

The Classification Tendency and Common Denomination of the Points Paid Attention in Ikebana Instruction

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Abstract. “Ikebana” is one of the representative aspects of Japanese Culture. However Ikebana arranging skill has been passed down as an oral tradition from master to disciple, rather than in a systematic educational system. This research examines the words used by a teacher with regard to ikebana arrangements created by a beginner and an experienced arranger, examines what parts of the arrangements are focused on and evaluated, and looks at the points ikebana teacher pay attention to in correcting arrangements. It is possible that clarifying the criteria for evaluation and correction of arrangements will contribute to establishing a logical and scientific method of teaching ikebana in the future.

With respect to the arrangement created by a beginner, there were many comments about the “tai” portion rather than evaluation of the overall form of the arrangement. So “tai” is supposed to be a difficult part of Ikebana arrangement for beginner. Regarding the arrangement created by the experienced arranger, it is possible that overall balance of the arrangement made the viewer have a positive impression of the whole work. However, a few positive comments were also made about the overall arrangement created by the beginner. Although the beginner’s arrangement was not as accomplished as the work by an experienced arranger, it appears that viewers don’t always look negatively at an arrangement created by a beginner. Next concerning correction of the arrangement, Comments for correction of Ikebana arrangement occurred both for beginner and for experienced arranger, though experienced arrangers followed the standard method. These results indicate that comments made during the correction of an arrangement can be categorized into two types: “comments made because of discrepancy with the one standard arranging method,” and “comments made because of disagreement with the aesthetics of the viewer.” The former type of comment occurs only for the arrangement made by a beginner,

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as opposed to many positive comments for the arrangement made by an experienced arranger. The latter type of comment seems to be made for arrangements both by an experienced arranger and a beginner.

Keywords: Correction, arrangements, comments, aesthetic, evaluation, standard method.

1 Introduction

In Ikebana, teachers evaluate ikebana arrangements made by disciples and correct them along certain criteria, in order the output be accomplished. This is called “Te-naoshi (Correction)”. Teachers correct ikebana arrangements made by disciples, however, there are many different ways of correcting, and thus, there is still no common way of guidance.

In addition, although there are primary curriculums[1], already established for “Rikka” and “Shoka”, the typical formats of Ikenobo Ikebana, criteria vary by the degree of the experience of the teachers, which is sometimes hard for students to understand.

This research examines the words used by a teacher with regard to ikebana arrangements created by a beginner and an experienced arranger, and investigates what parts of the arrangements are focused on and are evaluated. By drawing out teachers’ knowledge and comments about Ikebana, and putting them in order, it would be possible to categorize the points focused by teachers when they correct, and to clarify a common point and a tendency from the guidance. For example, by comparing the words and comments made by teachers when assessing ikebana arrangement, the difference between the experienced and the beginner would appear clearly. By doing so, it would be possible to integrate the criteria, which had traditionally been evaluated by teachers’ experience and aesthetics.

In addition, it enables teachers to instruct based on systematic knowledge, which would also be helpful for less experienced teachers. For students and disciples as well, they will be enabled to acquire knowledge and skills even faster by such scientific guides.

2 Method

2.1 Outline

In this investigation, six experienced teachers evaluated each piece of Shoka arrangement created by an experienced arranger and a beginner (Fig 3, Fig 4). Teachers were asked to evaluate each piece of work by oral words, and then describe what was wrong and what should be improved. By doing so, it enabled us to extract typical and core phrases used to evaluate, and to categorize them in order.

2.2 Teachers

The six teachers in this investigation were the ones who are experienced in ikebana for more than ten years, and also experienced in teaching for more than five years. The details are shown as below:

Table 1. List of participants (Interviewees)

	Age	Years of Ikebana Experience	Years of Teaching
Teacher A	35	20 years	7 years
Teacher B	58	40 years	13 years
Teacher C	50	32 years	12 years
Teacher D	66	40 years	11 years
Teacher E	70	50 years	30 years
Teacher F	69	47 years	31 years

2.3 Arrangers and Place Taken

The arrangers in this experiment were the ones who were well experienced and less experienced. Their profiles are as follows:

Table 2. List of participants (Ikebana arrangers)

	Age	Years of Ikebana Experience
The Experienced	42	21 years
The Beginner	27	4 years

In this research, “experienced arranger” was defined as an arranger who has more than ten years of Ikebana experience, since it requires roughly ten years to be certificated as a teacher of Ikebana[2], and “beginner” was defined as an arranger who had less than five years of Ikebana experience.

