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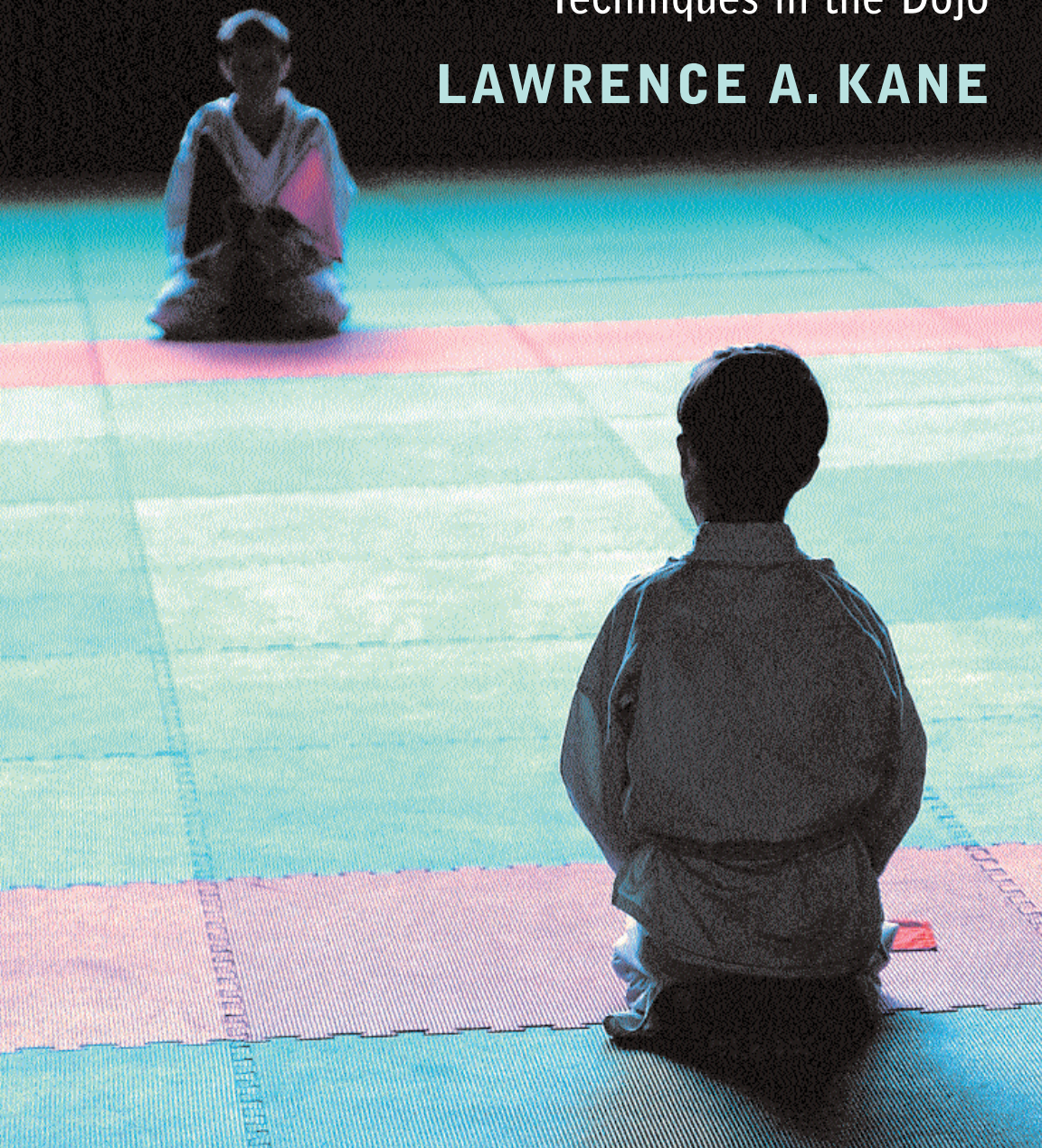
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Martial Arts **INSTRUCTION**

Applying Educational Theory and Communication
Techniques in the Dojo

LAWRENCE A. KANE



Praise for Lawrence Kane...

