

Nicole Nau (UAM Poznań & VU Vilnius): Agent Nouns and Valency in Latvian
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1. Introduction

An agent noun

- is a noun designating an individual
- is derived from a verb (v)
- has the meaning 'one who v-s' (or 'is v-ing', or 'has v-ed')

(1) **Rakstniekam**, kas šo profesiju izvēlējies un nolēmis neatkāpties, jāsaprot, ka viņš sabiedrības acīs vienmēr būs visai aizdomīga persona. **Liekēdis, plāpa, mākoņstūmējs, saulesbrālis, dīvainis, nekauņa, kārtīga darba nestrādātājs**.

'A **writer** who has chosen this profession and decided not to give in has to understand that in the eyes of society he will always be a very suspicious person. A **dawdler**, a **babbler**, a **cloud-pusher** (=one who lives in cloud-cuckoo-land), a rolling stone, an **oddball**, a **bounder**, **one who doesn't work** on a proper job.' (Lelde Stumbre at *la.lv* 13.06.2012)

<i>liek-ēd-is,</i>	<i>plāp-a,</i>	<i>mākoņ-stūm-ēj-s,</i>	<i>saul-es-brāl-is,</i>
superfluous-eat-DE	babble-DE	cloud-push-AN-NOM.SG	sun-GEN.SG-brother-NOM.SG
<i>dīvain-is,</i>	<i>ne-kauņ-a,</i>	<i>kārtīg-a</i>	<i>darb-a</i>
odd-DE	NEG-shame-DE	regular-GEN.SG.M	job-GEN.SG
			<i>ne-strādā-tāj-s</i>
			NEG-work-AN-NOM.SG

Agent nouns (AN) derived with the suffixes *-ēj-* (*stūm-ēj-s*) and *-tāj-* (*ne-strādā-tāj-s*) are the most productive and most regular. They differ from other formations in important ways (section 2).

Two central questions with respect to valency:

- Which argument of a verb can be the referent of an AN? (Section 3)
- What arguments and adjuncts may an AN have? (Section 4)

2. Overview of the astonishing properties of Latvian AN with *-ēj-/tāj-*

Formation: past tense stem + *-ēj-/tāj-* + case ending (masculine I declension, feminine IV declension)

short stem + *-ēj-* (*stumt* 'push') (*stūm-*) > *stūm-ēj-s*, *stūm-ēj-a*

long stem: + *-tāj-* (*strādāt* 'work') (*strādā-*) > *strādā-tāj-s*, *strādā-tāj-a*)

Features of these agent nouns (vs. similar formations in Latvian and other languages):

- are derived only from verbs (vs. *-niek-, -is*)
- are derived from almost all verbs (vs. *-āj-, -on-, -a*)
- *-ēj-/tāj-* behave like allomorphs, morphologically conditioned
- predictable meaning without necessary additional nuances (vs. *-a*)
- designate humans, animals, plants, machines, abstract forces
- do not designate tools, instruments in the narrow sense (vs. *-is*)

- can express a **type** (ex. 2) or a **role** (ex. 3)

aizmirst ‘forget’ > AN *aizmirsējs*

- (2) *Es esmu profesionāls lietussargu aizmirsējs.* Nelaižu garām nevienu izdevību. Šodienas kontā 2 reizes. (tweet archived at *civciv.lv*)

esmu profesionāl-s lietus-sarg-u aizmirs-ēj-s
be.PRS.1SG professional-NOM.SG.M rain-guard-GEN.PL forget-AN-NOM.SG

‘I am a professional umbrella-**forgetter**. I don’t miss out a single occasion. On today’s account there are 2.’

- (3) *un te pēkšni uz bankomāta pusi skrietu skolnieciņš, iespējams, potenciālais naudas aizmirsējs.* (forum post at *irc.lv*)

potenciāl-ais naud-as **aizmirs-ēj-s**
potential-NOM.SG.M.DEF money-GEN forget-AN-NOM.SG

literally: ‘the potential money-forgetter’

(context: what would you do if you noticed someone forgot money in a cash dispenser ...) ‘and suddenly a small schoolboy came running towards the cash dispenser, probably **the one who forgot** the money.’

