A Gradient Grammar Approach to Concord Variation in Existential there+be Constructions

Robin Melnick
robin.melnick@sjsu.edu

INTRODUCTION

"There's lots of linguists at this conference!"

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is 'cue distance' (%), as defined here, a minimally significant factor in 8th agreement?
2. Do previously observed variations in the relative influence on discord variation with different determiner types, in fact, correlate with the extent to which each of these determiner types variesly contributes to increased cue distance?

METHOD

Using a combination of programmatic and hand coding, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (McASe) yielded 1563 tokens for there (across 842 tokens (there's) and 741 tokens (there are)). After removing tokens, here 842 tokens (post-copular NPs), locatives ("What do you find there is/are, and so on.

Results

ETB discord is principally a phenomenon of PL-NP with contracted SG copula

A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON SPOKEN CORPORA

Consider that for some speakers, the [final | there] is/are tends to deviate from a following subject, making there is/are essentially uninterpretable in phonics such as there's now to there's one, adverbs in the examples of a. This raises the possibility of transmission errors.

To account for this in the present study, a check of tokens where there is/are precedes a subject found no significant differences, indicating that there is/are are not easily distinguished from one another in transmission.

SELECTED REFERENCES


REFERENCE


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