

# Latvian *dabūt* ‘get’: An acquisitive modal?

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Depending on the context the Latvian verb *dabūt* ‘get’ expresses either necessity or possibility in combination with the infinitive, which makes it similar to what is known as “acquisitive modals” in other languages, such as Swedish and Estonian. The Latvian verb is different in that it is implicative rather than modal, i.e. the necessity or possibility that it expresses is always actualized, unless the verb is negated. The use of *dabūt* with the infinitive has developed from the meaning ‘onset of possession’ alongside other meanings that include ‘displacement/change of state’ and ‘unpleasant experience/damage’, the former also being found with acquisitive verbs in other languages.

**Keywords:** modality, participant-external modality, acquisitive modals, implicative verbs, Latvian

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This paper is about the Latvian verb *dabūt* ‘get’ which has a modal-like meaning in combination with the infinitive. The paper consists of five sections, including the introduction. In the second section I provide a brief characterization of modal verbs in Latvian. The third section introduces the verb *dabūt* and considers modal and non-modal meanings that acquisitive verbs develop in combination with the infinitive in other languages. The fourth section concentrates on Latvian data. I review how various meanings of *dabūt* are interpreted in the main dictionaries and present my own analysis based on the use of *dabūt* in the Latvian Corpus, paying special attention to the use of *dabūt* with the infinitive. I also compare the meanings of *dabūt* with meanings conveyed by acquisitive verbs in other languages, and introduce another polysemous Latvian verb, *tikt*, which corresponds to some of the typical uses covered by acquisitive verbs in other languages and may be seen as an intransitive equivalent of *dabūt*. The fifth section contains the conclusion.

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## 2. Modal verbs in Latvian

Among modal verbs (*modālie verbi*) Latvian grammars usually list lexical items meaning possibility and desire, i.e. *varēt* ‘can, may’, *driestēt* ‘be allowed’, *spēt* ‘be able’, *jaudāt* ‘be able’ and *gribēt* ‘want’, sometimes with the addition of the verb *ļaut* ‘allow’. The most common verb for expressing necessity, *vajadzēt*, is mentioned less frequently. See Sokols (1959, 547), Nītiņa (2001, 64), Paegle (2003, 113), Skujiņa (2007, 236–237), Grigorjevs & Nītiņa (2013, 468). Apart from modal verbs (*modālie verbi*), Latvian linguists distinguish the so-called modal modifiers (*modālie modificētāji*) which belong to a wider class of modifiers (*modificētāji*) that combine with an infinitive, see Grigorjevs & Nītiņa (2013, 468–469) based on Kārklīš (1976) and Freimane (1985). Modal modifiers are differentiated from the other members of the class by their modal meaning. The latter is understood very widely, comprising ability, possibility, necessity, inevitability, aspiration, intention, dislike and avoidance, e.g. *mācēt* ‘be able, know’, *censties* ‘try’, *baidīties* ‘be afraid’, *pienākties* ‘be due’.

In his studies of modality in Baltic, Holvoet (2007, 2009) mentions only those Latvian verbs with the meaning of possibility and necessity. The main items, *varēt* and *vajadzēt*, both serve to express all kinds of modality—dynamic, deontic and epistemic. Also, Holvoet interprets the special inflectional form called the debitive as an incorporated modal verb semantically and syntactically similar to *vajadzēt*. For more details on the debitive see Holvoet (2001, 9–62). More peripheral verbs mentioned in Holvoet (2007, 2009) include *driestēt* with a specialized meaning of deontic possibility, *spēt*, which has a dynamic meaning ‘be able, manage’, and *derēt* ‘be fitting’, which is interesting as the only modal-like verb shared by both Baltic languages.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of *ievajadzēties*, an ingressive derivative from *vajadzēt*, is either dynamic or deontic but not epistemic, as distinct from its base word.

The uncertainty concerning the modal verbs in Latvian is explained by their low degree of grammaticalization. They also have to compete with other means of expressing modality, such as the above-mentioned debitive, participle constructions, and finite forms with the modal particle *lai*; see more details in Holvoet (2007, 2009). The verbs meaning various

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<sup>2</sup> Holvoet (2007, 165–166) refers to *derēt* as a verb that may express either possibility or necessity depending on the context, but my impression is that its modal uses in Latvian convey necessity.

kinds of possibility are all personal verbs and thus look more similar to the average European modals. The necessitive verb *vajadzēt* and the less frequent verb *derēt* are impersonal, and the same holds for the debitive. Holvoet sees the impersonal character of *vajadzēt* as an obstacle to its further grammaticalization. Nevertheless, he claims that both *vajadzēt* and the debitive are highly grammaticalized semantically since they are used in epistemic meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Holvoet links the lack of personal necessitive items to the fact that Latvian, unlike Lithuanian, has not developed any verbs with the meaning 'have' that could have further evolved into necessitive verbs. The verb *turēt*, a Latvian cognate of the Lithuanian *turėti* 'have, must', still retains the original meaning 'hold'. Possession is expressed by the verb *būt* 'be' with the dative, and this construction also served as one of the sources for the debitive. The complicated evolution of the debitive is investigated in Holvoet (2001, 9–25) but here I will restrict myself to constructed examples of both expressions from modern Latvian (1)–(2). Cf. also the construction with *vajadzēt* in (3).

- (1) *Man ir maiz-e.*  
 1SG.DAT be.PRS.3 bread-NOM.SG  
 'I have bread.'
- (2) *Man ir jā-ēd maiz-e.*  
 1SG.DAT be.PRS.3 DEB-eat bread-NOM.SG  
 'I have to eat bread.'
- (3) *Man vajag ēs-t maiz-i.*  
 1SG.DAT need.PRS.3 eat-INF bread-ACC.SG  
 'I should eat bread.'<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Acquisitive modals

#### 3.1. Latvian *dabūt* as a necessitive verb

Modal verbs, and necessitive verbs in particular, may come from many sources; see Heine & Kuteva (2004, 333), Bybee *et al.* (1994, 182–183),

<sup>3</sup> According to Kalnača (2013) and Kalnača & Lokmane (2014), the epistemic use of the debitive and *vajadzēt* is restricted to stative verbs. As can be seen from Ramchand (2014), Latvian is not unique in this respect.

<sup>4</sup> As Holvoet (2007, 163–164) points out, *vajadzēt* tends to be interpreted deontically. Kalnača (2013) also shows that *vajadzēt* is more common for colloquial speech.

and also van der Auwera & Plungian (1998, 94–96). One of the sources is provided by verbs meaning onset of possession, as in the case of the English *get*. But *get* is not a very good example in that it conveys the meanings of possibility and necessity in slightly different ways<sup>5</sup> while in many other languages it is common for such verbs to be interpreted as an expression of possibility or necessity depending on the context. In van der Auwera *et al.* (2009) these are called “acquisitive modals” and are known to be found in Circum-Baltic languages, including Latvian which has *dabūt*. The degree to which such verbs belong to the domain of modality in individual languages is, however, different. For now it is important that these verbs are usually personal,<sup>6</sup> which is also true for the Latvian *dabūt*. Even though what we can see is only the beginning of a long process, it is not completely unlikely that *dabūt* will evolve with time into a necessitive modal verb.

The constructed examples in (4)–(6) show the various uses of *dabūt*, reflecting its development on the way to a modal verb. In (4) the verb conveys its main meaning as a transitive verb with the object of possession in the accusative. The sentence in (5) is ambiguous between onset of possession, the omitted object of possession being some unspecified food, and (actualized) necessity (or, less probably, possibility). In (6) *dabūt* is used with an intransitive verb and expresses (actualized) necessity. (The meaning of *dabūt* in (6) can also be interpreted as possibility in the circumstances when waiting is preferred to other options, such as going away.)

- (4) *Es dabūj-u maiz-i.*  
1SG.NOM get-PST.1SG bread-ACC.SG  
'I got bread.'
- (5) *Es dabūj-u ēs-t par brīv-u.*  
1SG.NOM get-PST.1SG eat-INF for free-ACC.SG  
'I got something to eat for free.' / 'I got to eat for free.'
- (6) *Es dabūj-u gaidī-t.*  
1SG.NOM get-PST.1SG. wait-INF  
'I had to wait.'

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *I've got to eat in restaurants every night this week* (future obligation) vs. *I've gotten to eat in restaurants every night this week* (past permission) in Gronemeyer (1999, 26). See also van de Auwera *et al.* (2009, 297), “The formal identity of the *got* in the *have-less* form *gotta* and the past tense possibility marker *got* must now amount to homonymy”.

