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Predicative Infinitive  
Constructions

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# Pragmatic Aspects of Latvian Predicative Infinitive Constructions

Pragmatiniai predikatinų  
bendratis konstrukcijų aspektai  
latvių kalboje

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine Latvian predicative infinitive constructions in a pragmatic aspect, showing that they constitute a special type of pragmatic marking. Unlike such pragmatic markers as particles, conjunctions, adverbs or prosody, predicative infinitive constructions in Latvian are pragmatically functioning as a single unit, i.e., their constructional functionality follows from this unity rather than from separate lexical or grammatical elements. Insofar as they represent a marginal modally marked construction type in Latvian, their use is related to non-neutral, marked registers of the language. Therefore, the article focuses on modal and temporal meanings, as well as polarity of predicative infinitive constructions. As their modal and temporal meanings are closely related to communicative types of utterances, the use of these constructions is restricted to specific text types – warnings, categorical requests and prohibitions, advertisements, headlines in mass media, etc.

**KEYWORDS:** infinitive, predicative construction, dative, tense, copula, modality, polarity.

## Introduction

Predicative infinitive constructions in Latvian belong to pragmatic marker types. The use of such constructions is never neutral and always implies various, mainly deontic, meanings the author wishes to express. Unlike such pragmatic markers as particles, conjunctions, adverbs or prosodic features, predicative infinitive constructions in Latvian pragmatically function as a single unit, i.e. their constructional functionality follows from this unity rather than from separate lexical or grammatical elements. According to Fraser (1996) we distinguish between optional (1) basic pragmatic markers which use the sentence proposition as its message content, and (2) commentary pragmatic markers which provide a comment on the basic message. Besides, as Fraser points out (1996, p. 5), the phrase structure, i.e., the syntactic structure, needs to be considered as pragmatic marker: “The first and most general of the basic [pragmatic – AK and IL] markers is the syntactic structure of the sentence itself, its mood.”

This conclusion about the use of predicative infinitive constructions is supported by Latvian examples.



There is no doubt that pragmatic markers could be conceived more broadly or more narrowly and, as Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg (2009) claim, at times be rather unclear, because this term in fact denotes both separate discrete language units (particles, conjunctions, etc.) and contextual or prosodical phenomena. Aijmer (2013, pp. 3, 6) notes: “However, there is little agreement on basic issues such as the definition of pragmatic markers, terminology, and how many meanings they can have.” And, “(...) it is difficult to establish a clear link between form and what pragmatic markers are doing in communication.” In contrast, Furko (2017, p. 1) defines pragmatic markers as follows: “Pragmatic markers comprise a functional class of linguistic items that do not typically change the propositional meaning of an utterance but are essential for the organization and structuring of discourse, for marking the speaker’s attitudes to the proposition being expressed as well as for facilitating processes of pragmatic inferences.”

The topic of the Latvian grammar discussed below – predicative infinitive constructions – needs to be examined in the context of a broader understanding of pragmatic markers that corresponds to the approach taken in this study. The objective of this study is to provide an empirical overview of modal and temporal meanings of predicative infinitive constructions, examine their relation to communicative types of utterances and their use in different genres and registers.

In Latvian syntax, infinitive predicative constructions are of particular interest in more than one respect. First, it has to do with the problem of syntactic model delimitation and with the functions of copular verbs and modal auxiliaries in some of them (Kalnača, 2016; Lokmane, 2016). The main question is whether predicative infinitive constructions represent one sentence type or several different ones, and, if so – how many. The auxiliary questions would enable us to find the answer to the main question, i.e., whether the present tense forms show an omission of the verb *būt* ‘to be’ or of some modal verb; whether the naming of agent in the dative can be considered as a syntactic subject and in which cases it can be omitted, which sentences can only have an animate, and which ones can also have an inanimate subject. These issues will be briefly discussed in Section “The structure and semantics of Latvian infinitive predicative constructions”.

Second, the emergence and the types of modal (mainly deontic) meanings are worth examining, because *irrealis* modal meanings compositionally do not follow from any of the grammatical forms or lexical items involved but result from the construction itself. This leads one to believe that predicative infinitive constructions in this case constitute a special pragmatic marker. Such an approach to predicative infinitive constructions is the novelty of this study.

Third, predicative infinitive constructions show a close interplay of several semantic, pragmatic and lexical factors: the existence and the tense form of the copula, the polarity of the predicate, the speech act type or the communicative type of the utterance, specific lexical units occurring in the initial position of the utterance – mostly pronouns, often in combination with particles. The combination of these features has an impact on the modal meanings, as well as on the functions of the utterances.

