

Title: ‘Ik spreek geen Fries’ – ‘Mar kinsto ferstean?’ Receptive multilingualism in Fryslân

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West Frisian is a minoritized language spoken in the province of Fryslân, in the Netherlands, as well as in some neighboring villages in the province of Groningen. It has actually been said to be converging with Standard Dutch (cf. Nerbonne, 2001; Nota, Coler, & Hilton, 2015), and it has been found to be largely intelligible for Dutch native speakers (cf. De Vries, 2010). However, it seems that negative attitudes towards the language (cf. Hilton & Gooskens, 2013; Belmar, 2018) serve as the basis for a perceived difficulty that is often used to prevent the language from being used in the public sphere.

In this research, we tried to test how much Frisian Dutch native speakers can actually understand, as well as the perceived difficulty of each kind of exercise. An online test was designed with two reading exercises, three listening exercises and twenty sentences in West Frisian that the participants were asked to translate into Dutch. The test was shared through social media, and we got answers from both the Netherlands and Belgium. The results seem to indicate that West Frisian is highly intelligible for Dutch native speakers, which we argue should be used to enrich the school curriculum and foster receptive skills in the minoritized language (cf. Fonseca, 2012), which could in turn boost its use.

Works cited:

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