ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: The Effects of Exposure on L2 Concord and Non-Concord Existential There

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Non-concord (number disagreement) existential there (there + be) is prevalent in all native English varieties (Collins 2012), but it is not well understood how non-native English speakers use existential there. Extent of exposure to native speech is known to influence the adoption of native, non-prescriptive features (Sankoff 1997). Therefore, previous research leaves this question unanswered: Since L2 English speakers are not taught to use non-concord existential there, which is prevalent in native English, does extent of exposure to native English affect L2 oral use of non-concord? This study answers this question by testing this hypothesis: If extent of exposure to native English speakers is greater, then L2 oral use of non-concord existential there will increase, approaching native-like frequency. This study proposes that L2 speakers adopt non-concord existential there as extent of exposure to native speech increases. These findings can be generalized to suggest that with increased exposure to non-prescriptive native speech, non-prescriptive feature frequencies in L2 speech approximate those of native speech. Furthermore, these results support the hypothesis that the adoption of non-prescriptive features makes L2 speakers more native-like.