

Language policies and attitudes towards Frisian in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation into covertly and overtly held attitudes towards the minority language Frisian in the Netherlands. A large scale matched-guise investigation was held in five locations throughout the Netherlands, including the province of Fryslân, where Frisian enjoys an official status in education and government and top-down language policy encourages usage of the minority language. The project reported upon is the first language attitude investigation to be held in a broad population group since large scale language planning and policy changes have taken place in the province. The outcomes from the attitude investigation are viewed in light of these language planning and policy changes. Our analysis indicates that the top-down language planning concerned with Frisian over the last 20 years has not brought with it more positive attitudes towards the language. These findings have implications for language planners who hope to increase the status of minority languages in Fryslân and elsewhere.

1. Frisian as a minority language

West Frisian is a Germanic language spoken mainly in the province of Fryslân in the north of the Netherlands. Other varieties of Frisian are North and East Frisian, both spoken in Germany. This paper focuses on the situation of West Frisian and for the remainder of the paper ‘Frisian’ is used to refer to the linguistic variety spoken in the Netherlands only. The main concern of this paper is to report on the currently held language attitudes towards Frisian, a language which has enjoyed an increase in official status and amount of institutional support in the last decades. To better understand the backdrop to our research question we give a brief outline below of the many factors that can be said to contribute towards the vitality of a minority language. Following the ethnolinguistic vitality framework (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor 1977) we discuss some important factors in the domains of demography, institutional support, and status that determine the vitality of Frisian. This introduction thus presents the larger context for our investigation and attempts to make clear why language attitude investigations are important for the study of minority languages. We argue that language attitude research enables linguists to better understand processes behind language shift as well as making language planners able to draw more informed conclusions about the outlooks and needs that different speaker groups might have.

1.1 Demography

On the side of demography, Frisian is a resilient language within the Netherlands. In the last 50 years regular surveys have been held to monitor the reported usage of the language (alongside Dutch). It is important here for the reader to note that speakers of Frisian are generally also speakers of Dutch. Since the first survey of reported language use was published in 1969 (Pietersen 1969) the proportion of inhabitants in Fryslân who claim to understand Frisian has hardly changed, and lies around 90-95%. The percentage of people claiming to speak Frisian was 85% in 1967 (Pietersen 1969) but dropped slightly in subsequent decades according to the following reported language surveys (Gorter, Jelsma, van der Plank & de Vos 1984). The number of reported speakers has remained stable since the 1980s, however, at 70-75% of the province's population (Province Fryslân 2007a, 2011, Gorter & Jonkman 1995). This means that we estimate speakers of Frisian in the Netherlands today at 480,000.

1.2 Institutional support for Frisian

On the side of *institutional support* there has been a noticeable increase of governmental support to the Frisian language during the last decades. This support has come from the local provincial government, government-funded support organisations as well as from the national government through inclusion in education, the judicial system and through ratification of international treaties with respect to regional and minority languages.

National governmental decisions have allowed Frisian official recognition as a minority language in the Netherlands. The language is an accepted medium of communication in the court system within the province of Fryslân. The language is furthermore recognised through inclusion in the Netherland's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages. Furthermore, Frisians are the only group recognised as a national minority with the Netherlands' ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In a decision from 2010, the Dutch parliament determined to include Dutch and Frisian in the country's constitution as the only official languages of the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid 2010).

The support for Frisian from the provincial government in Fryslân can be seen as strong. The province has a number of overt language policies in place, such as the 'taaltaske', a bag with information about Frisian and multilingualism that parents in Fryslân are handed at children's birth. The

province also invests in speech pathology materials for Frisian, and has plans for the development of information technology devices for the language (Province Fryslân 2007b). The culture and language organisation Afûk is partly subsidised by the province (Afûk 2011: 30). Afûk aims to promote Frisian as well as informing citizens about the Frisian language. The organisation provides language courses and has initiated campaigns to promote the usage of Frisian in all social domains, including that of the corporate world (Afûk 2011). Other institutional support for Frisian inside the province of Fryslân includes the pop music, theatre shows and fictional literature available in the language.

From being a subject offered after school hours in the beginning of the 20th century, Frisian became an obligatory subject in primary school in the province in 1974 and an obligatory subject in secondary school in 1993 (Inspectie van het onderwijs 2006). Today there are a number of bilingual or even trilingual primary schools in Fryslân that use Frisian as one of the mediums of instructions (alongside Dutch and English), and the language thus serves as a natural part of primary school children's academic development. There are no secondary schools that use Frisian as their medium of instruction, however. As hinted at above this means that all Frisian speaking children must master Dutch well enough to be able to graduate from secondary school. In practice this means that there are but very few native Frisian speakers in Fryslân who do not speak Dutch.

