

Research Article

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Semantic features of case markings in Old English: a comparative analysis with Russian

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Abstract: This article explores the semantic features of case markings in Old English (OE) by applying theoretical models developed for Russian, addressing a notable gap in the OE linguistic field. This article reveals that similar semantic features can distinguish case assignments in both languages by evaluating the applicability of Jakobson's model, which categorizes case markings based on interrelated oppositions. This comparative analysis highlights the shared Indo-European (IE) roots of OE and Russian despite their differences in case syncretism and semantic overlap. The findings indicate that the merger of peripheral cases into a combined dative (Dat)-instrumental (Instr) form in OE corresponds with locative (Loc), genitive (Gen), or Instr uses in Russian. The study also examines the role of cognitive engagement employed by Vakareliyska, Cynthia. 1994. A model of the dative/accusative opposition for Slavic languages based on data from aphasia. *Supostavitelno ezikoznanie (Sofia)* 19. 7–13, particularly in the context of Dat objects, demonstrating its relevance in OE case assignments. By establishing a hierarchy of marked and unmarked cases, this study expounds the relationships among the accusative (Acc), Gen, Dat, and Instr. A case system model is proposed to represent the OE case system, accommodating six oppositions that capture the semantics of OE case marking.

Keywords: morphological case; general meaning; peripheral case; submeaning; cognitive

1 Introduction

Old English (OE) and Russian are both part of the Indo-European (IE) language family. They each employ morphological case marking applied to categories such as nouns. The meanings of these morphological cases can be quite similar, as the two languages share a common ancestral language, Proto-Indo-European (PIE). However, these meanings have evolved over time. For example, in OE, the dative (Dat) form *þæm cyninge* 'to the king' marks the indirect object morphologically, the ending *-e* signaling Dat case. In Modern English, the same semantic role is expressed without morphological case marking, as in *to the king*. Russian, by contrast, retains morphological case marking, as in *korolyu* 'to the king', where the ending *-yu* indicates the Dat.

This article explores the meanings of the morphological cases in these languages, focusing on the general semantic features identified by Jakobson (1936/1984), directedness, scope-limiting, and peripheral, while also addressing their submeanings in the OE and Russian data. It demonstrates how their meanings have been preserved or merged with those of other morphological cases. It also examines various OE verbs corresponding to each morphological case alongside their Russian equivalents. This allows for establishing the similarities and differences between OE and Russian case systems by applying the Russian general meanings proposed by Jakobson (1936/1984:64).

When considering case loss, a distinction must be made between case and morphological case marking. In his seminal work on case, Fillmore (1968:42) distinguishes case, the underlying syntactic-semantic relationship, from case form, the expression of such a relationship in a specific language, whether morphologically or syntactically.

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Fillmore focuses on the universal cases underlying the case forms in various languages; however, this article focuses on morphologically expressed case forms. In doing so, it adopts the approach taken by Vakareliyska (1994:7), for example, who defines case as a semantic property of verbs that is expressed morphologically in Indo-European (IE) languages as a marking on noun phrases (NPs) governed by the verbs. According to this approach, the semantic case is not a syntactic relationship between NPs, but a set of physical or psychological relationships that are perceived among the referents of the NPs (*ibid.*, 8). The distinction between case and case marking treats case as a cognitive phenomenon that exists whether or not it is morphologically expressed. Cf., for example, the generative case theory that treats case as a syntactic phenomenon to some degree, drawing a distinction between syntactically assigned structural case or morphological case that essentially constitutes grammatical relations, and inherent, or lexical, case, which is assigned by the semantics of a governing constituent (see, for example, Allen 2008, with respect to OE).¹

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 explores theoretical models of semantic cases. Section 3 examines the semantic classes of verbs. Section 4 outlines the methodology of the study. An overview of the forms and functions of the OE case system is presented in Section 5, along with discussions of the general meanings of the morphological cases in OE and comparisons to their Russian counterparts. Finally, Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

2 Theoretical models of semantic case

While traditional grammars of OE (e.g., Mitchell 1985; Hogg and Fulk 2011; Allen 1995) offer detailed morpho-syntactic analyses of case, they consider case categories to be syntactically determined and fixed rather than semantically motivated. So far, no study has systematically applied a semantic model to case alternations in OE. Although recent research on case semantics in IE languages (e.g., Barðdal 2008; Malchukov and Spencer 2009) has made advances towards comparative semantic approaches, these insights have not yet been extended to OE.

There have been no descriptions of OE case marking in terms of semantic features or cognitive semantic networks;² thus, this work should help to fill a gap in the field of OE studies. Both of these approaches, however, have been used to describe Russian case marking. Since Russian and OE both maintain the basic IE case system, albeit with different degrees of syncretism and different case morphemes and since both have some parallels in the semantic classes of verbs that take non-accusative (Acc) objects, in the absence of similar treatments of English or other modern IE languages, semantic descriptions of the Russian case-marking system are used as a starting point for this paper's description of OE case marking. An additional goal of this study is to determine the extent to which these models for Russian work for OE as well.

There have been a number of semantic descriptions of cases over the past 80 years, and a sizable portion of these have focused on the case systems of Russian and other Slavic languages. Jakobson (1936/1984:64) proposed that the general meanings of each Russian case marking be expressed in terms of an interrelated set of case oppositions since previous attempts to define cases in isolation had failed.³ According to Jakobson (*ibid.*, 70), the particular meanings of a case marking vary based on the contexts in which they are used, but all are marked for a

¹ In this article, the term “grammatical relations” will be used to refer to syntactically assigned markings, while the terms “morphological case” and “case marking” will be used for semantically assigned marking. This distinction follows the approach of Fillmore (1968), Blake (2001), and Hogg and Fulk (2011), who differentiate between syntactic and semantic case functions. Specific morphological case markings and their abbreviations appear capitalized throughout this paper, which generally does not attempt to determine how these correspond to universal semantic cases. However, when referring to semantic cases rather than their morphological markings, lower-case unabbreviated names are used.

² Fillmore's (1968) approach to case describes a set of universal relations that constitute the set of underlying cases for English but does not account for the semantics of morphological case markers. In addition, there have been a number of generative syntax treatments of OE case that also do not deal with morphological case-marking: e.g., Van Kemenade (1987), Allen (1995, 2002, 2008), Lightfoot (1999), and Van Gelderen (2000).

³ In his analysis of what he calls Russian case, Jakobson (1936/1984) is actually focusing on the morphological case markings in Russian and not any underlying cases *per se*.

specific feature that opposes them from another case; these features compose the general meaning. Applying this methodology to Russian, Jakobson (*ibid.*, 95) argued that the Russian semantic case system consists of eight cases (including the alternative “second genitive (Gen)” and “second locative (Loc)” forms available for certain nouns, which have narrower meanings of partitivity and physical location, respectively), with ten oppositions between pairs of cases. Each opposition can be considered a hierarchy, with a marked case and an unmarked case. The instrumental (Instr) and Dat are marked as peripheral cases, as opposed to the full cases, nominative (Nom) and Acc, which indicate nothing about the peripheral status of their referents. The Acc and Dat are marked as directional cases, since they indicate that their referents are affected by an action directed towards them; they are opposed to the unmarked Nom and Instr, which indicate nothing about the directedness of an action toward their referents. The Gen and Loc are marked as cases of scope, since they limit the scope of their referents’ involvement in the utterance, in opposition to the previously mentioned cases. The second Gen and second Loc are further marked as cases of shaping, since their referents function as something that shapes or is shaped. The Nom case is not marked for any features. Expressing the general meaning of morphological cases in terms of these oppositions in semantic features makes it possible to account for the choice of one case marking over another when both can occur in the same syntactic position, e.g., as the object of a verb or preposition. For this reason, Jakobson’s (1936/1984) model is particularly well-suited for the present study’s examination of non-Acc case assignment by verbs.

Wierzbicka’s (1980, 1986) models of the Russian Instr and Polish Dat, respectively, replace semantic features with semantic metalanguage to capture the diversity of the different submeanings of a case. For example, Wierzbicka (1986:386-387) defines the core meaning of the Polish Dat, CAUSING TO HAVE, as follows:

X did something with thing Y
 wanting person Z to come to have it
 something happened to Y because of that
 one could assume that Z would come to have Y because of that

Thirty additional descriptions using similar metalanguage follow, but the relationships between these submeanings are not made explicit enough. For example, Wierzbicka (*ibid.*, 391) leaves it to the reader to find the connections between the description of the core meaning above and that of the submeaning CAUSING TO SEE:

X did something with thing Y
 wanting Z to come to be able to see Y
 one could assume that Z would come to see Y because of that

Wierzbicka (*ibid.*, 419–420) concludes that the various constructions of the Polish Dat share a common theme, rather than a defined set of semantic features; she represents this theme with another semantic formula and acknowledges that it is broad enough to apply to the Dat in other European languages:

something happened not because person Z wanted it
 one could assume that person Z would think/feel/know something because of that

This formula and the implied relationships described above are the extent of the connections that Wierzbicka draws between submeanings of the case markers. Furthermore, her approach is limited in the number of case markings examined. As a result, her (1980, 1986) approach is more complex to implement and less unified than Jakobson (1936/1984). Because of these limitations, it is not employed in the present study.

In contrast to the models of Jakobson (1936/1984) and Wierzbicka (1980, 1986), Janda (1990, 1993) approaches case in Czech and Russian from a cognitive linguistics perspective. The cognitive model for semantics assumes a prototype surrounded by hierarchically related members. The model does not predict all variations of a category but describes the principles for extending the use of existing categories. Peripheral members that have no features in common can be connected through the prototype, which avoids the vagueness necessary to capture all meanings with a single set of features, as in Jakobson’s model (Janda 1993:3–6).

