

# 2016 VCE Indigenous Languages of Victoria: Revival and Reclamation examination report

## General comments

Overall, there were some excellent answers to the questions on the 2016 VCE Indigenous Languages of Victoria: Revival and Reclamation examination, particularly Questions 1–4. In general, however, Section 2 (Question 5 or 6) was less well answered, both in terms of quantity and content. For both of these questions, students should have taken note of the importance of using examples that clearly illustrated the points they were making and written enough to answer the question fully.

Students could have achieved full marks for Questions 1– 4 without needing to remember specific linguistic information. On the other hand, Questions 5 and 6 asked for actual examples of the language that students are involved in reclaiming.

## Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

## Section 1

Students should have carefully checked their answers to Question 1a., comparing the words in every example. Students should have also taken care, both in this question and throughout Questions 1–4, to ensure that the spelling of words in the language was always correct.

For Questions 1b., 1c. and 1d., students should have been careful to answer all the points being asked in the question. If the question asked about word order and asked for examples, the student needed to give examples of a range of word orders.

### Question 1a.

man	<u>pam</u>	<u>pamal</u>	
animal	<u>minh</u>	<u>minhal</u>	
fish	<u>ngat</u>	<u>ngatal</u>	
water	<u>ngok</u>	<u>ngokeln</u>	<u>ngokem</u>
bit	<u>patharr</u>		
fell	<u>wontirr</u>		
pulled	<u>thuuthirr</u>		
ate	<u>mungskarr</u>		

**Question 1b.**

No, word order is not used to distinguish subject and object, as the following examples show:

Subject, verb, object: 4. <i>Ngay patharr nhunh</i>	I bit her.
Object, subject, verb: 5. <i>Pam minhal patharr</i>	The animal bit the man.
Object, verb, subject: 10. <i>Ngok mungkarr ngay</i>	I am drinking water.

**Question 1c.**

The ergative/agentive/transitive subject form, *pamal*, is used when the noun is the subject of a transitive verb/in the presence of a direct object; for example, 2. *Pamal minh patharr* – The man bit the meat.

The absolutive/unmarked form, *pam*, is used when the noun is either the subject of an intransitive verb, for example, 1. *Pam yat* – The man walked, or the direct object of a transitive verb, for example, 5. *Pam minhal patharr* – The animal bit the man.

**Question 1d.**

*Yat* is variously translated as ‘walked’, ‘swam’ and ‘flew’. It really just means ‘went’, and the manner of motion is determined by the subject, i.e. a man usually walks, so *pam yat* describes walking, but the unmarked/default manner of motion for a fish is to swim, so *ngat yat* describes swimming.

**Question 1e.**

ngokeln: into/in the water

ngokem: from the water

**Question 2**

Again, students are encouraged to be very careful with spelling of words in language, and they should be especially careful of words that are very different in spelling from English. For example, the word *nhunh* (‘her’) in Kuuk Thaayorre has a spelling that is very unusual to English speakers and is easily spelled incorrectly, such as *nhuhn*. Students are advised to carefully check their work for spelling and consistency.

For Question 2c. full marks could only be given to fully correct answers. In this case, an error in Question 1a. could have led to another error in Question 2c., which is why greater care needs to be taken at each stage.

Question 2d. asked for a translation from language into English. Students are once again reminded to read the question and examples carefully in order to get the correct answer.

**Question 2a.**

- *nhul* ‘she’ is the subject pronoun, used for both transitive and intransitive subjects.
- *nhunh* ‘her’ is the object pronoun, used only in transitive sentences.

Simply equating *nhul* and ‘she’, and *nhunh* and ‘her’ was sufficient for this question.

**Question 2b.**

- The pronouns make a split between direct object, on the one hand, and the two kinds of subject.
- The nouns make a split between transitive subject, on the one hand, and intransitive subject plus direct object.

The difference is in whether the intransitive subject takes the same form as the transitive subject or direct object.

**Question 2c.**

Sentence 1: *Ngay ngokeln yat*

Sentence 2: *Pamal minh mungkarr*

Sentence 3: *Ngay pam ngokem thuuthirr*

**Question 2d.**

An answer of 'The man kept biting the snake' was required for full marks. One mark was awarded for 'The snake kept biting the man' or 'The man bit the snake'. Students were not awarded any marks for 'The snake bit the man'.

**Question 3**

In general, Question 3 was well answered. Question 3 dealt with linguistic details from historical sources in one of the languages of Victoria that may not have been worked on by students.

Question 3f. dealt with some of the differences between English and the Indigenous language (in this case, Ngurrimauer) and was not very well answered. Table 3 showed that there were unmarked objects in Ngurrimauer that needed to be expressed in English. For example, *Linne* 'am thrashing' + *nguttha* 'I' (ergative case – subject of transitive sentence) entails the presence of an object, which in English has to be expressed. So it could easily be 'I told (her)', 'I told (someone)' or 'I told (him)'.

Students need to be very careful to ensure that all the grammatical features of the target language are present in any translation. Students missed out on marks for Question 3g. because of the lack of a suffix.

**Question 3a.**

killed: *takkan*

bit: *innanin*

**Question 3b.**

Each of these words has a suffix, *-(u)nga*, and this suffix is used to mark the subject of a transitive sentence, also known as the ergative case.

**Question 3c.**

These are present, past and future forms, and the past is marked by a suffix, *-an*, or *-n*, and that the future is marked by a suffix, *-(e)ang*.

