

CHAPTER 2

Cases; First Declension; Agreement of Adjectives

CASES AND INFLECTION

Consider the following sentence: "The girl saw the dog".

How can you tell that this sentence does not mean that the dog is seeing the girl?

The answer is obvious to an English speaker. "Girl" comes before the verb, and "dog" comes after it, and this arrangement tells us that the "girl" is performing the action of verb, and the "dog" is receiving the action.

We say that the one who is performing the action of the verb is the "**subject**" of the verb.

So "girl" is the "subject" of "saw".

The dog, however, is the "**object**" of the verb, since it's the object of the action.

And in English, we generally show these functions - subject and object - by position relative to the verb.

The subject of the verb tends to come before the verb, the object tends to come after it.

But position isn't the only way we show which word is the subject and object of a verb.

Now consider this sentence: "Him I like, them I despise".

Obviously this sentence has an usual arrangement for rhetorical purposes, but how can you tell who is doing what to whom?

Even though English grammar shows grammatical relationship between words in a sentence mainly by position, in many instances a change in the word itself provides you additional help.

The word "him", although it comes first in the sentence, is not the subject because its form - "him" instead of "he" - is not the one used to indicate that it's the subject of the verb. We use the form "he" to show that. Furthermore, the word "I" is the form we use when the first person is subject of the verb.

Hence, the words "he" and "I" change their forms as their grammatical function in the sentence changes.

The change in form of a word to show grammatical functions is called "inflection".

The English personal pronouns change quite a lot to show you how they're being used in the sentence.

Watch :

	FORM	FUNCTION
First Person Pronoun	I	subject
	my	possessor (it owns something
	me	object (something is being done to it)
	we	subject
	our	possessor
	us	object
Second Person Pronoun	you	subject
	your	possessor
	you	object
	you	subject
	your	possessor
	you	object
Third Person Pronoun	he, she, it	subject
	his, her, its	possessor
	him, her, it	object
	they	subject
	their	possessor
	them	object

This inflection (change of form to show grammatical function) in the pronouns is very useful for helping us to understand each other - although, as you can see, the second person pronoun "you, etc" doesn't inflect nearly so much as the first and third. The plural forms are even identical to the singular forms. We can still get by.

In English, inflection is rather limited, and we rely on position mainly to tell us what the words in the sentence are doing to each other. The only grammatical functions that involve a change in form for all nouns is the possessive case and the plural forms, where we attach an "-s" to the end of the word. (In written English we even include an apostrophe "' " mark to help us see the difference between a pluralized noun and a noun that's in the possessive case.)

For example

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
apple	subject	apples	subject
apple's	possessor	apples'	possessor
apple	object	apples	object

Watch how we combine position with inflection in English to make sense to one another. As you can see, position is the principal guide.

"These apples' [*plural, possessor*] cores are hard, but apples [*plural, subject*] are usually soft. When you [*singular, subject*] buy apples [*plural, object*], you [*singular, subject*] should first pick up each apple [*object, singular*] and bounce it [*singular, object*] off the floor several times. Then check its [*singular, possessor*] skin. If it [*singular, subject*] is bruised, discretely put it [*singular, object*] back with the other apples [*plural, object*], making certain that no one [*singular, subject*] is watching you [*singular, object*]."

Unlike English, languages which rely primarily on inflection of words to show grammatical relationship are called "**inflected**" languages.

English, though it has some inflection, is not an inflected language.

Latin, however, is an inflected language, because it relies almost entirely on changes in the words themselves to indicate their grammatical function in a sentence.

The different grammatical functions a word can have in a sentence is called "**case**".

In English there are three recognizable different cases, that is grammatical functions, a word can have: the subjective case, the possessive case, and the objective case. So we say there are three cases in English.

In Latin there are six difference cases. Here are the Latin cases.

(Don't try to memorize them all at once here. Just read through the list; there will be plenty of time to firm up your familiarity of them.)

LATIN	APPROXIMATE ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
Nominative	(Subjective)
Genitive	(Possessive Case)
Dative	(Object of words like "to" or "for")
Accusative	(Objective Case)
Ablative	(Adverbial Usages: "by", "with")
Vocative	(Direct Address)

We'll look at the way these cases are used in Latin in the next part of these notes, although some of them won't be difficult at all: the nominative, genitive, and accusative cases are almost the same as their English counterparts.

The ablative, dative and vocative will need some explanation. Before then, however, let's look at how a Latin noun inflects to show all these different cases.

Let's look at some English pronouns which inflect to show the three different cases.

Do you remember "they, their, them?"

The pronoun is inflecting through its different cases, but we can definitely spot a pattern of similarity among the three forms. There is a definite root of the word. The root (that is, the part of the word that contains the meaning of the word) is "the-" to which then the endings "-y", "-ir" and "-m".