An issue that traditionally has received a lot of attention in Latvian syntax is the syntactic functions of the dative in sentences where it designates agent or experiencer (among others, Freimane, 2013; Lokmane, 2013; Kalnača, 2014). The peculiarities of the dative are beyond the scope of the article and would require a separate study. We will limit ourselves to mentioning that we believe that the dative in the predicative infinitive constructions denotes the grammatical subject. Richardson (2007, p. 39), who focuses on similar examples of dative use in the Slavonic languages, labels these *dative ‘subject’ experiencer constructions*, which can be fully referred to Latvian as well (see e.g., Seržant, 2013a, b; Holvoet, 2013; Holvoet et al., 2015). Blake (1997, pp. 144–151) points out that the dative can have the function of the indirect subject next to the functions of the direct object and the indicator of possession (see also Árnadóttir & Sigurdsson, 2013, on Icelandic, and Kroeger, 2004, pp. 269–276, on

dative subjects). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term *dative subject* is used.

The modal meanings of the predicative infinitive constructions examined in this article mainly express various aspects of deontic modality. In our study, we refer to Palmer's (2001, p. 9) definition: "Deontic modality relates to obligation or permission, emanating from an external source."

There are certainly a lot of discussions in linguistic circles about how to classify such modal meanings as need, necessity, possibility, probability, and how they relate to the imperative (for a more detailed discussion on the interaction of various modal meanings with the imperative, see, for instance, Palmer, 2001; Portner, 2007, 2009; Nuyts, 2016). Because of the limited scope of this study, we will not discuss this issue any further, but limit ourselves to stating that, in our view, predicative infinitive constructions express modal meanings in all cases, also when they are used to express various instructions, prohibitions, etc. (see further in Section "Interaction of tense, modality, communicative type and polarity").

The language material we looked at is excerpted from various sources. Most examples are taken from the Balanced Corpus of Modern Latvian 2018 (*Līdzsvarotais mūsdienu latviešu valodas tekstu korpuss 2018<sup>1</sup>*), and the examples are marked "LVK2018". Since the corpus is not syntactically tagged, we were unable to find examples of all the necessary Latvian infinitive predicative constructions and needed to involve other sources such as fiction, media and applied texts, along with *Latvian Web 2014 (lvTenTen14)* corpus<sup>2</sup>. The study does not attempt a statistical analysis of the language units concerned, as this was not its objective.

## The Structure and Semantics of Latvian Infinitive Predicative Constructions

In Latvian, infinitive predicative constructions represent a minor syntactic type, and, depending on their sub-type, are restricted either to expressive colloquial speech, or elevated mass media and literary texts, as well as legal texts, where they are used for pragmatic purposes (Nītiņa & Grigorjevs, 2013, pp. 714, 718; Kalnača, 2016; Lokmane, 2016). All these constructions express deontic modal meaning.

- (1) Kā skaistumkopšanas piedāvājumu  
 how beauty\_treatment.GEN.SG offer.GEN.PL  
 daudzumā mums **neapjukt?**  
 amount.LOC.SG we.DAT **not\_confused.INF**  
 'How to not get overwhelmed by the sheer number of beauty treatments on offer?'  
 (Ievas Stāsti)

These constructions contain the name of the agent (if any) in the dative, while the predicate is expressed either by a grammatically independent infinitive (example 2a) or by an infinitive together with the copula *būt* 'to be' in the past (example 2b) or future tense (example 2c) (among others, Mathiassen, 1997, pp. 145, 205; Nītiņa & Grigorjevs, 2013, p. 718).

- (2) a Ko man **darīt?**  
 what.ACC I.DAT **do.INF**  
 'What [am] I to do?'  
 b Ko man **bija darīt?**  
 what.ACC I.DAT **be.COP.PST.3 do.INF**  
 'What was I to do?'  
 c Ko man **būs darīt?**  
 what.ACC I.DAT **be.COP.FUT.3 do.INF**  
 'What shall I do?'

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.korpuss.lv/id/LVK2018>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at [https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2FVltenten14\\_2search](https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2FVltenten14_2search).

The verb *būt* 'to be' is not used in the copular function in the present tense in this construction; thus, the following sentence with an overt copula is impossible in Modern Latvian (the instances of use that are ungrammatical in Latvian will be marked with an asterix \*):

- (3) \*Ko man **ir** darīt?  
 'What am I to do?'

However, Endzelīns (1951, p. 994) points to the construction *ir + infinitive*, noting that it is not usual in Latvian, and only gives one example for it: "The present tense of *ir* 'is' (or *nav* 'isn't') with the infinitive is not normally to be used; only in set expressions like *ka tik mums ir ēst* 'so that we just have enough to eat' instead of which sometimes is *said* the following: *man bija kuo ēst* 'I had enough to eat.'" This example by Endzelīns shows that this construction *ir + infinitive* has a different meaning – that of establishing a fact or expressing possession without any modality. This function need not be taken to be related to the various modal (or deontic) meanings of Latvian infinitive predicative constructions. Moreover, in present day Latvian, no more examples of such a construction *ir + infinitive* are found. Even if they were

