
A Current approaches to language variation and change: bringing together historical linguistics and sociolinguistics

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The past two decades have witnessed a flowering of interest in applying the insights of sociolinguistic studies of variation to language change in the past. Scholars such as Peter Trudgill and Terttu Nevalainen have helped to establish historical sociolinguistics as an exciting new interdisciplinary field of historical linguistics, in which variation and change in written documents from earlier periods are analyzed and interpreted in terms of external (social) factors, such as occupation, gender, or social network. The research of scholars working on the ethnography of communication and the construction of e.g. gender or social-class identities also has important consequences for studying the historical record, e.g. in determining what kinds of social dimensions were most relevant to linguistic variation and change in preindustrial and/or non-Western societies.

This workshop will familiarize participants with some of the major topics of research in historical sociolinguistics, and introduce them to some of the major problems and issues facing scholars in the field. We will examine four case studies, two from English and two from other languages:

- (1) the rise of *do*-support in early modern English;
- (2) new dialect formation in postcolonial Englishes, focusing on U.S. and New Zealand English;
- (3) variation in written and spoken Latin of the late Roman Republic and Roman Empire; and
- (4) written evidence for changes in spoken Arabic during the medieval period.

In addition, participants are encouraged to bring their own research on topics related to sociolinguistic variation and change, and share their findings and questions with others.