

LESSON 37

Accusative Case

37.1. Accusative as Direct Object

37.1.1. Simple Direct Object

The most basic function of the Accusative Case is to express the direct Object of a verb.

καί μοι ἐπίλαβε τὸ ὕδωρ. (Lys. 23.4.)
*And please stop **the water(-clock)**.*

37.1.2. Predicate Accusative

A second Accusative term may be added to the simple direct Object after factitive verbs such as ‘to make’, ‘to appoint’, ‘to think’, ‘to call’ (somebody something). (Cf. Lesson 36.3.)

... οἱ βουλευόντες γεραίτεροι αἰροῦνται αὐτὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς εἰς Μήδους στρατιᾶς. (X.Cyr. 1.5.5.)

... *the elders sitting in council chose [Hist. Pres.] him **commander** of the expedition to the Medes.*

37.1.3. Double Object

Some verbs may have a double Object, where the second Accusative is not predicative. Frequently, the first Object is a person, the second a thing, for example, ‘to teach’ somebody something, ‘to ask’ somebody something and (in Greek) ‘to deprive’ somebody (of) something or ‘to conceal’ something (from) somebody.

πᾶσι γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισιν αἰοιδὸν
τιμῆς ἔμμοροί εἰσι καὶ αἰδοῦς, οὐνεκ’ ἄρα **σφέας**
οἴμας μοῦς’ ἐδίδαξε, φίλησε δὲ φύλον αἰοιδῶν.
(Hom. *Od.* 8.479–481.)

*For among all people on the earth singers
are participants in honour and respect, just because the muse
taught **them the ways** <of singing>, and loved the race of singers.*

The second Object is an ordinary noun.

Τηλέμαχ’, ἦ μάλα δὴ **σε** διδάσκουσιν θεοὶ αὐτοῖ
ὑψαγόρην τ’ **ἔμναι** καὶ θαρσαλέως **ἀγορεύειν**.
(Hom. *Od.* 1.384–385.)

*Telemachus, assuredly the gods themselves are teaching **you**
to be a boaster and **to speak** boldly.*

The second Object is a pair of Infinitive phrases (i.e. verbal noun phrases).

37.1.4. Retained Accusative

When a verb, which may take a double Object of person and thing, is used in the Passive Voice, the person becomes the Subject and the thing is ‘retained’ in the Accusative.

ἐν γὰρ τῇ πόλει τῇ ἡμετέρα αὐτῶν ... σεσυλήμεθα **τὰ ἡμέτερ’
αὐτῶν** ὑπὸ Φασηλιτῶν ... (D. 35.26.)

*For in our own city ... we have been robbed of **our own** <possessions> by the
people of Phaselis ...*

Active equivalent: ‘The people of Phaselis have robbed us of our own
<possessions>’ (double Acc.).

An equivalent Passive construction may be used with verbs, which in the Active take a direct Object of the thing in the Accusative and an indirect Object of the person in the Dative. For example, ἐπιστέλλειν in the Active Voice may mean ‘to give instructions (Acc.) to someone (Dat.)’.

καὶ οἱ μὲν Βοιωτοὶ καὶ Κορίνθιοι **ταῦτα** ἐπεσταλμένοι ... ἐκάτεροι ἀνεχώρουν. (Th. 5.37.1.)

*And the Boeotians and the Corinthians, having been given **these** instructions ... both withdrew.*

Active equivalent: ‘having given these instructions to the Boeotians and Corinthians’ (Acc. and Dat.).

37.1.5. Accusative with a Phrase Equivalent to a Verb

An Accusative term sometimes provides a virtual direct Object for a phrase, in which a verb with Object is equivalent to a simple verb.

ὕμεῖς δ' ἐπευφημήσατ', ὦ νεανίδες,
παιᾶνα τῆμῃ συμφορᾷ Διὸς **κόρην**
Ἄρτεμιν. (E.IA 1467–1469.)

*But you, O young women, sing
praise <to> **the daughter** of Zeus, **Artemis**, for my
situation.*

The phrase ἐπευφημήσατ(ε) ... παιᾶνα is equivalent to παιωνίσατε (‘praise’) with direct Object κόρην Ἄρτεμιν. Some scholars prefer to explain this construction in terms of a noun directly dependent on another noun (of action), without reference to a verb.

37.1.6. Accusative of Whole and Part

Sometimes a direct Object is more narrowly defined by a second Accusative in apposition with it. The usage is mainly poetic.

