

## A generative syntactic analysis of Latvian grammatical prefixes *jā-*, *ne-*<sup>1</sup>

### *Latviešu valodas gramatisko priedēkļu jā-, ne- ģeneratīvi sintaktiskā analīze*

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The present study explores Latvian grammatical prefixes *jā-*, *ne-*, from the generative syntactic perspective. To date, in contrast to significant research within the traditional syntactic dimension, generative syntactic studies of Latvian in general have been very limited (e.g., Apse 2007; Fábregas et al. 2018; Kushnir 2019; Biks 2020), and verbal morphosyntax is yet to become a topic of discussion. Meanwhile, the two grammatical verbal prefixes under analysis raise a number of questions, such as their incompatibility with respect to one another in Standard Latvian, their placement on the generative syntactic tree, and the non-canonical case marking in the debitive construction. To answer these questions, the present study builds on the generative theory of X-bar syntax (Chomsky 1993; 1995), Rizzi's (1997) Split-CP hypothesis, Case Theory (Chomsky 2001), and previous findings on the Baltic verb (Korostenskienė 2017; 2022). The proposed approach to the debitive construction and accompanying non-canonical case-marking in Latvian is hoped to contribute to the existing field of research as well as to have implications for the study of clausal phenomena in Baltic languages from the generative syntactic perspective.

**Keywords:** modality; debitive; negative; prefixes; Latvian; split-CP; case assignment; generative framework.

## Introduction

As is known, the debitive prefix *jā-* historically is of pronominal origin and is used to express the necessity of an action (e.g., Fennell 1981; Holvoet 2001; Lokmane, Kalnača 2014; Seržant, Taperte 2016). Formally, the debitive is an analytical construction

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composed of the auxiliary verb *būt* ‘to be’ and the 3<sup>rd</sup> present indicative form of the lexical verb prefixed with *jā-*; the auxiliary is often omitted (Metuzāle-Kangere, Boiko 2001; Lokmane, Kalnača 2014).

The debitive construction is characterised by unique properties, viz., the ability to appear in all tenses and other moods alongside regular semantics, viz., expressing necessity.

To illustrate, consider the examples below (Metuzāle-Kangere, Boiko 2001, 489–490, glosses adjusted); *-ot* is an oblique suffix (Lokmane, Kalnača 2014; Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 240, 247):

- (1) a. *Man* (ir) *jā-lasa* *grāmat-a*. Stand. Latv.  
 I.SG.DAT (be.AUX.PRS.3) DEB-read book-NOM.SG.F  
 ‘I have to read the/a book.’
- b. *Man* (ir) *jā-lasa* *grāmat-u*. Non-Stand. Latv.  
 I.SG.DAT (be.AUX.PRS.3) DEB-read book-ACC.SG.F  
 ‘I have to read the/a book.’
- (2) a. *Man* *es-ot* *jā-lasa* *grāmat-a*. Stand. Latv.  
 I.SG.DAT be-OBL.PRS.AUX DEB-read book-NOM.SG.F  
 ‘It seems that I have to read the/a book.’
- b. *Man* (esot) *jā-las-ot* *grāmat-a*. Non-Stand. Latv.  
 I.SG.DAT (be-OBL.PRS.AUX) DEB-read-OBL.PRS book-NOM.SG.F  
 ‘It seems that I have to read the/a book.’

As can be seen, in the oblique constructions (2a–b) the logical direct object is in the Nominative; but in the present indefinite debitive (1b), it can bear the Accusative case. This case alternation in the debitive has been posited as problematic (e.g., Holvoet 2001; Lokmane, Kalnača 2014; Seržant, Taperte 2016; Fábregas et al. 2016). Meanwhile, the entire debitive construction has been viewed from several competing perspectives, viz., “as a verb mood, passive voice forms with a modal meaning or, perhaps, a group of special modal forms” (Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 248; see also Dini 2014; Kalnača 2014; Lokmane, Kalnača 2014; Arkadiev, Pakerys 2015).

According to the traditional approach pursued in Latvian grammars, the debitive (alongside the imperative) is viewed as a grammatical mood, together with the Oblique and the Conditional moods constituting Irrealis modality (Lokmane, Kalnača 2014, 168–169 and references there; Dini 2014; Arkadiev, Pakerys 2015). At the same time, the exclusively prefixal formation of the debitive has led some scholars to argue against the status of debitive as a mood, as it stands in stark contrast to the conventionally suffixal or inflectional formation in other moods (Endzelīns 1971; cf. Fennel 1981; Holvoet 2001; Kalnača 2014).

The paradigm of the other grammatical prefix to be considered in this study, viz., the negative prefix, is regular. Thus, negative forms are constructed by adding the negative prefix to the main verb. Importantly, in Standard Latvian, the prefixes *jā-* and *ne-* are incompatible and cannot occur on the same verb form, but in non-Standard varieties, the combination *jā-ne-* is occasionally used for stylistic purposes.

Assuming a generative syntactic perspective, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) Where are the Latvian debitive prefix *jā-* and the negative prefix *ne-* placed on the generative syntactic tree?
- 2) Why are the debitive *jā-* and the negative *ne-* incompatible?
- 3) How can the non-canonical case marking in the debitive construction be explained?

