

## Study on Exploration of Sushi in Teaching Japanese as a Second Language

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**Abstract:** Sushi plays a crucial role in Japanese food culture and in Japanese daily life. Sushi is the significant factor in Japanese practical teaching. This paper illustrates the backgrounds of sushi, elaborates the characteristics of sushi, analyzes the main aspects of the impact of integration of Japanese culture on sushi, and discusses the effectiveness and practicability of the application of sushi in Japanese practical teaching. Through the cultural explore and practical teaching of sushi, the study and practice of Japanese culture is an act of enlightening for further Japanese study, for deep understanding of Japanese food culture and for better improvement of teaching Japanese as a second language.

### 1. Introduction

The integration of Japanese culture refers to the harmonious atmosphere and the pleasing combination between human and nature. Under the deep impact of integration of Japanese culture, Sushi has made significant contributions for the inheritance of Japanese food culture. Sushi is the representative of Japanese traditional foods and the essence of the Japanese food culture. The characters of sushi are gradually formed, which are the delicate food materials and the exquisite food vessels. Based on the method of analysis of cultural elements, this paper takes sushi as the starting point of re-understanding the Japanese culture, introduces the general facts of sushi, illustrates the characteristics of sushi, analyses the impact of integration of Japanese culture on sushi, and explores the practice of sushi in practical teaching. The cultural study and the practical teaching of sushi are a highlight and key point in reform and practice of teaching Japanese as a second language, are considered to be significant.

### 2. The General Facts of Sushi

In modern Japanese, along with the development of the economy and the improvement of the demands for the level of food, sushi has got its all-around changes. Sushi is a dish derived from rice ball, and is originated from the lactic acid fermentation of fish and rice [1]. The earliest type of sushi is known nowadays as narezushi (salted fish). The fish can be prevented from spoiling under the protection of the lactic acid fermentation of rice. The function of fermentation is a way of preserving food, and also a way of flavoring food. When the secret of the lacto-fermentation of the rice is discovered by the Japanese, the simple rice ball comes into being. The rice is pressed to squeeze the air out and to ferment the microorganisms and the sugar in the rice. The rice is added with vinegar to shorten the process of fermentation. Thus the sour and umami taste of rice ball is formed. The development of sushi can be noticed in different types and various skills of sushi. Chirashizushi also called scattered sushi, the rice is served in a bowl and the raw fish and vegetables are put on the top of the rice. Oshizushi, also known as box sushi, is a pressed sushi made by chefs in Osaka. The chef uses an oshibako, a wooden mold, to make the block-shaped sushi. Nigirizushi is a hand-pressed sushi. The chef uses the palms of the hands to shape the rice into oval ball and drapes some toppings. Makizushi, rolled sushi, is commonly wrapped in nori with the help of a bamboo mat, and is cut into small pieces to serve to the customers. Sushi is popular for its fast to make and easy to eat. Sushi is gradually enriched in various types, is constantly brought forth new ideas in skills, and is little by little improved in tastes.

### **3. The Characteristics of Sushi**

Sushi inherits the Japanese eating habits. Sushi exhibits the Japanese balanced diet and satisfies the Japanese needs of healthy foods. Sushi shows the characteristic styles of Japanese foods, which are delicate and exquisite.

#### **3.1 Delicate Food Materials**

The integration of Japanese culture refers to the harmonious atmosphere. Harmony is the process of integrating man with nature. Harmony can be noticed in dietary activities, which are closely related to the population growth. Dietary life is the communication between man and nature, and is the emotional connection between man and man. The Japanese chefs believe that less cooking is the best way of cooking [2]. It is advised to choose fresh material of food, to present the original flavor of food, to avoid complicated cooking methods, to prevent excessive cooking, to create new flavor. The Japanese chefs pay much attention to the purchase, cooking and preservation of food, and care for the relationship with the customers. There is a Japanese saying “Ichi-go Ichi-e” (Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity), which means one should value each meeting, for it will never happen again. “Ichi-go Ichi-e” is the way of expressing the sincerity for the food materials and for the customers. Enjoying sushi is the combination of cherishing the instantaneous food and instantaneous consumer.

##### **3.1.1 Instantaneous Food**

Food materials have different natural flavors for different climate, season and region. Japan is an island country, and also a mountainous country. The abundant vegetables, the seasonal seafood, and the fresh fruits are benefited by the geographical conditions. Japan is blessed with plentiful rainfall and ample sunshine. The monsoon climate makes settlement and cultivation possible, favorable for growing rice. Rice gradually becomes the staple food of Japanese. Sushi is an exhibition of the vitality of earth and ocean. There is a Japanese proverb “Hatsumono sitijyuugoniti”, which means one can expand the life span for 75 days when one eat the first fruits or vegetables of the season. Sushi is a good example of hatsumono, with high quality fish in low fat, seasonal fruits and vegetables in adequate nutrition and plump-eared rice in lustrous color. Sushi is a way to understand the features of Japanese food culture, which can be described as taking rice as the staple food, commonly having seafood, carefully choosing seasonal and fresh food materials, cooking with less oil, maintaining the original flavor and keeping balanced nutrition.