Janda’s cognitive-framework description of case assumes that case always has meaning, part of which objectively encodes the referent’s role in an event, while another part consists of the speaker’s subjective interpretation.

Jakobson (1936/1984) does not explicitly address the role of the speaker's interpretation in case meaning, but there are some case uses, e.g., the ethical Dat,⁴ for which he implies that the proposed semantic features are present because of the speaker's interpretation (see also Vakareliyska 1994). For Janda (1993:15), case meaning organizes rather than specifies information, but is not different from lexical meaning in its essential structure. Each member of a case's semantic network can be represented as a schema that shows its role in an event consisting of circles for participants and arrows for actions (*ibid.*, 16). Individual uses of distinct cases can be contrasted based on differences in their schemas, but this still does not provide a way to distinguish the cases more generally.

In Janda's view (*ibid.*, 20-21), there are a number of ways that members of the network can vary from the prototype: through paradigmatic variation, i.e., variation in the properties of the case-marked referent; syntagmatic variation, i.e., variation in how the event is composed; and metaphoric extension, both to different semantic fields through synonymy, antonymy and metonymy, and to different domains, i.e., the domain of subjective perception and the speech-act domain. Janda applies this model to the Czech Dat (1990, 1993) and the Russian Instr (1993). The prototype of the Czech Dat is its use as an indirect object (IO), with syntagmatic variants when the Acc and/or Nom participants are removed, and a paradigmatic variant, in which there is an action inside the Dat referent's sphere of control (Janda 1990:275–277). Something that is inalienably possessed is within the possessor's sphere of control, so this analysis of the sphere of control as a paradigmatic variant of the Dat connects inalienable possession to other uses of the Dat more satisfactorily than Jakobson (1936/1984) and other semantic feature-based accounts.⁵ Therefore, this characteristic of the Dat is included in the present study's account of the OE Dat. Janda (1993) supports Jakobson's (1936/1984) choice of peripheral as the defining feature of the Russian Instr, proposing that the core of the Russian Instr network consists of four roles, connected by their peripheral nature but varying in whether they are internally or externally peripheral and whether they are peripheral to the event or to a participant in the event (Janda 1993:139–142).

Janda compares the cognitive model with other descriptions of case, finding that inventories of uses of a given case describe the members in a case's semantic network but fail to comprehensively account for how different uses are related. In contrast, she argues that the cognitive model captures the unity and hierarchical structure of a case and the details provided by inventories of uses (Janda 1993:25-26). In Janda's opinion (*ibid.*, 26-27), models that employ semantic features, such as Jakobson (1936/1984), can be too vague and powerful without being verifiable, but these problems can be addressed, at least in part, by allowing semantic features to be present in different degrees depending on the specific use of a case. According to Janda, the models of Kuryłowicz (1960) and others that distinguish two types of case, i.e., lexical/semantic case and structural/syntactic case, and categorize case uses accordingly, assume a difference between lexical and grammatical meaning. However, she claims they take this distinction too far because grammatical meaning is still a kind of meaning, so no case use can be completely syntactic (Janda 1993:27–29). Generative syntax accounts of OE case, e.g., Van Kemenade (1987), Allen (1995, 2002, 2008), Lightfoot (1999), and Van Gelderen (2000), that differentiate these two types of case have the same issue: they assume that case markings sometimes carry meaning but sometimes completely lack semantic content. For this reason, these analyses of the data lack a perspective that this paper hopes to supplement.

As Janda (1993) demonstrates, the cognitive model is particularly suitable for reconciling diverse uses of a single case. However, it does not account for how one case's semantic network distinguishes itself from another case's network. In addition, while prototypes are supposed to be the most cognitively salient member of a semantic network, Janda (*ibid.*, 49) does not support her choice of prototypes with experimental data, relying instead on conventional assumptions, e.g., that the cross-linguistic concept of giving invokes a situation more basic to human experience than any other involving the dative; furthermore, she justifies her choice of prototype because she is able to derive the other meanings from it, without addressing why it could not be derived from another meaning instead. Because of these weaknesses in her methodology, Janda's model is relied on here to account only for inalienable possession.

⁴ See Section 5.4 below for a discussion of the ethical Dat.

⁵ Jakobson (1936/1984) does not address inalienable possession in his account of the Russian Dat. Vakareliyska (1994:13) and Grimm (2011:3) both mention inalienable possession briefly but do not discuss how it interfaces with other specific uses of the Dat case marking.

There have also been semantic feature-based studies of case marking that are narrower in both the case oppositions and case uses analyzed. One such study is Vakareliyska's (1994) account of Dat versus Acc marking on the objects of verbs in Bulgarian, Russian, and Latvian. For the case marking of the objects of verbs in these languages, she argues the most important feature of the Dat/Acc opposition is the presence (for the Dat) or absence (for the Acc) of cognitive engagement by the object referent (*ibid.*, 15). The notion of *cognitive engagement* is used to explain distinctions in case assignment that reflect the degree of mental or conceptual involvement of an argument in the action. For example, a Dat-marked participant may be viewed as more conceptually involved than an Acc-marked one. The kind of cognitive engagement for Dat referents varies by verb but can include situations in which the referent shares the speaker's assessment of the action, actively cooperates, or is at least aware of the action and acquiesces to it. All types of cognitive engagement require an animate referent, which is characteristic of the objects of Dat-assigning verbs in IE languages. For the objects of verbs in OE, cognitive engagement may be a more salient feature of the Dat than its peripheral status, which is harder to qualify. This is especially true for Experiencers and the objects of verbs of confiding and trusting. In addition, the lack of cognitive engagement for the Instr provides an additional way to distinguish verbs that originally took Instr objects from those that originally took Dat objects before the merger of these cases in the development of OE. Therefore, the present study applies this same Dat-Acc distinction in cognitive engagement to its account of the OE case system.

Grimm (2011) builds on previous feature-based approaches, particularly the approach of Jakobson (1936/1984), adapting these to a treatment of the semantic features that distinguish Agents from Patients cross-linguistically. He organizes different combinations of these properties into a lattice; each combination forms a node on the lattice (Grimm 2011:8–11). The maximal Agent and maximal Patient are located on two opposite corners of the transitive region, a subset of the agentivity lattice (*ibid.*, 14–15). Cases, then, are connected regions on such a lattice: specific uses of a case do not all need to have the same exact features as long as they are in the region of feature combinations corresponding to that case, in opposition to the region of another case or cases (*ibid.*, 17–18). Grimm (*ibid.*, 18–19) distinguishes the nominative region, which includes the maximal Agent node, from the accusative region, which includes the maximal Patient node, based on differences in existential and qualitative persistence: the nominative has the property of total persistence, i.e., it does not undergo any changes, while the accusative either undergoes a change in quality or ceases to exist. Of note for the present study, Grimm also distinguishes the dative from the accusative using the same lattice. He defines the dative region as the combination of two properties: sentience, i.e., conscious involvement, and qualitative change, finding that these apply both to the prototypical use as IO and to extensions such as Experiencers and primary/sole Dat objects (*ibid.*, 20–24). The properties of sentience and qualitative change correspond to the features for the Russian Dat proposed by Vakareliyska (1994) and Jakobson (1936/1984) above, i.e., cognitive engagement and directedness, respectively. Grimm's (2011) cross-linguistic model of semantic case suggests that the same features that distinguish the Russian Dat hold in other languages as well. The present study incorporates the features of cognitive engagement/sentience and directedness/qualitative change into its account of OE, using the terminology of Vakareliyska (1994) and Jakobson (1936/1984).

While the semantic network of the cognitive model better accounts for the relationship between different uses of a given case marking than Jakobson's model (1936/1984), Janda (1990, 1993) does not provide the necessary framework for distinguishing between semantically similar uses of morphologically-distinct cases or a full account of all the cases in either Czech or Russian.⁶ Therefore, my article uses Jakobson's (1936/1984) basic model as the basis for a semantic description of the morphological cases in OE. In Section 5, this semantic description is developed and then tested for its capability to predict the morphological cases assigned by OE verbs. To fill in the gaps where Jakobson's model fails to account for the OE case system, certain modifications have been made, drawing from other studies. Based on the insight of the cognitive model, the features comprising the general

⁶ Janda and Clancy (2002), a textbook on the use of grammatical cases in Russian, does provide a pedagogically compatible cognitive-linguistic account of the whole Russian case system using simplified semantic networks and schemas. Janda (*ibid.*, 7) includes a brief overview of the relations between morphological cases, but it simply lists the prototypical meaning of each in a grid organized by Jakobsonian features, thereby tacitly acknowledging the utility of those features in accounting for case oppositions in a way that her cognitive model cannot.

meanings of each case marking cannot be assumed to be fully present in every specific use of that case (Janda 1993:37). Thus, the features that distinguish the OE case markings may be less salient in certain uses. The insight of other authors is also used to account for some specific uses, including Janda (1990) for how inalienable possession is connected to other uses of the Dat, as well as Vakareliyska (1994) and Grimm (2011) for the distinction between Dat and Acc objects of verbs.

In summary, while Jakobson's oppositional system offers a robust core framework, it does not fully explain several important aspects of case, especially concerning gradient meanings, prototype structures, or psychological inclination. Therefore, this study incorporates insights from other theoretical models, addressing specific limitations in Jakobson's model. Wierzbicka (1980, 1986) replaces semantic features with semantic primitives expressed in a metalanguage to capture the diversity of the different submeanings of case. Janda (1990, 1993) introduces a cognitive-linguistic prototype model in which each case is a semantic network centered on a prototype and extended via metaphor and variation. This is especially useful for analyzing inalienable possession, which is difficult to account for in feature-based models like Jakobson's. Vakareliyska (1994) contributes to the cognitive engagement of referents, particularly in distinguishing Dat from Acc objects. This notion enriches the semantic criteria for Dat beyond its peripheral status. Grimm (2011) develops a lattice model that maps agentivity-related features (e.g., persistence, sentience) across languages. His approach aligns with Jakobson's oppositions but provides a formal model for comparing features across Nom, Acc, and Dat. Each of these models contributes insights that help refine the semantic description of OE case. The cognitive and the lattice models complement Jakobson's by accounting for prototype effects, variability in feature salience, and cross-linguistic consistency. These are incorporated into the present study.