<sup>6</sup> One notable exception is the Lithuanian verb *tekti*.

Before proceeding with an analysis of the Latvian *dabūt*, let us consider acquisitive modals in other languages.

### 3.2. General issues concerning acquisitive modals

Van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 272) define **acquisitive modals** as “an expression of modality that goes back to a predicate meaning ‘acquire, get’”. Apart from Circum-Baltic languages and other languages of Northern Europe, they are found in Southeast Asia (Burmese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Lao, and Thai etc.).

The notion of acquisitive modals is introduced in van der Auwera *et al.* (2009) where the authors revisit the semantic map of modality from van der Auwera & Plungian (1998) so that it fits the development of modal meaning by verbs with the meaning ‘acquire/get’. They understand modality as four “semantic domains that involve possibility and necessity as paradigmatic variants, that is, as constituting a paradigm with two possible choices, possibility and necessity” (van der Auwera & Plungian 1998, 80).

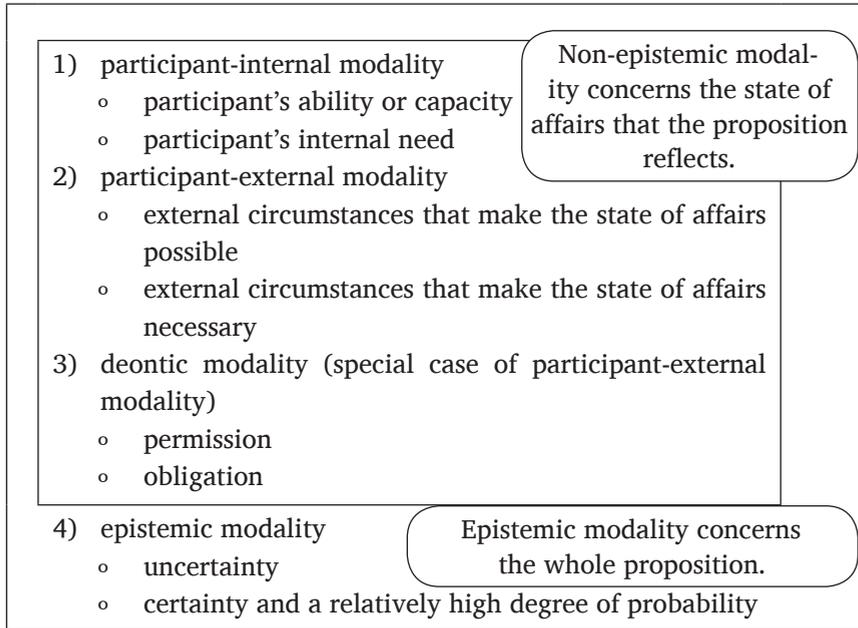
I sum up their analysis of modality in Diagram 1. The principal division of the non-epistemic meanings is between participant-internal and participant-external modality rather than between deontic and dynamic. Deontic meaning is seen as a special case of participant external modality, and dynamic modality can be roughly identified with the rest of the non-epistemic meanings.

Van der Auwera & Plungian (1998, 111) state that participant-internal modality can develop into participant-external modality, but not the other way round. They also say that the meaning of participant-external modality can directly develop from a premodal meaning. The modification of the map in van der Auwera *et al.* (2009) is made necessary by the fact that acquisitive modals can develop from participant-external modality to participant-internal modality.

Apart from the development from participant-external to participant-internal modality, van der Auwera & Plungian (1998) and van der Auwera *et al.* (2009) discuss two other issues concerning acquisitive modals.

- Acquisitive modals are found to express possibility in some contexts and necessity in other contexts.
- The development of acquisitive modals from ‘acquire’ to participant-external necessity goes through an intermediate meaning of “participant-external actuality”.

*Diagram 1. Four domains of modality in van der Auwera & Plungian (1998)*



In Sections 3.3–3.5 I will also give more detail on these three issues following van der Auwera *et al.* (2009), Trigel & Habicht (2012), Viberg (2012), Askedal (2012), Gronemeyer (1999), Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014),<sup>7</sup> Enfield (2003), as they describe acquisitive modals in some of the languages of Northern Europe and Southeast Asia. Special attention will be paid to the problem of differentiating between premodal and modal meanings.

### 3.3. Modal meanings of acquisitive verbs

It is common for acquisitive modals to express participant-external modality, deontic modality being a special case of participant-external modality. Less frequently, they also allow participant-internal reading, as

<sup>7</sup> For Lithuanian see also Usonienė & Jasionytė (2010) and Jasionytė (2012).

in Estonian. The Estonian examples (7)–(9) are from Trigel & Habicht (2012, 1379, 1391).<sup>8</sup>

- (7) onset of possession

Estonian

*Poiss saa-b isa-lt kaardi.*

boy get-3SG father-ABL card:GEN

'Boy will get/receive a card from father'

- (8) participant-external possibility

Estonian

*Muidugi ei saa teise juttu lihtsalt ümber*

of.course NEG get:NEG other:GEN story:PART simply around

*kirjuta-da*

write-INF1

'Of course one can't just rewrite somebody's story'

- (9) participant-internal possibility (capacity)

Estonian

*Teatavasti saa-b inimene mõel-da vaid selle-st,*

as.is.known get-3SG person think-INF1 only this-ELA

*mi-da ta tea-b.*

what-PART 3SG know-3SG

'Obviously a person can only think about what he/she knows'

In Estonian acquisitive modals also develop epistemic meanings, as in (10), according to Trigel & Habicht (2012, 1394–1395).

- (10) Estonian

*Siin saa-b veel palju ära teh-a.*

here get-3SG yet much PTC do-INF1

'There is still much to do here.'

Acquisitive modals may be “vague between possibility and necessity” (van der Auwera & Plungian 1998, 103–104) as in the example of the Swedish verb *få* 'get' in their paper (from Wagner 1976, 56), here reproduced as (11).

<sup>8</sup> In examples from the literature the original glosses are retained with the exception of (12)–(13) which lack glosses in Viberg (2012) and (20)–(21), (24)–(25), (86)–(87) where I changed the original glosses in the Lithuanian examples from Jasionyte-Mikučionienė (2014) and Usonienė & Jasionyte (2010) in order to adapt them to my own glossing of the examples from Latvian.

(11) Swedish

*Lasse får köra bil.*  
 Lasse gets drive car  
 ‘Lasse gets to drive the car.’  
 ‘Lasse may/must drive the car.’

Viberg (2012, 1427) illustrates the Swedish *få* ‘get’ with two sentences, here reproduced as (12) and (13). In (12) “<t>he passage is taken from a novel <...> and describes what happens when someone arrives at a hospital. The presupposition is that someone who feels ill wants to stay at the hospital.”

(12) Swedish

*Den som inte är sjuk är följaktligen frisk*  
 3.COMM.SG REL NEG be.PRS ill be.PRS consequently healthy  
*och får åka hem igen.*  
 and get.PRS go.INF home again  
 ‘The person who is not ill is consequently well and has to go back home.’

In example (13) “taken from the same novel, another patient wants to leave the hospital after an operation”.

(13) Swedish

*Han skulle förmodligen snart få åka hem.*  
 3SG.M AUX.PST probably soon get.INF go.INF home  
 ‘He would presumably be allowed [(to) go] home soon.’

Other authors agree that acquisitive modals can mean either necessity or possibility depending on the context and situation. In particular, this is true for Swedish (Viberg 2012, 1427), Norwegian<sup>9</sup> (Askedal 2012, 1319), Estonian (Tragel & Habicht 2012, 1394), Lithuanian (Jasionytė-Mikučionienė 2014, 77); see also the languages discussed in van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 294–296).

Van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 296) suggest four scenarios that could explain “the possibility-necessity polyfunctionality, and each may be cor-

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<sup>9</sup> It must be noted that in Norwegian “<e>xamples without a direct object of the kind found with *ha* ‘have’ <...> do not occur (cf. *du har å gjøre det* ‘you must do it’ vs. *\*du får å gjøre det*, literally ‘you get to do it’), indicating that the *få*-construction is not grammaticalized (at least not to any comparable degree)” (Askedal 2012, 1319).

rect, but for different languages or even different historical stages of a language”.

