

Syntax and Semantics of Latvian Agent Nouns

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(1) Velta Toma: Trejskaldnis

Viņa nav debesis traucēja,
viņa ir pazemē kāpēja,
viņa ir sāpētāja –
viņa ir raganās jājēja
viņa ir mājās ūjinātajā
viņa ir gājēja –

Naktīs jaušu. Minu dienā –
kuļa? Visas vienā.

She is not one to churn the sky,
she is one who walks
underground,
one who hurts –
one who rides on witchback
one who calls the cattle home
one who goes –

In nights I sense. I guess at day –
which one? All are in one.

- Derived from the past stem of a verb
- Suffix -ēj/-tāj- + case & number in two genders
- short stem + -ēj-
kāpt (*kāp-*) > *kāpēj-s,-a*; *iet* (*gāj-*) > *gājēj-s,-a*
long stem: + -tāj-
sāpēt (*sāpē-*) > *sāpētāj-s,-a*
- General meaning: ‘one that V-s’
- Very productive and very frequent
- human/animate > inanimate

Introduction

- What restricts the productivity of the derivation? Which (classes of) verbs do not allow the building of AN?
- Do AN inherit semantic or syntactic traits from the verbal base?
- Which additional meanings are common for an AN?
- In which syntactic constructions do AN tend to appear, and what is the meaning of the construction?
- Are AN more typical for certain text types / genres than others?

Questions

- Morphology: reflexive verbs do not favor AN
- Verbal semantics (cf. English **faller*)
- Grammatical relations, case

Productivity What may restrict the derivation of AN?

AN derived from reflexive verbs

possible reflexive ending: -ējies/-tājies (very rare)

klausīties ‘listen’ > *klausītājies* / *klausītājs* ‘listener’ (5, 6)
šaubīties ‘doubt’ > *šaubītājies* / *šaubītājs* ‘doubter’ (7, 8)

baidīties ‘fear’ > *baidītājies* ‘one who fears, one who is easily frightened’ (9)

but: *baidītājs* ‘one that scares’, ‘scarecrow’ < *baidīt* ‘scare’

Other examples occasionally to be found: *priecātājies*,
mazgātājies, *gaudotājies* ‘whiner’

(5) *Ja kāds pie durvīm slepeni klausās un cits pret tām durvīm sviež ar akmeni, tad klausītājies paliek kurls.*

‘If someone secretly listens at a door and another person throws stones against that door, the listener becomes deaf.’

(Tic. 14489)

(7) *Patiesība – no tava Kunga, tad neesi starp šaubītājies.*

‘The truth is from your Lord, so never be among the **doubters**.’ (The Quran, 2.147)

(8) *"Šaubītāji nav vajadzīgi", kliedza trimdas pašieceltie korifeji.*

“We don’t need doubters”, the exile community’s self-appointed experts shouted.’ (Juris Kronbergs, Jaunā Gaita 238)

(9) *Need zaka galu, lai bērns nebūtu baidītājies.*

‘(A pregnant woman) doesn’t eat hare’s meat, in order for the child not to become one who fears.’ (Tic. 27293)

Semantic preferences

- activity > state
- volitional > non-volitional

(10) *Esot tāda cilvēku suga - skumēji. Nez, var jau būt.*

They say there is such a human race – **those who are being sad.** Maybe that's true.'

Argument choice

- agent > experiencer > stimulus
 - nominative subject > dative argument (?)
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“Traditionally, Dutch deverbal nouns in -er [...] are called agent nouns (*nomina agentis*). However, it is more adequate to call them subject names, because the basic effect of the suffix -er is that it binds whatever θ -role is linked to the subject position of the base verb.”(Booij 1986: 507)

- Whatever θ -role?
 - Subject position?
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- *sāpēt* (DAT NOM) ‘hurt’
(something hurts somebody)
- *patikt* (DAT NOM) ‘please’
(something pleases somebody)
- *garšot* 1. (DAT NOM) ‘be pleasant in taste’,
2. (NOM ACC) ‘taste’ (someone tastes something)

=> Which argument is selected for the AN?

Verbs with dative experiencer and nominative stimulus

- *sāpetājs* – tas, kas sāp, vai tas, kam sāp?
(one that hurts or one that is hurt?)
- *šokolādes garšotājs* – tas, kas (no)garšo šokolādi,
vai tas, kam garšo šokolāde?
(one who tastes chocolate or one who likes the taste of
chocolate?)
- *sieviešu patīcējs* – tas, kas patīk sievietēm, vai
tas, kam patīk sievietes?
(one who pleases women or one who likes women?)

