An ablative for the Greeks?

A grammar dispute in Tübingen (1585/1586) and its implications*

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1. Introduction

In December 1585, while most inhabitants of Tübingen were preparing for Christmas celebrations, the German humanist Philipp Nicodemus Frischlin (1547–1590) was once again in the mood for a quarrel. After several years of exile, Frischlin found it difficult to get out of this old habit of his. This time, it was a scholarly topic which incited him, after a long series of hardly intellectual arguments with his colleagues at Tübingen University, where he had held the chair of poetics, and with local nobility, against whom he had directed a crushing speech, despite himself being a count palatine.¹ Initially tolerated because of his scholarly and literary talents – he was even granted the title of poet laureate by the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II – Frischlin made himself increasingly unwelcome in the Swabian city and was forced to flee in 1582 to escape the publication ban and house arrest under which he had been placed.

After serving as school rector in Laibach (present-day Ljubljana), where he composed most of his Latin grammar manual, Frischlin returned to Tübingen in 1584–1585, with intermittent stays in Strasbourg. At the end of 1585 he tried to impress his former colleagues in a rather unsuccessful attempt at being reinstated at his alma mater. He published his Latin grammar shortly after November 1, 1585; it was received terribly by his former supervisor Martin Crusius (1524–1607), a prominent Hellenist now mainly known for his work on contemporary Greece (see most recently Calis 2020, with further references) but also a productive grammarian of Latin and Greek, whom Frischlin implicitly attacked with his manual, as Ahačič (2014: 111) notes. Crusius' copy of the work is preserved in Berlin and contains crushing comments on Frischlin's textbook, written when he read the book on December 13–14, 1585.² The often-

* This article is an outcome of my junior postdoctoral project funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) and entitled “The cross-linguistic application of grammatical categories: The early modern genesis of a contemporary problem, with specific reference to the relevance of ‘typically Ancient Greek’ categories (ca. 1470–1800)” (grant number: 12V4818N). I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their critical comments on an earlier version of this paper, as well as the editor Jean-Michel Fortis for his helpful feedback. I am indebted to Richard Calis for his advice on Martin Crusius' Philhellenism.

¹ On Frischlin's life and works, see Strauss (1856) and Stahlecker (1943), both to be read in conjunction with the entertaining corrective account of Wheelis (1974) and the biography of Röckelein & Bumiller (1990). See also Köhlmann (2000) and, for a bibliography, Wilhelmi & Seck (2004).

² Staatsbibliothek, Unter den Linden, 1 an: W 1250. This intriguing book, available online, demands further study. See < <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN799238910> > (last accessed May 26, 2020).

ironic notes by Crusius criticize the contents and method of the manual as well as Frischlin's personal traits, such as his alleged megalomania. For instance, Frischlin had claimed that his textbook was a concise companion to Latin grammar, but the long parenthetical remark following his enumeration of Latin consonants (Frischlin 1585: 3) triggered Crusius' ironic comment: "mira brevisitas [remarkable brevity!]". On the same page, Frischlin outlined the Latin occlusive letters (*mutae*), which he went on to subdivide into three groups following Greek categories. "Quid op[us] [What use]?" noted Crusius in the right-hand margin, correcting at the same time the mistaken "vocem" to "vicem" in Frischlin's Latin. Some pages earlier, in the preface, Frischlin (1585: γ 2^v) had praised Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484–1558) – whose rational model of grammar he greatly admired – as the most learned man the world had seen in the last half millennium ("quo ego viro neminem credo intra quingentos annos, in universo orbe, doctiorem extitisse"). Here, Crusius could not resist noting in the left-hand margin: "Excepto Frischlino [except for Frischlin!]". His reading of Frischlin's grammar induced him to compile a full-blown refutation of the textbook in 1586, based at least in part on his handwritten notes of mid-December 1585.

Shortly after the publication of his grammar, and Crusius' reading of it, Frischlin had a new text ready: a brief "demonstration" claiming that the Greeks did not lack the ablative case, an oration he pronounced in Tübingen during the Christmas holidays. He reacted against traditional grammarians, including Protestant icon Philipp Melanchthon and Crusius himself, preferring the ideas of J. C. Scaliger and others. To make sure that Crusius could also read his controversial ideas, Frischlin had his *Demonstratio* printed in Strasbourg in early 1586. The rivalry between Frischlin and Crusius clearly brought out the worst in both scholars, but it was yet to culminate; it did so in Crusius' *Two books to Nicodemus Frischlin (Libri duo ad Nicodemum Frischlinum; Strasbourg 1586)*, which is about the most ad hominem an attack can get. Crusius included an implacable refutation of Frischlin's *Demonstratio* in this volume. The dispute was far from over with this book, which mercilessly rejected the ideas Frischlin had put forward both in his 1585 Latin grammar and in his *Strigilis (Scraper)*, a polemical account of the grammatical tradition first published in 1584 at Aldo II Manuzio's printing house in Venice.³ Frischlin, of course, could not let this alone, and responded vehemently to Crusius' book in the same year with a new publication. Their dispute was never settled, and even after Frischlin's unfortunate death in 1590 – he fell out of his prison cell window during an attempted escape from Hohenurach Castle near Reutlingen where he had been locked up for his polemic against local authorities – Crusius could not resist mocking him in an epitaph: "Frischlinus iacet hic, celsa qui decidit arce: / Ingenio magnus, sed male abusus eo [Frischlin lies here, having fallen down from a high fortress; / a great mind, but he grossly misused it]".⁴

I will focus here on one remarkable point of the bitter grammatical dispute between these two learned men: the question of whether the Greek language had an ablative case, an issue which I believe touches on the core of their conflicting views on grammar. Indeed, I argue that,

³ On Frischlin's grammar works from his Ljubljana period, see Ahačič (2014: 110-114), with further references.

⁴ Cited from Röckelein & Bumiller (1990: 133). In German, the elegiac couplet reads: "Frischlinus lieget hier, vom Falle böß verstaucht: / Er war ein guter Kopf, doch hat er ihn mißbraucht". I have regularized all Latin quotes, preferring <v> spellings and transforming ligatures into freestanding letters. Vernacular quotes have been preserved in their original form. I translate all Latin and Greek quotes but have refrained from doing so for citations in modern languages.

as much as their conflict was fueled by personal rivalry, they differed also significantly in their grammatical ideas, as evidenced by their hairsplitting about the Greek ablative. What arguments did Frischlin and Crusius deploy in their debate? How do these views relate to their models of language? What other linguistic phenomena did they involve in their heated discussions? These will be my guiding questions in the present contribution. First, I will offer the necessary contextual elements on the history of the ablative concept and both scholars' relationship to the humanist grammatical tradition (Section 2). Then, I will discuss Frischlin's and Crusius' arguments (Section 3) and briefly treat their ideas on two other grammatical features that are now typically associated with Ancient Greek, the article and the optative mood (Section 4), before assessing their underlying models of grammar in the conclusion (Section 5). In the Appendix, I will offer a digression on a misquote by Frischlin of Julius Caesar Scaliger which was popularized especially in the nineteenth century and can be taken to exemplify the highly anecdotic way in which numerous modern scholars have treated early modern language studies.

2. *Context: the ablative and Renaissance grammatical thought*

Frischlin and Crusius were both well-educated Hellenists with an excellent command of the Greek language and its grammatical tradition, which they put to use in their Latin and Greek handbooks. They were aware that ancient and medieval grammarians had attributed only five cases to Ancient Greek: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, and vocative.⁵ When Roman scholars took over the Greek frame of reference, they soon noticed that there was an extra case in Latin. Varro called it the *casus Latinus* or *sextus* ("Latin/sixth case"), associating it initially with agency.⁶ By the time of Quintilian, the standard term was *ablativus* ("ablative"), which highlighted the meaning of "taking away" or "removal" and is now the default designation for this case.⁷ The Roman rhetorician also proposed distinguishing between this and the

⁵ See Robins (1993: 215-227) for an overview, which I follow here.

⁶ *De lingua Latina* 8.16: "Sine controversia <sunt obliqui, qui nascuntur a recto: unde rectus an sit casus> sunt qui quae<rant. Nos vero sex habemus, Graeci quinque>: quis vocetur, ut *Hercules*; quemadmodum vocetur, ut *Hercule*; quo vocetur, ut ad *Herculem*; a quo vocetur, ut ab *Hercule*; cui vocetur, ut *Herculi*; cuius vocetur, ut *Herculis*]. [The oblique forms which develop from the nominative are without dispute to be called cases; but there are those who question whether the nominative is properly a case. At any rate, we have six forms, and the Greeks five: he who is called, as (nominative) *Hercules*; how the calling is done, as (vocative) *Hercule*; whither there is a calling, as to (accusative) *Herculem*; by whom the calling is done, as by (ablative) *Hercule*; to or for whom there is a calling, as to or for (dative) *Herculi*; of whom the calling or called object is, as of (genitive) *Herculis*]; 10.62: "Sin ab singulari quis potius proficisci volet, initium facere oportebit ab sexto casu, qui est proprius Latinus: nam eius casus litterarum discriminibus facilius reliquorum varietate<m> discernere poterit, quod ei habent exitus aut in A, ut hac terra, aut in E, ut hac lance, aut in I, ut hac <c>lavi, aut in O, ut hoc caelo, aut in U, ut hoc versu. [But if one should prefer to start from the singular, he ought to start from the sixth case, which is a case peculiar to Latin; for by the differences in the letters of this case-form he will be more easily able to discern the variation in the remaining cases, because the ablative forms end either in A, like *terra* 'earth', or in E, like *lance* 'platter', or in I, like *clavi* 'key', or in O, like *caelo* 'sky', or in U, like *versu* 'verse']". Ancient Latin sources and their translations are taken from the Loeb series and accessed through the online *Loeb Classical Library* <loebclassics.com>, unless mentioned otherwise.