So we could say that the word is inflecting by adding certain case endings to a stem.

The stem contains the core of the meaning of the word, and the endings merely inflect or alter its grammar.

This is precisely how Latin nouns show their different cases: they add additional letters to the end of the basic form of the word. This basic form that does not change throughout its inflection is called the "stem". There are, consequently, two parts of a Latin word that you must note: the stem and the case ending. The stem contains the meaning of the word and its gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter).

The case ending will tell you

- (1) how the noun is being used in its sentence, and
- (2) whether the noun is singular or plural.

Let's watch the Latin noun "puella" (girl) as it inflects through its different cases:

SINGULAR		APPROXIMATE ENGLISH TRANSLATION	
NOMINATIVE	puella		girl
GENITIVE	puellae		of the girl
DATIVE	puellae		to/for the girl
ACCUSATIVE	puellam		girl
ABLATIVE	puella		by/with the girl
VOCATIVE	puella		girl
PLURAL			
NOMINATIVE	puellae		girls
GENITIVE	puellarum		of the girls
DATIVE	puellis		to/for the girls
ACCUSATIVE	puellas		girls
ABLATIVE	puellis		by/with the girls
VOCATIVE	puellae		girls

The stem of the Latin word is clearly visible. It's "puell-" to which different endings are being attached. The endings are:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
NOMINATIVE	-a	-ae
GENITIVE	-ae	-arum
DATIVE	-ae	-is
ACCUSATIVE	-am	-as
ABLATIVE	-a	-is
VOCATIVE	-a	-ae

There are many other nouns in Latin which follow this same pattern of case endings when they inflect. This pattern of endings is called the "first declension" (deh CLEN shion) and you can see the strong presence of an "-a-".

There are four other declensional patterns in Latin, but a noun will belong to only one of them.

Hence we can say that "puella" is a first declension noun.

The other declensions are called, not surprisingly, the second, third, fourth and fifth declension, and are distinguished from one another in part by the thematic, or characteristic, vowel that appears in its endings.

REVIEW

This is a lot of information to absorb in one sitting. Stop now for a while, then read through this review statement before starting on the next section of this chapter.

A language whose nouns show their grammatical function in the sentence by changes in the noun itself, and not by position, is called an **inflected** language.

The different grammatical functions a language recognizes are called **cases**.

In English, there are three cases. They are the subjective, the possessive, and the objective.

In Latin there are six cases. They are the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative and vocative cases.

A Latin noun has two parts which you must note: it has a **stem**, which contains the noun's basic meaning and its gender; and it also has a **case ending** which tells you the noun's case and its number.

A pattern of endings which are added to the end of a noun to show its grammatical function is called a **declension**.

Each noun in Latin belongs to one declension.

The declensions are called the first, second, third, fourth and fifth declensions.

THE FIRST DECLENSION

Let's have a look at another first declension noun: "pecuni-" (money).

SINGULAR				
	STEM +	CASE ENDING	=	INFLECTED FORM
N/V.	pecuni +	-a	=	_____
GEN.	pecuni +	-ae	=	_____
DAT.	pecuni +	-ae	=	_____
ACC.	pecuni +	-am	=	_____
ABL.	pecuni +	-a	=	_____
PLURAL				
	STEM +	CASE ENDING	=	INFLECTED FORM
N/V.	pecuni +	-ae	=	_____
GEN.	pecuni +	-arum	=	_____
DAT.	pecuni +	-is	=	_____
ACC.	pecuni +	-as	=	_____
ABL.	pecuni +	-is	=	_____

Let's try a few more paradigms. Decline the nouns "patri-" (fatherland) and vit-" (life).

SINGULAR			
	patri-		vit-
N/V.	_____		_____
GEN.	_____		_____
DAT.	_____		_____
ACC.	_____		_____
ABL.	_____		_____
PLURAL			
N/V.	_____		_____
GEN.	_____		_____
DAT.	_____		_____
ACC.	_____		_____
ABL.	_____		_____

GENDER

All Latin nouns possess what is called "gender".

That is, a noun will be masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Don't confuse this kind of grammatical gender with biological gender.

There is nothing biologically feminine about nouns which are grammatically feminine, nothing biologically masculine about nouns which are grammatically masculine, and nothing biologically neuter about nouns which are grammatically neuter.

It's just that nouns have a feature which we call gender by convention. And this is a feature which cannot change in a noun. A noun may change its case or number, but a noun will never change its gender. This is a fixed feature, and you must be told what gender a noun is when you look it up in the dictionary. This is important to remember, because although the vast majority of first declensions nouns are feminine, not all of them are. You must memorize the gender of each noun as you would learn its meaning.

DICTIONARY CONVENTIONS FOR GENDER AND DECLENSION

The dictionary therefore must tell you many things about a noun you're looking up -- and you must know how the dictionary tells you what you need to know. Latin dictionaries follow the following conventions for listing nouns.