As a side note here it is worth discussing in short what the linguistic implications are of the competing statuses that Frisian and Dutch have in education and mainstream society. De Haan (1997) argues that the relationship between Frisian and Dutch resembles that between regional dialects and standard languages in other European countries. He claims that Frisian is experiencing vertical convergence towards Dutch, a language which serves as linguistic norm in the Frisian-speaking areas. This argument is similar to that made by Breuker (1993), who claims that although there is a standardised Frisian, the acceptance of the Frisian norm is not widespread in the population¹. One implication of this is that the Frisian language is vulnerable for interference from Dutch on structural and lexical levels. The lack of acceptance of the norm is likely to be related to the fact that only a small number of people in Fryslân confidently claim to be

¹ Acceptance is here used in the sense of Haugen (1966) who argues that all aspects of standardisation, namely codification, elaboration, selection and acceptance of the language norm, must be undergone to differentiate a language from a dialect.

able to write Frisian. In 2011 the number of writers of Frisian was estimated to lie around 12% of the province's population (Province Fryslân 2011).

1.3 *The status of Frisian*

The main aim of the investigation reported in this paper is to investigate language attitudes towards Frisian in the Netherlands, i.e. the *status* that the language holds in contemporary Dutch society. However, the component of status in the framework of language vitality has more elements than just the attitudes that listeners hold when they are confronted with a linguistic variety (predominantly the topic of our investigation). Giles et al. (1977) note that status also entails 1) the status of a speech *community*, and 2) the historical position the speaker group and the language is perceived to have.

1) There are no large scale empirical studies with quantitative or qualitative data concerning the social status of the Frisian speaker group in the Netherlands as opposed to the status of Dutch speakers today. It is our experience that most Frisian speakers identify themselves as Dutch speakers as well as Frisian, which causes problems for carrying out such an investigation.

2) On the side of the historical status of the Frisian speech community, there are certain points that can be made, however. The historical status of the Frisian speech community can be said to be rather high as the Frisians are an indigenous people in the north of the Netherlands and can point to a long cultural and linguistic history in the area. When it comes to historic language status there are records of the Frisian language from as far back as the 7th century AD. Old Frisian was used actively between the 13th and 16th centuries, but the written Frisian language was practically out of use in formal contexts during the 17th and 18th centuries before becoming standardised in a form close to its modern form in the 19th century (Hoekstra 2003).

We finally arrive at contemporary language status, the topic of the current paper. A number of studies have previously investigated the status that the Frisian language holds with its speakers. There are two main reasons why the current study is needed to add to our knowledge of the status of Frisian. Firstly, it has been quite a while since the previous empirical investigation of language attitudes towards Frisian was conducted in a broad sample of informants. The last language attitude investigation reporting attitudes towards the language published was held in 2005 by Ytsma (2007) and focussed on language teachers in training within Fryslân

only. Ytsma (2007) asked informants direct questions about the value they would attach to usage of the Frisian language; i.e. collecting overtly held attitudes. He reports that there is a large difference in attitudes between students with Frisian as a first language and students with Dutch as a first language in that both groups rate their first language the highest (Ytsma 2007: 162). Ytsma further reports no significant difference in language attitudes between genders or socio-economic groups in his material. His data was based on a fairly homogenous group of informants, however, all aspiring to the same profession in the same geographic location. Ytsma had also conducted a larger study of language attitudes in Fryslân some years before (Ytsma 1995). This previous investigation sampled views of 410 children and 220 adults towards Frisian and Dutch and found that neither Frisian nor Dutch speaking children in Fryslân assign higher social status or economic status to Dutch than to Frisian (1995: 132). He also found that Dutch speaking parents express negative views towards Frisian in 9 out of 10 measures of language attitudes (1995: 136). His findings indicate that there could either be a development of negative attitudes towards Frisian with age in the Dutch speaking population in Fryslân, or that there are more positive attitudes towards Frisian found in the generation of Dutch speakers who are now in their early twenties than could be found in their parents' generation. As a follow-up study was never conducted this study aims to address this question by investigating language attitudes in said age group; informants in their early twenties.

Another large scale language attitude investigation was held in the early 1990s and reported in Gorter & Jonkman (1995). Their study sampled consciously held beliefs and overtly held attitudes about Frisian by 1368 inhabitants of Fryslân and concluded, similarly to that of Ytsma (1995), that Frisian and Dutch adults in the province hold widely different language attitudes. The speaker groups, not surprisingly, were the most positive towards their native language. Dutch speakers held negative views towards the usage of Frisian in contexts such as the media (Gorter & Jonkman 1995: 47), mirroring the findings that Ytsma made in the same time period.

