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*Urban vernaculars and intra-speaker variation:
Linguistic accommodation in merchant letters from Milan*

Historical sociolinguistics has seen a revived interest in the question of urban vernaculars and urban centres, particularly in the field of English linguistics (e.g. Auer 2018; Kerswill & Williams 2000; Auer et al.'s project on *Emerging Standards*; for Italian, Tomasin 2016; in Europe more generally, Extra & Yağmur 2004). Conversely, studies that consider how the connection between urban vernaculars and intra-speaker variation are relatively rare in the research literature (but see Auer 2015; Schiegg 2018). This paper examines two graphemic variables, providing evidence of intra-speaker variation in seven letters written by a Milanese merchant, Francesco Tanso (?–1398), to members of the large Datini trading company based in Tuscany. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the aim of the paper is to show how stylistic choices can function as a linguistic resource for accomplishing pragmatic purposes (cf. Hernandez-Campoy & García-Vidal 2018). I argue that a process of written accommodation was occurring in a situation where the balance of power between interlocutors was uneven, and show how this difference is played out in graphemic variables. The variation inherent in these letters, in turn, can be seen as part of the broader power dynamic evolving between Tuscany and Milan in late medieval Italy. While studies of style, audience design, and stylistic variation have been popular ever since Bell (1984), the main focus of this research trajectory has been on spoken corpora, with little attention paid to writing or how this approach can be applied in historical perspective. This paper, therefore, has implications for language history 'from below' in general and the interplay between intra-speaker variation and historical data in particular.

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