μέθεες **με**, πρὸς θεῶν, **χεῖρα**, φίλτατον τέκνον. (S.Ph. 1301.)

*Let **me** go, by the gods, <let go my> **hand**, dearest boy.*

37.1.7. Cognate Accusative

So far in this Lesson, all examples in §§37.1.1–3 and 37.5–6 have contained ‘external’ or ‘affected’ Objects. The action of the verb is exercised upon an already existing person or thing. An ‘internal’ or ‘effected’ Object denotes the content or result of the action of the verb: the grammatical Object

does not exist until the action of the verb takes place. Usually such an internal or effected Object is a noun either etymologically or conceptually related to (or ‘cognate’ with) the verb whose Object it is. Otherwise, the cognate Accusative may be a demonstrative or relative adjective used as a pronoun.

πλεῖς δ’ ὡς πρὸς οἶκον, ἐκλιπὼν τὸ ναυτικὸν
στράτευμ’ Ἀχαιῶν, **ἔχθος** ἐχθήρας **μέγα** ... (S.Ph. 58–59.)

*And you are sailing as for home, leaving the naval
expedition of the Achaeans, having developed a great hatred ...*

The Accusative ἔχθος is etymologically cognate with ἐχθήρας.

... ἀλλ’ αὐτός, ὦ παῖ, **τοῦτο** κήδευσον **λέχος**. (S.Tr. 1227.)
... but you yourself, my boy, undertake **this marriage**.

The Accusative λέχος is conceptually cognate with κήδευσον.

Λάμαχος μὲν **ταῦτα** εἰπὼν ὅμως προσέθετο καὶ αὐτὸς τῇ
Ἀλκιβιάδου γνώμῃ. (Th. 6.50.1.)

*Although having made **these** statements, Lamachus himself nevertheless sided
with the opinion of Alcibiades.*

The internal Accusative of the demonstrative adjective ταῦτα refers to the content of the verb. (In the second example in §37.1.4 above, ταῦτα is a retained internal Acc.)

Verbs sometimes have both an internal and an external Object. Verbs meaning ‘to divide, to distribute’ belong to this group.

τρεις μοίρας ὁ Ξέρξης δασάμενος **πάντα τὸν πεζὸν στρατόν**,
μίαν αὐτέων ἔταξε παρὰ θάλασσαν ἰέναι ὁμοῦ τῷ ναυτικῷ.
(Hdt. 7.121.2.)

*Dividing **all the infantry force** <into> **three parts**, Xerxes appointed one
of them to go along the sea<-coast> parallel with the fleet.*

The ‘infantry force’ existed before the division was made (external Object), but the ‘three parts’ did not exist until the division was made (internal Object).

37.1.8. Oaths

Verbs of swearing take various Objective constructions:

1. to swear to do something (mostly Intentive/'Fut.' Infin.), or that one is doing something (Imperf. Infin.), or did something (Aor. Infin.), or would have done something (Aor. Infin. with ἄν) or that one has done something (Perf. Infin.). See Lesson 16.3.
2. (a) to swear an oath (internal Acc.).

τὰς δὲ βασιληίας ἰστίας νόμος Σκύθησι τὰ μάλιστα ἐστὶ τότε ἐπεὰν τὸν μέγιστον ὄρκον ἐθέλωσι ὀμνύναι. (Hdt. 4.68.2.)

And it is the custom for the Scythians generally to swear by the king's hearth(s) then, when(ever) they want to swear the most serious oath.

(b) to swear to something, to confirm by oath (external Acc.).

εἰρήνην μὲν γὰρ ὤμωμόκει. (D. 9.16.)

For he had sworn to peace.

(c) to swear by someone or something (external Acc.).

καὶ λέγουσι οὗτοι ὡς τὸ ἐπίπαν μάλιστα τάδε, ὡς τὰς βασιληίας ἰστίας ἐπίωρקה ὃς καὶ ὄς, λέγοντες τῶν ἀστῶν τὸν ἄν δὴ λέγωσι. (Hdt. 4.68.1.)

And these [Scythians] for the most part generally say this, that so and so (stating whoever they actually state of the townsmen) has sworn falsely by the king's hearth(s).

3. An oath formula may also be used parenthetically in the Accusative. Various positive, negative or neutral particles may precede the oath.