Agent nouns can display **verbal features inherited** from their base verb:

- reflexive marker (ex. 4, AN derived from *gaudoties* ‘whine’ and *priecāties* ‘be delighted’)
- aktionsart (ex. 5 and 6, *mirējs* vs. *nomirējs*)
- negation (*nestrādātājs* in ex. 1)
- modification by adverbs (ex. 7, 8, 9)
- arguments and adjuncts (section 4)

- (4) *Tākā lielos gaudotājies un diženos priecātājies – labāk ejiet ārā pastaigāt ar bērniem*
(comment in a discussion at *tvnet.lv*)

liel-os gaucho-tāj-ies un dižen-os priecā-tāj-ies
big-VOC.PL whine-AN-NOM.PL.M.RFX and grand-VOC.PL rejoice-AN-NOM.PL.M.RFX

‘Therefore, you big whiners and great rejoicers – better go out for a walk with your children’

- (5) *Mir-oñ-a krekl-am, kas **mir-ēj-am***
die-AN-GEN.SG shirt-DAT.SG which.NOM die-AN-DAT.SG

mirstot bijis mugur-ā
die.CNV be.PAP.SG.M back-LOC.SG

pār-plēš krūt-is un ie-met ugun-ī.
PFX-tear.PRS.3 breast-ACC and PFX-throw fire-LOC

‘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)

- (6) *Tanī viet-ā, kur kād-s **miris,***
DEM.LOC.SG place-LOC.SG where someone-NOM.SG die.PAP.SG.M
- ie-sit grid-ā nagl-u,*
PFX-hit.PRS.3 floor-LOC.SG nail-ACC.SG

lai no-mir-ēj-s ne-nāk-tu atpakaļ.
 so.that PFX-die-AN-NOM.SG NEG-come-IRR back

'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)

Adverbs¹:

- (7) *ātr-i un lab-i brauk-t māk tikai procentu*
 fast-ADV and good-ADV drive-INF can.PRS.3 only procent-GEN.PL
desmit-dal-a no ātr-i brauc-ēj-iem
 ten-PART-NOM.SG of fast-ADV drive-AN-DAT.PL.M

'only a fraction of **those who drive fast** is able to drive fast and well' (comment at www.iauto.lv)

- (8) *Ne vien-s vien skal-i bļāv-ēj-s*
 NEG one-NOM only loud-ADV shout-AN-NOM.SG.M
patiesīb-ā ir ček-as agēnt-i.
 reality-LOC.SG be.PRS.3 KGB-GEN agent-NOM.PL

'More than one of **those who loudly shout** are actually agents of the KGB' (forum post at forums.delfi.lv)

- (9) *Ko pēc koncert-a runās*
 what.ACC after concert-GEN.SG speak.FUT.3
tie bilešu joti gribē-tāj-i?
 DEM.NOM.PL.M ticket.GEN.PL very want-AN-NOM.PL.M

'What will **those who very much wanted** tickets say after the concert?' (comment at tvnet.lv)

3. Which argument of a verb can be the referent of an AN?

Semantic roles and macroroles (Van Valin 2001; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997)

Actor (Agent) – Actor/Undergoer (Experiencer, Recipient) – Undergoer (Stimulus, Theme, Patient)

Effector: *dīgt* 'sprout' > *dīdzējs*

- (10) *Miežus var izmēgināt, vai viņi ir dīdzēji, vai nav. Glāzē jāielej ūdens, jāsaber mieži un mazu laiciņu jāpatur ūdenī, tad jāapskata: kuram mazs burbulītis galā, tas dīdzējs, kam nav, tas nedīgs.*

vai viņ-i ir dīdz-ēj-i, vai nav
 QU 3-NOM.PL.M be.PRS.3 sprout-AN-NOM.PL.M QU NEG.BE.PRS.3

literally: 'whether they are sprouters or not'

kur-am maz-s burbul-īt-is gal-ā,
 which-DAT.SG.M small-NOM.SG.M bubble-DIM-NOM.SG end-LOC.SG
tas dīdz-ēj-s
 DEM.NOM.SG.M sprout-AN-NOM.SG.M

