



Let's talk X

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Data: the basic contrast

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

(2) Let's Talk Payments
https://twitter.com/LetsTalkPayments?ref_src=twsrc%5Efgoo&7Ctwc&5Fsern%7Ct%5Eauthor

(3) Let's Talk Coffee
<http://www.letstalkcoffee.org>

Questions

(i) How are *Let's talk about x* and *Let's talk* different?

(ii) How can we account for the contrast between the two constructions?

Study #2

Example
You are a chef chatting with other chefs after a tough day of baking.
Let's talk about cakes: 4.291667
Let's talk cakes: 4.230769

Sample finding

	Let's talk x	Let's talk about x
Chef teaching community college	5.73	6.25
Judge on a cooking show	4.73	5.17
Chef chatting with chef	4.23	4.29
Chef talking to family	2.27	2.17

Data: constraints

(4) **Bare N**

- Let's talk books.
- *Let's talk *a* book.
- *Let's talk *the* books.

(5) **Count/mass distinctions**

- Let's talk books/wine.
- *Let's talk *one* book.

(6) **modifier N**

- ?Let's talk good books.
- ?Let's talk great hunting.

N modifier

- ??Let's talk food sold at Wegman's.

Theoretical assumptions

Information structure *def* 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

Lambrecht 1994

Topic is what the sentence is about

Gundel & Fretheim 2004, Riou 2015

Interpretation of indefinites in topic positions is restricted

Portner 2004, Erteschek-Shir 2007

Questions still to be answered

What counts as specific?
What to do with proper N?
(7) Let's talk Trump.
How is the sense of *commitment to the topic* achieved?
(8)
Speaker A: Let's talk books.
Speaker B: #No, maybe another time.

What is the role of intonation?
Prosodic phenomena, particularly pitch contours, are linked to topichood and information structure in English (Zellers, & Post. 2009, Steedman, 2014, among others).
(9)
a. Let's talk about books?
b. *Let's talk books?

Data generalization sources

- native speaker introspection
- Twitter posts with "talk (about) x"
- Mechanical Turk perception studies

Study 1

2 separate groups of 25 participants each one for 'let's talk x', another for 'let's talk about x'
1-7 scale on data grammaticality acceptability

Study 2

2 separate groups of 25 participants each one for 'let's talk x', another for 'let's talk about x'
1-7 scale on acceptability for data context, familiarity, authority, performativity

Working Hypotheses

...*Let's talk x* vs. *Let's talk about x* are **allosentences** *def* 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 Portner 2004

Study #1

Example	Acceptability
Let's talk books	6.12
Let's talk good books	5.76
Let's talk books we all like	3.12

Sample finding

Both *Let's talk x* (4.80) nor *Let's talk about x* (5.16) are acceptable
On average, *Let's talk about x* was rated more acceptable than *Let's talk x*
Statistically significant difference (**p=0.032**)

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