Another reason why the current study is needed is found when interpreting the findings reported by Gorter & Jonkman (1995) and Ytsma (1995) above. It concerns the view that the majority language group, i.e. Dutch speakers, holds towards the minority language Frisian. Edwards (2010: 99) calls for more information about majority language groups' attitudes towards minority languages, as only with attitude data from the majority group will it be possible to create a typology that successfully

predicts how certain language planning efforts are fruitful, while others are not. As will become clear from studies discussed below, there is reason to believe that top-down language planning can lead to more positive attitudes towards the minority language also in groups of majority language speakers. As noted above, there has been an increase in institutional support towards Frisian in the last decades. This increase could, perceivably, have led to an increase in positive attitudes towards Frisian in the Dutch speaking population in the decades since previous investigations were held. The current investigation thus aims to compare language attitudes towards Frisian and Dutch in populations of Frisian and Dutch speakers. The latter group will not only be sampled inside of Fryslân, but also in areas outside of the province.

2. Language attitudes and minority languages

Sociolinguists have known for some decades now that there is a link between the social meaning that a linguistic variety holds and its chances of survival in a bilingual community. In her study of the bilingual German – Hungarian community in Oberwart, Austria, Gal (1978) showed evidence for a perceived relationship between the usage of Hungarian and a ‘peasant’ identity in the community. She argued convincingly how the negative association of Hungarian with peasant-ness led to more young women opting for German as their language of choice in a number of social domains. A similar association with gender was also found by Cavanaugh (2006) investigating the Bergamasco speech community and the revitalisation efforts for the language in northern Italy. She noted a link between the ‘unmarked’, i.e. normalness, the feminine, and Standard Italian. Because women are the care givers in the communities, and the unmarked choice for women is the Standard language, children mainly tend to grow up speaking Italian, rather than Bergamasco. These studies show how the conceptualisation of regional and minority languages in a speaker’s eyes is important to understand to comprehend why language choices are made down the line. They also indicate that gender differences in language attitudes are important to investigate with women often being in the vanguard of linguistic change (cf. Labov 2001), and the catalysts in language shift from a minority to a majority language.

As noted above, the attitudes towards minority languages can also be viewed in light of political, or language planning, decisions. Woolard & Gahng (1990) found a change in solidarity ratings of Catalan by Castilian speakers after Catalan was given an official status (i.e. in government,

media, court systems, and in education) in Catalunya in Spain. By using a matched-guise test they discovered what can best be described as an increase in tolerance levels for second languages, with Catalan speakers becoming more tolerant of second language speakers of Catalan, and Castilians becoming more tolerant of Catalan usage than they were before legislation for Catalan had come into place (Woolard & Gahng 1990: 326-327). Their study indicates how top-down overt language planning and policy can have an effect on attitudes towards language use. Similarly, Bourhis (1983) investigated attitudes towards language use in Quebec after the passing of legislation for French in the early 1980s. He notes how English speakers' language motivations had changed to the more positive after the introduction of the language bill, and calls for more research on the relationship between language planning and people's motivations for language use.

The found relationship between official language policies and positive language attitudes bode well for the current status of Frisian. We hypothesise that an increase in institutional support towards the Frisian language has led to an increase of positive associations with the Frisian language not only by Frisian speakers themselves, but also by Dutch speakers. We therefore investigate language attitudes both within the province of Fryslân where the major component of institutional support and language planning changes have taken place the last decades, and in the central and south-western parts of the Netherlands, where such language planning has not taken place. We hypothesise that with the increase in official support of Frisian in the last decades we will see a fairly high status given to the language by Dutch and Frisian speakers within the province of Fryslân, while Dutch speakers living outside of Fryslân will rate Frisian more negatively than Dutch because they have not witnessed the effects of the official support.

To sum up we will in our analysis consider three independent variables that could influence language attitudes towards Frisian and Dutch in the Netherlands. These are the informants' home language, gender, and region of origin. The differences between home language is looked at as previous investigations note that informants tend to rate their home language the highest (e.g. Ytsma 2007). We predict that speakers will rate the language they consider their first language the highest. Gender is chosen as a variable based on the studies by Gal (1978) and Cavanaugh (2006) finding a relationship between language shift and women's beliefs and ideologies about the minority languages in question. If the situation at hand is a situation of language shift where Frisian is abandoned for the national

majority language Dutch it could be that this is reflected in gender differences in language attitudes. Women's attitudes could be more favourable towards Dutch than towards Frisian if this is the case. Finally, region is chosen as a factor for the analysis to discover whether being an inhabitant of Fryslân makes a difference for Dutch speakers' perceptions and opinions when it comes to Frisian. Our expectation is that the inhabitants of Fryslân who have first-hand experience with language planning and policies regarding Frisian will be more positive towards the language than those who live outside the province.

