Modelling (Dia)lectal coherence across time:
Exploring the relationship between lifespan and community change in Swabian

Karen V. Beaman
Queen Mary, University of London
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Forty years ago, Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968:188) observed that "idiolects do not provide the basis for self-contained or internally consistent grammars," rather it is the grammar of the speech community, governed by social factors, that reflects regularity and coherence and where linguistic change occurs. Recently, increasing focus has been placed on the role of the individual in ongoing language change and whether individual lifespan trajectories can "speed up" or "slow down" a community change in progress. This conundrum precipitates the question as to how well the grammars of individuals and the grammars of a community may cohere or "behave in parallel" (Guy & Hinskens 2016:1).

One common method for evaluating linguistic coherence is the concept of co-variation which implies "that variables are correlated" (Guy 2013:63). While many studies have shown that variables do exhibit patterns of co-variation (Meyerhoff and Walker 2006; Newlin-Łukowicz 2016; Oushiro and Guy 2015), lectal cohesion may be more multidimensional than has been generally assumed. Another method for evaluating lectal coherence utilises implicational patterns to identify types and levels of coherence across sociolects. Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016:15) found that *Tussentaal* "is not just a random idiolectal mix of dialect features, but that it is structured by implicational principles shared across the speech community."

To explore the concept of sociolectal coherence and how it shapes variation and fosters or constrains language change, this paper examines language usage in two Swabian speech communities through a combined real-time panel study and real-time trend study. Coupled with concepts from implicational scaling and the order theory of mathematics, the Lectal Lattice analyses 32 phonological and morpho-syntactic features of Swabian along with five social factors to build a model of linguistic coherence. The Lectal Lattice offers a new method for evaluating (dia-)lectal coherence across the lifespan, providing insight into whether less coherent lects are more vulnerable to change and convergence to the standard language, while more coherent lects are less susceptible.

References:

Ghyselen, Anne-Sophie and Jacques Van Keymeulen. 2016. "Implicational Scales in Colloquial Belgian Dutch." *Dialectologia et Geolinguistica* 24:1–17.

Guy, Gregory R. 2013. "The Cognitive Coherence of Sociolects: How Do Speakers Handle Multiple Sociolinguistic Variables?" *Journal of Pragmatics* 52:63–71.

Meyerhoff, Miriam and James A. Walker. 2006. "The Persistence of Grammatical Constraints: 'Urban Sojourners' from Bequia." *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 12(2):131–43.

Newlin-Łukowicz, Luiza. 2016. "Co-Occurrence of Sociolinguistic Variables and the Construction of Ethnic Identities." *Lingua* 172–173:100–115.

Oushiro, Livia and Gregory R. Guy. 2015. "The Effect of Salience on Co-Variation in Brazilian Portuguese." *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics: Selected Papers from NWAV 43* 21(2).