- 1) 'get' → possibility; 'get' → necessity
- 2) 'get' → possibility → necessity
- 3) 'get' → necessity → possibility
- 4) “each meaning is just an instantiation of a vague participant-external modality”

### 3.4. Premodal meanings of acquisitive verbs

According to van der Auwera & Plungian (1998) and van der Auwera *et al.* (2009), the development of acquisitive modals from 'acquire' to participant-external-necessity goes through an intermediate meaning of “participant-external actuality”. As seen from the literature on individual languages, the more precise formulation of this meaning may vary from ingressive/inchoative to 'chance occurrence' and 'result of a prior event'. It is not clear whether these specific meanings can be seen as evolving from each other or they are products of a parallel development.

It is common for acquisitive verbs to retain the premodal meaning in combinations with stative verbs, especially verbs of perception. There are also languages where acquisitive verbs are used in the premodal meaning with any verbs. The facts below suggest that ingressive/inchoative meaning is typical for combinations with stative verbs. In a language where the premodal meaning is found with all kinds of verbs, it is described as a meaning of 'chance occurrence' and 'result of a prior event'.

Van der Auwera & Plungian (1998, 103) reflect on the premodal meaning of the Swedish *få*, intermediate between onset of possession and the modal meanings, and call it “participant-external actuality”. “<S> one state of affairs is actualized because of participant-external circumstances, in particular, because the participant in some way “received” the state of affairs”. They illustrate the meaning of participant-external actuality with an example from Wagner (1976, 56, 58), here reproduced as (15).

(14) onset of possession

Swedish

*Han fick 50 av rösterna.*

he got 50 of the votes

'He got 50 of the votes.'

(15) participant-external actuality

Swedish

*Han fick veta hela sanningen.*

He got know whole the.truth

‘He got to know the whole truth.’

Van der Auwera & Plungian speak about the same meaning of the Swedish *få* that is referred to as “ingressive” in Wagner (1976). In Viberg (2012, 1443–1444) this use of *få* is labelled as “inchoative”; see (16). Examples (15) and (16) both mean entry into a state—of knowing, as in (15), or seeing, as in (16).

(16) Swedish

*Maria fick se en ödla.*

Maria got see a lizard

‘Maria caught sight of a lizard.’

Viberg (2012, 1443) says that “<w>hen *få* is combined with a bare infinitive, the interpretation in most cases is modal, but when the infinitive is followed by one of the verbs *se* ‘see’, *höra* ‘hear’ or *veta* ‘know’, *få* usually has an inchoative rather than a modal sense.” As Viberg points out, “<i>t would be possible to say *När han såg tältet* ‘When he saw the tent’ even in Swedish, but the use of *få* in combination with *se* signals more vividly the sudden inception of the experience.”

Gronemeyer (1999, 7–9) specifies the same meaning of the English *get*. In the inchoative meaning, *get* is followed by the infinitive of a stative verb, as in her example here repeated as (17). When a dynamic<sup>10</sup> verb is in the infinitive, *get* means permission, as in (18).

(17) *It wasn’t like getting cheated at the fair. They were always trying, so you got to expect it* [i.e. getting cheated, C.G.].

(18) *I filled a five-gallon jug for him and brought it to the hospital. I don’t think he ever got to drink any of it.*

Tragel & Habicht (2012, 1380–1381) see the Estonian verb *saama* ‘get’ in combination with the infinitive of *näha* ‘see’, *kuulda* ‘hear’, *teada* ‘know’, *tunda* ‘feel’ as an extension of the meaning ‘motion into posses-

<sup>10</sup> *Get* has the ingressive meaning when followed by an *-ing* form of a dynamic verb as in *That night the older men got to talking about going possum-hunting on a moonlight night* (Gronemeyer 1999, 7–8).

sion’ where “the object coming into possession is a cognitive entity.” They also believe this meaning to be directly related to the further development into the meaning of participant-external non-deontic modality; see their example in (19).

(19) Estonian

*Sa-i-me nāh-a ja proovi-da võimsa-i-d*  
**get-PST-1PL see-INF1 and try-INF1 powerful-PL-PART**  
*sportauto-si-d.*  
 sports.car-PL-PART  
 ‘We got to see and test powerful sports cars.’

Although the combination of a verb meaning onset of possession and a perception verb is observed in more than one language, it is not always described as having ingressive/inchoative meaning. Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014, 75) states that the two Lithuanian verbs *gauti* ‘get’ and *tekti* ‘fall to (someone’s lot)’ convey chance occurrence when combined with *girdėti* ‘hear’/ *nugirsti* ‘get to hear’, *matyti* ‘see’, *patirti* ‘experience’, *skaityti* ‘read’<sup>11</sup>; see her examples in (20)–(21). The meaning of chance occurrence is also present when either *gauti* ‘get’ or *tekti* ‘fall to’ is complemented by verbs denoting states and achievements (in Vendler’s classification).

(20) Lithuanian

*Gav-au patir-ti nežinom-ų dalyk-ų.*  
**get.PST-1SG experience-INF unknown-GEN.PL things-GEN.PL**  
 ‘I got to experience unfamiliar things.’

(21) Lithuanian

[*Tai gražiausia muzika,*]  
*koki-q tek-o girdė-ti.*  
 what.kind.of-ACC.SG.F **fall.to.PST-3 hear-INF**  
 ‘[This is the most beautiful music] that I have ever happened to hear.’

According to Enfield (2003, 141) the Lao verb ‘acquire’ “mark[s] a main predicate as being a result of some (unspecified) prior event.”<sup>12</sup> (His

<sup>11</sup> The verb *skaityti* here must have a more specific meaning ‘to receive information from reading’ rather than simply ‘read’.

<sup>12</sup> The discussion of Lao here is restricted to the meaning of the preverbal *daj*, which is different from the postverbal *daj*, also analyzed by Enfield (2003).

gloss RSLT.PRR.EVNT is retained here). He claims that examples like (22), reproduced from Enfield (2003, 142), literally mean “I am moving (or: have moved) house; this is because of something else that happened before.”

- (22) Lao  
*kuu<sup>3</sup> daj<sup>0</sup>                      ñaaj<sup>4</sup> hùan<sup>2</sup>*  
 1     RSLT.PRR.EVNT   move   house  
 i. ‘I got/get to move house.’  
 ii. ‘I had/have to move house.’

Enfield (2003, 146) remarks that “aspects of the context concerning whether the subject wants or does not want to ‘V’ encourage different modal marking in the English translation.” He compares the alternative translations of sentences like (22) to “an example in which the subject is ambivalent as to whether or not to ‘V,’” here reproduced as (23). The English translation on (23) “has no special modal marking at all.”

- (23) Lao  
*khèèk<sup>5</sup> bð<sup>0</sup>   haj<sup>5</sup>        saj<sup>1</sup>    ñang<sup>3</sup>*  
 guest   NEG   let/make   put.in   whatever  
*haw<sup>2</sup> ka<sup>0</sup>        bð<sup>0</sup>   daj<sup>0</sup>                saj<sup>1</sup>*  
 1        FOC.PTC   NEG   RSLT.PRR.EVNT   put.in  
 ‘(If) guests want something not to be put in (the cooking),  
 I don’t/won’t/wouldn’t put it in.’

### 3.5. Approaches to modality

It follows from Enfield (2003, 146) that what can be viewed as modality in (22) and takes the form of modal verbs in the English translation, is the expression of the speaker’s attitude towards a situation that is viewed as real. This is actually one of the two main approaches to modality, outlined by Narrog (2005, 2012).

One approach understands “modality as the expression of the attitude of the speaker, or the expression of subjectivity and the speaker’s opinions and emotions” and the other “as the expression of realis vs. irrealis or factuality distinctions” (Narrog 2005, 168) so that “<t>he expression of a state of affairs is modalized if it is marked for being undetermined with respect to its factual status, i.e. is neither positively nor negatively

factual” (Narrog 2005, 184), (Narrog 2012, 6). Narrog himself, not unlike Enfield (2003), supports the definition of modality based on the notion of factuality. He criticizes the definition through speaker’s attitude on the grounds that it does not provide us with the means to “<...> identify a single grammatical category, or even a definite set of categories, associated with it” (Narrog 2012, 5).

Since, as van der Auwera & Plungian (1998, 80) put it, “< m > odality and its types can be defined and named in various ways”, it is only to be expected that different authors employ different approaches in their analysis of the evolution of acquisitive verbs. Nevertheless, it does not facilitate the comparison of their results. While van der Auwera & Plungian (1998), as well as van der Auwera *et al.* (2009) differentiate between modality, in the form of necessity or possibility, and actuality, other researchers may treat actuality as instances of necessity or possibility because these are perceived as such by the speaker. On the whole, unpleasant situations tend to be interpreted as necessity, and pleasant ones as possibility.