3 Semantic classes of verbs

There has been a great deal of previous research on the connections between the meanings and argument structures of verbs. This research relies on the basic assumption that the syntactic behavior of a verb is dependent on its meaning; motivation for this assumption comes from the fact that native speakers can judge which syntactic constructions are acceptable with a given verb, even if they have never encountered that verb before, e.g., novel verbs derived from nouns (Levin 1993:1–4). A second assumption follows from this one: each verb's lexical entry only contains the idiosyncratic properties, including some elements of meaning, but not possible argument structures since these are determined by the meaning (ibid., 11–12). Working under these assumptions, Levin (ibid., 14) seeks to identify the elements of the lexical representation of Modern English verbs by grouping verbs that occur with the same set of possible argument structures into classes, then isolating the part of the meaning that all verbs in a class share. The idea that verbs with similar syntactic behaviors form groups based on common elements of meaning is critical both for the further studies that will be discussed in this section and for the present study's analysis of the semantic classes of OE verbs that assign a particular case marking.

A number of studies on semantic classes in English concern themselves with the so-called “dative alternation,” i.e., the two possible argument structures with ditransitive verbs in English, the double object construction (with two NP complements), and the prepositional object construction (with an NP and a PP), canonically with the preposition *to*. One such study, Hovav and Levin (2008), argues that the dative alternation arose for different reasons and has different meanings depending on the class of verbs. The *to*-variant can represent caused-motion or caused possession with verbs like *throw* and *send* but only caused possession with verbs like *give* and *sell*; the double object variant has only the caused possession meaning with both verb classes (ibid., 132). Zehentner (2017) investigates the history of the dative alternation and associated semantic changes through a corpus study of Middle English, finding a bi-directional causal interaction between the semantic narrowing of verbs used with the double object construction and the increased use of the prepositional object construction as a paraphrase of the double object construction. To demonstrate this, Zehentner (ibid., 9–18) establishes eight semantic verb classes and traces the proportion of double versus prepositional object constructions for each class across four periods of Middle English.

There are also some descriptions of the semantic classes of verbs that assign the various case markings in OE, but all are lacking in some way. Lists of these verbs, including the meanings and types of objects a given case is

used for, can be found in glossaries such as those of Marsden (2010) and Klaeber et al. (2008), but these do not group verbs into classes. Lass (1994) includes some semantic classification of these verbs and the connections these classes have to the meanings of the case assigned but is not comprehensive in terms of the individual verbs or classes of verbs discussed. Despite these shortcomings, the present study uses Lass (1994) in addition to Jakobson (1936/1984) as a starting point for grouping the OE verbs under investigation into semantic classes.

OE verbs that assign Gen have been categorized by semantic class by Bungenstab (1933), whose study includes other cases and/or prepositions that can be used with these verbs. However, Bungenstab does not include semantic motivations for the case(s) assigned by each class. OE verbs that assign the Dat versus Gen have been treated by Van Kemenade (1987) using a generative approach, focusing on the thematic relations of their objects. Mitchell (1985:449–464) lists the semantic classes of OE verbs that tend to take each case marking, and lists the cases assigned for different meanings of individual verbs but does not mention which verbs belong to which class. He also admits that verbs are not always consistent in assigning case marking based on semantics: for verbs that can assign Acc or Gen to the same argument, there is sometimes a clear distinction between the use of the Acc to express the involvement of the object as a whole and the Gen to express the involvement of only part of the object. However, this distinction is often lacking: sometimes synonymous verbs assign different cases, e.g., *neos(i)an* ‘seek’ usually assigns the Gen, while *secan* ‘seek’ assigns the Acc rather than Gen; and sometimes the same verb, e.g., *biddan* ‘ask for,’ can assign Acc or Gen without any evidence that only part of the Gen objects are involved (ibid., 562–563).

The associations between different meanings of the same verb and different cases assigned by that verb to the same argument are examined briefly in this study, but a more thorough investigation is a topic for further research. Lass (1994:235) also warns, importantly, that it is impossible to tell if synchronic semantic motivations determine the cases that individual verbs assign in OE or if the cases assigned are remnants of a past connection between the meanings of the verbs and those cases. Therefore, the analysis of the connections between the semantics of the verbs investigated and the case markings they assign is carried out with the understanding that it may not be possible to find clear semantic connections for every verb.

4 Methodology

This study examines several OE verbs – 22 in total – that assign different case categories to their objects. These verbs were selected to represent each possible case assignment category found in OE, as illustrated in Table 1 below. The analysis utilizes OE texts, including *Beowulf* and PC0 (the annals of The Peterborough Chronicle, which cover the years up to 1121). Additional sources, such as Marsden (2010) and Mitchell (1985), are consulted to ensure comprehensive coverage of all possible cases assigned by the OE verbs under investigation. The objects of the verbs that assign Acc, Dat, and/or Gen cases in OE are categorized based on the morphological case or cases for which they may be marked.⁷ Furthermore, the OE verbs are compared to their Russian equivalents to evaluate the

Table 1: Verbs by case-assignment category.

+Gen	+Dat	+Gen/Dat	+Gen/Acc	+Dat/Acc	+Gen/Dat/Acc
<i>missan</i> ‘miss’	<i>behōfian</i> ‘be required of (animate)’	<i>berēofan/berēafian</i> ‘deprive of’	<i>ābīdan/onbīdan</i> ‘await’	<i>dēman</i> ‘decide, judge’	<i>(ge)fandian</i> ‘search out, experience’
<i>reccan</i> ‘care for’	<i>beorgan</i> ‘protect’	<i>gilpan</i> ‘boast, rejoice’	<i>hēdan</i> ‘heed’	<i>forlēosan</i> ‘lose’	<i>(ge)wealdan</i> ‘control, possess’
<i>(be)weddian</i> ‘promise, wed’	<i>offpyncan</i> ‘displease’ (animate) <i>(ge)unnan</i> ‘grant’ (animate) <i>byncan</i> ‘seem’	<i>helpan</i> ‘help’	<i>(ge)unnan</i> ‘grant’ (inanimate) <i>wēnan</i> ‘expect, think’ <i>wundrian</i> ‘admire’		<i>weorpan</i> ‘throw’ <i>wilnian</i> ‘desire’

⁷ Often a single form can represent multiple morphological case markings due to syncretism within paradigms.

applicability of Jakobson's general meanings regarding Russian case markings. The following table presents the OE verbs that are analyzed in this study.

The 22 verbs selected for this study were chosen to reflect the full range of case-marking possibilities observed in OE. Selection criteria included semantic diversity, attestation across multiple texts, *Beowulf*, PC0, and coverage in standard historical grammars (e.g., Mitchell 1985; Marsden 2010). While not exhaustive, the sample includes verbs from key semantic classes to ensure broad representational coverage. Additional OE verbs exhibiting similar case variation were consulted during the analysis, but these are not listed in this study (though not all are listed), and no major divergences from the identified patterns were observed. As a result, the sample does not aim to be statistically comprehensive; instead, it serves to illustrate how a semantic model of case may be applied to OE. There are some limitations, especially regarding rarer case patterns or idiomatic constructions, and future studies might expand the dataset to test the model's robustness more fully.

The primary examples used in this study are drawn from *Beowulf* and PC0, chosen for their extensive case-marked verbal constructions and their representation of early and late OE, respectively. While these texts provide valuable contrasts in both texts and temporal scope, they do not fully capture the range of OE usage. Case patterns may vary in other texts that are not represented here. This study, therefore, does not claim exhaustive coverage of all OE case usage, but rather presents an analysis of attested patterns in two influential texts. Reference grammars (e.g., Mitchell 1985; Marsden 2010) were consulted to support generalizations. Future research could utilize corpus resources to confirm the broader distribution and productivity of these patterns.

5 General meanings and specific functions of the Old English and Russian case system

A short description of the general meaning of each morphological case in OE is given in this subsection, modeled primarily after Jakobson's (1936/1984) analysis of the Russian case system.⁸ Differences between the meanings of Russian and OE cases are noted where they occur. The specific syntactic functions of each case are then considered in the context of the general meaning. These are drawn from Marsden (2010:377-378) and listed with example sentences below. The example sentences, glosses, and translations provided are my own. After describing each case marking, Section 5.5 evaluates how effectively Jakobson's model (1936/1984) predicts the morphological cases assigned by OE verbs. Following this, the general system of case oppositions in OE is presented in Section 5.6.

5.1 Nominative

In Russian, the Nom is a pure function of naming and the most semantically unmarked morphological case: it does not limit anything about the meaning of the referent (Jakobson 1936/1984:67). All of these facts also apply to the Nom in OE. The statement by Hindu grammarians that the Nom form only contains the meaning of the stem, along with gender and number, also applies to Russian (ibid., 67) and OE, since the Nom has the same general meaning and functions in both languages. This view of Nom as the absence of case marking accounts for both of the functions listed below. Allen's (2002:67) assertion that Nom forms, or at least those without a suffix, are unspecified for morphological cases corresponds to Jakobson's observation for Russian.

The OE Nom is used for the subject of the verb, which is named but not limited in the role it can take in the sentence. The pronoun *he* 'he' is the subject of the following example:

- (1) *ac he ne wand-ode na him met-es to tyli-enne*
 but he.NOM NEG hesitate-PST.3SG NEG he.DAT food-NEUT.GEN.SG to provide-INF
 'but he did not hesitate to provide himself with food' (PC0, 1052)

⁸ See discussion in Section 2 above.