¹ „Darītāju vārdi ir lietvārdi, pie kuriem apstākleji nemēdz stāvēt. Vai tad kāds saka: "labi kalējs", "čakli arājs", "priekšzīmigi skolotājs"?“ (Ķīķauka 1962) “Agent nouns are nouns, at which side adverbs are not accustomed to appear. Who would say: [...] “čakli arājs” ‘diligently plougher’ [...]”

literally: ‘the one that has a little bubble at the end will be a sprouter’

‘One may try out whether barley will sprout or not. Fill a glass with water, pour barley and leave it in the water for a while, then look: a corn that has a little bubble at the end will sprout, one that doesn’t won’t.’ (Tic. 20549)

Experiencer: *dusmoties* ‘be angry’ > *dusmotājs*; *slimot* ‘be ill’ > *slimotājs*

- (11) *mēs ar draug-u ab-i tād-i*
1PL.NOM with friend-ACC.SG both-NOM such-NOM.PL.M

klusēj-oš-ie dusmo-tāj-i
be.silent-PA-NOM.PL.M.DEF be.angry-AN-NOM.PL.M

‘my boyfriend and I both are **ones who are angry** without saying a word’ (forum post at *cosmo.lv*)

- (12) *Aivita Vītolīja teica, ka slimotāj-i*
Aivita Vītolīja say.PST.3 that be.ill-AN-NOM.PL.M
- galvenokārt bijuš-i jenot-i un laps-as.*
mainly be.PAP-NOM.PL.M raccoon-NOM.PL and fox-NOM.PL

‘Aivita Vītolīja said that it was mainly raccoons and foxes that were contracted (by rabies).’
(Kurzemes Vārds 04/01/2001)

Recipient: *dabūt* ‘get’ > *dabūtājs*

- (13) *Arī to, ka priekš zīdaiņa autiņiem pat vienīgais materiāls marle bija deficīts, un tās dabūtājs skaitījās veiksminieks, sen aizmirsām.* (comment at *tvnet.lv*)
tās dabūtāj-s skaitījās veiksminiek-s
DEM.GEN.SG.F get-AN-NOM.SG.M count.PST.3.RFX success.AN-NOM.SG

‘Another long-forgotten fact is that even gauze, the only material for baby diapers, was a shortage and **the one who got** some counted as a lucky person.’

Theme: *stāvēt* ‘stand’ > *stāvētājs*

- (14) *Man patīk tas vīrs, kurš, sasniedzis trepju augšējo kāpsli, uzsauc apakšā stāvētājiem, lai dod vēl otras trepes augšā.* (Mio2)
uzsauc apakšā stāvētāj-iem
call.PRS.3 beneath stand-AN-DAT.PL.M

‘I like the man who, having reached the topmost step of a ladder, calls to **those standing beneath** and asks them for another ladder.’

Patient: *lūzt* ‘break (itr.)’

- (15) *[...] bet antonovkām visi zari šitādi un viens jau vakar padevās un nolūza. Tagad gaidu, kurš un kurai ta būs nākamais lūzējs.* (forum post at *sapforums.lv*)
tagad gaidu kur-š un kur-ai ta
now wait.PRS.1SG which-NOM.SG.M and which-DAT.SG.F PTC
būs nākam-ais lūz-ēj-s.
be.FUT.3 next-NOM.SG.M.DEF break-AN-NOM.SG.M

'but the Antonovkas all have impressing branches (= full of apples), only yesterday one surrendered and **broke**. Now I am waiting which [branch] and of which [tree] will be the next **one that breaks**.'

