

# Disentangling Bare Nouns and Nominals Introduced by a Partitive Article

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# “Partitive Articles” in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal—Old Questions and New Data

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*This paper is dedicated to Wolf-Dieter Stempel, Elisabeth Stark’s mentor,  
model and friend, for his 90th birthday.*



## 1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present and discuss fieldwork data from present-day Francoprovençal varieties spoken in the Aosta Valley (Italy), gathered in May 2017 in order to complement our knowledge of “partitive articles” in Romance from both a typological and theoretical perspective. The varieties at issue are interesting for at least three reasons: first, they constitute varieties of a minority Gallo-Romance language that in its history has never been standardized (Kristol 2016, 350); second, they are in continuous vertical contact with both Standard Italian and Standard French, taught from preschool level onwards, and in horizontal contact with Northern Italian dialects; third, Francoprovençal features invariable DE-elements as well as fully-fledged “partitive articles” functionally possibly parallel to “partitive articles” of Standard French and/or Standard Italian. To date, these elements are scarcely described in the literature (in fact, the only specialized study is Kristol 2014, who investigates the morphology and geographical distribution of invariable DE-elements and fully-fledged “partitive articles” in the Swiss canton of Valais; other insights come from dispersed observations in descriptions such as Jeanjaquet 1931; Olszyna-Marzys 1964 or Jauch 2016).

In the literature, the existence of “partitive articles”, that is, of indefinite mass determiners in the singular and of indefinite determiners in the plural, has been correlated either with non-existing DOM-systems (Körner 1981, 1987; see Schurr, this volume, for a usage-based approach of the issue), that is, with some sort of complementary case-marking, or with the unavailability of inflectional

information on nouns concerning declension class, gender and number (Stark 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Gerards and Stark, in this volume), related to internal and external agreement of nominals and argumenthood. Besides purely morphosyntactic approaches to “partitive articles”, semantic and distributional properties of these elements have also repeatedly been discussed in the literature for the two standard languages French and Italian (see Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade 2004, 2012; Zamparelli 2008; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016a). Yet, virtually nothing is known about these aspects of “partitive articles” in minor Romance languages such as Occitan, Rhaeto-Romance or Francoprovençal, and even information on Catalan is scarce (but cf. Laca 1990).

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 will first give some background information on Francoprovençal and on existing resources for its study and then comment on previous documentation and research on “partitive articles” in this (and other) Romance languages, thus setting the scene for our first fieldwork in the Francoprovençal context. Section 3 will describe the fieldwork methodology and participants, while Section 4 offers a detailed description of the results obtained. Section 5 contains a sketch of the first formal explanatory attempt of the data. A short conclusion (Section 6) will summarize the main findings and indicate pending research questions that will be of value for future data collections as well as for the systematic exploitation of already existing material.

## 2 State-of-the-Art: Francoprovençal and “Partitive Articles” in Minority Gallo-Romance Languages

Bossong (2016), in his typological overview of the Romance languages, also mentions so-called “partitive articles” (or, in his quite fuzzy terminology, “the partitive”; Bossong 2016, 69–70) as a typical feature of Romance, displaying a remarkable geographical distribution. Such marking of mass and plural indefinite nominals by a descendant of the Latin preposition *DE* ‘of, from’, absent in Ibero-Romance, Romanian and many parts of the Central and Southern Italo-Romance area, ranges from South-Western areas of Occitan to Northern France and to Eastern Francoprovençal in the Aosta Valley. Consider, for instance, Languedocian (1), displaying a simple, invariable *DE* (cf. Stark 2016, 142–146):

- (1) *dounàs-me*                      *de pan*                      [...] *d’ amellas*  
 give.IMP.2SG-1SG.DAT *DE* bread.M.SG [...] *DE* almond.F.PL  
 ‘Give me (some?) bread [...], (some?) almonds.’ (Thérond 2002, 86; our glossing)

The same pattern as in Languedocian (1) holds for Provençal varieties (Barthélemy-Vigouroux and Guy 2000, 83). Interestingly, in turn, according to Bossong (2008, 142; also Bossong 2016, 69 with the same example; our glossing), Northern Occitan dialects (more precisely: Limousin and Auvergnat) feature a fully-fledged “partitive article”, that is, a morphological combination of DE plus the definite article with an indefinite reading:

- (2) *demandar del pan, de la carn e del*  
 ask.INF PA.M.SG bread.M.SG PA.F.SG meat.F.SG and PA.M.SG  
*vin*  
 wine.M.SG  
 ‘to ask for bread, meat and wine’

Note, however, that Bossong’s statement on Northern Occitan dialects has not yet been empirically verified.

Bossong (2016, 69) claims French to be the most advanced system with a fully grammaticalized “partitive article” not only in object position. This latter specification by Bossong seems to imply that there is a morphological and syntactic classification underlying his observations. Rather unsurprisingly, Bossong’s enumeration of Romance varieties featuring some kind of indefinite “partitive” determiner as well as his list of examples do not comprise any hint as to Francoprovençal, the easternmost Gallo-Romance language, in close contact with systems with fully-fledged “partitive articles” in the West (Northern Occitan, French) as well as DE in the East (some Northern Italian dialects, see, e.g., Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016b, 2018; other Northern Italian dialects do have fully-fledged “partitive articles”, Stark 2016).

Francoprovençal is, in multiple regards, the *parent pauvre* of the Romance language family, not only for laymen and its speakers (who most often consider it a dialect, a *patois*), but also for specialists. This may be due to its sociopolitical situation, the scarcity of written testimonies over the centuries, the absence of standardized varieties, and, last but not least, the fact that at present only very traditional descriptions of Francoprovençal are available. Such descriptions almost exclusively focus on phonetics and the lexicon and are written by traditional dialectologists not up to date concerning terminology or methodology, let alone analysis (see Massot and Stark 2018 for a critical summary of Gallo-Romance dialectology and the need to modernize this field).

Francoprovençal is a non-standardized and highly endangered Romance language, which is heavily underresearched, especially from a modern morphosyntactic point of view. We already mentioned its special geolinguistic situation between French oïlique dialects, Eastern Occitan varieties, and North-

ern Italian dialects. The earliest attestations of Francoprovençal are mostly toponyms and stem from the sixth century; the earliest documents, in turn, are from the thirteenth century (Kristol 2016, 350). In their history, Francoprovençal varieties were never the language of a unique political formation (read: state). Already by the beginning of the twentieth century, active use and transmission of Francoprovençal to the following generations had ceased in Swiss Romandy and in the French cities (Lyon, St. Etienne, Grenoble). The rural population of the respective areas in Switzerland maintained Francoprovençal at least until the 1930s (Kristol 2016, 351). Today, native speakers of Francoprovençal in Switzerland are generally older than 70, except for Evolène, where a third of the school-age children are still speakers of Francoprovençal (Kristol 2016, 351). In the Aosta Valley, due to active language policy, the situation is slightly better; competent—however never monolingual—native speakers of all ages can still be found.

As for the system of nominal determination,<sup>1</sup> under scrutiny in this contribution, Kristol (2014, 2016) claims a subdivision of Francoprovençal into two types (cf. also Stark 2016, 145). According to Kristol, there exists, on the one hand, a group of Francoprovençal varieties agnostically labelled “Francoprovençal A” which comprises Southern Francoprovençal, that is, the Southern varieties spoken in France, the Eastern varieties in the Swiss canton of Valais and the Aosta Valley in the very East of the Gallo-Romance area. These varieties, like French and unlike Ibero-Romance or Italian, do not show any gender distinction on the plural definite article. There is, thus, a single form for masculine and feminine plural definite articles: *le(z)*. Unlike French, however,—and unlike the neighboring Northern Italian dialects in the case of Aosta Valley Francoprovençal—there is no fully-fledged “partitive article” in “Francoprovençal A”. Instead, according to Kristol, we merely find grammaticalized invariable DE for indefinite mass singulars and indefinite plurals alike, though with a (not systematically used, see Section 4.2.2) allomorph *de-[z]* in the plural before vocalic onset (Kristol 2016, 358–359; this *liaison*-like element is also found on definite plural determiners).

