

THE FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE LATVIAN DEBITIVE MOOD

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The so-called debitive mood of verbs is a peculiarly Latvian innovation, but, rather surprisingly, very little seems to have been written about it.¹ It is thus of considerable interest to note that in the very first grammar of Latvian, J. G. Rehehusen's *Manuductio* . . . ² of 1644, the debitive forms of verbs are both clearly perceived and (almost) adequately described, particularly since Rehehusen's grammar is traditionally (and for the most part correctly) regarded as very inadequate indeed and an extremely inauspicious beginning to the development of Latvian grammatical theory.

Although a number of points of detail are passed over in silence, Rehehusen's discussion of the debitive, which he does not see as a mood, but rather as an isolated idiomatic construction, nevertheless indicates that he has succeeded in grasping the fundamentals of the structure. He correctly notes that the tense marker is the third person singular³ of the appropriate tense of the verb but "to be", but does not point out that in the present tense the marker *ir* is normally omitted. Nor does Rehehusen himself omit it in practice: it is plainly present in his textual material — cf. ". . . wingims ir jamaxa" (p. 39) ("they must pay") and, at least by implication, ". . . szehns ar iszkaptims ir ja-plauw, ar dackschims ja-iszahrđi, ar gkrahbäcklims ja-kaszi, gkabba-nohsz ja-szannäsz, kaudsohsz ja-szammet un ja-weddehckschan . . ." (pp. 43-44) (lit. "the hay with scythes must be reapt, with forks (it must be) spread out, with rakes (it must be) collected up, into heaps (it must be) carried together, into stacks (it must be) piled up, and (it must be) brought inside"). Here the *ir* of the first debitive (*ir ja-plauw*) is no doubt understood as repeated in front of each of the others (*ja-iszahrđi*, *ja-kaszi*, *ja-szannäsz*, *ja-szammet*, *ja-wedd*). He then lists the third person singular or each of the tenses of *but*, insofar as he had recognized them. Under the pluperfect, however, where the pluperfect indicative must surely be the form required, as well as intended, he lists the form of what he has elsewhere referred to as the pluperfect subjunctive (i.e., the modern conditional perfect) and furthermore provides a translation consonant with a pluperfect subjunctive!

"Buhte man bihsz — hette ich gehabt" i.e., "had I had to", (p. 26)

The inconsistency is repeated on p. 27, where pluperfect subjunctives, with consonant translations, again appear under the heading "Pluperfect":

"Buhte man bihsz jaähde — hette ich zu essen gehabt" i.e., "had I had to eat."

and

"Buhte jums bihsz jaähde — hettet ihr zu essen gehabt" i.e., "had you had to eat."

Obviously, a pluperfect indicative of but would be *bih bihsz*, but astonishingly this form appears nowhere, being always (quite incorrectly) supplanted by the subjunctive *buhte bihsz*. We can find no explanation for the misconstrual, which remains as enigmatic as it is monumental. Even so, it would not be of any great interest, but for the extraordinary fact that in a later grammatical manuscript (the so-called Büchner fragments)⁴ — on three separate occasions — we find a pluperfect subjunctive listed in verbal paradigms where the pluperfect indicative is the form required. Cf. "butu bijs" (with full paradigm, p. 268), "būtu gahjis" (with full paradigm, p. 269) and "buhtu sarrgajees" (with partial paradigm, p. 270). Büchner has never been thought to have copied any of his material from Rehehusen; could there then be a common source for the error?

The main verb carries the prefix *ja-*, which, apart from the question of vowel length (cf. the modern standard *ja-}*⁵, is accurate enough. But the prefixing of this *ja-* is described simply (p. 26) as "addita tamen verbo vocula Ja" ("with the

addition to the verb of the element *Ja*"). At the end of the exemplary material (p. 27) the further refinement is added that it is to the third person that the *ja-* is to be prefixed; only from the various examples listed can we infer that it is the third person of the present tense that is intended. Regrettably our author makes no specific reference to this point. The one irregular form *jabūt* is not discussed in the work and does not occur anywhere in Rehehusen's textual material.

This verbal module (i.e., the tense marker and the main verb with the prefixed *ja-*) is to be used "cum Dativo nominis vel pronominis" ("along with the dative of the noun or pronoun" — p. 26). We are entitled to ask which noun or pronoun Rehehusen was here referring to — the logical subject (I, ich) or the logical object (letter, Brief) in the English or German "I must write a letter", "Ich muss einen Brief schreiben". Rehehusen does not expressly indicate which noun or pronoun he had in mind, but the analogy which he draws with the Latin gerundival construction "Mihi est scribendum" (p. 26) leaves little room for doubt that the Latvian dative is to correspond to the Latin dative "mihi", i.e., that he intends (correctly) a dative of the logical subject.⁶ All of his examples (pp. 26, 27, 39) confirm this. We note however that the examples of pp. 43-44 ("... *szehns ar iszkaptims ir ja-plauw . . .*" etc. — see above) occur *without* the dative — a legitimate possibility not allowed for in Rehehusen's exposition.⁷

Another element missing from this first treatment of debitives is any discussion of the case of the logical object. Analogy with the Latin model would suggest a nominative, but the point is not taken up, and none of the examples in the exposition contains such an object. There is just one relevant example in the textual material: "... *szehns . . . ir ja-plauw . . .*" (pp. 43-44, and quoted in full above), where *szehns* is indeed in the nominative, but without comment, and furthermore without a dative of the logical subject, whereby we might have been able to test Rehehusen's knowledge of the full structure.