The Nom is also used for direct address (the vocative), another function that names but does not limit. In this example, *leof Sæxulf* ‘beloved Saxulf’ is being addressed directly:

- (2) *La leof Sæxulf, ic hau-e geseond æfter þe*
 O beloved.MASC.NOM.SG Saxulf.MASC.NOM.SG I have.AUX.PRES-1SG send.PP after you.DAT/ACC
 ‘Beloved Saxulf, I have sent after thee’ (PC0, 656)

5.2 Accusative

In Russian, the Acc indicates the object affected by an action directed towards it (Jakobson 1936/1984:67). The Russian Acc is not marked for any kind of cognitive engagement by the object referent when assigned by verbs, in opposition to the Dat (Vakareliyska 1994:15). Both of these facts also apply to the Acc in OE. Like the Russian Acc, the OE Acc is used for the direct object (DO), which is affected by a directed action. The pronoun *hine* ‘him’ is the DO in the following example:

- (3) *Ic hine cuð-e*
 I he.ACC know.PST-1SG
 ‘I knew him’ (*Beowulf*, l. 372)

This object can be reflexive. The action is still directed toward the Acc referent; it just happens to be the same entity as the Nom subject. The pronoun *hine* ‘him’ is a reflexive DO in the following example:

- (4) 7 *Iohannes se godspellere hine gerest-e in Effesia*
 and John.MASC.NOM.SG the.MASC.NOM.SG evangelist.MASC.NOM.SG he.ACC rest-PST.3SG at Ephesus
 ‘and John the evangelist rested [himself] at Ephesus’ (PC0, 100)

Certain prepositions can take an Acc object in OE. Many of the OE prepositions that indicate motion with the Acc have Russian equivalents that also take the Acc when motion to the object referent is implied, e.g., *v* ‘into,’ *na* ‘onto,’ *za* ‘behind,’ *pod* ‘under,’ *čerez* ‘over,’ *skvoz* ‘through,’ and *po* ‘up to’ (Jakobson 1936/1984:77). In the following example, *on* has an Acc object since it indicates motion towards:

- (5) 7 *wurp-on hine on þone bat*
 and throw.PST-PL he.ACC on the.MASC.ACC.SG boat.MASC.ACC.SG
 ‘and threw him into the boat’ (PC0, 1046)

The Acc can also be used in adverbial expressions indicating duration of time, as in example (6); and extent of space, as in example (7):

- (6) *he on weg los-ade lytl-e hwil-e lif-wynn-a breac*
 he on way.MASC.ACC.SG escape-PST.3SG little-FEM.ACC.SG time-FEM.ACC.SG lif-joy-FEM.GEN.PL enjoy.PST.3SG
 ‘he escaped away and for a little while enjoyed the joy of life’ (*Beowulf*, ll. 2096–2097)
- (7) *n-elle ic beorg-es weard oferfleon fot-es trem*
 NEG-will I barrow-MASC.GEN.SG guard.MASC.ACC.SG flee-INF foot-MASC.GEN.SG step.MASC.ACC.SG
 ‘nor will I flee a foot from the barrow’s guard’ (*Beowulf*, ll. 2524–5)

In example (6), *lytle hwile* ‘a little while’ indicates how long he enjoyed life. In example (7), *trem* ‘step’ indicates how far the speaker fled from the barrow’s guard. In both of these functions, the Acc indicates a segment (of time or space) that is completely enclosed by the action, as described for Russian by Jakobson (1936/1984:66).

It is also used in the Accusative-plus-infinitive construction:

- (8) *geseah his mondryhten under here-grim-an hat browi-an*
 see.PST.3SG his lord.MASC.ACC.SG under war-mask-MASC.DAT.SG heat.NEUT.ACC.SG suffer-INF
 ‘he saw his liege-lord suffering heat under the war-mask’ (*Beowulf*, ll. 2604–5)

The noun *mondryhten* ‘lord’ is the Acc subject of the infinitive *þrowian* ‘suffer,’ which also has an Acc DO *hat* ‘heat,’ all of which function together as the complement of *geseah* ‘see.’ In other words, the entire construction constitutes the entity towards which the action is directed. In all of its uses in OE, the Acc involves an action or motion directed towards and fully involving the referent.

5.3 Genitive

For Russian, according to Jakobson (1936/1984:72–73), the Gen indicates partial or negative representation of the referent that is involved in the utterance. This includes the following meanings: partitive, limit, goal, separation, negation. Although the Gen marking in OE was not used for objects of negated verbs as it is in Russian, it also functioned as the scope-limiting marker, in the following ways: adnominally, as the complement of adjectives, verbs, and prepositions, and adverbially. These are among the main syntactic uses in Russian as well (ibid., 73–77). All of the OE Gen uses below can be seen as limiting the involvement of their referent.

For example, the Gen is used to indicate adnominal possession:

- (9) 7 *Ecgferð-es* *mynster* *æt* *Done-muþ-e* *berefod-on*
 and *Ecgfrith-MASC.GEN.SG* *minster-NEUT.ACC.SG* *at* *Don-mouth-MASC.DAT.SG* *loot-PST-PL*
 ‘and looted Ecgfrith’s minster (a monastic church) at the mouth of the Don River’ (PC0, 794)

Ecgfrith possesses the minster, at least in some sense, but is himself only tangentially involved in the action of the sentence. The Gen limits the involvement of the possessor to the possessor’s relationship with what is possessed.

Another use, the partitive Gen, indicates that only part of the referent (here *manna* ‘people, men’) is involved in the event represented:

- (10) 7 *fela* *mann-a* *mid* *heom*
 and *many man-MASC.GEN.PL* *with* *they.DAT*
 ‘and many men with them’ (PC0, 1067)

The indeclinable adjective *fela* ‘many,’ along with many other adjectives of quantity, numerals, and nouns that refer to part of a whole, assigns a Gen complement. In this example, men are referred to generally, but not all men are involved in the action, only many of them.

Some OE verbs can take a Gen object. Of those investigated in this study, nine consistently take the Gen, i.e., *abidan/onbidan* ‘await,’ *behofian* ‘require,’ *hedan* ‘heed,’ *missan* ‘miss,’ *reccan* ‘care for,’ *(ge)unnan* ‘grant’ (inanimate), *weddian* ‘promise,’ *wenan* ‘expect, think,’ and *wilnian* ‘desire.’ Two other verbs take either the Gen or the Dat, i.e., *gilpan* ‘boast, rejoice,’ and *helpan* ‘help.’ Two take either Gen or Acc, i.e., *(ge)fandian* ‘search out, experience,’ and *wundrian* ‘admire.’ Finally, two take Gen, Dat-Instr, or Acc, i.e., *(ge)wealdan* ‘control, possess’ and *weorpan* ‘throw.’ Some of the semantic equivalents of these verbs in Russian also consistently take Gen objects, e.g., *skuchat* ‘miss,’ *trebovat* ‘require,’ and *želat* ‘desire’ (ORD, 2000). Other Russian equivalents take Gen with indefinite or abstract objects – [specific] – and Acc with definite or concrete objects – [+specific], e.g., *ždat* ‘await, expect,’ *iskat* ‘search for’ (ibid.). However, other Russian equivalents take Acc objects, e.g., *žalovat* ‘grant,’ *obeshchat* ‘promise.’ (ibid.).

Other equivalent verbs in Russian take Dat objects, e.g., *radovat’sja* ‘rejoice’ and *pomogat* ‘help’ (ibid.). Since Russian has fully preserved the distinctions between Instr and Dat meanings, it follows that other equivalent verbs take Instr objects, e.g., *xvastat* ‘boast,’ *ljubovat’sja* ‘admire’ and *vladet* ‘control, possess’ (ibid.). The Russian verb *švyrvat* ‘throw’ assigns either the Instr or the Acc depending on whether the object has an incidental or a direct role in the sentence (Jakobson 1936/1984:79). This same distinction could also account for at least some of the variation in the case marking assigned by OE *weorpan* ‘throw.’ In OE, very generally, the Gen objects of these verbs can all be considered as limited in their scope of involvement. In the following example, *wederes* is the Gen object of *abad*, the past tense of *abidan* ‘await’:

- (11) *ac* *þa* *hwile* *þe* *he weder-es* *abad*

but then while REL he weather-NEUT.GEN.SG await.PST.SG
 'but while he waited for the weather' (PC0, 1097)

Unlike their Russian equivalents, OE prepositions of separation and deprivation do not take Gen. This may have a semantic connection to the absence of the Gen in negative object constructions in OE. In the following example, *wið* 'towards' has a Gen object since it indicates motion towards but not to:

- (12) *ond wið þæs bealofull-an burgeteld-es*
 and towards the.NEUT.GEN.SG wicked-NEUT.GEN.SG tent-NEUT.GEN.SG
 'and towards the wicked tent' (*Judith*, l. 248)

The Gen can also be used in adverbial expressions of time, as in example (13); place, as in example (14); definition, as in example (15); and description, as in example (16):

- (13) *þæt hire an dæg-es eag-um star-edē*
 that she.DAT on day-MASC.GEN.SG eye-NEUT.DAT.PL stare-PST.3SG
 'that on her by day stared with his eyes' (*Beowulf*, l. 1935)
- (14) *þæt ænig oðer man æfre mærd-a*
 that any.MASC.NOM.SG other.MASC.NOM.SG man.MASC.NOM.SG ever glory-FEM.GEN.PL
þon ma middan-geard-es gehed-de under heofen-um
 the.INSTR more middle-earth-MASC.GEN.SG heed-PST.3SG under heaven-MASC.DAT.PL
 'that any other man ever heeded glorious deeds more on middle-earth under the heavens'
 (*Beowulf*, ll. 503-5)
- (15) *n-eall-es folc-cýning fyrð-gesteall-um gylp-an þorf-te*
 NEG-all-NEUT.GEN.SG folk-king.MASC.NOM.SG war-comrade-MASC.DAT.PL boast-INF need-PST.3SG
 'the folk-king didn't need to boast about his companions in arms at all' (*Beowulf*, ll. 2873-4)
- (16) *he wæs on Norðhymbr-on heard-es cynnes*
 he was from Northumbria-MASC.DAT.PL hard-MASC.GEN.SG stock-MASC.GEN.SG
Ecglaf-es bearn
 Ecglaf-MASC.GEN.SG child.NEUT.NOM.SG
 'he was from Northumbria from hard stock, son of Ecglaf'
 (*The Battle of Maldon*, ll. 266-7)

In example (13), the Gen *dæg-es* 'day' indicates when the action took place. In example (14), the Gen *middangeard-es* 'middle-earth' indicates where the action took place. In both of these functions, the action only occurs during or on part of the Gen referent, in contrast to the Acc. Cf. example (6) for duration of time and example (7) for extent of space. In example (15), *nealles* 'not at all' defines something about the action. In example (16), the Gen *heard-es cynnes* 'hard stock' provides a description of the subject *he* 'he.' All of these expressions refer to something that is only involved in the utterance in a limited way.

