

*The case for the seventh case: comparative grammar and language teaching in antiquity*

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Besides the six “canonical” cases (*nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, ablative*), a branch of the Latin grammatical tradition assumed a *septimus casus*, formally converging with the ablative but semantically/functionally distinct from it. As underlined by several interpreters, the doctrine of the *septimus casus* appears bizarre and rather puzzling to modern eyes: it includes a list of uses which look extremely heterogeneous on the one hand, and, on the other, extremely defective, in that it does not provide an exhaustive survey of “non-ablatival” uses of these forms. This paper suggests a new approach to the data, assuming as a starting point the identification of the specific historical context in which the doctrine the *septimus casus* flourished, namely the practice of school teaching.

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