Subsequent refinements concerning the case of first and second person pronouns in this position are necessarily absent from the discussion. Nor does Rehehusen discuss the negative, and no negative debitive forms occur in the work. Presumably the negative of "singims ir jamaxa" (p. 39 — see above) would be "*wingims nō ir jamaxa" in line with the hopelessly incorrect negative form of *ir* used in another context (p. 48) by our author.

Should we lay greater stress on Rehehusen's deficiencies than on his achievements in respect of the debitive? It is a question to which we would prefer not to attempt an answer. The main point in our view is that, for a first approximation, a surprisingly accurate representation has been provided — in a grammar where very little else can be said to approximate to accurate representation. It would be utterly unrealistic to expect more.

1 See however Endzelin, J., "Ursprung und Gebrauch des lettischen Debitivs" in *Beiträge zur Kunde der Indogermanischen Sprachen* XXVI (1901), pp. 66-74 (repr. in *J. Endzelins. Darbu izlase* (hereafter *Endz. izl.*), Riga, I (1971), pp. 143-150; Endzelins, J., "Ka celees un leetojams latveesu valodas debitivs?" in *Rakstu krajums* (izdots no Rigas Latveisu Biedribas Zinibu Komisijas) XIII (1901), pp. 1-6 (repr. in *Endz. izl.* I, pp. 138-142); (Endzelin, J.), "Zur Entstehung des lettischen Debitivs" in *Beiträge zur Kunde der Indogermanischen Sprachen* XXIX (1905), pp. 320-321 (repr. in *Endz. izl.* I, pp. 288-289); Prellwitz, W., "Zur Entstehung des Lettischen Debitivs" in *Beiträge zur Kunde der Indogermanischen Sprachen* XXVIII (1904), p. 319, and XXIX (1905) pp. 321-322; Mjulenbach, K., "O debitive" in *Izvestija otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imp. Akademii Nauk* (Ser. 2) XII (1907) Kn. 3, pp. 313-333; Endzelin, J., "Esc? o latysskom debitive" in *Izvestija otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imp. Akademii Nauk* (Ser. 2) XIII (1908) Kn. 4, pp. 201-207 (repr. *Endz. izl.* II, pp. 64-69); Fennell, T. G., "The subject of Latvian verbs in the debitive mood" in Ziedonis, A. et al, (eds) *Baltic Literature and Linguistics* (Columbus/Ohio, A.A.B.S., 1973) pp. 213-221.

2 Rehehusen, J. G., *Manvductio ad Lingvam Lettonicam facilis & certa* monstrata a Joanne Georgo Rehehusen (Riga, Gerhard Schröder, 1644). 48 (unnumbered) pp. Repr. A. Bielenstein in *Magazin* herausgegeben von der lettisch-literarischen Gesellschaft Bd. 20, St. 2 (1901) pp. 1-59.

3 The reference to a third person singular is over-precise, since in all non-compound tenses the third person singular is identical with the third person plural. The simple reference "third person" with no mention of the number would have been perfectly adequate.

4 See Arbuzovs, L., "17. gs. latviesu gramatika bij. Kurzemes hercogu biblioteka Peterpili" in *Filologu beidribas raksti* 5 (1925), pp. 106-125. Additional information and a discussion of the authorship can be found in K. Dravins, "Latviesu gramatikas materiali Martina Bichnera albuma" in *In honorem Endzelini* (Chicago, 1960) pp. 107-113.

5 See Grisle, R., "Rehehuzena gramatika un pret to verstais Einhorna raksts" in *Rakstu krajums* (Veltījums Akademikim profesoram Dr. Janim Endzelinam vina 85 dzives un 65 darba gadu atcerei) (Riga, LPSR ZA izdev., 1959), pp. 479-526. See especially pp. 511-512.

6 There is some argument over the use of the terms "subject" and "object" in relation to debitives. See *Mūsdienu latviesu literāras valodas gramatika*, II (Riga, 1962), p. 233; Loja, J., *Valodniecības pamatjautājumi* (2. parstr. izd., Riga, 1968), p. 254; Fennell, T. G., "The subject of Latvian verbs in the debitive mood" in Ziedonis, A. (et al.) (eds), *Baltic Literature and Linguistics* (Columbus/Ohio, 1973), pp. 213-221.

7 Unfortunately for the reader, Rehehusen has nowhere taught the dative case of pronouns. That *man, tev, mums, jums* stands as datives to *es, tu, mes, jūs* is a piece of information over which the reader here stumbles for the first (and last) time. Nouns are shown in the dative in Rehehusen's paradigms (pp. 9-10) but from this it is a considerable leap of the imagination to the dative even of *vins/vina/vini*: nothing in "universal" grammar suggests that pronouns might be declined according to the pattern of nouns. Obviously, it would be a great boon to the twentieth century analyst to know exactly what Rehehusen assumed as given or deemed to be self-evident or already patent to his readers, as opposed to those areas in which he regarded instruction (i.e., analysis and exposition) as either necessary or useful.