
Accounting for the presence/absence of overt number morphology in Romance nominals: insights from Francoprovençal

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In this paper, we investigate noun phrases without any overt number (NUM) marking in Francoprovençal (FrPr), an endangered Gallo-Romance language, which does not have bare nouns, cf. (1). This property is surprising in Romance, where the noun (N) and/or the determiner traditionally carry overt NUM marking, as illustrated in (2) and (3) (Cyrino/Espinal 2020):

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|-----|-----------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| (1) | də 'dzor | of day | 'of day' | FrPr B, St-Nicolas, Italy |
| (2) | los días | / loʃ dias / | 'the.pl day.pl' | Spanish |
| (3) | les jours | / le ʒuʁ / | 'the.pl day' | French |

In (1), N is not marked for NUM, nor is invariable DE, a compulsory element in indefinite non-quantified noun phrases (deriving from the Latin preposition *de* 'of'), occurring in some varieties of FrPr that do not have partitive articles (PAs) like French *du/de la/des* e.g. in *du chocolat* ('chocolate') (see Kristol 2016; for a more fine-grained discussion see Ihsane et al. submitted). This element is sometimes considered an allomorph of PAs (Carlier/Lamiroy 2014). To account for (1), we thus need to understand a) the relation between PAs, which also etymologically contain *de*, and uninflected DE, and b) when/why PAs/DE are used. One hypothesis on the presence/absence of PAs in Romance correlates with the absence of overt NUM on N (Delfitto/Schroten 1991; Gerards/Stark 2020; Pinzin/Poletto 2022 a.o.). The FrPr facts (invariable DE, absence of NUM on some Ns, noun class dependent number marking) show that this hypothesis needs to be revised. We will propose that the type of NUM marking on N can be correlated with DE being an allomorph of PAs in FrPr analogically spread to unmarked nouns, which explains why (1) is possible (unlike in Italian or French).

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