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Sustainable Development in a Diverse World (SUS.DIV)

RESEARCH PAPER OF RESEARCH TASK 1.2

“Cultural diversity as an asset for human welfare and development”

**Mapping regional minority languages in Europe.
Frisian in the Netherlands**

Participants

Durk Gorter, Fryske Akademy, The Netherlands, research task leader

1. Introduction

This paper will focus on language survey research on a macro-level. In some cases such as Friesland and Ireland language surveys have been replicated with regular time intervals over a period of over thirty years or longer. The first survey in Friesland was carried out in 1967 and the first in Ireland in 1973 (CILAR 1975). In recent years several surveys have been conducted in most minority language communities across the European Union. In particular the Euromosaic study (1996, 2004) included a number of survey studies of minority language groups that had not done any such study before.

Social language surveys can give us representative and reliable data about a language group, about the language competence of its members, and about the use of languages between generations and usage in different sectors of society.

The aim of the paper is to point to some of the advantages, problems, possibilities and limitations of conducting sociological language surveys among minority language groups based upon the experience in Friesland, The Netherlands.

Section 2 opens with a description of the background of the Frisian language. The next section contains the description and analysis of the major sociolinguistic surveys since the 1960s. Section 3 deals with survey research as way to map the linguistic diversity of the region of Friesland. Section 3.1 deals with some general characteristics of a survey in a minority language context. In section 3.2 their goals and rationale are given. Section, 3.3 deals with the method of survey research emphasizing aspects related to the multilingual context. In section 3.4 some of the major outcomes are presented. In the final section, 4, conclusions about current and future research into the mapping the linguistic diversity in a multilingual province such as Friesland are outlined.

2. Background to the Frisian language: history, migration and dialects

History

Somewhere between 500 and 700 AD North Sea Germanic (also called Ingweonic) evolved into separate languages, Frisian is one of them (Bremmer 1997: 69-70). Historically, Frisian is most closely related to English and both are part of the North Sea Germanic branch of the larger West Germanic language group. As a result of language contact over several centuries the development of Frisian was influenced most by Dutch.

In the early Middle Ages Frisian was spoken not only in the current province of Friesland (*Fryslân*) but over a much larger area in a narrow strip along the coast of what are now the Dutch provinces of *Zuid-Holland*, *Noord-Holland* and *Groningen* and also in the adjoining area of East Friesland (*Ostfriesland*) in the north-west of Germany up to the *Weser* river. Over the ages, Frisian gradually disappeared from these areas (Niebaum 2001).

The change from Latin to the vernacular implied that Frisian was widely used in writing during the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1498 Friesland acquired new rulers; during the 16th and 17th centuries the area became, step by step, incorporated into the Republic of the Netherlands. During the 16th century Frisian texts became scarcer and the language was only spoken in the countryside (Vries 1997). During the same period, a new variety arose in the towns through intensive contact with (early) Dutch in administration and in trade. It is designated as *town-Frisian*, but it is regarded as a dialect of Dutch (Jonkman 1993, Van Bree 1994).

During the 17th and 18th centuries Frisian functioned as a written language hardly at all. A movement to revive Frisian began in the early 19th century (Zondag 1993). Only in the 20th

century does the Frisian language regain a modest position in government, education and the media (Gorter 2001a).

Migration

It can be estimated that up until the 1950s over 90% of households in the countryside spoke Frisian, whilst it was spoken in less than 20% of households in the towns (Boelens and Van der Veen 1956). The majority in some towns spoke town-Frisian. Migration has changed this pattern, although Frisian still has its strongest base in the countryside. Changes in language transmission between the generations and mixed-language marriages lead to fewer children having Frisian as their mother-tongue.

Friesland experienced an emigration surplus over almost the whole of the 19th and 20th centuries. In most years the negative balance of migration was in the order of 2,000 to 5,000 persons. Two periods stand out. Towards the end of the 19th century (1880-1899) and right after World War II (1946-1955), the surplus reached more than 10,000 persons per year. Only in the period between 1971 and 1980 did Friesland experience an influx of immigrants, with an average of around 5,000 newcomers. The growth in the population is mainly due to a birth surplus and longer life expectancy (from a total of 176,000 inhabitants in 1815 through 340,000 in 1900 to 643,000 in 2007).