3. Methodology

3.1 Test selection

For our investigation we use a combination of indirect questioning of attitudes through the matched-guise technique (MGT), and direct questioning of attitudes. The MGT methodology was first developed for the investigations of language attitudes in the French-English bilingual setting in Quebec, Canada (Lambert, Wallace, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum 1960). A MGT test consists of lexically identical speech samples from a balanced bilingual speaker (i.e. a bilingual with equally high proficiency levels in both languages). The recordings of the bilingual are played interspersed with other recordings (distractors) to avoid listeners being aware of hearing the same speaker twice. Listeners are then asked to evaluate the speakers that they are hearing for different personality attributes. Since the two varieties spoken by the bilingual are in fact produced by the same speaker the results of the speaker-evaluations can be taken as indirect measures of language attitudes, language usage being the only feature between the two recordings that changes. We refer to the attitudes elicited with the MGT as covertly held attitudes.

In addition to the speaker evaluations, the informants in our study were asked, after listening to the sound fragments, to rate the beauty of Dutch and Frisian on a five point semantic differential scale (beautiful – ugly) on a sheet of paper. Ratings in response to the direct questions can be compared to those from the matched-guise test to see whether there is in fact a difference between covertly (privately) held views and responses to direct questions (i.e. overtly held attitudes).

3.2 Stimuli

For our MGT recordings we used a bilingual Frisian-Dutch speaker. The speaker is a female postgraduate student in her late 20s from the Sneek area who reports Frisian and Dutch to be her home languages. She has proficiency in written Frisian and translated the Dutch text to Frisian herself for the recording task. The translation was controlled by a native Frisian speaker working as a linguist at the Frisian Department at the University of Groningen. The bilingual speaker recorded six different versions of the speech samples and we chose the Frisian and a Dutch version that were as similar as possible as far as speech tempo is concerned to make sure that speech tempo would not influence the results. The versions were 38 and 34 seconds long for Frisian and Dutch, respectively. The distractor fragments in the test ranged between 35 and 46 seconds in length.

The reading text used in the MGT was a passage from the children's book *Can't you Sleep, Little Bear?* by Waddell & Firth (2005). The distractor languages in the test were Finnish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish (two different recordings), as well as another two recordings of Dutch. All fragments were played to listeners twice with 6 second gaps between them. The ten recordings were presented in two different orders to the listeners. 97 informants heard the Dutch recording as the fifth fragment and the Frisian recording as the ninth, while 94 informants heard the test with the Frisian recording played second and the Dutch played sixth. T-tests conducted within the Dutch-speaking listener group ($N = 144$) shows that there are no significant differences in attitude ratings between listeners of the different playing orders.

3.3 Procedure

The listeners were provided with rating questionnaires consisting of Semantic Differential Scales (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum 1957). Respondents were asked to evaluate their opinion on a five-point scale where two bipolar adjectives were extreme values. The adjective pairs were 'old-fashioned – modern', 'stupid – smart', 'unattractive – attractive', 'strange – normal', 'unfriendly – friendly' and 'poor – rich'. These adjectives can be classified into the three categories *dynamism* ('old-fashioned – modern' and 'strange – normal'), *attractiveness* ('unattractive – attractive' and 'unfriendly – friendly') and *superiority* ('stupid – smart' and 'poor – rich') following the framework for language attitude testing in Zahn & Hopper (1985). Figure 1 is an image of an English translation of the questionnaire used in the investigation.

After completing the language evaluations informants were asked to provide biographical information regarding their age, gender, region of origin, academic background, home language(s) and brief language learning histories.

<u>Recording 1</u>						
What impression does this speaker make? This speaker sounds:						
	1	2	3	4	5	
a old-fashioned	<input type="radio"/>	modern				
b stupid	<input type="radio"/>	smart				
c unattractive	<input type="radio"/>	attractive				
d strange	<input type="radio"/>	normal				
e unfriendly	<input type="radio"/>	friendly				
f poor	<input type="radio"/>	rich				

Figure 1: Questionnaire used in the MGT

3.4 Subjects

In total there were 191 informants from across the Netherlands who participated in the test. All informants were either students at a higher education institution or pupils (aged 16 to 18) in the two highest classes of secondary schools. The higher education institutions were the University of Groningen and the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. The secondary schools were all schools where students prepare for university studies, so-called VWOs. The experiment was conducted in a school setting, i.e. during the day, in a group in a class room at the university or the secondary school. Four informants who were significantly older than the other informants in the sample, and could be classified as mature students, were removed (33, 47, 50 and 53 years of age) to attain a more homogenous sample for the analysis. Two informants did not respond with ratings of Frisian and Dutch in the task, which results in ratings from 185 informants for the final analysis. All these informants have either Frisian or Dutch as one of their home languages (some informants also reported using an additional language at home). A number of informants reported using both Frisian and Dutch at home. For the sake of this article we have grouped informants according to whether they report to have Frisian as one of their home languages or not. This division results in the distribution of informants found in Table 1. A map of the test locations in the Netherlands is provided in Figure 2.

