

ANALYTIC PERMISSIVES IN ENGLISH, NORWEGIAN AND FRENCH¹

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1. Introduction

This article deals with the encoding of permission/enablement by certain analytic permissive constructions in English, Norwegian and French. An analytic permissive construction contains a matrix verb that explicitly encodes the act of permission/enablement, such as *let* in English, *la* in Norwegian and *laisser* in French. The discussion will be limited to constructions with explicit encoding of both participants in the act of *permission* (hereafter I will use the term *permission* to include situations encoding enablement). These will be termed the *permitter* and the *permittee*. Thus constructions with passive matrix verbs will not be considered. Constructions with negated matrix verbs, which encode *prohibition* rather than *permission*, will also be excluded from consideration.

The data for the study is drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC) and from two corpora at the University of Oslo, The English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC) and the Oslo Multilingual Corpus (OMC) and the discussion is grounded in an interpretation of two sorts of force dynamic relations which will be introduced in section 2. This

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section also includes details of how these two forms of force dynamic relations are encoded in English by constructions containing the matrix verbs *let* and *allow*. Section 3 considers the force dynamic relations of Norwegian *la* and compares *la* to *let* and *allow*. Section 4 investigates how the two types of force dynamic relations encoded by *let* and *allow* in English are translated into Norwegian in the ENPC and section 5 how the various force dynamic readings of *la* are translated into English and French in the OMC. Finally, section 6 contains a summary of the preceding discussion and a conclusion.

2. Force dynamics in English analytic permissives

There are two very common analytic permissive constructions in English, containing the matrix verbs *let* and *allow*. There are around 30,000 tokens of both verbs in the BNC and around half of these encode either permission or its negative counterpart prohibition (see Egan 2008: 220). Both *allow* and *let* may, however, encode two quite different types of permission. In the first of these, illustrated in Figure 1, the permitter removes a barrier to the realisation of the complement situation by the permittee.

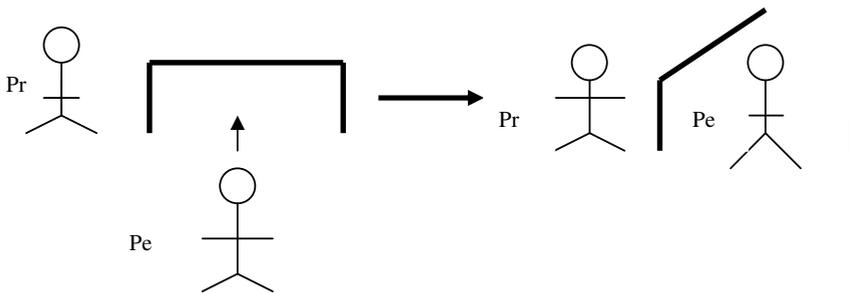


Figure 1: Barrier-removal by the permitter (Pr) enabling the permittee (Pe) to pass

The form of permission illustrated in Figure 1 will be called *barrier-removal*, a term introduced by Kemmer and Verhagen (1994). The other form of permission will be called *non-imposition* and comprises situations in which the permitter has the power to impose a barrier to the permittee's realising the situation in the complement clause but refrains from so doing. It is illustrated in Figure 2.

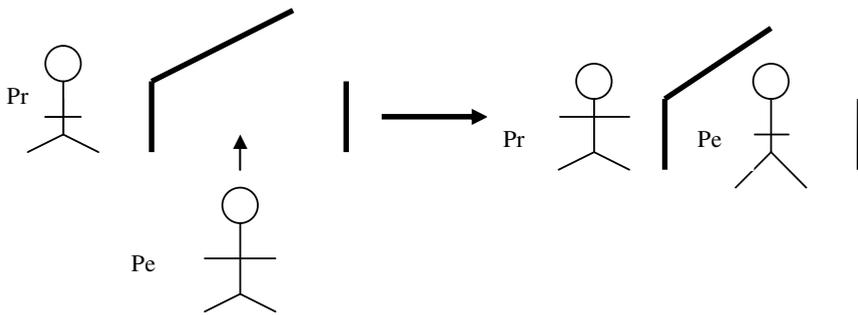


Figure 2: Non-imposition of barrier by the permitter (Pr) enables the permittee (Pe) to pass

Barrier-removal and *non-imposition* correspond roughly to the two forms of permission termed *onset-letting* and *extended letting* in Talmy (1986).

In Egan (2008) 372 randomly down-loaded positive polarity tokens of the <let x infinitive> construction and 414 positive polarity tokens of the <allow x to-infinitive> constructions were examined with a view to determining whether they encoded *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition*. The two types of permission were taken to comprise mutually exclusive categories – either a barrier existed or it did not. Distinguishing between the two sometimes necessitated an extensive investigation of the co-text in an effort to ascertain the possible prior existence of barriers. In other cases the immediate co-text contained sufficient information to conclude that such a barrier existed. Possible evidence for the existence of a barrier may include the presence of a temporal adverbial like *later* in (1) or an adjective like *new* in (2). All examples in this section are taken from the BNC.