The following examples illustrate the invariable DE in “Francoprovençal A”:

- (3) *oe kɔ̃tra a t'v fo fi.ɛ de te*  
 ehm against the cough.F.SG have.to.PRS.3SG make.INF DE tea.M.SG  
 ‘Ehm, against a cough one has to make tea.’ (Kristol 2014; our glossing)

1 Interestingly, some residues of an older two-case system—not discussed in what follows—are still found in the Eastern Valais. For more information, see Kristol (2016, 356–357).

- (4) *oe pə fe            ɔ buʎ'ɔŋ            oe b'ɔt:o            de=z*  
 ehm for make.INF the bouillon.M.SG ehm put.PRS.1SG **DE=PL**  
*ɔsə            aw'ɪ la mɪ'o:la*  
**bone.M.PL** with the marrow.F.SG  
 ‘Ehm, in order to make bouillon, eh, I add bones to the marrow.’ (Kristol 2016, 359; our glossing)

In (3), we find invariable DE with a singular mass noun in postverbal direct object position; (4) contains its plural allomorph [dez] (same syntactic distribution). Possibly, this *liaison* consonant could be seen as a problem for our analysis, as arguably it could be located in the head postulated in Section 5, Div. However, this is anything from clear and there are, in fact, explicit proposals locating it in a different head (Pomino 2017).

Except for this latter *liaison* element, the system of “Francoprovençal A” is thus parallel to that of Languedocian or Provençal.

Opposed to “Francoprovençal A”, there exists, on the other hand, a group of Francoprovençal varieties labelled “Francoprovençal B”, which comprises the Western varieties of the Valais (Switzerland) and the Northern varieties (in France and Switzerland). “Francoprovençal B” displays a gender distinction on plural definite articles (masc. *lu(z)*—fem *le(z)*), like in Ibero-Romance systems, plus a fully-fledged “partitive article” like in French (which, however, does not seem to be categorically used, in the sense that invariable DE is also available):

- (5) *Sg. M. dy (dɛ) F. dla (dɛ)*  
*Pl. M. de            F. dle (dɛ)*

In contrast to Standard French (cf. Dobrovie-Sorin, this volume, for a detailed analysis), the fully-fledged form is preserved under the scope of negation (Kristol 2016, 358), something we also find in non-standard varieties of spoken French:

- (6) *on n' a            pas du            travail            pour des types*  
 3SG NEG have.PRS.3SG NEG **PA.M.SG work.M.SG** for **PA.PL guy.M.PL**  
*comme ça*  
 like that  
 ‘We don’t have work for guys like that.’ (OFROM: unine15–034)

By and large, Francoprovençal seems to have the same rules for *en*-constituency as (Standard) French (see Bjerrome 1957, 74, for the canton of Valais; Gerards and Stark, this volume, Section 2). Nevertheless, there do seem to be some

contexts where, differently from French, *en* is not mandatory (Olszyna-Marzys 1964, 110, who claims the existence of constructions with *un* plus N-ellipsis in direct object position without *en* figuring in the sentence; something to be checked by future fieldwork in the Valais).<sup>2</sup>

Besides the scarce information on its morphology and its distribution under the scope of negation and with *en*, nothing is known about “partitive articles” in Francoprovençal. This holds especially true of its obligatory or optional status and its exact syntactic distribution and semantic value(s) (scope-behavior, specificity etc.). This is just as much a lacuna with regard to many other Gallo- (and Italo)romance varieties and constitutes the main motivation for the submission and approval of the SNSF-DFG-funded research project “Distribution and Function of ‘Partitive Articles’ in Romance (DiFuPaRo): a microvariation analysis” (SNSF ID: 100012L\_172751 and DFG ID: PO1642/8–1; <https://www.rose.uzh.ch/de/seminar/personen/stark/DiFuPaRo.html>), which officially started in 2018 and also guided the research questions and research design of the present contribution.

One final observation relevant in the typological and theoretical context of this contribution (see Section 1) concerns nominal morphology, which might be correlated to the existence and degree of grammaticalization of “partitive articles”: Francoprovençal does, according to the literature, not have plural marking on nouns (cf. e.g., Jauch 2016, 169–170; Barmas and Pannatier 2013; Jeanjaquet 1931, 31–34), with the notable exception of Evolène (Kristol 2016, 357), a small community in the Swiss canton of Valais (see below). Francoprovençal varieties do not seem to have real declension classes either, except for some feminine nouns, where we have  $-a_{SG}$  as opposed to  $-e_{PL}$ . This being said, note however that (i) a considerable amount of work is still to be done with regard to number marking on N in Francoprovençal, and (ii) that the claims in the literature mentioned above need to be double-checked by means of fieldwork: as in the case of “partitive articles”, existing work on number marking on N in Francoprovençal is scarce, unsystematic and partially unreliable.

Given that, as of today, the picture we have of Francoprovençal “partitive articles” is decidedly incomplete, we decided to develop a systematic inventory and classification of Francoprovençal “partitive articles” by means of data

2 If this turns out to be true, the contrast between Standard French and “Francoprovençal B” would find a parallel in Standard Dutch vs. Central German dialects: whereas in Standard Dutch, the partitive pronoun *er* is obligatory with ‘one’ plus N-ellipsis (\*(*er*) *één/een*), the Central German partitive pronoun *ere* is ungrammatical in such contexts. Possibly thus, ‘one’ (and maybe also ‘none’) has a special status cross-linguistically in this respect. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this valuable hint.



elicited in a pilot fieldwork in May 2017 in the Aosta Valley, a particularly interesting area because of its geographical location between French and Northern Italian dialects. This fieldwork campaign is presented in the next section.

### 3 Methodology

In the present section, we briefly describe the methodology applied for the collection of the Aosta Valley Francoprovençal data to be presented in Section 4. Data collection took place during a four-day fieldwork trip to the Aosta Valley in May 2017.<sup>3</sup> The aim of the fieldwork was the elicitation of Aosta Valley Francoprovençal equivalents of French “partitive articles” under a series of different (morpho)syntactic and semantic conditions (see Table 9.1 below) in accordance with modern, comparable elicitation techniques (cf. e.g., Cornips and Poletto 2005; Giusti and Zegrean 2015). Altogether, a total of 629 nominals were elicited from 17 informants from four different localities (Saint-Nicolas (5 inf.), Fénis (5 inf.), Pontey (1 inf.), Saint-Vincent (1 inf.)). The remaining five speakers were collaborators of the *Bureau Régional Ethnologie et Linguistique (BREL)* from different dialectal areas.

All 17 informants were asked to translate a questionnaire, designed by Dr. Tabea Ihsane in collaboration with further experts on Francoprovençal and previously tested in a pilot, into *Patois* (the glottonym assigned to Aosta Valley Francoprovençal by its speakers). The questionnaire contained 50 French stimuli (36 target stimuli containing indefinite nominals, partly inspired by the *ALAVAL* questionnaire,<sup>4</sup> + 14 fillers) embedded orally into guided semi-spontaneous interviews of approx. 30–40 minutes duration (matrix language French and, to a lesser extent, Italian). The interviews were always conducted by one researcher only, whereas another two to three researchers took note both of the informants’ replies and their metalinguistic comments. Addition-

3 Designed to provide both fieldwork training and language awareness for minority varieties to prospective and young researchers, participants did not only include established experts on morphosyntax and (Francoprovençal) dialectology († Prof. Federica Diémoz [University of Neuchâtel/Switzerland], Prof. Elisabeth Stark, Dr. Tabea Ihsane [both University of Zurich/Switzerland], and Dr. Claus Pusch [Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg/Germany]) but also several undergraduate and doctoral students from these three universities.