Table 1: The experiment subjects' distribution of ages, genders and home languages

	Age	Gender		Frisian Home Language?		Total informants
		M	F	No	Yes	
18-28						
Utrecht	($M=20.9, SD=2.34$)	2	25	26	1	27
18-30						
Spijkenisse	($M=25.3, SD=3.3$)	6	4	10	0	10
18-25						
Groningen	($M=20.7, SD=3.89$)	5	31	30	6	36
17-24						
Leeuwarden	($M=18.8, SD=1.67$)	20	43	50	13	63
16-18						
Heerenveen	($M=16.9, SD=0.67$)	26	28	28	21	49
Total		59	126	144	41	185

*Figure 2: Test locations on the map of the Netherlands*

4. Results

4.1 Covertly held language attitudes: The matched-guise results

The overall ratings of Frisian and Dutch by the 185 informants are given in Figure 3 below. As can be seen from the figure the ratings of Frisian are lower overall than the rating of Dutch in our sample.

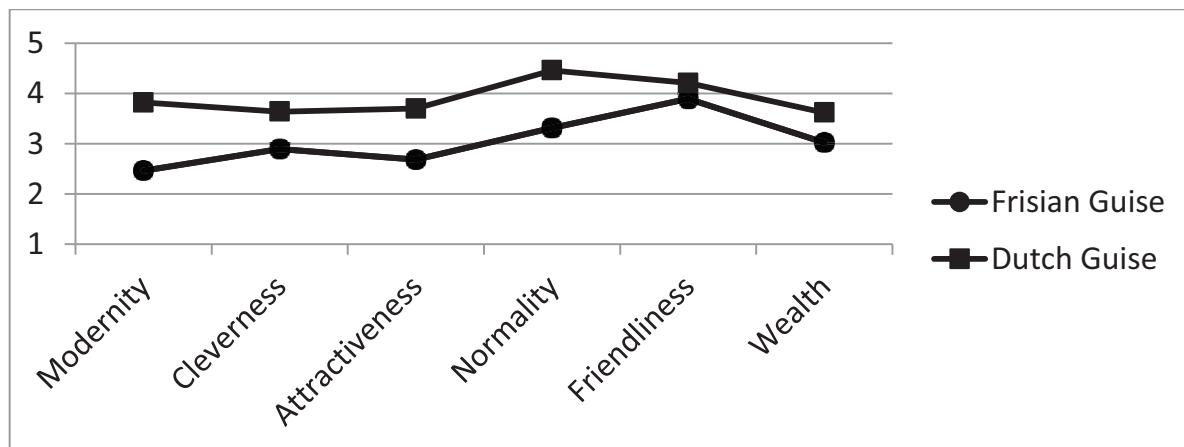


Figure 3: Ratings of the Frisian and Dutch Guise ($N = 185$)

To analyse whether the six evaluative scales in our MGT measure different components of language attitudes we reduced the data by conducting a principal component analysis (PCA). We conducted the PCA on the ratings of the six personality traits normality, attractiveness, cleverness, modernity, friendliness and wealth, which served as input variables. The PCA revealed that the six variables were significantly interrelated. The maximum correlation coefficients (Pearson's r) was $r = .73$ for the ratings of Frisian and $r = .48$ for the ratings of Dutch. This suggests that all six variables normality, attractiveness, cleverness, modernity, friendliness and wealth measure the same phenomenon. At the same time, they do not entirely consist of redundant information, which would be the case if the variables would correlate too highly. For each language (Frisian or Dutch) one principle component with an eigenvalue of more than 1 would have been suitable for further analysis. These eigenvalues were 3.84 for the component in the Frisian data (explaining 64% of the variance) and 2.68 for the component in the Dutch data (explaining 44.6% of the variation). As none of the components in our evaluation correlate above $r = .73$, we report all evaluations in the remainder of the results section. This is to be able to provide a comprehensive view of the variation in the language attitude measures in our sample.

4.2 Differences between listener groups I: Frisian vs. Dutch listeners

The first independent variable we look at with respect to the attitudes is the difference between the two home language groups' ratings. These are portrayed in Figure 4 below.