## 1. Theoretical overview

This section contains the discussion of the following points:

- 1) the main generative syntactic premises relevant for analysis;
- 2) Latvian grammatical prefixes considering the debitive mood.

### 1.1. Main generative syntactic premises

Contemporary generative syntactic theory seeks to develop a uniform analysis for the global diversity of language data (Chomsky 1993; 1995; 2001; Newmeyer 2004; Carnie 2013), positing that all languages share an underlying deep structure. To connect generative syntactic research for other languages and the present study of Latvian, a number of general generative syntactic premises are used. The first is Chomsky's (2001, 2) Uniformity Hypothesis, according to which analysis, initially developed for other languages, may be applied to the languages at hand: "In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, assume language to be uniform, with variety restricted to easily detectable properties of utterances". Following the Uniformity Hypothesis, existing variations arise from differences in the activation of mechanisms and transformations, thus leading to surface structure.

In generative syntax, the components are hierarchically arranged and are joined by the binary attachment principle through phrase structure rules and form phrases. Graphically depicted as a syntactic tree, any phrase (XP) consists of a mandatory head ( $X^{\circ}$ ), and optional specifier and complement. X-bar theory distinguishes intermediate projections ( $X'$ ) between the head and phrase level, while specifier and complement positions may be filled by other phrases. The head is thus the only mandatory component of a phrase (Figure 1).

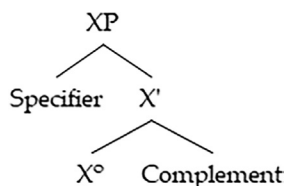


Figure 1. Phrase composition in generative syntax (based on Roberts, Roussou 2003, 5–6)

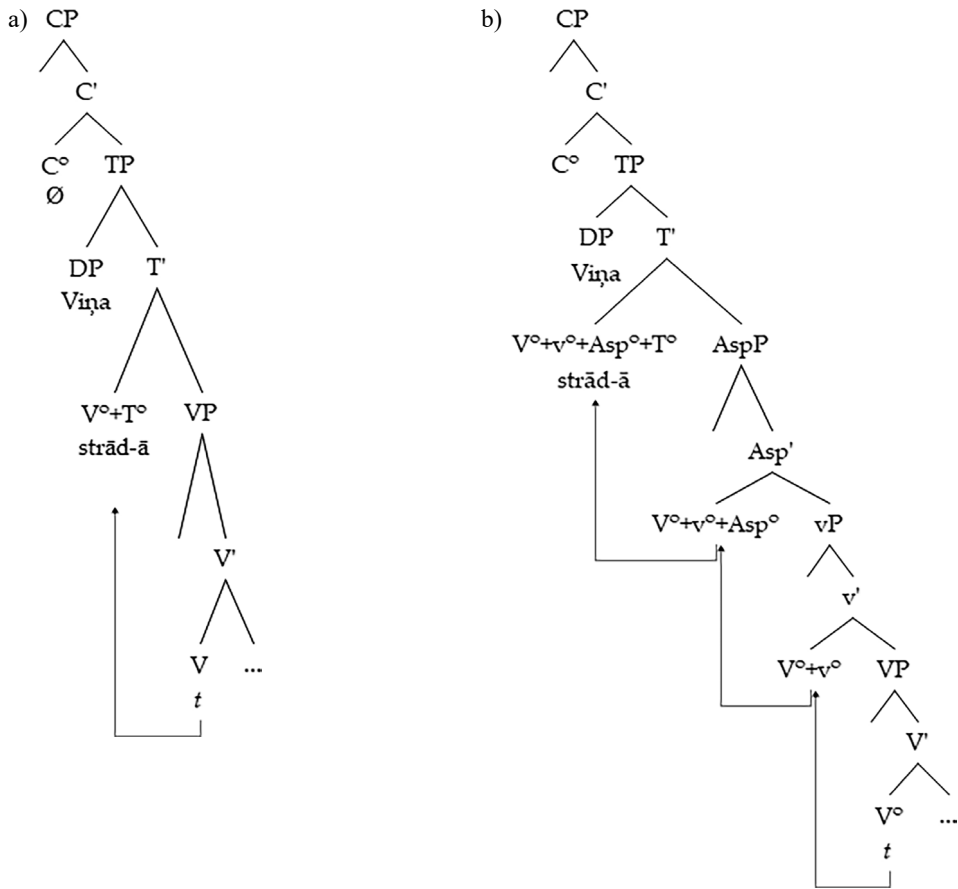


Figure 2. The simplified and more detailed syntactic trees of the Latvian sentence “She works”

Syntactically, phrases may be created for functional and lexical categories. The verb phrase (VP) is a lexical phrase; the complementizer phrase (CP) is a clause-level projection and is a functional phrase (see also below). A basic syntactic tree diagram for a Latvian sentence is provided in Figure 2 in a simplified (a) and detailed form (b). Upward arrows on the diagrams show the tendency of the verb to move upwards on the syntactic tree, leaving a trace (marked *t*) in its original position and picking up the tense and agreement morphology at the Tense Projection (TP). In the indicative mood, the CP is unfilled (marked  $\emptyset$  on the tree).

