

Geographical variation in intonational phonology and phonetics in the Netherlands

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For the purposes of prosody, the Netherlands consists of two zones. Zone I is the southern half of the province of Limburg in the south east of the country, which represents 6% of a tonal area covering adjacent regions in Germany and Belgium. It is characterized by wide display of tonal/intonational grammars, varying in the choice of TBU, number of intonation contours and phonological rules, while all having a privative lexical tone contrast. In Zone II, the remainder of the territory, a phonologically uniform intonation system is used which is largely identical to that of English, despite considerable variation in the segmental phonology (Hollandic, Frisian, Saxon). Based on recent work with Jörg Peters and Judith Hanssen, there is evidence of a U-shape in the phonetic measurements taken from six varieties in locations that form a geographical crescent along the north sea coast. The explanation would appear to be that the centre of the crescent, which is the prestigious heartland of the country, has innovated the phonetic shape of the neutral H*L pitch accent, making it higher and later. In addition, two striking realizations of H*L H% and H*L were found, in the southwest and Amsterdam, respectively.