2022 VCE Indigenous Languages of Victoria – Revival and Reclamation written examination report

General comments

Although the quality of responses varied in the 2022 examination, some students scored highly.

Only a few students did not answer all questions, including some short answer questions, such as Questions 2–4. It is strongly recommended that students attempt all the questions; even if unsure about an answer, it is better to attempt the question and possibly get some marks rather than not attempt it at all.

Some students lost marks because they did not answer all parts of a question. For instance, when a question asks for two examples, an answer with only one example cannot be awarded full marks.

There were two essay questions: Questions 5 and 6. In the case of Question 5, some students did not address the question asked, but seemed to base their answers on the collection of a lot of ideas from working with the practice examinations (such as discussions of community consultation). Students should be careful to answer the question that is asked rather than answering the question they expect to be asked.

Furthermore, students who did not answer Part c. of Questions 5 or 6 could not receive full marks, even though their answers to the early parts of those questions were good.

Specific information

Note: 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

Question 1

Responses to Questions 1a. to 1h. were generally good.

Question 1a.

man wati watingku

woman kungka kungkangku

I/me ngayulu ngayinya

meat kuka kukaku

camp ngurakutu ngurangka

firewood waṟu waṟuku

One mark was given for each correct pair of words.

Question 1b.

The form kungka is used as the subject of an intransitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 11, kungka waḻikutu yanu ‘The woman went towards the house’) and as the object of a transitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 6, watingku kungka nyangu ‘The man saw the woman’).

The form kungkangku is used as the subject of a transitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 5, kungkangku ngayinya nyangu ‘The woman saw me’).

Some students missed some key points in their answers. For example, the question asked for an explanation of the two different forms of the Yankunytjatjara word for women. The explanation is not complete unless the students point out that the form kungka is used for both objects and intransitive subjects (Sentence 11), whereas kungkangku is used for transitive subjects (sentences 4 and 5).

Question 1c.

The form ngayulu is used as the subject of an intransitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 1, ngayulu kuwari yananyi ‘I’m going now’) and as the subject of a transitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 7, ngayulu makaṯi katingu ‘I took the rifle’).

The form ngayinya is used as the object of a transitive sentence (e.g. Sentence 5, kungkangku ngayinya nyangu ‘The woman saw me’).

Question 1d.

The different patterns here relate to the fact that ngayinya/ngayulu is a pronoun, whereas words such as kungka/kungkangku are nouns. The word for ‘woman’, a noun, has the pattern where the subject of the transitive sentence (ergative, marked with -ngku) is different from the subject of an intransitive sentence or the object (absolutive) of a transitive sentence. The words for ‘I’ and ‘me’, pronouns, have a pattern where the subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs pattern together (nominative) and the object has a different pattern (accusative).

Kungka is both the subject of an intransitive verb and object; kungkangku is the agent (subject of a transitive verb).

Students need to make sure to answer all aspects of a question. This question asked students to ‘consider what part of speech or word class’ the words for ‘woman’ (noun) and ‘I/me’ (pronoun) belong to. Not all the students did so in their answers, but an understanding that the difference in the grammar between pronouns and nouns is a key aspect to answering this question.

This question specifically mentions parts of speech, but most students did not correctly answer that pronouns (as one part of speech) behave differently from another part of speech, nouns.

Question 1e.

The word ngurakutu means ‘to camp’ (e.g. Sentence 10) while ngurangka means ‘at the camp’ or ‘in the camp’ (e.g. Sentence 12). (Students may note that the -kutu form may be an allative form while the -ngka form may be a locative form; however, this terminology is not required provided the response shows a good understanding of the conceptual distinction, for example, through suitable English translations.)

Question 1f.

In Yankunytjatjara, the suffix -ku on a noun indicates purpose. (Optional: this is known as ‘purposive case’ in some Australian languages.) This is different from English, which uses a separate word, the preposition ‘for’.

Question 1g.

In Yankunytjatjara, word order in this data set follows the pattern ‘Subject-Object-Verb’. An example is Sentence 7, ngayulu ‘I’ makaṯi ‘rifle’ katingu ‘took’ = ‘I took the rifle’.

(Note: students should avoid confusing grammatical objects with other words that may appear in a pre-verbal position, such as kuwari ‘now’ in Sentence 1 or ngurangka ‘at the camp’ in Sentence 12).

Question 1h.

Students needed to provide any sentence that includes words other than subject, object and verb.

For example, in Sentence 1, ngayulu kuwari yananyi ‘I’m going now’, the word for ‘now’ is kuwari and this appears after the subject and before the verb. In the English translation provided, however, the word ‘now’ appears after the verb, at the end of the sentence. (English also allows ‘Now I’m going’, where ‘now’ appears at the start of the sentence.)