- (1) The US pilots later allowed an Iraqi search-and-rescue helicopter to fly to the crash site and then return to its base. (BNC CBE 784)
- (2) In an attempt to remedy this the SLORC introduced new banking laws in July 1990 which allowed foreign banks to open branches in Myanmar. (BNC HLD 4402)

We can also make inferences about the prior existence of a barrier on the basis of other sorts of information in the immediate co-text, as in (3), or using our general world knowledge as in (4).

- (3) She *allowed herself to feel* all the pain she'd denied herself for so long. (BNC HGM 851)
- (4) Claudia relaxed her fingers, *letting the pencil drop* to the desk. (BNC H8J 2708)

In (3) it is the presence of the adverbial <for so long> in the relative clause that allows us to infer the previous self-imposed barrier to the feeling of pain. In (4) our knowledge of the function of taut fingers as a container of objects allows us to conclude that prior to their being relaxed the fingers constituted a barrier to the pencil's falling.

Another type of barrier takes the form of a *sine qua non* condition, as in (5) - (6).

- (5) If you re recall back in nineteen eight five Tony the Govern-
ment brought in *the transport bill* which *let operators com-
pete*. (BNC KM8 236)
- (6) The two centre holes *allow a retaining wire to be fitted*. (BNC
HH6 1902)

(5) is similar to example (1) in that it contains a temporal adverbial, «back in nineteen eight five». However, the presence of the adverbial is not necessary for us to make the requisite inference. The very fact that it is the bill that is the permitter implies the prior impossibility of competition, in other words the existence of an earlier impediment. Similarly in (6) without the presence of the two centre holes a wire could not have been fitted. Thus the presumed absence of these two holes amounts to a prior barrier.

Examples (1) - (6) all encode situations of *barrier-removal*. To categorise them as such it is sufficient to identify the earlier existence of a barrier, which may either be implicit or explicit. The prior non-existence of a barrier is less easy to stipulate, for obvious reasons. We may sometimes draw on our world knowledge, as in the case of (7). Often we must trawl the co-text before we can conclude that no such barrier existed.

- (7) With the tension reaching boiling point, it was finally announ-
ced that the French officials *had allowed the result to stand*
and they had to be applauded for a sporting decision. (BNC
A40 42)
- (8) In mid-stream Meg *let Ben take the oars* from her, changing
seats with him nimbly as the boat drifted slowly about. (BNC
FRF 1677)

- (9) So we *let the blacks come down to us*, we didn't go looking for them. (BNC FAY 933)

We can infer from (7), without searching the co-text, that the officials in question had the power to alter the result but chose not to exercise this power. In other words (7) is an instance of *non-imposition*. In (8) an extensive search of the text did not reveal any prior wish on the part of Ben to assume the task of rowing. In this case a paraphrase without a verb of permission, such as *«Meg handed the oars to Ben»* would be more felicitous than one implying a previous desire on his part to take over. Similarly (9) does not imply a prior prohibition on the descent of *«the blacks»*. It merely states that the permitters did not themselves make any effort to seek them out.

Tokens such as (7) – (9) may appear at first sight to be ambiguous. However, this sort of ambiguity usually evaporates when one conducts a thorough examination of the co-text. Whenever such an investigation reveals no clue as to the previous existence of a barrier to the realisation of the situation encoded in the complement clause, the token in question is labelled as encoding *non-imposition*. The question of the presence or absence of a barrier is a black-and-white question. Either such a barrier existed, or it did not. If it existed one may expect it to have been either explicitly mentioned or at least implied by the speaker.

We have seen in examples (1) to (9) that both *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* may be encoded using both *allow* and *let*. This does not mean that both forms of permission are equally common in both constructions. Indeed quite the opposite is the case. Table 1 shows that while *allow* is employed to encode *barrier-removal* in almost nine cases out of ten, *let* favours *non-imposition* by a margin of almost four to one.

Table 1: Constructions containing positive active voice matrix verbs *allow* and *let* encoding *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition* with horizontal percentages

| Construction | Totals per sample | | Percentage totals | |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | barrier-removal | non-imposition | barrier-removal | non-imposition |
| allow to-inf. | 365 | 49 | 88.2% | 11.8% |
| let bare inf. | 81 | 291 | 21.8% | 78.2% |

The difference between the two constructions in the table with respect to encoding *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition* is statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$). We can therefore safely conclude that *allow* prototypically encodes *barrier-removal* and that *let* prototypically encodes *non-imposition*. In section 4 we will look at how these two forms of permission are translated into Norwegian in the ENPC.

