Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Approaching

Task: Your class is studying about the role of second language learning in American schools and how most schools in Europe require all students to learn two languages. You are given four sources (two research articles, a compilation of letters to the editor, and an interview) that provide information about the pros and cons of foreign language studies and discuss at what age it is best to learn a foreign language.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an argumentative essay** in which you establish an argumentative claim for or against the inclusion of second language instruction in local elementary schools. Make sure to address potential counterarguments in your essay and support your claim with information from the sources you have examined.*

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 3

The essay takes a clear position in favor of offering foreign language classes rather than requiring them. The writer explains three reasons and uses some relevant logic about interest, responsibility, and employment needs. However, the response does not use any of the required sources, does not address a counterargument with evidence, and the reasoning is often basic or underdeveloped. While the ideas are coherent and mostly relevant, the argument lacks accuracy, depth, and source-based support.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The writer clearly states: "I think foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required." ○ The purpose—to persuade decision-makers to offer but not require foreign language instruction—is maintained throughout.	➢ **Strengthen and Clarify Your Claim With a Preview** ○ Add a sentence in the introduction that identifies your main reasons for offering but not requiring foreign language classes.
✓ **Relevant Reasons but No Source Evidence** ○ Reason 1: Younger children are better at learning language ("younger is a better age to teach… kids are more open and curious"). ○ Reason 2: Global workforce needs communication ("jobs… getting more and more involved with other countries"). ○ Reason 3: Required classes create stress and poor grades ("If they are forced… they are uninterested… can lead to bad grades"). ○ All reasons are relevant, but none come from the assigned sources (e.g., cognitive benefits, grammar awareness, bilingual milestones, school time constraints).	➢ **Use Evidence From the Sources to Support Your Reasons** ○ Add accurate details (e.g., young children learn quickly, bilingual students perform better academically). ○ Use source information about time constraints or confusion to strengthen the "don't require it" claim.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Some explanation is present, such as why younger learners do better ("accents become harder to learn… pronunciation doesn't come out clearly"). ○ Explanation of stress and responsibility is logical but general. ○ Several ideas remain surface-level and repetitive without deeper development. ○ No evidence-based explanation of benefits or drawbacks from the sources. ○ No reasoning explaining *why offering is better than requiring* beyond student preference.	➢ **Deepen Reasoning for Each Reason** ○ Explain *why* interest affects academic performance, *how* job markets depend on language skills, and *why* pressure impacts learning.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays focused on why foreign language should be *offered* but not *forced*. ○ Paragraphs remain consistent in purpose. ○ Some repetition ("more responsibilities… more pressure") but no off-topic drift. ○ However, the required counterargument is missing.	➢ **Include a Counterargument and Rebuttal** ○ Address the viewpoint that foreign language should be required and respond using strong evidence from the articles.

Organization: 3

The essay has a clear introduction, body paragraphs grouped by reason, and a conclusion. Organization is generally logical and easy to follow. However, transitions are basic, the reasoning order sometimes feels repetitive, and the essay lacks the counterargument structure required by the task. Overall, the structure works but needs more sophistication and completeness.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction With Stated Claim** ○ Opens directly with the writer's position: "I think foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required."	➢ **Add a Preview Sentence in the Introduction** ○ Outline your main reasons early to help guide the reader.
✓ **Logical Grouping of Reasons** ○ Each body paragraph focuses on a separate idea: ▪ younger students learn more easily ▪ global jobs and cultural communication ▪ pressure and stress from required classes	➢
✓ **Transitions Are Functional but Basic** ○ Uses simple transitions such as "Another reason" and "I also think," which help clarity but do not show complex relationships.	➢ **Use More Purposeful Transitions** ○ Try transitions that show reasoning: "as a result," "in contrast," "more importantly."
✓ **Conclusion Restates Main Idea** ○ Reinforces the claim: "That's why I think foreign language should be optional."	➢ **Clarify Paragraph Focus and Reduce Repetition** ○ Strengthen each paragraph so it develops a new point rather than restating earlier ideas.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Missing Counterargument Paragraph** ○ No acknowledgment of the opposing viewpoint or rebuttal, which is a required organizational component of this task.	➢ **Include a Counterargument and Rebuttal** ○ Address concerns about requiring the class and respond using evidence from the sources.

Voice: 3

The writer's voice is sincere and student-centered, with a clear viewpoint. However, tone is sometimes conversational, general, or repetitive, which weakens the argument's authority. More academic precision would strengthen the voice for a school-board audience.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Clear Personal Perspective** ○ Strong statements of belief appear throughout ("I think… I believe… I feel…").	➢ **Use a More Academic Tone** ○ Replace conversational expressions with more formal phrasing.
✓ **Conversational Tone Reduces Formality** ○ Phrases like "that's stressful for kids" or "the pressure can cause bad grades" sound informal for the intended audience.	➢ **Strengthen Audience Awareness** ○ Address the school board with confident, evidence-based voice.
✓ **Generalizations Without Evidence** ○ Claims such as "younger kids are more curious" and "jobs in America are getting more involved with other countries" are broad and unsupported.	➢ **Avoid Broad or Unsupported Claims** ○ Ground statements in evidence from the sources.
✓ **Repetition Weakens Impact** ○ Repeats words like "pressure" and "responsibility" without adding nuance.	➢ **Vary How You Express Your Opinion** ○ Reduce repetitive "I think" and "I believe" phrasing.