Similar examples include Sentences 2 and 8–13. Where a sentence has both an object and an additional word (e.g. a noun marking the location of an event), the additional word appears between the object and the final verb in this data. A noun ending in -ku, indicating a purpose, may either appear before the final verb (Sentence 8) or at the end of the sentence after a comma (Sentence 10).

Sentence 12 includes a locative, ‘at the camp’, which is not subject, object or verb. The student would need to point out that the order is ‘subject-object-locative verb’ in Yankunytjatjara.

Question 2

In general, the responses to Questions 2a., 2b., 2d. and 2e. did not score highly. The answers to Question 2c. were generally good.

Question 2a.

* -ningi marks the past progressive/continuous tense
* -ngu/-nu marks the simple past tense

Full marks required the functions of both suffixes.

This question was generally answered poorly, without both suffixes being explained.

Question 2b.

In English, the present and future tenses are marked differently, for example, ‘is going’ vs. ‘will go’. In Yankunytjatjara, the same form, -nyi, may indicate an event either in the present or the future.

Some students may point out that in English, auxiliary verbs are used in combination with suffixes, such as ‘will + go’ versus ‘is + going’. However, this answer is not sufficient to get full marks unless students point out that present and future events in Yankunytjatjara are expressed with the same form, -nyi.

This question was mostly not answered correctly, and it seemed that students did not pay careful attention to the question. It was clear in the way the question was asked that the ending -nyi had the meaning ‘will do something’ and ‘is doing something’, as in the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| wati wala yananyi | The man is going quickly.The man will go quickly. |

Question 2c.

The -ku form is used when the future event is possible but not certain, as reflected by the English translation ‘might’.

(Note: this -ku suffix on verbs is not to be confused with the -ku suffix on nouns, which marks a purpose, as discussed in Question 1e.).

Question 2d.

The woman is returning. (kungka kuḻpanyi)

The snake saw the man. (kaṉpangku wati nyangu)

The man heated tea at the house. (watingku tii walingka kutjangu)

(Note: kutjanu or kutjaṉu would also be accepted. Yankunytjatjara has different verb classes and the actual Yankunytjatjara form for ‘heated’ is kutja-ṉu, but the data above would suggest either kutja-ngu or kutja-nu.)

Typical mistakes in this question were not using the ergative required in the second and third sentences, and using the ergative in ‘the woman is returning’. There seemed to be a general lack of understanding of the importance of transitivity in deciding what marking to put on different subjects.

Question 2e.

kungkangku waṟu ngurakutu kuwari katinyi (The woman is taking (the) firewood to (the) camp now.)

ngayulu kuka mantangka waniku (I might throw (the) meat on the ground.)

This question was generally not well answered. Students failed to notice that the -ku at the end means ‘might’. Despite Question 2c., which was about the -ku ending on verbs, and which most students answered correctly, students failed to translate ngayulu kuka mantangka waniku as ‘I might throw ...’.

Question 3

Responses to Questions 3a. to 3j. were generally good, Because this is a question relating to 19th-century sources, students needed to be aware that the spelling of words will not always be consistent.

For example, in sentences 5 and 6 in Table 2, students have assumed there is a meaningful distinction between narmbindyu and narmbindju (a word meaning ‘the old bird’, marked with the ergative), whereas in fact these are different spellings that are found in the original manuscript. Because these appear to be two different suffixes, students who identified -dju and -dyu as suffixes in Question 3i. were awarded marks. But students need to be aware of potential spelling differences.

Question 3a.

yanguren

Question 3b.

-angur. Students could also identify this suffix as -ngur.

Question 3c.

Yanguren (us) is an independent, stand alone, free word, but -angur (we) is a suffix. Students might point out that ‘we’ is a subject and ‘us’ is an object. Both yanguren and -angur contain the common element angur. It is not necessary to point this out

Question 3d.

Any two of:

* yikandok (my)
* yikedha (with me)
* ngyikin (me)

Question 3e.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| kadhino | To (the) creek |
| banggo | To (the) man |
| larngo | To (the) camp |
| kadhinaka | In (the) water |

Answers that did not include the definite article ‘the’, such as ‘to creek’, ‘to man’, were accepted. To get a mark for each of these, the student needed to have both the preposition and the noun. The answer ‘creek’ for kadhino received no marks.

Question 3f.

The similarities between the two is the root word kadhin-, meaning ‘water’ or ‘creek’.

Question 3g.

The similarity between these two words is that they share the same root word, pial-, meaning ‘stick’ and ‘tree’.

