

---

## *What's in a Name?* by Michael J. Hacker

"What's in a name?" Do you remember what it was like the first time you ventured outside your home dōjō, whether it was on the internet or into the school of another style? Did you find yourself befuddled by the different terminology you may have heard? Still confused?

Things can get a bit linguistically scary out there if you're not careful. Not unlike traveling to another country, the local lingo is often a little different than we're accustomed to hearing. But this doesn't need to get in the way of a good training session! My intent with this month's article is to give you a basic Berlitz guide to some of the different ways we all talk about (more-or-less) the same things. I'll start off with a few technique names.

Some schools are known for naming some of their techniques with numbers followed by a suffix (-*kyō*) which means "lesson" or "teaching." *Ikkyō*, it would follow, means "first lesson," and *nikyō* "second lesson." (You can fill in the rest.) Yōshinkan also numbers some of their techniques, but they use a different suffix (-*kajō*) which basically means "section" (i.e. section 1). There are, of course, other ways to translate these suffixes, but this should give you a pretty good idea of what's going on.

Tomiki-based systems, on the other hand, tend to use descriptive terms (which are really only descriptive if you understand Japanese) instead of numbering. In place of *ikkyō*, for instance, you may hear *oshi taoshi*, which, somewhat loosely translated, means "push and knock 'em down." Instead of *nikyō*, you are likely to hear "*kote mawashi*" (forearm turn).

Although Ki Society tends to use Aikikai-type naming conventions in many cases, you may be surprised to hear "*kote oroshi*" (forearm drop) instead of *kote gaeshi* (forearm return).

An interesting point is that in Ueshiba Kisshōmaru sensei's book "Aikidō" (1985), he uses both the numerical and descriptive system in many instances, i.e. "*sankyō (kote hineri)*." I personally feel that there is a huge advantage (as a speaker and understander of Japanese) in using the more descriptive terms. "Do technique #4 against attack #17-B" doesn't quite make sense to my monkeybrain, but it works for some.

As always, watch out for homonyms! Just because a technique bears the same (or similar-sounding) name, doesn't mean it is the same thing. Case-in-point is the elusive *kokyū nage* (breath

throw). Since the specifics vary so much from place to place (and person to person), I generally translate *kokyū nage* as "I don't quite know what to call this technique." Many styles also use *sumi otoshi* to describe a technique that is different from the *sumi otoshi* that others do. Caveat emptor: when in doubt, pay attention to how the locals do things.

The differences aren't limited to technique. Some styles call the person doing a technique *nage* (thrower) and the person receiving it *uke* (receiver). Some use *tori* (taker) instead of *nage*. Still others use *shite* (protagonist) in place of *nage*. *Uke*, it seems, is pretty common usage across the board.

In closing, I'll leave you with a cross-reference chart here on AikiWeb which will give you some of the jargon used by some of the major systems of aikido:

<http://www.aikiweb.com/wiki/reference>

Again, I open the forum to you. If there's a particular topic, no matter how far-fetched or odd you may think it is, I'd love to hear it. Contact me via the website!

*Michael Hacker began his study of Aikidō in Japan in 1990, and has been very fortunate to get his hands on many skillful teachers in his short time on the tatami. His primary Budō influences are Donald Moriyama, Amano Shigeko, Saito Morihiko, C.E. Clark, and Stan Connor. He has also had limited exposure to Kōdōkan Jūdō, Mugai-ryū Iai-Hyōdō, Shōrin-ryū Kishaba-juku Karate, Hapkido, Tae Kwon Do, Tai Chi, and various Chinese martial arts. Among his other loves are song-writing, his Chet Atkins nylon-string, techno-geek stuff, his world famous Bad Budō video collection, studying languages, and Swan (if he knows what's good for him). Michael is a student at the Jiyushinkan in Tempe, Arizona.*