



NaP2019: Number and Plurality: Cross-linguistic Variation in the Nominal Domain (part of LinG2) – Göttingen, Germany, 11/12 December 2019

## Francoprovençal B: Galloromance varieties without mass vs. plural distinction?

 SNF project *Distribution and Function of 'Partitive Articles' in Romance (DiFuPaRo): a microvariation analysis* (Grant Number: 172751)  
<https://www.rose.uzh.ch/de/seminar/wersindwir/mitarbeitende/stark/DiFuPaRo.html>

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### 1 Introduction / Research question

- *Francoprovençal*: No systematic morphosyntactic distinction in some varieties between
  - **indefinite singular mass**:

(1) ε va bretʃ'e: o dz'o:n aw'i de pã  
he go.3SG.PRS take.INF the.MSG egg yolk.M with DE bread.M  
'He'll soak up the egg yolk with bread.' (Conthey, Valais)

- and **indefinite plural count**:

(2) li dzœ de f'i:tə n ast'ẽn de prɔj'u pã  
the.PL day.M of feast.F we buy.1PL.IPFV DE small.M bread.M  
'On holiday we bought buns.' (Liddes, Valais)

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

### 3 Data and Methodology

- Used corpus: ALAVAL (<http://alaval.unine.ch/>)
- Data collection: 1994 – 2001
- 20 different varieties of *Francoprovençal B*: 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 presentational 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

### 5 Discussion

- Indefinite singular mass nominals and indefinite plural count nominals are morphosyntactically alike, without overt gender or number marking in the DP
  - Relevant opposition: semantically 'non-singular' (= DE) vs. 'singular' (denotation of sets of atoms, cf. Chierchia 1998, King 2006 "singular term")

	Mass	Count
Singular	(PA <sub>GENNUM</sub> ) vino	UN vino
Plural	-	(PA <sub>GENNUM</sub> ) vinos/vini

Table 4: Indefinite nominals in Romance (simplification)

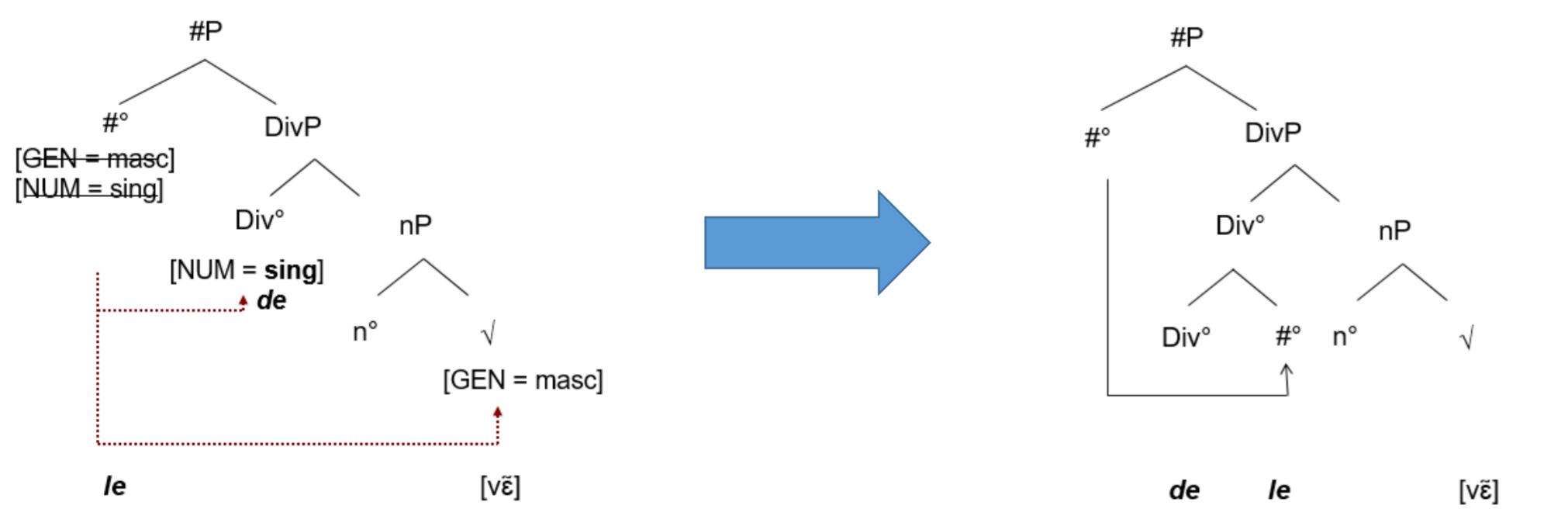
	Mass	Count
Singular	PA <sub>GENNUM</sub> [vẽ]	UN [vẽ]
Plural	-	PA <sub>NUM</sub> [vẽ]

