

Stefania Degaetano-Ortliev, Tanja Säily & Yuri Bizzoni (University of Saarland/University of Helsinki) – Registerial adaptation vs. innovation across situational contexts: 18th century women in transition

Endeavors to computationally model language variation and change are ever increasing. While analyses of recent diachronic trends are frequently conducted, long-term trends accounting for sociolinguistic variation are less well-studied. Our work sheds light on the temporal dynamics of language use of British 18th century women as a group in transition across two situational contexts. Our findings reveal that in formal contexts women adapt to register conventions, while in informal contexts they act as innovators of change in language use influencing others. While adopted from other disciplines, our methods inform (historical) sociolinguistic work in novel ways. These methods include diachronic periodization by Kullback-Leibler divergence to determine periods of change and relevant features of variation, and event cascades as influencer models.