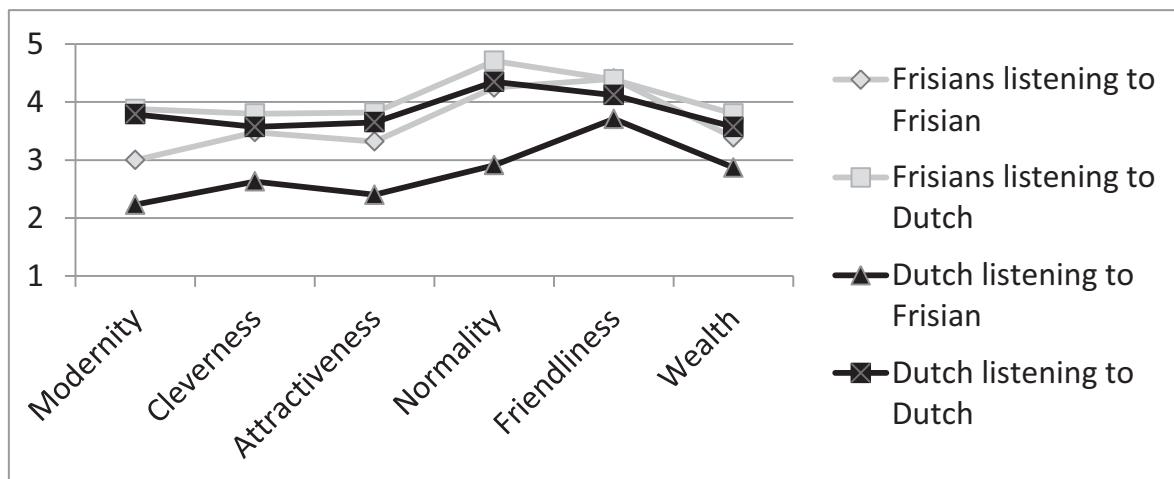


Figure 4: Ratings of the bilingual speaker by the two listener groups (Dutch L1 or Frisian L1)

T-tests of the differences in perceived modernity, cleverness, attractiveness, normality, friendliness and wealth between Frisian and Dutch-speaking listeners were conducted. These were done both on the evaluations of the Frisian speaking guise, and for the evaluations of the Dutch speaking guise.

The t-tests run on the ratings for the Frisian speaking guise show that the Frisian-speaking group (◊ in Figure 4) evaluate Frisian significantly higher than Dutch speakers (▲ in Figure 4) do on all personality traits. This is portrayed in Table 2 below.

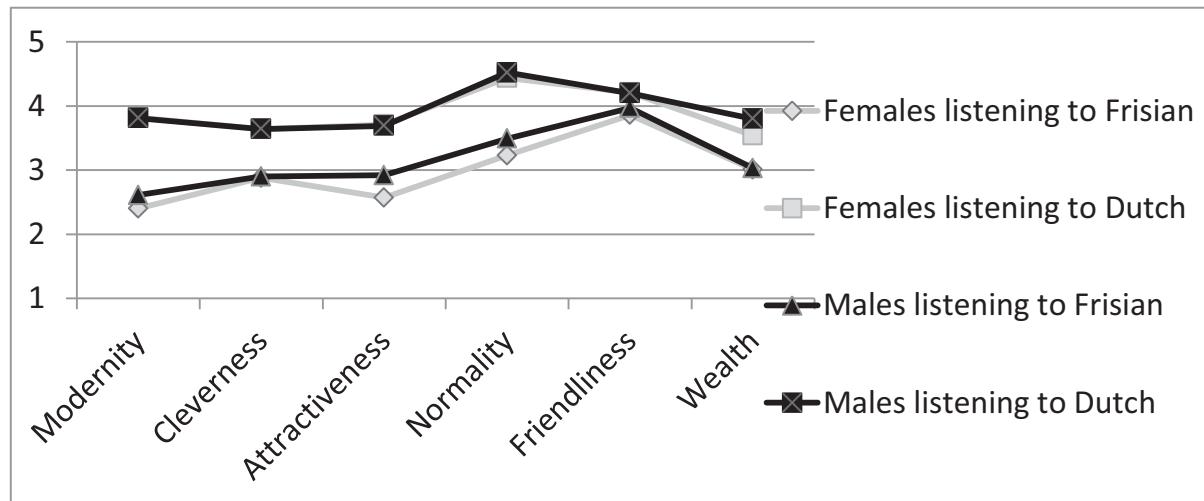
The same procedure was used to establish whether there were significant differences between Frisian (■ in Figure 4) and Dutch (■ in Figure 4) speaking listeners in their ratings of the Dutch guise. The only significant difference found between the two groups was in the perceived normality of Dutch, where Frisian listeners rated Dutch as sounding more normal ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .60$) than Dutch listeners did ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .864$), $t(182) = -2.19$, $p = < .03$. It is important to note that both groups rate Dutch as normal-sounding, however, as mean ratings of 4.71 and 4.39 out of 5 are both far above the middle of the scale (3).