Table 5: Indefinite nominals in French

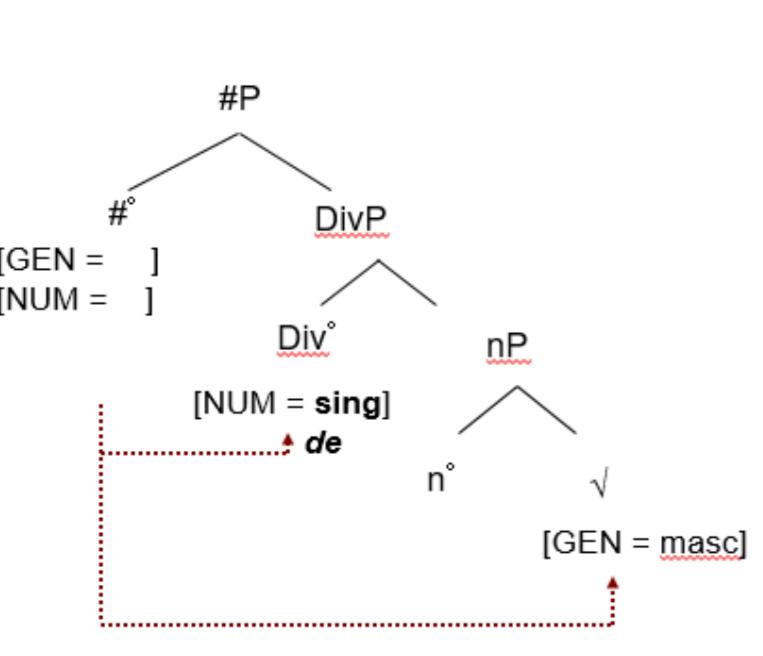
	Mass	Count
Singular	DE vin	UN vin
Plural	-	DE vin

Table 6: Indefinite nominals in FrPr B

- Gender and number information generally has to be encoded in Romance (indefinite) nominals. Morphological number is either encoded on Div<sup>0</sup> or on #<sup>0</sup> (Borer 2005, Stark 2016); DE as default spell-out of Div<sup>0</sup> if no plural exponent available, yielding a default classification as 'non-individuated' (Stark/Gerards submitted, Stark 2016):



- FrPr B: DE-nominals are highly defective, i.e. 'underspecified' for gender and number = indefinite nominals with restricted syntactic distribution (cf. Stark/Gerards submitted), i.e. in internal argument position, frequently quasi-incorporated



### 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, 2016): *Francoprovençal A* showing fully-fledged partitive articles (PAs) and *Francoprovençal B* (FrPr B) with grammaticalized invariable DE (cf. (1) and (2)):



Francoprovençal A	Francoprovençal B
fully-fledged PAs	invariable DE
gender distinction with plural determiners	no gender distinction with plural determiners
heavily reduced number marking on the noun	partly preserved number marking on the noun (fem. -a vs. -e)
no case distinction with definite articles	(partly) preserved case distinction with definite articles

 Table 1: Overview over nominal morphosyntax in *Francoprovençal A* vs. *Francoprovençal B*

### 4 Findings

- *French*: Reportedly an *NP[-arg, +pred] (= DP[+arg]) language* with plural marking (Chierchia 1998a: 355f), which is, however, present exclusively on the determiner
  - Evolution of a 'classifying' PA signalling semilattice reference (cf. Chierchia 1998a: 345–348 for the similar structures of pluralities and mass nouns)
  - Gender/number marking on the PA (as well as on ONE) allows indefinite nominals to function as arguments (examples from Ihsane 2008):
- (3) a. De la corde traînait par terre.  
of.the.FSG rope.F lie.3SG.IPFV on floor.F  
b. Des enfants jouent dans la cour.  
of.the.PL children play.3PL.PRS in the.FSG yard.F
- *Francoprovençal B*: No systematically available morphological plural marker, no gender marking on the *de*-element → **Only 31% of the DPs are marked for number** (154/498):

	Number marked	Number unmarked	Total DPs
MSG	1 (1%)	98 (99%)	99
MPL	16 (13%)	104 (87%)	120
Total	17 (8%)	202 (92%)	219

Table 2: Marking of Number with masculine DPs

	Number marked	Number unmarked	Total DPs
FSG	49 (48%)	53 (52%)	102
FPL	88 (50%)	89 (50%)	177
Total	137 (49%)	142 (51%)	279

Table 3: Marking of Number with feminine DPs

- Feminine: partly preserved -a/-e alternation on the noun or the adjective, but "many modern varieties tend to reduce the range of final atonic vowels to [ə], even deleting the final vowel altogether in many lexical items" (Kristol 2016: 354, cf. (4)):

(4) k'ɔmə døʃ'e: me k'wɔʒ'ɔnɛ m'ɔ̃dʒɔn də ju:tɔ:  
as dessert.M my.PL cousin.F eat.3PL.PRS DE blueberry.F  
'My cousins eat blueberries for dessert.' (Nendaz, Valais)

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

(5) i m'ɛ:dze de z u:  
he eat.3SG.PRS DE PL egg.M  
'He eats eggs.' (Torgnon, Aosta Valley)

- **Correlation**: DE-nominals almost impossible as preverbal subjects (cf. Ihsane 2018, Stark/Gerards accepted), except for feminine plural

### 6 Conclusion

- The database ALAVAL documenting FrPr varieties shows that in some varieties (FrPr B) 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 FrPr B reveals their structural deficiency, which might be at the origin of their very restricted syntactic distribution, i.e. only postverbal internal arguments.

### 7 References

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