⁷ See e.g. Quintilian 1.5.58-59: "Sed haec divisio mea ad Graecum sermonem praecipue pertinet; nam et maxima ex parte Romanus inde conversus est, et confessis quoque Graecis utimur verbis ubi nostra desunt, sicut illi a nobis nonnumquam mutantur. Inde illa quaestio exoritur, an eadem ratione per casus duci externa qua nostra conveniat. Ac si reperias grammaticum veterum amatorem, neget quicquam ex Latina ratione mutandum, quia, cum sit apud nos casus ablativus, quem illi non habent, parum conveniat uno casu nostro, quinque Graecis uti. [But this division of mine [into Latin and foreign words] mainly pertains to the Greek language, because Latin is largely derived from that language, and we also openly use Greek words where we have none of our own, just as they sometimes borrow from us. The question then arises whether foreign words should be declined in the same way as ours. If

instrumental meaning of the ablative, a suggestion lightly dismissed by Priscian, who preferred to rely on purely formal criteria in distinguishing the cases of Latin.⁸

Quintilian's emphasis on the importance of case semantics no doubt inspired Frischlin's bold claim for the existence of the Greek ablative; in fact, the ancient author is mentioned in the very first sentence of the *Demonstratio* and put in Frischlin's own camp, together with J. C. Scaliger and Agostino Saturnio (d. 1533): "Frontem caperant severitudine nostrates quidam grammatici: quod ego meis, et Fabii Quintiliani, et Augustini Saturnii, et Iulii Scaligeri, sculponeis ora illorum nonnihil obverberavi [Some grammarians of our country frowned in seriousness because I have smashed their mouths a little with my shoes and those of Fabius Quintilianus, Augustinus Saturnius, and Julius Scaliger]" (Frischlin 1586: A 2r). But Quintilian was claimed by Frischlin for a more wide-ranging insight: that truth and reasoning prevail over usage and tradition. This claim on Quintilian was a rather presumptuous move, especially since the Roman author had suggested himself a distinction between speaking Latin, on the one hand, and speaking grammatically, on the other. However this bifurcation should be understood, it seems that Quintilian acknowledged the importance of language usage, not at all granting exclusive dominion to the rules of grammar.⁹ Frischlin, and many humanist grammarians with him, usually chose to ignore this observation by Quintilian, pointing out instead that the Roman had claimed that "sermo constat ratione, vetustate, auctoritate, consuetudine [speech consists of reason, antiquity, authority, usage]" (Quintilian 1.6.1; Luhrman 1994: 30). What Quintilian said about the last of these four elements was likewise left unmentioned by Frischlin: "consuetudo vero certissima loquendi magistra [but usage is the most certain teacher in speaking]" (1.6.3).

Frischlin's reference to Agostino Saturnio and J. C. Scaliger was more easily justifiable. Both had sought rational foundations for the art of grammar, the former less persistently so, still following as he did the humanist fixation on the authority of classical Latin authors.¹⁰ For Scaliger, who relied on Aristotelian philosophy in his *De causis linguae Latinae* (1540), "[r]eason constitutes both his starting-point and boundary" (Luhrman 1994: 26). Frischlin

you come across a *grammaticus* who loves the old writers, he would probably say that there must be no change from the Latin way, because, since we have an ablative and they do not, it would be irrational to use one Latin case and five Greek]" I have slightly adapted the Loeb translation here.

⁸ Quintilian 1.4.26: "Quaerat etiam sitne apud Graecos vis quaedam sexti casus et apud nos quoque septimi. Nam cum dico 'hasta percussi', non utor ablativi natura, nec si idem Graece dicam, dativi [He should also ask whether the Greeks have what is virtually a sixth case, and we a seventh. When I say *hasta percussi*, I do not use the natural sense of the ablative; nor, if I say the same in Greek, do I use the natural sense of the dative]"; Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae* 5 (in Keil 1855–80: II.190) [with my own English rendition]: "denique in comparationibus absque praepositione solet proferri ablativus, nec tamen dicit quisquam, septimum tunc esse casum, sed ablativum, cum dico 'fortior Achilles Hectore'. In quo omnes artium scriptores consentiunt et sex esse casus confitentur, non septem. Uno enim, non duobus, Latini casibus superant Graecos. Supervacuum faciunt igitur, qui septimum addunt, qui nulla differentia vocis in ullo nomine distet a sexto. [Finally, in comparisons the ablative is usually pronounced without a preposition; yet no one says that there is a seventh case, rather than the ablative, when I say 'Achilles is stronger than Hector'. All those writing on the arts agree on this point and acknowledge that there are six cases, not seven. For the Latins surpass the Greeks by one case, not two. Therefore, those who add a seventh case are doing a superfluous thing, since it does not differ from the sixth case in any noun by any difference of sound]". On the idea of a seventh case in Latin, see Uria (2017).

⁹ Frischlin was not the first humanist to attribute linguistic ideas to Quintilian in a rather tendentious fashion. See e.g. Mazzocco (1993: 71–72) on the debate between Poggio Bracciolini and Lorenzo Valla, and their interpretations of the *grammaticae/Latine loqui* distinction.

¹⁰ See Luhrman (1994) and Lardet et al. (2019) on these grammarians' ideas. The latter also offers a critical edition of Scaliger (1540). For a critical edition of Saturnio's *Mercurius* see Saturnio (1997).

followed in Saturnio's and especially Scaliger's tracks, believing that "to know is to apprehend a thing from its causes" (Ahačič 2014: 110), and eagerly cited Scaliger in his Latin grammar of 1585 (Ahačič 2014: 112-113). In their eyes, reason surpassed usage. Language was logic, and as such its variety and arbitrariness should be reduced as much as possible. The focus was not on the formal side of language but rather on "its signifying function" (Luhrman 1994: 26-27).

Martin Crusius, on the other hand, seems to have been a proponent of the typically humanist strand of grammar. Grammar, believed Crusius, should first and foremost lead to the practical mastery of a language in all its variety, following the best models, both in speaking and in writing. He blamed Frischlin for not explicitly mentioning the latter, written aspect of grammar, a discipline which, after all, derived its name from a Greek verb meaning "to write"; moreover, Frischlin's source Quintilian had mentioned this etymology from the Greek *gráphō* (γράφω) quite prominently (Crusius 1586: 23). Additionally, grammar was an "art" (*ars*) rather than a "science" (*scientia*), as Frischlin had defined it, since it aimed to provide "cognitionum et comprehensionum perpetuarum, et ad exitum vitae utilem spectantium copiosa praeceptio [copious instruction of perpetual knowledge and comprehension which envisages a useful way of life]" (Crusius 1586: 24). It was an art because its subject matter was, as Aristotle had already maintained in book six of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, contingent, meaning that, contrary to a science, it was governed by arbitrary rules which were not necessarily true or false.¹¹ Thus Crusius tried to invalidate Frischlin's claims by drawing on his former student's own favorite authorities, Quintilian and especially Aristotle, whom Frischlin later eagerly defended in a dialogue against Ramist logic.