4 *ALAVAL* (*Atlas Linguistique Audiovisuel du Francoprovençal Valaisan*; <http://alaval.unine.ch>), elaborated at the University of Neuchâtel/Switzerland under the direction of Prof. Andres Kristol, is an online atlas of the Francoprovençal varieties spoken in the Swiss Canton of Valais.

ally, the interviews were recorded. In a later step, the replies to the 36 target stimuli were phonetically transcribed in IPA by a native speaker of Franco-provençal.<sup>5</sup>

As represented in Table 9.1, the 36 target stimuli were distributed over eleven different contexts, held maximally constant with regard to the verbal predicate and to tense so as to best isolate the target variable. For ten out of these eleven contexts, there were four test items, one for each M.SG, F.SG, M.PL, and F.PL.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this is that plural “partitive articles” are demonstrably different from singular “partitive articles” in their syntactic distribution, semantic function, dialectal distribution and diachronic chronology (Ihsane 2008; Zamparelli 2008; Carlier and Lamiroy 2014; Garzonio and Poletto 2014; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016a,b, 2018; Stark 2016). Note, too, that no fragmentative verbs in the sense of Kupferman (1979, 1994, like *manger* ‘to eat’) were included in order to minimize the risk of obtaining replies with semantically partitive Prepositional Phrases with a zero Quantifier (Q<sup>o</sup>) head and a definite superset instead of indefinites.

Based on what is known about Standard French and Standard Italian “partitive articles”, we take postverbal indefinite direct objects in affirmative contexts without any additional operators (= context 1) as the most prototypical locus of “partitive article”-nominals (cf. e.g., Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade 2004, 2012; Ihsane 2008; Zamparelli 2008; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016a). Testing for direct objects under the scope of negation (= context 2) is necessary, as “partitive articles” in different languages and varieties differ morphologically with such operators (Standard French, for instance, differently from Standard Italian, reduces its fully-fledged “partitive article” to invariable *DE*; cf. Ihsane 2008, 135 vs. Cardinaletti and Giusti 2018, 145–146). A further aspect taken into consideration by the questionnaire is that “partitive article”-nominals seem to be somewhat disfavored—at least in some varieties—with atelic predicates (= context 3; cf. Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016b, 2018). Additionally, specific readings of nominals with “partitive articles” (= context 4) are highly restricted and possible only

5 We fully agree with one anonymous reviewer with regard to the risk of interferences with the questionnaire’s original language (French) and, for this reason, plan additional fieldwork including grammaticality judgments in the form of multiple-choice questions and/or insertion tasks. See Cornips and Poletto (2005).

6 For the reason why indefinite nominals in specificity-inducing contexts were only tested in the plural, see below. Note that some stimuli contained two coordinated items, which is why the stimuli number of 36 is lower than 42 (NB: 10 contexts \* 4 items + 2 items [specificity-inducing context] = 42). See Ihsane, this volume, on specificity and plural complements with a “partitive article” in French.

TABLE 9.1 The eleven different contexts tested by the fieldwork questionnaire

Syntactic function	Position of nominal w.r.t. verbal predicate	Test contexts
<i>Direct object</i>	Postverbal	1) affirmative context 2) under scope of NEG 3) with unbound/atelic predicate 4) in specificity-inducing context (only PL) 5) in characterizing sentence 6) following a Q° 7) following a numeral
<i>Subject</i>	Preverbal	8) with individual-level pred. (emphatic) 9) with stage-level predicate
<i>Compl. of presentative</i>	Postverbal	10) affirmative context
<i>Compl. of P°</i>	Postverbal	11) affirmative context

in the plural, both in Standard French and Standard Italian (Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade 2004, 2012; Le Bruyn 2007; Ihsane 2008; Zamparelli 2008; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016a, 2018).<sup>7</sup> Note, too, that quantifiers show particular behavior with regard to “partitive articles” (= context 6): in Standard French, for instance, some quantifiers require DE—to which the fully-fledged “partitive article” (never allowed after Q°) is reduced in these contexts—whereas other quantifiers do not allow DE (cf. e.g., Asnès 2008); in Standard Italian, DE (as well as the fully-fledged “partitive article”) is not licensed after Q°; Catalan displays diatopic differences (Martí i Girbau 1995, 258–259). Numerals (= context 7), too, are particular in that neither Standard French nor Standard Italian allow DE or fully-fledged “partitive articles” (but cf. Bauche 1951, quoted in Kayne 1977, for differences with important theoretical implications in some substandard varieties of French). “Partitive articles” are also characterized by a slight subject/object asymmetry, subjects with “partitive articles” being more constrained than objects. Standard French, for example, allows preverbal subject “partitive article”-nominals only with stage-level predicates but not normally with individual-level predicates (Kupferman 1979; Guéron 2006; Grevisse

7 Note, however, that only Standard Italian allows (plural) “partitive article”-nominals to take wide scope over negation (Le Bruyn 2007; Zamparelli 2008; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016a, 2018). Scopal specificity with negation was not tested for in the questionnaire.

and Goosse 2007, 745), unless they occur in an argumentative/corrective context with a focused constituent (often negated) other than the subject (Wilmet 2003, 165; Vogeleer and Tasmowski 2005, 69; Roig 2013), hence the inclusion of and differentiation between these contexts (= 8 and 9) in the questionnaire. Individual-level predicates are often found together with generic statements, that is, “[...] ⟨principled⟩ generalizations over the entities of a class” (Krifka et al. 1995, 44). This could arguably be the reason for the observed subject/object symmetry. Possibly, thus, the additional investigation of indefinites in direct object position in so-called “characterizing sentences” (Krifka et al. 1995, 3; = context 5) can shed more light on this issue. “Characterizing sentences” are sentences that express generalizations (such as *Snow is white* or *John drinks a coffee after lunch*) and are also sometimes called “habitual” or “gnomic”. Finally, the questionnaire also tested for complements of P<sup>o</sup> (= context 11): if DE or fully-fledged “partitive articles” turn out to be compatible with prepositions, then this may be further support that these are no longer prepositions themselves but indefinite determiners (Korzen 1996, 494; Garzonio and Poletto 2014; Carlier and Lamiroy 2014, 494).<sup>8</sup>

As will be shown in Section 4, the procedure described in this section allows us to draw a fine-grained picture of the (un)availability and optionality/obligatoriness of fully-fledged “partitive articles” and invariable DE in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal, adding, thus, invaluable new insights to Francoprovençal dialectology. Furthermore, the Aosta Valley Francoprovençal data discussed prove an important empirical input to the theoretical debate on “partitive articles” (see Section 5).

