"Now let's you eat something" - the particulization of *let's*: evidence (not only) from the English-Czech parallel corpora

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let-constructions; first person inclusive imperatives; open let-imperatives; grammaticalization; parallel corpora

The status of *let* in let-constructions has been widely discussed in the literature (Collins, 2004; Xiang & Liu, 2018). Most studies demonstrate that the expression *let* can take on diverse syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions. Apart from belonging to the class of lexical verbs, it can occur as an illocutionary marker of directives (in so called ordinary imperatives, and first person inclusive imperatives) and optatives (in open-let imperatives), exhibiting different grammatical properties and reaching different levels of grammaticalization (Hopper & Traugott, 1993, pp. 10–14).

This paper focuses on a specific subtype of let-constructions, in which *let* fused with the contracted form of the personal pronoun *us* (*'s*) syntactically and semantically. Its particle-like status becomes evident in constructions in which *let's* is followed by a pronominal subject, as in *"Now let's you eat something"* (*InterCorp*), and the contracted form is "no longer associated with *us*" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 148). Such usages are considered highly informal and acceptable only for some speakers (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 934), yet fully integrated into the language system.

While considerable attention has been paid to the discourse and syntactic functions of *let's* whose reference to the first person plural pronoun *us* is still traceable, uses such as *'Now let's you eat something'* have remained underexplored. Therefore, this paper attempts to address the gap and provide a systematic description of pragmatic functions of *let's*. It will demonstrate that it can be used in all types of *let*-constructions (ordinary imperatives, first person inclusive imperatives and open let-imperatives), it may even function as a lexical verb. Furthermore, it can express speaker's inclusiveness, addressee's inclusiveness and both the speaker's and addressee's inclusiveness.

To provide a description of pragmatic functions of *let's* and to identify a particular type of the *let*-construction, two sets of data will be used. The first source of data is represented by the monolingual Corpus of the Contemporary American English where the sequences with *let's* followed by any type of pronoun will be manually checked. As there is some indeterminacy between the individual functions of *let's*, the analysis will also be based on the Czech translations of English uses of *let's + pronoun*, involved in the parallel corpora *InterCorp* (v16ud – English/Czech) accessed via *KonText* interface (the query [word = "let's"] [upos="PRON"]).

The results obtained from the corpus analysis suggest the fully grammaticalized status of *let's*. First, this expression is rather flexible in the pronoun selection (it can occur with a range of pronouns, e.g. *let's you and me/everybody/us/me/you*), as well as in its reference to the speaker and/or the addressee(s). Second, the degree of its grammaticalization is reflected in the Czech translation counterparts. The data from the parallel corpora demonstrate that *let's* mainly

corresponds to inflectional endings (person and mood markers) in Czech. It translates most frequently as the ending of the present indicative (e.g. *-me: všichni se usadíme – let's everyone take a seat*), thus toning down the face-threatening character of the directive force of the utterance (see also Collins, 2004, p. 302).

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