



Problem 1. Wembawemba *expressing possession*

Wembawemba is an indigenous Australian language previously spoken in Victoria. There are no longer any fluent speakers of this language; the last speakers were recorded by Luise Hercus in the 1960's; in compiling her Wembawemba dictionary (and in her other writings on Victorian languages) Hercus also included the work of earlier recorders of the language.

Possession is marked by a set of pronoun suffixes or endings (with meanings akin to *my*, *your*, *his/her/its* etc.) which attach to the word referring to the possessed entity. However each of these suffixes takes at least three distinct forms.

Study these Wembawemba words and their English counterparts:

Wemba-wemba	English	Wemba-wemba	English	Wemba-wemba	English	Wemba-wemba	English
<i>wutyup</i>	stomach	<i>tyinə</i>	foot	<i>kurrm</i>	breast	<i>lar</i>	country
<i>wutyupek</i>	my stomach	<i>tyinəngək</i>	my foot	<i>kurmbuk</i>	her breast	<i>larnuk</i>	his/her country
<i>wutyupin</i>	your stomach	<i>tyinəngin</i>	your foot	<i>kurn</i>	throat	<i>mir</i>	eye
<i>wutyupuk</i>	his/her/its stomach	<i>tyinənyuk</i>	his/her/its foot	<i>kurnduk</i>	his/her/its throat	<i>mirnuk</i>	his/her/its eye
<i>tjel</i>	net	<i>ngani</i>	waddy	<i>paring</i>	track	<i>yiren-yiren</i>	eyebrows
<i>tjelek</i>	my net	<i>nganingek</i>	my waddy	<i>paringguk</i>	his/her/its track	<i>yiren-yirendek</i>	my eyebrows
<i>tjelin</i>	your net	<i>nganingin</i>	your waddy	<i>kurratyuk</i>	his/her/its fat	<i>yiren-yirendin</i>	your eyebrows
<i>tjeluk</i>	his net	<i>nganinyuk</i>	his/her waddy	<i>merterruk</i>	his/her/its bone	<i>yiren-yirenduk</i>	his/her/its eyebrows

NOTE: In the Wembawemba writing system *ng* represents the consonant sound in English *singer* and not the sequence of the two consonant sounds *n + g* as in *finger*. The sequence *ty* represents a single consonant sound close to English *ch* in *chin*. There are two distinct 'r' sounds in this language: the consonant sound written with a single 'r' symbol is quite different from the one written with two 'r' symbols. In other words 'rr' does not represent two consonant sounds, but just one. ə represents the vowel sound of 'e' in *open* or of 'er' in *singer*.



Part 1. The Wembawemba possessive pronoun endings each come in several forms.

- In Column 1, below, list all the forms which translate as English *his*, *her* or *its*
- In Column 2, write a word containing the possessive ending written in Column 1
- In Column 3, explain the environment or condition in which each form is used

Wembawemba endings	Example word	Sound environment in which form is used

Part 2. Write your answer to the question asked to the right of the question.

a. *kunənyuk* means 'its guts', what is the word for 'guts'?

b. *mirrkuk* means 'its egg', what is the word for 'egg'?

c. *kurrk* means 'blood', how do you say 'your blood'?

d. *mula* means 'hip', how do you say 'your hip'?

e. *ngapundek* means 'my grandchild', use a hyphen to break this word into the part meaning 'grandchild' and the part meaning 'my'

f. *kurratyuk* means 'its fat' use a hyphen to break into the part meaning 'fat' and the part meaning 'its'

Part 3. If we know that *ngarrəngək* means 'my hair', is the word for 'hair' *ngarrə* or *ngarrəng*? Give the reasoning behind your answer. (Recall that *ng* represents a single sound as in English *singer*).



Problem 2: Zoque word formation

Zoque is a language from southern central Mexico. There are several dialects of Zoque which are spoken by over 30,000 indigenous Mexicans. The Zoque language is a member of the larger Mixe-Zoque group of languages.

Zoque words can be very complex, incorporating parts which mark plural and also parts expressing meaning which in English are expressed by separate words (such as prepositions, e.g., *on, for...*). An example of an English complex word is *un-manag(e)-abil-ity*.

Study these Zoque words:

NOTE: ə represents the vowel sound of English 'e' in *open*; ʔ represents a glottal stop which is the sound we get in the middle of the expression of disagreement *nuh-uh*; ŋ is the consonant sound represented by 'ng' as in *sing*; š is the sound written 'sh' in *she*.

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|----------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. pən | <i>man</i> | 11. yomo | <i>woman</i> |
| 2. pəntaʔm | <i>men</i> | 12. yomohiʔŋ | <i>with a woman</i> |
| 3. pənkəsi | <i>on a man</i> | 13. yomotih | <i>just a woman</i> |
| 4. pənkotoya | <i>for a man</i> | 14. yomoʔune | <i>girl</i> |
| 5. pənhiʔŋ | <i>with a man</i> | 15. kahši | <i>hen</i> |
| 6. pənkəsitaʔm | <i>on men</i> | 16. kahšiʔune | <i>chick</i> |
| 7. pənkəsišeh | <i>as on a man</i> | 17. maŋu teʔ pən | <i>The man went</i> |
| 8. pənšeh | <i>manlike</i> | 18. maŋpa teʔ pən | <i>The man goes.</i> |
| 9. pənšehtaʔm | <i>like men</i> | 19. maŋkeʔtpa teʔ yomo | <i>The woman also goes.</i> |
| 10. teʔ pən | <i>the man</i> | 20. minpa teʔ ʔune | <i>The child comes.</i> |

PART 1. List all of the meaningful parts of these Zoque words and write their English equivalent beside it. Two examples are done for you.