In her analysis of Lithuanian, Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014) understands modality as the expression of speaker’s attitude. This leads her to assign *gauti* and *tekti* a modal meaning in sentences that are clearly determined as factual or non-factual. The examples in (24)–(25) from Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014, 78) only differ from (20)–(21) in that they deal with unpleasant experience. Thus, the distinction between the Lithuanian sentences in (24)–(25) and (20)–(21) is analogous to the one found in the Lao examples (22) and (23). It is not surprising then that Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014, 87–91) claim that many sentences are ambiguous between the meaning of modality and chance occurrence.

- (24) [ <...> *apie vidurdienī apimdavo snaudulys,*  
**tek-dav-o**            **grieb-ti-s**            *kav-os.*  
**fall.to-PST.HAB-3** **resort-INF-REFL** *coffee-GEN.SG*  
 ‘[By midday one used to become drowsy] and had to resort to coffee.’
- (25) <...> *nuolat*    **gau-dav-au**            **aiškin-ti-s,**  
                   always    **get-PST.HAB-1SG** **explain-INF-REFL**  
 [*kodēl negeriu alkoholio.*]  
 ‘I always had to explain [why I did not drink alcohol].’

If one subjects the Lithuanian data to Narrog’s criterion of modality, it seems to turn out that *gauti* and *tekti* cannot be considered modal as far as situations, conveyed by the infinitive, are factual.<sup>13</sup> In all probability, Lithuanian, as well as Lao, is a language where the development of acquisitive verbs has not yet fully reached the stage of modality. The question remains as to whether acquisitive modal verbs are really modal in other languages. Further I will answer this question as far as it concerns Latvian.

## 4. Latvian *dabūt*

### 4.1. Previous studies

There is not much information about acquisitive modals in Latvian in the literature. Van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 285, 289) mention Latvian among the Circum-Baltic languages with acquisitive modals and characterize *dabūt* as an old Slavic loan which developed its meaning of necessity and possibility under the possible influence of either Finnic or, as suggested by Axel Holvoet (p.c.), German.<sup>14</sup> Van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 286) credit the Latvian *dabūt* with the ability to express both participant-external and participant-internal modality, but their paper does not contain examples.

Although they do not use the term “acquisitive modal”, *dabūt* is ascribed the meanings of possibility and necessity in the main Latvian dictionaries (LLVV, LVV, MLVV), with the exception of MEV which merely gives an example of *dabūt* with an infinitive under the first meaning ‘erhalten, bekommen’. All the dictionaries treat *dabūt* as a polysemous word having from four to six meanings. Onset of possession, as in (26) from LLVV and MLVV, is invariably given as the first one but the order in which the other meanings are mentioned may differ.

- (26) *dabūt-t biļet-es uz koncert-u*  
 get-INF ticket-ACC.PL to concert-ACC.SG  
 ‘to get tickets for a/the concert’

<sup>13</sup> Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014, 71–72) draws a parallel between *tekti* and implicative verbs in Karttunen (1971).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. “To judge from present-day uses, German *bekommen* ‘get’ and *kriegen* ‘get’ – as well as Dutch *krijgen* ‘get’—these languages could be credited with marginal acquisitive modality as well. At least with transitive verbs, these three verbs allow participant-external possibility readings. <...> Different from the ‘get’ uses in the other languages, however, intransitive verb complements are bad.” (van der Auwera *et al.* 2009, 289)

The second place is usually given to either of the two very broad meanings. In a generalized way these can be described as 'attain a result' and 'undergo impact'. The former involves physical or other efforts in order to displace an object or change its state or to make a person move or change their state. Examples in the dictionaries comprise miscellaneous phrases ranging from a simple combination of *dabūt* with an object in the accusative (27) to constructions containing various adverbs<sup>15</sup>, locatives, prepositional phrases and adjectives, see (28)–(32) from MLVV. It should be noted that these uses are attributed to several different meanings in MEV, which is also different from the later works in that it simply puts the rest of the uses under 'erhalten, bekommen'.

- (27) *dabūt*-*t telefon-a savienojum-u*  
 get-INF telephone-GEN.SG connection-ACC.SG  
 'to get a/the telephone connection'
- (28) *dabūt*-*t sien-u šķūn-ī*  
 get-INF hay-ACC.SG shed-LOC.SG  
 'to bring (the) hay into a/the shed'
- (29) *dabūt*-*t bērņ-u gult-ā*  
 get-INF child-ACC.SG bed-LOC.SG  
 'to make a/the child go to bed'
- (30) *dabūt*-*t vārt-us ciet*  
 get-INF gate-ACC.PL closed  
 'to get the gate closed'
- (31) *dabūt*-*t cietuš-o pie samaņ-as*  
 get-INF victim-ACC.SG.DEF to consciousness-GEN.SG  
 'to make a/the victim regain consciousness'
- (32) *dabūt*-*t rok-as tīr-as*  
 get-INF hand-ACC.PL clean-ACC.PL.F  
 'to get one's hands clean'

Another meaning that is often put second in the dictionaries is defined above as 'undergo impact' and involves examples like (33)–(36) from MLVV. In MLVV it also comprises the meaning 'fall ill', as in (37), which is given separately in LVV and interpreted as onset of possession in LLVV.

<sup>15</sup> Wälchli (2001) calls them 'verb particles', pointing out that not all verb particles are adverbs.

On the other hand, MLVV views such uses as (34) as onset of possession, together with *dabūt stipendiju* ‘to get a/the stipend’.

- (33) *ceļ-ā dabū-t liet-u*  
 road-LOC.SG get-INF rain-ACC.SG  
 ‘to get caught by a/the rain on the road’
- (34) *dabū-t sod-u*  
 get-INF punishment-ACC.SG  
 ‘to receive punishment’
- (35) *dabū-t pa pirkst-iem*  
 get-INF on finger-DAT.PL  
 ‘to get a rap on the hand’
- (36) *Pulksten-is dabūj-is triecien-u.*  
 clock-NOM.SG get-PST.PA.NOM.SG.M blow-ACC.SG  
 ‘The clock (reportedly) got hit.’
- (37) *dabū-t iesn-as*  
 get-INF cold-ACC.PL  
 ‘to catch a cold’

The meanings of necessity and possibility, found in combinations of *dabūt* with the infinitive, are given separately in LVV. LLVV lists possibility as an individual meaning but puts necessity together with various uses of ‘undergo impact’. MLVV, on the contrary, sees necessity as a separate meaning and gives possibility as its variant. Examples in (38)–(39) are from MLVV.

- (38) *dabū-t ilg-i gaidī-t vilcien-u*  
 get-INF long-ADV wait-INF train-ACC.SG  
 ‘to have to wait long for the train’
- (39) *dabū-t brītiņ-u pagulē-t*  
 get-INF moment-ACC.SG sleep-INF  
 ‘to be able/allowed to sleep for a moment’

With the exception of MEV, which does not give the construction of *dabūt* with the infinitive a separate meaning, all the dictionaries use almost the same words to convey the meanings of necessity and possibility expressed by this construction. The meaning that I here refer to as necessity, in the dictionaries is defined as *būt spiestam (ko darīt)* or *tikt piespiestam (ko darīt)* ‘be compelled (to do something)’. The meaning that I call possibility is phrased as *gūt iespēju, izdevību (ko darīt)* ‘get possibility/opportunity

(to do something)'. Also, LVV defines this meaning of *dabūt* as synonymous to *varēt* 'can, may'. In addition, LLVV and LVV provide the formulation *pagūt izdarīt* 'manage to do something in time', see the example from LLVV in (40).

- (40) *Viņ-š ne-dabūj-a nobeig-t,*  
 3-NOM.SG.M NEG-get-PST.3 finish-INF  
 [*jo mūsu meitenes sacēla tādu brēku, <...> ka Ādolfam neatlika nekas cits kā iesākto domu pavedienu pārtraukt.*]  
 'He was not able to finish [because our girls protested so loudly <...> that Adolf had no choice but to stop his line of thought].'

All the dictionaries, including MEV, give at least one example of *dabūt* in combination with a perception verb, usually *zināt* 'know', *redzēt* 'see' and *dzirdēt* 'hear', see (41) from LLVV. Both MEV and LLVV set *dabūt* *zināt* apart as a special use providing it with a separate definition 'get to know'.