μὰ τοὺς παρ' Ἄϊδη νερτέρους ἀλάστορας,

οὗτοι ποτ' ἔσται τοῦθ', ὅπως ἐχθοῖς ἐγὼ
παίδας παρήσω τοὺς ἐμοὺς καθυβρίσαι. (E.Med. 1059–1061.)

By the avengers below with Hades,

*this will certainly not ever be, that I should give up
my own children for my enemies to maltreat.*

37.2. Adverbial Uses of the Accusative

Several uses of the Accusative are more appropriately regarded as adverbial, expressing relationships of space, time, manner, degree and respect.

37.2.1. Accusative of Goal (or ‘motion towards’)

ἦκω Διὸς παῖς **τῆνδε** Θηβαίων **χθόνα** ... (E.Ba. 1.)
*I have come the son of Zeus **to this land** of the Thebans ...*

This usage is poetic.

37.2.2. Accusative of Extent of Space

Μενέλαε, μαστεύων σε κιχάνω μόλις,
πᾶσαν πλανηθεῖς **τῆνδε βάρβαρον χθόνα** ... (E.Hel. 597–598.)

*Menelaus, in my search I scarcely <manage to> reach you,
 after wandering **all over this foreign land** ...*

General area.

ἀπέχει δὲ ἡ Πλάταια τῶν Θηβῶν **σταδίους ἑβδομήκοντα** ...
 (Th. 2.5.2.)

*And Plataea is distant **seventy stades** from Thebes ...*

Specific distance. (70 stades = c. 13 km.)

37.2.3. Accusative of Extent of Time

... τὸν μὲν **πρῶτον ἐνιαυτὸν** ἐν Πειραιεῖ διητῶντο· (Lys. 32.8.)
 ... *they lived **for the first year** in the Piraeus.*

37.2.4. Accusative of Manner

... καὶ ἀντικαταστάντες ταῖς ναυσὶ **τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον** αὐθις
 ἐπὶ πολὺ διῆγον τῆς ἡμέρας πειρώμενοι ἀλλήλων ... (Th. 7.39.2.)

*... and taking their stand in opposition with their ships, **in the same way**
 they again continued for a large part of the day making attempts on each
 other ...*

37.2.5. Accusative of Degree

Degree is often expressed by the neuter Accusative singular or plural of adjectives of size and number, indefinite adjectives or negative adjectives.

πολὸν δὲ ἐν πλείονι αἰτία ἡμεῖς μὴ πείσαντες ὑμᾶς ἔξομεν·
(Th. 1.35.4.)

*But we shall hold you **much** more at fault if we do not persuade you.*

πολύ (adverbial Acc. of Degree) modifies the Comparative adjective πλείονι.

37.2.6. Accusative of Respect

With verbs used intransitively or in the Passive Voice or with adjectives, the Accusative may denote the respect in which the verb or adjective is defined. The usage ranges from the completely general ('in all respects'), through spheres of activity or attributes, to the body or especially a part of the body.

ἢ πολλὰ πολλοῖς εἰμι διάφορος βροτῶν. (E.Med. 579.)

*Certainly **in many respects** I am **in disagreement** with many among mortals.*

General; with adjective.

οὐ γὰρ δέσποιν' ἐμή
Μήδεια πύργους γῆς ἔπλευς' Ἴωλκίας
ἔρωτι **θυμὸν ἐκπλαγείς**' Ἰάσονος· (E.Med. 6–8.)

*For my mistress Medea
would not have sailed to the ramparts of the land of Iolcus,
struck in her heart with love for Jason.*

Particular; with Pass. Partc.

... ὁ Ἰστιαῖος ... τιτρώσκειται τὸν μηρὸν ὑπὸ τευ τῶν Μιλησίων.
(Hdt. 6.5.2.)

*... Histiaeus ... was wounded **in the thigh** by one of the Milesians.*

Here the Accusative of Respect denotes the part of the body of Histiaeus which 'was wounded' (Pass.; Hist. Pres.). Although this usage has been classified as adverbial, it is essentially the Passive form of the Accusative of

whole and part (classified as direct Object at §37.1.6 above). The Active form of the present sentence would be: ‘One of the Milesians wounded Histiaeus [Acc. of whole] <in> the thigh [Acc. of part]’: τῶν Μιλησίων τις τὸν Ἰστιαῖον τιτρώσκει τὸν μηρόν.

37.3. Accusative in Apposition to a Sentence

Sometimes, an Accusative appears to be independent of its sentence and to refer to a phrase, clause or even all the rest of the sentence. For some instances, the rationale of an ‘internal Accusative’ is plausible. In other instances, the Accusative may be regarded as being in apposition with another Accusative (or Object Infin.). But sometimes these explanations seem strained, except as background to a stereotyped construction.