Since World War II, industrialization and technological changes in agriculture have had an enormous impact in the countryside. Population growth has become concentrated in a limited number of larger towns with a linguistically heterogeneous population. In addition, improvements in transport, the development of mass-tourism and new forms of telecommunication have led to more and more frequent contact with Dutch and with other languages, in particular English. The whole population has undergone a process of mental urbanization.

The provincial borders of Friesland coincide reasonably well with the area in which Frisian is spoken. Only in a small part of the neighbouring province of Groningen, where the language border crosses the administrative border, a few thousand speakers of Frisian are found (Gorter, Jansma & Jelsma 1990).

Division of the dialects

The Frisian-speaking community is basically homogeneous and the main dialectal varieties are mutually intelligible; peripheral dialects may present more difficulties. Traditionally, the Frisian language is divided into three broad regional dialects: Clay Frisian (*Klaaifrysk*), Woodlands Frisian (*Wâldfrysk*) and South-West Corner Frisian (*Súdwesthoeksk*) (Hof 1933, Van der Veen 2001). The standard variety of Frisian evolved gradually during the 19th and 20th centuries.

More peripheral dialects of Frisian are in use by the inhabitants of the small town of Hindeloopen (*Hylpen*) and the Wadden Islands of Schiermonnikoog (*Skiermûntseach*) and Terschelling (*Skylge*). They cannot be understood without effort. The dialects are transmitted hardly to the next generation.

Town-Frisian is spoken in the towns of Leeuwarden, Bolsward, Dokkum, Franeker, Harlingen, Sneek and Stavoren. As a mixture of Dutch and Frisian it can be readily understood by speakers of both languages. The municipality *It Bilt* is a polder where since the 16th century so-called *Biltsk* is spoken; this is also a Dutch-Frisian mixture.

Finally, in the south-eastern part of Friesland, in the municipalities of *Ooststellingwerf* and *Weststellingwerf*, a Saxon dialect is spoken (Wouda 2003). All these dialects have a hard time surviving and are spoken by less people from the next generation.

It may be pointed out that (West-) Frisian has, of course, a strong linguistic relationship to the Sater Frisian and North Frisian languages of Germany. Because of their separate historical development and great geographical distance the three languages differ strongly from one another today and cannot be treated as one minority language.

The language situation in Friesland involves more than just the bilingualism of Frisian and Dutch and their dialects. The number of languages in daily life has increased substantially the last years due to immigration and globalization. This can be demonstrated by the changes in the provincial capital Leeuwarden where over 50 different languages are spoken at home today by primary school children (Van de Avoird et al 1999). English is among the most important of those home languages. The importance of English is also reflected in the linguistic landscape (the public display of languages) where English and Dutch are most prominent and Frisian takes only a minor place (Cenoz & Gorter 2006).

3. Sociolinguistic surveys

3.1 Characteristics of a survey in a minority language context

To many persons to carry out a survey project may seem to be a relatively straightforward exercise, which would not be all that difficult to execute given the right resources in terms of staff, finance and time. In one superficial sense this is completely true, as the basic ingredients can be easily listed and are well known in our society today. Surveys with standardized questionnaires have become one of the most widely used research instruments over the past decades. This type of survey is not only used for scientific studies, but also used widely for market research and public opinion polling. The only goal of doing such surveys sometimes seems to create news for the mass-media.

The following table gives an overview of different stages that can be distinguished in a survey.

Table 1: Stages in a survey project

- < 1 objectives
- < 2 research questions
- < 3 variables
- < 4 questionnaire writing
- < 5 sampling frame
- < 6 field work: data collection
- < 7 data analysis
- < 8 reporting and dissemination

Such a list of steps seems simple and straightforward, but in fact each stage is related to a multitude of problems and several detailed methodological studies have been done each one of the stages separately. One can find a plethora of handbooks dealing with designing and executing survey research in general (Alreck and Settle 1985, Babbie 1973, Bradburn and Sudman 1980, Miller 1991) and there are several specialized books on, e.g., questionnaire design, on sampling methods or on statistical techniques of data-analysis. However, the amount of publications on the technical and methodological peculiarities of surveys when

language or multilingualism or minority languages is the object of the study is rather limited. Lieberman pointed already to this shortage in 1980, but not much has changed in the past 25 years. When handbooks or specialized studies on survey methodology are examined, one does find little to nothing relating to the issues of language or multilingualism. The only issue that get some attention is values in cross-cultural studies (Peng, Nisbett & Wong 1997) or the translation of questionnaires in international studies or studies that involve different language groups (e.g. Behling & Law 2000). The study of the functioning of languages as a social phenomenon is a rather specialized type of survey research.