	Example	Tense
(4)	a *Tev no tā <b>mācīties.</b> you.DAT.SG from it.GEN.SG <b>learn.INF</b> 'You are to learn from it.'	PRS
	b Tev <b>bija</b> no tā <b>mācīties.</b> you.DAT.SG <b>be.COP.PST.3</b> from it.GEN.SG <b>learn.INF</b> 'You were to learn from it.'	PST
	c Tev <b>būs</b> no tā <b>mācīties.</b> you.DAT.SG <b>be.COP.FUT.3</b> from it.GEN.SG <b>learn.INF</b> 'Thou shalt/ You shall learn from it.'	FUT
(5)	a Kur nu tev to <b>saprast!</b> where PTCL you.DAT.SG that.ACC.SG <b>understand.INF</b> 'As if you could understand!'	PRS
	b *Kur nu tev to where PTCL you.DAT.SG that.ACC.SG <b>bija</b> <b>saprast!</b> <b>be.COP.PST.3</b> <b>understand.INF</b> 'As if you could understand!'	PST
	c *Kur nu tev to where PTCL you.DAT.SG that.ACC.SG <b>būs</b> <b>saprast!</b> <b>be.COP.FUT.3</b> <b>understand.INF</b> 'You will not understand!'	FUT
(6)	a *Tev <b>nesalt!</b> you.DAT <b>not_cold.INF</b> 'You are not to feel cold!'	PRS
	b *Tev <b>nebija</b> <b>salt!</b> you.DAT <b>not_be.COP.PST.3</b> <b>cold.INF</b> 'You were not to feel cold!'	PST
	c Tev <b>nebūs</b> <b>salt!</b> you.DAT.SG <b>not_be.COP.FUT.3</b> <b>cold.INF</b> 'You shall not feel cold!'	FUT

**Table 1**  
 Grammatical and ungrammatical Latvian infinitive predicative constructions in different tense forms



Besides semantics, other crucial differences are the dative subject and the impossibility to use copular *būt* 'to be' in the present tense in Latvian.

Thus, infinitive predicative constructions without the verb *būt* 'to be' are puzzling, namely, it is not entirely clear how to interpret the independent infinitive which functions as a predicate:

- 1 as an instance of ellipsis (see Kroeger, 2004; Trask, 2008, Aelbrecht, 2015);
- 2 as an instance of syntactic zero (see Mel'chuk, 1995);
- 3 as a special predicate, i.e., a simple verbal predicate (see Freimane, 1985; Beloshapkova, 1999; Nītiņa & Grigorjevs, 2013).

It is important to clarify the meaning of the terms 'ellipsis' and 'zero' that are used here. *Ellipsis* is "the omission of elements that are inferable from the context, and therefore crucially constitutes a mismatch between form and meaning: there is no form, but the meaning is understood nevertheless" (Aelbrecht, 2015, p. 563, see also Kroeger, 2004, p. 35). *Zero*, on the other hand, is defined as "an abstract unit postulated by an analysis, but which has no physical realization in the stream of speech" (Crystal, 2008, p. 528). In our opinion, the essential difference is that a zero element only acquires its meaning in opposition to other, physically realised members of the opposition (as stressed in, e.g., Mel'chuk, 1995).

Thus, ellipsis is a contextual (syntagmatic) phenomenon, while zero forms are mainly paradigmatic. We will not, however, go into further detail regarding ellipsis and zero form differentiation in this article. Our focus is on whether it is at all possible to claim that there is an empty syntactic position in the construction under consideration. Likewise, it will be of no consequence to us whether the empty element *būt* 'to be' (if there is one) is best viewed as a copula or an auxiliary; we will treat it as a copula.

If seen as elliptical or involving a syntactic zero, infinitive predicative constructions without the verb *būt* 'to be' can represent two different constructions:

- 1 a verbal copular predicate with the ellipsis or zero form of the verb *būt* 'to be';
- 2 a complex verbal predicate with the ellipsis of a modal verb, e.g., *vajadzēt* 'should'.

In the first case, the infinitive predicative construction can be considered to involve a paradigmatic gap of the copula *būt* 'to be', that is, taking into account its past and future forms (see Baerman et al., 2010, on defective paradigms). Actually, this issue has been in discussion since as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century not only in Latvian linguistics (e.g., Mīlenbahs, 1898; Endzelīns, 1951; Ozols, 1961), but also in synchronic and especially diachronic linguistics in general; namely, which type of sentence is older: copulaless (i.e., a special type of predicate) or copular (i.e., a zero copula) (e.g., Mīlenbahs, 1898; Ambrazas, 2006; Ivulāne, 2015). First, one wonders if copula omissions can be diagnosed with the help of the semantic criterion, namely, looking at whether a sentence contains a meaning that can only be imparted to it by these verbs. However, the meaning of the copula is so general that it is completely neutral and, therefore, does not bring any semantic variation to the sentence. Furthermore, because of their deontic, i.e., unreal modality, copulaless sentences have no real present; they do not express actions or states known to happen as the speaker is talking. Therefore, the (implicit) presence or absence of the copula cannot be demonstrated in this way. In our view, in copulaless sentences, one cannot speak of the zero form of the copula, and sentences with and without the copula *būt* 'to be' represent different syntactic patterns in Latvian (Kalnača & Lokmane, 2017).