3. Force dynamic relations encoded by Norwegian *la*

There are 364 tokens of constructions of the form ‘NP1 *la* NP2 infinitive’ among the slightly over 400,000 words in the (original) Norwegian texts in the Norwegian-English-French-German part of the Oslo Multilingual Corpus.² In 92 of these tokens the second NP is not the subject of the infinitive. (10) and (11) exemplify this type of construction.

- (10) Helt til hun uventet *lot* seg fange. (HW2)
 Until, unexpectedly, she *allowed* herself to be caught.
 Jusqu’ au moment inattendu où elle se *laissait* prendre.
- (11) Så snart telen gikk av jorda, *lot* han tomte så igjen. (HW2)
 As soon as the frost left the ground, the sheriff *had* the plot seeded.
 Aussitôt que le gel lâcha prise, il *fit* ensemencher le terrain.

In (10) *seg* is the object rather than the subject of the infinitive *fange*. In English, though not in French, it is necessary to signal the syntactic/semantic role of the second NP by using a past participle form of the verb in the complement clause. Note, by the way, that while (10) is permissive, (11) is causative. The difference is reflected in the choice of matrix verbs in the translations.

Having excluded tokens like (10) and (11) from consideration, we are left with 272 tokens, 110 of which do not encode permission or prohibition. These include 71 tokens that encode causation. These are often translated into English using the matrix verb *make* and into French using *faire* as in (12).

- (12) Rouchefoucault *lot* ham vente i en halv time, og da han kom inn til ham unnskyldte han seg ikke, men gryntet et: (NF1)

² For a description of both this corpus and the English Norwegian Parallel Corpus see Johansson (2007).

Rouchefoucault *made* him wait over half an hour before he strode in without any apology and grunted, «What do you want?»
Rouchefoucault l' y *fit* attendre une demi-heure et, quand il entra enfin, il ne s' excusa pas, mais grogna:

It is not always easy to decide whether an utterance encodes causation or permission. In a token like (12) with an animate NP2, our world knowledge tells us that it was highly unlikely that someone would want to be kept waiting. Nor is there anything forcing NP2 to stay apart from the pressure exerted by NP1. We can therefore conclude that the matrix verb subject is a causer rather than a permitter. The situation is less clear-cut in the case of inanimate NP2s, as in (13) and (14).³

- (13) De svartkledde lettet på hatten og hilste tilbake og *lot* noen løselige ord falle i forbifarten. (BHH1)
The men in black tipped their hats and returned the greetings, *letting* fall some casual words in passing.
- (14) Jeg løfter kjolen opp. Stukket inn mellom kantene i den glatte ryggen ligger et sammenbrettet ark. Jeg *lar* kjolen falle på gulvet, og åpner arket. (NF1)
I picked it up, and there, tucked between the folds of the smooth back, I found a piece of paper. Dropping the dress to the floor, I opened it.

In (13) the words in question are not subject to any force dynamic pressure causing them to fall, other than that exerted by the matrix verb subject. In (14) on the other hand, the force of gravity causes the dress to fall to the ground when the matrix verb subject releases her hold on it. I have therefore classified (13) as causative and (14) as permissive. That the distinction is a subtle one is reflected in the two translations, the translator in (13) choosing to encode the causative action by means of the prototypically permissive construction <let x infinitive> while the translator in (14) employs the analytic causative <drop>.

Besides causatives, some other constructions were excluded as not encoding permission in the sense of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition*. These include first person plural suggestions as in (15), idioms such as (16) and optatives as in (17).

³ Note that the French translations will only be given in this section when these are relevant to the discussion.

- (15) Men *la* oss gjerne snu på perspektivet. (JG3)
But *let's* reverse the perspective by all means.
- (16) Og når de *lot* eksegese være eksegese og dro ut på rangel, sank han utmattet ned på sin krakk og kastet et kritisk blikk på de notatene han hadden nådd å klore ned på formiddagens forelesning. (BHH1)
And while they *let* exegesis be exegesis and went on a spree, he slumped exhausted onto his stool to take a critical look at the notes he had managed to scrawl down at the morning's lecture.
- (17) *La* dem få se at bikkja har slitt seg, og undres et øyeblikk. (KF1)
Let them see that the old dog has broken loose, and wonder a moment.

Note that in all three non-permissive tokens (15) – (17) *la* is translated by *let*, indicating that there is considerable overlap in the non-permissive usage of these very polysemous verbs.

The 110 excluded tokens comprise 40% of all different-subject *la* constructions.⁴ This corresponds closely to the figure of 37% in the case of English *let* (See Egan 2008: 218). Of the remaining 162 tokens, 148 (91%) have positive polarity and thus encode permission, while the remaining 14 encode prohibition. The ratio of positive to negative matrix verbs is greater than that of English *let* in the BNC, which is estimated to be 76% in Egan (2008: 220).