The experiment was taken in a meeting room where the frontage width was five meters and the depth was ten meters long, and was surrounded by white walls with a window faced south.

The arrangers were asked to arrange Ikebana on a table right beside the wall, and were asked to work back to back with each other, in order not to mutually influence their works.

When two arrangers accomplished their works and departed from the room, teachers entered the room evaluating both works and corrected them by oral. The arranged works were exhibited one at a time so that each work had been evaluated and corrected independently by the teachers. This serial procedure was repeated for each teacher, thus, six times.

2.4 Format and Materials Used

The arrangers were asked to arrange Ikebana in “Shoka” style, using four to six branches of cornus albas and two to three flowers of small chrysanthemums. Shoka has its own rules to be obeyed, and because cornus albas, the main material in this task, are relatively elastic, this task was practical to see the difference of the well experienced and the beginner.

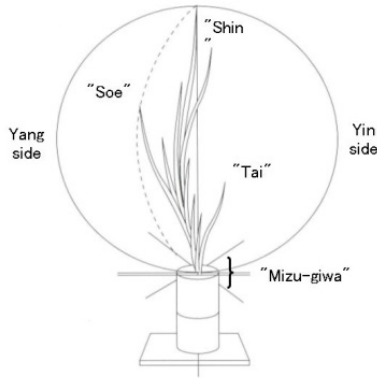


Fig. 1. Form of “Shoka”



Fig. 2. Materials for Ikebana arrangement in this experimentation

2.5 Collecting Date

Data of evaluations and corrections spoken by the teachers were collected in the same place as the experiment was conducted. We, first, asked the teachers to assess the overall evaluation of each work independently, and asked to give reasons why some particular points should be corrected and how. We also asked them questions when needed. There was no regulation in time length when each teacher made comments, but came out approximately five to ten minutes.

This evaluation process was recorded by a video camera, and every comment was archived in words afterward.

Although a various range of comments were made depending on the age and the linguistic environment of the teachers (as shown in Table 3), there are similarities in each comment, and therefore, we categorized such comments and integrated them in

simple words. Table 4 shows typical comments made by the teachers. As shown in the table, most comments were mainly concerned in the overall impression and the partial points.

Table 3. Chart of representative comments for experienced arranger by the teachers

	Experienced Arranger
Overall Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I assume that the work was arranged by someone who is highly skilled. ● This is not a work made by someone ordinary. ● It is very free and easy. ● The Shin has strength and is excellent. ● Tai seems confused. ● It is hard to arrange in such a beautiful way. ● ...and more.

Table 4. Chart of typical comments by the teachers

	Experienced Arranger	Beginner
Overall Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skillful. ● Free and easy. ● Well arranged. ● Skillful in making and is based on the Shoka format. ● Assembled in clear and straightforward way. ● A skill of arranging it natural. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lacking sense of “free and easy”. ● The balance and the height are in format. ● Need to put materials in order.
Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tai and Soe should be more balanced. ● There should be more coarseness and fineness in small branches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There should be more variations in expression. ● Small branches in Soe should be cut off. ● Tai should be in order and should make variations.

2.6 Categories of Comments and Structuring the Categories

In order the data to be liable, all recorded comments were double checked by the teachers themselves. The average number of comments made in each work, including evaluation and correction, was 16. Those comments can be categorized as follows, and these are the main categories to assess arrangements based on Shoka format:

1. Overall evaluation and correction.
2. Evaluation and correction about “Shin”.
3. Evaluation and correction about “Soe”.
4. Evaluation and correction about “Tai”.
5. Evaluation and correction about “Mizugiwa”.