Each of the stages mentioned in table 1 has some peculiarities in the context of a language survey among a minority language group.

(1) The *objective* of a language survey can be to take stock of the situation and the development of a minority language vis-à-vis a majority language in one particular language community. Another objective can be to measure the degree of language maintenance or language vitality among one or several different minority language groups. Different other objectives are possible, to test a theory or a theoretical proposition, to provide a detailed description, to underpin a language policy, to compare different communities, etc.

(2) The *research questions* depend on the objective and have been paraphrased in a classic sociolinguistic study as the broader issue of “who is speaking what language to whom, when and why?” (Fishman 1965).

(3) The research questions have to be translated into measurable *variables*. As concept indicators they will help to answer the research questions. The following table gives an idea of the concept-indicators (variables) that were used to draft questionnaires in studies of four different European minority languages: Basque, Frisian, Irish and Welsh.

Table 2: Concept-indicators (variables) (ELSN 1996)

1. Lange Competence:	Speaking Understanding Reading Writing
2. Language Use:	Family Interpersonal Relations Neighbourhood Work Public Environment Media
3. Language Attitudes:	Group Identity Language and Identity Reasons for learning language Education Policies Media Policies Language Policies in Public Sector

These variables were translated into a questionnaire with mainly closed, multiple-choice type questions.

(4) Once the variables have been determined, they in their turn have to be translated - operationalized - into a *questionnaire*. Formulation of questions, based on concept indicators, is among the most important steps of any survey project. In total, the four questionnaires in the European Language Survey Network contained over one thousand discrete questionnaire items on a wide variety of topics, excluding the socio-demographic background questions on age, marital status, place of residence, education, socio-economic status, etc.

Dealing with survey studies in a bilingual community there are additional problems, such as what language will be used for the questions: only one language (then which one?) or both languages (or even three)? Questionnaires have to be developed in more than one language that are reliable, complete, accurate, and culturally appropriate.

(5) As far as the *sampling frame* is concerned, most people would agree that the sample has to be representative. But a researcher may forget to answer the question: “representative of what?”, (or, “how well?”). Will the sample include only speakers of the minority language, e.g., because the group is only a small proportion of the total population or are all inhabitants of a certain area interviewed? Generally it seems to be known that the criterion of randomness is important in a sample, but few persons are able to decide whether a two-stage cluster sample can better fulfil that criterion than a stratified sample. For regional minority language communities also the issue of borders may arise: will the sample be drawn from the population of the administrative area or, from the linguistic area (where both areas in most cases do not fully overlap)? All these questions are important for the end result and have to be answered before data collection can begin.

(6) In terms of *data collection* many other, but related issues do arise. A decision has to be made whether the interviews are carried out through surface mail, by telephone, by means of face-to-face interviews, or through the internet.

Another important issue becomes the language to be used during the interview. This choice may be quite complicated when dealing with a minority language (with low prestige and/or not likely to be used in formal situations). A related issue concerns the proficiency of the interviewers to carry out interviews: are they sufficiently skilled to carry them out in two (or more) languages?

(7) Many general techniques for *data-analysis* are well-known, such as frequency counts, cross tabs, analysis of variance, correlation, factor analysis, multiple regression or structural modelling. These are usually independent of issues of multilingualism.

(8) Finally, writing up the *report* and disseminating the results may seem quite straightforward, but again one is faced with many questions, such as the language to choose, the target audience to write for, etc.

3.2 Rationale and goals of research

Three times large scale surveys on language competence, language use and language attitudes were conducted in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands and a fourth is planned for 2008. In the meantime a large number of smaller similar surveys of one town, an institution or among school children were carried out, some of them using a different technique, such as telephone-interviews or partially through an internet panel.

The first population survey was held in 1967. It was executed and reported upon by Pietersen (1969). This survey was repeated and extended substantially in 1980, as reported by Gorter et al. (1984, 1988). Again in 1994 a similar large scale survey was carried out and a

publication appeared by Gorter and Jonkman (1995). A fourth survey will take place in 2008. These four surveys will be dealt with in this section.