The next question to be addressed is whether the 148 positive polarity permissives encode *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition*, as these were defined in section 2. As in the case of the English examples of *barrier-removal* discussed in section 2, we may avail of various clues in the co-text to ascertain the previous existence of a barrier. Consider (18) – (20).

- (18) Langsomt åpnet hun døren, og *lot* meg slippe inn. (NF1)
She slowly opened the door and *let* me slip inside.
- (19) Forsiktig åpnet han øynene, og *lot* dagslyset sive inn mellom øyelokkene. (NF1)
He opened his eyes cautiously, *letting* the daylight filter through his lashes.

⁴ Different-subject constructions contain two explicitly encoded subjects, one for the matrix verb, the other for the complement predicate. They are to be distinguished from the construction in (10) and (11), in which the subject of the complement predicate is not encoded.

- (20) Jordmoren var ikke lenger i live, og etter påtrykk fra de lokale nazister *let* etterforskerne saken falle. (BHH1)
The midwife was no longer alive, and, after pressure from the local Nazis, the investigators *let* the matter drop.

In (18) and (19) the opening of the door and the eyelids clearly remove a barrier to the entrance of the two permittees, the speaker in (18) and the daylight in (19). Similarly in (20) the fact that the Nazis are encoded as bowing to pressure indicates that they originally intended pursuing the matter in question.

Just as we often do not need to trawl the co-text to ascertain that we are dealing with *barrier-removal*, other tokens obviously encode *non-imposition*. (21) – (23) are cases in point.

- (21) Dina *let* Mor Karen og Johan holde på med sitt. (HW2)
Dina *left* Mother Karen and Johan to their own concerns.
(22) Hun *let* ham varsomt bli liggende. (HW2)
She carefully *let* him lie there.
(23) Hun tok maten fra små barn, og *let* fattige folk dø av sult, for egen vinning. (NF1)
She took the food from the mouths of little children and *let* the poor die of hunger, all for her own profit.

(21) – (23) all encode a lack of action on the part of the permitter allowing the situation in the complement clause to evolve. In each case the permitter could have acted to prevent the realisation of the complement situation but chooses not to do so. (23) resembles (12), which I classified as causative, in that the permittees certainly cannot be presumed to entertain a wish to die of hunger. The difference lies in the force dynamics. In (23) death by hunger will inevitably come about if no food is provided for the starving.

Sometimes it is necessary to examine the co-text more extensively in order to judge what type of permission, or indeed causation, is being encoded. Consider (24).

- (24) Så *let* de ham slå de vanskeligste teigene om kveldene, alene. (HW2)
Then they *let* him mow the most difficult parts of the field in the evenings, alone.

At first glance it might seem that (24) is causative, as it is unlikely that anyone would choose of their own free will to labour in the most difficult parts of the field. In fact the mower in question is hyperactive and the permitters allow him to undertake this task so that he will burn off some energy. Nor is there any suggestion that there was any prior impediment to his undertaking it. If he wanted to work extra the permitters were more than happy to let him do so. (24) is therefore classified as an instance of *non-imposition*.

All 148 permissive tokens of <NP1 *la* NP2 infinitive> were classified as either *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition*. The results of this classification are shown in Table 2 and may be compared to the results obtained for *let* and *allow* in the BNC in Table 1. Figure 1 shows the ratio of tokens encoding *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* in the case of all three verbs.

Table 2: Constructions containing the positive active voice matrix verb *la* encoding *barrier-removal* or *non-imposition* with horizontal percentages

| Construction | Totals per sample | | Percentage totals | |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | barrier-removal | non-imposition | barrier-removal | non-imposition |
| <i>la</i> x infinitive | 37 | 111 | 25% | 75% |

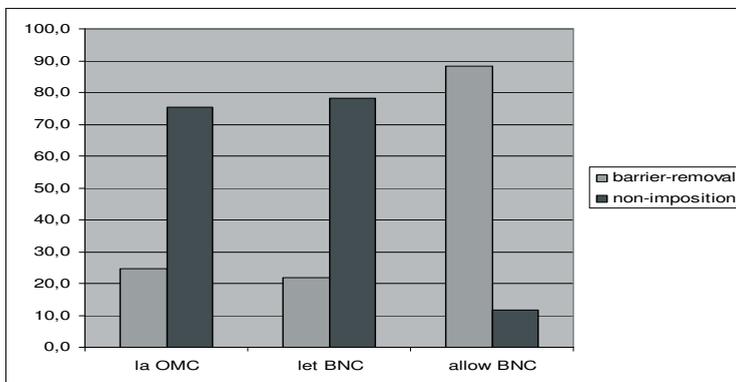


Figure 1: Percentage of tokens of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* encoded by *la* in the OMC and *let* and *allow* in the BNC

