

## **A scalar theory of past and present**

Daniel Altshuler (Hampshire College)

Tenses are typically characterized as being relative or absolute. In the talk, I argue that the present tense in English is an amalgam of both a relative and an absolute present, while the Russian present tense is purely relative. Despite these difference, the two presents share something in common: they are scalar alternatives to past (PRES  $\phi$  asymmetrically entails PAST  $\phi$ ). I use these facts to derive the well-documented intuition that English has sequence of tense (SOT), but Russian does not. I do so without invoking an SOT rule and without invoking *de re* mechanisms. I end the talk but briefly commenting on some outstanding issues, including whether the proposed analysis could be extended to other uses of the past tense (e.g. in 'before' clauses) which arguably motivate an SOT rule.