The *rationale* for these surveys is a mixture of scientific, language political and practical motives. The basic objective of these overall population surveys is to obtain insight into the social and geographical distribution of the language varieties spoken in the province: Frisian, Dutch, several non-Frisian dialects and 'other' languages. Over a period of several decades longitudinal data are available, because these surveys are partially replicated. This makes it possible to search for the dynamics in the relative social positions of each variety.

In the introduction to the *first survey* Pietersen (1969: 7-8) describes the reason for his survey as the need for data on reading habits and reading preferences in Friesland. His aim is also clear from the structure of the questionnaire. Only in the second half, questions are asked on language proficiency, language use and opinions on Frisian. This first survey may be called "pioneers work". Pietersen (1969:8) was right when he remarked that "so far there has been very little sociolinguistic research on the topic of bilingualism." Today no-one would dare to state the same.

Once the effects of the study by Pietersen had worn off after a few years, the initiative was taken to repeat the study. This was perceived as all the more pressing because for the first time in history the province of Friesland had from 1971 onwards a surplus of immigrants. Many people were convinced that language relationships had changed profoundly. In 1975 a plan was launched to repeat the survey.

In the publication of the *second survey* the goal is described as follows.

Our research is first of all aimed at the description of the multilingualism in Friesland. We will describe according to a number of important themes:

- the geographic spread of the language groups
- the social stratification of the language groups
- the transmission of the languages, in particular inside the family
- the proficiency of the languages, in particular of Frisian
- the opinions about the Frisian language and the identification with the Frisian language group
- the use of the languages, in particular Frisian, in a number of important domains of daily life: work, neighbourhood, school, public life and in associations
- the position of Frisian, the attitude towards Frisian and the role of in particular Frisian speakers in the arena of the school, the church, the media, and politics; buying and reading Frisian books and magazines will be dealt with as well (translated from Gorter et al 1984: 1).

The *third survey* refers to the former two surveys and repeats "the goal to obtain good insight into the proportions of the language varieties spoken there: Frisian, Dutch and several non-Frisian dialects." With this third survey a corpus of sociolinguistic data became available covering more than a quarter of a century. To look for systematic trends also became a goal (Gorter & Jonkman 1995, Jonkman 1999). The third survey also refers explicitly to the importance of international comparison in a European context. The researchers took part in the *European Language Survey Network* where knowledge and experience were exchanged with researchers from the Basque Country, Ireland and Wales, Catalonia and Galicia.

The *fourth survey* in 2008 will again have to provide a basic description of the dynamics in the language relationships.

3.3 Methods of data collection

The methodological differences and similarities between the three projects are in (a) the problem definition, (b) the questionnaire, (c) the sample and (d) the language use of the interviews (see also Gorter et al 1984: 280-283; Gorter & Jonkman 1995). The relationship between the projects can best be referred to as one of “partial replication”. “Replication” of a survey means that a project builds on a former one in terms of design, formulation of questions, etc. At the same time new elements have been added and others were removed.

The *problem definitions* are only partly the same. In the first project the emphasis is on reading habits and the sociolinguistic questions on language proficiency, use and attitudes have been “taken along”, which gives the project somewhat of dual character (Pietersen 1969: 7-8). In *Taal yn Fryslân* the well known question “Who speaks what language to whom and when?” is taken as the point of departure (Gorter et al., 1984: 3). The questionnaire contains only language related questions. The third survey takes that same WWW-question as point of departure, but has also taken a second survey on board, which concerns issues of religion and life convictions.

The *questionnaire* in all three projects has about the same length. But the contents diverge through different accents in the problem definitions. Also the order of comparable questions differs. Furthermore Pietersen used rather broad questions on language use, e.g. in one single question he asked “When you go to visit a physician, notary, minister/pastor, chief/director, which language do you usually speak?”. In the second and third project such questions have been split up into a series of separate questions. Questions on language transmission are conspicuously absent in Pietersen, while in the later studies a series of questions has been asked about language background and language use with children. Changes in the patterns of language transmission between the generations thus can only be established on the basis of the last two surveys.