Zoque	English	Zoque	English
pən	<i>man</i>	hiʔŋ	<i>with</i>

**PART 2:** Translate into Zoque:

English	Zoque
The child came	
The girl also went	
with children	
for women	

PART 3: Translate into English:

Zoque	English
maɲutih teʔ yomoʔune	
yomotihtaʔm	



Problem 3: Pitjantjatjara words borrowed from English

Pitjantjatjara is one of the Western Desert languages spoken by about 2,000 Australian Aboriginal people living in the northern part of South Australia and the southwest part of the Northern Territory.

Here are some examples of English words which have been incorporated into Pitjantjatjara. Some of them are pronounced in a similar way to their English counterparts, whereas others are pronounced in ways that are quite different.

English	Pitjantjatjara	English	Pitjantjatjara
<i>teacher</i>	tiitja	<i>John</i>	Tjaana
<i>paper</i>	piipa	<i>school</i>	kuula
<i>shovel</i>	tjapila	<i>bus</i>	paatja
<i>room</i>	ruuma	<i>tent</i>	tiinta
<i>crowbar</i>	kurupa	<i>flour</i>	palawa
<i>ration</i>	ratjina	<i>bucket</i>	pakata
<i>rabbit</i>	rapita	<i>drunk (inebriated)</i>	tarangka

NOTE: The vowel 'a' is pronounced like the vowel in *but* or *us* while 'aa' is a 'long a' pronounced more like the vowel written 'a' in *father*. The vowel written 'i' is pronounced like the vowel in *bit*, while *ii* is 'long i' which is more like the vowel sound in *bee* or *seed*. The vowel *u* is like the vowel in *put*, while the 'long u' written as *uu* is more like the vowel sound in *school* or *pool*. The long vowels, *ii*, *uu*, *aa*, in the Pitjantjatjara words tend to be longer than in the corresponding English word. The letters *tj* represent a sound similar to English *ch* in *chin* but a little closer to *t* especially if followed by the vowel *a*. You will notice that English 's' changes into the Pitjantjatjara *tj* sound.

By comparing the English and Pitjantjatjara pairs of words, we can learn quite a bit about the vowel and consonant sounds of Pitjantjatjara, and also about the way in which these sounds may or may not pattern to form words. We can also see that certain rules or processes are applied in converting English words into Pitjantjatjara ones.

HINT: To answer the questions below, it is important to think about how the English words *sound* and not just how they are written.



Question 1:

Under what condition must the initial vowel in these Pitjantjatjara words be a long vowel (written *aa*, *uu* or *ii*)?

Question 2:

All these Pitjantjatjara words borrowed from English end in 'a'.

Does this word final vowel have a single source or origin? Explain the reasoning behind your answer.

Question 3:

a. Which sequences of consonant sounds are not permitted in the Pitjantjatjara words?

b. Which examples illustrate this?

c. How have the Pitjantjatjara speakers changed the sequence of sounds to avoid an 'illegal' consonant sequence inherited from the English borrowing?



Question 4.

a. Which English sounds correspond to the Pitjantjatjara sound written 'p'?

b. What do the English sounds you have listed in answering Question 4a have in common? (HINT: Say them silently to yourself and note which part of your mouth moves in order to pronounce these sounds.)

Question 5.

a. If English *blood* were borrowed into Pitjantjatjara, how would the Pitjantjatjara word be written? _____

b. Set out your reasoning for the form you have written for *blood*.



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**Problem 4: Syntax *rules to transform strings***

This problem is about rules that turn things into other things. You start with a sequence (or ‘string’) of characters. If your string contains a character that appears on the left side of the arrow in a rule, you can turn that character into whatever is on the right side of the arrow in that rule. You can apply different rules to your string over and over again until no more moves are possible. You're *not* allowed to twiddle the order of the characters in your string.

Here are the rules:

$$S \rightarrow AB$$
$$A \rightarrow ab$$
$$A \rightarrow aAb$$
$$B \rightarrow bcd$$
$$B \rightarrow bBc$$
PART 1:

If you start with ‘S’, which of these strings is it possible to end up with using these rules? (Put a tick to the right of the possible strings, and a cross to the right of the impossible ones.)

1. abcd
2. abbcd
3. aabbbcd
4. aaabbbcd
5. abbbcdcc
6. aabbccdcc
7. aabbbbcdc
8. aaabbbbcd
9. aaabbbbcdc
10. aabbbbbcddcc
11. aaabbbbbcdcc

PART 2:

Here is a string that can *not* be generated by these rules: bbbcdccc

Can you add a rule to all the others so that this string *can* be generated?



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Problem 5: Japanese Tenji script

Braille is a tactile writing system, based on a series of raised dots, that is widely used by the blind. It was invented in 1821 by Louis Braille to write French, but has since been adapted to many other languages.



English, which uses the Roman alphabet just as French does, required very little adaptation, but languages that do not use the Roman alphabet, such as Japanese, Korean, or Chinese, are often organized in a very different manner!

To the right is a Japanese word written in the *tenji* ("dot characters") writing system. The large dots represent the raised bumps; the tiny dots represent empty positions.



A1. The following *tenji* words represent *atari*, *haiku*, *katana*, *kimono*, *koi*, and *sake*. Which is which? You don't need to know either Japanese or Braille to figure it out; you'll find that the system is highly logical.

a. _____	b. _____
c. _____	d. _____
e. _____	f. _____

A2. What are the following words?

g. _____	h. _____
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A3. Write the following words in *tenji* characters:

i. samurai	j. miso
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A4. Explain the logic behind this Tenji script.