- (1) The first entry in the dictionary is the noun in the nominative case.
- (2) The second entry is the genitive singular ending.
This is essential, because many of the declensions have identical nominative singular endings. There is no way to be certain, therefore, to which declension a noun belongs simply by looking at the nominative singular.
But in all declensions, the genitive singular endings are different.
The genitive singular ending of the first declension is "-ae",
that of the second declension is "-i",
that of the third is "-is",
that of the fourth is "-us",
and that of the fifth is "-ei"
If you know the genitive singular of a noun you know what declension the noun follows.
Another reason you must have the genitive singular form given to you is that the stem of the noun is often not visible in the nominative singular. Sometimes the stem changes slightly from the nominative to the other forms. Again, you cannot predict what kind of stem change will occur simply by looking at the nominative. But you will be able to see it in the genitive singular. (This kind of stem change never occurs in the first declension, but it does in the second and the third.)
- (3) The last entry is the gender of the noun, which cannot be deduced even if you know everything else about the noun. You must be given it.

Put all this together, and typical dictionary entries for first declension noun will look like this:

patria, -ae (f)
pecunia, -ae (f)
poeta, -ae (m)
agricola, -ae (m)

Now look up the following nouns in your dictionary and write out the grammatical information you are given.

ENGLISH	FULL ENTRY	DECLENSION	STEM
band	_____	_____	_____
brother	_____	_____	_____
care	_____	_____	_____
city	_____	_____	_____
day	_____	_____	_____
dread	_____	_____	_____

TRANSLATION OF THE CASES

What I'm going to give you now is just the bare outline of how these cases can be translated into English. There will be plenty of time for further refinement in the future - and we'll have to do some refinement - but for the time being, these guide lines will get you well on your way.

NOMINATIVE CASE

A noun in the nominative case is often the subject of a verb.

For example, in the English sentence "The tree fell on my car", the "tree" is in the nominative case because it's the subject of the verb "fell". If this were a Latin sentence, the word tree would be in the nominative case form. The rule of thumb for now is that if you see a noun in the nominative case, try to translate it as the subject of the verb in its sentence.

GENITIVE CASE

This case shows that one noun belongs to another noun.

The noun which is the owner is put into the genitive case.

Like this in English: "The car's door is open". "Door" is the nominative case because it's the thing which is open - it's the subject of the verb "is" - and the door belongs to the car, so "car's" is put into the genitive case. So for now, every time you see the genitive case, translate the noun with the English preposition "of" or use the genitive marker "'s". For example, if "portae" is in the genitive case, translate it either as "the door's" or "of the door".

DATIVE CASE

The dative case shows that a noun is indirectly affected by the action of the sentence.

Take for example, in the English sentence "George gave the ball to the girl". George is the subject of "give" and the thing George is giving is the "ball". So the thing most directly affected by George's action is the ball. It's the direct recipient of the action. But George then gave the ball to the girl, so the girl is also being affected, but only indirectly. Therefore, the girl is the "indirect object" of the action of the sentence.

English can also indicate the indirect object simply by position: by putting the indirect object before the direct object. Like this: George gave the girl the ball.

In Latin, the word for "girl" would be in the dative case, and so would have the dative case ending of the declension to which the word "girl" belongs. So the form would be "puellae".

Again, a rough rule of thumb: when you see the dative case, try to translate it with the prepositions "to" or "for" and see which of the two makes the most sense.

ACCUSATIVE CASE

The noun which is directly affected by the action of a verb is put into the accusative case.

In English we call this case the "direct object" which is a little more descriptive of its function. It's the direct object of some action. In the example above, the "ball" is in the accusative case because it's the direct object of George's action of giving.

In Latin, therefore, the word for ball would have the characteristic accusative case ending attached to its stem. The accusative case is also used after some prepositions, but we'll look at that later.

ABLATIVE CASE

The ablative case is rather complicated.

Let's just say for now that when you see a noun in the ablative case, translate it by using the prepositions "with" or "by". We'll study the various meanings of the ablative case separately in later chapters.

VOCATIVE CASE

If you want to call someone or something by name to get some attention, then you use the vocative case. "Dog, get out of the house!" "Dog" is in the vocative case.

The form of the vocative case - that is, the ending you attach to the stem to form the case - is almost always identical to the nominative form of the word.

For that reason, the nominative and vocative forms are often listed together in a declensional pattern, instead of being given separate listings.

The vocative case is very easily distinguished from the nominative case, though, because a noun in the vocative is always set off from the rest of the sentence with commas and is often preceded by in the interjection "O" - the Latin equivalent of our "hey":

"O puellae, date poetae rosas" (Hey girls, give roses to the poet.)