“Lawrence Kane’s book, *Martial Arts Instruction*, provides a unique and much-needed professional approach to teaching martial arts. At a time when more and more Americans are seeking personal security through martial arts, Kane’s guide to instructors of these ancient skills using modern business and psychological techniques, is incredibly creative and valuable. His practical application of Myers-Briggs personality assessments to students would benefit any teacher, including those training soldiers, security officers, as well as martial artists. Boeing trains hundreds of security officers annually in weapons handling and retention, and Kane’s ideas will certainly help us be more effective. The thoughtful discipline he advocates for students and instructors alike, makes this book a must read for anyone seeking to reach the highest levels of martial arts and self defense training.” – *Gregory A. Gwash, BA, MA, JD; Chief Security Officer of The Boeing Company; Vietnam Veteran ('65-'67 Special Forces Group).*

“Just because you have your black belt doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re ready to pass your skills on to others. *Martial Arts Instruction* is a detailed ‘how to’ book that will be of tremendous value to experienced instructors and novices alike.” – *William C. Dietz, author of twenty-five books including the McCade Series, The Drifter Series, The Corvan Series, The Legion Series, and The Sauron Series (Ace Books).*

“*Martial Arts Instruction* is an important text, one that is needed desperately by every instructor and ultimately by every student. Though I’ve been teaching the martial arts since 1965, I found myself thinking ‘I didn’t know that’ several times as I read this wonderful book. Lawrence A. Kane’s research, experience, and writing style make this the definitive work on how to be a better instructor and a better martial artist. Although written primarily for martial arts teachers, I highly recommend this book to all students.” – *Loren W. Christensen; martial arts instructor; retired police officer; author of 27 books including Warriors (Paladen) and On Combat, (PPCT Research Publishing) co-authored with Lt. Col. Dave Grossman.*

“This is the book instructors want to have on their desk, and students want their instructors to have open and dog-eared.” – *Kris Wilder, martial arts instructor; author of Lessons from the Dojo Floor (Xlibris 2003).*

“Effectively teaching physical combat skills to the variety of students that an average dojo encounters presents difficulties that are not experienced in a normal classroom. Likewise, the average martial arts training in and of itself does not necessarily train one to teach. Lawrence Kane quite effectively clarifies the techniques and skills needed to train the class that a typical instructor will encounter. This is a ‘must read’ for any new instructor or any instructor that feels he may not be reaching his class.” – *Dr. Randall Norstrem, martial arts instructor.*

“His in-depth examination of different personalities provides instructors with an enlightened view of their students and subordinates. His thoughtful and structured techniques lays a foundation and strategy for any class.” – *Romadel E. De Las Alas; Lieutenant US Navy; 3-time Iron man Triathlete Finisher.*

“I was a Karate instructor for over twenty years and managed two Karate schools. Lawrence Kane’s book is inspiring and a must read for any martial arts instructor. It

contains valuable and practical tips for instructors, whether beginning/novice instructors of professional/skilled instructors. The advice on self defense and moral and legal aspects is right on target and sound advice. I would recommend that all martial arts instructors apply the principles Kane identifies to help them become better teachers.” – *Vicky M. Peltzer; Police Chief of a Major University; Retired Albuquerque Police Dept. Lieutenant; martial arts instructor.*

“This book is unlike others in that it provides not only teaching content, but also the latest in educational theory to be sure that students receive and make the lessons their own.” – *Maureen Kane; Executive Director of Whatcom Literacy Council.*

“I really enjoyed Lawrence’s book. It was not only thorough and educational, but also well written and easy to understand. His integration of educational philosophy with the martial arts information gives you not only a visual understanding, but also a deeper appreciation of the art. The use of the Myers Briggs information intertwined with the Japanese training gives the reader a complete understanding of martial arts; it brings together the past with the present. The book is not just a tool for teaching martial arts it can be used as a tool for any teaching situation. It gives solid examples of not only what to teach but how to reach your audience. This book as with the ‘core’ of martial arts will teach the teacher too.” – *Stephen Morissette MA Ed.; Principal of the Holy Family School (Seattle WA).*

“*Martial Arts Instruction* by Lawrence A. Kane provides an outstanding background of teaching Martial Arts through making connections with students’ needs, preferences, and learning styles. Mr. Kane’s discussions of teaching martial arts are characterized by an extremely well grounded understanding of developmental sequences, learning characteristics and teaching techniques. Reading this text as an educator, I was impressed at the care taken to address the range of abilities and interests of a diverse student population.

“Further, this book provided me with knowledge of an art form and cultural understanding in martial arts that I have had no experience in prior to reading this text. It was engaging, informative, and understandable to read. The examples used placed the reader in an active position mentally to understand the concepts and skills discussed. I want to learn more about the discipline of martial arts as a result of reading this book. I will recommend this book to any student I have who is thinking of studying martial arts or any student that is currently involved with martial arts. It is an excellent reference book.” – *Judith A. Perry, Ph. D., M.A.T.; Oregon State University, B.S., National Board for Professional Teaching Standards*

“This book goes beyond its modest stated intention of being about teaching martial arts; it is an insightful guide to good leadership of all kinds. It takes a serious subject and, through a facile mix of theory, practice, and anecdote, leaves the reader feeling empowered to apply its concepts with confidence. Even potentially difficult ideas are so clearly expressed that it is never anything less than lucid. And the jovial, self-deprecating wit and conversational yet authoritative tone is approachable and engaging” – *Bruce A. Ritzen; Attorney-at-Law, Code Reviser and Legislative Drafter.*

“*Martial Arts Instruction* is a winner. Using a variety of powerful tools both traditional and modern, Lawrence Kane has created an impressive roadmap for genuinely passionate martial arts instructors.” – *Steven Barnes; author, former Kung Fu columnist for Black Belt magazine.*

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Foreword

Upon entering martial arts training, a student can easily recognize the necessity of learning the art. One cannot “scribble” the movements and expect to protect oneself. In fact, the art and the practitioner did not survive or thrive if the art did not work well. Traditional martial arts were honed by the fire of battle. The art and the artist needed to evolve to a high level.