Question 3h.

They both have the same allative word ending ‘to’. Students may exemplify to this ending either as -o or -go. In fact, the ending is -ngo on the word for ‘camp’, lar, and -go on the word for ‘person’, bang.

Question 3i.

Full marks were given for answers that included two of the following suffixes:

* -in ‘past tense’
* -ok ‘imperative’
* -aka ‘locative’ (or meaning ‘in’)
* -u ‘instrumental’ (or meaning ‘with’)

The question clearly asked for ‘two examples of suffixes’. A single example could not be awarded full marks.

Question 3j.

Come to the creek. yanok kadhino

He gave the stick to the dog. wuin werangano pial OR wuin werangango pial

Full marks could only be given for all words being correctly spelled (except for the variation in the possible spelling of the word for ‘to the dog’).

Many students thought that wuin meant ‘he’, not the past tense of ‘gave’. The meaning ‘he’ is unmarked, but students assumed there must be a pronoun meaning ‘he’. The students should know that the explicit use of third-person singular pronouns isn’t required in many Aboriginal languages, and that a sentence with seven words in English will not necessarily be translated with seven words in language. The word wuin occurs in the sample sentence 8 in Table 2 and students should have been able to work out what it means.

Question 4

Responses to Questions 4a. to 4g. were generally very good.

Question 4a.

Extension of meaning

Question 4b.

Compounding

Question 4c.

Students needed to explain first that the words biidi (scratch) and baamgal (space) have their meanings extended to ‘write’ and ‘room’, respectively, and second that these two were then compounded to form a new word, literally ‘writing room’ (i.e. office).

In general, this question was not answered well. Few students mentioned the traditional meaning of the words and therefore they were not able to adequately discuss the way in which the meaning was extended to the modern meaning.

Question 4d.

biidi-bagul The meaning is ‘desk’, literally the flat space where writing is done. We could also accept ‘paper’ or ‘page’, the flat item on which writing is done.

biidi-damaan The meaning is ‘keyboard’, literally the buttons (shells) with which writing is done. ‘Typewriter’ could also be accepted.

biidi-wurruun The meaning is ‘office building’, literally the house space in which writing is done. We could also accept ‘school’ or ‘university’.

Two marks were given for each answer with a plausible meaning and a clear explanation about how that meaning is reached, so if the student answered ‘page’, then they would need to say that a page is a flat object on which writing is done.

In the case of biidi-damaan, the students had a more challenging task to come up with an answer, as this was one of the more difficult parts of the exam. They might associate ‘button’ with the on/off buttons on phones or note that buttons that you write with are like the keyboard on a phone. This was intended to be a more challenging question.

Question 4e.

Maayalaw is a machine; historically, machines had a tendency to shake back and forwards, a printer is then a writing machine.

Most students did not mention the connection between the word maayal ‘shake’ with what (many) machines do (i.e. ‘move’ or ‘shake’ as in ‘printer’). While some students may not be aware of what older style printers did, and may rarely use printers, if they did not get the connection between ‘shake’ and ‘machine’, they could have offered a plausible explanation for the meaning extension for which they would have received marks.

Question 4f.

Driver’s license / license to drive

Question 4g.

Dagudi.

This is the only word that doesn’t sound like the English word when pronounced in the Gumbaynggir way.

Section 2

Question 5

While some of the responses to Question 5 were very good, some of the answers did not deal sufficiently with the main point of the question, namely ‘a widespread move towards using Indigenous place names for sites around Victoria’.

The answers appear to have collected a lot of ideas from working with the practise exams, discussing issues like community consultation, the need for borrowing words from other languages etc., that did not relate directly to the topic of the question. The students need to answer the questions as they are asked, and not assume that the essay questions will be the same every year.

Question 5a.

Answers should include some discussion of the range of resources available within the target language community; songs, stories, folk memories of a second- or third-hand nature, written resources from local press, perhaps historical societies or similar. Deciding what to include might involve some ranking of these resources.

There may be significant individuals, families or groups within the community whose input should be described.

As mentioned above, the records of explorers, pastoralists and newspaper accounts of activities in the area both from the 19th century and more recently are potential sources for the collection of vital information.

Mention could be made of the inconsistencies of spelling by Europeans, as well as the possibility the Indigenous words that are not actually place names could come to be given the status of place names by European hearers. This could result in Indigenous verbs or names of certain creatures being supplied to a white questioner because the Indigenous person involved misunderstood the thrust of their question. Perhaps also the tendency for words of an obscene or ribald nature being given to Europeans as an entertainment. European attitudes to the giving of names to actual places, rather than using words that might describe an activity, could colour the English language records.

