

# Instructing Taekwon-Do by way of Part Practice

By Richard Rogers

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Over my past ten years of doing Taekwon-Do I have had many experiences. Aside from being a student and going along to classes twice a week there have been gradings, camps, seminars, combined trainings, demonstrations the list goes on. It was in 2002 when I got my red belt and I was one of the more senior members in my club. My Instructor at the time knew I was doing a sport coaching degree and later a diploma in secondary teaching and would utilise my skills for instructing the younger, more junior students. Having only a couple of years experience with coaching schoolboy hockey I found it quite a challenge applying what I knew to Instructing Taekwon-Do. I had to think about what teaching or coaching strategies do I use in one sport and how can they be effective when instructing a martial art. The tournament or 'sport' side of Taekwon-Do focuses on four areas: Patterns, Power, Sparring and Specialty. This essay looks at ways to make instruction more effective with each of these four disciplines by way of part practice.

First of all what is part practice? Part practice according to Schmidt and Wrisberg (2000) is a procedure involving the practice of a skill in a more simplified form (p.217).

The forms of part practice fractionalisation, segmentation, simplification and backward chaining can each be applied to patterns, power, sparring and specialty technique.

Fractionalisation is a type of part practice in which two or more parts of a skill are practiced separately. Fractionalisation put simply is when the skill is broken down into parts be it two or more and each of these parts practiced separately. An example of this might be someone learning to kick when practicing freestyle stroke in swimming by use of a flutter board. Here, the student is focussing on kicking alone and the arms are being held afloat by the board. Where fractionalisation is relevant to learning Taekwon-Do may be a new student learning the walking stance middle front punch. This technique in particular can be recognised as one of the more basic Taekwon-Do techniques, however when broken down into different parts it is quite evident that the technique as a whole can be relatively complex. The walking stance middle front punch is made up of walking stance, the sine wave, the hand positions, the intermediate position, breath control and there are probably some more parts which I may have missed. To the beginning student this can be quite daunting so it would pay to focus on one part at a time. This is an example of how fractionalisation applies to the junior student learning a fundamental technique – green belt being perhaps green belt and below, fractionalisation can be applied to higher coloured or even black belts learning a number of Taekwon-Do fundamental movements. When the student comes to learning a new pattern it can be a challenge to learn all the movements in one go. Coloured belt patterns can range from nineteen to thirty-eight movements but if broken down into five sets of four, five or six movements the idea of learning a new pattern becomes somewhat easier. If we look at Joong-Gun for instance it has thirty-two movements and with fractionalisation it can be broken down into five sets of six or seven movements. Firstly, the L-stance reverse knifehand outward block, then in L-stance a side front snap kick with the front foot, then rear-foot stance palm upward block and perform all three

techniques on the other side, this would be the first 'set' of techniques for Joong-Gun. The student would move on to the next set of movements in the pattern when the instructor feels the student is ready to do so. This process is repeated until all the sets of movements are complete and the pattern is then to be performed by the student from start to finish. Due to the fact that a number of coloured belt patterns are more or less symmetrical, a student would only need to learn two or three movements and perform them on both sides. This method of learning can be applied to Chon-Ji, Dan-Gun, Do-San, Won-Hyo, Yul-Gok, Toi-Gye and Hwa-Rang also.

Segmentation is defined by Schmidt and Wrisberg as a type of part practice in which one part of a target skill is practiced until it is learned, then a second part is added to the first part and the two are practised together and so on until the entire target skill is practiced (p.217). Segmentation when instructing Taekwon-Do can be used as a way of teaching power breaking. When learning power breaking with a side piercing kick for example, there are a number of steps that need to be followed in order to maximise a students chances of success. With the side piercing kick we begin in L-stance, then move the rear foot into what can be resembled as an X-stance at which point we drop our body to initiate the sine wave. The side piercing kick can be broken down into six easy steps which are as follows:

1. Begin in L-stance facing the target
2. Pivot front foot so heel is pointing towards the target and body weight should be on front foot
3. Drop the body down so knees are bent and move rear foot in behind front foot, weight distribution is now fifty-fifty.
4. Push up off the rear foot, at this point lift the front leg so the knee and heel are level with each other
5. Push forward off the rear foot keeping knee and heel of front leg as they are
6. Extend the front leg so it is straight

With segmentation, we learn the first step several times before adding the second step. Then learn both the first and second step together, do this several times before adding the third. Continue with this procedure until all six steps are learned.