Table 2: T-test and mean scores from evaluations of the Frisian guise

	Frisian listeners		Dutch listeners		<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.22	1.19	2.25	1.13	-4.802 (183)	< 0.001
Modernity	3.68	1.08	2.66	1.17	-5.035 (183)	< 0.001
Cleverness	3.49	1.05	2.45	1.26	-4.80 (183)	< 0.001
Attractiveness	4.49	1.03	2.98	1.36	-6.600 (183)	< 0.001
Normality	4.59	0.84	3.69	1.11	-4.761 (183)	< 0.001
Friendliness	3.46	0.87	2.89	0.97	-3.424 (183)	< 0.001
Wealth						

4.3 Differences between listener groups II: Gender and language attitudes

As can be seen by Figure 5, there are but minor gender differences in the data. The attitudes by male and female listeners overlap almost completely.

*Figure 5: Ratings of the bilingual speaker by female and male listeners (N = 185)*

The only statistically significant difference found in the ratings of Frisian and Dutch between the male and female listener groups was in the perceived wealth of the Dutch guise. Male listeners rate Dutch as

sounding more wealthy ($M = 3.8$, $SD = .69$) than female listeners do ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .82$), $t(183) = -2.09$, $p < .04$.

4.4 Differences between listener groups III: Region and language attitudes

The third independent variable we consider for our analysis is the region of origin of the listeners. As home language is a significant predictor of the attitudes towards Frisian, as seen above, the two home language groups are divided for this analysis. Quite unexpectedly there were 7 Frisian-speaking informants living outside of the province of Fryslân in our data set. However, such a small sample entails that a comparison of Frisians living inside and outside of Fryslân is fruitless. We therefore conduct this part of the analysis on the group of Dutch speakers only, as planned. We consider whether listeners with Dutch as a native language living inside of the province of Fryslân ($N = 78$) are more positive towards Frisian than informants with Dutch as a native language who live outside of Fryslân ($N = 66$).

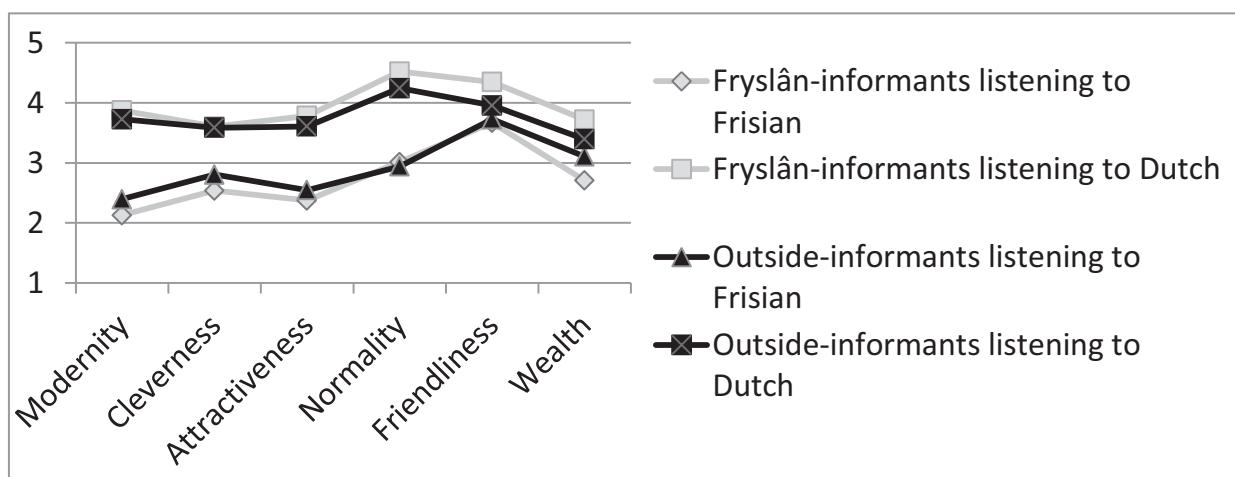


Figure 6: Dutch-speaking listeners' ratings of the bilingual speaker ($N = 144$)

As can be seen from Figure 6, there are but few differences between the two groups of regions when it comes to the ratings of the languages. There are three instances where there is a significant difference between the Dutch speakers living within Fryslân and those living outside Fryslân, however. There is a difference found between the within-Fryslân and outside-Fryslân listener group in the perceived wealth of the Frisian guise where Dutch listeners within Fryslân rated Frisian as poorer (less wealthy)

sounding ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.06$) than did the outside-Fryslân group ($M = 3.1$, $SD = .81$), $t(142) = -2.52$, $p = < .02$. When it comes to the ratings of Dutch, the informants within Fryslân perceived the Dutch guise as friendlier ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.74$) than the informants outside of Fryslân did ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .83$), $t(142) = -3.0$, $p = < .003$, as well as wealthier ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .75$) than did the informants outside Fryslân ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.86$), $t(142) = -2.41$, $p = < .02$.