Similarly, in our society, the art of instruction has been developed to high level. Modern psychotherapy, educational research, and scholastic competition have contributed to the enhancement of instructional skills.

However, in our society, martial arts instruction is behind the curve in regards to the “art of instruction.” Cross-cultural differences, language difficulties, and rigidity to change have been significant obstacles that we have needed to bridge.

Lawrence Kane is clear and concise in delineating a map to bridge traditional martial arts and modern instructional arts. Students of traditional Japanese martial arts especially will find this book of great use. Be bold, like the author: adapt and adopt ways that will benefit humankind.

I couldn’t help but reflect on how I would have benefited from this book when I began teaching martial arts thirty years ago. I was young, presumably adept at martial arts, but woefully inept at teaching. I recognize that this is often the case with many young martial arts teachers. We need this book—and more. Mr. Kane has lit my fire to write. Martial arts instructors need to upgrade their instructional skills to be commensurate with their martial skills. If this can be done, we can bring martial arts to a place of prominence in our society akin to its history in Asia.

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Preface

“The dojo is a place of awakening, not a hall of competition. The dojo is to be used judiciously to cultivate abilities and to nurture them in their own time, as opposed to demanding progress in technique regardless of circumstance. The dojo is a place to share respect for others, regardless of technical skill... The relationship between student and teacher is complex, based deeply on trust, integrity, and honesty. As a teacher, my duty is to see that the student grows in ability, not because of pressure and competition but in spite of it. As a student, my responsibility is to give my fullest attention to those who would impart something of themselves to bring evolution and well-being to my existence.”¹

*– Helen Michiyo Nakano Sensei,
Renshi and co-founder of the
United States Naginata Federation*

While the old adage, “those who can’t do, teach” is not entirely true, the reverse often enough is. Sadly, “those who can do” frequently cannot teach effectively. As both a student and a teacher I have observed numerous examples of how an educator’s actions can encourage or dissuade learning. Through these experiences, I have developed an in-depth understanding of instructional techniques appropriate to a wide variety of situations.

Educators are responsible for employing methodologies that give students productive learning environments where everyone knows what he or she is expected to do and are generally successful at doing it. When the personality mix of the group one is instructing is understood, a teacher may more readily connect with the students’ needs, optimizing time and attention to fit individual preferences and learning styles. To achieve the greatest success in effectively communicating with students, educators must be flexible in presentation and

approach. One size clearly does not fit all.

In reading this document, martial arts instructors will develop a strategic foundation from which to facilitate student learning and will acquire a discrete toolbox of methods to employ. Educators will improve their abilities to motivate, educate, and retain students, while students will develop a better understanding of what instructional methods best suit their needs.

General subjects covered in this text include the following:

- Understanding the instructional implications of learning style differences
- Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® tool to identify student predilections
- Effectively applying six teaching styles to martial arts instruction
- Fostering an environment conducive to learning
- Developing and implementing lesson plans for the *dojo* (school or training hall) ²

Teaching martial arts is a fairly serious business. Instructors must balance the somber reality that they are responsible for ensuring the safety of practitioners who learn (potentially) deadly techniques with the truism that if classes are not enjoyable and productive no one will participate. Martial artists are in a unique position to serve as role models for their students whether they intend to or not. Consequently, etiquette and tradition become essential aspects of *budo* (martial ways) training, for without them we would practice nothing more than base violence.

An essential tradition in karate (as with many martial arts) is that practitioners, regardless of rank, bow to each other before practicing together saying, “*Dozo one gaishimasu*” which means, “Please teach me.” The implication of this tradition is that teachers will learn from their students as much as students will learn from their instructors. While lower-ranking individuals obviously know less than their more knowledgeable seniors, both parties derive benefit from training together.

Budoka (practitioners of the martial ways) embark upon life-long journeys as they strive to master their chosen arts. A *sensei* (literally, “one who has come before”), or teacher, is simply someone who has progressed further along that path than his or her students. Many martial systems have special ranks to honor highly skilled instructors, especially those who have also excelled in personal and spiritual development. Examples of *shogo*, or teaching titles, include *Hanshi* (model teacher), *Kyoshi* (master teacher), *Renshi* (senior expert), and *Shihan* (expert teacher), all of which recognize exemplary instructors.