**What is the expected meaning
of these AN?**

- *šokolādes garšotājs* – one who tastes chocolate (nominative subject of *garšot* 2)
- *sāpētājs* – usually one that hurts (stimulus, nominative), see ex. 11, 12
 - occasionally one that is hurt (experiencer, dative): ex. 13
- *sieviešu patīcējs* – one who likes women (experiencer, dative), see ex. 14, 15, 16
 - sieviešu nīdējs un zēnu patīcējs* ‘one who hates women and likes boys’ (forum discussion at www.lelb.lv)

Answers from the data in Internet resources

(11) *Lai kādos dzīlumos nolaides, lai kādos kalnos tu kāp, mīlestība ir - sāpētāja. Jo vairāk mīli - jo vairāk sāp.*

‘You may descend into the deepest depths or climb the highest mountains – love always is **a hurter**. The more you love the more it hurts.’ (Māris Čaklais)

(12) *Līdz ar mitro laiku, plecā iesēdies sāpētājs (Twitter)*

*With the humid weather **something that hurts** (an ache) has settled into my shoulder.*

(13) *Cita radītas sāpes ir, kad ar augstpapēdeni uzkāpj uz "šlopkās" gērbtu kāju. Bet sāpes no cerētās mīlas nepiepildīšanās rada pats sāpētājs un neviens cits.*

‘[An example for] pain caused by someone else is when one steps with a high heel on a foot dressed in a soft slipper. But in the case of unfulfilled hope for love it is **the one who is in pain** himself and nobody else who creates the pain.’

(<http://attiecibas.jautajums.lv/976253/20>)

(14) *Vācieši ir lieli ēst patīcēji.*

‘Germans really like to eat (“are great eat-likers”).

(<http://vikistation.wordpress.com/2009/08/02/vacija-un-skaips/>)

(15) *patikt vai nepatikt kādai otra īpašībai ir tikai un vienīgi tā patīcēja/nepaticēja privāta problēma*

‘whether one likes or dislikes some trait of the other person is solely the private problem of the **one who likes/dislikes**’

(forum discussion at www.tauta.lv)

- negation
- tense/aspect
- semantic category
- valency

**Inheritance What verbal
traits may be found in AN?**

nezinātājs ‘one who doesn’t know’; *nemelotājs* ‘one who doesn’t lie’, *nestrādātājs* ‘one who doesn’t work’, *nelietotājs* ‘one who doesn’t use’

- *Plastmasas maisiņu lietotājiem un nelietotājiem* (17)
- *Nezinātājam grūti pamanīt* (18)
- *roku nenolaideži* (19)
- *kārtīga darba nestrādātājs* (20)

negation

(17) *liek par maisiņiem maksāt visiem pircējiem (plastmasas maisiņu lietotājiem un nelietotājiem)*

[this policy] makes all clients pay for bags (those who use plastic bags and those who don't) (Mio2)

(18) *Nezinātājam grūti pamanīt, ka [...]*

(literally:) “For a not-knower it is difficult to notice that [...]” =
‘If you don't know it you will hardly notice that [...]’ (SestDiena
18-24.07.09, 32)

(19) *Bet nevajag zaudēt pozitīvismu un nolaist rokas. [...] Tāda "roku nenolaidēju" dzimta meklējama Vidzemē.*

‘But one mustn't lose a positive mind and let one's hands down (= sit back and do nothing). A family of such “**who don't let their hands down**” can be found in Vidzeme. (SestDiena 18-24.07.09, 10)

- *mirējs* ‘one that is dying’ (21)
 - *nomirējs* ‘one who (has) died’ (22)
- *baidītājies* ‘one that is scared’ (9)
 - *nobaidītāj(ie)s* ‘one that has been scared’ (23)

tense&aspect (traces)

(21) *Mirona kreklam, kas mirējam mirstot bijis mugurā, pārplēš krūtis un iemet ugunī.*

‘The dead man’s shirt, which **the dying person** was wearing when they died, is ripped at the front and put into the fire.’
(Tic. 20741)

(22) *Tanī vietā, kur kāds miris, iesit grīdā naglu, lai nomirējs nenāktu atpakaļ.*

‘At the place where someone has died they drive a nail into the floor so that **the one who died** would not come back.’
(Tic. 20785)

AN is a noun and cannot be modified by a qualitative adverb: **bieži slimotājs, *dziļi domātājs*

BUT: a modifying adjective may relate to the action rather than the actor (person) – «**frequent flyer syndrom**»

biežs slimotājs, rets slimotājs, ilgais slimotājs

dziļais domātājs

mazs slimotājs ‘a small person that is ill’

liels slimotājs ‘a person that is ill in a big way’

Category as seen by its modification

“In contrast to (complex) event nouns, agent nouns in English and in many other languages do not seem to inherit the verb’s argument structure. Expressions such as
**voter for Mitterand,*
**thinker about deep problems* or
**claimer that Armageddon is near*
are systematically impossible.”
(Haspelmath & Sims 2010: 255-6)

How about Latvian?