These main categories can also be broken down into some sub-categories, such as follows:

1. Overall evaluation
2. Shin – synthetic evaluation
 - i. An arrangement of Shin
3. Soe – synthetic evaluation
 - i. An arrangement of Soe
4. Tai – synthetic evaluation
 - i. Flowers and buds
 - ii. Leaves
 - iii. Tai-saki
5. Mizugiwa – synthetic evaluation

Nejime in Tai, in this case, belongs to Mizugiwa, the core of Shoka format, and is the important part of balancing overall impression. Tai-saki means the edge of Tai. Depending on teachers, they sometimes comment based on botany such as flowers, leaves, and buds, whereas others express them by using technical phrases of ikebana such as Nejime and Tai-saki. Though those comments sometimes correspond, their nuances may vary in a wide range, and are not always the same. In this research, we tried to specify the points the teachers were focusing on as precise as possible, and categorized them in order. Also, an “arrangement” in this study means supplementary works processed to the main materials such as Shin and Soe, in order to strengthen the materials and add tastes and elegance in it. Arrangement should be done only when needed.

In addition, the comments about corrections made after the overall evaluation can be categorized as follows:

1. Shin
 - i. Balance and space
 - ii. Position and direction
 - iii. Quantity and Length
2. Soe
 - i. Balance and space
 - ii. Position and direction
 - iii. Quantity and Length
3. Tai
 - i. Balance and space
 - ii. Position and direction
 - iii. Quantity and Length
4. Mizugiwa
 - i. Balance and space
 - ii. Position and direction
 - iii. Quantity and Length
5. Work as a whole
 - i. Synthetic evaluation
 - ii. Balance and space



Fig. 3. The works for experiment (Left: by expert, Right: by beginner)



Fig. 4. The scene of the expert interviews in the actual Ikebana arrangements

Afterward, we categorized pros and cons made by the teachers about each of the total arrangement. And then, we calculated frequencies of the comments made in each category.

It should be noticed that corrections are made in some parts where they should be amended, and thus, there are no positive comments there. Based on this premise, we calculated frequencies of the comments made in each category.

3 Result

In overall evaluation, positive comments for the experienced arranger's work appeared 49% and were overwhelming. Other than that, Tai was the only part where 30% of the comments appeared, whereas other parts had been referred only 1-7%. This implies that there was more weight on evaluating overall form of the work. In

addition, for the experienced arranger, many comments were made in Tai part, which implies that the experienced have managed well in Tai part among Shin, Soe, and Tai. Especially in Tai, the experienced were positively evaluated in flowers and buds part, whereas the beginner had relatively low values in it. Tai, where small chrysanthemums were used, consisted of many weeds, leaves, buds and flowers, and it required higher techniques to treat flowers and buds, which might lead the arrangers to such difference.

Positive comments made for Shin and Soe were 7% and 1% respectively, and were both not highly appeared. However, by comparing Shin and Soe, it can be said that the experienced arranger had successfully managed to arrange more in Shin, the main part of the whole.

On the other hand, comments made for the beginner, as similar to the experienced, were mostly about the overall work, too. However, it should be noticed that negative comments do not always appear just because the work was made by the beginner. It is rather said that there were nice positive comments made among the twelve comments, which means that $9/12=3/4$ of the comments were positive. However, partially looking, we can find many negative comments in Shin, Soe, and Tai. Although parts of the arrangement were evaluated negatively, its overall form was tent to be evaluated positive, and this could be because there might be an educational purpose by teachers to find out good points in any work, in order to motivate students.

In correction, compared to the beginner, only half of the comments were made for the experienced. It is easily said that teachers distinguished technical difference between the experienced and the beginner. However, the experienced arranger who is not supposed to be given corrections, were still asked to amend the arrangement. In fact, 24% and 40% of the corrective comments were made in Shin and Tai parts respectively. As opposed to the highly evaluated comments on the overall form, only 16% of the comments were made in correction for the overall form, and this implies that the evaluation and the correction are said to be coherent. On the other hand, although the experienced arranger has gotten positive evaluation in Tai part, there were also some corrections made partially. From here, it can be concluded that although overall balance of the arrangement made the viewers have a positive impression as a whole, it appeared not enough for the teachers' aesthetics in order the work to be accomplished.

