

## PARTS OF SPEECH

*PIE had 8 cases: NOM, VOC, GEN, DAT, ABL, LOC, INSTR, ACC. Bold font indicates cases in Old English.*

**NOMINATIVE.** This is the *casus rectus*; all others are *casus obliqui* (oblique cases). Indicates the theme of the sentence—in non-inflected languages, it is sentence-initial. Delbrück writes that the nominative “does not indicate the subject of an action in theological sense, but rather in the sense that appears to the observer to be bearer and middle-point of the action that is expressed by the verb.” OE **Ø**, **-as**, -u, -a, -an, -e.

**VOCATIVE.** Nominal form for addressing a listener.

**ACCUSATIVE.** Has two functions: 1) the direct object of transitive verbs, and 2) the spatial or temporal resolution of the verb. Also a relational accusative, an accusative of contents, an accusative of extent. Meier-Brügger writes, “The original meaning of the accusative is probably that of direction, in the sense of spatial relation.” Delbrück thinks that it served to indicate the complement of the verb, as understood by the listener. There are primary goal accusatives and secondary goal accusatives. The locative bears some resemblance in terms of arrival at a place; there is also a directive case, which survived in Anatolian, and in fragments elsewhere (e.g., Lat. *domum*, ‘(to) home’ and *rus* ‘(to) the countryside’). In general, OE words/phrases indicating motion into or across will inflect in the accusative. Note that certain prepositions may take accusatives or genitives. OE *on* ‘on’ can take both dative and accusative, depending on the meaning. (Lat. *in* ‘in’ can take both an ablative and an accusative). In general, the matter is decided both by the preposition and by the meaning of the prepositional phrase. OE **Ø**, **-as**, **-e**, **-an**, **-u**, **-a**

**INSTRUMENTAL.** That which accompanies the verbal action. An inanimate object (by means of which the action is executed) or a person (who helps to execute the action). Also, constitution, accompaniment, a reason, and so forth.

**DATIVE.** With respect to people, writes Meier-Brügger, “the dative indicates an actor or actors who receive (action; [indirect] object dative) or possess (state; possessive dative).” Also, “when applied to abstract nouns, the dative indicates that the noun is the goal of an action (*dativus finalis*). In OE, the dative tends to indicate a static location, and it also expresses a locative and instrumental sense. In Gmc. generally, any motion will require the accusative, not the dative (Ich ging über die Brücke[acc.] vs. Ein Flugzeug kreist über dem Haus[dat.]). The Gmc dative includes the PIE dative, ablative, locative, and instrumental. One OE use to note is the location at the possessor, which may seem genitive: *him* [dat.] on þæt heafod ‘on his head’ (lit. ‘to-him on the head’). Also, can be the direct object of verbs involving separation (*ætwindan* ‘escape from’ with dative, lack, abdicate, etc.) and

verbs of serving (*þegnian* ‘serve’, *betæcan* ‘entrust’, etc.). NB., this is the “preeminent prepositional case” in Gmc. according to Lass—most prepositions will take the dative, unless they indicated motion-into.

Note also the dative absolute, which corresponds to the Lat. ablative absolute (& Gk. gen.absolute), i.e., “a kind of loose adverbial adjunct to another construction, normally with a perfective or progressive (location-in-time) sense ... ‘after X happened’ [or] ‘while X was the case’” (Lass)

OE **-e**, **-um**, **-an**

**ABLATIVE.** The place of origin of an action (esp. movement away from). In Gk, assumed by the genitive.

**GENITIVE.** Partative genitive indicates a part of the noun in the genitive case. From this arise uses to indicate possession, composition, and time. OE **-es**, **-ena**, **-a**, **-an**, **-e**

**LOCATIVE.** Situates the verbal action spatially and/or temporally. (In Lat., assumed by the ablative, e.g., *domi* ‘at home’; in Greek, assumed by the dative.)

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### References:

Delbrück, Berthold. *Die Grundlagen der griechischen Syntax* (Halle: Waisenhauses, 1879).

Lass, Roger. *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Meier-Brügger, Michael. *Indo-European Linguistics* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).