

Classics Faculty – Linguistics

Lent term – Introduction to Morphology and Syntax

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## Lecture 4: **Nominal morphology – Case syncretism**

### **1. Introduction**

- Different cases have various different functions
- To an extent, then, all are ‘syncretic’
- συγκατατω I mix together.
- Some functions have been entirely swallowed up – e.g. locative
- Synchronic syncretism – different cases share endings according to paradigm
- See separate hand-out
- Diachronic syncretism – merging of formerly distinct grammatical categories

### **2. Synchronic syncretism**

- 2 predominant syncretisms – nom and acc and dat and abl
- Structuralists looked for one central meaning
- Syncretism comes from similarity of functions
- Feature analysis of Latin case system

### 3. The cases of proto-Indo-European

- Greek: Nominative, Vocative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative (5)
- Latin: Nominative, Vocative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative, Ablative (6)
- Different number of cases – Greek has swallowed up the functions of Latin?
- Nominative and accusative very similar in Greek and Latin

Nominative	Grammatical subject Predicative Topic
Accusative	Direct object in instances of maximum transitivity Subject under special circumstances Spatial extension (incl. acc. of respect)

- Accusative of respect expressed by ablative in Latin
- Extra functions are metaphorical extensions
- Other cases different in the two languages

	Greek	Latin
Genitive	Possessor Partitive Adnominal equivalent of an adverbial complement Local - Spatial extension, Source or origin	Possessor Partitive Adnominal equivalent of an adverbial complement
Dative	'indirect object' of 3-place verbs lesser degree of transitivity Personal closeness Ethic dative Agent in the passive.	'indirect object' of 3-place verbs lesser degree of transitivity Personal closeness Ethic dative
Ablative		Source or origin Locative Ablative of sphere Instrumental

- But Greek has not just syncretised functions of ablative into one other case
- Dividing up an original case unlikely
- In fact, Latin ablative has syncretised different functions
- Greek syncretism different
- Sanskrit: Nominative, Vocative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative, Ablative, Locative, Instrumental (8)
- Situation in Sanskrit usually reconstructed for PIE

- Thus the pattern of syncretism is the following:

Function	Latin	Greek
Nominative	→	
Accusative	→	
Genitive	→	
Dative	→	
Ablative	Ablative	Genitive
Locative	Abl. (+loc)	Dative
Instrumental	Ablative	Dative

#### 4. Reasons for case syncretism

- Sound change

e.g.

Latin	to	Italian
<i>musica</i>		<i>musica</i>
<i>musica</i>		<i>musica</i>
<i>musicam</i>		<i>musica</i>
<i>musicae</i>		<i>musica</i>
<i>musicae</i>		<i>musica</i>
<i>musicā</i>		<i>musica</i>

Ends of words generally not so salient  
cf Cohort Theory of word recognition

- The Rise of the Preposition

But NB which came first

e.g. in Greek do prepositions really 'take' case?

e.g. *παρά*: beside

Dative	at beside
Genitive	from beside
Accusative	along beside

- Overlapping of usage

#### 5. Form –the case of the Greek dative

- Greek dative = dative and locative functions
- Greek dative endings –  
First declension  $-\eta\iota > *-eH_2-ey$  (Lat. *ae*)  
Second declension  $-\omega\iota > *-o-ey$  (Sab. *oi*, Lat *ō*)  
Third declension  $-\iota > *-i$  (cf *Carthagine*)
- PIE dative ending  $*-ey$
- PIE locative ending  $*-i$
- Greek third declension 'dative' ending is really locative
- Greek dative case is a mixture of dative and locative forms as well as functions
- Therefore dative label confusing

## 6. Problems

- G marker -φι e.g. ναῦφι ‘aboard ship’
- Related to Vedic case markers:
- *-bhis* inst. pl. *-bhyas* dat./abl. pl., *bhyām* dat./abl./inst. du.

### Reading

Blake *Case*

Sihler *A New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*