By preparing themselves to teach others, *budoka* gain a greater depth of understanding and further the development of themselves and their arts. This is a core concept in all good martial arts: teachers learn from each lesson too.

Introduction

“If you flip through the ads for your local martial arts schools you might get the impression that being some kind of champion is a prerequisite for being an instructor. In reality, what you are is more important than what you have done in the past. To be a good instructor you have to do more than teach. You have to understand and relate to your students. You must have a sense of mission and motivation for what you are doing. You must have knowledge and experience as well as a sense of professionalism. Above all, you have to believe in what you are doing.

“Your teaching method is largely determined by your style, character, cultural-heritage, personality and martial arts background. This means that there can be as many different teaching methods as there are teachers. Still there are fundamental formulas that you can apply to your teaching style to make it as effective as possible.”³

– Dr. Sang H. Kim

In a well-managed *dojo* (or *dojang* in Korean, *kwoon* in Chinese), all students are actively engaged in instructor-led activities or self-directed practice at all times. Not only do they know what they are expected to do, but teaching styles have been thoughtfully selected and communication techniques appropriately tailored such that the students are generally successful. Students feel that they are making progress daily, learning something new, no matter how small, at each training session. There is little to no time wasted due to confusion or disruption. A work-oriented tone prevails, but within a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere.

Children internalize instruction best when it is broken down into simple components. Consequently, complex techniques are

best taught as a series of simple movements that, once mastered, can be reintegrated into a whole. While teaching children can be a lot like filling empty vessels with facts and ideas, teaching experienced adults is much more complex. Concepts can no longer simply be poured in; they must be fitted into what is already there. As continuous learners who generally know the modalities by which they learn best (even if they cannot articulate them well), adults gravitate toward instructors whose methods make an effective connection possible.

Instructors who are skilled in identifying learning style and personality type differences can vary their approaches to maximize delivery of their lesson plans in a way that meaningfully connects with their students. Since *budoka* further the development of themselves and their arts when they use these concepts to teach others, one might argue that developing a mastery of teaching is essential to truly mastering any martial art.

An outline of this book's six chapters follows.

Chapter 1: Understanding Learning Style Differences

An understanding of learning-style preferences and personality types greatly facilitates communication between teachers and students. Since different people learn in different ways and process information differently, it is important that educators avoid the common trap of treating students as though they had the same characteristics and preferences as their instructors. Addressing individual learning styles to the extent possible is critical to the success of all class participants.

Physiologically, the five human senses—sight, smell, touch, sound, and taste—are all pathways to the brain. Although students learn in a variety of ways and have a variety of predilections, everyone retains more information when additional neurological pathways are accessed during the learning experience. Keeping this in mind, a good instructor will try to involve as many senses as possible when explaining a new concept. In the martial arts example, an instructor can easily employ demonstration (visual), discussion (auditory), and practice (kinesthetic) in almost any lesson.

Chapter 2: Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) Tool to Understand Student Predilections

To facilitate communication, world-class educators account for differences in student personality and react accordingly. The MBTI instrument is a widely used personality assessment tool based on Jungian typology, which has proven useful in understanding the role of individual differences in personality type and the implications thereof to the learning process. It is particularly helpful to understand an individual's predilection toward Extraversion or Introversion and his or her inclination toward Sensing or Intuition, two of eight dichotomous dimensions identified by the MBTI tool. This helps instructors understand the degree to which students feel comfortable asking questions and the extent to which the students need to know how and/or why something works before attempting it.

These differences play a significant role in effectively motivating students as well. To be most effective, motivational techniques must be adapted to align with individual student preferences and personality types. In general, however, one can motivate beginners by teaching a variety of simple skills in a straightforward manner while providing regular, positive reinforcement. For intermediate students, instructors should begin to introduce the history and philosophy of their art form and individualize training methods to the extent practicable. For advanced students, instructors should broaden students' knowledge through training and provide opportunities for these more accomplished students to teach others. Personality differences aside, adults tend to be more intrinsically motivated, requiring less handholding than children in educational situations if for no other reason than their basic desire to attend class in the first place.

Chapter 3: Applications of the Six Teaching Styles to Martial Arts

Teachers have a variety of styles available with which they can effectively communicate knowledge. Like tools in a workshop, different teaching styles are appropriate for different applications. The six main teaching styles—modeling, lectur-

ing, cooperative performance, independent performance, knowledge capture, and role reversal—are directly applicable to the instruction of martial arts. Proficient instructors will match each approach to the situation(s) for which it is best suited.