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is clear enough for understanding, but often general, repetitive, or lacking academic specificity. Key terms from the sources are not used, and some wording is imprecise.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Some Effective Phrasing** ○ "Foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required" is precise and clear.	➢ **Use Domain-Specific Terms From the Sources** ○ Incorporate vocabulary like "proficiency," "cognitive benefits," "bilingual communication."
✓ **General or Vague Vocabulary** ○ Uses broad words like "pressure," "stressful," "curious," "future travel," and "jobs in America" without deeper explanation.	➢ **Replace Vague Language With Clarity** ○ Be more specific about what "pressure" means and how it affects learning.
✓ **Missed Academic Vocabulary Opportunities** ○ Does not use terms such as "bilingual advantage," "cognitive development," "grammar awareness," "global communication."	➢ **Integrate Source Vocabulary** ○ Use wording from the articles to show academic understanding.
✓ **Repetition of Key Words** ○ Frequent repetition of "pressure" and "responsibilities" weakens clarity.	➢ **Avoid Repetitive Words** ○ Use synonyms and more varied phrasing.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly readable, but patterns are repetitive and some structures are simplistic. Flow is generally clear but lacks the variety needed for stronger fluency.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable Sentence Structure** ○ Most sentences are complete and easy to follow.	➢ **Use More Internal Transitions** ○ Add transitions like "for example," "in contrast," "as a result."
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Patterns** ○ Many sentences begin with "I think," "I believe," or "This is why."	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Use introductory clauses or transitions.
✓ **Limited Complexity** ○ Few sentences use complex structures to combine ideas.	➢ **Add More Complex Structures** ○ Combine shorter ideas to create more fluid sentences.
✓ **Occasional Awkward Phrasing** ○ Example: "They are uninterested in something that they don't have a motivation to learn for the future."	➢ **Read Aloud to Improve Rhythm** ○ Identify where sentences feel repetitive or choppy.

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates control of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A few minor issues appear, but none interfere with meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Correct Spelling and Grammar** ○ Everyday vocabulary is spelled correctly; grammar generally standard.	➢ **Check Verb Clarity** ○ Ensure subject–verb agreement and strengthen awkward phrasing.
✓ **Mostly Accurate Punctuation** ○ Uses periods and commas correctly in most places.	➢ **Proofread Slowly for Small Errors** ○ Minor punctuation corrections can strengthen clarity.
✓ **Minor Issues** ○ Occasional missing commas or slightly awkward constructions.	➢ **Maintain Current Accuracy** ○ Continue applying spelling and grammar rules consistently.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No run-ons or fragments serious enough to obscure meaning.	➢ **Review Comma Placement** ○ Add commas after introductory phrases and around nonessential clauses.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay does not use any evidence from the assigned sources. While reasoning is sometimes logical, it is unsupported by facts and research required by the task. The argument is entirely opinion-based.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **No Direct Use of Sources** ○ No quotations, paraphrases, or factual references from Sources 1–4.	➢
✓ **Unsupported Claims** ○ Statements such as "younger is a better age," or "jobs are more involved with other countries" are not sourced.	➢ **Replace Unsupported Claims With Source-Based Facts** ○ Strengthen reasoning using research instead of assumptions.
✓ **Missed Opportunities for Evidence** ○ Could use Source 4 for cognitive benefits or Source 1 for employment insights.	➢ **Add Accurate Source Evidence** ○ Use details about brain development, test scores, and global communication.
✓ **No Attribution** ○ Lacks "According to Source __" or equivalent signal phrases.	➢ **Use Explicit Attribution** ○ Add signal phrases like "Source 4 explains…"
✓ **Missing Rebuttal Evidence** ○ No reference to Source 3's concerns about scheduling or confusion.	➢ **Include Evidence in a Counterargument Section** ○ Address concerns from Source 3 and rebut using stronger evidence.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Source Integration Mini-Lesson

- Teach students how to incorporate information from the articles with signal phrases and accurate paraphrasing.

Reasoning Expansion Routine

- Use a structured frame: claim to evidence to explanation to why it matters for the argument.

Counterargument + Rebuttal Modeling

- Model how to acknowledge Source 3's concerns (time, scheduling, confusion) and respond using evidence from Sources 1 or 4.

Organization:

Counterargument Structure Modeling

- Teach students a simple structure: "Some people argue… however, the evidence shows…"

Transition Function Lessons

- Practice transitions grouped by purpose (cause/effect, contrast, emphasis).

Paragraph-Purpose Mapping

- Students map each paragraph to a single purpose to check focus.

Voice:

Tone Calibration Activities

- Students revise sentences to match an academic or civic tone.

Audience-Awareness Mini-Lessons

- Teach how purpose and audience shape word choice and tone.

Evidence-Anchored Voice Practice

- Students practice rewriting opinions using source-backed statements.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Word Choice:

Replace-and-Refine Word Choice Workshop

- Students revise broad terms into more precise academic language.

Vocabulary Word Banks

- Build lists of key terms related to language learning and cognitive development.

Contextual Word Choice Modeling

- Teacher models selecting precise words to strengthen academic tone.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Mapping

- Highlight repeated sentence beginnings for revision.

Combining/Splitting Exercises

- Teach how to adjust pacing by combining or dividing sentences.

Read-Aloud Fluency Routine

- Students revise after hearing their writing aloud.

Conventions:

Editing Stations

- Students rotate through grammar, punctuation, and spelling practice stations.

Conventions Mini-Lessons

- Focus on commas, sentence boundaries, and agreement patterns.

Proofreading Checklist

- Provide structured checklists for final drafts.

Use of Sources:

Evidence–Explanation Pair Practice

- Students pair source evidence with their own explanation.

Citation Mini-Lessons

- Teach students to use signal phrases and paraphrasing techniques.

Rebuttal Using Sources Workshop

- Students practice responding to counterarguments with textual evidence.