In the second case, i.e., presuming the ellipsis of a modal verb, there would be a lexical gap altogether unrelated to copular constructions. This idea is represented in Lithuanian linguistics (for details see Paulauskienė, 1994; Ambrazas, 1996). We will not, however, expand on this idea in our article, firstly, because Latvian language data do not show evidence of modal

## Interaction of Tense, Modality, Communicative Type and Polarity

verb ellipsis (Kalnača, 2016). Secondly, we take the view that the modal meanings found in infinitive predicative constructions follow from the constructions themselves rather than from the modal meaning of the verb *būt* 'to be' or from the meaning of an elided modal verb (Lokmane, 2016). This view is supported by the fact that the realisation of modal meanings is affected by the communicative type (interrogative, imperative, declarative, exclamative) and by the polarity of an utterance. These, in turn, are sensitive to tenses. That is why not all sentences will have all the tense forms. These features will be examined in the next section.

As mentioned in the introductory part, in Latvian, none of the predicative infinitive construction types appear in semantically neutral declarative sentences. These appear either in interrogative or exclamative sentences that either carry various modal meanings or belong to a specific area of use (among other things, they express prohibitions, instructions, admonitions, etc.). Predicative infinitive constructions in sentences usually have an animate subject, except for the future imperative phrases that could also have an inanimate referent. An animate subject can also be generalised and formally covert but it is semantically implied, understood as present.

We will now look at how the basic modal meanings, such as necessity and possibility, interact with the meanings expressed by different communicative types of sentences (or types of speech acts, e.g., Yule, 2000, pp. 53–54), i.e., declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative sentences. All types of predicative infinitive are found in both declarations and negations but, as we shall see further in this section, polarity and modality semantics is not symmetric. In Latvian, though, it is conspicuous that the link between negation and modality is based on necessity and possibility, i.e., on the fact that negation can involve possibility and necessity (see e.g., Palmer, 2001, p. 106). The next section deals with present copulaless sentences.

### Present Copulaless Sentences

These sentences are represented by positive and negative interrogatives and imperatives with an animate dative agent in the subject position, negative declarative and positive exclamative sentences. Some sentence types involve a generalised agent, in which case there is no dative subject. We have not found any examples of copulaless sentences with an inanimate agent. Positive declarative sentences with an infinitive predicate are not possible either.

### Positive Interrogative Sentences

Depending on their lexical contents and the question word used, positive copulaless interrogative sentences can express either necessity (example 13) or possibility (examples 14a–b):

- (13) Ko                    jautā                    un  
 what.ACC            ask.PRS.3            and  
 ko                    man            **atbildēt**            darba            intervijā?  
 what.ACC            I.DAT            answer.INF            job.GEN.SG            interview.LOC.SG  
 'What do they ask and what to answer at a job interview?' (www.apollo.lv)

- (14) a Kā            vislabāk            **uzglabāt**            ķiplokus?  
 how    best            store. INF            garlic.ACC.PL  
 'How to best store garlic?' (www.delfi.lv)

- b Kā            **tikt**                    galā                    ar            stresu?  
 how            get. INF            end.Loc.SG            with            stressACC.SG  
 'How to deal with stress?' (www.apollo.lv)

Rhetorical questions beginning with a lexicalised construction *kas tur ko* meaning 'what's the point to' (example 15a) or *kam* 'what for' (example 15b) express lack of necessity:



(15) a Kas tur ko laipot?  
 what.NOM there what.ACC manoeuver.INF  
 'Why manoeuver there?' (LVK2018)

b Kam mocīties par minimālo algu,  
 what.DAT suffer.INF PREP minimum.ACC.SG wage.ACC.SG  
 ja ir pabalsti?  
 if be.PRS.3 benefit.NOM.PL  
 'Why suffer and earn a minimum wage when there are benefits?' (Kas Jauns)

Sentences beginning with question words and lexicalised constructions *kas tur ko* (example 15a), *kam* (example 15b) and *ko tur* (example 16) due to their meaning – lack of necessity – may be qualified as exclamative sentences, i.e., indirect speech acts, as well (see also Section “Positive exclamative sentences”):

(16) Ko tur runāt!  
 what.ACC there talk.INF  
 'There is no point in talking!' (LVK2018)

### Negative Interrogative Sentences

Here, only the copulaless type was found. Sentences usually begin with question words like *kāpēc* ‘why’ (examples 17a–b) or *kam* ‘what for’ (example 17c). Rather than being proper negative sentences, these are rhetorical questions with an emphasis on necessity.