4.5 Overtly held attitudes: How beautiful are Frisian and Dutch?

In addition to the MGT results we asked the informants to rate how beautiful they thought Dutch and Frisian are on a five-point-scale from beautiful to ugly. The results from this direct manner of questioning could be different from the responses to the matched-guise test as the direct question will elicit more publicly held views. The mean rating of the beauty of Dutch in the sample was 3.68, i.e. on the 'beautiful' side (above 3) of the spectrum (from 1 to 5), while the mean rating of the beauty of Frisian was 2.65, on the 'ugly' side of the spectrum. There are no significant gender or region differences (in the Dutch speaking informant group) for these ratings, but home language does affect the outcomes. There is no significant difference between respondents with Dutch as a home language and respondents with Frisian as home language in the ratings of Dutch. However, there is a highly significant difference again between respondents with Dutch as a home language ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.32$) and respondents with Frisian as a home language ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.16$) when rating the beauty of Frisian $t(182) = -6.66$, $p = < .001$, with Frisians finding their home language considerably more beautiful than the Dutch respondents do. This outcome mirrors that of the matched-guise results presented above.

5. Discussion

Our study set out to investigate the current attitudes towards Frisian in the Netherlands, compared with the attitudes towards Dutch. We also wanted to see whether home language and/or gender are factors that determine language attitudes towards the two languages. Finally, we wanted to investigate whether informants who live in Fryslân and who have more knowledge of Frisian in addition to having experienced large scale changes in language planning and policies in the last decades would be more positive towards the minority language Frisian than informants living outside Fryslân.

The current situation of language attitudes towards Frisian in the Netherlands seems to have remained relatively unchanged since previous investigations. As was the case in the studies by Ytsma (1995 and 2007) home language is the most telling predictor of whether attitudes towards Frisian are positive or not. Dutch informants are largely negative, sometimes neutral and only occasionally positive (Frisian is perceived as friendly-sounding also by Dutch informants) in their evaluations of Frisian. Frisian-speaking listeners are positive towards both languages, which is unsurprising considering these informants are bilinguals who could conceivably consider both Dutch and Frisian as their first languages.

There are no significant gender differences in our data set when it comes to the ratings of Frisian. This means that we have no indications that the social meaning of the language is tied to a specific gender identity. Ytsma (2007: 161) found the same, but notes that there were gender differences in his study of language attitudes towards Dutch. Also in our data there was an indication of gender differences in the perceived wealth of the Dutch speaker, but this difference was minor compared to the differences reported between Dutch and Frisian speakers.

Importantly, the expected difference in attitudes between Dutch speakers who live in Fryslân and those living in Groningen, Utrecht or Spijkenisse (i.e. outside of the Province Fryslân) was not found. The informants in our sample who hail from Fryslân have all experienced language policies and planning for Frisian. They have come into contact with the language through its obligatory position in secondary education and its official status in local government, regardless of whether they are mother tongue speakers of Frisian or not. Woppard & Gahng (1995) found that top-down language planning can have a positive influence on the forming of language attitudes, also with the group of non-minority language speakers. This is not reflected in our data. The informants with Dutch as a first language who live in Fryslân are even more negative on occasion, evaluating Frisian significantly lower on the status-measure ‘wealth’ than what their outside-Fryslân peers do. Interestingly, Dutch speakers living in Fryslân also perceive Dutch significantly more positively than their peers outside of the province do, forming an image of most extreme differences in language attitudes existing in Dutch speakers living in Fryslân. It could be that the daily contact with the minority language leads to more extreme attitudes in the majority language group; a proposal that must be investigated more in depth in future studies.

The lack of positive attitudes with the Dutch speakers in Fryslân can only be viewed as disappointing for language policy makers and educators

in the province. The position that the minority language has been given in education, judicial and political life could have had a negative influence on attitudes with the groups who do not master the minority language, rather than a positive. What can be noted here, however, is that the negative attitudes of Dutch speakers towards Frisian are not new. Gorter & Jonkman (1995) also reported these in their investigation conducted nearly 20 years ago. Further research must be conducted to investigate what the reasons are for the negative attitudes that Dutch speakers hold towards Frisian. We also call for more research that investigates what types of language policies and planning have a positive influence on language attitude forming, and which types and situations have the opposite outcome. Furthermore, measurement of the success of language policies can be done in other manners, for instance by looking at numbers of Frisian language learners and whether they have increased in recent years. More focus on using Frisian in secondary schools may also lead to the language being viewed more positively in the future – a necessity if one wants to ensure the prolonged vitality of the Frisian language.

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