The data in Tables 1 and 2, which are displayed graphically in Figure 1, show that *la* closely resembles its cognate *let* in that it is much more likely to encode *non-imposition* than *barrier-removal*. It also resembles *let* when it comes to the sort of situations of *barrier-removal*

it typically encodes. In the case of both *la* and *let* just under two-thirds of the tokens encoding *barrier-removal* contain a verb of motion in the complement clause. In section 5 we will return to Norwegian *la* and examine how it is translated into English and French. Before doing so we will look in the next section at translations in the opposite direction, at how *let* and *allow* are translated into Norwegian.

4. Norwegian translations of English *let* and *allow*

Løken (2007: 115) discusses the Norwegian translation correspondences of English *let* and *allow*. She shows that Norwegian *la* is the most common translation for both. In this section I take a different starting point and ask how English constructions encoding *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* are translated into Norwegian. Collating the figures for *allow* and *let*, there are 86 tokens of *barrier-removal* and 90 tokens of *non-imposition* among the 654,500 words of fictional and non-fictional English original text in the ENPC. How are these tokens translated into Norwegian?

To begin with tokens encoding *barrier-removal*, the most common translation of these is by means of Norwegian *la* as in (24) and (25).

- (24) Andrew laughed, gave up rowing, and *let* the boat drift. (AH1)
Andrew lo og la årene inn, *lot* båten drive.
- (25) He was fifty yards behind the Jaguar at Hyde Park Corner, *allowing* a truck to move between them. (FF1)
Han var femti meter bak Jaguaren ved Hyde Park Corner, og *lot* en lastebil kjøre inn mellom dem.

Sometimes situations encoding *barrier-removal* are translated using another matrix verb such as *tillate* (permit) in (26) and (27).

- (26) These words were in the air but were not spoken: they knew that if she *allowed* herself to begin she would not stop with this. (DL1)
Slike ord svevet i luften, men de ble ikke uttalt.
De visste at hvis hun *tillot* seg å begynne, ville hun ikke stoppe med det.
- (27) He called it the «collective contract in farm production»: giving autonomous teams of farm workers the right to draw up long-term contracts with management that would *let* them organise their own work, and decide their own pay packets,

which would be linked to the amount of food they produced.
(MAW1)

Han kalte midlet for «innføring av kollektivkontrakter i jordbruksproduksjonen».

De gav autonome grupper av kollektivbønder rett til å inngå langtidskontrakter med ledelsen av kollektivet.

Kontraktene *tillot* dem å organisere sitt arbeid selv, og selv bestemme hvor mye de ville få i lønningsspenen, ettersom dette ville henge sammen med hvor mye mat de faktisk produserte.

(26) and (27) are *congruent* translations in the sense that both participants, the permitter and permittee are encoded (or understood in the case of the imperative) in both the original and the translation, and the act of the permission is encoded by one verb, the action permitted by another.

Not all translations are congruent in this sense. There are many translations in which no matrix verb is employed, as in (28) and (29).

(28) This *allows* a female to move at high speed and carry her young safely in her pouch.
Hunnen *kan* hoppe med stor fart og bære med seg ungen sin trygt i pungen.

(29) After that had been registered (and she knew the importance of first impressions) she tended to *let* her attention lapse from what followed. (AB1)
Når den var registrert (og hun visste hvor viktig førsteinntrykket var), hadde hun en tilbøyelighet til å *tape* oppmerksomheten for det som så fulgte.

In (28) the sine-qua-non condition that permits the realisation of the complement situation is replaced by a statement of possibility encoded by the modal auxiliary *kunne* (can). In (29) the permittee is rendered as the object of the infinitive *tape* (lose).

Of a total of 86 tokens of *let* and *allow* encoding *barrier-removal*, 33 are translated by *la*, 11 by another congruent construction, while the remaining 42 involve rewriting the text in some way or other.

We find the same array of translational possibilities in the tokens encoding *non-imposition*. Whether encoded in English by *let* or *allow* it may be translated into Norwegian using *la*, as in (30) and (31).

- (30) When you 're self-employed, you can't afford to *let* these things slide. (SG1)
Når man er frilanser, har man ikke råd til å *la* slikt gli ut.
- (31) We *allow* them to roam homeless in our cities. (LTLT1)
Vi *lar* dem flakke hjemløse om i våre storbyer.

We also find congruent translations employing verbs other than *la*, such as *tillate* in (32) and (33).