(17) a Kāpēc neiepriecināt vēl kādu cilvēku?  
 why not\_gladdden.INF still another.ACC.SG human.ACC.SG  
 'Why not give joy to another human being?' (LVK2018)

b Kāpēc nedarīt, ja var izdarīt?  
 why not\_do.INF if can.PRS.3 do.INF  
 'Why not do it if it can be done?' (www.zemgaleszinas.lv)

c Kam nestrādāt, ja var strādāt?  
 what.DAT not\_work.INF if can.PRS.3 work.INF  
 'Why not work if you can go on working?' (Kas Jauns)

Rhetorical negative questions beginning with *kas tur ko* meaning ‘what’s the point to’, ‘what’s the big deal in/about’ express possibility, e.g.,

(18) Kas tur ko vienu nakti  
 what.NOM there what.ACC one.ACC.SG night.ACC.SG  
 neizturēt,  
 not\_survive.INF  
 guļot guļammaisā kuģa kāpņu telpā?  
 'What’s the big deal about surviving a night in a sleeping bag in the hold of a ship?' (LVK2018)

### Positive Imperative Sentences

Positive imperative copulaless sentences are used to express indirect orders, i.e., strong necessity, e.g.,

(19) Domāt, visiem domāt!  
 think.INF everybody.DAT.PL think.INF  
 'Think, everybody, think!' (LVK2018)



More common are sentences with a generalised agent expressing commands (usually found in different kinds of public instructions). These can either be indirect orders (example 20) or have a milder meaning of recommendation or encouragement (example 21):

- (20) **levērot** kļusumu!  
**keep.INF** silence.ACC.SG  
 'Keep silence!' (www.lcb.lv)
- (21) **Zvanīt** pēc pulksten 19.00.  
**call.INF** after at\_the\_clock 19.00  
 'Call after 7 o'clock p.m.' (www.krizescentrs.lv)

### Negative Imperative Sentences

Negative copulaless imperative sentences with a generalised agent usually express strict prohibition, e.g.,

- (22) a **Virsdrebēs neienākt!**  
 street\_clothes.LOC.PL **not\_enter.INF**  
 'No entrance in street clothes!' (www.gymnast.lv)
- b Ar [autobusa] vadītāju [brauciena laikā] **nesarunāties.**  
 with [bus] driver.ACC.SG [drive time] **not\_talk.INF**  
 'Do not talk to driver [while bus is in motion].' (www.staburags.lv)

### Negative Declarative Sentences

Copulaless declarative sentences with a negative polarity express impossibility. Some of them contain a dative subject (example 23), while others imply a generalised agent (example 24):

- (23) **Prezidentam neiztikt bez inteliģences,**  
 president.DAT.SG **not\_manage.INF** without wisdom.GEN.SG  
 izglītības un mugurkaula.  
 education.GEN.SG and backbone.GEN.SG  
 'A president cannot manage without intellect, education and plenty of backbone.' (www.tvnet.lv)

The English version of the example clearly conveys impossibility of carrying out the presidential functions without due intelligence and without his expressing his own position on various issues. As to example 23, another interpretation would also be conceivable: 'It's impossible for a president to manage ..' clearly points to the fact that a president is totally unthinkable without intelligence and his views on various issues.

- (24) **Jāņu naktī bez lietus neiztikt.**  
 Midsummer.GEN.PL night.LOC.SG without rain.GEN.SG **not\_manage.INF**  
 'Midsummer night is not complete without rain.' (www.delfi.lv)

### Positive Exclamative Sentences

These sentences usually begin with a lexicalised construction *kur nu* and express impossibility, e.g.

- (25) **Kur nu tev to saprast!**  
 where PTCL you.DAT.SG that.ACC.SG **understand.INF**  
 'As if you could understand!' (LVK2018)
- (26) **Kur nu domāt par uguni,**  
 where PTCL **think.INF** about fire.ACC.SG  
 tev nav nekā, ko būtu iespējams izmantot par pirmo darbarīku.  
 'Fire is out of question, you have nothing you could use as the first tool. (LVK2018)

Rhetorical questions beginning with *kas tur ko* and *ko tur* depend on the context and the speaker's intention and may also be considered as exclamative sentences (see examples in section "Present copulaless sentences"). They are used to express lack of necessity.

### Future-Tense Sentences with the Copula

Future-tense sentences with the copula express necessity and are usually preceded by an animate dative subject, e.g.,

(27) a Jums                    **būs**                    **darīt**    tā un    ne            citādi.  
    you.DAT.PL            **be.COP.FUT.3**    **do.INF**    so and    not            otherwise  
    'You shall do exactly as you are told.' (LVK2018)

b Ko    man            tagad    **būs**                    **teikt?**  
    what    I.DAT    now            **be.COP.FUT.3**    **say.INF**  
    'What shall I say now?' (G. Priede)

This type is represented by positive interrogatives and positive and negative imperatives.

### Positive Interrogative Sentences

Positive interrogative sentences in the future tense express necessity that may be combined with the meaning of uncertainty or doubt (see 28b):

(28) a Kā    tev                    **būs**                    **darīt?**  
    how    you.DAT.SG            **be.COP.FUT.3**    **do.INF**  
    'How shall you act?' (www.maminuklubs.lv)

b Ko    man            tagad    **būs**                    **teikt?**  
    what    I.DAT    now            **be.COP.FUT.3**    **say.INF**  
    'What shall I say now?' (G. Priede)

### Positive Imperative Sentences

An order, recommendation or encouragement can be directed not only at someone who is being addressed by the speaker (as in copulaless imperative sentences discussed in section "Positive imperative sentences"), but also at the speaker himself or even a third party, e.g.,

