Predicting upcoming questions and coherence relations

The topic of what types of relationships structure coherent discourses has been the subject of longstanding debate. Existing approaches include models of discourse coherence relations and models of questions under discussion (QUD) -- the former structuring discourse by establishing coherence relations between adjacent sentences and the latter structuring discourse with respect to implicit questions. I describe two conversation-continuation experiments that were conducted to test whether biases toward particular questions are correlated with analogous biases towards particular coherence relations.

(1) FRIEND: John scolded Mary.  
YOU: __________ [Why?]

(2) FRIEND: John scolded Mary. _____ [She had been misbehaving]

In contexts like (1) and (2), the rate at which people posed the question 'Why?" was correlated with the rate at which they wrote explanation continuations, suggesting that discourse coherence relations can perhaps be recast as a series of implicit questions.

QUDs for SemBabble: What phenomena are addressed with existing QUD models versus coherence models? How does the taxonomy of coherence relations correspond to the types of questions people ask in dialogs? How can we measure interlocutors' perception of the coherence of a dialog or a text?