Year 6/7 Second Language Learners

Oral — High

Content
Students respond with single words or phrases to scaffolded questions relating to favourite sports, food, colors, subjects, hobbies, and movies using a well-rehearsed phrase すきな xxx は xxx です.

They use basic greetings appropriately (e.g. こんにちは、さようなら、はじめまして) and speak about their age, year level, family members, weather, and activities such as things they do on the weekend and sports they play using modelled language. They use well-rehearsed phrases such as xxxにxxxをしました。e.g. どうぶつにフットボールをしました。

Students respond to simple predictable questions with yes/no (はい/いいえ).

Some students respond in basic full sentences when given the same familiar question format each time, for example, すきなスポーツはなんですか。 (What is your favourite sport?)
すきなスポーツはクリケットです。 (My favourite sport is cricket.)

Otherwise responses are less confident and may be lists of items (e.g. family members) or single-word answers. Sometimes two or three known words are combined to respond to questions, for example, すし 和 いいえ — student’s way of saying I like this ‘sushi’ (pointing to prawn) but ‘no’ I don’t like this one (pointing to raw fish).

Students are able to ask questions using familiar phrases, for example, すきなえいがなんですか。 (What is your favourite movie?).

Vocabulary
Students are familiar with basic vocabulary relating to sports, food, greetings, family, weather, classroom objects, colours, subjects, hobbies, and movies. They also use verbs such as します, いきます to speak about activities.

Other vocabulary that students use includes: にほん(Japan); days of the week, for example, きんようび(Friday); colours, for example, しろ(white), くろ(black); school subjects and/or classroom objects, for example, びじゅつ (art); にほんご(Japanese); えいご(English); えんぴつ(pencil); age (e.g. じゅうにさい(12 years old)); grade (e.g. ろくねんせい Year 6); loanwords from English (e.g. サッカー soccer), ネットボール(netball), パーティ(party).

Students know basic vocabulary for greetings and use them appropriately, for example, こんにちは(Hello). They also use はい, いいえ, ありがとう(thank you).

Students often remember vocabulary and phrases taught in games, songs, and short plays (e.g. むかし, むかしあるところに).

Forms and Structures
Students’ responses rarely include full sentences. Most language use is in the context of rehearsed models, for example, すきなかもくはりかです。 (My favourite subject is geography.)

Rehearsed structures incorporate accurate use of the past tense of verbs (e.g. きんようびにえいがをみました。)

Use of modifications tends to be in rehearsed structures (unanalysed chunks) such as すきなxxx.

Sometimes particles are confused or deleted, for example, サッカー(が)すきです。(I like soccer) (particle が deleted), for example, にちようびに パーティをいきました.
Descriptions of Student Achievement

(On Sunday I went to a party) (incorrect particle used – should have been ni instead of o).

Some students say the number of their age but are not always able to combine this with the counter for age correctly (e.g. じゅういち さい です。instead of じゅういちさいです。)

Many students use the English ‘and’ between a list of items in Japanese with stronger students using と。

Fluency
Students can be apprehensive when responding to questions. Answers beyond yes/no tend to include pauses throughout the sentence.

Intelligibility
Students’ speech is intelligible because of good pronunciation and intonation and clear articulation.

Comprehension
When students’ own class teacher asks questions using learnt formulaic phrases, students demonstrate good comprehension. When unfamiliar with the question, students tend to respond non-verbally, for example, shake head (not to say ‘No’ but to indicate incomprehension).

Students appear to be aware of the need to repeat after the teacher. However, this can sometimes be without comprehension, that is, they may answer both yes and no to the same question.

For example, with prompting by the interviewer (head nod/shake) the student is able to comprehend and answer appropriately in Japanese (single word). S: すし (pointing to a picture of sushi) I: OKすしが好きですか? S: 吐き? NOD S: 吐きじゃない? SHAKE HEAD S: 吐きじゃない

Communication Strategies
Students need slow and clear pronunciation of questions to support comprehension, and some prompting to respond.

Students are hesitant to take risks in using the language to try to respond. They find it difficult to move from known phrases to slight variations on known phrases (e.g. すきなスポーツはなんですか。 compared with なにがすきですか。

If the sentence is modelled for them, students can generally position their response in the sentence to respond, for example, Q: きょうはなんようびですか。 A: きょうはげつようびです。

Some students demonstrate some hybrid language use including using some English words to cover gaps in their Japanese (e.g. たべもの and drink for ‘food and drink’).

Students often mirror the interviewer’s phrasing in their responses, for example, the interviewer introduced herself with: 私は X X X せんせいです。 (I am Mrs Xxx) Students then greeted the interviewer and added こんにちは、X X X せんせいです。 (Hello, this is Mrs Xxx instead of Hello Mrs Xxx).

They also mirror their classmates’ responses, sometimes repeating errors. For example, one student introduced herself using the phrase below with an error then all other students in the small-group activity followed this pattern and made the same error ぼくはなまえはX Xです。(I am name is xxx.)

Interviewers vary in techniques and the amount of English used — this may have had an impact on the ability of students to respond.

Discourse
Not evident at this level.