Further, Korostenskiene (2017) posits the anti-lexicalist perspective on the Baltic verb, following which the Latvian verb has a syntactic, not lexical, structure. This necessitates incorporating Baker’s (1985, 375) Mirror Principle: “Morphological derivations must directly reflect syntactic derivations (and *vice versa*)”. Accordingly, verbal morphemes appear in reverse order compared to their arrangement in the clausal projection. In (3) below, the material following the verb mirror-reflects the italicized material preceding v/V:

- (3) *Agr* > *T* > *Asp* > *v* > *V* > *Asp* > *T* > *Agr* (Svenonius 2004; Korostenskiene 2017)

Building on previous research on Slavic grammatical prefixes (Svenonius 2004), another specific finding concerns Baltic grammatical prefixes. Since these prefixes are not required by verbal morphology and contribute strictly compositional meanings, they are analyzed as attaching to the verbal complex outside the v/VP. Consequently, the Latvian grammatical prefixes *jā-*, *ne-* adjoin above the v/VP (Korostenskiene 2017; 2022).

The syntactic composition of the Baltic verb, of which Latvian is the case, lends itself to incorporating Rizzi's (1997) split-CP hypothesis, which divides the clausal projection CP into smaller hierarchically arranged functional projections:

- (4) Force Phrase > Topic Phrase > Focus Phrase > Finiteness Phrase.

The table below exemplifies the application of Rizzi's split-CP approach to the analysis of constituents in a sentence, marking the original location of moved elements by traces of the same typeset.

The Force Phrase (ForceP) stores information about the illocutionary force of the utterance, such as the imperative mood (ForceP<sub>IMP</sub>), or the subjunctive mood (ForceP<sub>SUBJ</sub>). The Topic phrase (TopP) stores topicalised nominal material. The Focus Phrase (FocP) contains focalized material, such as elements which have moved up due to inversion. Finiteness Phrase (FinP) contains information on whether the following clause is finite or not. For instance, in infinitival constructions, *for* in English and *di* in Italian are positioned as specifiers of FocP, following Rizzi's perspective that functional heads of the respective projections are empty (that is, lexically unfilled), but overt material occupies the specifier projection of the relevant phrase.

Main clause						
CP <sub>1</sub>	TP <sub>1</sub>	Embedded clause				
		Split-CP <sub>2</sub>				TP <sub>2</sub>
∅		Force <sub>2</sub>	Topic <sub>2</sub>	Focus <sub>2</sub>	Finiteness <sub>2</sub>	
	It appears	that,	this level of complexity,	<b>never</b> <i>would</i>	∅	the commission <i>t t</i> allow <i>t</i> .
	The warning is	∅	∅	under no circumstances	<i>for</i>	residents to disclose their personal data when speaking to strangers on the phone.
	I cannot understand	how,	<i>this</i> discovery,	∅	∅	a teenager could make <i>t</i> .

**Table.** Rizzi's (1997) Split CP: an illustration (based on Radford 2009, 327–336)

## 1.2. General characteristics of Latvian grammatical prefixes in light of the debitive mood

Latvian grammatical prefixes, the debitive *jā-* and the negative *ne-*, are characterized by their ability to combine with any lexical prefix in the verb form, but they are not compatible with each other in Standard Latvian (Nau 2011). Consequently, the standard expression of negation in the presence of debitive is via suppletive forms, e.g., *nav jādara* “must not do” (Ivulāne 2015, 110). Latvian also has other constructions for expressing necessity, and they can be rephrased using the debitive, e.g., *nevajag klausīties* “should not listen” (Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 251). Meanwhile, the combination of the debitive and the negative *\*jā-ne*, attested in informal speech, is only viewed as the speaker’s stylistic choice to put emphasis on the lexical verb and convey the meaning of “obliged not to” – *obligāti nē*:

(5) *ir jādara* vs *ir jānedara* ‘must be done’ Non-Stand. Latv.

(6) *Vīrs sastādījis sarakstu ar lietām,*  
man-NOM make-PERF.PTCP list-ACC with thing-DAT.PL  
*kas man jānedara.*  
which-REL I-DAT DEB.NEG-do-INF

“My husband made a list of things which I am not to do.” (Ivulāne 2015, 109–110)

Regarded specifically as mood-forming prefixes in Baltic linguistics (Ambrasas et al. 2006; Holvoet, Konickaja 2011; Lokmane, Kalnača 2014), the Latvian debitive *jā-* and the Lithuanian permissive *te<sub>PRM</sub>-* are the outermost verb prefixes. Previously Korostenskiene (2017) has shown that, within the generative syntactic framework, the semantics of Baltic grammatical prefixes allows them to be viewed as pertaining to *modality*, as opposed to lexical prefixes, which are all aspectual. Given that modality is associated with the complementiser phrase (CP) – a projection which stores specific information about the type of the clause (e.g., its mood, whether it is a statement or a question, as well as whether it is main or embedded (Radford 2009; Carnie 2013)) – in the standard clausal composition *CP-TP-AuxP-AspP-VoiceP-vP-VP*, it is reasonable to consider whether the Latvian grammatical prefixes *jā-* and *ne-* could be located in a CP-like projection. As the correlation of this projection relative to the standard clause-level CP is yet to be determined, we tentatively posit it alongside the clause-level CP, its characteristic feature being that it attaches either directly on the left to the lexical verb or, in prefixed verbs, on top of the lexical prefix. We will label the latter type as  $CP_{v/VP}$ .