3. *Frischlin's Greek ablative*

¹¹ See Aristotle's observations on ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη at *Ethica Nicomachea* 1139b-1140a: "ἐπιστήμη μὲν οὖν τί ἐστιν, ἐντεῦθεν φανερόν, εἰ δεῖ ἀκριβολεγεῖσθαι καὶ μὴ ἀκολουθεῖν ταῖς ὁμοιότησιν. πάντες γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνομεν, ὁ ἐπιστάμεθα, μὴδ' ἐνδέχεσθαι ἄλλως ἔχειν· τὰ δ' ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως, ὅταν ἔξω τοῦ θεωρεῖν γένηται, λανθάνει εἰ ἔστιν ἢ μὴ. ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπιστητόν. αἰδίων ἄρα· τὰ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὄντα ἀπλῶς πάντα αἰδία, τὰ δ' αἰδία ἀγέννητα καὶ ἀφθάρτα. [...] ἔστι δὲ τέχνη πᾶσα περὶ γένεσιν καὶ τὸ τεχνάζειν καὶ θεωρεῖν ὅπως ἂν γένηται τι τῶν ἐνδεχομένων καὶ εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι, καὶ ὧν ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν τῷ ποιοῦντι ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐν τῷ ποιουμένῳ· οὔτε γὰρ τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὄντων ἢ γινομένων ἡ τέχνη ἐστίν, οὔτε τῶν κατὰ φύσιν· ἐν αὐτοῖς γὰρ ἔχουσι ταῦτα τὴν ἀρχήν. ἐπεὶ δὲ ποίησις καὶ πρᾶξις ἕτερον, ἀνάγκη τὴν τέχνην ποιήσεως ἀλλ' οὐ πράξεως εἶναι. καὶ τρόπον τινὰ περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ἐστὶν ἡ τύχη καὶ ἡ τέχνη, καθάπερ καὶ Ἀγάθων φησὶ 'τέχνη τύχην ἑστερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην'. ἡ μὲν οὖν τέχνη, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, ἕξις τις μετὰ λόγου ἀληθοῦς ποιητικὴ ἐστίν, ἡ δ' ἀτεχνία τοῦναντίον μετὰ λόγου ψευδοῦς ποιητικὴ ἕξις, περὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ἄλλως ἔχειν [The nature of Scientific Knowledge (employing the term in its exact sense and disregarding its analogous uses) may be made clear as follows. We all conceive that a thing which we know scientifically cannot vary; when a thing that can vary is beyond the range of our observation, we do not know whether it exists or not. An object of Scientific Knowledge, therefore, exists of necessity. It is therefore eternal, for everything existing of absolute necessity is eternal; and what is eternal does not come into existence or perish. [...] All Art deals with bringing some thing into existence; and to pursue an art means to study how to bring into existence a thing which may either exist or not, and the efficient cause of which lies in the maker and not in the thing made; for Art does not deal with things that exist or come into existence of necessity, or according to nature, since these have their efficient cause in themselves. But as doing and making are distinct, it follows that Art, being concerned with making, is not concerned with doing. And in a sense Art deals with the same objects as chance, as Agathon says: 'Chance is beloved of Art, and Art of Chance'. Art, therefore, as has been said, is a rational quality, concerned with making, that reasons truly. Its opposite, Lack of Art, is a rational quality, concerned with making, that reasons falsely. Both deal with that which admits of variation]". This text is cited from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* database < stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/ >. The English translation has been taken from the online *Loeb Classical Library* < loebclassics.com >.

How did the ablative dispute fit into the polemical Crusius–Frischlin dispute, obviously driven as much by their clashing views on grammar as by their personal rivalry? Which arguments did Frischlin deploy in claiming an ablative for the Greek language? How were these countered by Crusius? Frischlin started his six-page demonstration by singling out the primacy of reason and truth vis-à-vis usage on the authority of Agostino Saturnio.¹² Grammarians, claimed Frischlin, were on the wrong track, not only for Latin but also for Greek. He wanted to address some select topics in Greek grammar, including also the article, which Latin lacked, and the number of Greek declensions. His aim was clearly also pedagogical, since he intended to free students from the grammarians’ delusions:

haec inquam, et consimilia prope innumera, quae a vulgo grammaticorum perperam et magnam discentium pernecie traduntur in scholis, nos tam aperte, tam liquido demonstrabimus, ut vanitas nugarum grammaticarum vel caeco possit apparere [These, I say, and almost innumerable similar things, which the grammarians’ mob transmits incorrectly at the schools, and to the great ruin of their students, we will present in such a clear and transparent way that the falsity of the grammarians’ nonsense can become evident even to a blind man]. (Frischlin 1586: A 2v)

Frischlin went on to argue that one of the grammarians’ delusions regarded the ablative. In order to make this point, he first had to deconstruct the meaning of the dative case:

Primum enim in confesso est apud omnes solidae quidem eruditionis grammaticos per veteres, quod DATIVUS tam apud Graecos, quam apud Latinos semper significet acquisitionem, sive commodi sive incommodi, nunquam autem instrumentum aut causam modumve agendi. Nam hic significandi modus est ablativi unius, in quo maxime iste casus discrepat a dativo. Tot enim casus sunt, quot officia significandi. [For, first of all, it is well-known among all the very ancient grammarians, at least those of solid erudition, that the DATIVE always means, as much among the Greeks as among the Latins, acquisition, either of advantage or disadvantage, but never an instrument, a cause, or a way of acting. For this is the mode of signifying proper to the ablative alone, in which that case differs enormously from the dative. For there are as many cases as there are functions of signifying]. (Frischlin 1586: A 2v)

Clearly, Frischlin took semantics as the main criterion for positing the existence of a case category. Several Greek example sentences served to illustrate this point. For instance, in the phrase *sullambánō soi k^hrémasi kai sómasi* [συλλαμβάνω σοι χρήμασι καὶ σώμασι; “I assist you with money and body”], *soi* is a dative of acquisition of advantage, whereas *k^hrémasi* and *sómasi* express the instrument or means by which the assistance occurs, and are therefore in the ablative case. Although deploying a content-based argument, Frischlin (1586: A 3r) could not resist using polemical language in concluding this idea: “Nemo est tam stupidus qui inter dativum et ablativum pendentem a verbo βοηθῶ [*sic*] non possit discernere [Nobody is so stupid that he cannot distinguish between a dative and an ablative depending on the verb *boēthō*, ‘to help’]”.

Frischlin’s second argument was that classical Latin authors, too, had used the Greek ablative case in Greek loan words and phrases incorporated into their works. There, it was much easier to acknowledge the existence of the Greek ablative, since in Greek the dative and ablative cases were formally identical, but in Latin the Greek ablative was used with prepositions and other constructions requiring an ablative. Frischlin’s main source of evidence was Cicero, the great stylistic example of the day. His letters were larded with Greek words and phrases, showing the typical code switching among bilingual upper-class Romans (cf. Swain 2002). To

¹² For an English work translation of Frischlin’s *Demonstratio*, see Van Rooy (2020c).

his friend Atticus Cicero wrote: “Never was I in greater distress [*aporíāi*] [Nunquam in maiore ἀπορία fui]” (*Letters to Atticus* 16.8.2), where he used the Greek word *aporía* with the Latin preposition *in*, which required the ablative case. Frischlin therefore concluded that *aporíāi* was an ablative, too. He also quoted a previously obscure passage from Propertius’ *Elegies*, the corrupt text of which had been remedied by the Brabantian humanist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) only some years before.¹³ In conclusion, it made no sense to claim that certain Greek prepositions required the dative case, since they could be complemented, just like their Latin counterparts, with the ablative case, in addition to the genitive and accusative cases.

Frischlin (1586: A 3v) went on to point out that the argument that the Greek ablative and dative had the exact same form should not prevent scholars from considering them different cases in semantic terms: “Praeterea ablativum dicere similem dativo, quantum ad terminationem, sed diversum ab illo, quantum ad significationem, nihil vetat [Furthermore, nothing prevents one from calling the ablative similar to the dative in terms of ending but different from it in terms of meaning]”. After all, retorted Frischlin, was the Latin ablative not in very many cases formally identical to the dative? Compare, for instance, *his sacerdotibus* [“to these priests”] with *ab his sacerdotibus* [“by these priests”], phrases in which the demonstrative pronoun *his* served as a kind of pseudo-article. Frischlin repeated here the importance of the semantic criterion for determining the status of a declined noun form.

Frischlin’s final argument was that Greek *dictio*, which we would today perhaps translate as “idiom”, also had a place for the ablative case. For the Latin collocation *uti exemplis*, “to use examples”, had *k^hrêst^hai paradeígmasi* (χρησθαι παραδείγμασι) as its Greek equivalent, both clearly containing ablative cases. In his conclusion, Frischlin sneered at “those vulgar grammarians who transmit the precepts of the Greek language so differently from those of Latin”; they “are not very wise, when they grant the title ‘on the congruence of either language’ to their books”.¹⁴ He no doubt had Crusius in mind, one of the few humanists who had composed such a comparative treatise, a genre that was new in the sixteenth century. Crusius himself at least believed the sneer to be addressed to him.¹⁵

Frischlin’s demonstration hinged first and foremost on meaning – semantics in modern terminology – the centrality of which he underscored by raising the following question at the end of his short demonstration: “Quid enim tam dissimile est, quam ablativus instrumenti, dativo acquisitionis [For what is as dissimilar to a dative of acquisition as an ablative of instrument]?” (Frischlin 1586: A 4r). This semantic focus was motivated by universalist linguistic considerations. It made no sense to rob the ablative only from Greek, as opposed to all other languages, purely on formal grounds. Scaliger’s idea that the most important function of language was to signify things clearly resonates here. It is worth quoting in full Frischlin’s indignation at the harsh grammarians who denied the Greeks the ablative:

¹³ Propertius, *Elegies* 1.20.12 (“Adryasin”), 1.20.32 (“Hamadryasin”), and 1.20.34 (“Thyniasin”). In an early work of philological miscellanea, Lipsius (1575: 15-18) had correctly recognized these formerly problematic forms as Greek datives.