(29) Te    tad    nu    arī    mums                    **būs**                    **palikt.**  
    here    PTCL    PTCL    PTCL    we.DAT                    **be.COP.FUT.3**    **remain.INF**  
    'That's where we shall remain then.' (P. Bankovskis)

Imperative sentences with the copula in the future tense form can be used in subordinate clauses, e.g.,

(30) a Bet neviens nevar pavēlēt rakstniekiem,  
    ko                    viņiem                    **būs**                    **darīt.**  
    what.ACC            they.DAT.PL            **be.COP.FUT.3**    **do.INF**  
    'But no one can tell writers what to do.' (LVK2018)

b Pilsētas vadība katram mājas īpašniekam nosaka,  
    kādā                    krāsā                    savu                    māju  
    what.LOC.SG            colour. LOC.SG            own.ACC.SG            home.ACC.SG  
    viņam                    **būs**                    **krāsot.**  
    he.DAT.SG                    **be.COP.FUT.3**    **paint.INF**  
    'The city's governing body tells each home owner what colour to paint their houses.' (Diena)

Sentences with the copula in the future tense form can contain an inanimate dative subject, in which case they express a strong necessity rather than order or encouragement addressed to another person, e.g.,

- (31) a Dāvanai                      **būs**                      **būt!**  
 gift.DAT.SG                      **be.COP.FUT.3**                      **be.INF**  
 'The gift must be!' (Mans Mazais)
- b Tā    tam                      **būs**                      **būt.**  
 so    it.DAT.SG                      **be.COP.FUT.3**                      **be.INF**  
 'And so it shall be.' (www.tvnet.lv)

### Negative Imperative Sentences

Prohibition is the basic meaning of negative sentences with the copula in the future tense form; in this type of sentences, too, an inanimate subject is possible, e.g.,

- (32) a Tev                      **nebūs**                      par    mani  
 you.DAT.SG                      **not\_be.COP.FUT.3**                      about    I.ACC  
visu                      **zināt!**  
 all.ACC.SG                      **know.INF**  
 'You shall not know everything about me!' (www.apollo.lv)
- b Dieva baušļi pasaka skaidri,  
tev                      to                      būs                      darīt  
 you.DAT.SG                      it.ACC.SG                      be.COP.FUT.3                      do.INF  
un tev                      to                      **nebūs**                      **darīt.**  
 and    you.DAT.SG                      it.ACC.SG                      **not\_be.COP.FUT.3**                      **do.INF**  
 'God's commandments make it clear: thou shalt and thou shalt not do it.'  
 (LVK2018)
- c Jānis                      paziņojis,  
 Jānis.NOM.SG                      state.PTCP.PST.SG  
ka    tādai                      lietai  
 that    such.DAT.SG                      thing.DAT.SG  
nu    gan    **nebūs**                      **piepildīties.**  
 PTCL    PTCL    **not\_be.FUT.3**                      **come\_true.INF**  
 'Jānis has stated that such a thing would never come true.' (Kas Jauns)

Less common is the meaning of a lack of necessity, i.e., negation of necessity, e.g.,

- (33) Manis    dēļ                      tev                      **nebūs**                      **salt.**  
 I.DAT    because\_of                      you.DAT.SG                      **not\_be.COP.FUT.3**                      **freeze.INF**  
 'You will not have to freeze because of me.' (LVK2018)

### Past Sentences with the Copula

This type is represented only by positive interrogatives. When the copula is in the past, the meanings of necessity and possibility often co-occur, and it is only from the context that one can determine if, for example, these questions concern the possibility or necessity of a hypothetical action in the past.

- (34) a Un    ko                      viņam                      **bija**                      **darīt?**  
 and    what.ACC                      he.DAT                      **be.COP.PST.3**                      **do.INF**  
 'And what was there for him to do?' ('had to do' or 'could do') (LVK2018)
- b Un    kā    mums                      to                      **bija**                      **zināt?**  
 and    how    we.DAT    that.ACC                      **be.COP.PST.3**                      **know.INF**  
 'And how were we to know that?' (LVK2018)

Imperative sentences with a copula in the past tense form are not attested, because an order, encouragement or prohibition cannot really apply to a past situation.

Table 2 shows the interaction of tense forms, polarity and modal meanings that bear direct relation to the pragmatics of Latvian infinitive predicative constructions:

	Polarity	PRS	PST	FUT
Declarative sentences	positive	-	-	-
	negative	impossibility	-	-
Interrogative sentences	positive	Necessity lack of necessity possibility	Necessity possibility	necessity
	negative	Necessity possibility	-	-
Imperative sentences	positive	command (strong necessity) necessity	-	necessity
	negative	prohibition	-	prohibition
Exclamative sentences	positive	Impossibility lack of necessity		
	negative	-	-	-

**Table 2**

The interaction of tense forms, polarity, and modal meanings in Latvian infinitive predicative constructions (Kalnača & Lokmane, 2018)

As can be gleaned from the table, some combinations of tense, communicative type and polarity are not possible at all. For example, positive declarative sentences are not attested in Latvian. The reason for this would be the fact that there would be an absence of any unrealis indicator, as the infinitive itself does not carry the meaning of modality. With the copula in the past tense, only positive interrogative sentences expressing either necessity or possibility are attested. Sentences with the copula in the future tense express only necessity, or – when negated – prohibition. Exclamative sentences are interesting in that they are only copulaless and most often introduced by lexicalised constructions consisting of desemanticised pronouns and particles (about the trend toward lexicalisation of infinitival clauses, see Holvoet, 2000).