- (41) *dabū-t dzirdē-t jaun-o ziņ-u*  
 get-INF hear-INF new-ACC.SG.DEF message-ACC.SG  
 'to get to hear the news'

From the formal viewpoint, *dabūt* is interesting in that, being a loanword, it is the only verb of its type that has *ū* at the end of the stem where other verbs have suffixes *-ā-*, *-ē-* and *-ī-* cf. PRS.3 *dabū*, PST.3 *dabūj-a* with the form of the verb *strādāt*: PRS.3 *strād-ā*, PST.3 *strād-āj-a*. According to Endzelīns (1951, 843), the long *ū* was actually introduced under the influence of suffixal verbs, and the original forms had *ui* which regularly corresponded to Russian *y*: *dobyt'* > *dabuit*. More diversity is found in dialects.

## 4.2. Latvian Corpus

In this paper, I present an analysis of *dabūt* as it is used in the Latvian Corpus (<http://www.korpuss.lv>), more precisely its annotated subcorpus *miljons-2.0m*.<sup>16</sup> Some examples also come from the Internet.

On the whole, the Corpus data confirms the meanings established by

<sup>16</sup> All instances of the Latvian verbs *dabūt* were extracted from the Corpus using special queries (see <http://www.korpuss.lv/uzzinas/instrukcija.html>). The classification of the results still had to be done manually with the help only of backward sorting of the right context.

the dictionaries. Still, I propose a classification of the uses of *dabūt* that is slightly different from the dictionaries.

The main meaning of *dabūt* is, undoubtedly, onset of possession (42). In this meaning I also include such uses as (43) which the dictionaries would consider an instance of ‘attain a result’, cf. (43) and (27). Not mentioned in the dictionaries, in the Corpus there are also sentences like (44)–(45) where the agent in the nominative who attains the object of possession does not coincide with the (potential) possessor in the dative. I place them together with other cases expressing onset of possession.

- (42) *Vecāk-i dabūj-a zem-i Baltezer-ā* <...>  
parent-NOM.PL **get-PST.3** land-ACC.SG Baltezers-LOC.SG  
‘(My) parents came into possession of some land in Baltezers.’
- (43) *Tagad tād-u paš-u uzbudinājum-u*  
now such-ACC.SG same-ACC.SG excitement-ACC.SG  
*prot-u dabū-t pavisam reāl-i,*  
know.PRS-1SG **get-INF** completely real-ADV  
[bez alkohola starpniecības].  
‘Now I can pretty easily achieve the same (level of) excitement [without the help of alcohol].’
- (44) *Dabū man cit-as biks-es.*  
**get.IMP.2SG** 1SG.DAT other-ACC.PL.F trousers-ACC.PL  
‘Find and give me some other trousers.’
- (45) *Viņ-am izdev-ās dabū-t*  
3-DAT.SG.M be.successful.PST-3.REFL **get-INF**  
*tād-u ton-i klūg-ām,*  
**such-ACC.SG tint-ACC.SG** wattle-DAT.PL  
[kas pieskaņots pārējām mēbelēm].  
‘He managed to change the color of the wattle in such a way [that it suited the rest of the furniture].’

The second meaning defined as ‘attain result’ in the dictionaries, is found in constructions with adverbs, locatives, prepositional phrases, and adjectives. Such examples as (27) and (43) excluded, they express activity that is performed in order to displace an inanimate or animate object or change its state, see (46)–(49). I will further refer to this meaning as ‘displacement’ and ‘change of state’. One should also bear in mind that it is not always possible to differentiate clearly the former from the latter.

- (46) *Kā pārstād-ot dabū-t sakn-es atpakaļ potiņ-ā.*  
 how replant-CNV **get-INF** root-ACC.PL **back pot-LOC.SG**  
 'How to put the roots back in the flowerpot while replanting.'
- (47) *Vecāk-i dabūj-a mani cit-ā skol-ā.*  
 parent-NOM.PL **get-PST.3** 1SG.ACC **other-LOC.SG school-LOC.SG**  
 '(My) parents moved me to another school.'
- (48) *To gandrīz nereāl-i dabū-t uz skatuv-es,*  
 DEM.ACC.SG almost unreal-ADV **get-INF on stage-GEN.SG**  
 [jo luga ir uzrakstīta kā kino].  
 'It is almost impossible to stage this play [because it is written  
 as a movie script].'
- (49) *Vien-a mēneš-a laik-ā mēs programm-u*  
 one-GEN.SG month-GEN.SG time-LOC.SG 1PL.NOM program-ACC.SG  
**dabūj-ām gatav-u.**  
**get-PST.1PL ready-ACC.SG**  
 'We prepared the program in one month's time.'

The meaning of displacement and change of state must have evolved from 'onset of possession'. An intermediate stage is seen in (50) and (51) where an object appears or is moved to a location that belongs to the agent. I count such cases as onset of possession.

- (50) [*Kāds gados jauns autogrāfu mednieks bija pamanījies*  
*uz sav-as pier-es dabū-t vairāk-us*  
**on RPO-GEN.SG.F forehead-GEN.SG get-INF several-ACC.PL.M**  
*parakst-us.*  
 signatures-ACC.PL  
 '[One young autograph hunter managed] to get several signa-  
 tures written on his forehead.'
- (51) *Mēģinā-s-im vēlreiz šeit dabū-t pasaul-es*  
 try-FUT-1PL again **here get-INF world-GEN.SG**  
*čempionāt-u.*  
 championship-ACC.SG  
 'We will try one more time to bring the World Championship to  
 this place.'

The third meaning in my classification is identical with the one given as 'undergo impact' in the dictionaries, except that, as in *MLVV*, it also includes such uses as 'fall ill (with some disease)' and 'receive admonition',

see (52)–(53). These uses are considered onset of possession in LLVV and LVV.

- (52) [*Federikai jau lic-ies,*  
*ka viņ-a dabū-s smadzeņ-u vēz-i,*  
 that 3-SG.NOM.F **get-FUT.3** brain-GEN.PL **cancer-ACC.SG**  
 [*ja paliks tur dzīvot.*]  
 ‘[Federika was imagining] that she was going to have brain cancer [if she kept living there].’
- (53) *To kāvien-u es tā arī ne-dabūj-u.*  
 DEM.ACC.SG **beating-ACC.SG** 1SG.NOM PTC PTC **NEG-get-PST.1SG**  
 ‘I didn’t get the beating after all.’

Thus, my interpretation of the meaning ‘undergo impact’ is very broad and includes cases that are intermediate and disputable. The development from onset of possession towards a more distinct meaning expressed by a different construction is seen from the comparison between (54) and (55). The word *sitiens* ‘blow’ in the position of a direct object is often omitted if a sentence mentions a body part that is hit.

- (54) *Kā sitien-u pavēder-ē dabūj-is,*  
 as **blow-ACC.SG** **abdomen-LOC.SG** **get-PST.PA.NOM.SG.M**  
 [*Žanpjeri izdvesa: „Žēlīgs Dieš”*].  
 ‘As if he had received a blow in the abdomen, [Jeanpierre exhaled, “Merciful God.”]’
- (55) *Mēs šonakt dabū-s-im kārtīg-i pa galv-u.*  
 1PL.NOM tonight **get-FUT-1PL** orderly-ADV **on head-ACC.SG**  
 ‘Tonight we are going to receive a serious scolding.’  
 (literally ‘Tonight we are going to get properly hit in the head.’)

I will call this meaning ‘unpleasant experience/damage’. Although in most cases it is found with animate experiencers, this meaning is also possible with inanimate objects, as in (36) above.

The fourth meaning of *dabūt* is found in combination with the infinitive. In this respect I agree with MLVV, where such uses are given a separate meaning and disagree with both LVV and LLVV, of which the former lists necessity and possibility as two completely independent meanings and the latter places those uses that convey necessity under ‘undergoing impact’.

The choice between necessity and possibility reading of *dabūt* with the

infinitive depends on the context, but necessity seems to be more common. Since necessity is commonly associated with unpleasant experience, the perception of *dabūt* with the infinitive as conveying necessity might have indeed been influenced by the latter meaning. Still I believe the use of *dabūt* with the infinitive to have evolved directly from the meaning 'onset of possession'. Some sentences in the Corpus give an impression of an intermediate stage between onset of possession and possibility. The possibility of a certain action, such as tasting the wine in (56) or playing a part in (57), is connected with the fact the wine or the role in question becomes a possession of the agent.