#### 4 Results

The aim of this section is to present the most important empirical results obtained by the analysis of the 629 Francoprovençal nominals elicited as described in Section 3. In Section 4.1, it will be shown that Aosta Valley Francoprovençal has a fully grammaticalized invariable DE-element to mark indefinite mass singulars and indefinite plurals. This is in accordance with the findings reported in earlier studies (see Section 2). However, the data evince that the distribution of the Aosta Valley Francoprovençal DE-element is not iden-

<sup>8</sup> An anonymous reviewer notes that the same observation has been made for Dutch *van die/dat*, referred to in the literature as “faded partitive constructions” (cf. e.g., Broekhuis and den Dikken 2012, 627).

tical to that of French (and maybe Italian) “partitive articles” and that it often co-varies with (semantically indefinite) definite articles (cf. e.g., Kupisch and Koops 2007; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2018). Most remarkably, postverbal indefinite direct objects in characterizing sentences and complements of P° seem to preferably take the semantically indefinite definite article in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal. Additionally, our data suggest that DE-nominals in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal are strongly disfavored as preverbal subjects—especially with individual-level predicates—and that they are optional with some quantifiers. Also, no DE-nominals were found with numerals. These important empirical findings have hitherto not been reported in the literature (but see recently Ihsane 2018). Finally, Section 4.2 briefly addresses some informants’ productions (partly) featuring fully-fledged “partitive articles” of the Standard French/Italian type, even under the scope of negation, as well as replies in contexts in principle amenable to the use of the *liaison* consonant [z] (see Section 2).

#### 4.1 *Aosta Valley Francoprovençal Has a Grammaticalized Invariable DE-element*

Overall, we can state that an invariable DE-element is the obligatory minimal indefinite determiner in our data with singular mass and indefinite plural nominals in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal. Sometimes, reformulations trigger definite articles, which in some contexts are even the preferred option (e.g., in characterizing sentences, see below), but never actual zero determination (bare nominal) (in contrast to Italian (varieties); cf. Giusti, this volume, for a discussion of different indefinite determiners and their distribution in Italian and Italo-Romance). A summary of the results for the eleven contexts is provided in Section 4.1.12.

##### 4.1.1 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects in Affirmative Contexts

In order to elicit the Aosta Valley Francoprovençal equivalent of Standard French/Italian “partitive articles” with indefinite direct objects in affirmative contexts, the informants were asked to translate the following two French stimuli (a.1) and (a.2):

(a.1) (M.SG+F.PL) *Dans la soupe, j’ajoute du céleri et des carottes.*  
‘I add **celery** and **carrots** to the soup.’

(a.2) (F.SG+M.PL) *Souvent, on ajoute de la sarriette et des pois, dans la soupe.*  
‘Often, we add **savory** and **peas**, to the soup.’

In 91% of the valid replies (59/65),<sup>9</sup> the informants used phonic variants of invariable *DE* (7). In a minority of 5% (3/65) each, the answer contained a definite article (8) or even a fully-fledged “partitive article” (see Section 4.2.1):<sup>10</sup>

- (7) *sæeã æn dz'ontø də parj'eta e də pɛzɛ a la*  
 often 3SG add.PRS.3SG *DE* *savory.F.SG* and *DE* *pea.M.PL* to the  
*s'ø:pa*  
 soup.F.SG  
 ‘Often, we add savory and peas, to the soup.’ (BREL 5)

- (8) [...] *e də pɛvrã nã le pɛz'etə dɔdã la*  
 [...] and *DE* *paprika.M.SG* no *DEF.ART.PL* *pea.M.PL* in the  
*s'ø:pa*  
 soup.F.SG  
 ‘[...] and paprika | no | peas to the soup.’ (St.Vinc.)

4.1.2 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects under the Scope of Negation  
 Postverbal indefinite direct objects under the scope of negation were elicited by means of the following four French stimuli (b.1)–(b.4):

- (b.1) (M.SG) *Nous, on (n')achetait pas de fromage, on le faisait nous-même.*  
 ‘We didn’t buy **cheese**, we made it ourselves.’
- (b.2) (F.SG) *Ma mère aimait le fromage, mais elle (n')achetait pas de fontine.*  
 ‘My mother liked **cheese**, but she didn’t buy **Fontina cheese**.’
- (b.3) (M.PL) *À l'époque, ma grand-mère (n')achetait pas de draps. Elle les cousait elle-même.*  
 ‘Back then, my grandmother didn’t buy **bedclothes**. She sewed them herself.’
- (b.4) (F.PL) *Quand j'étais jeune, je (n')achetais pas de jupes.*  
 ‘When I was young, I didn’t buy **skirts**.’

9 By “valid replies”, we mean replies reproducing the syntactic structure and the semantics of the French stimulus. All other replies were discarded. Note that due to rounding differences, some of the percentages given do not exactly add up to 100.

10 In the F.SG, we counted all replies containing [d] plus [l] as instantiations of a fully-fledged “partitive article”. In the M.SG, we counted all replies containing [d] plus [y] or [ɣ] (see (5)) as instantiations of a fully-fledged “partitive article”. Additionally, forms with [d] plus the back vowel [o] were also counted as fully-fledged for M.SG. In the plural, we counted as fully-fledged all forms with [d] plus the front vowels [i] and [ɪ] (for justification of this, cf. Kristol 2016, 358; his examples (14) and (15)).

In 82% of the valid replies (54/66), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (9). In a minority of 14% (9/66), eight of which in the singular, the answer contained a definite article (10). Only in 5% (3/66) did the answer contain a fully-fledged “partitive article” (see Section 4.2.1):

- (9) *nʊ atsətam po də fɾom'a:zo nʊ lə fiʒã*  
 IPL buy.IPFV.1PL NEG DE cheese.M.SG IPL 3M.SG.ACC make.IPFV.1PL  
*nʊ m'i:mɔ*  
 ourselves  
 ‘We didn’t buy cheese, we made it ourselves.’ (St.-Nic. 4)

- (10) *nʊ atsətɔð po lo fɾom'e:dzɔ nʊ lɔ*  
 IPL buy.IPFV.1PL NEG DEF.ART.M.SG cheese.M.SG IPL 3M.SG.ACC  
*fiʒjõ nɔ*  
 make.IPFV.1PL IPL  
 ‘We didn’t buy cheese, we made it ourselves.’ (St.-Nic. 1)

#### 4.1.3 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects with Unbound/Atelic Predicates

Postverbal indefinite direct objects with unbound atelic predicates were elicited by means of the following four French stimuli (c.1)–(c.4):

- (c.1) (M.SG) *Les voisins ont cueilli de l'ail (des ours) toute la journée.*  
 ‘The neighbors picked **garlic** the entire day.’
- (c.2) (F.SG) *Au printemps, on a cueilli de la menthe pendant une semaine!*  
 ‘In spring, we picked **mint** for a week!’
- (c.3) (M.PL) *Dimanche, mon père a ramassé des champignons pendant 2 heures.*  
 ‘On Sunday, my dad picked **mushrooms** for two hours.’
- (c.4) (F.PL) *Les enfants ont cueilli des mûres tout l'après-midi.*  
 ‘The children picked **blackberries** the entire afternoon.’

In 85% of the valid replies (55/65), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (11). In a minority of 9% (6/65), three of which in the singular and the plural, respectively, the answer contained a definite article (12). Only in 6% (4/65) did the answer contain a fully-fledged “partitive article” (see Section 4.2.1):

- (11) *dæmmɪðə p'a:pa l=a tʃɛrtʃə dæ buli*  
 Sunday dad 3SG=AUX.PRS.3SG search.PTCP DE mushroom.M.PL  
*pø doz ɔ:ɔ*  
 for two hours  
 'On Sunday, my dad looked for mushrooms for two hours.' (BREL 5)

- (12) *læ mɛmu l=ɑŋ kɔʎa lə=z*  
 the children 3PL=AUX.PRS.3PL collect.PTCP DEF.ART=PL  
*ãmplə tɔta la v'iprɔ*  
 blackberry.F.PL all the afternoon  
 'The children picked blackberries the entire afternoon.' (BREL 3)

#### 4.1.4 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects in Specificity-Inducing Contexts

Postverbal indefinite direct objects in specificity-inducing contexts were elicited by means of the following two French stimuli (d.1) and (d.2):

- (d.1) (M.PL) *Au restaurant, j'ai rencontré des voisins que tu connais aussi: Paul et Eric.*  
 'At the restaurant I met (some) neighbors you know too: Paul and Eric.'
- (d.2) (F.PL) *À ce souper, ma mère a rencontré des connaissances / personnes qu'elle connaissait: Chiara et Marie.*  
 'At that dinner my mother met (some) acquaintances/persons she knew: Chiara and Mary.'