Words might be given spurious meanings. Perhaps a person from the wrong language group was asked for a meaning (as in the case of Kaurna where Ngarrindjeri speakers Unaipon and Milerum were asked about the meaning of Kaurna placenames). Suggested meanings might actually be descriptive, referring to qualities of the landform or refer to functions of the place.

Clearly many cultural practices have been, and still may be of a sensitive nature, and consideration should be given to not using words that lead into such areas. There may be names that are appropriate for only some groups to use (for example, gender-specific names).

Question 5b.

Answers might include discussion of the fact that there might be individuals within the target language community whose knowledge and even ownership of material is more highly esteemed. Can material be exposed to general knowledge and use? Who should do the singing? Gender and age roles might be considered.

It might be necessary to discuss traditional kinship in relation to ‘ownership’ or ‘caretaking’ of a site.

The role of the site in the past is of primary importance. Does the site still have some significance of a peculiar nature? Are certain stories repeated at or about the site? Were/are the sites associated with stages of life transition?

Consideration could be given as to whether the name selected should be a noun, either a name traditionally used and thus remembered, or whether the name itself is a noun associated with some cultural practice or traditional story. Possibly an activity (a cultural practice or a part of a traditional story) could be the most significant notion associated with the site, and therefore an appropriate name.

Question 5c.

Students should describe interviewing individuals or groups to record folk memories as fully as possible.

A full selection of words, fragments of speech and names should be assembled. Nouns, verbs and adjectives would be among these, and their use within the language might inform the selection of an eventual suggested place name.

Electronic and written records of interviews and conversations might be used, as well as quotations from historical documents.

Students could discuss the selection of a group or individuals to perform a song, a play or to produce an audio or visual product to complement a presentation to the authorities.

Question 6

Responses to Question 6 were generally very good.

Question 6a.

Answers would make the point that first and foremost, Ŋalawurr acquired her mother’s language (Gumatj) first and then her own language Djapu (the language of her father) later in life (adolescence).

Answers would refer to the family relationships that lead to her having knowledge of multiple languages, that she may know some languages but choose not speak them in certain situations – such as knowing her mother ‘Gumatj’ but still speaking Djapu to her mother, that she has knowledge of all the languages in the area.

Her knowledge comes firstly from listening to language within her context. Mention should be made of family connections. Her recognition of her place and responsibilities within contemporary community life is also an important factor. Reference could be made to the impact of the dominant European culture, which has no doubt contributed to her contact with language/dialect groups.

Answers would need to include the fact that Dalawurr’s mother and father spoke different languages. Individuals grow up hearing mostly their mother’s language, though they also hear their father’s and grandparent’s ‘dialects’ being used. Reference should be made to the fact that Dalawurr’s identity as a Djapu child carries with it responsibilities in cultic life. The fact that the interviewee lists some 13 languages as being ones they grew up among must also influence language development and use.

Question 6b.

Answers would need to mention that Dalawurr makes the link between speaking Gumajt and the land at Birany Birany. Dalawurr describes ‘Gumatj men who belong to that land’ as if that belonging is the determinant in the language position of spouses and children. Dalawurr also talks of ownership and caretaker-hood of ceremonies and land. The interviewee’s own role and responsibility for the land and ceremonies turns on language use.

Question 6c.

Snooky’s story is very different from Daluwurr’s. Snooky grew up speaking Ngarrindjerri in the land of another language, Nunga country. The interviewee was not aware of his father’s origin, unlike Dalawurr, who seems to have always clearly known the language affinity of both parents, and for that matter, grandparents. Snooky ‘now’ lives in Adelaide where more language influences exist. Not only might that be the land of Kaurna language, but many locals speak Nunga English. The use of such a lingua franca must influence one’s own language use and development. Dalawurr makes no mention of such an influence. Snooky lacks the close affinity with land that is clear in Dalawurr’s story. In fact, Snooky only discovered his father’s cultural and linguistic background when studying his genealogy. No mention is made of links between language and cultic practice and either the land at Point McLeay or the Flinders Ranges.

Snooky gets his language originally from his mother, he didn’t know initially about his father. Students would also talk about how, in his particular case, the impact of dealing with his family history is a central factor in his language understanding and development. The importance of ‘Nunga English’, not perhaps a ‘pure’ Indigenous language, but one awash with influences from many should be mentioned. His experience of yearning for a language stimulated by hearing other kids use their non-English language, and the authorities’ unwillingness to accept his Indigenous language must also be mentioned. Snooky’s rider about the importance of language to a feeling of wellbeing and connection with the past and confidence about the future has clearly coloured his view of his language development.