- (32) It suited me, and it was easy to let it claim me every night, but I had wishes, too, secret, passionate wishes, and as I sat there enjoying the heavy, moist breeze, I *let* myself think, maybe this is it, maybe this is what turns the tide, and carries the darling child into shore. (JSM1)
Jeg var tilfreds med denne tilværelsen, og det var lett å sovne inn i den hver natt, men jeg hadde drømmer også, hemmelige, lidenskapelige drømmer, og der jeg satt og trakk inn den tunge, fuktige nattelufta *tillot* jeg meg å tenke: kanskje det var dette som skulle til, kanskje lykken vil vende seg og la meg få et lite barn.
- (33) Instead, he *allowed* his Army Group G first to become entangled in irrelevant struggles with the Resistance, and second to be rolled up and destroyed by the American landings in the South of France that began on 15 August. (MH1)
I stedet *tillot* han armégruppe G først å bli innviklet i ubetydelige sammenstøt med motstandsbevegelsen, deretter å bli valset ned og knust av amerikanerne som gikk i land i Sør-Frankrike den 15. august.

Finally there are tokens which are *non-congruent* in that the text is rewritten in one way or another, as in (34) and (35). Note that in (35) the act of permission is simply omitted from the Norwegian text.

- (34) He lowered his big tawny body, into a kind of furry projectile and *let* his forward motion carry him in... where he promptly stuck like a cork in a bottle. (SK1)
Han strakte seg ut som et pelskledd prosjektil og dro nytte av farten han hadde opparbeidet... og ble sittende fast i hullet som en kork i en flaskehals.

(35) More important, both had atmospheres close to the chemical equilibrium state; if you took a volume of air from either of those planets, heated it to incandescence in the presence of a representative sample of rocks from the surface, and then *allowed* it to cool slowly, there would be little or no change in composition after the experiment. (JL1)

Enda viktigere er det at begge planetene viste seg å ha atmosfærer som befant seg i en tilstand nær opptil kjemisk likevekt. Dersom du tok en viss mengde luft fra hver av disse planetene og varmet den opp sammen med et representativt utvalg av bergarter fra overflaten til den ble hvitglødende, ville det være liten eller ingen forandring i dens sammensetning etter eksperimentet.

Of a total of 92 tokens of *let* and *allow* encoding *non-imposition*, 67 are translated by *la*, 4 by another congruent construction or modal auxiliary and the remaining 21 involve rewriting the text in some way or other. The total figures for both *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* are contained in Table 3.

Table 3: Norwegian translation equivalents of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* encoded by English *let* and *allow*

| Type of force dynamics | la | other congruent translations | rewritten | Total |
|------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| non-imposition | 67 | 4 | 21 | 92 |
| barrier-removal | 33 | 11 | 42 | 86 |
| Total | 100 | 21 | 30 | 178 |

We can see at a glance from the raw numbers in Table 3 that *la* is much more likely to be used as a translation of *non-imposition* than of *barrier-removal*. The difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). However, this may just be a result of the two facts that *la* typically translates *let*, and that *let* prototypically encodes *non-imposition*. To investigate whether this is so, Table 4 compares the figures for translation by *la* of tokens containing *let* and *allow* with those for *non-imposition* and *barrier-removal*. We can see in Table 4 that while there is a statistically significant difference between the likelihood of *let* and *allow* be-

ing translated by *la*, this significance is relatively marginal compared to the significance of the difference in the case of the two sorts of force dynamic relations.

Table 4: Translations of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* by *la* compared to translations of *let* and *allow*

| force dynamics/ matrix verbs | la | other | Total | Chi sq. |
|---------------------------------|----|-------|-------|-------------|
| non-imposition | 67 | 25 | 92 | p<0.001 |
| barrier-removal | 33 | 53 | 86 | |
| let | 77 | 42 | 119 | p<0.05>0.01 |
| allow | 23 | 36 | 59 | |

Table 4 distinguishes between those tokens encoded by *la* and all other tokens, with congruent translations containing verbs other than *la* being lumped with the non-congruent translations. If, on the other hand, we divide all the tokens into congruent and non-congruent translations, we see that it is only the distinction between *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* that leads to statistically significant results.

Table 5: Translations of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* by congruent and non-congruent constructions compared to translations of *let* and *allow*

| force dynamics/ matrix verbs | congruent | non-congruent | Total | Chi sq. |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------|-------|---------|
| non-imposition | 71 | 21 | 92 | p<0.001 |
| barrier-removal | 44 | 42 | 86 | |
| let | 82 | 37 | 119 | p>0.05 |
| allow | 33 | 26 | 59 | |

Table 5 shows clearly that the semantic distinction between *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* is more robust than the lexicographic distinction between *let* and *allow* in predicting Norwegian translation equivalents. Why should this be so? I would suggest that the reason is related to the passivity of the permitter in the case of *non-imposition*. Compare Figures 1 and 2. In Figure 1 the permitter carries out an ac-

tion. Even if the permitter were not to be encoded explicitly, his or her existence could be inferred from the unfolding of an action of *barrier-removal* which has not been initiated by the permittee. In Figure 2, on the other hand, if the permitter is not encoded explicitly, there is less reason to suspect his or her existence. I suggest it is the perceived need to encode the permitter explicitly in situations encoding *non-imposition* that prompts the greater incidence of congruent translations.

