Thesis: A Survey on Models of Language Acquisition, Null Subject Stage in Children and Variation Observed in Old English

Abstract: For my dissertation, I expect to make contributions in three areas. The first will be on learnability in the Principle and Parameters (P&P) framework. Parameters are typically discrete and binary, a real-valued approach would contribute to language variation and change that is often pointed to as a weakness of the discrete formulation. The second involves computational modeling of null subject production in English speaking children. It is unresolved why children in an English speaking environment (obligatory subject) drop subjects. I tie the real-valued work in P&P to shed light on this problem. The third entails a comprehensive corpus study of Old English to examine the variety of word orders it exhibits. This is informed by work in learnability, specifically triggering theory and grammar competition which are at the core of the first two prongs of my relevant literature review.

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