So let's put all this together into a chart you can use when you're translating a Latin sentence. The sooner you've memorized this guidelines, the easier it'll be for you to work through Latin sentences:

THE CASES

Nominative	the subject of a verb
Genitive	use "of" or "-s" ("-s'") for the plural
Dative	use "to" or "for", or put the noun before the direct object
Accusative	the direct object of a verb or object of a preposition
Ablative	use the prepositions "with" or "for"
Vocative	use the English "hey" or "Oh"

AGREEMENT OF ADJECTIVES AND NOUNS

An adjective is a word which modifies or qualifies a noun.

"A red leaf." "leaf" is the noun and "red" is telling you something more about it. That's pretty simple. To indicate which noun an adjective is modifying we use position in English: i.e., we put the adjective right next to the noun.

"A red leaf with a brown stem fell off the tall tree onto the flat ground".

There is no question about which adjectives are modifying which nouns. No one, except perhaps a deconstructionist, would think the author is trying to say that the ground is red or that the stem is flat. Position makes this clear.

In Latin, however, where position is not so important, adjectives have to be put together with their nouns differently.

Instead of using position, Latin adjectives take on some of the characteristics of the nouns they're modifying: i.e., they undergo changes to match the noun they're modifying.

So what properties do nouns have in a Latin sentence.

Well, they have case - they have to have case to work in the sentence - and they have number (singular or plural) and they have gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). Remember this about gender: a noun can change its number and case, but it can only have one gender; it cannot change its gender.

So each noun has number, gender, and case.

An adjective has to be able to acquire the number, gender, and case of the noun it's modifying.

So how does it do that? It does it by declining. And in this respect it resembles a noun: nouns decline to get different numbers and cases; so do adjectives.

But there is an important difference. Latin nouns are either masculine, feminine or neuter, and they can never change their gender. The noun "porta, -ae (f)" is forever feminine. The noun "poeta, -ae (m)" is forever masculine, etc.

But for adjectives to be useful, they have to be able to become any one of the three genders; i.e., adjectives have to be able to be masculine, feminine or neuter to match the gender of the noun they're modifying.

And how do they do that?

They accomplish this by using endings from different declensions (and you'll learn these other declension in the next couple of chapters).

So here are two critical differences between adjectives and nouns:

- (1) each adjective can have any of the three genders, but each noun can have only one gender;
- (2) each noun will belong only to one declension, but adjectives can span declensions.

You'll see much more of this later, but for now you need to know that adjectives use endings of the first declension to become feminine, and, therefore, to modify nouns which are feminine in gender. So try this.

Decline the expression "big rose":

	magna	rosa
N/V.	_____	_____
GEN.	_____	_____
DAT.	_____	_____
ACC.	_____	_____
ABL.	_____	_____
N/V.	_____	_____
GEN.	_____	_____
DAT.	_____	_____
ACC.	_____	_____
ABL.	_____	_____

Now look at these endings for the adjective and the noun.

They look alike, don't they. But this is dangerously deceptive.

Get this in your head: agreement means same number, gender, and case, not look-alike endings, even though in this limited example and in all the examples in this chapter they do look alike.

Consider this problem. The noun for poet is a masculine noun in the first declension: "poeta, -ae (m)".

Now, for an adjective to agree with it, it must have the same number, gender and case. Right?

But adjectives with first declension endings are feminine. So, will the endings of an adjective modifying the noun "poeta" be the same as those as "poeta". I.e., will the pattern for "great poet" look like this?

	SINGULAR	
	magna	poeta
N/V.	magna	poeta
GEN.	magnae	poetae
DAT.	magnae	poetae
ACC.	magnam	poetam
ABL.	magna	poeta
	PLURAL	
N/V.	magnae	poetae
GEN.	magnarum	poetarum
DAT.	magnis	poetis
ACC.	magnas	poetas
ABL.	magnis	poetis

The answer is "no", because the forms "magna, magnae" etc. are feminine in gender because adjectives use first declension endings to become feminine in gender but the noun "poeta" is masculine.

Therefore the adjective will have to use endings from another declension and the forms will not look alike. You'll see all this in the next two chapters.

But remember: agreement means having the same number, gender, and case, not having the same endings. Okay?

VOCABULARY PUZZLES

tua, mea

The words "*tua*", which means "your" and "*mea*", which means "my" are the first and second person singular possessive adjectives, and they consequently must "agree" in number, gender and case with whatever is being possessed.

"*tu-*" and "*me-*" are the stems of the word, and the "*-a*" is the adjectival suffix.

What causes students concern is that they can't quite bring themselves to make the adjectival suffix of the singular possessive adjectives plural.

For example, they balk at "*meae rosae*" (my roses), because they assume somehow that the entire word "*me-*" must become plural.

This isn't necessary.

Think of it this way: the "*me-*" or "*tu-*" part of these words refer you to the person doing the possessing, the adjectival suffix refers to whatever is being possessed.

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