On the other hand, about 50% of the corrections were made in Tai portion for the beginner. Since 21% of the comments were also made in Shin, it is said that there is a certain difficulty in arranging Tai and Shin portions. Especially in Tai portion, many corrections had been commented both for the experienced and the beginner, and thus it is said to be the most difficult and most seen part in ikebana arrangement. Although Shin is essentially the main portion in ikebana, more attentions were paid in Tai, which could be due to the nature of the materials used. In this experiment, Shin and Soe were consisted of *cornus albas*, which had no leaves, whereas Tai consisted of small chrysanthemums with leaves and flowers crowded. This peculiar situation could have lead teachers to pay attention in Tai more. These results indicate that corrections made for the beginner were mostly the comments that were made because of discrepancy with the standard arranging method, whereas the corrections for the experienced were mostly the comments that were made because of disagreement with the aesthetics of the viewers.

Table 5. Chart of comment appeared for overall

No.	Parts	Categories	The experienced			The beginner		
			Positive	Negative	Appearance	Positive	Negative	Appearance
a.	Shin		4	1	0.074626866	2	6	0.126984127
1		Synthetic Evaluation	3	0	0.044776119	2	1	0.047619048
2		Arrangement	1	1	0.029850746	0	5	0.079365079
b.	Soe		1	0	0.014925373	2	5	0.111111111
1		Synthetic Evaluation	0	0	0	2	5	0.111111111
2		Arrangement	1	0	0.014925373	0	0	0
c.	Tai		16	6	0.328358209	1	20	0.333333333
1		Synthetic Evaluation	2	5	0.104477612	1	12	0.206349206
2		Nejime	4	0	0.059701493	0	0	0
3		Flowers and buds	10	0	0.149253731	0	4	0.063492063
4		Leaves	0	0	0	0	1	0.015873016
5		Tai-saki	0	1	0.014925373	0	3	0.047619048
d.	Mizugiwa		3	0	0.044776119	3	0	0.047619048
1		Synthetic Evaluation	3	0	0.044776119	3	0	0.047619048
e.	Materials		3	0	0.044776119	0	0	0
1		Synthetic Evaluation	3	0	0.044776119	0	0	0
f.	Overall Form		33	0	0.492537313	9	3	0.19047619
1		Synthetic Evaluation	33	0	0.492537313	9	3	0.19047619

Table 6. Chart of comment appeared for correction

No.	Parts	Categories	The experienced		The beginner	
			Number of Comments	Appearance	Number of Comments	Appearance
g.	Shin		6	0.24	10	0.21
1		Balance and Space	3	0.12	1	0.02
2		Position and Direction	2	0.08	5	0.1
3		Quantity and Length	1	0.04	2	0.04
h.	Soe		3	0.12	6	0.12
1		Balance and Space	0	0	1	0.02
2		Position and Direction	2	0.08	1	0.02
3		Quantity and Length	1	0.04	4	0.08
i.	Tai		11	0.44	25	0.53
1		Balance and Space	2	0.08	6	0.12
2		Position and Direction	7	0.28	12	0.255
3		Quantity and Length	2	0.08	7	0.14
j.	Mizugiwa		2	0.08	2	0.04
1		Balance and Space	0	0	0	0
2		Position and Direction	1	0.04	1	0.02
3		Quantity and Length	1	0.04	1	0.02
k.	Overall Form		4	0.16	4	0.08
1		Synthetic Correction	1	0.04	1	0.02
2		Balance and Space	3	0.12	3	0.06

4 Considerations

It could be said that throughout evaluation, teachers were seemed to see abilities of the experienced and the beginner, and assessed each of them fairly and appropriately. The comments made during the correction of the arrangement can be categorized into

two types: “comments made because of discrepancy with the standard arranging method” and “comments made because of disagreement with the aesthetics of the viewer”. The former type of comments was found only for the arrangement made by the beginner, whereas the latter type of comments appeared in both. These two categories must be thoroughly investigated in the future, with relation to the materials used or levels of the arrangers. Also, the reason why the work was positively evaluated as a whole, even though there were some negative comments in parts, was because there would be an educational consideration for students to motivate themselves.

5 Conclusion

Teachers are seemed not only to evaluate abilities of students throughout assessment, but also to consider them from educational aspects as well, and they give two different types of corrections according to students’ abilities.

Since aesthetics and what they perceive from the work vary by teachers, more testees would be required in the future, in order to investigate how it affects the process of corrections done by teachers.

Also, the comments made because of discrepancy with the standard arranging method, which were found only for the beginner, can be examined more carefully, so that it would be helpful when guiding beginners. It is also one of the concerns that I would like to investigate in the future.

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