¹⁴ Frischlin (1586: A 4r): “Atque his argumentis demonstratum est Graecos non carere ablativo ac proinde vulgares istos grammaticos, qui tam diversa a Latinis tradunt Graecae linguae praecepta, non recte sapere, quando libris suis titulum indunt, de utriusque linguae congruentia”.

¹⁵ Crusius (1586: 341): “Post demonstrationem suam de ablativo Graeco, Crusium, qui Latina et Graeca grammatica inter se congruentia scripsit solus, his verbis describit [...]”.

Multo melius volunt consultum studiis pueritiae, qui conformes tradunt in utraque lingua regulas, tam etymologiae, quam syntaxeos – ut interim non dicam, quam atrox sit spoliū ex omnibus linguis unam Graecam privare ablativo, contra omnem rationem et aequitatem. Quam autem timidum sit animal, grammaticus, qui propter conformem dativi et ablativi terminationem, nulla habita ratione diversissimae significationis, inter acquisitionem et instrumentum (hic enim est audax contemptor naturae rei), non audet Graecis nominibus dare ablativum, quem tamen habent; id vel hinc patet, quod ipse in omnibus aliis linguis, etiam in Hebraea, admittit ablativum, ubi tamen eadem est omnium casuum terminatio. Id quod hic obiter saltem monuisse sufficiat. Non enim mihi negotium est cum illis hominibus, qui discere nolunt, quod nesciunt; et qui docere volunt, quod non possunt; neque enim didicerunt [Much better is the plan for the studies of the youth desired by those who transmit the rules in either language conformably, in terms of both morphology and syntax – in order not to say in the meantime how bad the damage is to rob the ablative only from the Greek among all languages, against all reasoning and fairness; and how cowardly an animal the grammarian is, who, because of the conformable ending of the dative and ablative, without taking their vastly different meaning into account, of acquisition versus instrument – for he is a bold scorner of the nature of the matter – does not dare to grant Greek nouns an ablative, which they nonetheless have. This is very much clear from the fact that he himself admits in all other languages an ablative, even Hebrew, where all cases nonetheless have the same ending. It should suffice to have admonished this here in passing at least, for I do not have any business with those men, who do not want to learn what they do not know, and who want to teach what they are not able to, for they have not learned it]. (Frischlin 1586: A 4v)

Frischlin emphasized his semantic criterion once again, while at the same time pointing out the fact that most grammarians of his day granted an ablative to all other languages, even Hebrew, which has no case inflection. There, the division into cases was also unmistakably semantic, marked as it was by prepositions rather than different case endings.

Frischlin, in sum, seems to have had a universal, semantics-based grammatical model in mind, which ultimately derived from the classical framework of Latin grammar, with which all humanists started their study in the sixteenth century, but came to extend even to languages which had indigenous grammatical traditions, such as Hebrew.¹⁶ All languages, including Greek, had an ablative case in the sense that they could express with a noun phrase the meaning of instrument. Frischlin's arguments were formulated in a consistently polemical tone, obviously directed toward his archenemy Crusius, though only through allusion. Crusius was very aware that Frischlin was ranting at him in particular, probably feeling that his former protégé had acted in a rather cowardly fashion. Indeed, he felt forced to respond directly to the demonstration on the ablative as part of his two-book attack on Frischlin's grammatical work, published in the same year as the demonstration. How did Crusius respond to Frischlin's account, and in what ways did he try to counter his opponent's arguments?

Crusius' (1586) refutation started with feigned indignation: how was it that after 45 years of studying Greek he had never heard about the ablative case of this language?¹⁷ The Hellenist consoled himself with the fact that even his illustrious predecessors, including Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574) and his former teachers at the Strasbourg gymnasium, had no knowledge of the Greek ablative. The Greeks themselves, from ancient authors to Byzantine grammarians, were to be pitied, maintained Crusius ironically, for not having introduced the ablative into their grammatical thinking:

¹⁶ On the humanist study of Hebrew, see e.g. Campanini (2013).

¹⁷ For an English work translation of Crusius' (1586) refutation, see Van Rooy (2020d).

O stultos Graecos ipsos, Platones, Aristoteles, Thucydides, Xenophontes, Demosthenes, Isocrates, quod Latinam linguam nescivistis, ex qua ablativum in vestram linguam introducendum, ex hoc summi animi Nicodemo didicissetis. Amentem Chrysoloram, rusticum Gazam, nullius consilii Chalcondylem, ceteros Graecos, qui, quamvis forsitan multi eorum Latine scirent, grammatica ablativo mutilata scripserunt [How foolish are the Greeks themselves! Platos, Aristotles, Thucydideses, Xenophons, Demostheneses, Isocrateses – that you didn’t know the Latin language! You could have learned from Nicodemus here, a magnificent mind, to introduce the ablative from Latin into your language. Mad Chrysoloras, stupid Gaza, senseless Chalcondyles, and the other Greeks who, even though many of them might have known Latin, wrote grammars bereft of the ablative]. (Crusius 1586: 340)

Crusius almost died in the process of reading Frischlin’s *Demonstration*, he suggested rather hyperbolically. After deploring his rival’s malice and the havoc he wreaked on grammar teaching, Crusius proceeded by countering Frischlin’s arguments. Firstly, Crusius argued that the core meaning of the ablative, “taking away”, was expressed in Greek by the genitive, not the dative. The secondary meaning of instrument, mode, or cause associated with the ablative was not properly called “ablative” but was actually tied to a seventh case, as the grammarian Diomedes had pointed out.¹⁸ In Frischlin’s phrase *sullambánō soi k^hrémasi kai sómasi* [“I assist you with money and body”], all three case forms were datives, not ablatives, since they did not express the core meaning of the ablative, “taking away”, but rather the opposite: “acquisition”, the semantics of the dative. Crusius thus turned the instrumental meaning of the Greek dative here into the original meaning of acquisition by means of a somewhat artificial semantic maneuver exploiting the meaning of the Greek verb for “to help”; the datives *k^hrémasi* and *sómasi* signified, he claimed, the things acquired through help rather than the instruments by which the object “you” was helped by the subject “I”.

To Frischlin’s argument that ancient Latin authors used Greek nouns in positions where one would expect an ablative case, Crusius (1586: 344-345) answered somewhat enigmatically:

Verum est: Latini utuntur hoc modo Graecis dativis. Sed inde non sequitur: ergo sua natura sunt ablativi. Quare non sequitur? Quia hoc violentum est. Latini quasi crinibus attrahunt tales dativos coguntque fieri ablativos [It is true: the Latins use Greek datives in this way. But hence it does not follow: so they are by their nature ablatives. Why does it not follow? Because this is forcible. The Latins drag in such datives by the head and shoulders, and they force them to become ablatives].

Did Crusius want to suggest that the coerced usage of foreign words in one language, Latin, did not allow conclusions about the case system in the source language, Greek? If so, he certainly made a valid point on the formal level. Whatever the case, he did not feel the need to pay much attention to this insight, which he felt to be obvious.

Frischlin’s claim that the form of case endings alone did not allow for the rejection of a Greek ablative met with Crusius’ disdain. According to Crusius (1586: 345), there was only a Greek dative, which in addition to its core meaning of acquisition could also express the value of the Latin seventh case but not of the Latin ablative. So although there was a semantic overlap between Greek dative and Latin ablative case forms, the Greeks had no separate ablative case signifying the core meaning of “taking away” as Latin had, a meaning expressed in Greek with

¹⁸ See Diomedes, *Ars grammatica*, e.g. book 1 (in Keil 1855–80: I.317) [with my English translation]: “ceterum ab his quidam discrepant qui etiam septimum casum adsumunt, qui est ablativo similis, ratione autem non congruit [...] [but from these differ some who assume a seventh case, too, which is similar to the ablative, but does not agree with it in meaning]”.

the genitive case instead. Crusius drily dismissed Frischlin's argument that the ablative was attributed to all languages except Greek by labelling this argument as obscure. Universal applicability of the ablative case was obviously not as much a concern for Crusius as it was for Frischlin. Instead, Crusius turned to ad hominem attacks again, ridiculing his opponent for having used the wrong case with the Greek verb *horô* (ὁρῶ) "I see", genitive *sou* (σου) instead of accusative *se* (σε) "you", as well as for writing in Latin *saltem* "at least" where he meant *tantum* "only". This attack served to invalidate Frischlin's knowledge of both classical languages and, by consequence, his arguments in favor of a Greek ablative.

Crusius' refutation ended with the contention that Frischlin's *Demonstratio* was not a demonstration in the sense of Aristotle, nota bene Frischlin's favorite philosopher (see section 2). Aristotle had argued that a demonstration "constare ex veris, primis, immediatis, notioribus, prioribus et causis conclusionis [consists of true, primary, immediate, well-known premises and causes of the conclusion]" (Crusius 1586: 346). Also according to Aristotle, the propositions included in a demonstration should meet three criteria: "in omni inesse, per se dici et in universo genere spectari [being present in every case, being said in its own right, and being observed universally]".¹⁹ But, continued Crusius, since these three elements were lacking, Frischlin's so-called demonstration was nothing but a "puerile sophisma [boyish sophism]" for which pupils would receive corporeal punishment if they asserted it.

