

Meredith Tamminga

Leaders of language change: micro and macro perspectives

Linguistic theories of the relationship between synchronic variation and diachronic change often highlight the role of leaders of language change: groups or individuals that drive change forward through their linguistically innovative behavior. The question of who leads language change can be thought of in terms of group differences at the community level or in terms of individual differences within groups. In this talk I discuss my research on the relationship between these two levels of analysis. I report on a study of how individual differences in cognitive style, personality, and social network degree are related to individual innovativeness in a number of ongoing sound changes in Philadelphia English, connecting these differences to our established understanding of group-level sociolinguistic stratification in this speech community. I highlight ways in which patterns of covariation between changes differ across groups and individuals, arguing that theories of change leadership developed based on group differentiation do not always make the correct predictions about individual differences in ongoing language change. I argue that the question of who leads change will need to be refined to ask who leads *which* change before we can successfully connect the micro and macro perspectives on change leadership.