5. English and French translations of Norwegian *la*

This section considers the English and French translations of the permissive tokens of Norwegian *la* in the OMC as described in section 3. It should be emphasised at the outset that the corpus data in this section do not provide us with a mirror image of the data in the previous section. There we saw that *barrier-removal* is only translated by *la* in 33 of 86 cases in the ENPC, with non-congruent options being chosen in 42 of the remaining 53 cases. Such non-congruent Norwegian originals are outside the scope of the present discussion, restricted as it is to original *la* tokens.

How then are *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* tokens encoded in Norwegian by *la* translated into English and French? To begin with *barrier-removal*, the most common English translation of *la* is *let*, utilised in 19 of 37 cases, as in (36) and (37). *Allow* is used in 4 cases, one of which is cited as (38). The remaining tokens are rewritten, yielding non-congruent translations like (39). The option most commonly chosen by translators into French is *laisser*, as in (36) and (38). There are 3 instances of *faire*, as in (37) and 16 non-congruent solutions, as in (39).

- (36) Midt i gaten må han vente og *la* en bil passere. (KF1)
 In the middle of the street he must wait to *let* a car pass.
 Arrivé au milieu de la rue, il faut qu' il s' arrête pour *laisser*
 passer une voiture.
- (37) Langsomt åpnet hun døren, og *lot* meg slippe inn. (NF1)
 She slowly opened the door and *let* me slip inside.
 Puis elle ouvrit lentement la porte et me *fit* entrer.
- (38) Først bare en liten sprekk, så en stripe av lys som langsomt
 brer seg og *lar* trappetrinnene komme tilsyne. (BHH1)
 First just a tiny crack, followed by a streak of light that slowly
 spreads, *allowing* the steps to come into view.
 D'abord une petite fente puis un rai de lumière qui s' élargis-
 sait lentement pour *laisser* apparaître le bas de l' escalier.

- (39) *Lot* sengeforhenget falle ned til alle sider og brettet ut Jacobs siste vilje mellom lårene med stive fingrer. (HW2)
Closed all the bedcurtains and smoothed out Jacob's will between her thighs with stiff fingers.
Tira les rideaux de tous les côtés et étala de ses doigts raidis les dernières volontés de Jacob sur ses cuisses.

There are 9 cases in which both *let* and *laisser* are used. In all nine cases the verb in the complement clause encodes motion. This is the prototypical type of barrier-removing action encoded by both *let* and *la*.

We find the same three options utilised in the translation of situations encoding *non-imposition*, i.e. translation by *let* and *laisser*, congruent translations using alternative matrix verbs and non-congruent translations. Examples (40) – (43) illustrate the various strategies chosen by the translators in question.

- (40) Kvalm av engstelse *lot* jeg henne feste miljømerket på genseren min. (KF1)
Sick with worry, I *let* her pin the environmental emblem to my sweater.
Malade d'angoisse, je la *laissai* parer mon chandail de l'insigne écologique.
- (41) *La* ho få sjå bøtta og kluten og snakk heile tida, sa Dina og vaktet på dem, mens hun dro seg ut av båsen. (HW2)
«*Let* her see the pail and the rag, and talk the whole time,» said Dina, withdrawing from the stall but still watching the girl.
«*Fais-lui* voir le seau et le torchon, et continue à parler», dit Dina, se retirant de la stalle tout en les surveillant.
- (42) Mor Karen og fostersønnene *lot* Jacob være nygift til han kom fra høstmarkedet. (HW2)
Mother Karen and the foster sons *allowed* Jacob to be a newlywed until he returned from the autumn market.
Mère Karen et les fils adoptifs *laissèrent* Jacob jouer son rôle de jeune marié jusqu' à son retour du marché d'automne.
- (43) Tillat at jeg avholder meg, sa jeg og *lot* glasset stå. (BHH1)
«Allow me to abstain,» I said, *not picking up* my glass.
Vous me permettez de m'abstenir, ai-je dit *sans lever* mon verre.

The most common English translation of situations of *non-imposition* encoded by *la* is *let*, utilised in 67 of the 111 cases, as in (40) and (41). There are six other congruent translations, *allow* being used in three of these, as in (42). The remaining tokens are rewritten, yielding non-congruent translations like (43). The option most commonly chosen by translators into French is again *laisser*, as in (40) and (42). There are six other congruent translations, 4 using *faire* as in (41), the other two *permettre*. There are 42 non-congruent translations, as in (43). There are 37 tokens in all which are translated both by *let* and *laisser*. Unlike in the case of the *barrier-removal* tokens discussed above, no one sort of complement clause predicate appears to stand out as favouring this translation option.