In the final substantial paragraph, Crusius again insulted Frischlin and his Latin grammar and *Strigilis*, also accusing him of lies, contradictions, superfluities, and obscurity. Frischlin, claimed Crusius, only wanted to exalt himself at the cost of great pedagogical chaos. It was for this reason that Crusius' unruly student also abolished the optative mood in Latin grammar, another act of revolt against his former supervisor, who had retained this mood in his handbook (see Section 4). Despite these insults, Crusius maintained that he did not hate the incorrigible Frischlin but that he felt forced to react against him and his absurd grammatical ideas.

Crusius' final words were addressed to grammar teachers, urging them to be conservative, a request bolstered by five lines from Vergil's *Bucolics* (1.45 & 1.48-51). There was no need to engage in grammatical absurdities following Frischlin's lead:

Vos vero, honorandi et cari scholarum praeceptores ac paedagogi, bono animo estote; ac Philippica Grammatica retinentes, officio strenue fungimini [But you honorable and dear school teachers and pedagogues, be of good spirit. Retain Philipp's *Grammar*, and carry out your duty strenuously].²⁰

In sum, as they argued over the Greek ablative Frischlin and Crusius were talking about meaning and form, with Frischlin claiming that the semantics of the Latin ablative were present in Greek, too, and Crusius countering that Greek had no ablative case formally and that the ablative meaning was expressed by the Greek genitive. It may seem like a non-dispute, especially since the Italian polyglot humanist Angelo Canini (1521–1557) had astutely

¹⁹ Crusius (1586: 346). Cf. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.2 & 1.4 (71b-72b & 73a-74a), which Crusius probably cited from memory as he referred to it as the *Analytica priora*.

²⁰ Crusius (1586: 347). With "Philippica Grammatica" Crusius probably referred to Philipp Melanchthon's older Latin grammar, thus promoting once again pedagogical conservatism. Another possibility is that Crusius was thinking of his opponent Philipp Nicodemus Frischlin's Latin grammar, in which case the Latin verb *retinere* should be understood as "to repress". Perhaps Crusius intended this striking ambiguity, but the apparent speed with which he wrote his response to Frischlin's *Demonstratio* might be taken as a counterargument to this hypothesis.

remarked thirty years before: “ablativi forma Graeci carent, non vi, quae genitivo et aliquando dativo refertur [the Greeks lack the form of the ablative, but not its meaning, which is expressed by the genitive and sometimes the dative]” (Canini 1555: 112). However, Frischlin and Crusius were less pragmatic than Canini and appear to have fundamentally disagreed on the tenets of grammar, which Frischlin believed should be sense-driven, whereas Crusius assumed that form was the primary criterion by which this issue should be assessed. In addition to their personal rivalry, it was also their competing models of grammar that drove a wedge between these scholars: Frischlin’s newfangled rational-semantic approach clashed with Crusius’ traditional humanist conception of grammar, in which usage and variation prevailed over reason and transparency.

4. *Beyond the ablative: the article and the optative*

Frischlin’s ideas about two Greek categories, the article and the optative, seem to confirm the rational-semantic underpinning of his grammar model. On the article, Frischlin (1586: A 2r–A 2v) remarked:

Nam et articulum falso dici partem orationis grammaticae, sive SPECIEM dictionis (est enim loquacissimae gentis flabellum quoddam, ut ait Scaliger) et postpositivum articulum esse nullum, sed ὃς, ἥ, ὅ pronomen esse relativum [For the article, too, is falsely called a part of grammatical speech, or a KIND of word (it is, in fact, a fan of an excessively chatty people, as Scaliger puts it), and there is no such thing as a postpositive article. *Hós, hē, hò* is rather the relative pronoun].

There were, in other words, two main problems with the article category in Frischlin’s eyes. On the one hand, the article was not a part of speech because, he seems to have thought, it did not convey any fundamental meaning; it was a superfluous feature of the Greek language, an observation he supported by misquoting his model Julius Caesar Scaliger from memory (see the Appendix). On the other hand, half of the category did not actually consist of article forms, since the so-called postpositive article in Greek grammatical tradition was nothing more than a relative pronoun (cf. Matthaios & Van Rooy forthcoming, with further references).

One would expect Frischlin’s semantic focus on grammar, which entailed skepticism about the Greek article class and the Greeks’ unique lack of an ablative case, to also have implications for another grammatical category: the optative. If Greek had a semantic ablative, then in the same line of reasoning Latin would also be able to express the meaning of the optative mood. This viewpoint would moreover be backed by traditional Latin grammaticography, since at the outset Roman scholars had simply adopted the category from Greek scholarship, which they had also done with the article (cf. Van Rooy forthcoming and especially the references there). They distinguished the Latin optative solely by adding the adverb *utinam*, “if only”, to the subjunctive paradigm. Yet Frischlin surprisingly dropped the optative mood from Latin grammar, picking yet another fight with traditionalist grammarians, including his former supervisor Crusius:

In enumeratione modorum, quos ineptissime definiunt, ponunt etiam optativum. At cur non etiam posuere dubitativum, aut concessivum, aut iurativum? Sunt enim varii coniunctionum et interiectionum significatus, qui additi verbo subiunctivi aut indicativi modi, facile nobis modum aliquem eiusmodi parturient. [In their enumeration of the moods, which they define most inadequately, they also place an optative. But why have they not placed a dubitative, a concessive, or a jurative either? For conjunctions and interjections have various meanings

which, added to a verb in the subjunctive or indicative mood, will easily generate a mood of some sort]. (Frischlin 1587 [1584]: 27-28; cf. Strauss 1856: 266)

Frischlin suggested that the form of the subjunctive was in itself not enough to render an optative meaning but required the addition of an adverb, whereas the ablative he attributed to Greek could appear autonomously – although it often followed a preposition. In other words, from his Latin-centered perspective, he did not find it useful to assume an optative category, since this would give way to inventing new verbal categories marked only by variable adverbs and not by different verb forms.

Crusius was indignant at the omission of the optative, noting in his copy of Frischlin's 1585 grammar: "optatiu[us] ἐξώριστ[αι] sicut Adamus è Paradiso [the optative is banished just like Adam from Paradise]".²¹ Crusius (1586: 15) accused Frischlin of modernism surpassing even that of Scaliger, who had retained the Latin optative, and pointed out the paradox inherent in his wish to describe ancient Latinity without retaining the categories used by the ancients themselves, in addition to other, purely personal observations (e.g. Crusius 1586: 80). Frischlin (1587: 28) countered his opponent not only by discussing the workings of the subjunctive and how the optative meaning was arrived at through the addition of an adverb but also by invoking the authority of the Italian humanist Girolamo Ruscelli (1518–1566; cf. Strauss 1856: 266). He moreover drew a parallel with the Greek dual number, assuming apparently that in Latin the optative and the dual could not be expressed with only one word but required the addition of extra elements to other categories such as the subjunctive and the plural, *utinam* for the optative and something like *duo* for the dual. Indeed, argued Frischlin (1587: 123), the fact that such additions were needed indicated that the optative and dual semantics were not the primary meanings of the subjunctive and plural categories but rather "speciales [...] significationes [specific meanings]" nested under a "generalem [...] significationem [general meaning]".

To Frischlin's mind the ablative case seems to have had a primary meaning clearly distinct from that of the dative case, which is why it was present in Greek – and all other languages for that matter – whereas the optative and the dual conveyed only secondary meanings and were therefore not universal, which is why they should not be stipulated for Latin. So Frischlin's rejection of the optative for Latin and his claim that Greek had an ablative were only seemingly paradoxical, hinging as they did on a semantic principle: postulating a separate category was only warranted if a series of forms reflected a principal meaning, as was the case with the ablative. If "significationes [...] minus principales [less principal meanings]" (Frischlin 1587: 123) were conveyed, for instance by the optative, one need not stipulate an autonomous category, especially if this meaning did not correspond to an individual word form but was instead generated by the addition of an adverb such as *utinam*.

Be that as it may, Frischlin's treatment of the Latin optative and the Greek ablative could be easily misinterpreted as a contradiction, if judged purely on formal grounds, as it was by Crusius, and his numerous grammar works did not straightforwardly outline his complex semantic principle, details of which he hid in one of his fictitious grammar dialogues with Crusius (Frischlin 1587: 123). Additionally, tradition was not on Frischlin's side when he wrote.

²¹ See Staatsbibliothek, Unter den Linden, 1 an: W 1250, p. 96. Cf. also the variant comparison to Cicero in Crusius (1586: 79-80): "Optativus ἐξώρισται, exterminatus est: sicut Cicero, ex urbe Roma, in exilium [The optative is banished, is expelled: just like Cicero, from the city of Rome, in exile]".