Valency

(24) *Piemēram Pēteris Lazda - jurists, bijušais parlamenta deputāts un 4. maija balsotājs par Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanu*

‘For example, Pēteris Lazda – a lawyer, former member of parliament and **voter for the renovation of Latvia’s independence** [in the historic ballot] **of May 4** [1990]
(faces.eu/lv/forum-archive/25/9513/)

(25) *apgaismības laikmeta spīdeklis, dziļais domātājs par morāli un ētiku Imanuels Kants*

‘the bright star of the enlightenment, **the deep thinker about moral and ethics** Imanuel Kant’ (www.diena.lv)

(28) *Nez apgalvotājs, ka Lietuvā ceļi ir labāki ir braucis arī par kādiem citiem Lietuvas ceļiem kā Panevēža - Vilna vai Klaipēda - Vilna?*

‘I wonder whether **the claimer that in Lithuania the roads are better** has also used some other roads in Lithuania apart from Panevėžys – Vilnius or Klaipēda – Vilnius?’ (comment at www.tvnet.lv)

- *no sievas algas dzīvotājs*
‘one who lives from his wife’s wages’ (forum discussion at www.dr.lv/phorum)
- *skumējs par pasaules ļaunu*
‘one who is sad about the world’s evil’ (from Dzintars Sodums’ poem *Balāde par Gustu*)
- *uz nerviem kritejs*
‘one that gets on (my/others) nerves’ (several examples)
- *raganās jājēja, mājās ūjinātāja*

(29) *Māte vispār nebija tāda kaut kur gājēja*
‘My mother didn’t go out much in general’ (Rīgas Laiks 7/2009)

- *4. maija balsotājs*
< balsot / balsojums 4. maijā
- *pavasara slimotājs*
< slimot pavasarī
- *bronhīta slimotājs*
< slimot ar bronhīti ‘suffer from bronchitis’

Not inherited, replaced by genitive

(30) *Kā tevī vairāk – mātišķuma, rāmas sievišķības vai valdzinātājas, vīriešus ap pirkstu tinējas?*

‘What makes up the greater part in your character: motherliness, gentle feminity or something of one who dominates, **one who twists men around her little finger?**’ (Santa 2009/8)

Inherited accusative

(31) *Gribētāju redzēt Disneja ledus šovu Princešu stāsts milzīgajā Arēnā Rīga 10. un 11. februārī ir bijis tik daudz, ka dienas vidū tiek ieviesta papildizrāde.*

There were so many **people who wanted to see Disney's ice-show The Princesses' Story** in the huge venue Arēna Rīga on February 10 and 11 that an additional performance was given during the day.' (Diena, 02.2009)

Inherited infinitive clause

- GEN ticētājs
horoskopu ticētājs ‘own who believes in horoscopes’
- DAT ticētājs
Dievam ticētājs ‘one who believes in God’
- ticētājs DAT
ticētājs tiesu varai ‘one who believes in the power of justice’

dative arguments

(32) *Neesmu tads baigais horoskopu ticētājs, bet [...]*

‘I am not a great believer in horoscopes, but [...]’ (forum discussion at www.calis.lv)

(33) *Nekāds lielais Dievam ticētājs neesmu, bet sapratu, ka šoreiz biju ar viņu saticies*

‘I am not a great believer in God, but I understood that this time I had met him’ (Interview with Jānis Serģis at www.la.lv)

(34) *Es ceru, ka ar laiku mēs nonāksim tiktāl, jo es esmu ticētājs tiesu varai*

‘I hope with time we will get that far, for I am a believer in the power of justice’ (from a parliamentary debate, www.saeima.lv/steno/st_98/st1105.html)

AN defines a type and/or a role

(35) *tālab gībēji, ceļos kriteji, pantiņu skaitītāji un prasti gultā grūdēji* slapstījās apkārt vai strīpām, taču Anna Buršīte, kā par sodību, baidījās no vīriešiem.

‘that was why around her there was an abundance of men who fainted, who fell on their knees, who recited poetry or who simply pushed into bed, but Anna Buršīte, as if it were her punishment, was afraid of men.’ (Mio3, fiction)

braucējs < *braukt* ‘drive, ride, go by any means of transport’

- driver of a vehicle
- passenger in a vehicle
- someone planning to go somewhere using a vehicle

AN in discourse What are agent nouns used for?

ir / būs / bija AN

(38) *Bet tagad, tik vēlu viņš nebūs braucējs.*

‘But now, at this late hour, he **won’t go/drive [home]**’ (Mio2, fiction)

(39) *Autosportists Kārkliņš būs dzīvotājs*

‘The race driver Kārkliņš will survive’ (headline at www.vipi.lv)

(42) *Neviens neticēja, ka kakēns izdzīvos, bet viņš bija dzīvotājs,*

‘Nobody believed that the kitten would survive, but he survived’
(www.kasjauns.lv)

(41) *Šovakar iemēģināju jauno Vecrīgas Deli snack. Spriedums:*

būs dzīvotājs.

‘Tonight I tested the new Old Riga Deli snack. Judgement: will survive.’ (Twitter)