##### **3.1.2 Instantaneous Consumer**

The group consciousness is intensely rooted in Japanese ideology. The national communication is common in Japanese dietary life. The feelings and moods between the chefs and the customers are always observed in the process of having meals. The mode of operation of Sushi restaurant is “itamae kappoutenn”, which means both the chefs and the customers are in the same space when cooking and having sushi. The customers order sushi, and then the chefs make sushi just in front of the customers. The chefs would change the flavor of sushi according to the appearance of the customers, would adjust the size of sushi depending on the appetite of the customers, and would serve sushi to the left side or right side of the customers in line with the customer is left-handed person or right-handed person. In the meantime, the customers enjoy the serving methods of sushi, the display of utensils and the decoration of the restaurant; enjoy the distinguished taste of each sushi; enjoy the surprising skills in each sushi. The chefs server the sincere services to make customers feel at home, at the same time, the customers show the sincere thanks for the hospitality. Sushi is a carrier and manifestation of Japanese emotional communication. Sushi is an exhibition of Japanese dietary customs and philosophy of life.

#### **3.2 Exquisite Food Vessels**

The integration of Japanese culture refers to the pleasing combination between human and nature. The manufacture of food vessels is reasonable reformation and imitation of nature. The abundant

geographic condition and the various climatic zones provide rich and generous resources, suitable for craft making. The food vessels reflect the relationship between man and nature. The integration of Japanese culture can be found in the material, design, and style of the utensils. When making the utensils, the Japanese craftsmen follow the applicability principle. When using the utensils, the Japanese chefs abide by the reality principle. The roughly made crafts and the superficial crafts are not allowed. The ordinary, simple and pure food vessels are recommended to improve the mood and enrich the joy of having sushi.

### **3.2.1 Ordinary Material**

The food vessels are commonly earthenware and japan, which are mainly made in clay and wood. The nature of clay and wood are varied in Japanese prefectures. Japan is famous for its pottery and porcelain, such as Setomono in Aichi Prefecture, Karatsumono in Saga Prefecture, and Tanbayaki in Hyougo Prefecture. There are famous japan like Wakasanuri in Hukui Prefecture and Hakatanuri in Hukuoka Prefecture. The crafts are made by following the natural law, having their own characters. The crafts of pottery and porcelain exploit the advantages of the thick and claim clay, whereas the crafts of japan develop the value of the plain, dim and original wood. The handmade crafts are different from each other and can be described as strong, joyful, plump, earnest, chilly, lonely, slender, peaceful, and so on.

### **3.2.2 Simple Design**

The utensils vary in design. The design can be quadrilateral, multilateral, geometric, round, fan-shaped, and so on. The design can be even or uneven, regular or irregular, shallow or deep, wide or narrow, concave or convex. The design of the utensils is various but simple. Simple is to omit the futile effort, to produce the fruit of material, to know well in the nature of the material, and never to be equate to dull [3]. Simple covers and contains everything. The simple designed utensils lead to an extraordinary realm of life.

### **3.2.3 Pure Style**

The style is mainly expressed by the pattern and the color. The pattern reveals the features of local culture and maintains the native feelings. The color of the vessel body is light and pale; however, the color of the pattern is colorful. The conflict colors matches well as one craft. Makie, the gold or silver lacquer, is impressed by the majestic atmosphere. Japan is affected by the dignified red and black and is touched by the kind wooden grain. The style can be described as pure. Pure is by no means overdose, is definitely not uncomfortable. The pure pattern and color is the honest way of explaining the nature.

## **4. Practical Teaching**

Sushi is a colorful and original artistic creation. For Japanese learners, just be aware of the knowledge of sushi is far from comprehending it. In order to get more acquainted with sushi, the activities of handmade sushi are organized by Japanese teacher. Hundreds of students of Sichuan Minzu College participate in the practical activities in 2017 and 2018.

In the year of 2017, 143 students of grade 3 from College of Foreign Language took part in the activities. Some of the students involved in careful planning, some acted as the purchasing agent, some created the unique artwork of sushi by the skill of cutting and clever hands, some played a part in serving and having sushi, some were responsible for taking pictures, some were in charge of writing news bulletin, some were included in summarizing the experience of the activity. Based on the previous experience, 147 students of grade 4 from College of Foreign Language successfully completed the sushi activity in 2018. And at the same year, under the guidance of the Japanese teacher, the Japanese Club for Cultural Exchange held two extracurricular activities of making sushi for most of students from Sichuan Minzu College. In the practice of handmade sushi, the Japanese culture, the importance of teamwork, the ability of communication and the spirit of innovation are deeply engraved on the memory of the students and the Japanese teacher.

Thanks to the sushi making activity, one student of grade 4 from College of Foreign Language chooses sushi as the topic of his thesis. Under the guidance of the Japanese teacher, the student finished the first, second and the third draft in the last two terms of the college life, and are preparing for the coming thesis defense in 2019. For the student, the ability to research and the ability of creative thinking get cultivated in the process of writing the thesis. For the Japanese teacher, the teaching skill, the teaching ability, the research ability and management ability get strengthened and improved in the process of supervising the thesis.

The teaching results show that the reform of Japanese teaching is satisfied with both the students and the teachers. All these knowledge and activities of sushi would have great significance to the study of Japanese and the reform of teaching Japanese for both the students and the teachers.

## **5. Conclusion**

Sushi epitomizes the Japanese food culture. The integration of Japanese culture has integrated into the food obtaining, the food storage, the food serving and the dining etiquette. This paper expounds the development of sushi, explains the characteristics of sushi, analyzes the impact of the integration of Japanese culture on sushi, and explores the practice of sushi in Japanese teaching.

The study of Japanese culture is crucial to the profound understanding of Japanese culture. The practical activities carry some importance in the cross-cultural communication and the great significance of teaching Japanese as a second language.

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