A conspicuous difference is that the language related questions in the first questionnaire are introduced cautiously. The intention was to “prevent too emotional reactions (...) Therefore in the questionnaire (...) always an approach was sought for that would not lead to resistance.” (Pietersen 1969: 51) In hindsight the researchers of the second survey project found this approach too cautious. The second survey was introduced to the respondents as a study of the use and attitude towards the languages in Friesland. A similar approach was chosen in the third survey, which was introduced as study about language and life convictions. As far as language proficiency, language use and language attitudes are concerned, the aim was to repeat as much as possible. All in all, there are 67 questions, including background variables, between the first and the second which are more or less the same (Gorter et al. 1984: 321-323) and some 40 questions are repeated in all three surveys.

The *samples* of the projects differ in size and in design. In 1967 there were net 800 respondents in the sample, against 1,126 in 1980 and 1,368 in 1994. Thus there are some differences in size, but they are relatively unimportant. More important is the difference in sampling design. Pietersen has a two-stage sample which is very common when a sample is drawn from the Netherlands as a whole. He first draws municipalities, 11 out of 44 in Friesland, and thereafter in every municipality the same number of addresses. In a technical sense there is nothing against this sample design. One can, however, doubt whether the practical reasons for such design in the Netherlands with (then) over 900 municipalities are equally applicable when dealing with only 44 municipalities. In 1980 it was decided to have a single stage sample design: drawing from all Frisian municipalities a number of respondents

depending on the size of the population. An advantage is the certainty of optimal geographic spread, which is especially important where regional dialects are concerned.

An important difference between the three samples is the percentage of non-response. In the case of Pietersen it is not certain how high this was as replacements were used (in order to obtain the targeted sample of 800 respondents). The percentage of non-response was very low, probably less than 5%. In that time a survey was an exceptional event in society in general. There are even some anecdotes that people would dress up in their Sunday clothes because the interviewer had specially selected them for the interview! When the second large scale survey took place, people had become used to surveys and some got tired of them. Non-response was then 19%, compared to many surveys in the Netherlands still relatively low. During the 1990s people had become overwhelmed by the enormous number of studies carried out, especially commercial telephone-surveys. Quite a few persons “just did not feel like it” and could not be persuaded to participate, and the non-response percentage rose to 30%, still quite low compared to other surveys where it had already risen above 50%.

The *language of the interviews* and thus the questionnaires is one of the most striking differences between the first two surveys. Pietersen (1969: 50, 119) defends the use of only Dutch in his interviews. In the second and third surveys interviews were conducted both in Frisian and Dutch. The idea was to come as close as possible to the daily language behaviour of the respondents. The solution was to let the respondent choose the language of the interview. All interviewers (with few exceptions) were bilingual and they were specially instructed at this point. At the initial contact with a respondent they had to choose the language which they would also choose as a stranger in such situation. In other words, the everyday knowledge of the interviewers was used. An advantage of this system of language choice is that it yields some “hard” facts about language behaviour. It now could be said that at least 62% of the inhabitants of Friesland (over 12 years) are able to conduct an interview in Frisian. The percentage was almost the same 13 years later when it was 63%. This item of language choice in interviews concerns a general issue for research methods of sociolinguistics and sociology on which little has been published.

An important consideration is, of course, what *effect* the differences between the three projects have had on the results. One should take into consideration the points mentioned above. The outcomes of the three projects are most certainly comparable. The results show that on average the changes in the outcomes are not large.

Table 3 Overview of the 4 surveys in Friesland

Survey	fieldwork	number of questions	N =	publication in
Pietersen	spring 1967	76(= 224 items)	800	1969
Gorter, Jelsma, Van der Plank, De Vos	autumn 1980	138 (= 311 items)	1126	1984
Gorter, Jonkman	spring 1994	80(= 172 items)	1368	1995
Gorter?	spring 2008	At least 100?	At least 1,000	2009

In order to find further similarities and differences the third Frisian survey can be compared to three other surveys in three other regional minority language communities, Basque Country, Ireland and Wales, which were carried out around the same time. It could be expected that the total number of (countable) questions among the four surveys does differ. It should be borne

in mind that in some cases only parts of the questionnaire had to be answered by all respondents. In the following table the results of this analysis are given for two questions, the first concerns language use and the second language attitudes.

Table 4 Questionnaires in the Basque Country, Friesland, Ireland and Wales: questions on language use and attitudes

survey	No Q's	Language use	%	Attitude	%
Basque country	246		25		14
Friesland	233		18		31
Ireland	267		13		46
Wales	317		42		7

(See Aizpurua 1995; Gorter 1997; Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1994; Williams & Morris 2000).

