Tough nuts to crack in information-structural annotation

In this talk I will discuss competition between prominent entities in information packaging. We will first look at the interplay of different semantic prominence-lending features in cases with clear information-structural partitions. Then, we will analyze sentences with ambiguous partitions. For example, in the first sentence in (1), the referents have different probabilities of being promoted to topichood: the illness > my dog > some poison. Semantic properties, such as agentivity, definiteness, specificity, or animacy, are a key factor in explaining topicality (Brunetti 2009).

(1) The illness$_i$ / Some poison$_i$ killed my dog. It$_{i[+top]}$ first caused skin problems and bleedings.

Furthermore, we will raise the question of context. We know that the preceding context plays a role on the topic shift potential. But does the following context also have an effect, i.e. is there a backward-looking effect on topicality?