Another use is in expressions of respect, as in example (17), and comparison:

- (17) *Ic þæs Hroðgar mæg ... ræd gelaer-an*
 I that.NEUT.GEN.SG Hrothgar.MASC.ACC.SG can.AUX.PRES.1SG counsel.MASC.ACC.SG advise-INF
 'I can give Hrothgar counsel on this matter' (*Beowulf*, ll. 277-8)

The form *þæs* 'that' indicates with respect to what the speaker advises Hrothgar. The topic of the counsel is only involved to the extent that the speaker addresses it in his counsel. In all of its uses in OE, the Gen indicates limited involvement of the referent in the utterance.

5.4 Dative/instrumental

The Dat and Instr once constituted distinct morphological case markings in the (pre-) history of the English language (as they still do in Russian). However, as can be seen in Section 5.1 above, only a select number of paradigms in standard West Saxon have Instr forms that are distinct from the Dat. In the OE texts considered by this study, *Beowulf* and PC0, the Instr is limited in use to a small number of syntactic contexts, mainly adverbial expressions and after certain prepositions, and in almost all of these, a Dat form can be used instead. An exception described below is comparative constructions. There are instances of distinct Instr forms serving as the object of certain verbs, but none were found for the verbs considered in this study. Therefore, for the remaining sections of this study, the Instr is not considered a distinct morphological case marking. Instead, its general meaning constitutes part of the combined Dat-Instr, usually shortened to “Dat”. While Dat and Instr were still partially distinct in OE, Dat had already merged with IE Ablative (Abl) and Loc (Lass 1994:237).

According to Jakobson’s (1936/1984:83) model for Russian, the Dat and Instr both indicate peripheral status. The Russian Dat marking also shows directedness, however, in opposition to the Instr, which does not indicate whether the action is directed towards the referent. In addition, it has been observed that the Russian Dat is marked for cognitive engagement of the referent when assigned by verbs, in opposition to the Acc (Vakareliyska 1994:15). In other words, as noted in Section 2 above, the referent of the Dat must be aware of the action and acquiesce to it. Therefore, the referent must be animate.

The same case oppositions apply to the earlier stage of OE at which the Dat and Instr were still distinct. All uses of the Dat-Instr marking indicate the peripheral status of the object referent, but those deriving from the old Dat also indicate directedness and cognitive engagement, while those deriving from the old Instr do not. Dat-Instr is the main case marking used with prepositions: of the 47 prepositions in the glossary of Marsden (2010), 41 take the Dat-Instr at least some of the time, out of which 23 consistently take the Dat-Instr as opposed to five that consistently take Acc and one that consistently takes Gen. The Dat-Instr is not limited to use with directional prepositions, and in fact it can be said to have taken on a similar function to the modern Russian Loc, in that it does not necessarily express any specific meaning when used with prepositions, with the key distinction being that the OE Dat-Instr maintained non-prepositional uses as well. For instance, in the OE phrase *on þæm hūse* ‘in the house’, the Dat *þæm* marks Loc, closely corresponds to the Russian Loc use in *в доме* ‘in the house’. While the OE Dat arises through a preposition rather than an inflectional Loc, its functional semantics align with the Russian Loc. This suggests that, in certain constructions, the OE Dat-Instr overlaps with the semantics of the modern Russian Loc.

The OE Dat is used for the IO, whose referent is affected by a directed action, but more peripherally than the referent of the DO, and is often cognitively engaged, but cognitive engagement is not as critical with IOs as with other uses of the Dat with verbs. The pronoun *me* ‘me’ is the IO in the following example:

- (18) *he me lond forgeaf*
 he I.DAT land.NEUT.ACC.SG give.PST.3SG
 ‘he gave me land’ (*Beowulf*, l. 2492)

The OE Dat is also used to express inalienable possession (as in Russian). In the following example, the Dat pronoun *him* ‘to him’ indicates the possessor of *modsefa* ‘spirit’:

- (19) *ne gemealt him se modsefa ne*
 NEG melt.PST.3SG he.DAT the.MASC.NOM.SG spirit.MASC.NOM.SG NEG
 his mægen-es laf gewac æt wig-e
 his kinsman-MASC.GEN.SG heirloom.FEM.NOM.SG fail.PST.3SG at fight-NEUT.DAT.SG
 ‘his spirit did not melt, nor did the heirloom of his kinsman fail in the fight’
 (*Beowulf*, ll. 2628-2629)

This type of possession is more limited than the adnominal possession expressed by the Gen: the Dat possessor must refer to a cognitively affected participant in the action, and the verb is semantically involved in assigning the Dat (Wahlström 2015:163). The contrast between these two types of possession can be seen in example (19): while

the referent's spirit is something he always possesses, and he is cognitively engaged in the action, his kinsman is no longer engaged, cognitively or otherwise, and in fact no longer directly possesses the heirloom. The characteristic sphere of control accounts for the use of Dat to indicate inalienable possession: something that is inalienably possessed must be in the Dat referent's sphere of control (Janda 1990:275).

Also as in Russian, some OE impersonal verbs have a Dat Experiencer. Two such verbs are included in this investigation: *of-hyncan* 'displease' and *hyncan* 'seem':

- (20) *ðær him foldweg-as fæger-e þuht-on*
 where they.DAT earth-road-MASC.NOM.PL suitable-MASC.NOM.PL seem.PST-PL
 'where to them the earth-roads seemed suitable' (*Beowulf*, l. 866)

The Experiencer, *him* 'to them,' of the verb *þuhton*, from *hyncan* 'seem,' is more peripheral than the Nom *foldwegas* 'earth-roads' but must be cognitively engaged.

Reflexive pronouns can also be used in the Dat with *gebiddan* 'pray' and certain verbs of motion:

- (21) *gewit-on him þa fer-an*
 depart-PST.PL they.DAT then go-INF
 'then they set off' (*Beowulf*, l. 301)

The pronoun *him* 'for themselves' is reflexive in that it refers to the same entity as the implied Nom subject of the plural verb of motion *gewiton* 'depart.' The inclusion of this reflexive indicates that the referent is doing something for their own benefit. The action is directed towards them, and they are cognitively engaged. This can be considered a kind of ethical Dat construction.⁹

Many other verbs assign Dat-Instr to their primary or sole object instead of the Acc. Excluding those listed above as impersonal verbs with a Dat Experiencer, six of the verbs investigated in this study consistently take Dat-Instr, according to Marsden (2010), Klaeber et al. (2008), and Mitchell (1985): *beorgan* 'protect,' *bereofan/bereafian* 'deprive of,'¹⁰ Of these six, three are listed as taking Dat-Instr in Klaeber et al. (2008): *bereofan/bereafian* 'deprive of,' while the rest are listed as taking only Dat. For the verb that means 'deprive of,' the Dat object is the thing that is taken. The Acc is expected for the person from whom it is taken. The equivalent verbs of deprivation take Gen objects for the thing taken in Russian, e.g., *lišat* 'deprive, bereave of' (ORD, 2000). Two others can take either Dat or Acc, i.e., *deman* 'decide' and *forleosian* 'lose.' As noted above, three other verbs take either Gen or Dat, i.e., *gilpan* 'boast, rejoice,' and *helpan* 'help;' and two take Dat-Instr, Gen, or Acc: *(ge)wealdan* 'control, possess' and *weorpan* 'throw.' Klaeber et al. (2008) and Mitchell (1985) list Instr as a possibility for both of these verbs and does not list Dat for *weorpan*, but the instance of a Dat-Instr object in *Beowulf* with *weorpan* consists of a bare noun, so no distinction between Dat and Instr can be made for it. Many of these verbs require cognitive engagement on the part of their Dat-Instr objects. Others may have originally taken Instr objects that were peripheral to the action. In the following example, *ealdre* 'life' is the Dat object of *burgan*, from *beorgan* 'protect':

- (22) *ac hy on holt bug-on ealdr-e burg-an*
 but they on forest.NEUT.ACC.SG sink.PST-PL life-NEUT.DAT.SG protect-INF
 'but they sunk to the forest to protect life' (*Beowulf*, ll. 2598-9)

Unlike most verbs that take a Dat object, *beorgan* does not appear to require cognitive engagement by the object referent. If *ealdre* does not refer to the subject referents themselves, the Dat marking on this verb may be an indication that cognitive engagement is not as essential to the use of Dat with verbs in OE as it is Russian. The Russian equivalent, *zaščiščat* 'protect,' assigns Acc (ORD, 2000).

