

Year 6/7 Second Language Learners

Reading — Average

Content

Texts that are more likely to be understood are typically those created for pedagogic purposes, that is, texts with a high degree of familiar vocabulary and simple sentence construction (in *desu/masu* form).

Students recognise familiar words and short sentences written in hiragana. In addition, they read some sentences written in romanisation. Texts are related to personal domains of language use such as body parts (あし、くち、め、はな、おなか), fruits (すいか、りんご), pets (いぬ、ねこ), and classrooms (せんせい、まど、ほん).

Knowledge of Linguistic Forms

Students able to write a word in a cloze exercise generally used an appropriate noun, indicating some understanding of the text given and/or sentence structure. When translating the sentence into English, they accurately translate the noun used but may have difficulties successfully translating the full sentence. (Note: much primary language teaching is based on knowledge of nouns.)

The use of romanisation (instead of hiragana) does not hinder or help the effective completion of tasks. More important is the range of known vocabulary.

Task Requirements/Processing

Students draw on familiar vocabulary knowledge to identify keywords to match to pictures (e.g. body parts). Students understand some meanings with support from texts or test questions. They use known literacy strategies to support their reading, for example, they use cloze exercise strategies of crossing out 'knowns' to clearly visualise and aid the elimination process and make predictions about 'unknowns'.

Many students transpose the hiragana to romanisation/sound equivalents in English to use their aural/oral language skills to identify key sounds and guess at meanings. Where a written response is required, students then transcribe back into hiragana.

Students use their knowledge of the genre of 'greeting cards' and illustrations provided to make guesses at meanings. For example, students guessed that a 'Thank you teacher' card may have said 'Happy birthday' or 'Merry Christmas'.

Students are able to name the three Japanese scripts; however, sometimes katakana are provided as examples of kanji.

For some students the ability to match a character can be impeded by font or vertical/horizontal writing. Similarly, their knowledge of one character can incorrectly influence their prediction about the meaning of the whole word. For example, the first character in 日本 can also be read as 'day' or 'sun' — many students guessed that it could be related to a day/date (e.g. Sunday).