

Marc L. Greenberg

“The Emergence of Distinction: Style as a Factor in (Slavic) Language Change”

The presentation examines “style” in language change, akin to, but not identical to, the notion of style as used in archaeology. In this sense, style is, roughly, conscious innovation imbued with meaning and functioning to mark off a group, applied to language rather than material culture. As such, this use of the notion of style can be viewed as a precursor to modern – 19th-century and later – processes of standardization. The presentation focuses on case studies from medieval to modern in Slavic languages that exemplify style innovations with a view to helping investigators distinguish between style innovations and more familiar types of language change, e.g., structurally induced change, prestige-driven innovation. As such, the presentation offers a diachronic perspective on standardization as an enrichment and dialogue with the papers on modern cases of standardization and nation-making.