There is at least one example in *Beowulf* of an overt Instr form, *ðy wæpne* 'the weapon,' as the object of *gebræd*, from *gebredgan* 'draw,' a verb that is attested only with the Instr:

⁹ The ethical Dat indicates that the referent has an indirect interest in the event ("ethic dative," OED, 2018). Van Gelderen (2000:36,89) refers to the type of construction in (21) as an ethical Dat. Mitchell (1985:568), however, maintains that the ethical Dat cannot have the same referent as the subject or object because these are already directly involved in the action.

¹⁰ The verb *(ge)unnan* 'grant,' also investigated in this study, assigns Dat to its animate object, but it is a true ditransitive verb, in which the Dat complement is an IO.

- (23) *þæt ic ðy wæpn-e gebræd*
 that I the.NEUT.INSTR.SG weapon-NEUT.INSTR.SG draw.PST.1SG
 ‘that I drew the weapon’ (*Beowulf*, l. 1664)

The prepositions that can be used with distinct Instr forms tend to have meanings that suggest instrumentality or accompaniment such as ‘(together) with, by, by means of, through.’ Those that alternate between the Dat-Instr and Acc tend to have meaning without motion when used with Dat-Instr, in contrast to an Acc meaning with motion towards. Not many generalizations can be made about prepositions that consistently take the Dat because these uses of the Dat derive from the different peripheral IE cases that merged to form the Dat: original Dat with those indicating motion towards (Goal), Abl with those indicating motion from (Source), and Loc with prepositions indicating location. Thus, there is sometimes directedness, but not always. As in Russian, cognitive engagement is not required for the use of the Dat with prepositions. Therefore, the only generalization that can be made about prepositions that take a Dat-Instr object is that the referent is somehow peripheral to the action: the referent is not as important as some other central point of the utterance. In the following example, *on* has a Dat object since it indicates location:

- (24) *7 sæt on þam biscopric-e*
 and sit.PST.3SG on the.MASC.DAT.SG bishopric-MASC.DAT.SG
 ‘and [he] occupied the bishopric’ (PC0, 1048)

In the following example, *be* ‘by’ has an explicitly Instr object *þon* ‘that’ showing instrument:

- (25) *ðu þe lær be þon*
 you.NOM.SG you.ACC.SG teach.IMP.SG by that.NEUT.INSTR.SG
 ‘you teach yourself by this’ (*Beowulf*, l. 1722)

The Dat-Instr can also be used in adverbial expressions of time, as in example (26); definition, as in example (27); as well as place, respect, manner, agency and containment:

- (26) *ðær he þy fyrst-e form-an dogor-e*
 where he the.MASC.INSTR.SG time-MASC.INSTR.SG first-MASC.DAT.SG day-MASC.DAT.SG
weald-an moste
 control-INF must.AUX.PST.3SG
 ‘where at that time he had to wield it for the first day’ (*Beowulf*, ll. 2573-4)
- (27) *þær him n-ænig wæter wiht-e ne sceþ-e*
 where he.DAT NEG-any.NEUT.NOM.SG water.NEUT.NOM.SG anything-DAT.SG NEG oppress-PST.3SG
 ‘where no water oppressed him at all’ (*Beowulf*, l. 1514)

In example (26), the Instr *þy fyrste* ‘the time’ and the Dat *forman dogore* ‘first day’ probably both indicate something about when the action took place, according to the interpretations of this passage given by Klaeber et al. (2008:250-251). Some interpretations suggest that one of these phrases is the object of *wealdan* ‘control,’ but Klaeber et al. (2008) considers the interpretations that treat them as temporal adjuncts safer and therefore preferable. For this reason, neither was counted as an object of *wealdan* in this investigation. In example (27), *wiht* ‘anything’ defines something about the action. These functions are in contrast to the Acc but are more or less interchangeable semantically with the corresponding Gen functions listed above. A possible explanation is the overlap between entities that are peripheral to the action and those that are only partially involved in the action.

Another use of the Dat-Instr is to indicate instrument. The instrument is peripheral to the action in that it is used but the action is not directed towards it, and it is assumed to be unaffected. Both the Instr, as in example (28), and the Dat, as in example (29), can be used this function:

- (28) *ðu he þone feond ofer-cwom*
 that.NEUT.INSTR.SG he the.MASC.ACC.SG fiend.MASC.ACC.SG over-come.PST.3SG
 ‘by this he overcame the fiend’ (*Beowulf*, l. 1273)

- (29) *guðrinc* *gefeng* *atol-an* *clomm-um*
 warrior.MASC.ACC.SG seize.PST.3SG terrible-MASC.DAT.PL clasp-MASC.DAT.PL
 '[he] seized the warrior in terrible clasps' (*Beowulf*, ll. 1501-2)

The instrument with which the action is performed is *ðy* 'that' in example (28) and *atolan clommum* 'terrible clasps' in example (29). It is unclear if uses with Dat forms like this one represent assumptions of the Instr meaning by the combined Dat-Instr, with both overtly Instr and overtly Dat forms in free variation, or if the Dat form only occurs when no distinct Instr form is available, as in (29).

Comparative constructions are one use of the Instr that is not interchangeable with the Dat in OE or in Russian. Jakobson (1936/1984:82) connects the Russian Instr of comparison to the general meaning by its indication of marginal status in terms of value to the utterance relative to the proper, uncomparative, meaning of the referent. The Instr is not used for the same kinds of comparison in Russian and OE, but the connection between comparison and the general meaning of the Instr still applies. In Russian, the Instr is used for the object of comparison in similes: *kazak bujnym sokolom rinulsja na vraga* 'the Cossack threw himself upon the enemy like an enraged hawk' (ibid., 82). In this example, the Nom *kazak* 'Cossack' is being compared to the Instr *bujnym sokolom* 'an enraged hawk.' In OE, an Instr determiner is used to qualify a comparative adjective or adverb:

- (30) *symle* *wæs* *þy* *sæmra* *þonne ic sweord-e*
 ever be.PST.3SG the.NEUT.INSTR.SG weaker.NEUT.DAT.SG when I sword-NEUT.DAT.SG
drep *ferhð-geniðla-n*
 strike.PST.SG life-foe-MASC.ACC.SG
 'ever was it the weaker when I struck with sword the deadly foe' (*Beowulf*, ll. 2880-81)

In an OE corpus study, Freeman (2018:46) found that all 908 instances of an oblique determiner followed by a comparative used an Instr determiner. Most often this construction employed *þy*, an Instr allomorph of *se* 'that,' as in example (30), although the allomorph *þon* occurred a small percentage of the time in poetry and early prose, and *þe* became the predominant form in late prose (ibid., 47). The same *þy/þe* + comparative construction is also used in two clauses to show proportionate increase or decrease. A reflex of this use survives in Modern English, e.g., "The more, the merrier." Freeman's (ibid., 47) data, along with the survival of this reflex after the loss of the morphological Dat-Instr, suggest that this construction became fossilized during the OE period. In all of its uses in OE, the Dat-Instr indicates the peripheral status of the referent in the utterance.

5.5 Testing Jakobson's model

This subsection evaluates how well Jakobson's oppositional features: directedness, scope-limiting, and peripherality, account for the OE. Although Jakobson's framework serves as the main analytical tool, it has some limitations. As outlined in Section 2, this study supplements Jakobson's oppositions with insights from Wierzbicka, Janda, Vakareliyska, and Grimm, each of whom addresses specific gaps in his model. These complementary perspectives are applied here to test whether OE case alternations align with Jakobson's predicted oppositions.

In evaluating the applicability of Jakobson's oppositional framework to OE, the working hypothesis is that the semantic features Jakobson proposes for Russian (e.g., directedness, boundedness, scope) will likewise distinguish OE case categories. The null hypothesis, by contrast, would posit that OE case distinctions do not systematically reflect these semantic oppositions and are instead determined by syntactic rules.

As noted in Section 2, one goal of this study is to test how well Jakobson's (1936/1984) description of the Russian case system applies to OE, particularly case assignment by verbs. To this end, the cases and submeanings predicted by Jakobson's description for the verbs under investigation were compared to the actual case markings they assign in OE.¹¹ Jakobson (1936/1984) distinguishes between the *general meaning* of a case – its core semantic function across contexts – and its *submeanings*, which are context-dependent extensions or modifications of that function. For each morphological case assigned by verbs in both Russian and OE, the features of Jakobson's

¹¹ The process by which verbs were selected for investigation is described in Section 4.

Table 2: Jakobson's description of the Russian Acc, Gen, Dat, and Instr.

Case marking	General meaning	Submeanings
Accusative	+Directedness, –Scope-limiting, –Peripheral	Acc of inner object: the referent is created by the action. Acc of outer object: the referent already exists but is affected by the action. Acc of duration/extent: the referent is a segment of time or space that is completely enclosed by the action. Acc of objectivized content: a dummy object, often cognate with the verb. Acc object of speaker's attitude: the speaker interprets the referent as the object of an unstated verb.
Genitive	+Scope-limiting, –Peripheral, –Directedness	Partitive Gen: the referent is partially involved. Gen of limit: the action is bounded by the referent. Gen of goal: the action has the referent as its goal but does not affect it. Gen of separation: the action tends away from the referent. Gen of negation: the referent is removed from the context of the utterance.
Dative	–Scope-limiting, +Peripheral, +Directedness	Dat of direct reflexive reference: an action that is normally performed by the referent is instead experienced by that referent. Ethical Dat: the referent has an indirect interest in the event. Dat of more remote object: the referent is the indirect goal of an action or motion. Dat of address: the referent is a recipient.
Instrumental	–Scope-limiting, +Peripheral, –Directedness	Instr of stipulation: the referent is a condition under which the action takes place. Instr of restriction: the referent restricts the scope of the associated predicate. Instr of role: a special function of a corresponding referent marked by another case. Instr of comparison: the referent is used as the source of comparison. Instr of instrument: the referent is instrumental to the action.

general meaning and the submeanings he mentions are listed in Table 2. It should be noted that in both Russian and OE, not all of these submeanings can apply to the objects of verbs. In addition, some submeanings do not occur with any of the verbs investigated by this study but may occur with other OE verbs.