For example, traditional instruction in Asian martial arts relies heavily upon modeling relationships where students observe and attempt to imitate their *sensei*'s techniques, transcending potential language barriers and other inhibitors of communication. While this is a particularly powerful method of introducing students to the gross physical movements of an art form, lecturing is required to communicate essential strategic frameworks as well as important nuances of individual tactics or techniques (e.g., stance dynamics, internal power, *sanchin* breathing, or pressure point/nerve manipulation).

Cooperative and independent performance sets in motion a trial and error process through which students develop a better understanding of which techniques are most effective for their unique physical attributes and abilities. Under knowledge capture, the mere process of writing things down facilitates internalization and understanding of the knowledge that is written. By teaching others via role reversal, students internalize the materials taught and develop even deeper understanding.

Chapter 4: Fostering a Positive Learning Environment

The general mindset and biases of the students with whom educators plan to share information will color what they can hear and how they hear it. These biases are both intellectual as well as emotional. Influences on how people will interpret what is presented include their previous experience with and attitude about the subject matter, what is urgent and important to them at the time of instruction, the mental models through which they make sense of the world, any previous experience they might have had (or may have heard about) with the instructor, and any outside issues that may distract their attention.

The instructor's attitude is paramount to effective communication. Martial arts are competency-based, not letter-graded along a curve. When educators truly believe that their primary

role is to impart knowledge, they will be motivated to creatively find appropriate mechanisms that ensure their students will learn. Most of the time, when a student does not understand a lesson, it is the teacher's fault.

Etiquette is an integral part of martial arts, for without it we would be practicing nothing more than base violence. Similarly, it is very important to respect the traditions of our art. While boxing, wrestling, and other combat sports are currently associated with name-callers, ear biters, steroid abusers, and generally poor sportsmen (and women), Asian martial arts have managed to maintain their dignity, ostensibly through an adherence to the traditions of such art forms. The primary emphasis of *budo* (martial ways) such as judo, karate, aikido, or kendo is on character development of the *budoka* (*budo* practitioners) themselves rather than on merely training for tournaments or sports competition.

Today, anyone can pay an initiation fee, buy a uniform, and join almost any *dojo* in the country. Few instructors, however, will devote their full attention to new *budoka* until they have proven that they are worthy of such training. The rare student who demonstrates discipline, perseverance, and a positive attitude will gradually be given access to more and more of the instructor's time, attention, and specialized guidance. While all learners deserve a first-rate education, teachers need to be able to recognize and nurture exemplary students just as students need to be able to recognize and adopt excellent instructors.

Chapter 5: Developing and Implementing Lesson Plans for the Dojo

By following a structure of merit, such as the belt system, an instructor has a way of monitoring the development and skill progression of students and can teach them according to set standards. Training objectives must be stated in specific terms so that students will know whether or not these objectives have been met. Continuous feedback is essential in order to assure that students understand how they are progressing. In this fashion, students are able to identify and focus on areas in which they may be deficient. Instructors should monitor stu-

dent performance over time and promote them once they have met predefined proficiency levels.

Lessons should be approached within a “Plan–Do–Check–Act” framework, allowing for optimal utilization of teacher/student interaction and classroom time management. Under this process, midcourse corrections will ensure that progress is continually achieved and lessons are effectively communicated to the entire student population. Classes should progress through a logical order that both assists in communication and facilitates efficient use of available time. Curricular variety is an important component to maintaining student energy and interest.

Chapter 6: Conclusion/Stages of Teaching

New teachers pass through three relatively distinct developmental phases: induction, consolidation, and mastery. Just as it is essential to understand the personality types and learning styles of students, it is also important to understand the natural progression that teachers follow throughout their careers.

During the induction period, teachers begin to understand how to develop lesson content and present it to their students in an effective manner. In consolidation, teachers refine their understanding to more effectively tailor materials to individual students. On the journey toward mastery, teachers learn through experience and hard work to develop lessons that are enjoyable and beneficial, effective and satisfying for all involved (including themselves). Through long experience and continuing effort, they are able to truly master the art of education, furthering their personal growth, and the development of their martial art.

CHAPTER 1

Understanding Learning

✧ Style Differences ✧

“Both Higa and Miyagi were very strict and questions were not permitted during training. When we practiced, we were not allowed to perform the kata beyond what they had taught us. In essence you were not allowed to learn a new sequence of the kata until the initial section or techniques were approved... No explanation of techniques was given. We simply followed instructions. We were not even permitted to utter a word in response to instructions. The Sensei often said that they were the “sculptors” and we were the “raw material” to be sculpted.