Case marking: can a dative argument become an agent noun?

Some verbs with dative and nominative arguments and their semantic roles:

dative	nominative	example (<i>man</i> = 1SG.DAT)
possessor	possessed	piederēt 'belong', 'be the possession (of someone)' <i>Man pieder dārzs.</i> 'I am in possession of a garden'.
experiencer	stimulus	garšot 'taste (good, bad)', 'be pleasant in taste' <i>Man garšo zirņi.</i> 'I like peas' patikt 'please' <i>Man patīk zirgi.</i> 'I like horses'
experiencer	theme	sāpēt 'hurt' <i>Man sāp galva.</i> 'My head hurts.' <i>Galva sāp.</i> '[My] head hurts.' <i>Man sāp.</i> 'I am in pain' salt 'freeze, be cold' <i>Man salst kājas.</i> 'My feet are cold.' <i>Kājas salst.</i> '[My] feet are cold.' <i>Man salst.</i> 'I am cold.'

Not attested: [?]*piederētājs*; attested with another source: *garšotājs* 'taster (= one who tastes sth.)'
paticējs 'one who likes' (< dative argument of *patikt* 'please')

- (16) *Vācieši ir liel-i ēst patic-ēj-i.*
 German.NOM.PL.M be.PRS.3 big-NOM.PL.M eat.INF please-AN-NOM.PL.M

'Germans really like to eat.' (from a blog at vikistation.wordpress.com)

- (17) *Varbūt bija sieviešu nīdējs un zēnu paticējs, un tādā veidā centās nosist zēniem apetīti uz meitenēm?* (forum post at lelb.lv)

sieviešu nīd-ēj-s un zēn-u patic-ēj-s
 woman.GEN.PL hate-AN-NOM.SG.M and boy-GEN.PL please-AN-NOM.SG.M

literally: 'a hater of women and liker of boys'

'Maybe he hated women and liked boys, and in that way he tried to kill the boys' appetite for girls?'

- (18) *patik-t vai ne-patik-t kād-ai otr-a īpašīb-ai*
 please-INF or NEG-please-INF some-DAT.SG.F other-GEN.SG.M trait-DAT.SG
ir tikai un vienīgi tā
 be.PRS.3 only and solely DEM.GEN.SG.M
patic-ēj-a / ne-patic-ēj-a privāt-a problēm-a
 please-AN-GEN.SG.M NEG-please-an-GEN.SG.M private-NOM.SG.F problem-NOM.SG

'whether some trait of the other person **pleases or does not please** is solely the private problem of the **one who likes/dislikes**' (forum post at *tauta.lv*)

paticējs 'one who pleases' (< nominative argument of *patikt*)

- (19) *Starp citu, pēdējo iemeslu – stresa noskriešanu, enerģijas atjaunošanu – minēja arī liela daļa «svara nometēju» un «**sievai paticēju**» [...]. (article at *tvnet.lv*)*

<i>liel-a</i>	<i>dal-a</i>	<i>svar-a</i>	<i>nomet-ēj-u</i>	<i>un</i>
big-NOM.SG.F	part-NOM.SG	weight-GEN.SG	PFX-throw-AN-GEN.PL	and
siev-ai	patic-ēj-u			
wife-DAT.SG	please-AN-GEN.PL			

literally: "a great part of the weight-throwers and the wife-pleasers"

'By the way, the last reason – to run the stress away, to renew one's energy – was mentioned also by a great part of those who had answered that they wanted to lose weight or please their wives.' (Context: Men were asked why they had started running.)

sāpētājs 'one that feels pain' (< dative argument of *sāpēt* (*sāp*) 'feel pain')

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

<i>sāp-es</i> [...]	<i>rada</i>	<i>pat-s</i>	<i>sāpē-tāj-s</i>
pain-ACC	create.PRS.3	self-NOM.SG.M	hurt-AN-NOM.SG.M

