

2019 VCE Indigenous Languages of Victoria: Revival and Reclamation written examination report

General comments

Overall, the majority of students gave good responses to questions. Answers to Questions 1–4, as well as to the essay (Question 6), were particularly high scoring. Students with the highest-scoring responses answered these very well, both in terms of number of words and quality of content. No students answered Question 5.

Students are reminded to read the questions carefully and make sure they attempt them all. Some students missed out on marks because question instructions were not carefully followed. In responding to Questions 5 and 6, students are advised to present answers that are as detailed as possible by answering the questions fully and using examples that clearly illustrate their points.

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.

Question 1a.

The Dyrbal words that correspond to each of the English words were:

English	Dyrbal
man	<i>yara, yaragu</i>
woman	<i>jugumbil, jugumbilgu</i>
child	<i>njalŋga</i>
dog	<i>guda, gudagu</i>
goanna	<i>gugar, gugargu</i>
coming	<i>baninju</i>
hitting	<i>balgan</i>
sat	<i>njinanju</i>
saw	<i>buran</i>

Responses needed to have all forms in each line correct for full marks.

Most responses received full marks for this question. Some missed out on marks through incorrect spelling.

Question 1b.

From sentences 1–13 we can see that there is free word order, or at least there is subject–verb–object (SVO) word order (examples 8, 10, 11, 13) and subject–object–verb (SOV) word order (in others).

Responses received one mark for noting that the grammatical relations are not signalled by word order and two marks for the examples and explanation.

Answers to this question were generally good, although some students could have expressed their responses more clearly. When asked for examples, students should give the examples both in the language and in English translation/explanation.

Question 1c.

These forms are a root noun and a root noun plus *-gu*, the ergative suffix. Students received two marks for identifying the two forms and describing how they are used, and one for the example.

Question 1d.

The meanings were:

- *balay*: there
- *dibanda*: on (or by) the stone.

In the translation of *dibanda*, the form ‘stone’ by itself was not sufficient.

Question 2a

The Dyirbal words that correspond to the English words ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘you’ were:

English	Dyirbal	
I/me	<i>ɲada</i>	<i>ɲayguna</i>
you	<i>ɲinda</i>	<i>ɲinuna</i>

Question 2b.

The correct answers were:

- *ɲada*: I, first person subject singular
- *ɲayguna*: me, first person singular object
- *ɲinda*: second person subject
- *ɲinuna*: second person object.

Answering ‘I’ and ‘me’ for the first two words was sufficient.

Answering ‘you’ for the second two words was not sufficient.

Students were not expected to give the number of the second person pronoun.

Students needed to indicate subject and object for *ɲinda* and *ɲinuna*.

Question 2c.

The correct answer was *ŋa-*.

Question 2d.

The correct answer was *ŋi- / ŋin*.

Question 2e.

The common Dyrbal form shared between the words for ‘me’ and ‘you’ was that object/accusative forms have *-(u)na*.

Question 2f.

The subject forms have *-da*.

Question 2g.

The pronouns are nominative/accusative (*ŋada* ‘I’ is used in subject position for transitive and intransitive). The nouns are ergative/absolutive (e.g. *-gu*).

Question 2h.

The correct translations were:

English	Dyrbal
The woman is coming	<i>jugumbil baninju</i>
The man saw you	<i>yaragu ŋinuna buran</i>
The dog sat there	<i>guda nĵananju balay</i>
The child saw me	<i>nĵalŋgagu ŋayguna buran</i>

Question 3a.

The correct answers were:

English	Dyrbal
killed	<i>burtan</i>
flogged	<i>yilpan</i>
bit	<i>būndan</i>
pierced	<i>maiangan</i>

Question 3b.

The correct answer was subject–object–verb (SOV).

Question 3c.

The subject of these transitive sentences (or ergative) is marked by *-a*. Responses needed to mention that an ergative suffix is added.

Question 3d.

The correct answers were:

- A man kills a possum: *mārra guramuk burta*.
- A dog will bite a possum: *galla guramuk būnduk*.

Some students missed the point that 'bite' is a different verb from *burta*, meaning 'beat' and 'kill'.

Question 3e.

The present is formed with an *-a* suffix. The past is formed with *-an* and the future with *-ugu*.

The forms of 'flog' would be:

- present: *yilpa*
- past: *yilpan*
- future: *yilpuk*.