- (56) [*Pāri tiltam ir Zeķu krogs,*]  
*kur var dabūt nogaršo-t*  
 where can.PRS.3 get-INF taste-INF  
*māj-ās gatavo-t-u ābol-u vīn-u.*  
 home-LOC.PL produce-PST.PP-ACC.SG apple-GEN.PL wine-ACC.SG  
 '[On the other side of the bridge there is a pub called "Zeķu"]  
 where one can get to taste home-made apple wine.'
- (57) *Mamm-a dabūj-a spēlē-t daudz skaist-u*  
 mother-NOM.SG get.PST-3 play-INF many beautiful-GEN.PL  
*lom-u.*  
 part-GEN.PL  
 '(My) mother got to play many beautiful parts.'

On the other hand, sentences with an omitted object after such verbs as *ēst* 'eat' and *dzert* 'drink' (58) are very common. They may have paved the way for the use of intransitive verbs after *dabūt*, as in (59).

- (58) *Aleks-is saprat-a, ka padzer-tie-s*  
 Aleksis-NOM.SG understand.PST-3 that drink-INF-REFL  
*dabū-s.*  
 get-FUT.3  
 'Aleksis understood that he was going to get [something] to drink.'
- (59) *Beidzot Helēn-a dabūj-a apsēs-tie-s <... >*  
 at.last Helen-NOM.SG get-PST.3 sit.DOWN-INF-REFL  
 'Helen got to sit down at last.'

In my classification all intermediate uses of *dabūt* with the infinitive are placed together with those sentences where the meaning of either

possibility or necessity is clear. In this group I also include sentences where *dabūt* is combined with perception verbs, as in (60).

- (60) *Vis-u, ko es par dzīv-i zin-u,*  
 all-ACC.SG REL.ACC 1SG.NOM about life-ACC.SG know.PRS-1SG  
*es dabūj-u dzirdē-t pirt-ī.*  
 1SG.NOM **get-1SG.PST** **hear-INF** bathhouse-LOC.SG  
 ‘Everything I know about life I got to hear in the bathhouse.’

Further analysis of the meaning expressed by *dabūt* in combination with the infinitive is provided in Section 4.4. In Diagram 2 it is formulated as ‘result of prior event’, which is how Enfield (2003) defines the meaning of the acquisitive verb in Lao, because I believe his characterization to be the most accurate description of the situation that is also found in Latvian.<sup>17</sup>

Diagram 2 reflects the number and percentage of examples conveying each of the four meanings of *dabūt* in the Corpus. It also presents separately the number and percentage of examples with and without negation on *dabūt*. (In two instances negation is added to the auxiliary.)

Diagram 2. *The uses of dabūt in the Corpus*

	posit	posit %	neg	neg %	all	all %
all meanings	447	100,00%	45	100,00%	492	100,00%
onset of possession (Acc)	283	63,31%	29	64,44%	312	63,41%
displacement and change of state (Loc, Adv, PP)	73	16,33%	5	11,11%	78	15,85%
unpleasant experience and damage (Acc, Loc, PP)	53	11,86%	4	8,89%	57	11,59%
result of prior event (Inf)	38	8,50%	7	15,56%	45	9,15%

<sup>17</sup> Also, it is not incompatible with the meaning of chance occurrence postulated by Jasionytė-Mikučionienė (2014) for Lithuanian, which places more emphasis on changing external circumstances and less on the cause of the change.

The Diagram shows that in more than half of the data *dabūt* means onset of possession. The second popular option comprises various combinations with locatives, prepositions, adverbs, and adjectives all conveying change of place or state. The third place belongs to 'unpleasant experience/damage'. It is closely followed by infinitives, which are found in less than 10% of the data. However, the situation changes if we only look at sentences where *dabūt* is negated. Although the numbers are too small to draw serious conclusions, one cannot fail to notice that the relative frequency of *dabūt* with the infinitive is almost two times higher if *dabūt* is negated. The frequency of the negated *dabūt* in the meanings 'displacement/change of state' and 'unpleasant experience/damage', on the contrary, is lower, while the meaning 'onset of possession' does not reveal any dependence on negation.

#### 4.3. Comparison with other languages

Before presenting a more thorough analysis of the meaning of *dabūt* with the infinitive, I will try to compare its other meanings with what can be found in the other languages where verbs expressing onset of possession are also used in (pre)modal meanings. On the whole, the polysemy of *dabūt* does not come as a surprise because its equivalents in Estonian, Swedish and English are known to have many various uses. But this is not necessarily true for any language, and each of the Lithuanian verbs *gauti* 'get' and *tekti* 'fall to' have only two meanings.

Of the other meanings of the Latvian *dabūt*, 'unpleasant experience and damage' does not have direct correspondences in the other languages under comparison. The easiest explanation is that it is not easily differentiated from onset of possession even in Latvian. But the meaning of displacement and change of state, on the contrary, is found in English (61)–(62), Estonian (63) and Swedish (64). The examples below are from Gronemeyer (1999, 5–6), Tragel and Habicht (2012, 1385) and Viberg (2012, 1417).

- (61) *the board would cooperate so far as possible to get the children to where the parents wanted them to go*  
 (62) *we simply can't afford to get Ken mad at us*

(63) Estonian  
*Sa-i-me ta voodi-sse*  
 get-PST-1PL 3:GEN bed-ILL  
 ‘We got him/her to bed’

(64) Swedish  
*Maria fick benen fria.*  
 Maria got legs.the free  
 ‘Maria got her legs free.’

Other meanings of acquisitive verbs in English, Swedish and Estonian are not attested in Latvian, which can often be linked to the fact that *dabūt* cannot act as an intransitive verb. But the Latvian verb also lacks some transitive uses of acquisitive verbs in other languages. Firstly, it is not found in such constructions as in the Swedish example (65) from Viberg (2012, 1417).

(65) Swedish  
*Maria fick bilen reparerad/stulen.*  
 Maria got car.the repaired/stolen  
 ‘Maria got her car repaired/stolen.’

Secondly, *dabūt* does not normally express causation, as in English (66) from Gronemeyer (1999, 9) and Swedish (67) from Viberg (2012, 1417), although one can find peripheral examples on the Internet (68). Besides, LLVV and MLVV mention a causative meaning of the prefixed derivative *piedabūt* (69).

(66) *John got his students to work on another topic.*

(67) Swedish  
*Maria fick oss att skratta.*  
 Maria got us to laugh  
 ‘Maria made us laugh.’

(68) Latvian  
*Vakar-os ne-var-u bēr-n-us dabū-t gulē-t.*  
 evening-LOC.PL NEG-can.PRS-1SG **child-ACC.PL** get-INF sleep-INF  
 ‘In the evening I can’t get children to sleep.’  
<https://twitter.com/dziedava/status/573578573505765377>  
 (09.09.2015)

(69) Latvian

*Fotografē-tie-s*      *viņ-a*      *nav*  
**take.photo-INF-REFL** 3-SG.NOM.F    be.NEG.PRS.3  
*pie-dabūj-am-a.*  
**PFX-get-PRS.PP-NOM.SG.F**  
 'One cannot get her to have her photo taken.'

Some of the intransitive uses in English and Estonian are parallel to the transitive ones, including displacement and change of state. Cf. examples (70)–(71) from Gronemeyer (1999, 5–6) and (72)–(73) from Trigel & Habicht (2012, 1385, 1384) with (61)–(62) and (63) above.

(70) *And Paul Lipson, as Morris, the faithful one who never gets home to his Shirley's dinner, was one, too.*

(71) *If you're a good ballplayer, you've got to get mad.*

(72) Estonian

*Ta*    *sa-i*                    *laeva-le*    *viimase-na*  
 s/he    **get-PST.3SG**    **ship-ALL**    last-ESS  
 'S/he was the last one to get on board the ship.'

(73) Estonian

*Laps*    *saa-b*    *terve-ks.*  
 child    **get-3SG**    **well-TRAN**  
 'The child is getting/will get well'

Other intransitive uses can be viewed as evolved from the meaning 'change of state'. In both English and Estonian the corresponding acquisitive verbs function as a passive auxiliary, as in examples (74) and (75) from (Gronemeyer 1999, 6) and (Trigel & Habicht 2012, 1397). In Estonian the verb in question also conveys the meaning of future, as in (76) from (Trigel & Habicht 2012, 1391).