From the table it can be observed that the Frisian questionnaire was the shortest and the one in Wales the longest, although the differences are not large. The Welsh list contained by far the most questions on language use (42%) and relatively few on language attitudes. In contrast the Irish questionnaire was concerned with attitudes more than any of the others. This in part reflects a difference in theoretical approach and the importance attached to attitudes. Moreover, in Wales only speakers of Welsh were involved and a major aim of this general survey was to trace language habits. In Ireland, where only a very small proportion of the total population uses the language extensively on a daily basis, language attitudes play a more important role. It fits in the pattern where the first major survey in Ireland was conducted in 1973 by the Committee on Irish Language *Attitudes* Research (CILAR 1975; Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1994).

However, these differences in the number of questions do not inform us at all about the complexity of questions or how difficult they may be for respondents to answer. It is obvious that a battery-type series of questions that can straightforwardly be answered by saying “yes” or “no” (or “don’t know”) is much easier than a complicated sorting task where respondents have to select their most preferred answer from five different alternatives. Besides it can be remarked that the Welsh questionnaire was used to set an example for another series of language surveys (each n=300) in different regions in the European Union conducted as part of the Euromosaic study (Euromosaic 1996).

One of the central theoretical considerations in the type of survey dealt with here regards the variable of *language competence*. If one wants to measure proficiency in the minority language (and sometimes also the dominant language), what are the dimensions that have to be measured and how does one include one or more questions on competence in a self-report questionnaire? In particular what degrees of competence does one distinguish? As all four surveys had included one or more questions on competence, detailed comparison for this

specific item could be made, the results are given in the table below.

Table 5: Competence questions: scales

	Basque	Frisian	Irish	Welsh
1	1 well	1 very easily	6 native speaker ability	1 very good
2		2 good		
3	2 quite well	3 fairly well	5 most conversations	2 quite good
4			4 parts of conversations	
5	3 a little	4 with difficulty	3 few simple sentences	3 some
6	4 only a few words		2 the odd word	
7	5 nothing	5 not at all	1 none	4 none

The issue of language competence is quite basic for all four surveys concerned. The four surveys differ among them in using 4, 5 or 6 different levels of language competence in the minority language. Also, they use different wordings to indicate to the respondents a level from which they can choose.

Bringing these differences into one table leads to the conclusion that there seems to be a fair degree of overlap of independently developed scales. Thus researchers seem to agree at least to some extent on what it means to *command* a language. On the other hand direct comparison of the results would be quite difficult because of the different wording used to indicate the same or almost the same level of proficiency. Of course, also some of the subtleties in the wording may have been lost in the translation to English.

One further issue should be mentioned. If one is interested in the social position of the minority language in the first place, does one ask for the competence in the dominant language as well? In the Irish and Frisian case this was not done, as it was deemed unnecessary or superfluous. However, in both the Basque and the Welsh case the question was also asked what the level of competence was in the dominant language (Spanish and English respectively).

3.4 Outcomes: substantive findings of survey research

The basic percentages of the surveys on language proficiency in Frisian are quoted very often. That gives an indication of the scientific and the social relevance of the outcomes. The publication of Pietersen in 1969 had great impact because it was perceived as the first ever. His most important language variables are the degree of proficiency of Frisian, the use of Frisian in a limited number of domains and the attitude towards Frisian. The Frisian language situation could now be caught in “hard facts” which brought an end to personal impressions.

Outsiders who doubted the extent of the use of Frisian could be told that 71% of the inhabitants of Friesland use Frisian at home. They also were confronted with the results that 96% can understand Frisian, 83% can speak, 65% can read and 11% can write the language.

The results of the second survey could never have the same impact as the first. Both publications present a description of the language situation. Broadly speaking the description provides a series of percentages for certain language variables for the population. The second project has the same language variables as the first, but in more detail. Further extension concerns the description of the Frisian language situation in terms of the geographic spread (a “language map”), the variation according to language background on different social strata and separate attention for domains like the school, media and politics.

In the following table some results of the project “Taal yn Fryslân” are given on geographic and social spread according to first language learned.