Although he rightly argued in favor of ridding Latin grammaticography of the article and the optative, which eventually did happen, many humanists retained these categories for the sake of tradition.²² Frischlin's daring suggestion to attribute an ablative case to Greek was, however, relatively unsuccessful. Yet his *Demonstratio* did feature in a posthumously published volume filled with brief texts by his hand (Frischlin 1606: 278-282) and moreover enjoyed a reprint in the eighteenth century (in Eskuche 1750: 46-52), the latter more because of the rarity than the originality of the work. His idea of a Greek ablative might also have influenced another follower of J. C. Scaliger, Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (1523–1600).²³ Still, in spite of the relative lack of success his ideas enjoyed, Frischlin's attempts to reform grammatical theory were well thought through and might additionally reflect his experience as a teacher, since he wanted to simplify existing descriptions of Latin and Greek by finetuning the grammatical model along more universal semantic principles, centering on primary meanings.

5. *By way of conclusion: the ablative as smoking gun*

Frischlin and Crusius fought a bitter grammar war, of which I have only sketched one heated battle here. Their quarrel on the Greek ablative can, however, be taken as a smoking gun revealing a more fundamental disagreement, rooted in discrepant ideas on grammar and reflected also in their opposing views on the optative. Crusius the supervisor clung to grammar in its traditional humanist form, refuting any innovations whatsoever in this art and deploying all possible arguments for maintaining the grammatical status quo, in which formal and semantic criteria were often conflated. His former protégé Frischlin took a different approach to grammar, conceiving of this foundational branch of learning not as an art but as a science which should be based on rational principles. Julius Caesar Scaliger constituted his main inspiration for this approach, according to which primary meanings should be the central touchstone in defining grammatical categories. This semantic focus was also the reason for not considering the article a separate word class, since its meaning was not clear-cut.

Frischlin aimed to arrive at a model with maximal cross-linguistic applicability, which entailed that if all languages had an ablative case, Greek should have, too. Crusius, in turn, did not mind allowing for language-specific particularities, since he denied Greek the ablative category. In the Frischlin–Crusius dispute, then, we find the seeds of more recent discussions on the adequacy of linguistic concepts and whether they can be effectively applied respecting the individuality of every language. Most notably, Martin Haspelmath (2010a; 2010b) and

²² The gradual expunction of the article and optative categories from Latin grammaticography deserves a separate study.

²³ Sánchez de las Brozas (1587: 16r–17v) seems to have taken up Frischlin's suggestion of a Greek ablative and even offered the same examples from Cicero's letters in his *Minerva* (see Clerico 1982: 51; Breva-Claramonte 1983: 104-105, 216), without, however, mentioning Frischlin by name. Sánchez de las Brozas' influence seems to have been greater, being apparent, for instance, in the Port-Royal grammar of Greek (Lancelot 1655: 455-460), where the idea of a Greek ablative is also defended at length. A discussion of Sánchez de las Brozas' ideas on the ablative and their impact lies outside the scope of this contribution but would be a neat parallel to my analysis of Frischlin's views. It would also be worthwhile to clarify the relationship between Frischlin's and Sánchez de las Brozas' views, especially since it is currently unclear when exactly Sánchez de las Brozas developed his ideas on the Greek ablative, but it seems to have been shortly after Frischlin's *Demonstratio*; the suggestion of a Greek ablative appears to be lacking in the rare first edition of Sánchez de las Brozas' *Minerva*, published in 1562 (Breva-Claramonte 1975: 56 & 63 n. 10). The fact that the Spanish grammarian of Latin and Greek passed off someone else's work as his own on other occasions, too (Van Rooy 2020b: 461), leads one to conjecture that he may have done the same with Frischlin's ideas.

Frederick J. Newmeyer (2010) have intensely debated this matter in the journal *Language*. Haspelmath (2010a: 663-664) proposed moving away from the often-implicit idea of “categorical universalism” and to carefully distinguish, instead, between language-specific categories and “comparative categories”, a distinction which Newmeyer (2010) sharply criticized.

Although a sixteenth-century debate on an alleged Greek ablative can never hope to make any substantial contribution to this modern discussion, it does reveal that the unease about the descriptive adequacy of traditional grammatical categories is rooted in this period. As such, sixteenth-century scholarship moved far beyond the few suspicions harbored by ancient and early medieval grammarians such as Priscian, who had sensed the mismatch between Greek and Latin but had not considered its full implications.²⁴ The linguistic horizons of European scholars vastly expanded in the sixteenth century, and there was a major movement to codify languages in grammars, which involved the massive, usually ad-hoc transfer of terminology and concepts (see the discussion and references in Peetermans 2020: 14-16; Van Rooy 2020a: 49-52); this transfer typically occurred from Latin to the European vernacular tongues and the languages of the Americas, Asia, and Africa but with Frischlin also from Latin to Greek, that other revered ancient tongue. The flexibility shown by grammarians such as Frischlin resulted in the eager cross-linguistic application of terms and the concepts associated with them; such extrapolations tended to occur without too much premeditation, resulting in the widespread assumption that one could freely use categories tailored to one language in descriptions of other tongues. This flexible application of terms inevitably led to situations where a linguistic phenomenon in one language was denoted with a term covering a different phenomenon in another language. In the early modern period, such transferals usually happened intuitively, but with Frischlin’s *Demonstratio* we have a clearly premeditated instance of applying the Latin ablative category to Greek, which makes it a rather exceptional text for its age, however brief it may be.

Of course, the Frischlin–Crusius controversy, of which the ablative debate was only a small part, was about much more than grammar alone. Their head-on fight had two other dimensions that were manifestly less scholarly. Firstly, Frischlin and Crusius had a fierce personal rivalry, as I have established in the introduction (see Section 1). Their dispute seemingly also involved a contest of philological acumen, the victory of which Samuel M. Wheelis (1974: 46) has claimed for Frischlin: “From a philological standpoint, Frischlin was more often correct in the specific grammatical questions”, but to which he added: “On both sides, however, the bulk of the arguments were of a rather low order; most of their pamphlets and counterpamphlets are exercises in character assassination and are to neither man’s credit”, an assessment with which I am inclined to agree.

Secondly, Frischlin and Crusius adopted fundamentally different attitudes toward the Greeks, their heritage, and their language. Whereas Crusius often figures as a protagonist in accounts of sixteenth-century Philhellenism (cf. Ben-Tov 2009: 84), especially since his interest in all things Greek spanned from antiquity to his own time, Frischlin followed his great example

²⁴ See note 8 above for Priscian’s observations on the Greek vs. Latin case system.

Scaliger’s Mishellenic tracks.²⁵ Tellingly, Frischlin (1589: 285), when surveying the great abundance of Greek verb forms, including the optative, was seduced to make the following Hellenoskeptic comment: “Graeci enim sunt multo loquaciores et ideo mendaciores Latinis [For the Greeks are much more chatty and hence more mendacious than the Latins]”. This quote reminds of Scaliger’s description of the Greek article, which also featured the adjective *loquax*, but takes matters even further by suggesting that linguistic abundance not only led to garrulity but even to a proneness to lie – hardly a flattering image of the people so greatly admired by Crusius.

In sum, Frischlin was obviously not picking a fight about an alleged Greek ablative with his former supervisor Crusius out of a deep-seated concern about this particular case category. Instead, as I have tried to argue, their quarrel about the ablative was a smoking gun for much deeper disagreements, not least their diverging views on grammar, their personal vendetta, and their diametrically opposed attitudes toward the Greek people. However multilayered their dispute may have been, I doubt that many inhabitants of Tübingen will have left their Christmas dinner tables to hear Frischlin’s arguments for a Greek ablative.

Appendix – The Greek article as *flabellum*: A bon mot and its vicissitudes

In dismissing the Greek article category as “a fan of a most garrulous nation” (see Section 4 above), the graphomaniac Frischlin (1586: A 2r–A 2v) was citing his great model J. C. Scaliger, but apparently from memory, as he replaced Scaliger’s (1540: 126) original “otiosum loquacissimae gentis instrumentum [idle instrument of an excessively chatty people]” with “loquacissimae gentis flabellum quoddam [a fan of an excessively chatty people]”. To Frischlin’s mind, *flabellum*, literally “fan”, referring to the object used to create an airflow for cooling, no doubt had the metaphorical meaning of “frivolity”. Interestingly, the *flabellum* misquote was to have a rich reception, picked up as it was by the biblical critic Salomon Glass (Salomo Glassius; 1593–1656) in his *Grammatica sacra* (*Sacred grammar*), first published in Jena in 1634 as part of his *Philologia sacra* series (1623–36), which enjoyed many reprints in the early modern period (see Betz 2020: 429–442 for Glass’ life and work). Yet Glass was referring to another work of Frischlin’s, namely his comparative syntax of Latin and Greek, where he argued on the authority of Varro that the Greek article was not a separate word class but a kind of demonstrative pronoun which had a determining function (Frischlin 1590: 87–88). There Frischlin complained that there was such a great fickleness in the article’s use that it could not be captured in rules.²⁶ After illustrating this fickleness with numerous examples, he concluded his introduction to the syntax of the article as follows: “Quare non abs re est, quod πανεπιστήμων ille Scaliger articulum dixit loquacissimae gentis flabellum [Which is why it is not out of place that that all-knowing Scaliger called the article the fan of an excessively chatty people]” (Frischlin 1590: 89). The article’s lack of regulation, in addition to its allegedly indistinctive – pronominal – meaning, led Frischlin to reject its word class status, and therefore dismiss a prominent category of Greek grammatical scholarship. It was this changeable usage

²⁵ Cf. Lardet et al. (2019: 33–36, 52–54 & 204–217). For a more nuanced account of Crusius’ Philhellenism, see Calis (2020), who points out the scholar’s criticisms of, and negative attitudes toward, the Greeks.