It may also be observed that some sentence types can occur with a generalised agent, i.e., they can be subjectless, while others cannot. Agent generalisation is quite common in copulaless sentences regardless of the communicative type, e.g.,

(35) a Ko **iesākt** ar sakaltušu maizi?  
 what.ACC **do.INF** with dried\_up.INS.SG bread.INS.SG  
 'What to do with dried up bread?' (Ieva)

b Tad atskanēja komanda:  
 - Mierā! **Pacelt** karogu!  
 peace.INTERJ **raise.INF** flag.ACC.SG  
 'Then a command was issued: At ease! Raise the flag!' (I. Ābele)

c **Nesmēķēt** 10 metrus  
**not\_smoke.INF** 10 meter.ACC.PL  
 no ieejas!  
 of entrance.GEN.SG  
 'No smoking within ten meters of this entrance!' (www.bus.lv)

In sentences containing the copula, agent generalisation occurs much more seldom, but is still possible:

(36) a Tad ko būs darīt?  
 PTCL what.ACC be.COP.FUT.3 do.INF  
 'So, what shall one do?' (LVK2018)

b Ko bija darīt ar  
 what.ACC be.COP.PST.3 do.INF with  
 televīzijas abonementmaksu?  
 television.GEN.SG subscription\_fee.ACC.SG  
 What was there to do about the TV subscription fee?' (Ir)

### Use of Predicative Infinitive Constructions in Different Text Types

In Latvian, infinitive predicative constructions, depending of the tense form of the copula and the communicative type, are restricted to expressive colloquial speech and mass media and literary texts, as well as legal texts, the reason being that they are, to a degree, perceived as conservative units carrying an obsolete form of expression.

The majority of sentences, especially the ones that contain the copula, can be used for pragmatic purposes. Sentences with the copula verb *būt* 'be' in the future tense are often perceived as elevated, e.g.,

(37) Tev nebūs ticēt,  
 you.DAT.SG not\_be.COP.PST.3 believe.INF  
 tev būs zināt.  
 you.DAT.SG be.COP.PST.3 know.INF  
 'You shall not believe, you shall know.' (LVK2018)

The construction *būs / nebūs* 'to be / not to be (future)' + *infinitive* is also quite common in expressive texts modelled on Ten Commandments, in which case it is used to express deontic modality, stating certain laws, rules, etc., intended as obligatory:

(38) a Tev nebūs dzert,  
 you.DAT.SG not\_be.COP.PST.3 drink.INF  
 tev nebūs smēķēt,  
 you.DAT.SG not\_be.COP.PST.3 smoke.INF  
 tev nebūs vēlu mājās nākt.  
 you.DAT.SG not\_be.COP.PST.3 late home.LOC.PL come.INF  
 'You shall not drink, you shall not smoke, you shall not come home late.' (LVK2018)

b Tev nebūs dusmās  
 you.DAT.SG not\_be.COP.PST.3 anger.LOC.PL  
 traukus šķaidīt.  
 dish.ACC.PL smash.INF  
 Un dāvanas no vīra gaidīt.  
 and present.ACC.PL from husband.GEN.SG expect.INF  
 'You shall not smash dishes in anger. And expect presents from your husband.'  
 (www.delfi.lv)

A slogan on the page of BMW fans uses the model of Ten Commandments and conveys some self-irony, e.g.,

- (39) Tu ievēro BMW bausli:  
 "Tev **nebūs** **zināt** sava BMW  
 you.DAT.SG **not\_be.COP.PST.3** **know.INF** own.GEN.SG BMW  
 [benzīna] patēriņu vai **interesēties** par to!"  
 [fuel]consumption.ACC.SG or **be\_interested.INF** in itACC.SG  
 'You obey the BMW commandment: "You shall not know your BMW's fuel consumption, nor want to find it out!" (www.bmwpower.lv)

Similar sentences are found with the copula in the past tense, e.g.,

- (40) Šo jums **bija** **darīt** un to **neatstāt**.  
 this you.DAT.PL **be.COP.PST.3** **do.INF** and it.ACC.SG **leave.INF**  
 'This ought ye to have done, and that not to have left undone.' (LVK2018)

Overall, this option for expressing obligation is rarely encountered in formal language, because it is, in part, obsolete and perceived as rather expressive in contemporary Latvian.

