

Turn-taking and final boundary tones in Dutch: a corpus study in replication of Caspers (2003)

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We report results of a replication study on the role of utterance-final speech melody in the turn-taking system of Dutch (Caspers 2003), using a larger dataset that had not previously been analysed for this purpose. In natural dialogue, interlocutors typically take turns at speaking and listening. To facilitate smooth and accurately timed speaker transitions, listeners need to gauge whether the speaker intends to continue speaking or to yield the turn at any moment. Among an array of possible end-of-turn cues, the present study examines the patterning of utterance-final boundary tones and syntactic completion in relation to observed instances of turn-keeping and turn-changing in a corpus of Dutch task-oriented spontaneous dialogue. These materials – consisting of eight map-task dialogues (Anderson et al., 1991) – are highly comparable to those analysed by Caspers (2003), allowing for a precise replication and verification of the original findings. The corpus has been divided into inter-pausal units (Koiso et al., 1998) – stretches of single-speaker speech bounded by turn-changes or pauses (>100ms). For each IPU, the turn transition type, final melody (following ToDI), and syntactic completion (Ford & Thompson, 1996) are being annotated. The following hypotheses will be tested: (1) IPUs ending in a level boundary tone (%) will most often be followed by a same-speaker continuation (turn-keeping), while the rising (H%) and low (L%) boundary tones are not expected to pattern consistently with either turn-keeping or changing by themselves; (2) Level boundary tones are expected to pattern with syntactically incomplete IPU-boundaries, and rising and low boundary tones with syntactically complete boundaries. Once verified with this new corpus study, these findings will serve as a stepping stone towards follow-up investigations.

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