

Dothraki Language Discovery

Background: Many languages have a way of expressing **possession**. In English, we call words like *my*, *your*, *his* and *her* **possessive pronouns**. Like English, Dothraki, the language of the horse-riding warriors from HBO's *Game of Thrones*, has possessive pronouns. Unlike English, Dothraki has two different types of possessive pronouns.

Your Task: Discover when Dothraki uses its two different possessive pronouns.

Given Information: Below are the two versions of *my* found in Dothraki. We'll refer to them by two different classes. Remember: **Both** words mean *my*.

anni (pronunciation: ON-nee) = my (Class A)

anhoon (pronunciation: on-hoe-OWN) = my (Class B)

In order to say something like *my head*, the order is reversed in Dothraki, so the word for *head* will come first and one (and only one) of the two words for *my* will follow.

Data: Here's some data for you to investigate.

azho anni "my gift"

chot anni "my beet"

darif anni "my saddle"

elge anni "my sandal"

fotha anhoon "my throat"

gomma anhoon "my mouth"

hake anni "my name"

hlaka anni "my glove"

irge anhoon "my back"

jorok anni "my corn"

khado anhoon "my body"

kogi anhoon "my pimple"

lashfak anni "my stew"

meso anhoon "my muscle"

nhare anhoon "my head"

noreth anhoon "my hair"

oyof anni "my clay"

qora anhoon "my hand"

rhae anhoon "my foot"

rohane anhoon "my mustache"

sajo anni "my steed"

serja anni "my vest"

shirane anhoon "my beard"

tavo anni "my hatchet"

thagwa anni "my yogurt"

tih anhoon "my eye"

vov anni "my weapon"

yazla anni "my diamond"

zhor anhoon "my heart"

ziso anhoon "my wound"

To help you in your investigation, you might start by separating all the phrases above into two groups: Those that have *anni* (Class A) and those that have *anhoon* (Class B). What similarities are there between the possessed words in Class A? How do they differ from the possessed words in Class B?

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Taking It Further 1: By now you should have a hypothesis about when one would use *anni* and when would use *anhoon*. Now consider the following:

vorto anhoon "my tooth"
vorto anni "my tooth"

Both phrases above are correct, but they mean something slightly different. What might that difference be?

Taking It Further 2: Thus far the nouns you've seen cover a certain range of meanings, but we have yet to see words for humans. Consider the following:

<i>akkelenak</i> "teacher"	<i>krista</i> "aunt"
<i>ave</i> "father"	<i>mahrzh</i> "husband"
<i>chiori</i> "wife"	<i>mai</i> "mother"
<i>ezok</i> "student"	<i>ohara</i> "daughter"
<i>gaezo</i> "brother"	<i>rizh</i> "son"
<i>inavva</i> "sister"	<i>simon</i> "uncle"

If you were to use some version of *my* with each of the words above, which would you use and why? How might your answer alter your understanding of when *anni* and when *anhoon* is used in Dothraki?

Taking It Further 3: Here are some other possessive pronouns in Dothraki:

<i>yeri~yeroon</i> "your"	<i>kishi~kishoon</i> "our"
<i>mae~moon</i> "his/her/its"	<i>mori~moroa</i> "their"

Based on this information and what you already know about *my*, how do you suppose one might say *horse's*, if the Dothraki word for *horse* is *hrazef*?

Taking It Further 4: Using your new words for *horse's* in Dothraki, how might a horse possess the following nouns? (Some of these may have more than one right answer.)

<i>eve</i> "tail"	<i>ostikh</i> "bit"
<i>foge</i> "hoof"	<i>rhiko</i> "stirrup"
<i>hoska</i> "snout, muzzle"	<i>torga</i> "belly"
<i>orzvezhan</i> "horseshoe"	<i>tovish</i> "bridle"

Dothraki Language Discovery: Answer Key

Pronunciation Information: <http://www.dothraki.com/dl/dothraki101.pdf>

The purpose of this exercise is for students to discover the difference between **alienable** and **inalienable possession**. These are terms students aren't expected to know or learn, but they should be able to articulate that *anhoon* is used when the possessed noun is attached to or grows out of or is otherwise an inalienable part of the possessor, and *anni* is used otherwise.

If students aren't hitting on the distinction, an informative pair to focus on would be *elge anni* "my sandal" and *rhae anhoon* "my foot". From there, a similar pair to compare would be *irge anhoon* "my back" and *serja anni* "my jacket", and then *qora anhoon* "my hand" and *hlaka anni* "my glove". From there one can move on to less obvious items, such as abstract elements (*hake anni* "my name") and phenomena like *ziso anhoon* "my wound" (one could point out that a cut on one's skin can't simply be lifted off).

Taking It Further 1: The primary difference here is whether the tooth is still in one's mouth or has been removed, as with a baby tooth. In fact, *vorto anni* doesn't necessarily need to refer to a tooth that came from one's own mouth.

Taking It Further 2: While there is a correct answer to this question (in Dothraki, *anni* is used for familial possession), this is a question meant to foster discussion. Some students may arrive at the correct answer quickly. Others might wonder if interpersonal relationships are metaphorically inalienable. Some also might argue that one's son would take *anhoon*, while one's mother would not, given the nature of the relationship. This type of discussion is quite fruitful, as there are languages on Earth that actually utilize each of these options.

Taking It Further 3: The correct pair is *hrazefi* and *hrazefoon*. This may prove challenging, but real life language data is rarely simple.

Taking It Further 4: The obvious answers here are that *eve* "tail", *foge* "hoof", *hoska* "snout, muzzle", and *torga* "belly" take *anhoon*, while *orzvezhan* "horseshoe", *ostikh* "bit", *rhiko* "stirrup", and *tovish* "bridle" take *anni*. Still, it might prove interesting to discuss how *orzvezhan* "horseshoe" ought to be possessed, whether nailed to the hoof or not. Does nailing a horseshoe to the hoof count as inalienable possession? Afterwards, it might prove interesting to discuss other items and how they would be possessed: tattoos, saliva, ideas, traits (e.g. courage), etc.