(74) *You're gonna get caught.*

(75) Estonian

*Hea näide*      *saa-b*    *lei-tud.*  
 good example    **get-3SG**    **find-PST.PP**  
 'A good example will be found.'

(76) Estonian

*Molekulaarbioloogia-l*    *saa-b*    *ole-ma*    *suur*    *tulevik.*  
 molecular.biology-ADE    **get-3SG**    **be-INF2**    great    future  
 'Molecular biology will have a great future.'

In Latvian all these uses with the exception of future are found with the verb *tikt*. Its main function is to serve as a passive auxiliary (77) but it also acts as an intransitive equivalent of *dabūt* meaning onset of possession as well as displacement and change of state.<sup>18</sup> Cf. examples with the both Latvian verbs in (78)–(80). (Examples with *tikt* that are not from the Internet, come from the Corpus.)

- (77) *Tur mašin-as tik-a pārdo-t-as*  
 there car-NOM.PL arrive.PST-3 sell-PST.PP-NOM.PL.F  
 [ar uzviju par 600 latiem.]  
 ‘Cars were sold there [at a profit of 600 lats].’
- (78) a. *Vis-i dabūj-a balv-as <...>.*  
 all-NOM.PL.M get-PST.3 prize-ACC.PL  
 ‘Everybody got a prize.’  
<http://hofzumberg.jimdo.com/jaunumi-news/2010/09.09.2015/>
- b. *Dalībnieku nebija daudz,*  
*un balv-as tik-a vis-iem.*  
 and prize-NOM.PL fall.to.PST-3 all-DAT.PL.M  
 ‘There were not many participants, and a prize went to each of them.’
- (79) a. *Draug-i dabūj-a viņ-u virs ūden-s.*  
 friend-NOM.PL get-PST.3 3-ACC.SG above water.GEN.SG  
 ‘[His] friends got him/her out of the water.’
- b. *<...> tik-u virs ūden-s.*  
 arrive.PST-1SG above water.GEN.SG  
 ‘I got out of the water.’  
<http://staburags.diena.lv/novadu-zinas/uzvara-par-drossir-dibu-9588> (09.09.2015)
- (80) a. *<...> bez liek-iem zaudējum-iem*  
 without extra-DAT.PL.M loss-DAT.PL  
*dabūj-u durv-is vaļā.*  
 get-PST.1SG door-ACC.PL free  
 ‘I opened the door without extra losses.’  
<http://klab.lv/users/elmucis/2007/03/07/> (09.09.2015)

<sup>18</sup> Very rarely, *tikt* is also used as an auxiliary in the perfect, see Grigorjevs & Nītiņa (2013, 480).

- b. *Es beidzot tik-u valā no skol-as.*  
 1SG.NOM at.last arrive.PST-1SG free from school-GEN.SG  
 'At last I got free from the school.'  
<http://blogi.oho.lv/?kid=194898> (17.09.2015)

Still, the main meaning of *tikt* (apart from being a passive auxiliary) is that of displacement, as in (81). It is of interest for this study that this is sometimes found in combinations with the infinitive where it evolves into the meaning of actualized possibility, cf. (82) and (83). Such constructions are comparable to the use of the infinitive with *dabūt* and, not unlike *dabūt*, may contain verbs of perception (84).

- (81) *Duš-ā toreiz tik-ām reiz-i*  
 shower-LOC.SG that.time arrive.PST-1PL time-ACC.SG  
*nedēļ-ā.*  
 week-LOC.SG  
 'We only got to the shower one time a week those days.'
- (82) *Pēdēj-ā mēnes-ī tik-u strādā-t*  
 last-LOC.SG month-LOC.SG arrive.PST-1SG work-INF  
*virtuv-ē,*  
 kitchen-LOC.SG  
 [*kur gatavojām visādus spāņu ēdienus.*]  
 'Last month I got to work in the kitchen [where we cooked various types of Spanish food].'  
<http://www.aprinkis.lv/sabiedriba/izglitiba/item/10152-malpili-arodu-ieguvusie-audzekni-ir-konkuretspejigi-darbatirgu-vajag-tikai-pacietibu-un-gribesanu> (10.09.2015)
- (83) [*Es biju laimīgākais cilvēks pasaulē,*]  
*kad tik-u strādā-t.*  
 when arrive.PST-1SG work-INF  
 'I was the happiest person in the world] when I got to work.'  
[http://www.tvnet.lv/sievietem/attiecibas/67047-nav\\_bernu\\_nav\\_problemu/comments/page/4](http://www.tvnet.lv/sievietem/attiecibas/67047-nav_bernu_nav_problemu/comments/page/4) (10.09.2015)
- (84) *Bet, kad beidzot tik-u redzē-t,*  
 but when at.last arrive.PST-1SG see-INF  
 [*diezgan pamatīgi vilos.*]  
 'But when I at last got to see (the film), [I was thoroughly disappointed].'

<http://www.manskino.lv/alice-in-wonderland-2010>  
(10.09.2015)

Since the main meaning of *tikt* is displacement rather than onset of possession, one cannot see it as one of the cases in which an acquisitive verb acquires a meaning of (actualized) possibility. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the two Latvian verbs *dabūt* and *tikt* are slightly reminiscent of the Lithuanian pair *gauti* ‘get’ and *tekėti* ‘fall to’, *tekėti* being etymologically related to *tikt* (Karulis 2001, 1037). Cf. the already mentioned Latvian examples in (85) with the Lithuanian sentences from Usonienė & Jasionytė (2010, 204) in (86).

- (85) a. *Vis-i dabūj-a balv-as <...>.*  
all-NOM.PL.M **get-3PST** prize-ACC.PL  
‘Everybody got a prize.’  
<http://hofzumberg.jimdo.com/jaunumi-news/2010/>  
(09.09.2015)
- b. [*Dalībnieku nebija daudz,*]  
*un balv-as tik-a vis-iem.*  
and prize-NOM.PL **fall.to.PST-3** all-DAT.PL.M  
‘[There were not many participants,] and a prize went to each of them.’
- (86) a. *Gav-au knyg-q.*  
get.PST-1SG book-ACC.SG  
‘I got a/the book.’
- b. *Man tek-o knyg-a.*  
1SG.DAT fall.to.PST-3 book-NOM.SG  
‘A/the book was given to me.’

The important difference between the Lithuanian *tekėti* and the Latvian *tikt* is that the former is also impersonal in combination with the infinitive, see (87) from Usonienė & Jasionytė (2010, 207).

- (87) *Man tek-o dirb-ti.*  
1SG.DAT fall.to.PST-3 work-INF  
‘I had to work.’

## 4.4. 'Result of prior event'

I assume the meaning of the Latvian *tikt* in combination with the infinitive to be basically the same as the one of the verb *dabūt* in a similar construction, which I already defined, using Enfield's term for Lao, as 'result of prior event'. If the ensuing situation is evaluated by the speaker as undesirable, they tend to perceive it as necessity, and if the change is welcome, then it is regarded as possibility. Thus, the interpretation of (88) as necessity and (89) as possibility is solely based on the assumption that it is bad to wait long while it is good to sit down after spending a long time on one's feet.

(88) *Ilg-i dabūj-ām gaidī-t.*

long-ADV get-PST.1PL wait-INF

'We had to wait for a long time.'

(89) *Beidzot Helēn-a dabūj-a apsēs-tie-s.*

at.last Helen-NOM.SG get-PST.3 sit.down-INF-REFL

'Helen got to sit down at last.'

Nevertheless, *tikt* differs from *dabūt* in two aspects. Firstly, the shift in the meanings of the two verbs is associated with two different metaphors. The new situation resulting from an unspecified prior event is imagined as an object of possession with *dabūt*, and as a location with *tikt*. Secondly, for some reason that is unclear to me, *tikt* does not express necessity. In other words, it is only used for situations that are perceived as advantageous for the participant. The construction with *dabūt*, on the contrary, is interpreted as conveying necessity outside of context. Further I will solely concentrate on the uses of *dabūt*.

When negated, *dabūt* usually means that the expected change for the good did not happen (90), which is in accord with the view that changes for the good are common and it is their absence that is marked. But it is nevertheless possible to find examples on the Internet where the negation of *dabūt* is used to show that the situation did not change for the bad even though the change was expected, as in (91).