²⁶ Frischlin (1590: 89): “Accedit huc magna varietas in usu articuli, ita ut praeceptis comprehendi non possit”.

of the article which Glass (1653: 498-499, emphasis original) also targeted in his *Grammatica sacra*:

In usu *articuli praepositivi* magnam sibi Graeci, praesertim profani scriptores, sumunt libertatem, adeo, ut nec praeceptis comprehendi id possit. Unde Iulius Caesar Scaliger (referente Frischlino in synt. Graecolat.) articulum dixit *loquacissimae gentis flabellum* [In the use of the *prepositive article* the Greeks, especially pagan writers, allow themselves great liberty, to such an extent that it cannot be captured in rules. Hence Julius Caesar Scaliger (as reported by Frischlin in his Greek-Latin syntax) called the article *the fan of an excessively chatty people*].

Notably, Glass attributed the unsystematic use of the article in the first place to pagan authors, suggesting that Christian texts such as the Greek New Testament were not harmed by this irregular usage. By further specifying Scaliger's remark, the Bible scholar Glass associated the frivolous article with pagan Greeks, safeguarding Christian Greek-speakers from this grammatical excess.

Glass' second-hand citation of Scaliger's article phrase was included in a highly successful work, which, as a founding study in biblical philology, enjoyed numerous reprints in the early modern period. As such, it was in a position to transmit Frischlin's version of Scaliger's description of the article to posterity.²⁷ It seems that the phrase featured especially often in modern English publications in which either the Greek article or the New Testament or both were treated. Although this conclusion might be biased by the Anglocentric Google (Books) search algorithm and coverage, and will probably have to be adjusted in follow-up research, I believe it worthwhile to briefly survey here the instances of Frischlin's misquote from Scaliger through Glass and the contexts in which this occurred, if only to indicate that the desire to invoke Scaliger's authority was apparently much stronger than the will to read his original work on Latin grammar. This case study moreover illustrates that citation practices in language studies did not necessarily improve with the advent of modern institutionalized linguistics, and that many linguists were content with a very anecdotic use of earlier scholarship.²⁸

In 1808, the Anglican bishop Thomas Fanshawe Middleton (1769–1822) published a book on the use of the article in the New Testament in which he cited the article quote from Glass in order to counter it immediately, even if that meant going against two esteemed authorities. It is worth citing Middleton's opening passage in full, especially because his citation, occurring in a successful book which ran through numerous editions, appears to have been influential in popularizing Scaliger's quote in the *flabellum* version:

We learn from Glass, in his *Philol. Sacra*, that Julius Caesar Scaliger called the Greek Article *loquacissimae gentis flabellum*; and that Budaeus [i.e. Guillaume Budé (1468–1540)] represents the Attic writers, as at one time inserting the Article by a Pleonasm, and at others omitting it by an Ellipsis. This doctrine, while it seems to command assent from the authority of those, who have propounded it, is nevertheless so abhorrent from the genius of a philosophical language, like that of the ancient Greeks, that no fallible authority is of sufficient force to rescue it from

²⁷ See e.g. also Owen (1655: 66), with a slight mismatch in syntax between Owen's English and the Latin *flabellum* quote: "The *curious* use of the Greeke *Articles*, which as *Scaliger* calls them, are *loquacissimae Gentis flabellum*, is their great *covert* against the Arguments for the *Deity* of Christ [...]". Here, the quote, judging by the similar construction probably taken from Glass, served to undermine the use of the Greek article as an argument in theological disputes.

²⁸ Cf. Considine (2009), who conducted a similar investigation for the French phrase "Les voyelles ne font rien, et les consonnes fort peu de chose", misattributed to Voltaire. See also Maxwell (2018) for the strikingly misinformed attributions of the "A language is a dialect with an army and navy" quip, associated with Max Weinreich but not authored by him.

the consequences of its inherent improbability. If in any language there could be a Part of Speech, which without offence to Syntax might thus be employed or discarded at the pleasure of the speaker, that language might with more reason be supposed to be the French; which has not, like the Greek, the appearance of having been contrived by a synod of philosophers, but might rather be thought to owe its peculiarities to the fashion of the court and the habits of the gay and frivolous. In French, however, the laws respecting their Articles are rigorously observed; and an Englishman, who has not attended to the rules, will probably find, that of the faults which he commits in translating into that language a page of English, those which regard the Articles, are not the least considerable part. The nation, therefore, to which in modern times all others are accustomed to impute loquacity, does not employ its Articles as mere *flabella*: and there is at least a presumption, that among the Greeks the Article was subservient to some graver purpose. (Middleton 1808: 1-2, emphasis original)

In 1834, another, shorter, publication on the Greek article, this time by the American biblical scholar Moses B. Stuart (1780–1852), who could have read Middleton’s work in the 1813 New York edition, the *flabellum* quote appeared twice. Stuart (1834: 288 & 327) likewise used the bon mot to counter Scaliger’s, Frischlin’s, and Glass’ conviction that the Greek article was a mere frivolity with no linguistic function. Seeing that Stuart omitted the names of both Frischlin and Glass, we are here at the very start of the tradition directly attributing the *flabellum* quote to “Scaliger”, with no further qualifications or direct source indications, thus initiating a long-lasting tradition of misquoting Scaliger’s observation on the Greek article. Notably, in a 2001 edition of works by the English author Thomas De Quincey (1758–1859), the editor confessed that the quote was “[u]ntraced in the writings of Julius Caesar Scaliger” (Lindop 2001: 340 n. 90), when he had to annotate De Quincey’s excursus on the language of Socratic philosophy in one of his papers on style in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*:

But in what mode does the conversational taint, which we trace to the writings of the Socratici, enforced by the imaginary martyrdom of Socrates, express itself? In what forms of language? By what peculiarities? By what defects of style? We will endeavour to explain. One of the Scaligers (if we remember it was the elder,) speaking of the Greek article $\acute{o}, \eta, \tau\omicron$ [*sic*], called it *loquacissimae gentis flabellum*. Now, *pace superbissimi viri*, this seems nonsense; because the use of the article was not capricious, but grounded in the very structure and necessities of the Greek language. Garrulous or not, the poor men were obliged by the philosophy of their tongue to use the article in certain situations. (De Quincey 1840: 397)

Here too, Scaliger’s alleged quote served as a disclaimer: there were some learned men who dismissed the value of the Greek article, but this could not be maintained, De Quincey thought. He drew a parallel between the Greek and the English article and singled out the two main functions of the word class: “to individualize” and “the very opposite function, viz., to generalize in the highest degree—a use which our best English grammars wholly overlook”, a neat analysis which he exemplified with the following sentences:

- (1) It is not any sword that will do, I will have *the* sword of my father.
- (2) Let *the* sword give way to *the* gown.

We have come a long way from Scaliger’s and Frischlin’s dismissal of the article as a fickle frivolity without stable meaning to a rather accurate understanding of this linguistic category.

De Quincey moreover failed to recall precisely which Scaliger, the elder (i.e. Julius Caesar) or the younger (i.e. Joseph Justus [1540–1609]), had formulated the *flabellum* phrase, while at the same time objecting to the quote associated with him. These two elements indicate that the nineteenth-century essayist had not read the early modern works of Scaliger, Frischlin, or Glass

but rather relied on more recent publications of the English-language sphere. De Quincey being a very popular author whose collected works were printed at various times, the *flabellum* quote turned into a customary quip for authors writing on the Greek article, an anecdotal witticism with which modern scholars achieved two things: (1) amusing their readers and (2) dismissing Scaliger’s ideas on the Greek article, and by extension those of early modern scholarship in its entirety, as inadequate and irrelevant.²⁹ Yet in the late nineteenth century, scholars involved in a discussion on translating the Greek New Testament into English could still be blamed for “lean[ing] to Scaliger’s view, who sarcastically called [the article] ‘*loquacissimae gentis flabellum*’”.³⁰

The *flabellum* quote survived into the twentieth century, featuring in modern studies in Greek linguistics. Most notably, in a 1902 paper published in the *American Journal of Philology*, the classical scholar Basil L. Gildersleeve (1831–1924) reiterated both the quote and De Quincey’s observations on the twofold function of the article. Gildersleeve (1902: 122), however, took a less categorical stance toward the adequacy of the *flabellum* quote than De Quincey and other predecessors:

The particular article is felt to be more and more a necessity, and not, as Julius Caesar Scaliger called it, a *flabellum loquacissimae gentis*. But the generic article, the article that picks out an individual and holds it up as a model, a type, a standard, never becomes a necessity, and the differences which the grammars make between abstracts with and without the article not only lack practical warrant in the every-day language, but fail to work in the field in which they are most needed; and he who tries to distinguish between σοφία and ἡ σοφία, ἀρετή and ἡ ἀρετή everywhere in Plato is not wise.