Table 6 Major outcomes of the second survey: geography and social stratification (Gorter et al 1984)

First language	Frisian	Dutch	dialects	Sample size
average	54	31	13	(N=1126)
<i>geographic spread:</i>				
Capital Leeuwarden	28	45	22	(n= 145)
Major towns	47	38	14	(n= 255)
Countryside	70	23	5	(n= 584)
Dialect areas	28	40	32	(n= 142)
<i>stratification:</i>				
higher professions	24	62	14	(n= 29)
Middle professions	57	40	10	(n= 189)
lower professions	49	33	18	(n= 198)
workers	69	17	15	(n= 164)
average	56	30	14	(N= 580)

In the table on the average just over half of the population has Frisian as its first language. There are important geographical differences. The provincial capital of Leeuwarden and the traditional dialect-speaking have far less Frisian speakers on the average. The countryside continues to be the basis of Frisian, although there, too, one third of the respondents does not have Frisian as first language. The stratification by profession shows that Dutch is overrepresented in the higher professions.

The third survey in the mid-1990s was expected to confirm the common anticipation in Friesland that the Frisian language had decreased sharply. The results of the survey were eagerly awaited. But to the surprise of many people the third survey did not find that Frisian was diminishing in use. On the surface things did not change much in the position of the Frisian language over a period of 25 years. The basic percentages of people who have the ability to understand (94%), speak (74%), read (67%) or write (17%) remained more or less the same. Those four percentages have only changed a little between the first general

sociolinguistic survey of 1967 and the third one of 1994. Gorter and Jonkman (1995: 55) concluded that the results of their survey, in terms of language ability, usage in intimate and more public settings and language attitudes, point to a relatively stable situation for the Frisian language. However, they also point to underlying dynamics. There is a gradual decline of the Frisian language which can be illustrated by the variable of home language. The proportions for “language usually spoken at home” are shown in the table below.

Table 8: Home language 1967, 1980, 1994 and 2003

	1967	1980	1994	2003
Frisian	71	56	55	50
Dutch	13	33	34	40
Dialects/other	16	11	10	10
total	100%	100%	99%	100%
	(n=800)	(n=1125)	(n=1368)	(n=390)

The trend is that Frisian decreases and Dutch increases. The most important outcomes are that in 1967 still 71% of the population spoke Frisian at home and today it is 50%. Dutch is clearly on the increase from 13% in 1967 to 34% in 1994 and (probably) 40% in 2003.

There is some evidence that part of the decline is caused by differences in the sampling frameworks. The 1967 sample did not include some of the regions in the province that are historically considered to be non-Frisian speaking. The decline in an adjusted sample would be 7% instead of 10%. It amounts to an over-representation of the rural areas in the Pietersen sample.

As can be noticed, the differences between 1980 and 1994 are small. This is related to the wave of migration which was experienced in the 1970's, when large numbers of non-Frisian speakers came to work and live in Friesland. The most important reason behind this all has to do with the labour market. The survey from 2003 was among a relatively small sample and done by a commercial firm by telephone interviewing that focused on the proficiency, use and attitudes towards Frisian.

The language situation is seemingly faced with a paradox: there is stability for the minority language Frisian in terms of proficiency, but at the same time an increase in the presence of the dominant language Dutch as a home language and in other domains. In particular the younger generations are learning less and less Frisian as their first language from home. Large scale studies among primary and secondary school children carried out in 2000 found that the percentages for the mother tongue were around 45% (Van Ruijven 2005:77; Van der Bij & Valk 2005: 138). A second reason is that bilingual speakers have learned to speak and use Dutch with more ease, but at the same time have not “unlearned” their Frisian. The average for the whole population (in 1994) was 60% who could speak Frisian with more ease than Dutch; among primary school children in 2000 the percentage was 45% who reported greater fluency in Frisian than in Dutch.

An interesting survey was carried out in November 2004 by a commercial firm TNS-NIPO at the request of the Frisian Broadcasting organization. Two special groups were studied: parents of young children (under 12 years, n=208) and prospective parents (persons under 35 years who have no children yet, n=195) (Foekema 2004). The respondents on average compared well with the results of former surveys, for instance the percentages for language proficiency (understanding, speaking, reading and writing) were compatible. This study showed that problem of language transmission was not very recent and existed already among these (potential) parents, because 30% of the parents born in Friesland were raised through Dutch and 12% in town-Frisian. The large group that was born outside Friesland (30% of the sample) was raised almost completely through Dutch. As soon as one of the partners is non-Frisian speaking the language of the family is almost always Dutch. Mixed marriages and immigration are the determining explanatory factors. Thus, it is not a matter of lacking transmission from the generation of parents to the children, because when parents both speak Frisian they will almost always also do so with the children. Still the outcomes were shocking to policy makers because they showed that only 30% of the future generation would be raised through Frisian.

