Case Assignment and Verb Classes in Dothraki

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Fourth Language Creation Conference
Groningen, The Netherlands
May 14, 2001
Voji Dothraki

- **Language of the Dothraki** from George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

- **Dothraki**: Nomadic horse warriors. Inspired by various Native American cultures and the Mongols of the Silk Road period.

- **Pre-literate;** contact with literate societies; near the end of their Iron Age.
Lekh Dothraki

- Head-initial: SVO, NA, NG, NR, Prep
- Inflectional language
- Full case system for nouns/pronouns
- Verbs conjugate for person/number
- Mix of suffixes, prefixes and circumfixes
Vekhikh Dothraki

- **Two broad noun classes: Animate and inanimate.**

- **Part semantics; part phonology; part history.**

- **Differ in case endings and number.**
**Vekhikh Hranna**

- **Inanimate nouns simpler: Don’t distinguish number on the noun.**

- **Sample words: qeso “basket”; os “path”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>qeso / os</td>
<td>qeso / os</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>qes / os</td>
<td>qes / os</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>qesi / osi</td>
<td>qesi / osi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allative</td>
<td>qesaan / osaan</td>
<td>qesaan / osaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>qesoon / osoon</td>
<td>qesoon / osoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Animate nouns have separate plural forms for most cases.**

**Sample words: rizh “son”; ko “bodyguard”**

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<td>rizhes / koes</td>
<td>rizhis / koes</td>
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<td>rizhoon / kosoon</td>
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</table>
Tihikhziri

- **Nominative (varies): Subject**
- **Accusative (—/-es): Direct Object**
- **Genitive (-i): Possessor**
- **Allative (-aan/-ea): Motion Towards**
- **Ablative (-oon/-oa): Motion Away From**
Tikkheya Dothraki

- Agree with person/number of subject.
- Agree with polarity (positive/negative).
- Imperative (informal/formal), infinitive and participle (archaic).
Based on Beth Levin’s *English Verb Classes and Alternations* (1993).

Classes defined by usage.

Not exhaustive.
Veneser Ataki

Case(s): **Allative**

Semantics: **Recipient**

**azhat** “to give”

**Rakh azh yot nayataan.** “The boy gave a fruit to the girl.”

**Rakh chom nayataan.** “The boy respected the girl.”

**Other verbs:** **assilat** “to signal”; **davralat** “to be useful”; **emat** “to smile/approve”
Allative Recipient
Case(s): Accusative~Allative
Semantics: complete~irresultative

Vindelat “to stab”

Rakh vinde yot. “The boy stabbed the fruit.”

Rakh vinde yotaan. “The boy stabbed at the fruit”

Other verbs: lojat “to hit”; fakat “to kick”; fatat “to slap”; fatilat “to insult”; frakhhat “to touch”; sikhtelat “to spit”
Accusative~Allative
Veneser Senaki

- **Case(s):** **Accusative** ~ **Ablative**
- **Semantics:** **complete** ~ **partitive**

**RISSAT** “to cut”

- **Rakh risse yot.** “The boy sliced the fruit.”

- **Rakh risse yotoon.** “The boy cut into the fruit.”

**Other verbs:** **charat** “to hear”; **tihat** “to see”; **adakhat** “to eat”; **ostat** “to bite”; **yanqolat** “to gather”; **lekhilat** “to taste”
Accusative~Ablative
Veneser Toraki

- **Case(s):** Accusative~Genitive
- **Semantics:** object~topic

  charat “to hear”

- Rakh char nayat. “The boy heard the girl.”

- Rakh char nayati. “The boy heard about the girl.”

- Other verbs: qafat “to ask”; tihat “to see”; astolat “to speak”; astilat “to joke”; other communicative verbs, e.g. donat “to shout”
Venesar Mekaki

Case(s): Genitive
Semantics: motion beside another body

lanat “to run”

Rakh lan nayati. “The boy ran beside the girl.”

Other verbs: dothralat “to ride”; anat “to jog”; ifat “to walk”; elat “to go”; other verbs of motion, e.g. chetirat “to canter” or karlinat “to gallop”
Bodies in Motion
Veneser Zhindaki

Case(s): Ablative
Semantics: source

NIRAT “to be full”

Heffof nir evethoon. “The jug was full of water.”

Other verbs: MENAT “to be empty”; DOGAT “to suffer”; FEVELAT “to thirst”; GARVOLAT “to hunger”; DRIVOLAT “to die”; GERAT “to lack”; ZIGERELAT “to need”; ILDAT “to strike”; KHEZHAT “to be sad”; NITHAT “to feel pain”
Source
Dirge Ha Nakhaan

- Only so many cases; a number of possible thematic roles for a given verb frame.

- Hierarchy: Canonical case role >> non-canonical case role >> object of preposition >> subordinate clause.

- Non-canonical case functions derive from original, canonical case functions.
Fonás Chek!