## 2. The proposed analysis

In the present section, we first define the position of the debitive and negative prefixes on the syntactic tree and examine the properties of their respective projections. We then consider case alternation in the debitive construction considering the position of the logical subject and object.

## 2.1. Locating the debitive prefix *jā-* on the syntactic tree

As mentioned earlier, Rizzi's (1997) Split-CP hypothesis posits that the clausal projection is composed of several strictly regulated functional projections, which become prominent in sentences with marked word order. In Latvian, the uniform change in the illocutionary force of the clause upon the addition of the debitive prefix, the debitive classified as a mood, clearly suggests that within Rizzi's split-CP, the debitive prefix resides in the Force projection, which captures the illocutionary force of the utterance. Opting for a debitive construction, the speaker encourages the hearer to take the action expressed by the *jā-*-prefixed verb. This corresponds to the essence of directive illocutionary force (Searle, Vanderveken 1985, 60; see also Quirk et al. 1985, 827 ff.).

Given that the debitive, just like the more cross-linguistically widespread imperative, expresses illocutionary force, Rizzi's (2005, 100) Categorical Uniformity Principle is applicable: "Assume a unique canonical structural realization for a given semantic type", which means that both moods will have the same syntactic structure. Further motivated by Chomsky's (2001) Uniformity Hypothesis, the Latvian debitive *jā-* falls under the same functional category as, for instance, the English imperative, or the subjunctive, each formally placed in the relevant functional projection: ForceP<sub>IMP</sub>, ForceP<sub>SUBJ</sub>, or ForceP<sub>DEB</sub>. There is also a certain affinity between the imperative and the debitive projections, as both are specified for a person feature, 2<sup>nd</sup> person for the imperative and 3<sup>rd</sup> person for the debitive. The difference is in that morphologically, the debitive is overtly marked on the lexical verb as a prefix. In contrast, the subjunctive and the oblique, for instance, are both expressed via suffixal forms. Consequently, Latvian allows for a simultaneous manifestation of two clause-like environments: one expressed through suffixes (e.g., subjunctive or oblique), and the other, through the (debitive) prefix. While verbal suffixes have been analysed as heads of respective functional projections, prefixes occupy the specifier *Spec* position of the respective projection (Korostenskiene 2017), which is also in line with Rizzi's (1997) approach to overtly expressed elements. Hence, *jā-* resides in spec-Force<sub>DEB</sub>. Another implication of the given analysis is that, in the case when the debitive appears solely on the lexical present-tensed verb, the clausal projection needs to be additionally marked for the declarative illocutionary force (or indicative mood), e.g., ForceP<sub>DECL/IND</sub> (see also discussion below), in which the debitive force, given its person feature specification, resides above ForceP<sub>DECL/IND</sub> (cf. Holvoet 1997). This interplay of two illocutionary forces within a single sentence has implications for surface representation of case assignment of the logical subject and object, as we will show below.

Let us now consider the negative prefix *ne-*.

## 2.2. Placement of the negative *ne-* on the syntactic tree

For *ne-*, which has no effect on the illocutionary force of the clause, three functional projections remain unfilled: TopicP, FocusP and FinitenessP. TopicP and FinitenessP are not suitable for definitional reasons: the former is devoted to topicalised items, i.e., left-displaced nominal elements of the clause, and the latter only contains information about the finiteness of the clause, unaffected by *ne-*. Hence, the only available

projection is FocusP. Indeed, this projection fits well, for negation is traditionally conceived as a foregrounding device. Consequently, in the discussion of the debitive-negative sequence, the proposed arrangement of split-CP projections on the verb is ForceP>FocP, and a similar analysis has been proposed for the permissive *te<sub>PERM</sub>*- and the negative *ne*- in Lithuanian (Korostenskiene 2022).

To specify further, in defining the placement of the prefix *ne*- in Latvian (as well as Lithuanian), two conditions apply: Rizzi's (1997) requirement that overtly expressed material takes the specifier position of the relevant functional projection and Haegeman and Zanuttini's (1991, 244) NegCriterion, which states the following:

- (7) a. Each Neg X° must be in a Spec-Head relation with a Negative operator.  
b. Each Negative operator must be in a Spec-Head relation with a NegX°.

