

# The Effectiveness of Warabe-uta Play in Early Childhood Education

## —An analysis of the characteristics of Warabe-uta—

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### 1. Background and Purpose of the study

The current Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (MEXT, 2017) clearly states the qualities and abilities to be fostered in kindergarten education from three perspectives: "foundation of knowledge and skills," "foundation of thinking, judgment, expression, etc.," and "ability toward learning, human nature, etc.". In the "Environment" area of the five domains, it states, "When familiarizing children with culture and traditions, they should become familiar with traditional Japanese events such as New Year's and seasonal festivals, national anthems, various songs, Warabe-uta, and traditional Japanese games, and with activities that expose them to different cultures, so that they will develop a sense of connection with society and have an increase of international understanding.

Following the above, this study focused on expressive activities through Warabe-uta and traditional play as indicated in the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (MEXT 2017). The purpose of this study is to analyze the characteristics of Warabe-uta and to verify how expressive activities using Warabe-uta are suitable not only for familiarizing students with traditions and culture, but also for developing the three aforementioned qualities and abilities.

### 2. Research Methods

In this study, we first surveyed previous research on Warabe-uta to find out the effectiveness of expressive activities using Warabe-uta. Next, we explored what characteristics of Warabe-uta attracted children and made them suitable for expressive activities based on previous research on the musical characteristics of Warabe-uta. Next, we picked up most commonly used Warabe-uta in children's song textbooks. Then, their musical characteristics were analyzed using Energy Thinking and compared with the musical characteristics derived from previous research to examine the usefulness of expressive activities with straw songs.

### 3. Previous Research on Warabe-uta

Warabe-uta are, as the name suggests, children's songs, but they are not popular songs. The songs arose spontaneously from the group life of children and have been refined and weeded out over the years and handed down to the present day. Most of these songs are sung in conjunction with children's play, where children's daily routines are present. Kami (1972) also points to Warabe-uta as children's folk songs that facilitate the smooth development of children's play, in contrast to work songs, which originated when adults worked in groups.

Regarding the educational significance of Warabe-uta, many of the studies found that they are effective because they are a source of human development for young children due to the multifaceted elements involved in the five domains of Warabe-uta play. In addition, focusing on the words of Warabe-uta, they have also been shown to be effective in helping young children acquire their native language. Furthermore, some stated that musical development is expected from the musical characteristics of Warabe-uta and that they promote musical growth.

Among them, there were many previous studies on rhythm, but we could not find any that went beyond the analysis of the rhythms of Warabe-uta and verified that Warabe-uta are suitable for early childhood education due to the characteristics of the rhythms of Warabe-uta obtained in the studies.

#### 4. Results of the Research

From a survey of previous studies, an analysis by Energy Thinking (Hoshina 1998) was conducted to verify what characteristics of the rhythms of Warabe-uta are suitable for use in early childhood education. For the analysis of the songs, we chose "Anatagatadokosa" and "Genkotsuyamanotanuki-san" as the songs with the largest number of texts.

##### (1) Hoshina's (1998) Energy Thinking

Hoshina (1998) proposes a method of musical piece analysis based on the assumption that there are three types of musical information that a composer can represent on a staff using notes: "length of notes", "height of notes" and "accumulation of notes". Its method of analyzing a piece of music is to compare the "center of gravity" notes, which are the core of the expression of a group of notes, against some conditions. The "center of gravity" is the apex of the inflection, where the energy is greatest. The five conditions are indicated by the sound groups preceding and following that "center of gravity".

##### (2) Analysis Results

In "Antagatadokosa," the rhythm is sung in a repetition of two notes, one long and one short, in an ambiguous ratio of dotted eighth notes and sixteenth notes. It was observed that the "center of gravity," which is the top of the inflection of a group of sounds, coincides with the point at which the words are either unconsciously or consciously intensified.

#### 5. Conclusion

While previous studies have shown that Warabe-uta is effective with regard to children's physical development due to the fact that it is an activity that involves play, this study showed that Warabe-uta is effective even in the language development of young children through an analysis of Warabe-uta. In the future, we would like to continue further analysis of Warabe-uta in order to verify how it relates to children's development in various aspects.

#### < References >

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