“Looking back, I realize that teaching the American GI’s really helped me apply Miyagi’s theories while developing a cohesive teaching system. Had I not taught them, my Shorei-kan system would look nothing like it does today. This may sound confusing, but let me explain. When I taught kata to the Americans, they always asked questions regarding the meaning of the kata movements and how they could be applied to real fighting situations. Okinawans would never ask such questions.”⁴

– Seikichi Toguchi Sensei

I realized fairly early in life that different people learn and process information in different ways. When teaching and learning styles misalign, students progress slowly, if at all. As a child, I had the opportunity to take judo instruction from a former national champion who was the highest-ranking black belt in the United States at that time. No one could argue that he did not know his art, for truly he had mastered it. Yet in seven years of practice (four years with a three-year break followed by another three years) I truly learned very little, placing no higher than second in a variety of tournament competitions and progressing only to green belt (twice).

In retrospect my natural learning preferences did not properly align with this instructor's teaching style. Similar to the quote about Miyagi *Sensei*, my instructor preferred a traditional modeling approach for instruction (see *Application of the Six Teaching Styles to Martial Arts*) with virtually no explanation or discussion.

While I certainly understood the gross physical movements of each technique he presented, I developed no real understanding of the nuance or subtlety behind what made an individual tactic more or less effective or how it fit into a larger strategy or system. This mismatch not only inhibited my progress but also eventually led me away from judo into the study of other martial forms.

In the early 1980s, I had the opportunity to attend an intensive two-week judo camp taught by a cross-section of instructors. During those two weeks, I experienced enormous variety of teaching styles and methods. Some of these divergent approaches connected with me while others did not. Overall, my skills improved more in those two weeks than they had in all my prior years of training combined.

More importantly, however, I discovered not only which methods worked best for me, but also that what worked well for me was not necessarily the best approach for training other students. This may have been intuitively obvious, but in my prior experience it had never been so aptly demonstrated.

Many years later, I initially approached *Goju Ryu* karate (an Okinawan martial art) with slight trepidation due to my

earlier experiences with traditional martial forms. But after sitting in front of a computer for thirteen years, I needed to get into better shape; I hated jogging, was bored with weight lifting, and I wanted to try something new. I found an inexpensive course at a local YMCA and figured it could not hurt to sign-up for a month to give it a try.

Serendipitously, I found an instructor whose teaching approach was able to reach multiple learning styles and was unusually effective at conveying highly complex ideas in easily understandable terms. In fact, his teaching style very closely mirrored the way in which I like to receive information and this greatly facilitated my ability to learn. What began as a one-month trial metamorphosed into several years of training. When he left the YMCA and opened his own *dojo*, I followed him to that location where I continue to train (and teach) today.

Over time, I have found that my instructor is especially adept at making newcomers feel comfortable while maintaining a challenging and interesting curriculum for more advanced students (see *Maintaining Student Interest*). That approach has helped me preserve a high level of interest in *Goju Ryu* and has compelled me to continue my study. He clearly communicates not only nuance and meaning but has also derived modern relevance from traditional technique (see *Tradition*). He also maintains careful control of classroom activities (see *Classroom Management*) and is committed to assuring the safety of his students (see *Physical Environment*), all traits that I find worthy of emulation.

All Students Are Not Alike

“When all men think alike, no one thinks very much.”⁵

– Walter Lippmann

An understanding of style preferences and personality types greatly facilitates communication between teachers and their

students. Addressing individual learning styles to the extent possible is critical to the success of class participants. Instructors must utilize techniques and methodologies that give all students a productive learning environment. Instructors must also avoid the common trap of treating students as though they have the same characteristics and preferences as the instructors themselves do.

Contribution of the Five Senses to Memory Retention

“Memory is the cabinet of imagination, the treasury of reason, the registry of conscience and council chamber of thought.”⁶

– Edward M. Forster

Physiologically, the five human senses—sight, smell, touch, sound, and taste—are all pathways to the brain. At the most basic level, people tend to have a primary and secondary pathway preference for processing new information. Any combination of auditory (sound), kinesthetic (touch), and visual (sight) processing preference is possible and will vary by individual. Visual/kinesthetic and auditory/kinesthetic are the most common combinations. While the olfactory sense can trigger a powerful emotional linkage to memory, it is challenging to intentionally incorporate into most instructional situations. Likewise, the sense of taste just isn’t used all that much in the teaching of martial arts (or many other subjects outside of culinary arts).

Although different students will have different preferences for their primary learning pathways, all will retain more information when more modes (pathways to the brain) are accessed in the learning experience. Keeping this in mind, good instructors will try to access as many senses as possible throughout instruction, but especially when explaining new concepts or ones with complex or subtle elements. In the martial arts example, instructors can readily employ demonstration (visual), discussion (auditory), and practice (kinesthetic) in an integrated fashion.

Characteristics of Auditory Learners

To teach auditory learners, a martial arts instructor must present information orally, providing specific instructional details such as left/right, front/back, high/low, etc., using Japanese terminology (which is generally more precise than English translations) when appropriate. For Chinese, Korean, Philippine and other martial arts, the language is different but same principle applies. Native language is usually more precise (and pithier) than English translation.