**Question 3d.**

*ngaia* and *nguttha*

**Question 3e.**

*ngaia* is found with verbs that are intransitive (do not have a subject) and *nguttha* is found with transitive verbs (verbs that do have a subject).

**Question 3f.**

Because the object of this sentence is unmarked, it could be translated as 'I told her' or 'I told someone'. Because this is a transitive sentence there must be an object, but unlike English the object does not have to be expressed.

**Question 3g.**

The woman will tell the child: *murraiunga ngurreang nguliwak*

The child told the man: *nguliwak(u)nga ngurrean bawo*

The possum is sitting: *mukkur dūmpul*

Minor spelling variation and a change in word order were accepted.

**Question 4**

In general, this question was reasonably well answered, but students missed out on marks due to a lack of detail. For example, for Question 4a., it was important to read and answer the question carefully. The question asked students to 'suggest what the origin of the word might be', but this was often not included.

In Question 4b., students needed to be careful with terminology. An incorrect term was given – possibly a misspelling of 'derivation' – but the correct answer was 'borrowing'.

Question 4f. was worth five marks, and students needed to take account of this. If a question is worth five marks, then an answer with several different points is being asked for. In this case, students were required to point out things like the fact that in Pintupi-Luritja all words have a final vowel, so *kick* becomes *kiki*. The final vowel tends to be the same as the previous vowel.

Again, for Question 4g., marks could only be given if the answer was fully correct.

**Question 4a.**

- *pluwana* – from English 'blue one'
- *tayiti* – from English 'tight'
- *watpala* – from English 'white fellow/fella'

**Question 4b.**

Borrowing

**Question 4c.**

*ritwanarringanyi*

**Question 4d.**

Kick: *kiki*

Pull: *pulu*

Know: *nuu*

**Question 4e.**

Borrowing

#### Question 4f.

- The English words 'pull', 'kick' and 'know' are transformed into Pintupi-Luritja to conform to its sound systems. Pintupi-Luritja has only three vowels – /a/, /i/ and /u/ – and words require a final vowel, so that pull becomes *pulu*, and kick becomes *kiki*. A long /u/ vowel would be needed for English –ow, so know becomes *nuu*.
- Each of these words, *kiki*, *pulu* and *nuu*, are then suffixed by *-mila*, which attach to non-Pintupi-Luritja words and marks them as transitive verbs.
- A further suffix is then added for past, present or imperative.

#### Question 4g.

*kiki-mila-la*

## Section 2

Students were required to answer Question 5 or Question 6.

Students are reminded that they should take sufficient time to answer a question in this section. In particular, they should provide detailed information, which might include anecdotal evidence of community usage, and specific examples of language use, not just generalisations.

#### Question 5

In general Question 5 was not answered as well as Questions 1–4. To achieve higher-scoring results for Question 5, students needed to pay close attention to instructions. Students needed to give more concrete examples; appropriate actual examples of the language should have been included as part of the much greater detail that was needed overall in the questions in Section 2.

#### Question 5a.

Answers could have contained:

- clear examples of how speakers of the target language can inform reclamation
- the role of elders and the respect due to them
- examples of how partial language memory may assist in reclamation
- knowledge of the cultural background of language necessary to understand linguistic structures
- songs and games remembered within the community
- dreaming or other stories that contain language information
- community members such as performers/dancers/singers/orators/filmmakers/radio announcers may have a range of skills
- community members may be teachers, have training in linguistics or have IT skills.

#### Question 5b.

Answers should have:

- demonstrated a knowledge of the grammar and syntax of a language or languages beyond the target language
- clearly demonstrated a link between this knowledge and reclamation within the target language
- demonstrated a knowledge of semantic patterns (for example, 'summer' = 'year'; 'shadow' = 'image, photo, pictures'; 'sun' = 'day, time, clock')
- demonstrated how new concepts are incorporated (for example, in Tiwi the word for 'dragonfly' is used for 'helicopter')

- looked at how other languages have attempted to fill gaps in the lexicon and grammar (for example, application of the historical reconstruction and comparative method)
- looked at some languages with a long history of language revival/language reclamation to see what methods and approaches they have used (for example, Gumbaynggirr, Gamilaraay, Kurna and languages outside Australia such as Maori, Hawaiian, Cornish).

**Question 5c.**

Answers could have included:

- clear reference to specific examples of historical records of language/languages
- some understanding of the limited nature of such records
- a demonstration of how such records aid in the reclamation of the target language
- the impact of multiple spellings of Aboriginal words in different sources
- inconsistencies between different sources
- inconsistencies between different records made within the same source.

**Question 6a.**

Answers should have included:

- specific anecdotal evidence of personal involvement in reclamation, involving a knowledge of language/languages beyond the target language
- a demonstration of the grammar and syntax of a language or languages beyond the target language
- clear demonstration of a link between this knowledge and reclamation within the target language
- discussion of how new concepts are incorporated into the language
- discussion of how gaps in the historical records are filled.

**Question 6b.**

Answers needed to include:

- clear reference to personal experience of language reclamation involving individuals or groups from the target community
- notion of the reliability or authority of the individuals from within the community referred to.

**Question 6c.**

Answers needed to:

- include two competently described factors
- demonstrate clear anecdotal evidence of creative involvement in language reclamation.
- demonstrate either evidence of the originality of these creative efforts, or some acknowledgement of sources.