Responses needed to include an explanation and needed to note that the word *yilpan* already has the past suffix (*-n*) included, and that the present and future have to be derived after the removal of that suffix.

Question 3f.

Responses needed to establish that there was an inconsistency. In Table 2, the past tense form for 'bit', is *būndan* whereas the form in Table 4 is *bunda*. If Table 3 was correct, *bunda* would be the present tense. The more appropriate translation for the sentence in Table 4 would therefore be 'a dog bites / is biting a (o)possum'.

Question 3g.

The correct translations were:

- I flogged a dog: *gal yilpanu*.
- We two (you and I) kill (are killing) a possum: *guramuk burtangul*.

Question 4a.

The process is the extension of meaning to a new area. An example in English would be 'web'.

Question 4b.

Correct responses pointed out that the extended meanings in the contemporary examples relate to items not present in the 19th century and that the word for 'internet' is based on the same metaphor, 'web', as the English word.

Question 4c.

Responses may have used the word for scorpion, which is literally 'lightning tail', and explained that the tail of the scorpion is dangerous and might inflict a wound that is a little like lightning, or that a bee makes a sound that crackles like fire or produces a sting that feels like a burn.

Question 4d.

A correct answer would be that 'stockings' comes from the words for 'leg' and 'covering' and is literally 'leg covering'.

Question 4e.

An example of a correct answer is that 'breakfast' is 'dawn' plus 'food', or 'bank' is 'money' plus 'house'. A reasonable effort to explain 'bicycle' was also considered a correct answer.

Question 4f.

A correct answer would be 'pyjamas'.

Question 4g.

A correct response would be that *-tti* creates a noun from a verb. Students were expected to understand that one class of word, a noun, was being derived from another class of word, a verb.

Question 4h.

Correct responses indicated that an ending, *-(e)ndi*, is dropped, then *-tti* is added to create the meaning of a thing that does the action of the verb.

Question 4i.

Correct responses mentioned the process of compounding and the derivation of a noun from a verb: literally, 'beard-shaver'.

Question 5a.

No students answered Question 5.

There were several possible answers. A person might first learn nouns, names of animals or body parts; or simple sentence exchanges like 'How are you?', 'I am well' or the equivalent greetings; or a part of the language like pronouns. The reasons are:

- nouns represent objects that can be identified and pointed to
- sentence exchanges can be used in communication and practised
- pronouns get to the core of the language's structure more quickly.

What should follow might include pronunciation of sounds not used in English, and stress patterns in the language.

The grammatical aspects that are most difficult would include the pronoun system, case endings, and tense and number marking.

Question 5b.

Responses could have mentioned that there are differences between cultures in terms of what is talked about. If you learn kinship and place names properly, you are learning broader aspects of culture. Some examples might be that kinship terms (e.g. father, mother, uncle, aunt) have (or may have) different meanings in Indigenous languages and are also used in different ways. Similarly, place names often have meanings that are clearly understandable to speakers, in the way that place names in contemporary Australia often do not. Hence, learning the meanings of place names, and the cultural connection with those names, is perhaps more important in Indigenous languages than in English. It is likely that some of the recorded place names in Victoria have unclear meaning and unclear reference.

Question 5c.

Traditional stories (both those written down in the past and those that are in use orally today) may provide examples of language use that are not found in everyday language. Stories may be something that members of the community share with learners, and their important cultural knowledge, even if fragmentary, would increase students' understanding. High-scoring answers to

this question may also have made reference to discussions with members of community to ascertain which traditional stories might be shared.

Question 6a.

Almost all students attempted this question.

Reasons may include that people:

- have Indigenous heritage
- are interested in local languages
- are interested in Indigenous history
- think it is important to pay respect to Indigenous people
- have come across the use of individual words and want to know more about them.

High-scoring responses included clear expression and detailed examples.

Question 6b.

High-scoring responses discussed each of the three (or more) points the students chose to illustrate, and included concrete examples. If discussing the sounds and pronunciation, they may have pointed out that the target language has sounds not found in English, such as initial *ng*-. When talking about spelling, they may have pointed out that initial consonants like *b* and *p* might be alternative ways of spelling the same sound – a word *batja* might be spelled as *patja* or *badja*. If discussing the construction of new words, they might give examples of compounds of existing words, or using semantic extension (e.g. 'net' comes to refer to the internet).

Question 6c.

High-scoring responses discussed the role of the Aboriginal community, the role of elders, issues of protocols for the language revival process and consultation, and included relevant examples.