Because such students learn more by hearing or repeating information, they tend to ask lots of questions, often repeating an instructor's answers. Unfortunately, they also have a propensity to want to talk with other students about new techniques rather than physically practicing them. A proper balance must be maintained to assure that auditory learners receive (and discuss when appropriate) reasonably detailed verbal information to facilitate learning while not disrupting classroom flow with idle chatter.

When teaching complicated pattern drills, *kata* (combinations of offensive and defensive techniques done in a particular order), and other combination techniques, I have found it useful to briefly describe each movement just before doing it the first several times it is presented to the class. I might say, for example, "look left, turn, and block left" just before turning in particular stance and executing a left chest block. While these verbal cues do not describe the entire technique, they are enough to help auditory learners to know what to do.

For more advanced students who understand Japanese terminology, the previous example could be stated as, "Look left, turn *zenkutsu dachi*, *chudan hiki uke*." That is a much, much pithier way of saying "look to the left, turn with a sliding crescent step into 'front forward' stance with your front leg bent, back leg straight, legs shoulder width apart, hips and torso aligned, and a 70/30 weight alignment between front and back legs. From there, execute an open hand 'pulling/grasping' chest block keeping your elbows bent, approximately one fist-width away from your body, and closer to your side than your hands, the knuckles of which are held at shoulder height."

It is important to note that instructions given in terms of distance (e.g., inches) will work much more effectively when presented as body lengths (e.g., fist width), as every practitioner will have a different size foot, hand, or arm, etc. In this regard, a standard karate chest block is executed properly when your elbow is one fist width away from your body. Rather than instructing students to step one foot (i.e., twelve inches) forward, it is better to ask them to step forward far enough that the heels of their front feet align with the toes of their back feet.

Characteristics of Kinesthetic Learners

In the *dojo*, kinesthetic learners are probably the easiest students to teach, as they learn primarily by doing. Until such students have practiced a new technique several times they tend to find little value in understanding the concept behind it or the subtleties inherent therein. These students generally find great benefit from exercises practiced with partners. Examples of these include prearranged sequences such as *kiso kumite* (pre-sequenced sparring) or *kata bunkai* (applications from *kata*).

Unfortunately, kinesthetic learners often have trouble staying still, a trait that could be interpreted as not paying attention even when they are completely focused on the instructor. They also have a propensity to copy instructor's demonstrations in attempts to internalize new lessons, another habit that could be misinterpreted as a lack of respect. For the most part, fidgeting by kinesthetic learners should be ignored (so long as it is not disruptive to other students).

As they struggle to learn new skills, I frequently "freeze" the class then go around and physically move students into correct body alignment for a given technique. For example, if someone's chest block is too far to the outside, the elbow is not closer to the body than the fist, or the person's posture is otherwise incorrect, I will move the arm into the proper place.

Once it is in the proper position, I will press against it for a moment so that the student can feel the strength of correct technique, then I'll move it back into the previous improper configuration and apply pressure. Finally, I will replace the arm



IN THE TANDEM DRILL PICTURED HERE, ONE PRACTITIONER MOVES FORWARD IN *ZENKUTSU DACHI* (FRONT FORWARD STANCE) WHILE THE OTHER OFFERS RESISTANCE BY HOLDING HIS BELT. SUCH MANEUVERS REINFORCE PROPER BODY MECHANICS AND BALANCE, ACCLIMATIZING KINESTHETIC LEARNERS TO THE STANCE.^A

where it belongs, pressing against it a final time. In this manner, kinesthetic learners can understand the “feel” of doing movements properly, internalizing which positions are weak and which are strong. Misalignment by a mere half inch may mean the difference between brutally effective and hopelessly ineffectual technique. Such minor nuances can often be felt even when they cannot readily be seen.

When teaching complicated pattern drills, *kata*, and other combination techniques for the first time, I have found it useful to train together as a group until students understand the basic pattern and then let them continue at their own paces under the tutelage of a senior student. That allows me to watch and make corrections on an individual basis by “freezing” people and realigning their postures until they are correct.

Characteristics of Visual Learners

In order to understand new information, visual learners must clearly see demonstrations. In the *dojo*, it is important to intersperse senior and junior students during moving drills or *kata* such that visual learners can see and emulate technique from whichever direction they are facing. Mirrored walls are an excellent addition to the *dojo* because they facilitate improvement for all students, especially visual learners. Visual learners also benefit from supplemental reading materials, web sites, and/or videotapes. Therefore, an instructor can reinforce learning by providing reading lists or handouts, promoting the use of journals or notebooks, or even by drawing diagrams on a whiteboard.

