

Topic management in question-based discourse structure

Arndt Riester (University of Cologne)

QUD trees (Riester et al. 2018) provide a principled way to derive the hierarchical structure of discourse without recourse to discourse markers or coherence relations. Each discourse segment is interpreted as the direct answer to an explicit or implicit QUD, which, in turn, represents what the discourse segment is *about*, in the information-structural sense. In this talk I review some of the classical literature on topics and specify some long-standing – chiefly terminological – issues in terms of the QUD notion, such as *Are shifted topics necessarily contrastive? How can we distinguish primary and secondary topics? Can there be non-contrastive, discourse-new topics?* I furthermore argue for a differentiation between referential and conceptual aboutness. In result, I suggest an improved method for topic labeling in natural discourse.

Riester, A., Brunetti, L. & De Kuthy, K. (2018) Annotation guidelines for Questions under Discussion and information structure. In: Adamou, E. et al. (eds.) *Information Structure in Lesser-Described Languages*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp. 403–443.