

Discourse Topics

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In this talk I'll attempt to develop a theory of what discourse topics do in discourse structure and how they are affected by intrasentential properties. I'll begin with Buring's theory of sentence topic and van Kuppevelt's theory of discourse topic and show how the very nice theory that results from combining their views cannot deliver the kinds of information a theory of discourse interpretation requires from discourse topic. I'll then go on to propose a related but more abstract theory of discourse topic that is inherently dynamic and combines both pragmatic and semantic elements.