Following standard Rizzi's (1997) approach to split-CP, focused adjunctival elements are located in FocusP, and hence, in light of the conditions outlined above, *ne*- is in spec-Foc, the negative Focus phrase (Figure 3). Ignoring for now the incompatibility of the grammatical prefixes in Standard Latvian, Figure 4 depicts the hierarchical arrangement of *jā*- and *ne*-:

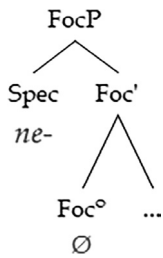


Figure 3. The placement of *ne*-

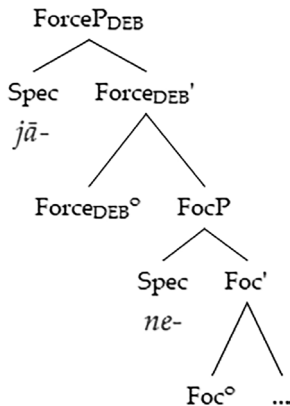


Figure 4. The preliminary arrangement of *jā*- and *ne*- (incompatibility not credited)

We can now consider the incompatibility of *jā*- and *ne*- in Standard Latvian.



### 2.3. On the incompatibility of *jā-* and *ne-* in Standard Latvian

The grammaticalization of the debitive prefix (e.g., Daugavet 2017, 14; cf. Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 246) is taken here as the main reason for the incompatibility of *jā-* and *ne-*. The historical origins of *jā-* as a particle of pronominal origin (Dini 2014, 455; Seržant, Taperte 2016, 209) imply that it was once a free-standing word, thus defined by a different projection and position on the syntactic tree. However, its evolution into a morpheme with a fixed (semantically reduced) meaning and regular paradigm suggests that *jā-* has undergone reanalysis and *grammaticalization*, defined in generative framework as “the creation of new functional material, either through the reanalysis of existing functional material or through the reanalysis of lexical material” (Roberts, Roussou 2003, 2; see also Traugott 1989; Roberts, Roussou 1999; Wischer 2000; Brinton 2010). One consequence of grammaticalization is the affiliation of the element with a strong head that possesses specific features which impose conditions on the attaching elements, while simultaneously preventing “unwanted” features in adjacent positions (e.g., the imperative head  $\text{Force}_{\text{IMP}^0}$  is specified for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feature (Zanuttini et al. 2012)).

Given the uniformity of the exclusion of *ne-* in the presence of *jā-* in Standard Latvian, we suggest that the morphologically null debitive head  $\text{Force}_{\text{DEB}^0}$  is strong and is characterized by the following properties:

- 1) it is a case assigning head, requiring that the logical subject appear in the Dative case (cf. Metuzāle-Kangere, Boiko 2001; Seržant, Taperte 2016);
- 2) its strength is manifested by lack of agreement between the debitive-marked verb and the logical subject;
- 3) it is specified by the person and tense feature, requiring that the adjoining verb be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person present tense;
- 4) it is a positive polarity item, marked with the feature [+pos], which precludes *ne-* from following *jā-* in Standard Latvian.

### 2.4. The composition of the debitive projection

The Baltic verb exhibits upward movement on the syntactic tree. This is evidenced by the occurrence of the verb root between aspectual prefixes and aspectual suffixes, which is analysed in the generative framework as the locus between the specifier and the head of the Aspect phrase (Svenonius 2004; Korostenskiene 2017), so that the verb root is as if framed by elements within AspP. Specifically in Latvian, iterative suffixes (Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 282, 303, 304) constitute heads of aspectual projections, while all resultative prefixes act as specifiers. Meanwhile, the verb’s upward movement creates complex heads by attaching the verbal complex to higher functional projections in a successive manner (Korostenskiene 2017; 2022). In Latvian, this process is revealed by the debitive: the verb in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person present indefinite does not have to agree in person with the logical subject, suggesting a fossilized form. This fact allows us to propose that the verb raises to the debitive projection  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{DEB}}$ , where it left attaches to the Force head and forms a complex head with it (Figure 5).

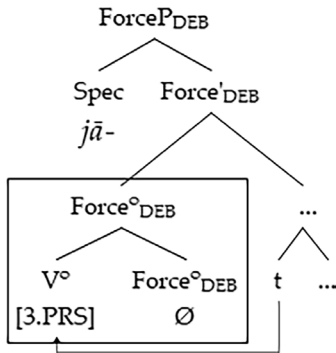


Figure 5. The formation of the complex head at Force°<sub>DEB</sub> (rectangular segment)

The syntactic tree in Figure 5 depicts the formation of the complex head Force° at ForceP<sub>DEB</sub> due to the verbal movement. The morphologically empty Force° obscures the tense and person marking on the verb. The overtly expressed debitive prefix is in spec-Force.

## 2.5. Implications of the verb movement on the syntactic tree: case assignment

Given the constraints of the paper and a significant debate in the field on case-marking (e.g., Rizzi 1997; Mathieu 2002; Newmeyer 2004; Kiss 2020), below we will only provide some preliminary remarks on case assignment of the logical subject and object in debitive constructions. We will consider two cases: first, when there is only the debitive mood that is overtly manifested; and second, when the debitive comes in combination with another mood.

The standard generative syntactic case theory (Chomsky 2000; 2001; Kiss 2000) postulates a mandatory case assignment for overt NPs (called the Case Filter), either through inherent or structural case marking mechanisms. In languages with nominative-accusative case distinctions, nominative and accusative case features are provided by the heads T and v, respectively. For case assignment to occur, the NP must be in a c-command relationship with the relevant head, that is, while neither the head nor the NP should dominate the other, they both must occur within the same larger projection (Kiss 2020, 398).