Simplification is a type of part practice in which the difficulty of one aspect of the target skill is reduced. An example of where simplification may be used in sport could be cricket where a batsmen practices the cut shot with the bowler simply lobbing the ball to the batsmen rather than bowling at full pace. Here, the target skill is being reduced by taking the pace off the ball making it easier for the batsmen to be comfortable with the stroke before they face the ball at full speed. In Taekwon-Do simplification can be applied to sparring. During a sparring session the instructor may demonstrate a sparring exercise that to some who have done the exercise before or something similar may be relatively straight forward. To the individual with not a lot of confidence or experience with sparring may find the exercise quite difficult. The 'lean and jab' to the opponent involves being paired up with one person presenting the target with their glove. The other person in free fighting stance then leans onto their front foot, lets their back foot come forward of the front foot and pushes off this foot and hits the target with the front hand. With this, the more challenging part of the exercise is the footwork and the student changing their weight from one foot to the other and the jumping off the foot. Simplification can

be applied by the student walking through the steps and then gradually working their speed up as they develop a feel for where their feet should be. The aspect of the target skill that is reduced in this example is speed. Simplification can be applied also when teaching a fundamental technique. If we were to take the example of the reverse turning kick a student could start by kicking a large pad and then using the correct attacking tool and the proper technique, repeatedly kick the pad until the student consistently hits the same spot on the target. The student is then ready to move to a focus pad where the target is much smaller. Again we see where the difficulty of the target skill is being reduced by beginning with a larger target and then through practice moving to a smaller target. To take this one step further would be to put a board in front of the student and then tell them to break it using the same technique. With this, the student needs to apply speed as well as precision to be successful.

Backward chaining refers to breaking down the steps of a task and then teaching them in the reverse order (Mauro, 2010). Backward chaining is similar to fractionalisation in the sense that it is a complex skill broken down into parts but is different due to the fact that these parts are taught from back to front. Backward chaining can be an effective way of teaching flying or specialty techniques to a student. If we look at the flying high kick for example and break it down into four parts:

1. The run up
2. The take off
3. The actual kick
4. The landing

It would pay to start off with learning the landing first and the progressing backwards. If the student was to learn the run up, take off and the kick before they learnt how to land it could prove to be quite unpleasant for the student to find themselves in mid-air without knowing the appropriate way to land. In all areas of specialty technique whether it is the overhead kick, mid-air, flying turning or reverse turning, the landing is the part which needs to be addressed first. Going back to the flying high kick, it is fair to assume that with training this is the specialty technique the student would most likely learn first and as mentioned earlier can be broken down into four parts.

1. The run up: ensure top speed is achieved before take off
2. Take off: with the one foot take off, ensure the kicking leg is the one the student takes off from. The knee of the non-kicking leg drives upward into the air then starts to come down as the other leg comes up, this can be referred to as the scissoring action.
3. The kick: at the peak of the jump, the kicking leg comes up straight with the ball of the foot exposed to the target.
4. The landing: with the non-kicking or reaction leg on the way down already landing on the ball of the foot with the leg slightly bent utilising the knee spring when landing. At this point it is important to transfer the mass of the body forwards to have the front foot bearing some of the body mass. Endeavour to land in an L-stance forearm guarding block for presentation purposes. The landing needs to be practiced by the student from a platform down to the floor as the student drops into this position.

Now that all four steps are covered, the order of these steps are reversed and taught to the student this way. This is how the backward chaining method of part learning is applied.

To conclude, it has been shown how a skill can be broken down and made easier for a student of Taekwon-Do regardless of what level they may be. By way of backward chaining the flying high kick can be made not so intimidating for the student who has no previous knowledge or experience with specialty technique. The same can be said with segmentation with the side piercing kick for power breaking, by progressively adding the steps together the skill or technique is made much simpler. A pattern can prove to be a much easier task for a student to learn when broken down into parts and practiced separately through fractionalisation. And finally, a skill or drill in sparring can be picked up by a newer student more effectively if simplified by it slowing the drill down or making bigger targets for the student. I hope as instructors, this information or these methods of teaching will prove useful should you apply them with your students in future trainings. Good luck with it and all the best, Taekwon!

## References

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