



Question 3 - Axolotl in the water (16 marks)

Nahuatl was the language of the Aztec empire, which dominated central Mexico in the fifteenth century. Some Nahuatl sentences have been translated into English below:

1	Nacatl itlacual in itzcuintli.	The dog eats the meat.
2	Xocolatl notlacual.	I eat the chocolate.
3	Niçuitta in itzcuintli.	I see the dog.
4	Quitta in itzcuintli in calli.	The dog sees the house.
5	Nechixcuepa in axolotl ipan in atl.	The axolotl ¹ in the water confuses me.
6	Ical in oquichtli ipan in tepetl.	The man's house is on top of the hill.
7	Quixcuepa in itzcuintli in cihuatl.	The dog confuses the woman.
8	Nipantlalia ipan in milli.	I ride (horseback) on the field.
9	Nechitta notah.	My father sees me.

3.1. Translate the following:

- a. Axolotl tlacualli ipan nocal.
- b. Itzcuintli napan.
- c. My father's father sees the axolotl.

3.2. Describe Nahuatl word and sentence formation as concisely and as clearly as possible; if you prefer, use formulae rather than prose. Someone with no background knowledge should be able to translate sentences 1-9 and a-c given your description and a dictionary.

¹ The axolotl is a freshwater salamander native to Lakes Xochimilco and Chalco in the vicinity of Mexico City.



Answer blank

Axolotl in the water (16 marks)

3.1 (6 marks)

a.	
b.	
c.	

3.2 (10 marks)

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Answers and marks

Axolotl in the water (15 marks)

3.1 (6 marks)

a.	In my house , the axolotl is food / eaten	1
b.	The dog is on top of me	2
c.	Quitta itah notah in axolotl [deduct 1 per error]	3

3.2 (10 marks)

• Word order is VSO (verb-subject-object).	1
• There is no copula 'to be.'	1
• Verbs take prefixes for the persons of their subjects and objects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• qu- for third person object,• ni- for first person subject,• nech- for first person object.• We also know that ni- appears before qu-.	2
• The bare form of each noun ends in -tl after vowels, -tli after consonants, and -li after -l.	1
• If the noun is possessed, it drops the suffix <i>-tl/tli/li</i> and takes a prefix for the person of its possessor: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>i-</i> for third person,• <i>no-</i> for first person. Then its possessor follows it.	1
• In exactly the same way, prepositions (<i>pan</i> , meaning 'in/on') agree with their objects, which then follow them.	2
• The bare form always appears with the preposed particle <i>in</i> , except sentence-initially (as in 1 and 2). The particle <i>in</i> never appears unless the noun is in its bare form.	2