In 100% of the valid replies (30/30), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (13):

- (13) *ɪ restorãŋ z=e kɔntro dɛ vøh'øn ke*  
 at restaurant 1SG=AUX.PRS.1SG meet.PTCP DE neighbor.M.PL who  
*tæ kɔne o:si pɔl e ɛrik*  
 2SG know.PRS.2SG too Paul and Eric  
 'At the restaurant I met (some) neighbors you know too: Paul and Eric.'  
 (Fénis 1)

#### 4.1.5 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects in Characterizing Sentences

Postverbal indefinite direct objects in characterizing sentences were elicited by means of the following two French stimuli (e.1) and (e.2):



- (e.1) (M.SG+F.PL) *Dans le garage, on entasse/empile du bois et on range des conserves.*  
 ‘In the garage, we stack **wood** and we put **cans**.’
- (e.2) (M.PL+F.SG) *Au grenier, on range des draps et à la cave de la confiture.*  
 ‘In the attic, we put **bedclothes** and in the basement **jam**.’

In 31% of the valid replies (18/59), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (14). This makes invariable DE a minority solution, differently from what is observed in the data for all other contexts discussed so far. In fact, answers containing a definite article are clearly the most frequent option with postverbal (semantically) indefinite direct objects in characterizing sentences (15). They are contained in 64% of the valid replies (38/59) and show very similar frequencies both with singular and plural nominals. Only in 5% (3/59) did the answer contain a fully-fledged “partitive article” (see Section 4.2.1):

- (14) *dã lɔ gara:ʒɛ əp ẽr'anzə dœ bukʲɛ e õn*  
 in the garage one store.PRS.3SG DE wood.M.SG and one  
*aranzə dœ kɔs'ɛrvə*  
 store.PRS.3SG DE can.F.PL  
 ‘In the garage, we store wood and we store cans.’ (BREL 2)

- (15) *dã lo garaʒœ no bæteã læ bukʲjœ e*  
 in the garage 1PL put.PRS.1PL DEF.ART.M.SG wood.M.SG and  
*lœ kɔs'ɛrvə*  
 DEF.ART.PL can.F.PL  
 ‘In the garage, we put wood and cans.’ (St.-Nic. 1)

#### 4.1.6 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects Following Q°

Postverbal indefinite direct objects following Q° were elicited by means of the following four French stimuli (f.1)–(f.4):

- (f.1) (M.SG) *Dans la recette que j'ai, ils mettent beaucoup de poivre.*  
 ‘In the recipe I have, they put a **lot of pepper**.’
- (f.2) (F.SG) *Si tu veux, je mets un peu de crème dans ton café.*  
 ‘If you want I put a **bit of cream** into your coffee.’
- (f.3) (M.PL) *Les gens de la région mettent peu de champignons dans leurs sauces, je trouve.*  
 ‘The people of this region put **few mushrooms** in their sauces, I think.’

- (f.4) (F.PL) *Quand je cuisine, je mets **plein d'épices**. Parfois j'en essaie de nouvelles.*  
 'When I cook, I add a **good deal of spices**. Sometimes I try new ones.'

In 89% of the valid replies (59/66), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (16). In a minority of 8% (5/66), four of which in translations of (f.3) containing [poka] 'few, little', the answer contained a noun directly preceded by Q° (17). Only in 2% (1/66) did the answer contain a fully-fledged "partitive article" (see Section 4.2.1):<sup>11</sup>

- (16) *se t ju bəɔ tʃika de kr'e:ma dædã la*  
 if 2SG want.PRS.2SG put.PRS.1SG a bit DE cream.F.SG into the  
*tiŋ kafɪ*  
 your coffee  
 'If you want, I put a bit of cream into your coffee.' (Fénis 5)

- (17) *le dzi dæ la resõ i=bəɔtõ<sup>m</sup> p'oka bəl'ejo*  
 the people of the region 3M.PL=put.PRS.3PL few mushroom.M.SG  
*dædã la s'øpa*  
 into the soup  
 'The people of this region put little mushroom in their soup.' (Fénis 5)

#### 4.1.7 Postverbal Indefinite Direct Objects Following Numerals

Postverbal indefinite direct objects following numerals were elicited by means of the following three French stimuli (g.1)–(g.3):

- (g.1) (M.SG) *À la fin, j'ajoute **un œuf**. Un seul, sinon ce n'est pas la bonne consistance.*  
 'At the end, I add **an egg**. Just one, otherwise it's not the right consistency.'
- (g.2) (F.SG+F.PL) *Dans la recette originale, ils ajoutent **une gousse d'ail entière et deux, trois tomates**.*  
 'In the original recipe, they add **one clove of garlic and two to three tomatoes**.'
- (g.3) (M.PL) *Pour ce gâteau, ma mère ajoute **une ou deux poires**.*  
 'For this cake, my mother adds **one or two pears**.'

11 In 2% (1/66) of the translations, the answer contained a definite article. We believe that this is either a transcription error or reflects a wrong interpretation of the translation stimulus, that is, one where Q° scopes over the entire VP.

In 100% of the valid replies (64/64), the noun is directly preceded by the numeral (18). No invariable DE was used.

- (18) *pε fe seta t'urtə m'ama adzente du o tri*  
 in.order.to make.INF this cake mother add.PRS.3SG two or three  
*pæ*  
 pear.M.PL  
 'To make this cake, mum adds two or three pears.' (BREL 2)

4.1.8 Preverbal Indefinite Subjects with Individual-Level Predicates  
 (Emphatic Context)

Preverbal indefinite subjects with individual-level predicates were elicited by means of the following four French argumentative stimuli (h.1)–(h.4):

- (h.1) (M.SG) *Du vin blanc va mieux avec la fondue que du vin rouge!*  
 'White wine goes better with fondue than red wine!'  
 (h.2) (F.SG) *De la bière coûte moins cher que du vin!*  
 'Beer is cheaper than wine!'  
 (h.3) (M.PL) *Des moutons n'ont jamais 5 pattes!*  
 'Sheep never have 5 paws!'  
 (h.4) (F.PL) *Des poules n'ont pas de dents!*  
 'Chicken don't have teeth!'

In none of the valid replies (0/67), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE.<sup>12</sup> In fact, invariable DE was explicitly considered ungrammatical in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal with preverbal indefinite subjects and individual-level predicates by three of our informants. By far the most frequent (97%, 65/67) answer type contained the definite article (19), most plausibly yielding a kind reading of the respective nominal. In 2% of the valid replies each (1/67), the informant used a fully-fledged “partitive article” (see Section 4.2.1) or a cognate of *certains* ‘some’:<sup>13</sup>

12 One informant used an invariable variant of DE in a reformulation of his first spontaneous reply. This reformulation was not counted. Note, too, that three of the 67 replies contained postverbal subjects. These are included in the calculi, as all contain the majoritarian definite article (see below).

13 We decided to include this answer in the calculus, as there are Italian varieties in which cognates of Standard Italian *certi* ‘some’ are no longer quantifiers but [+ specific] indefinite determiners (Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016b, 2018).