Case assignment of the subject follows the External Projection Principle (EPP), which is a requirement that all sentences have a subject (Carnie 2013). Nominative case is assigned to the subject at spec-T through an EPP feature borne by the head T<sup>0</sup>. The candidate subject moves up to the spec-TP position from its initial position in spec-vP or spec-VP, the former phrase distinguished for agentive subjects (Kratzer 1996). It has been shown that in some languages, the subject raises further up the syntactic tree to spec-Top (Solà 2002; Roberts, Roussou 2003). The debitive construction suggests upward movement of the subject, too, the latter taking place through the following stages:

- 1) the subject is base-generated in spec-vP/VP (Korostenskiene 2017);
- 2) it raises to spec-TP to check its Nominative case feature;
- 3) it appears as the nearest nominal in a position dominated by ForceP<sub>DEB</sub>.

This enables its movement upward on the syntactic tree, attracted by the strong case-assigning head Force<sup>o</sup>. We argue that Force<sup>o</sup>, like T<sup>o</sup>, contains an EPP-like feature. The logical subject, as a suitable candidate, gets attracted by the strong head Force<sup>o</sup> and moves from spec-T (where it got its Nominative case feature) to spec-Force where it gets the Dative case, the specifier position being the landing site for moved nouns. At the same time, the subject preserves linear order relations with the verb, which, too, has moved upward, as we have shown above, and has formed a complex head with Force<sup>o</sup><sub>DEB</sub> (cf. Fernández-Salgueiro 2020; Korostenskiene 2022).

The tree diagram in Figure 6 demonstrates the movement of the logical subject and the case assignment mechanism of the logical subject and object on the syntactic tree.

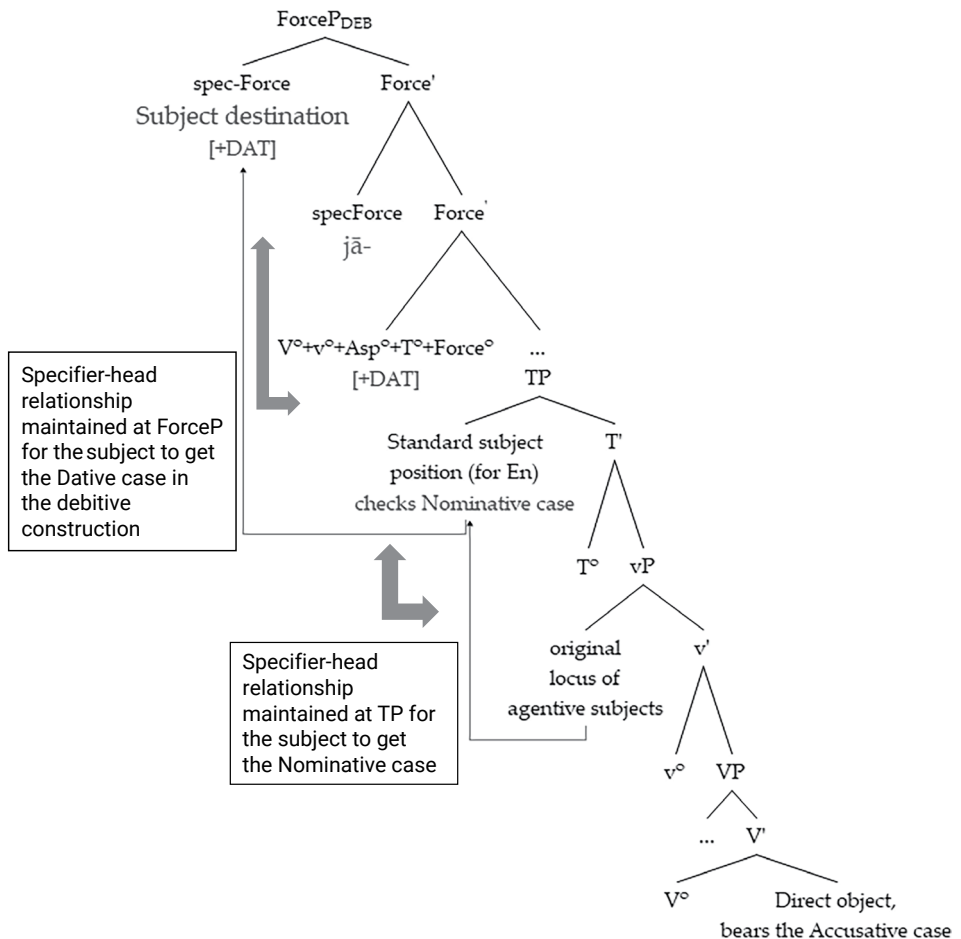


Figure 6. Case assignment and movement of the logical subject in debitive constructions

The positions for the nominative and the accusative cases are standard generative syntactic theory, the debitive case-marking position is proposed based on the present study. We can now consider constructions where debitive appears together with another mood.

