

**The University of Pittsburgh ~ Department of
Linguistics**

Colloquium Series *Presents:*

“The Evolution of Aspect: A Case Study in Russian”

Presented By: Wendy Martelle

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This paper attempts to address the question of how aspectual morphological forms in the Russian past tense evolved, as well as to determine the degree to which Russian fits in the aspectual development framework proposed by Bybee et al. (1994). A review of studies that investigated the historical development of aspectual systems is included and followed by an examination of data tracing three verbs through three different eras in the development of Russian: early Old Russian (the twelfth – fourteenth centuries), a later stage of Old Russian (the seventeenth century) and present-day Modern Russian. Several patterns of development were observed; namely, that past tense forms changed from Old Russian (a total of four tense forms) to Modern Russian (one past tense form), and the function of prefixes shifted to a more perfectivizing role. These patterns mostly fit Bybee et al.’s (1994) theory, in that perfective prefixes in Russian act as bounders; however, some concerns are raised regarding the status of marked imperfectives in Modern Russian within that framework.

**Friday, April 11, 2008 at 3:00 p.m.
Room 332 ~ Cathedral of Learning**