'[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 nobody else than **the one who is in pain** himself who creates the pain.' (forum post at *attiecibas.jautajums.lv*)

sāpētājs 'one that inflicts pain', 'a pain' (< nominative argument of *sāpēt* (*sāpē*) 'hurt, inflict pain')

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

<i>mīlestīb-a</i>	<i>ir -</i>	<i>sāpē-tāj-a</i>
love-NOM.SG	be.PRS.3	hurt-AN-NOM.SG.F

'love is a pain'

'You may descend into the deepest depths or climb the highest mountain – love always hurts. The more you love the more it hurts.' (Māris Čaklais)

4. What arguments and adjuncts may an AN have?

"A question which has attracted considerable, though still insufficient attention in the literature on agent and instrument nouns, especially from a cross-linguistic perspective, is in how far these preserve the valency and syntax of their base verbs." (Rainer, forthcoming)

"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 Mitterrand,

*thinker about deep problems or

*claimer that Armageddon is near

are systematically impossible." (Haspelmath & Sims 2010: 255-6)

Are they?

- (22) *Piemēram Pēteris Lazda – jurists, bijušais parlamenta deputāts un 4. maija balsotājs par Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanu* (faces.eu/lv/forum-archive/25/9513/)

4. maij-a balso-tāj-s par Latvij-as neatkarīb-as atjaunošan-u
4. may-GEN vote-AN-NOM.SG for Latvia-GEN independence-GEN renovation-ACC

'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]'

- (23) *apgaismības laikmeta spīdeklis, dzīļais domātājs par morāli un ētiku Imanuels Kants*

dzīļ-ais domā-tāj-s par moral-i un ētik-u
deep-NOM.SG.M.DEF think-AN-NOM.SG.M about moral-ACC and ethics-ACC

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

- (24) *Nez apgalvotājs, ka Lietuvā ceļi ir labāki ir braucis arī par kādiem citiem Lietuvas ceļiem kā Paņevēža - Vilnius vai Klaipēda - Vilnius?* (comment in a discussion at tvnet.lv)

apgalvo-tāj-s, ka Lietuv-ā ceļ-i ir lab-āk-i
claim-AN-NOM.SG.M that Lithuania-LOC road-NOM.PL be.PRS.3 good-COMP-NOM.PL.M

'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?'

"Complements introduced by prepositions generally can be inherited more freely, as is the case for *at* (cf. *to look at*) and *across* (cf. *to swim across*) in the following two examples: *She is nearly as eager a looker at women as am I; Who was the first swimmer across lake Ontario?* However, even in the case of prepositional complements the valency of agent nouns is heavily restricted in comparison with that of their base verbs." (Rainer, forthcoming)

- (25) some further examples:

- *no sievas algas dzīvotājs* 'one who lives from his wife's wages'
- *uz nerviem kritējs* 'one that gets on (my/others) nerves'
- *skumējs par pasaules jaunu* 'one who is sad about the world's evil' (from Dzintars Sodums' poem *Balāde par Gustu*)

(22b) ? *balsotājs 4.maijā / 4. maijā balsotājs* ?'voter on May 4'

(24b) ? *domātājs, ka Lietuvā ceļi ir labāki* ?'the thinker that in Lithuania the roads are better'

(26) ?? *noguldītājs bankā* / instead: *banka noduldītājs* 'bank depositor' (but: *noguldījums bankā*)
?? *slimotājs ar bronhīti* / instead: *bronhīta slimotājs* 'one who suffers from bronchitis'

(27) *Māt-e vispār ne-bija tād-a kaut kur gāj-ēj-a*
mother-NOM.SG at.all NEG-be.PST.3 such-NOM.SG.F somewhere go-AN-NOM.SG.F
'My mother didn't go out much in general' (*Rīgas Laiks* 7/2009)

(28) *Bet kur-i būs brauc-ēj-i ar riteņ-iem*
but which-NOM.PL be.FUT.3 drive-AN-NOM.PL.M with bike-DAT.PL
un kur-i ar mašīn-u?
and which-NOM.PL.M with car-ACC
'But who will go by bike and who by car?' (travel report at rajd.lv)

infinitives: ēst paticēji ‘who like to eat’, mācīties gribētāji ‘who want to study’

