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The origin and diffusion of variations

This paper presents a further step toward incorporating methods of evolutionary genetics into the study of language acquisition and change. We explore how, as a result of learning, syntactic variations may originate from and spread within a specific set of lexical items, and these variations then cause further changes in the global properties of the grammar. We show that the mathematical models of genetic drift can be used to capture the stochastic aspects of linguistic transmission, with implications in the study of linguistic typology as well.