# Modelling lectal coherence: The case of Swabian German

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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, which reflects regularity and coherence and where linguistic change occurs. Guy & Hinskens (2016) claim that the concept of orderly heterogeneity implies that "speech communities are sociolinguistically coherent .... [meaning that] the community should collectively behave in parallel: variants (or rates of use of variants) that index a given style, status, or a social characteristic should co-occur ... like a falling domino can make a row of neighbouring dominoes fall" and "can be characterized as displaying coherence" (Guy & Hinskens 2016:1-2).

Co-variation is one approach to coherence; however, another and perhaps more promising approach utilises Guttman and Bickerton-like implicational scaling (Bickerton, 1973; Guttman, 1944) to identify types and levels of coherence across various lectal chains in an implicational like pattern. In their study of the Belgian dialect of *Tussentaal*, Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016) found, as a result of dialect loss, destandardisation, and demotisation, the dialect-standard constellation in Flanders has transformed into a largely diaglossic repertoire (cf. Auer 2005). They argue 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" (Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen 2016:15).

To explore the concept of sociolinguistic coherence and how it shapes variation and fosters or constrains language change, this paper examines language usage in two Swabian speech communities across two points in time (1982 and 2017). Following the traditional quantitative variationist approach, pioneered by Labov in analysing the variation between dialect and standard language features (Labov, 1966, 1994, 2001, 2011), coupled with Guttman and Bickerton-like implicational scales (Bickerton, 1973; Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen, 2016; Guttman, 1944; Rickford, 1991), and drawing on concepts from the order and lattice theory of mathematics, twelve phonological and morpho-syntactic features of Swabian, along with five social factors (speaker age, sex, education, orientation, mobility) are modelled to examine aspects of linguistic coherence and language change across the two time periods. The hypothesis of this research is that more coherent lects are less vulnerable to change and convergence to the standard language, while less coherent lects are more susceptible. The modelling approach used in this paper brings together three views of lectal coherence – covariation, implicational scaling, and lattice theory – to demonstrate a holistic approach to the theory of linguistic coherence and its impact on language change.