In Table 3, the verbs under investigation are listed by their OE case-assignment categories.¹² The cases and submeanings predicted by Jakobson's (1936/1984) description of the Russian case system are listed to the right of each verb. Then, their Russian equivalents are for comparison. An "x" is placed in the "Match" column if the predicted case matches a case assigned by the verb in OE.

The patterns in Table 3 suggest that, while not perfectly aligned, Jakobson's (1936/1984) model accounts for a substantial portion of the attested OE case, particularly for the Acc and Dat. The assignment of the Gen by verbs in OE can be accounted for by Jakobson's submeanings.¹³ However, there is a difference in the case assignment by the OE *(be)weddan* 'promise' which assigns Gen, but its Russian counterpart *obeshchat* assigns Acc. The assignment of the Dat can be accounted for by Jakobson's submeanings. This is also true for the OE verbs that assign Gen or Acc. However, no Gen submeaning applies to the objects of *gilpan* 'boast, rejoice,' or *helpan* 'help,' verbs that can assign Gen or Dat-Instr. The general meaning of the Gen, specifically the feature [+scope-limiting], still applies to *gilpan* when it is used in the sense of enjoyment, but it does not seem to apply to *helpan* 'help' or the Gen/Dat-Instr/Acc-assigning verb *(ge)wealdan* 'control, possess': the assignment of the Gen by this verb is unexpected.

There are more serious inconsistencies for verbs that assign Dat-Instr. One issue is that Jakobson (1936/1984) does not seem to list any submeanings that apply to the primary or sole object of Dat-assigning verbs in Russian. Therefore, there are no submeanings to apply to the objects of such verbs in OE either. However, Jakobson accounts for the use of Dat with these verbs based on the general meaning, specifically the features [+peripheral, +directedness]. Another inconsistency concerns verbs of separation. In Russian, these assign the Gen; based on

¹² See Section 3 for the methodology used to determine the case markings assigned by these verbs in OE.

¹³ The verb *reccan* 'care for' can be followed by a preposition as its equivalent Russian verb does. The occurrence of preposition after the verb is not the focus of this study.

Table 3: Cases/submeanings for verbs by case-assignment category.

+Gen in OE	Submeaning(s) in OE	Russian equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>missan</i> ‘miss’	Gen of separation	<i>skuchat’</i>	Gen	x
<i>reccan</i> ‘care for’	Gen of goal	<i>zabotit’sya o</i>	Requires preposition o + Gen	x
<i>(be)weddian</i> ‘promise’	Gen of goal	<i>obeshchat’</i>	Acc	
+Dat in OE	Submeaning(s) in OE	Russian equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>behōfian</i> ‘be required of’ (animate)	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)	<i>trebovat’</i>	Dat	x
<i>beorgan</i> ‘protect’	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)	<i>zaščičat’</i>	Dat	x
<i>of-pyncan</i> ‘displease’ (animate)	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)	<i>ogorchat’</i>	Dat	x
<i>(ge)unnan</i> ‘grant’ (animate)	Dat of address	<i>žalovat’</i>	Dat	x
<i>þyncan</i> ‘seem’	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)	<i>kazat’sya</i>	Dat	x
+Gen/Dat-Instr in OE	Submeaning(s) in OE	Russian equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>berēofan/berēafian</i> ‘deprive of something’	Gen of separation	<i>lišat’</i>	Gen	x
	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)		NA	
<i>gilpan</i> ‘boast, rejoice’	Scope-limiting (no Gen submeaning applies)	<i>radovat’sja</i> ‘rejoice’	Gen	x
	Instr of instrument	<i>xvastat’</i> ‘boast’	Instr	x
<i>helpan</i> ‘help’	Peripheral (no Dat submeaning applies)	<i>pomogat’</i>	Dat	x
	No Gen submeaning predicted		NA	
+Gen/Acc in OE	Submeaning(s)	Russian equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>abidan/onbidan</i> ‘await’	Gen of goal	<i>ždat’</i> ‘await, expect’	Gen	x
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
<i>hedan</i> ‘heed’	Gen of goal	<i>vnimat’</i>	Gen	x
	Acc of inner object		NA	
<i>(ge)unnan</i> ‘grant’ (inanimate)	Partitive Gen	<i>žalovat’</i>	Gen	x
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
<i>wenan</i> ‘expect, think’	Gen of goal	<i>ždat’</i> ‘await, expect’	Gen	x
	No Dat submeaning applies.		NA	
<i>wundrian</i> ‘admire’	Gen of goal	<i>ljubovat’sja</i>	Gen	x
	Acc of outer object		Gen	
+Dat/Acc in OE	Submeaning(s)	Russian Equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>dēman</i> ‘decide, judge’	No Dat submeaning applies.	<i>sudit’</i>	Gen	
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
<i>forleosan</i> ‘lose’	No Dat submeaning applies.	<i>teryat’</i>	Gen	
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
+Gen/Acc/Dat-Instr in OE	Submeaning(s)	Russian Equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>(ge)fandian</i> ‘search out, experience’	Gen of goal	<i>iskat’</i> ‘search for’	Gen	x
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
<i>(ge)wealdan</i> ‘control, possess’	Instr of instrument	<i>vladet’</i>	Instr	x
	Acc of outer object		NA	
<i>weorpan</i> ‘throw’	No Gen submeaning applies.		Gen	
	Gen of separation	<i>švyrjat’</i>	NA	
	Instr of instrument		Instr	x
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x

Table 3: (continued)

+Gen/Acc in OE	Submeaning(s)	Russian equivalent		Match
		Verb	Case	
<i>wilnian</i> ‘desire’	Gen of goal	<i>želat’</i>	Gen	x
	Acc of outer object		Acc	x
	Instr of stipulation		Dat	x

this fact, the Gen of separation would be expected for OE verbs of separation as well. However, the verb *berēofan/berēafian* meaning ‘deprive of’ in OE, as well as *forleosan* ‘lose,’ were all found to assign the Dat to the thing taken or lost. This difference may be due to the fact that the IE Abl had merged with the Dat in Germanic, but with the Gen in Slavic.¹⁴ If so, this is one area where descriptions of Russian cannot be directly transferred to OE but does not represent a problem with Jakobson’s model in and of itself. The presence of both Gen and Dat semantic classes that encompass verbs of separation in OE may account for some of the substitutions and ambiguities observed in the assignment of these two morphological cases to specific verbs. Additionally, the dual function of both Gen and Dat in expressing possession contributes to this complexity. Considering these semantic overlaps, variations in type frequencies may clarify why the Acc case tends to replace both the Dat and Gen cases, whereas the Dat case is more frequently seen as a substitute for the Gen than the other way around. Finally, the motivations for the use of the Dat with the verb *deman* ‘decide’ are unclear. It would be expected to assign Gen like other cognitive verbs in OE. On the other hand, no issues are accounting for the assignment of Dat-Instr by verbs in OE where it corresponds to the Instr in Russian.

Jakobson’s (1936/1984) description of the Russian case system effectively explains the case assignment for certain OE verbs, despite some inconsistencies with specific verbs. To address the absence of Dat submeanings in Jakobson’s framework, this study introduces Vakareliyska’s (1994) proposed cognitive engagement feature, which helps clarify the use of the original Dat with verbs in OE. This feature applies to verbs like *of-byncan* ‘displease’ in the animate sense), *byncan* ‘seem,’ and *helpan* ‘help.’ However, it does not apply to verbs that assign the Dat-Instr, which derive from the Instr or Abl cases that correspond to the Russian Instr and Gen, respectively.

Overall, Jakobson’s (1936/1984) oppositional framework successfully covers the majority of OE morphological case, particularly in its broad distinctions of directedness, scope, and peripherality. However, certain patterns in the OE data resist a strictly binary classification. For example, gradient or overlapping meanings are better understood through Janda’s (1990, 1993) prototype-based approach, while the notion of cognitive engagement developed by Vakareliyska (1994) clarifies why some Dat objects extend beyond Jakobson’s (1936/1984) peripheral category. Grimm’s (2011) lattice model provides a way of situating OE case oppositions within a broader cross-linguistic context, and Wierzbicka’s (1980, 1986) semantic primitives highlight fine-grained distinctions not easily captured by oppositional features.

5.6 General system of OE case oppositions

A diagram can be constructed based on the general meanings of the OE case markings described in the preceding sections and the oppositions between these meanings. The following abbreviations for semantic features of the general meanings are used: [direct] for directedness, [scope] for scope-limiting, [periph] for peripheral, and [cog eng] for cognitive engagement.

As shown in Figure 1, each opposition can be considered a hierarchy or correlation, with a marked and unmarked morphological case. The marked morphological case is either below or to the right of the unmarked

¹⁴ The OE verbs *behofian* ‘require’ and *missan* ‘miss’ still assign Gen as predicted based on the separation element of their meaning. The Gen of separation with these verbs may derive from a use of the original IE Gen to express separation, in contrast to the Dat of separation from IE Abl. See Section 5.3 for a more detailed discussion of verbs of separation and other semantic classes of verbs in OE.

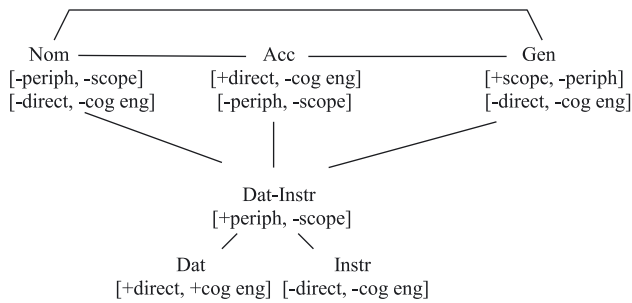


Figure 1: Diagram of the OE case system.

