Let’s talk X

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Data: the basic contrast

(1a) Let’s talk about books.  b. Let’s talk books.

(2) Let’s Talk Payments

(3) Let’s Talk Coffee
http://www.letstalkcoffee.org

Questions

(i) How are Let’s talk about x and Let’s talk x different?
(ii) How can we account for the contrast between the two constructions?

Theoretical assumptions

Information structure, a component of the sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures. Information structure intervenes at all meaning bearing levels of grammatical structure. It is formally manifested in:
- the form of syntactic (in particular, nominal) constituents
- the position and ordering of such constituents in the sentence
- the form of complex grammatical constructions
- certain choices between related lexical items
- aspects of prosody

Topic is what the sentence is about
Gundel & Fretheim 2004, Riou 2015

Interpretation of indefinites in topic positions is restricted

Working Hypotheses

...Let’s talk x vs. Let’s talk about x are allosentences, semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent surface manifestations of given propositions. Following Lambrecht 1994

...Let’s talk x and Let’s talk about x both introduce a topic. The grammatical properties of the second construction indicate that it may be a specific indefinite following Porter 2004

Selected references