Ellipsis and verbal syntax in Russian
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In this talk I explore how Russian finite verbs are composed syntactically. One focus is on the evidence which suggests that finite verbs (despite being words in morphophonological terms) reflect a complex internal syntactic structure. Another focus is on the kinds of evidence that can help to detect that syntactic structure. One such piece of evidence is a previously un-noticed instance of Verb Stranding Verb Phrase Ellipsis in Russian. Two separate strands of literature—one on verb movement (Bailyn, 1995, inter alia) and one on superlexical prefixation (Svenonius 2004, 2008, Fowler 1994, Babko-Malaya 2003, inter alia)—suggest that Russian verbs move to a position between T and vP in canonical clauses, and that this position is an Asp projection. Identity conditions on the stranded verb in V-Stranding VPE, when probed carefully, can be understood to support these preliminary conclusions about the distribution of the parts of the verb across syntactic space. Before this can be demonstrated, however, the empirical properties of V-Stranding VPE must be carefully explored in order to a) distinguish the construction from argument drop, and b) understand the verb-matching properties of the construction. This investigation, in turn, opens the door to two research paths: the argument drop data lead to conclusions about syntactic restrictions on Russian argument drop, and the verb-matching investigation sheds light on the nature of ellipsis licensing conditions.