strongest technique just short of contact with the target, so this danger is minimized. Because it contains elements of both competition and uncertainty and can be exercised in earnest, free-style sparring has steadily gained in popularity among karate student's enthusiasts in universities. The on-guard position in Jiyu-kumite is one of watchful, through relaxed preparedness. The actual sparring consists of a free exchange of blows, blocks and counterattacks, until one of the players gets in a focused attack at a vital point of his opponent. Participation in a free-style sparring requires expert use of hand and foot techniques, blocking, shifting, distancing, timing, responding, courage, composure, tactics – in other words, all aspects of advanced karate.

Regarding tactics in Jiyu-kumite (referring to Fig.2), when the opponent in freestyle-sparing is securely on his guard, it is very difficult to get in a focused attack. It is only when there is an opening in his defence that a successful attack can be made. Tactics in karate thus consists of finding or creating such an opening and taking best advantage of it.

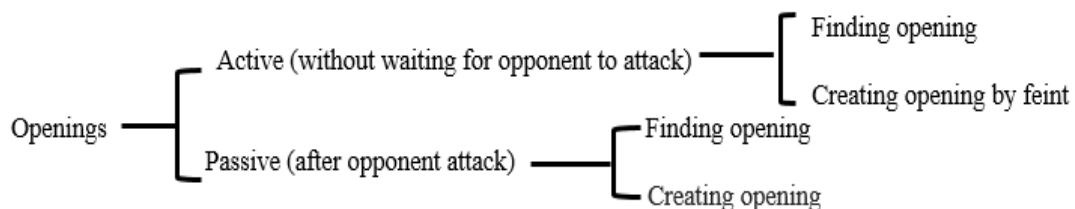


Figura 2. Tactics in creating an opening.

Finding an opening in opponent's defences depends on training and experience and can hardly be explained in this presentation.

If the students want to participate in sport karate competitions and make use of their free-style experience, they have to insist from the beginning on the a large number of short matches, representing a general endurance training, especially for aerobic and especially anaerobic endurance, for the zanshin spirit, because of the short time that the competitor has to win, so that the large number of changes of partners will bring something new to the fight every time. As general rules, the following steps are taken:

1. Working on basic technique - simple techniques are worked on: kizami zuki, mae geri, gyaku zuki, mawashi-geri, ushiro geri, for developing stability, speed and offensive attacking spirit;
2. Working on combinations (renzoku waza) Alone: starting with simple and straightforward techniques, on the spot, continuing with combinations moving around. At least 100 repetitions are needed for the movements to start becoming effective. This is where special, effective techniques are introduced in competitions. With partner: in the beginning everything is executed slowly and supplely, then the same combinations with force and speed on a partner who dodges or blocks without attacking, with the reversal of roles.
3. Working on control techniques – perform unique attacks of zuki waza or geri waza. Alone: attack very quickly with the arm or foot in the direction of any target and stop the blow suddenly, just before impact. The same is done on a moving target. With a partner: the same techniques are

worked on individually or in combinations that serve to identify the points targeted as targets of a partner, but never touching him. It remains motionless, then moves, but without blocking.

4. Work on hardening the blows – perform the favourite techniques (tokui waza), hitting the makiwara, pillow, or sandbag until the blows become harder and harder and the body gets used to hitting from a stable position;

5. The practice of free assault – short matches are performed, about a minute, changing the partner each time as follows:

A. A partner who dodges, blocks and counterattacks, but who does not attack at all, is attacked without stopping. It can be attacked at first only with geri waza techniques, then only with zuki waza, finally using combined techniques;

B. Each of the partners strikes at all levels but only with punch techniques or only with foot techniques;

C. Complete assault, where each of the opponents can take the initiative with any technique, but relaxed and at a slow pace (each looking for openings in the opponent's guard and in the way of changing effective techniques);

D. Complete assault and as close as possible to the competitive environment, with a protective equipment containing at least a shell (bra for girls), dental protection and shins;

E. Assault in competitive conditions.

Results

Representing for students the final stage in the hierarchy of karate practice, this category of exercises, practiced accurately, will offer to participants the means for attaining high levels of physical, mental and technical techniques. The students of University of Bucharest will benefit from this kind of exercise and we hope their progress will be notable.

Conclusions

Unlike others forms of exercise with a partner, this form of practice is not governed by a fixed set of rules. It is instead regulated by the conscience of the participants. The powerful technique, transformed into a real natural weapon stop just short of the target under the perfect control of the mind. The physical control of one's body and its limbs will lead to one's control of the mind, and in turn, leads to self-control, the basis of the formation of character of the students. The two opponents are allowed to freely and without warning, use their various techniques of attack and defence (tsuki – punching, keri – kicking, uchi – striking and uke – defending) and fighting spirit acquired in karate physical educational classes.

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