

Speaking Frisian in Fryslân

Are you learning Frisian and keen to practice speaking it, not only inside but also outside the classroom? – Great! Here are some helpful hints for when you are out and about in Fryslân.

Many Frisians are delighted that others learn the Frisian language and want to use it. Yet, you may also encounter people who are reluctant to chat with you in Frisian, who switch to Dutch when they notice you are not a Frisian mother-tongue speaker, who correct your Frisian, or who even laugh a little when they hear you using the language. But don't let that discourage you!

Try to put yourself in their shoes.

Frisian is a minority language in the Netherlands, and many people who grew up speaking Frisian

- have previously been ridiculed by Dutch speakers – so they may now be hesitant to use the language with anyone who is not a Frisian mother-tongue speaker;
- have been socialised to accommodate to Dutch speakers, and to only ever use Dutch with them – so they may feel that it would be impolite to speak Frisian;
- have been made to feel like Frisian is not as important as Dutch in education, employment, and other areas of public life – so they may be surprised that someone wants to learn it.

What you may think

It's really rude that this person keeps ignoring my attempts to speak to them in Frisian!

Why are they switching to Dutch ... is my Frisian not good enough?

It's so frustrating when people correct my mistakes, it makes me feel like a school kid getting evaluated by their teacher!

How mean that this person is mocking me for the way I speak Frisian! Will I never be accepted as part of this community?

What they may think

Speaking to Dutch is the polite thing to do in this situation, that's how I've been raised.

I'm trying to make this conversation easier for my interlocutor by switching to Dutch.

Great that this person is learning Frisian! I'll point out their mistakes to help them improve their language skills.

Hah! What a surprise to hear a Dutch speaker suddenly use Frisian ... but I like that they're making the effort!

What helps when you want Frisian speakers to talk to you in Frisian?

1. Awareness. Bear in mind that, even if it does not always feel that way, your interlocutor is probably trying to be polite and helpful.

2. Openness. Tell your interlocutor that you would like to speak Frisian with them – and explain what they can do to help you practice the language.

3. Perseverance. If your interlocutor falls into their old habits, remind them of what you said. Sometimes it helps to agree on a signal that functions as a reminder: for example, a little wave with your hand as a reminder to keep speaking Frisian.

YOU'VE GOT THIS! ... and if you need a bit of extra encouragement to keep speaking Frisian, take a look at the videos on the *Praat mar Frysk – ek mei nije Fryskpraters* page: www.praatmarfrysk.nl/nijefryskpraters