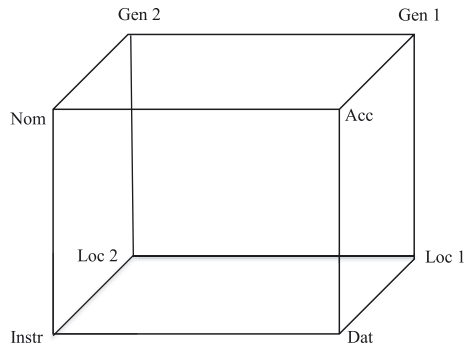


Figure 2: Jakobson's (1958/1984:126) cube model of the Russian case system.

case. The Acc and old Dat are marked morphological cases in directional correlations with the other morphological cases, which indicate nothing about the directedness of action toward their referents. The Gen is the marked morphological case in the scope correlation, in opposition to the Nom, Acc, and Dat-Instr, which do not serve to limit the involvement of their referent in the utterance. The Gen is further opposed to the Acc and old Dat since it is not marked for directedness. The Dat-Instr is the marked morphological case of the status correlation, in opposition to the other three morphological cases, which are not marked for peripheral status. Old Dat directedness can also be marked for cognitive engagement, in opposition to the Acc.

This diagram can be compared to the general system of Russian case oppositions described by Jakobson first in table form (1936/1984:95), and later in a three-dimensional cube model (1958/1984:126), reproduced here:

In Figure 2, each dimension of the cube represents one of the three proposed semantic features needed to distinguish the eight Russian case markings (Jakobson 1958/1984).¹⁵ These three features correspond to the directional, scope, and peripheral oppositions in Jakobson (1936/1984). However, Jakobson (1958/1984:110) also proposes two additional oppositions: indefinite (Nom and Instr) versus definite (other cases), and direct (Nom and Acc) versus oblique (other cases). Chvany (1986) provides several arguments against the cube model. While the cube, or any other three-feature system, is the most economical way to specify the distinctions between eight morphological cases, it is not the most accurate description of these cases (*ibid.*, 124-125). Chvany (*ibid.*, 109-121) argues that a model of case should account for distinctions in both form and meaning. The three dimensions of the cube fail to account for the patterns of syncretic forms in Russian, but the two extra dimensions can. The feature [+indefinite] for Instr provides a distinction from the other peripheral cases, which have the same form as each other but not the Instr in certain paradigms. It also captures the commonalities between Instr and Nom, e.g., alternations between the two in predicate nominals and active versus passive agents (*ibid.*, 122). The feature [+direct] (not to be confused with directionality/directedness) captures the Nom-Acc syncretism for inanimates. Finally, the cube model does not allow for extra dimensions or gaps without sacrificing its integrity, leading to its use being forced even when it does not accurately describe a case system (*ibid.*, 125-126).

This study's model of the OE case system takes Chvany's (1986) criticisms of the cube model into account: to gain descriptive accuracy, it uses more than the minimum features needed to distinguish the case markings; and

¹⁵ The alternative "second Gen" and "second Loc" forms are distinguished morphologically from the primary Gen and Loc forms, respectively, on certain nouns. These case markings have narrower meanings of partitivity and physical location, respectively.

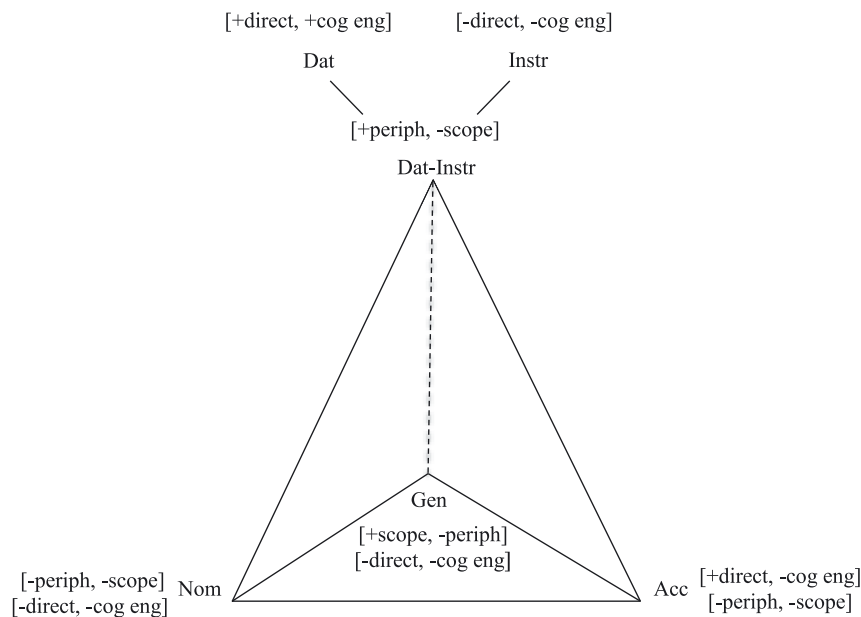


Figure 3: Pyramid model of the OE case system.

it uses the geometric shape most suited to the OE case system, not the one that is the most elegant. Namely, when represented in three dimensions, the OE system forms a triangular pyramid with six oppositions (plus a partial opposition between the Dat and Instr), as opposed to twelve for Russian:

The existence of only one type of Gen marking in OE results in a triangular opposition between the Nom, Acc, and Gen, while the existence of only one fully distinct peripheral case results in a single point in opposition with each corner of this triangle. This model represents the case system at the beginning of the period when significant morphological case ambiguity and case loss first become observable. It forms the basis for the semantic components of the morphological cases in the OE period.

The pyramid model in Figure 3 offers a visual-semantic representation of the OE case system, emphasizing the scalar relationships between case functions such as directedness, scope, and peripheral, cognitive engagement. While traditional descriptions of OE case (e.g., Mitchell 1985, Hogg and Fulk 2011) generally provide functional accounts of individual cases in prose, they do not model the *interrelations* between cases in a structured or oppositional way. By contrast, the pyramid framework organizes case functions along conceptual dimensions, supplemented by Jakobsonian oppositions but adapted to OE data.

This model can serve as a practical tool for predicting case use in ambiguous constructions or for illustrating case relationships in teaching OE grammar.

6 Conclusions

This article has explored the meanings of case markings by verbs in both OE and modern Russian. It addresses a notable gap in the study of OE case marking by applying semantic models that have been effectively used for Russian. This study has evaluated the applicability of theoretical models of the Russian case system to OE. Jakobson's (1936/1984) model for Russian generally works for OE as well: the same semantic features can be used to distinguish the general meanings of the case markings that are used in both languages. These general meanings largely account for the assignment of different case markings by different semantic classes of verbs in OE texts. The merger of all the peripheral cases into the combined Dat-Instr accounts for uses of this case marking in OE that correspond with the Loc, Gen (from IE Abl), or Instr in Russian rather than the Dat. For uses of the original Dat with verbs, Vakareliyska's (1994) proposed cognitive engagement feature usually applies as well, but the Dat

objects of verbs of serving such as *beorgan* ‘protect’ were found to be exceptions. The comparative analysis between OE and Russian underscores the shared IE roots of both languages, despite their differences in case syncretism as well as the semantic overlap between cases.

General meanings of the morphological cases were a convenient way to group seemingly disparate semantic classes that could assign the same case marking. The existence of both Gen and Dat semantic classes containing verbs of separation may explain some of the substitutions and uncertainty found in certain verbs’ assignment of these two morphological cases, as does the use of both to express possession. Given these semantic overlaps, differences in type frequencies may explain why the Acc replaces both the Dat and Gen, while the Dat replaces the Gen more often than vice versa.

This study provides an understanding of the OE case system through the exploration of morphological case oppositions. Establishing a hierarchy of marked and unmarked cases sheds light on the relationships among various cases, particularly the Acc, Gen, Dat, and Instr. The cases, such as Acc and Dat, are situated within directional correlations, emphasizing their role in indicating directedness toward referents. In contrast, the Gen is considered a marked case within the scope correlation, effectively restricting the involvement of its referent, while the Nom, Acc, and Dat-Instr cases do not impose such limitations.

A model of a triangular pyramid to represent the OE case system is offered, highlighting its characteristics. By incorporating six oppositions and focusing on the singular nature of Gen, as well as peripheral cases, this model presents a constructive framework for understanding the OE case system during a period marked. The triangular relationship among the Nom, Acc, and Gen, along with the distinct positioning of the Instr, effectively captures the semantics of OE case marking.

While the analysis demonstrates the utility of Jakobson’s semantic oppositions in accounting for OE case, several limitations remain. The verb sample is selective rather than exhaustive, and the conclusions rely primarily on two OE texts, which may not capture the full variation across genres or dialects. Additionally, the mapping between OE and Russian case functions presumes a degree of inherited IE structure, which may be more complex than this study allows for.

Future research could expand the data by incorporating a broader range of verbs and OE texts from various genres. Corpus-based analyses, utilizing resources such as the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, would enable more robust testing of the proposed semantic generalizations. Comparative work with additional IE languages such as Latin and Old Norse could also help refine the scope of the model and further assess the applicability of Jakobson’s oppositional framework.

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List of abbreviations

Abl	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
AUX	auxiliary
DAT	Dative
DO	direct object
FEM	feminine
GEN	Genitive
IE	Indo-European
INF	infinitive
INSTR	Instrumental
IO	indirect object
Loc	Locative

MASC	masculine
NEG	negative
NEUT	neuter
NOM	Nominative
NP	noun phrase
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
ORD	Oxford Russian Dictionary
PCO	the annals of The Peterborough Chronicle that cover the years up to 1121
PL	plural
PP	past participle
PRES	present
PST	past
REL	relative
SG	singular

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