Year 6/7 Second Language Bilingual Learners

Writing

Content

Students write in Japanese to give detailed information about themselves (family, pets, favourite sports, subjects, hobbies, etc). While drawing on familiar models and the hints in the task sheet, students regularly go beyond formulaic expressions to express their own meanings.

They write half a page to one page, and may elaborate on each topic in two to four sentences.

Content is elaborated through the use of some rudimentary conjunctions, modifiers, and intensifiers, for example, favourite sport or friends わたしのもたれはXXとXXとXXとXXとXXです。
わたしたちのたのしいです。Xはとてもシリーーです。たから、みんなはたのしです。
(My friends are xx and xx and xx and xx and xx. My friends are fun(nily). X is very silly.
So, everyone has fun.)

Some students (particularly high performers who know a related language) go beyond simple description and communicate their thoughts and feelings, and inject humour or a conversational tone.

Vocabulary

Students use a wide range of vocabulary across a broad range of familiar topics related to themselves and their lives.

They are able to use adjectives effectively to describe people, animals, and activities, for example, すばらしいです。わたしはさんつ( mathematics, incorrect spelling) がへたです。xxx
はやさしいです。x x x はべんきょうがじょうずです.

They demonstrate an awareness of ガイアロゴ and may compensate for gaps in vocabulary by using English words transferred into Japanese pronunciation and written in katakana (e.g シリー English gloss given by student). (Collecting).

Students also use quantifiers (e.g. たくさん、いちばん) and a limited range of conjunctions.

Scripts and Characters

Students use hiragana, katakana, and a small number of kanji confidently. In particular, they write complex words such as friends’ names and sports in katakana accurately, for example, ケイトリン (Katelyn), バスケットボール ( basketball).

Students also make excellent attempts at writing blended sounds (e.g. Tiger Woods タイガーワッズ).

Students’ writing is neat and characters are generally well balanced and proportional. There are few script errors, other than those caused by pronunciation errors, and writing appears confident and fluent, with few self-corrections.

Forms and Structures

Students use predominantly simple sentence structures and write in complete sentences using desu/masu forms. Descriptive sentences using the copula are very common, but a range of other constructions are used, some probably acquired as chunks for particular functions (e.g. Xにすんでいます I live in X), and others generalised beyond the context in which they were acquired.

Some students demonstrate the ability to distinguish between verbs expressing existence for animate and inanimate subjects (いる、ある), although confusion is sometimes evident.

Students’ writing demonstrates that they are creatively constructing sentences to express their own meanings and are prepared to take risks.
They demonstrate a good command of basic sentence structure (word order, particle use, etc.), but there are often minor grammatical errors with sentence construction, adjective and verb endings, and particles, etc., particularly when they go beyond well-rehearsed routines.

Students give time and location, using adjectives and other modifiers and use conjunctions (e.g., そして, と) extensively to connect nouns, clauses, and sentences.

There are some attempts to use subordinate clauses but these often contain errors, for example, もう日にいぬがあるき。わたしがいぬをあるきがすきです。
(On Thursday the dog walks. I like walk the dog.)

Some learners from first language backgrounds related to Japanese use more advanced grammatical forms than their classmates, often conversational in tone, with minimal errors, for example, わたしはかんこくのにいきたいんです。つもここにいるのがすきです。
(I want to go to Korea but I like being here.)

There is sometimes transference of pronunciation errors into students’ writing (e.g., していいす for しています), often reflecting the influence of the native language (for example, confusion of voiced and unvoiced syllables is common for Korean background learners). There is some transfer from English to Japanese (e.g. overuse of わたし'').

Students predominantly use present positive, but there are some attempts to use negative, past, present continuous forms for both verbs and adjectives (e.g, そしてにほんごをべまきよしです。)

Students’ use of particles demonstrates understanding of their basic meanings and use, although there are minor errors (e.g. confusion between がと は, transfer from English in using object marker に with the subject of すきです) and control of particles may break down in longer sentences, for example, わたしはかざくのとうさんとおかあさんとにおいさんとおねえさんです。

**Discourse**

Students exhibit less use of set routines but more internalisation of Japanese discourse structure than students from mainstream schools. For example, students in bilingual programs generally do not use set formulas for opening and closing self-introductions (commonly used by students in mainstream contexts). They generally followed the hints given in the prompt in constructing their self-introduction (e.g. almost all started with listing family members), but they adhered to Japanese discourse conventions such as giving the number of people in the family before listing them, which was not in the prompt.

While using the hints in the prompt, students show the ability to go beyond them, demonstrating engagement with the reader, a sense of audience, and an ability to play with and manipulate discourse. For example, near the end of their text, one student wrote それで、わたしのじこうかいおわりじゃないです。"My self-introduction doesn’t end here.')

The student then went on to add an extra piece of information revealing that his cousin is Japanese, then concluded with the formulaic ending 'My self-introduction ends here.'

Students use rudimentary devices to express a personal voice, and variation in tone, for example, through the use of exclamation marks あ！ありがとう！！

Students achieve coherence and cohesion through the use of conjunctions, for example, そして、だから、でも (and also, therefore, but).