- (19) *lo vim bjāyk va miej avœ la*  
 DEF.ART.M.SG wine.M.SG white. M.SG go.PRS.3SG better with the  
*fōndy kε lɔ vɪŋg r'ɔsɔ*  
 fondue than the wine red  
 'White wine goes better with fondue than red wine!' (BREL 6)

#### 4.1.9 Preverbal Indefinite Subjects with Stage-Level Predicates

Preverbal indefinite subjects with stage-level predicates were elicited by means of the following three French stimuli (i.1)–(i.3):

- (i.1) (M.SG) *Son mari n'avait rien nettoyé: (en effet) du sucre couvrait toute la table.*  
 'Her husband hadn't cleaned anything; in fact, **sugar** was covering the entire table.'
- (i.2) (F.SG+F.PL) *C'est les enfants qui ont cuisiné: de la farine recouvrait toute la table et des épiluchures de pomme traînaient par terre.*  
 'It's the kids who cooked: **flour** was covering the entire table and **apple peels** were lying around on the floor.'
- (i.3) (M.PL) *Quand je suis rentré, des papiers de bonbons traînaient dans la cuisine. Les enfants ne les avaient pas jetés.*  
 'When I came back, **candy papers** were lying around in the kitchen. The kids hadn't thrown them away.'

Only 14 of all 67 replies collected were valid, that is, were not syntactically reformulated or semantically reinterpreted (see below and note 9). As illustrated in (20) and (21), 12 of these contained invariable DE (M.SG: 2, F.SG: 1, M.PL: 6, F.PL: 3). Two replies contained a fully-fledged "partitive article" (see Section 4.2.1):<sup>14</sup>

- (20) *dε sɔkro kɔvataε tɔtε la t'a:bjɑ*  
 DE sugar.M.SG cover.IPFV.3SG all the table  
 'Sugar was covering the entire table.' (BREL 6)
- (21) *e dε pœl'yræ dε pɔ'mε trɛjnaɔ pε t'ε:rɛ*  
 and DE apple.peel.F.PL lie.around.IPFV.3PL on ground  
 '... and apple peels were lying around on the floor.' (St.-Vinc.)

14 Three informants used an invariable variant of DE in a reformulation of their first spontaneous reply. These reformulations were not counted.

All remaining 53/67 replies were clear (and often very free and sometimes multiple) reformulations of the original stimuli. Reformulations contained either presentative constructions (‘there is’), quantifiers and/or morphologically *and* semantically definite nominals. In this context, note too that the native speaker who transcribed the interviews marked one of the three replies with invariable DE in the SG with the metalinguistic label *hesitant* and that five informants explicitly excluded invariable DE with preverbal indefinite subjects with stage-level predicates in the SG.

Overall, replies to the stimuli with preverbal indefinite subjects with stage-level predicates were somewhat difficult to deal with. This is why we feel that the respective data should once more be double-checked by a native speaker of Francoprovençal, both for possible reformulations we might not have discovered and for the precise system of plural morphology on the feminine nouns (see Section 5).

#### 4.1.10 Postverbal Complements of Presentatives

Complements of presentatives were elicited by means of the following four French stimuli (j.1)–(j.4):

- (j.1) (M.SG) *Il y a du lait dans mon frigo; tu peux en prendre, si tu veux.*  
‘There’s **milk** in my fridge; you can take some, if you want.’
- (j.2) (F.SG) *Quand il y a de la neige, je vais moins souvent faire des courses.*  
‘When there is **snow**, I do a lot less grocery shopping.’
- (j.3) (M.PL) *Dans ce plat, il y a des œufs.*  
‘In this dish, there are **eggs**.’
- (j.4) (F.PL) *Fais attention, si tu es allergique: il y a des noix dans ce gâteau.*  
‘Watch out, if you are allergic: there are **nuts** in this cake.’

In 77% of the valid replies (50/65), the informants used phonic variants of invariable DE (22). In a minority of 22% (14/65), all of which in translations of (j.2), the answer contained a definite article (23). The reason for this asymmetry, we believe, is that (j.2), differently from the other three stimuli, is a characterizing-sentence (see Section 4.1.5). In 2% (1/65), the answer contained a bare noun (which we consider a performance error).

- (22) *la də laʃiː dā lə fr'igæ tæ pu nɛm*  
there.is DE **milk.M.SG** in the fridge 2SG can.PRS.2SG =PART  
*prɛndə se ta v'ɔjɐ*  
take.INF if 2SG want.PRS.2SG  
‘There is milk in the fridge; you can take some, if you want.’ (St.-Nic. 5)

- (23) *kã ja la nei zœ vo mwã*  
 when there.is DEF.ART.F.SG snow.F.SG 1SG go.PRS.1SG less  
*fê la sp'ɛzɛ*  
 make.INF the shopping  
 'When there is snow, I go shopping less.' (St.-Nic. 2)

#### 4.1.11 Complements of Prepositions

Complements of prepositions were elicited by means of the following four French stimuli (k.1)–(k.4):

- (k.1) (M.SG) *On cuisine les épinards sauvages avec du lard.*  
 'Wild spinach is cooked with **bacon**.'
- (k.2) (F.SG) *Il ne faut pas nettoyer les bidons avec de l'eau tiède.*  
 'One must not clean the jugs with lukewarm water.'
- (k.3) (M.PL) *Elle fait revenir de la viande avec des oignons.*  
 'She roasts meat with onions.'
- (k.4) (F.PL) *Les voisins mangent la fondue avec des patates.*  
 'The neighbors eat fondue with potatoes.'

Only in 46% of the valid replies (31/68) did the informants use phonic variants of invariable DE (24). Invariable DE is thus a minority solution, differently from what is observed in the data for most other contexts discussed so far. In turn, 50% (34/68) of the valid replies with complements of prepositions contained a definite article (25), making this the most frequent option in our data in this context. Only in 5% (3/68) of the cases did the answer contain a fully-fledged "partitive article" (see Section 4.2.1):

- (24) *fã kyi dœ tsir avwi dœ=z ɨɲõ*  
 make.PRS.3SG cook.INF DE meat.F.SG with DE=PL onion.M.PL  
 (BREL 5)
- (25) *e fã kwe dœ tsœ awe lɛ=z*  
 and make.PRS.3SG cook.INF DE meat.F.SG with DEF.ART=PL  
*œɲõ*  
 onion.M.PL  
 '(and) s/he brings meat to cook with onions.' (St.-Nic. 3)

#### 4.1.12 Summary of the Results

Table 9.2 below summarizes the results reported in Sections 4.1.1–4.1.11. For the sake of convenience, the eleven contexts have been reordered accord-

TABLE 9.2 Summary of the results

	Invariable <i>de</i>	Definite article (indefinite reading or kind reading)	Fully- fledged PA	Cognate of <i>certain</i> s	No further determiner
Postverbal indef. dOs; specificity-inducing contexts (4.1.4)	100% (30/30)	0	0	0	0
Postverbal indef. dOs; affirmative context (4.1.1)	91% (59/65)	5% (3/65)	5% (3/65)	0	0
Postverbal indef. dOs following Q° (4.1.6)	89% (59/66)	2% (1/66)	2% (1/66)	0	8% (5/66)
Postverbal indef. dOs; unbound/atelic predicates (4.1.3)	85% (55/65)	9% (6/65)	6% (4/65)	0	0
Postverbal indef. dOs; under scope of negation (4.1.2)	82% (54/66)	14% (9/66)	5% (3/66)	0	0
Postverbal complements of presentatives (4.1.10)	77% (50/65)	22% (14/65)	0	0	2% (1/65) <sup>a</sup>
Complements of prepositions (4.1.11)	46% (31/68)	50% (34/68)	5% (3/68)	0	0
Postverbal indef. dOs; characterizing sentences (4.1.5)	31% (18/59)	64% (38/59)	5% (3/59)	0	0
Preverbal indefinite subjects with stage-level predicates (4.1.9)	n/a <sup>b</sup> (12 cases)	0	n/a <sup>c</sup> (2 cases)	0	0
Preverbal indef. subjects with individual-level predicates (4.1.8), emphatic	0	97% (65/67)	2% (1/67)	2% (1/67)	0
Postverbal indef. dOs; following numerals (4.1.7)	0	0	0	0	100% (64/64)

a We consider this answer a performance error (see 4.1.10).

b No percentages are given for preverbal indefinite subjects with stage-level predicates. For justification, see 4.1.9.

c See note b.

ing to the relative frequency of invariable DE, beginning with the highest value attested. For every context, the most frequent result has been highlighted.