καὶ τῶνδ’ ἔλεγχον τοῦτο μὲν Πυθῶδ’ ἰὼν
πεύθου τὰ χρησθέντ’ εἰ σαφῶς ἤγγειλά σοι. (S.O.T 603–604.)

*And as proof of this, first go to Pytho
and inquire, whether I clearly reported the oracle to you.*

Creon is addressing Oedipus. ‘This’ is Creon’s claim that he has no designs on the kingship of Thebes. ‘First’ translates τοῦτο μὲν (an adverbial Acc.). The first item of ‘proof’ is finding out whether Creon clearly reported the oracle to Oedipus. Thus, the whole content of the sentence after the ‘Accusative in apposition’ constitutes the ‘proof’. ἔλεγχον is not in apposition with any other Accusative in the sentence, and it hardly provides an ‘internal Accusative’ for any verbal element in the sentence.

References

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§985, 991, 1551–1635, 2894 (μά); 2922 (ναί); 2923 (νή).

EXERCISE 37

Translate the following passages. Comment briefly on the function of the Accusative phrases in **bold type** in each passage, for example, direct Object of what verb (citing the form in the text), Accusative in apposition with (the rest of) the sentence.

Example

διδάσκουσι δὲ τοὺς παῖδας καὶ σωφροσύνην· (X. Cyr. 1.2.8.)
And they teach their children moderation also.

Double direct Object of διδάσκουσι, person and thing.

1. τί δῆτα χρήζεις; ἢ **δόμους** στείχειν **ἐμούς;**
2. θανάτῳ γὰρ ἴσον **πάθος** ἐκπέυση.
3. ... τοὺς Ἀσσυρίους **ὑποχειρίους** ἐποίησαντο πλὴν τῆς Βαβυλωνίης μοίρης.

μοῖρα, -ας (Ionic -ης), ἡ *province*

4. ... λέξον ἡμῖν πόθεν ἤρξατό **σε** διδάσκειν **τὴν στρατηγίαν.**

πόθεν *how*

5. ... **τελευτήν** τοῦ βίου μέλλει τελεῖν ...

μέλλει *The Subject is masc.*

6. ... ἦσαν **τὴν** πρὸς τὸ ὄρος φέρουσαν **ὁδὸν** ἐς Ἐρυθράς ...

7. σπονδὰς τέμωμεν καὶ διαλλάχθητί μοι.

σπονδή, -ῆς, ἡ (pl.) *agreement, treaty*

τέμνειν *to make peace*

διαλλάσσειν (usu. mid.) *to speak*

8. οἱ δὲ Συρακόσιοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι προσέκειντο **τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον** ...

προσκέϊσθαι *to press hard (upon) (+ Dat., when expressed)*

9. ... ὡς αὐτίκα μάλα **τὰς γνάθους** ἀλγήσετε.

ὡς *how ...! (exclamatory with ἀλγήσετε)*

γνάθος, -ου, ἡ *jaw*

10. **Ἔκτορα** δ' αἰνὸν ἄχος πύκασε **φρένας** ἠμιόχοιο.

πυκάζειν	<i>to cover</i>
ἠμίοχος, -ου (-οιο), ὁ	<i>charioteer</i>

11. ... κούφοις πνεύμασιν βόσκου, νέαν
ψυχὴν ἀτάλλων, μητρὶ τῆδε **χαρμονήν**.

βόσκειν	<i>to feed (here Pass.)</i>
ἀτάλλειν	<i>to nurture, to rear</i>
χαρμονή, -ῆς, ἡ	<i>joy</i>

12. ὅσοι τε **ἵππους** ἀπεστέρηνται, ταχὺ πάλιν ἄλλους ἵππους
κτήσονται·

τε	<i>Joins this sentence to the preceding</i>
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13. νῦν δ' εἶμι **Φθίηνδ'**, ἐπεὶ ἡ **πολὺ** φέρτερόν ἐστιν
οἴκαδ' ἴμεν σὺν νηυσὶ ...

Φθίην-δ(ε)	<i>to Phthia</i>
φέρτερος, -α, -ον	<i>better</i>
ἴμεν	<i>= ἰέναι</i>
νηυσί (Epic/Ionic)	<i>ναυσί (Attic)</i>

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