1 Introduction / Research question

- Francoprovençal: No systematic morphosyntactic distinction in some varieties between
  - indefinite singular mass:
    1. e va bref’c e dż o m zw a de pô
    2. li dż o de f’t a n a sał o m de ps u’ pô
    - He’ll soak up the egg yolk with bread.’ (Conthey, Valais)
  - and indefinite plural count:
    1. li dż o de f’t a n a sał o m de ps u’ pô
    2. ‘On holiday we bought buns.’ (Luddes, Valais)

- Research question: (How) Can a Romance variety admit nominals in argument position without any numeric information (which apparently contradicts Chierchia 1998, who considers Romance as number-marking languages)?

2 Francoprovençal

- “What we call ‘Francoprovençal’ is not a ‘language but a collection of speech varieties displaying a common linguistic typology yet an extremely high degree of dialect fragmentation” (Kristol 2016: 350)
- Spoken in France, Italy (Aosta Valley) and Switzerland (Valais)
- Two groups of varieties to be distinguished (cf. Kristol 2014, 2018): Francoprovençal A showing fully-fledged partitive articles (PA) and Francoprovençal B (FPrB) with grammaticalized invariable DE (cf. (1) and (2))

3 Data and Methodology

- Used corpus: ALAVAI (http://alavai.unine.ch/)
- 20 different varieties of Francoprovençal: 18 in the middle Valais, 2 in the Aosta Valley
- Data points enabling comparisons with older descriptions
- Additional data from the Aosta Valley collected in 2017 (cf. Stark/Gerards submitted) not yet included
- 498 translations of 37 French input sentences with a PA (24 direct objects, 8 prepositional complements, 5 preverbal complements; positive contexts only)
  - 99 masculine singular / 120 masculine plural
  - 102 feminine singular / 177 feminine plural
- Annotation for different morphosyntactic features and sociolinguistic properties
- Creation of a new database specialized in partitivity composed of annotated material from existing corpora as well as new fieldwork data
- Possibility to do quantitative and spatial analyses

4 Findings

- French: Reportedly an INP-arg., (pre)del. [−DP][−arg] language with plural marking (Chierchia 1998a: 355f), which is, however, present exclusively on the determiner
  - Gender/number marking on the PA (as well as on ONE) allows indefinite nominals to function as arguments (examples from Insane 2008):
    1. De la corde tralait par terre.
    2. Des enfants jouent dans la cour.

- Francoprovençal B: No systematically available morphological plural marker. Only 31% of the DPs are marked for number ([154/498])
- French: mostly preserved -e alternation on the noun or the adjective, but “many modern varieties tend to reduce the range of final atomic vowels to [e], even deleting the final vowel altogether in many lexical items” (Kristol 2016: 354, cf. (4))
  1. k’a ma daf’ e: me k’oa sa m’dődsn do já tr
  2. ‘My cousin eats blueberries for dessert.’ (Nendaz, Valais)

- Feminine: no means to mark number on the noun (cf. (1) and (2)), except for a preverbal liaison element in front of nouns with vocalic onset (cf. (5)) and a sporadic sigmatic plural marking which is found in only one variety (Evolene, Valais):
  1. 1 m’d dż o de z o v
  2. ‘He eats eggs.’ (Torgnon, Aosta Valley)

- Masculine: no means to mark number on the noun (cf. (1) and (2)), except for a preverbal liaison element in front of nouns with vocalic onset (cf. (5)) and a sporadic sigmatic plural marking which is found in only one variety (Evolene, Valais):

5 Discussion

- Indefinite singular mass nominals and indefinite plural count nominals are morphosyntactically alike, without overt gender or number marking in the DP

6 Conclusion

- The database ALAVAI documenting FPrB varieties shows that in some varieties (FPrB) indefinite nominals are in the vast majority of cases only marked for the opposition ‘non-singular’ vs. ‘singular’. These varieties do not systematically mark morphological number of complete noun phrases, which is a striking exception inside the Romance language family
- A fine-grained analysis of the internal structure of DE-nominals in FPrB reveals their structural deficiency, which might be at the origin of their very restricted syntactic distribution, i.e. only postverbal internal arguments.

7 References

- Konstanz, M. / Schmitt, C. (eds.). 1980: ‘Gender/Number Opposition in the Romance Languages’ – Partitive Articles in French
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