## 2.6. Interaction of debitive with other moods in Latvian

Given that the complementiser phrase is responsible for the illocutionary force of the utterance, earlier we identified two overt manifestations of complementiser phrase CP. One is characterised by the presence of the overt head, morphologically realized as a suffix (e.g., the oblique force projection  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{OBL}}$  and its head  $\text{Force}^{\circ}_{\text{OBL}}$  filled by the suffix *-ot*). The other kind of complementiser phrase is manifested by the debitive construction, where the debitive prefix, as overt material, is located in the specifier  $\text{spec-Force}_{\text{DEB}}$  and the debitive head  $\text{Force}^{\circ}_{\text{DEB}}$  is morphologically null. The interaction of debitive with another mood is unique in creating a complex illocutionary force known as “the oblique subtype” of the debitive construction (Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 249). Interestingly, extending this paradigm, we would acknowledge that, in the case of a “simple” debitive construction, formed with the present indefinite tense, we should also distinguish the projection for the unmarked indicative (declarative) mood,  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{IND/DECL}}$  (cf. Kalnača, Lokmane 2021, 240ff.), which in Latvian has the unfilled head  $\text{Force}^{\circ}_{\text{IND/DECL}}$ . Given the regular nature of the debitive paradigm, we posit that the verbal complex makes a complex head with  $\text{Force}^{\circ}_{\text{IND/DECL}}$  as well. However, as the present indefinite tense is more unmarked than, say, the oblique present, the Indicative force projection is not perceived as actively involved in the debitive construction.

Given tense and person feature restriction are imposed without exception by  $\text{Force}^{\circ}_{\text{DEB}}$  on the lexical verb, the debitive projection  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{DEB}}$  should then be positioned above the projection of the “standard” clausal mood, in our case,  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{OBL}}$  or  $\text{ForceP}_{\text{IND/DECL}}$  (cf. Korostenskiene 2022). I am unsure of the exact mechanism behind the debitive construction when the lexical verb is preceded by an auxiliary. For now I assume this may be due to a concord mechanism (see also Fries, Hill 2023), which I will leave for further study.

In (8a), the surface form is provided. In (8b), a more detailed view is presented, with morphologically filled components in bold (complex heads are not shown for clarity). Figure 7 shows a simplified syntactic tree diagram for the lexical verb’s upward movement, picking up the oblique and the debitive mood markings and successively forming complex heads.

- (8) a. *jā-las-ot*  
 DEB-read-OBL (surface)  
 ‘they say, must read’
- b. **spec-Force**<sub>DEB</sub>—spec-Force<sub>OBL</sub>—**read**—**Force**<sup>◦</sup><sub>OBL</sub>—Force<sup>◦</sup><sub>DEB</sub>

To summarize, we have shown how the verb augments its structure through movement to upward projections. The expression of the oblique mood through a suffix and

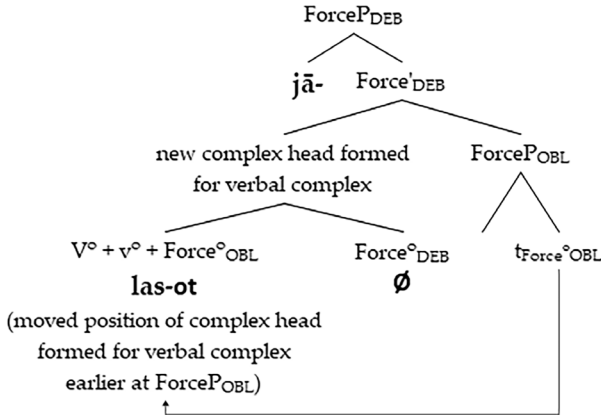


Figure 7. A complex verb form with two overtly manifested moods (simplified)

the debitive mood through a prefix are surface manifestations while underlyingly, these two moods are believed to have the same structure, yet with different overt components.

## 2.7. Case marking and locus of the logical subject and the direct object

Let us first consider the mechanism of case assignment of the logical subject in debitive constructions. We have said previously that the standard position for the Nominative-case-marked subjects is spec-T as the Nominative case is assigned by the head  $T^0$ . From this, it follows that, to get the Dative case, the logical subject must occur in a specific position where this case would be licensed.

We also remember that, as a strong head,  $\text{Force}^0_{\text{DEB}}$  is assumed here to assign the Dative case. If so, then, to check the Dative case, the logical subject must move to the specifier position spec-Force. This perspective, at least with respect to debitive constructions, invites a reconsideration of the idea that languages with rich agreement and morphological systems have topicalised subjects, which means that the subject in these languages resides in spec-Top (Solà 2002; Roberts, Roussou 2003). To occur at spec-Top, the subject should already have its relevant case feature checked with a dedicated functional head. Specifically, the presence of a topicalised subject in spec-Top would suggest that the subject has raised, after having checked its Nominative case feature at spec-T.

