

Investigating the Thematic Roles in Vedic: The case of the “Rig Veda Lexikon” (RiVeLex)

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Thematic Roles: Categorization of the predicate arguments not by means of morphological (case) or purely syntactic ('subject' – 'object' etc.) criteria but primarily of semantic ones.

Thematic roles' research is nowadays mainly associated with work within the Generative Grammar framework (largely based on the seminal paper of Fillmore 1968).

Beyond the Western grammatical tradition, a system of semantic roles, much alike to the modern *theta-theory*, was developed by the Indian Grammarian Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (lit. “Comprising eight chapters”, c. 5th B.C.).

Case (<i>vibhakti</i> -, f.)		Pāṇini's semantic roles (<i>kāraka</i> -)	(roughly) corresponding θ – roles
<i>prathamā</i> (= first)	nominative	<i>kartar-</i> < 1,4,54: <i>svatantraḥ kartā</i> “someone who acts independently is the kartā (the one who acts)” <i>hetu-</i> < 1,4,55: <i>tatprayojako hetuś ca</i> “the instigator of him (the agent) is the hetuḥ (cause)” (argument of causative predicates)	ACTOR; THEME
<i>dvitīyā</i> (= second)	accusative	<i>karman-</i> < 1,4,49: <i>karturīpīsatamaḥ karma</i> : “what is desired the most by the kartā (agent) is karma (effect, object)”	THEME; PATH; GOAL
<i>ṭṛtīyā</i> (= third)	instrumental	<i>karāṇa-</i> < 1,4,42: <i>sādhakatamaḥ karāṇam</i> “that which has been of the greatest use (as means in the success of the activity denoted by the verb) is karāṇam (instrument)”	INSTRUMENT; PATH
<i>caturthī</i> (= fourth)	dative	<i>sampradāna-</i> < 1,4,32: <i>karmaṇā yam abhipraīti sa sampradānam</i> “(the one) whom one approaches through the karman (Object) is the sampradānam (recipient)”	BENEFACTIVE; EXPERIENCER etc.
<i>pañcamī</i> (= fifth)	ablative	<i>apādāna-</i> < 1,4,24: <i>dhravam apāye 'padānam</i> “the fixed (point) at the departure/separation is apādānam” (lit. “the taking away (point)”)	SOURCE
<i>ṣaṣṭhī</i> (= sixth)	genitive	<i>apādāna-</i> (see above)	SOURCE
<i>saptamī</i> (= seventh)	locative	<i>adhikarāṇa-</i> < 1,4,45: <i>ādihāro 'dhikarāṇam</i> “the (place of) holding is 'dhikarāṇam” (lit. “something which bears the activity on it”)	LOCATIVE; PATH

In Vedic there is not an 1:1 connection between a morphological case and a *kāraka* - thematic role. For example, an **accusative** can express three semantic roles: **THEME, PATH, GOAL**. The following examples are extracted from Rig Veda, the Vedic collection of sacred hymnal poetry (translation by Ralph T.H. Griffith - <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/index.htm>):

1.094.03b: tvé devā **havír (Acc. - THEME) adanty** (Verb) āhutam “In thee the Gods eat the presented offering”.

1.123.10ab: kanyéva tanvā śāśadānāñ **éṣi** (Verb) devī **devám (Acc. - GOAL)** iyakṣamāṇam “In pride of beauty like a maid thou goest, O Goddess, to the God who longs to win thee”.

10.002.03a **ā** (preverb) devānāñ **āpi** (preverb) **pānthām (Acc. - PATH) aganma** (Verb) “To the Gods' pathway have we travelled”.

In “Rig Veda Lexikon” (‘RiVeLex’, a project funded by the FWF = Austrian Science Fund) a detailed list of the semantic roles of the arguments of every verb that has been researched up to know is provided. When completed, RiVeLex will encompass a large-scale and systematic investigation of the argument structure of every single predicate which is attested in Rig Veda. Thus RiVeLex will enable the researchers to examine the interplay between verbal morphology (e.g. Genera Verbi), Case and Thematic Role in Vedic in detail.

Literature:

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edh- (v.) facientiv-transitiv/intransitiv „ENTFLAMMEN, ENTZÜNDEN“¹
 ā (Bed. ~ Simplex); ādhi ā (großflächig aufflammen); abhí (erhitzen); prá (Bed. ~ Simplex); sám (Bed. ~ Simplex)
 Tiefenkasusschemata (semantische Rollen):
 1 ACTOR – THEME; 2 ACTOR = THEME
 1 ACTOR – THEME „jmd. entzündet jmdn./etw.“ ACTOR = Nom. +bel., -abstr.; THEME = Akk. +/-bel., -abstr. (Simplex; ā; sám; sam) Medium
 2 THEME „jmd. entflammt“ (auch metaphorisch i.S.v. „entflammen, gedeihen“) THEME = Nom. +bel., -abstr.; (Simplex; ādhi ā; sám) Medium (Mediopassiv)
 2a THEME (= INSTRUMENT/ACTOR) „jmd. wird (*mit etw./von jmd.) entflammt“ THEME = Nom. +bel., -abstr.; (INSTRUMENT/ACTOR = Instr. +/-bel., -abstr.) (Simplex; ādhi ā; sám) Passiv
 2b ta-Partizip: „entflammt“ (Simplex; abhí; prá; sám)