Copulaless interrogative sentences, on the contrary, are frequently used in mass media headlines to express necessity and to catch readers' attention, e.g.,

- (41) a Kādam **būt** Latvijas prezidentam?  
 what\_kind.DAT.SG **be.INF** Latvia.GEN.SG president.DAT.SG  
 'What should the president of Latvia be like?' (www.tvnet.lv)
- b Kādam **būt** koncertam  
 what\_kind.DAT.SG **be.INF** concert.DAT.SG  
 Latvijas valsts svētkos?  
 Latvia.GEN.SG state.GEN.SG celebration.LOC.PL  
 'What should Latvia's Independence Day concert be like?' (Latvijas Avīze)
- c Kādam **būt**  
 what\_kind.DAT.SG **be.INF**  
 grāmatas muzejam Latvijā?  
 book.GEN.SG museum.DAT.SG Latvia.LOC.SG  
 'What should Latvia's book museum be like?' (www.apollo.lv)

The media also use copulaless declarative and exclamative constructions in a similar way, e.g.,

- (42) a Gumijas zābakiem [šai gadalaikā]  
 rubber.GEN.SG boot.DAT.PL [this season]  
**būt!**  
**be.INF**  
 'Rubber boots [in this season] must be!' (Una)
- b Ar baseinu pie mājas  
 with pool.INS.SG by house.GEN.SG  
 nevienu vairs **nepārsteigt**.  
 nobody.ACC.SG PTCL **surprise.INF**  
 'You can't surprise anyone with a pool by your house these days.' (www.delfi.lv)

The infinitive with no copula is widely used in legal texts to report decisions, impart tasks, give warnings, make categorical requests, and express prohibitions (for a detailed discussion, see Skujiņa, 1999, p. 63).

- (43) Dokumentus                      **iesniedz**                      dekanātā.  
 document.ACC.PL                      **submit.INF**                      dean's\_office.LOC.SG  
 Documents shall be submitted to the dean's office.' (www.lu.lv)

## Conclusion

The following factors influence the modal semantics and pragmatic functions of predicative infinitive constructions: a) absence or presence of a copula and its tense; b) absence or presence and animacy of the (dative) subject; c) polarity of the predicate; and d) communicative type of the utterance (interrogative, imperative, declarative or exclamative).

Only in isolated cases does a sentence permit more than one tense form (i.e., two or three). Most of the time, tense variation is impossible due to differences in modal meanings and in the communicative type. Due to the interplay of formal, pragmatic, and semantic features, seemingly similar syntactic structures represent different construction types. However, the systematic ordering of the infinitival constructions depends on the criteria set to determine the construction and its subtypes and the debate about just how many predicative construction types there are in Latvian is ongoing.

The meaning of the sentence results from the construction (or even the utterance) as a whole and does not compositionally arise from any of the grammatical forms or lexical items involved. The fact that, for example, positive-polarity declarative sentences are completely impossible with the predicative infinitive construction also points in the same direction, i.e., for the modal meanings of necessity and possibility (or their negative counterparts) to emerge, they must be enhanced by the sentence communicative type meanings and/or negative polarity.

The use of the predicative infinitive construction is related to non-neutral, i.e., marked linguistic registers: expressive colloquial speech, elevated mass media and literary texts, as well as legal texts. The pragmatic use of each construction type depends on the interplay of the above-mentioned factors. For example, copular sentences in the future and the past tense forms are perceived as outdated and elevated, whereas copulaless declarative sentences are widely used in legal texts to state decisions, tasks, warnings, requests, and prohibitions.

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## Abbreviations

3	person	NEG	negative particle
ACC	accusative	NOM	nominative
COP	copula	PTCL	particle
DAT	dative	PL	plural
FUT	future	PREP	preposition
GEN	genitive	PRS	present
INF	infinitive	PST	past
INS	instrumental	PTCP	participle
INTERJ	interjection	SG	singular
LOC	locative		
LVK2018	The Balanced Corpus of Modern Latvian 2018		



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[www.tvnet.lv](http://www.tvnet.lv) (news portal)

## Andra Kalnača, Ilze Lokmane. Pragmatiniai predikatiųjų bendraties konstrukcijų aspektai latvių kalboje

Šio straipsnio tikslas – iširti pragmatinius predikatinės bendraties konstrukcijos latvių kalboje aspektus ir įrodyti, kad šios konstrukcijos turi specifinius pragmatinius ženklus. Priešingai nei tokie pragmatiniai ženklai kaip dalelytės, jungtukai,rieveksmiai ar prozodija, predikatinės bendraties konstrukcijos latvių kalboje pragmatiškai funkcionuoja kaip atskiras vienetas, t. y., struktūrinis funkcionalumas kyla iš sąsajos, o ne iš atskirų leksinių ar gramatinių elementų. Šios konstrukcijos latvių kalboje žymi marginalinį modalumą, o jų vartojimas yra susijęs su neutraliais, pažymėtais kalbos registrais. Taigi straipsnyje pagrindinis dėmesys skiriamas modalinėms ir laikinoms reikšmėms bei predikatiųjų bendraties konstrukcijų poliariškumui. Kadangi šių konstrukcijų modalinės ir laiko reikšmės yra glaudžiai susijusios su komunikaciniais kalbos tipais, jų naudojimas apsiriboja tam tikrais teksto tipais: įspėjimais, kategoriškais prašymais ir draudimais, reklama, antraštėmis žiniasklaidoje ir t. t.

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