In the case of *non-imposition*, there is one form of non-congruent translation into English that is particularly frequent. It incorporates the verb *leave* and accounts for as many as 16 of the 39 non-congruent translations. And in 10 of these instances the French translator has opted for a non-congruent translation with *laisser*. (44), previously cited as (21), and (45) illustrate this option.

- (44) Dina *lot* Mor Karen og Johan holde på med sitt. (HW2)
 Dina *left* Mother Karen and Johan to their own concerns.
 Dina *laissait* Mère Karen et Johan à leurs occupations.
- (45) *Lot* man hodet være fast til kroppen, ville man senere få store problemer med det muskuløse hakepartiet, forklarte Léopold og kikket på Latour. (NF1)
 If the head *were left* attached to the body, there would be problems later with the musculature of the chin, Léopold explained, watching Latour closely.
 Si on *laisse* la tête fixée au corps, on va avoir ensuite de grosses difficultés avec les muscles de la mâchoire, expliqua Léopold en regardant Latour.

In (44) both translators simply dispense with the complement clause predicate. In (45) both employ a past participle form, the English translator choosing to employ a passive construction, the French translator retaining the impersonal structure of the original.

We have now seen that similar strategies are chosen by French and English translators for both types of permission. Table 6 contains details of how often *let* and *laisser* are chosen.

Table 6: Tokens of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* encoded in Norwegian by *la* translated by congruent constructions containing English *let* and French *laisser*, with horizontal percentages.

| | la | let | laisser | let + laisser |
|-----------------|-----|----------|----------|---------------|
| barrier-removal | 37 | 19 51.4% | 17 45.9% | 9 24.3% |
| non-imposition | 111 | 67 60.4% | 52 46.8% | 38 34.2% |
| Totals | 148 | 86 | 69 | 47 |

The data in Table 6 show that there is a somewhat greater chance of *let* being chosen as a translation of situations encoding *non-imposition* than situations encoding *barrier-removal*. The difference is not, however, statistically significant. Nor is there much difference in the case of *laisser*. More interesting, perhaps, are the vertical percentages of the data in the table. These are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Tokens of *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* encoded in Norwegian by *la* translated by congruent constructions containing English *let* and French *laisser*, with vertical percentages

| | la | let | laisser | let + laisser |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| barrier-removal | 37 25.0% | 19 22.1% | 17 24.6% | 9 19.1% |
| non-imposition | 111 75.0% | 67 77.9% | 52 75.4% | 38 80.9% |
| Totals | 148 | 86 | 69 | 47 |

Table 7 shows that the ratio between the two forms of permission encoded by *la* in the Norwegian original is preserved in the translations by *let* and *laisser*. A comparison of the percentages for *let* in the table with the percentages for *let* in the BNC in Table 1 shows that the ratio in the translations is almost identical to that of the original British tokens. The fact that the ratio of *non-imposition* to *barrier-removal* for *<let + laisser>* translations is greater than is the case for either of the two matrix verbs themselves, combined with the fact that all the relevant *barrier-removal* tokens encode motion, may well be a reflex of the internal structure of the two semantic categories. At the very least this possibility is worth exploring using translations into other languages or corpora with multiple translations into the same language.

6. Summary and conclusion

In this paper I have looked at the encoding of permission/enablement by some analytic permissive constructions in English, Norwegian and French. The constructions investigated in English contain the matrix verbs *let* and *allow*, the construction in Norwegian the matrix verb *la*, and the French construction the matrix verb *laisser*. We saw in section 3 that Norwegian *la* is very similar to English *let* insofar as some three quarters of the permissive *la* tokens in the OMC encode *non-imposition* rather than *barrier-removal*. We also saw in section 4 that the ratio between the two forms of permission as encoded by *la* is reflected in the ratios for *let* and *laisser* in the French and English translations. There was, however, no significant difference between the tendency of translators to employ these two forms in their translations of *barrier-removal la* and *non-imposition la*.

The analysis in section 3 of the Norwegian translation equivalents of English *let* and *allow* in the ENPC, on the other hand, did yield significant results. The semantic distinction between *barrier-removal* and *non-imposition* was shown to be more robust than the lexicographic distinction between *let* and *allow* in predicting Norwegian translation equivalents. I suggested that the reason for this is related to the passivity of the permitter in the case of *non-imposition*, and that it is the perceived need to encode the permitter explicitly in such situations that prompts the greater preponderance of congruent translations. It would be worth looking at translations into other languages to see if the structural pattern in the case of *non-imposition* tends to be retained cross-linguistically.

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