Of course these figures tell us little about the *actual use* which is made of the language outside the home, but there is no space to go into these here. In the different surveys many questions were asked about language use. They showed an uneven pattern over language domains. Just over 50% of the population habitually uses Frisian in the domains of the family, work and the village. Frisian holds a relative strong position there. In the more formal domains of education, media, public administration and law, the use of Frisian has made some inroads during the last decades, but overall is still fairly limited. There is no space to go into these domains here (see Gorter 2001; Gorter & Jonkman 1995; Jonkman 2000).

4. Conclusion and discussion

Scientific survey research has contributed to the development and evaluation of language policy in a useful way. The three large-scale surveys in Friesland that were carried out over a period of almost 30 years, were well received by academic researchers, journalist, policy makers, language activists and interested citizens. They became well known in the community and were widely quoted in the research literature. There is evidence that the outcomes of the surveys have influenced certain policy decisions, sometimes directly. The sociolinguistic surveys in Friesland thus far have been almost exclusively oriented towards goal of description. But even when description is the goal, there can be substantial differences in how this is done. In the social sciences there is some degree of agreement on what a technically well-done survey is, but there is much less agreement on what an adequate description of a social phenomenon is. Similarly, within the sociology of language, it is not possible to say what dimensions have to be included in an adequate description of a language situation.

Repeated measures make the goal of measurement of change possible, even if only little change is actually found. Similar surveys were done at different times and thus created opportunities for comparison and for establishing developments over time. But it is not just a simple matter of conducting the same survey twice. Every survey will be different. Even if you use exactly the same questions, the same interviewers and the same interviewees, the difference would even then be at least the effect of repetition. It is therefore probably not a good strategy to try to replicate a study completely. It is better to aim at "partial replication". This is the relationship between the projects of 1967, 1980, 1994, and will be 2008.

On another level, the study of the Frisian language situation may contribute to the comparative analysis of European language minorities.

Language surveys can aim for the investigation of a policy problem, or simply try to provide a description of a language situation. Surveys can also have the express purpose of testing theory. Usually such clear-cut distinctions cannot be made. Many surveys of the descriptive type are undertaken within a theoretical framework, but practical limitations of time and staff, or the requirements a contracting party, leave theoretical statements implied rather than explicitly stated. Theoretical and empirical research would ideally continuously interact, as in any social survey.

The overall format of a social survey on language is determined to a large extent by the specific social and political context. Practical considerations lead to substantial differences between the surveys, which make it more difficult to compare across communities (see Euromosaic 1996). The contexts of the languages studied differ enormously in their sociolinguistic characteristics, even where all are so-called *unique* European minority languages.

A language survey as a quantitative technique has its inherent limitations because data rely on self-report of respondents and because random sampling always implies a degree of statistical uncertainty due to chance. The technique cannot be used in all circumstances or for all problems. Other techniques can be more appropriate such as ethnographies based upon participant observation, or open-ended, in-depth interviewing. A problem of the latter techniques is that they are time-consuming and expensive in operation and often used only in limited social or geographic contexts. A combination of different techniques to study the same phenomenon, an approach called triangulation, is even better. Surveys can be used to provide a context for qualitative research techniques, where those are, in turn, being used to deepen and extend the scope of survey research.

A research ideal would be to collect Europe wide comparable data on minority language communities, while at the same time meeting local requirements of the uniqueness of each local situation. It is not expected that such language surveys would be identical. In European Language Survey Research Network a core module of questions has been developed for inclusion in future surveys of regional minority language groups. It provides a basis for comparison and at the same time also allows ample space for adequate coverage of items specific to particular language communities. Thus, both aims of a European-wide collection of comparable data about minority languages and sensitivity to meet local requirements are compatible. In the ideal situation this whole endeavour would be combined with approaches where quantitative and qualitative techniques are triangulated.

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