This paper investigates intonational pitch variations and pitch peak alignment in declarative sentences and is part of a larger study of declarative, interrogative and imperative grammatical constructions in the West Frisian-Dutch contact situation. West Frisian is a minority language spoken in the province of Fryslân in the Netherlands.

Following Jun (2015), we devised a reading task in which phrasal intonation could be analysed while cancelling out focus effects. The reading task contains nine sentences per language, each with three trisyllabic words (SVO): three with focus on the first word, three on the second, and three on the last. For each set of three sentences, lexical stress is equally divided across the syllables of the focused word. A subset of 20 of the study’s 40 bilingual Frisian-Dutch native speakers performed the task in Frisian and Dutch. Pitch measurements were conducted according to the Melodic Analysis of Speech method and adapted MAS+ method, allowing for fine-grained analysis.

Results suggest both Frisian and the local Dutch variety show delays in pitch peak alignment when compared to previous research (Peters, Hanssen & Gussenhoven, 2014), with Frisian showing a stronger delay in focus realisation. Additionally, an age effect in Frisian pitch production suggests a possible ongoing change in the language.

Index Terms: Pitch peak alignment, phrasal intonation, minority language, reading task

References