Gildersleeve employed the Scaliger quote in denouncing the alleged arbitrariness of the article, but, to use De Quincey’s wording, only of the individualizing article and not of the elusive generalizing article, for which he apparently did feel that Scaliger’s phrase was suitable.

This citation practice in the Anglosphere of attributing the *flabellum* quote to Scaliger seems to hearken back to Middleton’s successful account of the Greek article, which drew on Glass’ work on biblical philology. Such a conclusion is backed by the fact that in the late eighteenth century Scaliger’s *articulus* quote was cited correctly in the original form. The philologist John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), for instance, started his discussion of the article with the following engaging account in his popular philological treatise *Ἑπεὰ περὶ ῥέοντα: or, the diversions of Purley* (1786):

Of all the accounts which have been given of the Article, I must own I think that of the very ingenious Abbé Girard to be the most fantastic and absurd. The fate of this very necessary word has been most singularly hard and unfortunate. For though without it, or some equivalent invention, men could not communicate their thoughts at all; yet (like many of the most useful things in this world) from its unaffected simplicity and want of brilliancy, it has been

²⁹ On scholarly forgetting in the nineteenth century, which occurred to different degrees of consciousness, see most recently Lamers et al. (2020) and the other papers in the same themed issue. For the second goal (dismissing earlier scholarship), see also the following telling example from the French-speaking sphere: “Dans leur infatuation pour la langue latine, les savants du XVI^{me} siècle, et à leur tête le célèbre Scaliger, traitaient le grec avec une sorte de dédain, par rapport, du moins, à ce petit mot qui y revient si souvent et qu’on appelle l’*article*. C’était un son dépourvu de sens, au dire même d’Aristote. Aussi n’y voyait-on qu’une vaine superfluité digne seulement d’un peuple éminemment bavard!”, footnote 1 containing the phrase “*Loquacissimae gentis flabellum*” (Burnier 1866: 135-136). Cf. also Anon. (1857: 493), quoted in n. 32 below.

³⁰ Schaff (1883: 470 n. 1), who was referring to the ideas of the Scottish classicist John Stuart Blackie (1809–1895) as opposed to those of Middleton.

ungratefully neglected and degraded. It has been considered, after Scaliger, as “*otiosum loquacissimae gentis instrumentum*,” or, at best, as a mere *vaunt-courier* to announce the coming of his master [...].³¹

Even more compelling evidence for attributing the nineteenth-century success of the *flabellum* quote to Middleton is provided by the biblical philologist Thomas Sheldon Green (1803/1804–1876). Green (1842: 131-132 n. *) cited both Glass and Middleton in his introduction to the article, before rightly arguing that the Greek article and the indefinite pronoun *tis* (τις) are most certainly not equivalent, for “[i]f this point were conceded, the Article might at once be given up as *loquacissimae gentis flabellum*” (Green 1842: 153-154 n. *). A comment in the July 1857 issue of *The Journal of Sacred Literature* also associated the phrase with Middleton.³² Finally, in a controversial 1829 dissertation on the then-unknown course of the Niger river, a passage from Herodotus where the Greek name for the Nile is construed with an article (2.33: καὶ Ἑτάρχος συνεβάλλετο εἶναι τὸν Νεῖλον) incited the author Rufane Shaw Donkin (1772–1841) to devote a lengthy footnote to the value of this part of speech. Donkin (1829: 12-14), an army officer turned geography enthusiast, did not share the opinion “that the Greek article is a mere non-entity” or even “a mere ‘Nominis Umbra [noun shadow]’”; nor did he agree

with Scaliger in calling the Greek article a ‘*loquacissimae gentis flabellum*’, nor with Budaeus, in thinking that the article in the hands of the Attic writers was either omitted by ellipsis, or inserted by pleonasm, according to the fancy of the author; and I am glad to be able to adduce the authority of Bishop Middleton as to the importance and entity of this part of speech [...].

In sum, the modern popularity of Frischlin’s misquote of Scaliger’s bon mot on the Greek article was mainly indebted to Middleton’s reading of Glass’ work on biblical philology, but at the same time Scaliger’s original version kept on being quoted as well. One is left to wonder why many erudite intellectuals felt comfortable quoting Scaliger rather carelessly. Was the Italian humanist’s fame enough to warrant a lack of source indication, or did his citers in vain search for the *flabellum* quote in one of the numerous editions of Scaliger’s *De causis* and feel forced to leave out details? Given the fact that many of their colleagues did manage to quote Scaliger correctly, the former option seems the most plausible. The *flabellum* phrase was also more concise than the original quote featuring the circumlocution *otiosissimum instrumentum*. Additionally, by comparing a linguistic phenomenon to a very specific object, a fan, Frischlin’s

³¹ Tooke (1786: 83-85), who seems to have inspired the French Hellenist Jean-François Thurot (1768–1832): “Et d’abord l’article, que Scaliger appelle, avec dédain, *otiosum loquacissimae gentis instrumentum*, et que l’abbé Girard regarde comme un simple *avant-coureur*, destiné à mettre de la politesse et de la délicatesse dans le discours, est, au contraire, d’un usage indispensable” (Thurot 1837: 211-212). For an earlier, seventeenth-century instance of a correct quote of Scaliger’s original, see e.g. Osiander & Hoeschel (1660: 23), discussing the Greek names of God and the usage of the article with them: “[...] ex praestantissimorum philologorum testimoniis et quotidiano linguae Graecanae usu, *otiosum loquacissimae gentis instrumentum* deprehendatur [from the testimonies of the most prominent philologists and the daily usage of the Greek language, it is observed to be an idle instrument of an excessively chatty people]”. See also Stark (1860: 4) on the poetical deletion of articles: “Le vers léger, le vers de huit ou dix pieds, grand ennemi des mots inutiles, y trouve le moyen de supprimer l’article, cet embarras des versificateurs, la surcharge de la phrase poétique, *otiosissimum loquacissimae gentis instrumentum*, comme l’appelait Scaliger dans sa colère”.

³² Anon. (1857: 493): “How much of late has been done to fix the principles and philosophy of the Greek language! About the time our admirable version was given to the world, the only canon which the highest scholarship could enunciate respecting the *article*, was that it was ‘*loquacissimae gentis flabellum*’. Scaliger knew nothing more about it than this flippant utterance betokened. It is needless to say how much since the time of Middleton has been done to define the influence of this important vocable”.

metaphoric variant might have enchanted readers more than Scaliger's drier original. Whatever the case, I hope to have elucidated here the origin of the widespread *flabellum* phrase by illustrating that it was apparently Scaliger's epigone Frischlin who coined it around Christmastime 1585, a misquote which became popular by accident. While in the early modern period the *flabellum* quote was used approvingly, it became an anecdotic quip in modern language studies serving the opposite purpose: to reject early modern scholarship on the Greek article and excuse oneself from engaging more extensively with earlier ideas.

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SUMMARY

In this article, I discuss a grammar dispute that took place between Philipp Nicodemus Frischlin and Martin Crusius in Tübingen in the winter of 1585/1586. I argue that their diverging views on the ablative case reflect a disagreement on two levels, in addition to their obvious personal rivalry: (1) the foundations of grammar, which Frischlin based on meaning rather than form, following J. C. Scaliger, and (2) contrasting attitudes toward the Greek people and heritage. Additionally, I discuss Frischlin's views on the article and the optative mood, while also tracing a popular misquote from Scaliger's work to Frischlin.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette contribution, nous analysons une controverse grammaticale qui eut lieu à Tübingen pendant l'hiver de 1585/1586 entre Philipp Nicodemus Frischlin et Martin Crusius. Nous démontrons que leur différence de position sur le cas ablatif reflète, outre leur évidente rivalité personnelle, un désaccord sur deux plans : (1) les fondements de la grammaire, que Frischlin établit, à l'instar de J. C. Scaliger, sur la sémantique plutôt que sur la forme, et (2) des attitudes opposées à l'égard des Grecs et de leur héritage. De plus, nous discutons les idées de Frischlin sur les catégories de l'article et de l'optatif, et montrons qu'il est la source d'une citation déformée de Scaliger qui a été colportée ensuite.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Beitrag analysiert einen Grammatikstreit, der im Winter 1585/1586 in Tübingen zwischen Philipp Nikodemus Frischlin und Martin Crusius stattfand. Wir behaupten, dass ihre unterschiedlichen Ansichten zum Ablativkasus eine Meinungsverschiedenheit auf zwei Ebenen widerspiegeln, neben ihrer offensichtlichen persönlichen Rivalität: (1) die Grundlagen der Grammatik, die Frischlin in J. C. Scaligers Spuren eher auf Semantik als auf Form gründete, und (2) eine gegensätzliche Einstellung zum griechischen Volk und Erbe. Zusätzlich besprechen wir Frischlins Ansichten zum Artikel und Optativ und führen wir den Ursprung eines falschen Scaliger-Zitats zu Frischlin zurück.

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