

Francoprovençal nominal morphology: a Network Morphology account

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The aim of this paper is to present a model of the variation of the nominal inflectional morphology (nouns, adjectives and determiners) within the highly fragmented Francoprovençal (henceforth, FrPr) dialectal network, a number of severely endangered non-standard Gallo-Romance varieties, which in the modern period have never undergone a process of standardisation and which are split between regions belonging to three countries, France, Italy and Switzerland. Our work is based on data from the online *DiFuPaRo* database (<https://difuparo.linguistik.uzh.ch/>), complemented with data from dedicated ongoing fieldwork collected since summer 2021, as well as with data from atlases and archives. Where these data were not sufficient, we used references works, dictionaries and folk literature.

Four varieties will play a key role, because they structurally reflect different manifestations of the expression of number on the noun (especially, suffixation vs. absence of any marking) and of the expression of number and gender on the determiners (gender/number neutralization vs. maintenance of the singular vs. plural, masculine vs. feminine opposition). In addition, our four key-varieties geographically cover the areas in all three countries where FrPr is spoken. These varieties are (i) Saint-Nicolas (province Aosta, Italy), representative of the simplest and most widespread type; (ii) Fénis (province Aosta, Italy), (iii) Evolène (Eastern Valais, Switzerland), which represents a linguistic island both for its especially vital patois (see Maître and Matthey 2007) and the preservation of several archaic structural properties in its grammar; (iv) Saint-Martin-La-Porte (Savoie, France). Of these four varieties, three are vital and one (Saint-Martin-La-Porte) is almost extinct.

Our first objective is descriptive as we will provide a systematic overview of declension classes, gender marking and especially number marking strategies in FrPr, as number marking on nouns has been repeatedly claimed to strongly interfere with the inventory of exponents of nominal determination in Romance, both in a diachronic and a comparative perspective (see, e.g. Carlier 2007, Carlier/Lamiroy 2014, Stark 2007 et passim). Since our varieties are very closely related, they share many properties at all levels of analysis, including morphology. Our description aims to capture these similarities as well as differences finding the correct generalizations both for individual varieties and for the entire diasystem.

Our second objective is typological. Nominal constituents represent a central and well-documented domain of the grammar in the Romance languages and have often been used for establishing typologies (cf. Longobardi & Guardiano 2009, Bickel 2015; see also for e.g., Nichols & Bickel 2013 on possessives, Widmer et al. on NP recursion). Therefore, it is worth examining the morphology of nominal expressions (NEs) in an endangered diasystem with close contact to at least two standard Romance languages (French and Italian). A thorough description of the nominal inflectional morphology of FrPr conducted with a comparative typological background is currently largely missing. This is unfortunate, as recent typological work on nominal pluralization has shown that Romance languages display, in this as in many other domains, interesting internal diversity reaching the level of general typological relevance, for instance expanding the set of plural marking strategies identified in Dryer's (2013) WALS Map 33 "Coding of nominal plurality". Importantly, this typological diversity has proved to be appreciable only if we consider nonstandard varieties (see Smith 2012, Ricca 2021, Floricic in press). Previous studies on number marking in FrPr have outlined the overall absence of plural marking on nouns (e.g., Kristol 2016: 357, Maiden 2016: 697, Stark & Gerards 2020: 306), always assuming a somewhat simplifying perspective on the nominal declensional system,

concentrated on a single language. We will adopt a hierarchical perspective on the variation we discover in FrPr varieties to identify how much this account is in accordance with the facts and what the relation between regular and exceptional patterns is. Moreover, by extracting what the unmarked shared morphological features are between the nominal inflectional paradigms of different FrPr varieties, we hope to reach a new vision of the FrPr morphological space. More importantly, we aim at providing a typology of number marking in the FrPr diasystem at the NE level, not at the noun level, as the NE is semantically and referentially involved in the notion of plurality.

To do so, we chose the paradigm-based framework of *Network Morphology* (NM), that models the systems of rules which determine the morphological structure of words in a formal way. Central notions are 'default' to represent what is somehow regular and 'inheritance' to capture the sharing of the same paradigmatic information between lexemes. Cf. the seminal work by Corbett & Fraser (2003) and the monographic overview by Brown & Hippisley (2012).

Selected References

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