

Standard Applications—part 2

In this series of articles we are analysing the typical movements found in Karate (and kata in particular), and how applications must be able to suit the individual. In the previous instalment we looked at how even a very reasonable application can be impossible for some practitioners based on their build. Here in part two, we begin to look at how your mindset can affect the applications.

Now, you could argue that all good karate-ka will be strong-willed, solid, and dependable in any situation, no matter how aggressive their opponent. This is fine in theory, but you have to look at, and make sure that you can teach the appropriate level, when students are not at that stage. A good teacher of self defence (and how kata moves relate to it) will be sure that the mindset of the practitioner matches the tactics that they are given.

These tactics can and should evolve over time, but if you mis-match the student and the tactics you could be creating greater problems for the student than they already had with regards to self protection.



Let's be specific:

Whilst I, having started training in 1981, now ranked 4th Dan and carrying height and weight sufficient to the cause, do not worry too much about intercepting a round-house punch with force (from most people), it is not good advice for most new practitioners.

Confidence and stoicism in the face of adversity – *bottle* – are hard won characteristics that must be forged and tempered through experience. Most people are not born fighters these days. Most people don't want to be. Those that are do well in the martial arts, but they do well in most physical activities. Those who step into the dojo without natural skill need nurturing to the state where they are comfortable with physical realities and how they perceive themselves and deal with the aggression of others.



The new student in the dojo is likely to find themselves “on the back-foot” when they meet aggression. Their instinctive response is most likely to throw their hands up in front of their face and move backwards.

There is fear of the opponent, fear of the outcome of any aggression, and fear for the wellbeing of the self and others to take into account.

As teachers of effective kata applications, we must recognise and train that instinctive response to be a useable part of our technique. It can become a circular movement (instead of directly away), thereby becoming an *irimi* (entry) technique in itself. The student can be taught to accept the incoming force and blend their movement into it instead of trying to overcome the incoming force with whatever power they have.



At the same time those raised hands can be channelled into striking, effectively creating a shock to the attacker’s body that they were not expecting (we call this Body Alarm Reaction – B.A.R.).



Whatever the student’s aptitude (locks, throws, striking, etc) can then be used in the moments bought by *creating* the attacker’s lapse in concentration.



So, how do we train these reactions and this type of response?



Well, it might seem out of place in some traditional dojo, but we need to use some equipment.

Training with a careful instructor as well as training partner is a necessity here. Our power levels must start at minimum on the defence and build up only within our partner's thresholds.

To create the feeling that the attacker *can* attack – to give them the willingness to strike a training partner with force, we need for the attacker to be wearing boxing gloves. Now, there are bound to be practitioners who don't mind smacking each other with force, but most of us take up martial arts because we are inherently peaceful, and perhaps even intimidated by violence. Wearing a boxing glove makes the attacker feel safe; it's big and soft and you know that you are unlikely to break bones if you strike with it.



Secondly, both practitioners should wear a headguard. The attacker feels like they can attack and the defender feels like they can defend because the other person appears to be protected. Now, as we frequently see, this isn't quite so, but both parties must *believe* that they are able to "go in". The attacker begins with a swinging right hook. It's the most common type of punch and so the one we are most likely to meet outside. The straight and corkscrew punches of the dojo are not ones we are *likely* to encounter outside. If we take the time to block and then counter, we will find that the attacker has swung again, so our response has to be instantaneous and prevent further activity from the attacker.

The defender enters into the attacker's space and so inside the arc of the hook punch. Their hands are raised, but then brought down quickly onto the attacker's head.



Now, there is no correlation between the amount of force you think you used and what the attacker felt. What might have felt like a 10% use of power to you may equate to 1% of what a training partner can take or it might end up being 110% of what they can take. It is vital for the safety of the person playing the attacker that you start at minimum power levels and build up from there. Do not start out by trying to KO your partner. It might work *too* well. We have to graduate from a “learning speed” to a “protective speed” in steps. We need to know what to do and teach our body to do it before it asked of us with any level of ferocity. The mind will only be strong enough to cope with the attack when it has some confidence in the skills that the body can exhibit.

So what has this got to do with kata?

The hands are in a similar shape to either the start of Kanku Dai or Heian Yondan. After this is delivered you have bought the time and space to deliver the rest of the kata if you so desired and you could morally justify it.



Take, for instance, that after the irimi, entry, which might look like the start of Kanku Dai or Heian Yondan, we have created an opening to deliver our favoured technique (that part of our training that has been drilled to come about naturally given the right stimulus). In this case we shall look at the position from Tekki Shodan.



The stepping across motion has produced a knee strike to the attacker's head.

The posture has an arm across the body (usually described as a block) that we have used to pull the attacker's head down with. The other arm is usually presented as though striking with a forearm, back-fist, or uppercut to the front, but here we have found a use for the elbow to be dropped onto the at-

tacker. All of this is performed while bringing our bodyweight down and into the attacker.



What you will notice is that this application requires someone of a positive and reasonably aggressive mindset to have the intestinal fortitude to deliver the interruption of attack and violent response. This isn't suitable for someone who hesitates when the attack begins, and must be trained slowly to begin with so that the individual can acclimatise to the imminent attack. Success breeds success, and so with each step forward the student can "up the

ante" a little until they are really dealing with fully fledged attacks. The job at that stage is to not hurt your training partner, as it is all too easy to respond to violent attack with violent response and damage the person who is trying to help you conquer your fears.

So the standard application must be congruent with not only the physical build of the practitioner, but also with their ability and confidence level. If you are distressed or frightened then the application of your kata moves must fall into the realm of what you might be expected to carry out. Training with a good instructor will build the ability to function under stress, but a lesson must be useful now as well as in the future once we are all-powerful. It starts with the ability to "switch it on" and moves through to functional spontaneity.

In the next part of this article, we will look at the common moves that come from kata, but are usually practised as "basics", and how they are applied to common methods of assault.

Thanks to Paul, Mike, and Clare for posing for the shots. Those willing to learn are always welcome at my dojo. Anyone who would like a Functional Kata Application Seminar at their dojo please contact keikokarate@aol.com, call 01626 360999, or write to John Burke, Karate Academy, 36-38 Market Walk, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 2RX. Books and dvds are available from www.thebunkaiguy.com and www.karateacademy.co.uk