As for a potential geographical pattern in our results, we have to admit that none is visible in our data. Many results are categorical or almost categorical across speakers and locations, and contexts where we observe some variation (see results in Sections 4.1.2, 4.1.10, 4.1.11, 4.1.5 and 4.1.8) do not have location as

TABLE 9.3 Use of the “indefinite” definite article in six contexts per location

	Affirma- tive dO	Negation dO	Unbound dO	C-Sen- tence dO	Compl. of presenta- tive	Comple- ments of P <sup>o</sup>	Total N def. art/ sentences	Total N def. art./location
Bondaz 1	1/4	0/4	0/4	1/2	1/4	0/4	3/22	13.6% (3/22)
Brel 2	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	1/4	4/4	5/24	n/a (speakers at BREL come from different locations)
Brel 3	0/4	1/4	3/3	2/4	1/4	4/4	11/23	
Brel 4	0/4	0/4	0/4	4/4	1/4	0/4	5/24	
Brel 5	0/4	0/4	0/4	1/4	1/4	0/4	2/24	
Brel 6	0/4	1/4	0/4	1/4	0/3	1/4	3/23	
Fenis 1	0/4	0/4	0/4	2/3	0/4	1/4	3/23	
Fenis 2	2/4	0/4	0/3	2/3	1/4	3/4	8/22	32.1% (36/112)
Fenis 3	0/4	1/4	0/4	2/3	0/3	2/4	5/22	
Fenis 4	0/3	0/4	0/4	2/3	1/4	2/4	5/22	
Fenis 5	0/4	1/3	1/4	3/3	1/4	3/4	9/22	
Ponthey 1	0/4	1/4	0/4	4/4	1/4	3/4	9/24	
StNic 1	0/4	3/3	1/4	4/4	1/3	4/4	13/22	32.1% (36/112)
StNic 2	0/4	0/4	0/4	4/4	1/4	2/4	7/24	
StNic 3	0/2	0/4	1/2	3/4	1/4	4/4	9/22	
StNic 4	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/2	1/4	0/4	1/22	
StNic 5	0/4	1/3	0/4	3/4	1/4	1/4	6/22	
<b>Total N</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>104</b>	

the independent variable responsible for it. This is shown in Table 9.3 for the use of the “indefinite” definite article in our data.

We can only compare Fenis and St. Nicolas (5 speakers each), and Table 9.3 shows similar percentages for the use of the “indefinite” definite article instead of DE or the “partitive article” for these two locations (27.0% and 32.1%). We thus conclude for the moment that our data do not permit any spatial analysis or conclusion as for any spatial pattern.

#### 4.2 *Fully-Fledged “Partitive Articles” and the liaison Consonant [z] in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal*

In this section, we briefly present the 20 replies featuring a fully-fledged “partitive article” (4.2.1), as well as 28 replies with the *liaison* consonant [z] (4.2.2).

4.2.1 Fully-Fledged “Partitive Articles” in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal  
As foreshadowed in Section 4.1, a small number of 20 replies in our data contained a fully-fledged “partitive article” (18 in the singular, 15 out of which with



TABLE 9.4 Contexts in the data with fully-fledged “partitive articles”

Context	N
Postverbal indefinite dO, affirmative (4.1.1)	3
Postverbal indefinite dO under scope of negation (4.1.2)	3
Postverbal indefinite dO with unbound atelic predicate (4.1.3)	4
Postverbal indefinite dO in characterizing sentence (4.1.5)	3
Postverbal indefinite dO following Q <sup>o</sup> (4.1.6)	1
Preverbal indef. subjects with individual-level predicates (4.1.8)	2
Preverbal indef. subjects with stage-level predicates, emphatic (4.1.9)	1
Indefinite complement of P <sup>o</sup> (4.1.11)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

feminine nouns and 3 out of which with masculine nouns, and 2 in the plural).<sup>15</sup> The 18 fully-fledged “partitive articles” in the singular are opposed to 147 attestations of invariable DE with singular stimuli, thus accounting for 11% of the relevant cases. The 2 fully-fledged “partitive articles” in the plural are opposed to 221 invariable attestations of DE with plural stimuli, that, is for less than 1% of the relevant cases. Fully-fledged “partitive articles” in our data do not respond to any clear geographic pattern, as 11 out of 17 informants from all 4 villages covered by the fieldwork produced at least one fully-fledged “partitive article”. Nevertheless, it strikes the eye that 9 of the 20 fully-fledged “partitive articles” in our data stem from the five speakers from St. Nicolas, whereas the five speakers from Fénis (the only location that provided five speakers, too; see Section 3) only provided one fully-fledged “partitive article” in total. Likewise, as represented in Table 9.4, the 20 replies under scrutiny are distributed over 8 different contexts.

The following examples illustrate fully-fledged “partitive articles” with postverbal indefinite dOs in affirmative contexts (26), under the scope of negation (27), in characterizing sentences (28), as subjects of individual-level predicates (29), and as complements of P<sup>o</sup> (30):

- (26) *sav'eë nò dzònten də la pari'eta* [...] *dë la s'òpa*  
 often 1PL add.PRS.1PL PA.F.SG *savory.F.SG* [...] in the soup  
 ‘Often, we add savory to the soup.’ (St.-Nic. 4)

<sup>15</sup> See note 10 for how fully-fledgedness was assessed.

- (27) *ma m'amã l=am'æ* [...] *dɛ frɔm'a<sup>d</sup>zɔ mɛ asɛtæ*  
 my mother 3SG=like.IPFV.3SG [...] DE cheese but buy.IPFV.3SG  
*pa dæ la font'ina*  
 NEG PA.F.SG fontine  
 'My mum liked cheese, but she didn't buy Fontina cheese.' (Bondaz 1)
- (28) *dã lo ga'aʒə ðn amatsæ dɻ bukæ*  
 in the garage 3SG stack.PRS.3SG PA.M.SG wood.M.SG  
 'In the garage, we stack wood.' (BREL 5)
- (29) *di zɛlɛn n æjɔm pa le dɛŋ*  
 PA.PL chicken.F.PL NEG have.PRS.3PL NEG DEF.ART.PL tooth.PL  
 'Chicken don't have teeth.' (BREL 6)
- (30) *fã pa aprɔpr'ie le bidø awɛ dəl' ɛ:vɛ*  
 must.PRS.3SG NEG clean.INF the jugs with PA.F.SG water.F.SG  
*tç'ɛdɛ*  
 lukewarm.F.SG  
 'One must not clean the jugs with lukewarm water.' (Bondaz 1)

4.2.2 The *liaison* Consonant [z] Aosta Valley Francoprovençal  
 As pointed out in Section 2 (4), Francoprovençal features a *liaison* consonant [z] in the plural before vocalic onset. According to Kristol (2014, 2016), this *liaison* consonant appears both with DE and with the definite article. In our data, too, we found this *liaison* element in both contexts, however not categorically with DE in plural nominals with vocalic onset.