- (29) **Gribētāju redzēt Disneja ledus šovu Princešu stāsts** milzīgajā Arēnā Rīga 10. un 11. februārī ir bijis tik daudz, ka dienas vidū tiek ieviesta papildizrāde. (Diena, 02.2009)

gribē-tāj-u redzē-t Disnej-a led-us šov-u
want-AN-GEN.PL see-INF Disney ice-GEN show-ACC.SG

‘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.’

Datives: arguments replaced by genitive (30), inherited (31, 32) (literal translations)

- (30) *Ne-esmu tād-s baig-ais horoskop-u ticē-tāj-s*
NEG-be.PRS.1SG such-NOM.SG.M terrible-NOM.SG.M.DEF horoscope-GEN.PL believe-an-NOM.SG
'I am not a great believer of horoscopes' (forum discussion at www.calis.lv)

- (31) *Nekād-s liel-ais Diev-am ticē-tāj-s ne-esmu,*
no.such-NOM.SG.M big-NOM.SG.M.DEF God-DAT believe-AN-NOM.SG NEG-be.PRS.1SG
bet sapratu, ka šoreiz biju ar viņ-u saticies
but understand.PST.1SG that this.time be.PST.1SG with him meet.PAP.M.SG
'I am not a great believer in God, but I understood that this time I had met him' (Interview *la.lv*)

- (32) *Es ceru, ka ar laiku mēs nonāksim tiktāl, jo es esmu ticētājs tiesu varai* (from a parliamentary debate, www.saeima.lv/steno/st_98/st1105.html)

ticē-tāj-s ties-u var-ai
believe-AN-NOM.SG.M court-GEN.PL power-DAT

'I hope with time we will get that far, for I am a believer in the judicial system'

? free datives (further research needed)

Accusatives: usually replaced by genitives (*aizmirst lietussargus > lietussargu aizmirsejs*, 2)

„Un literārajā valodā vienmēr tikai tā ir runāts, piem., "visa laba devējs" (un nevis "visu labu devējs"), "debess un zemes radītājs" (un nevis "debesi un zemi radītājs"). Tāpēc nav nekādas vajadzības kultīvēt šīs aplamās konstrukcijas ar akuzātīvu. Akuzātīvs drīkstēja stāvēt pie divdabja, kur tas bija legāls, bet ne pie darītāja vārda, kur tas stāv nelegāli.” (Ķīķauka 1962)

“In the literary language, this has always been the only way to speak, for example *visa laba devējs* ‘giver of everything good’ (and not *visu labu devējs* “everything.ACC good.ACC giver”) [...]. Therefore there is no need to cultivate those incorrect constructions with the accusative. The accusative was entitled to be used with participles, where it was legal, but not with agent nouns, where it was used illegally.”

- (33) *Kā tevī vairāk – mātišķuma, rāmas sievišķības vai valdzinātājas, vīriešus ap pirkstu tinējas?* (Santa 2009/8)

vīriešus ap pirkst-u tin-ēj-as
man.ACC.PL around finger-ACC.SG twist-AN-GEN.SG.F

‘What makes up the greater part in your character: motherliness, gentle femininity or something of one who charms, **one who twists men around her little finger?**’

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Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
ADV	adverb (suffix)
AN	agent noun (derivational suffix)
CONJ	conjunction, complementizer
DAT	dative
DE	derivative ending
DEF	definite (ending)
DEM	demonstrative pronoun
DIM	diminutive
F	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
INF	infinitive
IRR	irrealis (mood)
LOC	locative
M	masculine
NEG	negation
NOM	nominative
PA	present active participle
PAP	past active participle
PFX	prefix
PL	plural
PRS	present tense
PST	past
PTC	particle
QU	question particle
RFX	reflexive
SG	singular
VOC	vocative