(90) [*Dažs pat ir nomiris,*]

*tā arī ne-dabūj-is ne dien-u padzīvo-t*

so also NEG-get-PST.PA.NOM.SG.M NEG day-ACC.SG live-INF

*gatav-ā māj-ā.*  
 ready-LOC.SG house-LOC.SG  
 ‘[Some people died] before they were able to live in a finished house.’

- (91) *Uz Sibirij-u nevien-s no ģimen-es*  
 to Siberia-ACC.SG no.one-NOM.SG from family-GEN.SG  
***brauk-t ne-dabūj-a.***  
 GO-INF NEG-get-PST.3  
 ‘No one from the family had to go to Siberia.’  
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/rigaslaiks/conversations/topics/17455>

When *dabūt* is followed by verbs of perception, the situation is interpreted as neutral, and *dabūt* in such cases can only be ascribed inchoative meaning (92). That is, the participant receives information and this is made possible due to some changes in the situation, and receiving information is neither good nor bad, even though the information itself may be unpleasant.

- (92) *Tikai vēlāk viņ-i dabūj-a zinā-t,*  
 only later 3-PL.NOM.M get-PST.3 know-INF  
 [ka ar to saistās šausmīgs notāsts.]  
 ‘Only later did they get to know [that it is associated with a terrible event].’

Possibility and necessity that are brought about by a change in the circumstances must be qualified as participant-external. Although van der Auwera *et al.* (2009, 286) mention Latvian among the languages where acquisitive verbs can also express participant-internal modality, it is difficult to find an unambiguous example in the Corpus. In (93), the participant may be able to catch hold of the raft due to their strength or skill but it is equally possible that they simply get carried by the stream in the right direction.

- (93) [*Ņēmos pa viļņiem,*]  
*kamēr dabūj-u pieķer-tie-s vien-am*  
 until get-PST.1SG catch.hold-INF-REFL ONE-DAT.SG.M  
*plost-am.*  
 raft-DAT.SG

'[I struggled in the waves] until I managed to catch hold of some raft.'

In van der Auwera & Plungian's (1998) classification participant-external modality incorporates deontic meanings of obligation and permission. In Latvian the deontic use of *dabūt* is restricted. While it is easy to imagine the external circumstances in (88)–(89) as intentionally produced by other persons, for examples, someone bringing in chairs in (89), *dabūt* is absent from direct expressions of other person's will. This is a very striking difference between the Latvian *dabūt* and the Swedish acquisitive modal verb *få*, because the latter is normally used in order to convey obligation or permission according to Vibergs (2012, 1427).<sup>19</sup>

I explain the inability of the Latvian *dabūt* to be used in sentences expressing obligation or permission by the fact that *dabūt* is an implicative verb, see Karttunen (1971). In order to see the difference between implicative and other verbs, compare two sentences in (94)–(95) that are viewed as synonymous by native speakers of Latvian.

- (94) *Es dabūj-u ēs-t maiz-i.*  
 1SG.NOM **get-PST.1SG eat-INF** bread-ACC.SG  
 'I had to eat bread.'
- (95) *Man bij-a jā-ēd maiz-e.*  
 1SG.DAT **be.PST-3 DEB-eat** bread-NOM.SG  
 'I had to eat (the) bread.'

The crucial difference between them is that (94), containing the implicative verb *dabūt*, is only true if (96) is also true.

- (96) *Es ēd-u maiz-i.*  
 1SG.NOM eat.PST-1SG bread-ACC.SG  
 'I ate (the) bread.'

Even though the debitive is normally interpreted as factive, it can also be used as counterfactive (Holvoet 2007, 167), so that it is possible to say as in (97). The same sentence with *dabūt* instead of the debitive would be ungrammatical.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Viberg (2012, 1427) "<...> if a parent happens to tell the children to keep quiet using the phrase *Nu fār ni hālla tyst!* 'Now you must(/may) keep quiet', the children are likely to answer *Fār vi?* 'May we?' (with stress on *fā* 'may' and mockingly surprised intonation). Intuitively, permission appears to be the default interpretation, even if the children are well aware of the intended meaning in the preceding example."

- (97) *Man bij-a jā-ēd maiz-e,*  
 1SG.DAT **be.PST-3 DEB-eat** bread-NOM.SG  
*bet es ne-ēd-u.*  
 but 1SG.NOM NEG-eat.PST-1SG  
 ‘I should have eaten (the) bread but I didn’t.’

The other Latvian verb, *tīkt*, which often corresponds to intransitive uses of acquisitive verbs in other languages and sometimes can also be found in construction with the infinitive, shows similarity to *dabūt* in this respect. The sentence in (98) is only true if (99) is also true.

- (98) *Es tik-u strādā-t.*  
 1SG.NOM **arrive.PST-1SG work-INF**  
 ‘I got to work.’  
 (99) *Es strādāj-u.*  
 1SG.NOM work-PST.1SG  
 ‘I worked.’

## 5. Conclusion

The Latvian verb *dabūt* may be seen as a possible candidate for becoming a personal necessitive verb that Latvian at the moment lacks. Nevertheless, it may also express actualized possibility depending on the context, and usually conveys lack of possibility when negated. At present, *dabūt* is an implicative, rather than modal, verb meaning result of some unspecified prior event. It is interpreted as necessity if the resulting situation is disadvantageous for the participant and as possibility if it is favourable. This meaning can be viewed as the one of participant-external actuality in van der Auwera and Plungian’s terms. Being non-modal, the Latvian verb *dabūt* is thus different from acquisitive verbs in other European languages but similar to the Lithuanian acquisitive pair *gauti* ‘get’ and *tekti* ‘fall to’ and even more similar to the Lao verb *daj<sup>o</sup>* ‘acquire’.

The verb *dabūt* has developed the meaning ‘result of prior event’ from the meaning ‘onset of possession’, alongside other meanings including ‘displacement/change of state’ and ‘unpleasant experience/damage’. (The latter meaning is often difficult to differentiate from ‘onset of possession’.) Consequently, the Latvian verb has more meanings than either one of the two Lithuanian acquisitive verbs *gauti* ‘get’ and *tekti* ‘fall to’ which

only conveys onset of possession and the modal-like meaning in combination with the infinitive. But *dabūt* still lacks some of the meanings expressed by acquisitive verbs in Estonian, Swedish and English. These are the causative meaning and intransitive uses parallel to the transitive uses of *dabūt*. Intransitive uses also develop into a passive auxiliary. It is a curious fact that in Latvian these intransitive uses, including the function of a passive auxiliary, are covered by the verb *tikt* 'arrive'. The latter is etymologically identical to the Lithuanian acquisitive verb *tekti* 'fall to'. Also, it is occasionally found with the infinitive expressing actualized possibility.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABL — ablative, ACC — accusative, ADE — adessive, ADJ — adjective, ADV — adverb, ALL — allative, AUX — auxiliary, CNV — converb, COMM — common gender, DAT — dative, DEB — debitive, DEF — definite, DEM — demonstrative, ELA — elative, ESS — essive, F — feminine, FOC — focus, FUT — future, GEN — genitive, HAB — habitual, ILL — illative, IMP — imperative, INF — infinitive, INF1 — infinitive 1 (in Estonian), LOC — locative, M — masculine, NEG — negation, NOM — nominative, PA — active participle, PART — partitive, PFX — prefix, PL — plural, PP — passive participle, PREP — preposition, PRS — present, PST — past, PTC — particle, REFL — reflexive, REL — relative pronoun, RPO — reflexive possessive, SG — singular, TRAN — translative

## DICTIONARIES

LLVV = *Latviešu literārās valodas vārdnīca*, 1–8, by Rūdolfs Grabis, ed., Rīga: Zinātne, 1972–1996. <http://www.tezaurs.lv/llvv/>

LVV = *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca*. Izmantoti Latviešu valodas vārdnīcas (Rīga: Avots, 1987) materiāli. Izstrādāja LU Mākslīgā intelekta laboratorija. <http://www.tezaurs.lv/lvv/>

- MEV = *Kārļa Mūlenbacha Latviešu valodas vārdnīca, rediģējis, papildinājis, turpinājis* (/nobeidzis – 4) Jānis Endzelīns, 1–4, Rīga, 1923–1932. <http://www.tezaurs.lv/mev/>
- MLVV = *Mūsdienu latviešu valodas vārdnīca*, by Ieva Zuicena, ed., Latviešu valodas institūts, 2003–2009. <http://www.tezaurs.lv/mlvv/>

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