Some *dojos* maintain a library of books and/or videos that students can utilize to supplement their classroom training. We have a comprehensive set of notes that students are encouraged to copy if they are interested. Many instructors videotape *kata* practice and sparring sessions so that visual learners can objec-



SENSEI DEMONSTRATES SAIPAI WHILE THE CLASS OBSERVES THE KATA. VISUAL LEARNERS BENEFIT FROM WATCHING TECHNIQUES BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO DO THEM ON THEIR OWN.^B

tively evaluate their performances after the fact and receive appropriate coaching for improvement (sort of like reviewing game films in football).

When teaching complicated pattern drills, *kata*, and other combination techniques for the first time, I have found it useful to draw the pattern on a white board and demonstrate all of the movements to the class before having them follow along. I then break it down into small pieces that everyone can practice together. I ensure that senior and junior students are interspersed, of course, so that no matter what direction we are facing everyone can see someone to imitate. Each time there is a direction shift, I briefly pause everyone's movement while I reposition myself in front of the group so that all students can easily see what I am doing as well.

Summary

An understanding of learning-style preferences and personality types greatly facilitates communication between teachers and their students. Since different people learn in different ways and process information differently, it is important that an educator avoid the common trap of treating students as though they had the same characteristics and preferences as the instructor does. Addressing individual learning styles to the extent possible is critical to the success of all class participants.

Physiologically, the five human senses—sight, smell, touch, sound, and taste—are all pathways to the brain. Although there is great variety in student mode predilections, everyone will retain more information as additional pathways are accessed during the learning experience. Keeping this in mind, a good instructor will try to involve as many senses as possible when explaining a new concept.

The following briefly summarizes how best to teach to the three main senses discussed previously:

To teach auditory learners, a martial arts instructor must present information orally, providing specific instructional details such as left/right, front/back, high/low, etc. Reasonable efforts should be made to include Japanese terminology, which is generally more precise than English translations.

Tandem drills and repetition are especially beneficial for kinesthetic learners who gain skills primarily by doing.

Because visual learners must clearly see demonstrations, it is important to intersperse senior and junior students such that everyone can see and emulate proper technique from whichever direction they are facing.

To help everyone at once, instructors should strive to employ demonstration (visual), discussion (auditory), and practice (kinesthetic) in each lesson.

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About the Author

Lawrence Kane has a long history of successful teaching endeavors. As a martial artist, he has taught medieval weapons forms since 1994 and *Goju Ryu* karate since 2002. He developed and presented software application courses at a technical college between 1990 and 1998, where he consistently received student accolades for communicating effectively, demonstrating patience, and fostering a positive learning environment.

Between 1991 and 2000, he was a volunteer mentor and counseled MBA graduates entering the workforce. While mentoring is akin to teaching, there are subtle nuances in the mentor/mentee interaction that make such relationships unique. But just as teaching computers varies slightly from teaching *budo*, the underlying principles of instruction and communication remain the same.

In an effort to enhance business literacy in the aerospace company where he works, he successfully developed and taught the *Decision-Making for Shareholder Value* course, briefed company executives and vice presidents, and presented the *Managing for Value* class to hundreds of employees. As a financial analyst, he has been involved in several unique educational situations where he was tasked with communicating complex financial concepts to non-financial audiences. He routinely delivers management presentations on a variety of business subjects including finance processes, strategic sourcing, and IT infrastructure benchmarking.

Since 1985 he has supervised employees who provide security and oversee fan safety during college and professional football games at a Pac-10 stadium. This part-time job has given him a unique opportunity to appreciate violence in a myriad of forms. Along with his crew, he has witnessed, interceded in, and stopped or prevented literally hundreds of fights, experiencing all manner of aggressive behaviors as well as the escalation process that invariably precedes them. He has also worked closely with the campus police and state patrol officers who are assigned to the stadium and has had ample opportunities to examine crowd control tactics and procedures.

Over the last 30 or so years, he participated in a broad range of martial arts, trying everything from traditional Asian sports such as judo, arnis, kobudo, and karate to recreating medieval European combat with real armor and rattan (wood) weapons. He has also completed seminars in modern gun safety, marksmanship, handgun retention and knife combat techniques, and he has participated in slow-fire pistol and pin shooting competitions. While he certainly claims no mastery in any of the aforementioned activities, he believes that these experiences give him a more diverse viewpoint than the average practitioner of such arts. A well-rounded martial artist, his success in teaching inspired him to write this book as way of sharing his ideas and experiences with others.

Lawrence lives in Seattle with his wife Julie and his son Joey.

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LAWRENCE A. KANE has created and taught martial arts classes, business seminars, and college-level computer courses. A well-rounded martial artist, he has spent the last 30 years studying traditional arts such as karate, kobudo, and judo, as well as modern marksmanship and knife combat. He currently teaches medieval weapons forms and *Goju Ryu* karate. Lawrence resides in Seattle, WA.



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