The case marking of the debitive construction, however, leads us to suggest a different, tentative solution to its assignment. Assuming that  $T^0$  consistently assigns the Nominative case and given the occurrence of Nominative case on the direct object in Standard Latvian, we posit that in Latvian debitive constructions, the Dative case on the logical subject is assigned by the strong head  $\text{Force}^0_{\text{DEB}}$  in an EPP-like manner. Consequently, to check the Dative case feature, the subject must occur in the specifier of the debitive Force projection, spec- $\text{Force}_{\text{DEB}}$ . In dual mood constructions like (2b), the Dative-marked subject precedes the verb form with the debitive



Specifically, we show the upward movement of the following elements:

- 1) the verbal complex (angular arrows);
- 2) the logical subject (solid curved arrows);
- 3) the direct object (a double dotted curved arrow).

The verbal complex augments in a snowball manner, forming complex heads on its way up and is in the Force<sup>o</sup><sub>DEB</sub>. This straightforwardly suggests that the subject must be above Force<sup>o</sup><sub>DEB</sub>, the only possible position being spec-Force<sub>DEB</sub>. The direct object moves up the spec-T position, to get its nominative case.

The case interchange between standard Nominative and non-standard Accusative on the direct object is resolved more straightforwardly, albeit, again, leaving the exact reasons for this movement for further research. Given that the verbal complex and the logical subject move up the syntactic tree, so does the direct object in Standard Latvian, moving to the freed position of the canonical subject, viz., at spec-T. In non-Standard Latvian, the unchanged Accusative case on the direct object suggests that it remains *in situ*, as a complement of v/V. The upward movement of the direct object is motivated here by the Minimal Link Condition (e.g., Carnie 2013), following which the relevant item needs to move to the nearest potential landing site – which the direct object is forced to do – here, to preserve the feature checking mechanism with the upward moving verb.

## Conclusions

The study sought to demonstrate that the placement of two Latvian grammatical prefixes, *jā-* and *ne-*, results from two properties of the Baltic verb:

- 1) its syntactic, rather than morphological, structure;
- 2) its upward movement on the generative syntactic tree.

Applying Rizzi's (1997) split-CP hypothesis, we place these two prefixes at spec-Force<sub>DEB</sub> and spec-Foc, respectively. The strong projection ForceP<sub>DEB</sub> explains the incompatibility of the debitive prefix with the negative *ne-* and non-canonical case assignment. Our analysis supports viewing debitive as a mood, albeit with a unique construction. Case assignment in Latvian debitive constructions suggests upward movement of the logical subject and the direct object in Standard Latvian, driven by case feature checking. The study hopes to contribute to the analysis of the debitive in Latvian and to advocate for new opportunities in analysing Latvian data within the generative syntactic framework.

## Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
Asp	aspect
C	complementiser
DAT	dative
Deb	debitive

Decl	declarative
DO	direct object
DP	determiner phrase
EPP	external projection principle
IND	indicative
Fin	finiteness
Foc	Focus
Neg	negative
Non-Stand. Latv.	Non-Standard Latvian
NP	noun phrase
obl	oblique
OBL	oblique
P	phrase
SI	reflexive-middle marker <i>si</i>
Spec	specifier
Stand. Latv.	Standard Latvian
t	trace
Top	topic
TP	tense phrase
v/V	verb

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## Kopsavilkums

Šajā pētījumā apskatīti latviešu gramatiskie priedēkļi *jā-* un *ne-* ģeneratīvās sintakses skatījumā. Līdz šim pretstatā ievērojamiem pētījumiem tradicionālās sintakses jomā ģeneratīvās sintakses pētījumi par latviešu valodu kopumā ir bijuši ļoti ierobežoti (piem., Apse 2007; Biks 2020; Fábregas et al. 2018; Kushnir 2019), un verbālā morfosintakse vēl nav kļuvusi par diskusiju tēmu. Tikmēr abi analizējamie gramatiskie verbālie priedēkļi rada vairākus jautājumus, piemēram, par to nesaderību vienam ar otru latviešu literārajā valodā, par to vietu ģeneratīvās sintakses kokā un netipisku locījumu marķēšanu deibatīvajā konstrukcijā. Lai atbildētu uz šiem jautājumiem, pētījums balstās uz ģeneratīvo X-bāra sintakses teoriju (Chomsky 1993; 1995), Rizzi (1997) Split-CP hipotēzi, locījumu teoriju (Chomsky 2001) un iepriekšējiem pētījumiem par Baltijas verbēm (Korostenskiene 2017; 2022). Spēcīgā projekcija ForceP<sub>DEB</sub> izskaidro deibatīva prefiksa nesaderību ar nolieguma *ne-* un nekanonisku locījuma piešķirumu. Veiktā analīze atbalsta deibatīva skatījumu kā izteiksmi, lai arī ar unikālu konstrukciju. Locījuma piešķirums latviešu valodas deibatīvajās konstrukcijās liecina par loģiskā subjekta un tiešā objekta virzību uz augšu standarta latviešu valodā, ko veicina locījuma īpašību pārbaude. Ar šo pētījumu autori cer veicināt deibatīva analīzi latviešu valodā un atbalstīt jaunas iespējas analizēt latviešu valodas datus ģeneratīvās sintakses ietvaros.

**Atslēgvārdi:** modalitāte; debitīvs; negatīvs; priedēkļi; latviešu valoda; Split-CP; locījumu piešķiršana; ģeneratīvā pieeja.



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