As for invariable DE, the *liaison* consonant appeared in 68% (21/31) of the cases potentially amenable to it.<sup>16</sup> Compare (24), repeated here as (31), with (32):

- (31) *Fa kyi dæ tsir avwi dæ=z ipɔð*  
 make.PRS.3SG cook.INF DE meat.F.SG with DE=PL onion.F.PL  
 (BREL 5)

16 This calculus does not include the answers to the translation stimulus (f.4) featuring the French noun *épices* 'spices', as for many replies it was not at all clear whether the Franco-provençal equivalent had a vocalic onset (like the Standard French form) or a consonantic one (like the Standard Italian form *spezie*). Many replies contained lexical crossings between the Standard French and the Standard Italian form.

- (32) *fɛ*                      *kwir*      *dɛ* *tsiRʷ*      *awi* *de* *ɲõ*  
 make.PRS.3SG cook.INF DE meat.F.SG with DE onion.F.PL  
 ‘S/he brings meat to cook with onions.’ (Fénis 5)

With regard to the definite article with indefinite semantics, however, the *liaison* consonant did appear in 100% (7/7) of the cases potentially amenable to it. Consider (25), repeated here as (33) (see also (12) above):

- (33) *e* *fa*                      *kwe*      *də* *tsə*      *awe* *lɛ=z*  
 and make.PRS.3SG cook.INF DE meat.F.SG with DEF.ART=PL  
*ɲõ*  
 onion.F.PL  
 ‘And s/he brings meat to cook with onions.’ (St.-Nic. 3)

## 5 Discussion

Comparing our findings from the Aosta Valley Francoprovençal data (see Section 4) to French results in the very superficial impression of a more or less comparable system of nominal determination with regard to singular mass and plural indefinites. DE and its allomorphs are used in the great majority of cases (and even in 100% of cases with animate specific direct objects) of indefinite mass or plural nominals in postverbal object position and as complements of presentatives, in affirmative contexts and under the scope of negation, and also with atelic predicates and specificity inducing contexts. The second frequent option is the definite article, which thus seems to have an indefinite value also in parallel to some Italian dialects (Kupisch and Koops 2007; Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016b, 2018; Giusti this volume), a finding to be investigated in more detail in further studies and not attested for (Standard) French. In contrast to Kristol’s (2014) bipartition of the Francoprovençal area, where Aosta Valley Francoprovençal is part of “Francoprovençal A”, with invariable DE only, we also find 20 attestations of fully-fledged “partitive articles”—also under the scope of negation (cf. e.g., (27) above)—which in the singular are also clearly gender-marked. Bare mass nominals or bare plurals in argument position are thus as excluded in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal as they are in French, which is an important syntactic finding and an important difference with respect to (Standard) Italian.

Parallels exist also for mass singulars and plural indefinites after quantifiers and numerals: whereas DE is the default option after quantifiers (a perfect match with French regularities; except for *poka* ‘little, few’, which seems to

allow also the Italian construction *poca acqua* ‘little water’), it never occurs after numerals, like in (Standard) French. Contexts with a “generic flavor” such as indefinite direct objects of characterizing sentences or (preverbal) subjects of individual-level predicates in argumentative contexts systematically trigger the definite article and, in the latter case, sometimes heavy reformulations (something which we would also expect for spontaneous productions of informal French). Generally speaking, the data discussed suggest preverbal DE-subjects, also with stage-level predicates, to be blocked more strictly in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal than according to what is reported for French, a fact to which we will return below (see also Ihsane 2018). The only possible exception appear to be preverbal (M)PL DE-subjects with stage-level predicates. Finally, there is high variation in complements of prepositions, which is different from what is the case for Standard French and needs further research.

As for morphology, out of 388 valid productions, 20 (= 5%) show the fully-fledged “partitive article” like in French, without any clear geographical pattern—it seems to represent a rare yet existing allomorph of DE. “Italian-like” constructions are 4 attestations of the quantifier *poka* (‘few, little’) without a following DE, one use of the equivalent of *certain* in the plural with a preverbal subject of an individual-level predicate, and the recurrent use of the definite article with indefinite semantics reported in detail in Section 4.

Searching for an explanation of this highly grammaticalized indefinite determiner DE could thus also be done in parallel to French: many researchers claim, either diachronically (Carlier 2007; Carlier and Lamiroy 2014) or synchronically (Stark 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Gerards and Stark, this volume), that the impoverished nominal morphology of Modern French without any declension classes, overt and transparent gender and number marking on nouns, makes it necessary to minimally mark nominals for “argumenthood” by the determiner *de* (obligatory even under the scope of negation). “Partitive articles” in French, just like the remaining nominal determiners of this language, are marked for number (in the singular also for gender) and compensate in a way the loss of gender and number marking on nouns, both relevant *phi*-features in Indo-European agreement systems.<sup>17</sup>

In Section 2, we saw that Francoprovençal nouns are almost as highly defective as French ones, without any overt number marking (except for feminine

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17 An anonymous reviewer points out to us that this is reminiscent of the distribution of case, number and gender features in the New High German noun phrase, which is characterized by a sort of “division of labor” (word group inflection) between Det, A and N. Morphological features such as case often are expressed on the determiner and rarely on the noun (cf. Strobel and Glaser, this volume, on partitive markers in Germanic).

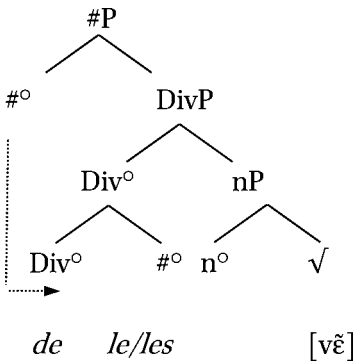


FIGURE 9.1  
Indefinite nominals in French with lowering of #° into Div°

*a/e*-alternations, which do not seem to be systematic, and the existence of sigmatic plural marking in Evolène, Switzerland, a variety not covered by our fieldwork). In turn, Francoprovençal varieties have a grammaticalized invariable *DE* or, depending on geolinguistic factors, even a fully-fledged “partitive article”. In parallel to what has been done for French (Stark 2008a, 2008b), such elements could be considered the expression of the functional head realized by the overt plural marker in languages which systematically and unambiguously mark number on the noun (in the sense of how Borer (2005) considers classifiers and plural affixes such as English *-s* to be in complementary distribution and to both mark “portioning out”, that is, the creation of countable elements in nominals, in a functional head  $Div^\circ$ ). Of course, invariable *DE* or fully-fledged “partitive articles” mark the opposite value of “portioning out”, but elsewhere (Gerards and Stark, this volume) we show that inside Romance languages, two options exist: either, only “portioning out” is explicitly marked by plural markers or the indefinite article stemming from Latin *UNUS*, zero marking being the default (= mass/indefinite), like in Ibero-Romance. Alternatively, both “portioning out” (by *UNUS*) and “mass” (by *DE* or fully-fledged “partitive articles”) are marked (like in French, to some extent also Italian). We could thus assume that *DE* and the *DE*-element of fully-fledged “partitive articles” are located in the very same position as are plural markers ( $Div^\circ$  in Borer’s 2005 terms), and may then be combined with counting elements like quantifiers (e.g., *beaucoup*, ‘much/many’) or erased post-syntactically when combined with numerals. When no such element is in the “counting head” #° (following Borer 2005), *le/la/les* is inserted, to assure minimal number marking (Borer 2005, 164, for that assumption). The analysis for French is represented in Figure 9.1 above. Concretely, Figure 9.1 shows how the root [vẽ], *vin* (‘wine’), without any information on declension class, gender or number, is combined with a functional head  $n^\circ$  to form a noun—a highly defective noun, however, not being able to combine with a verb, not even with a mass reading or in incorporation struc-

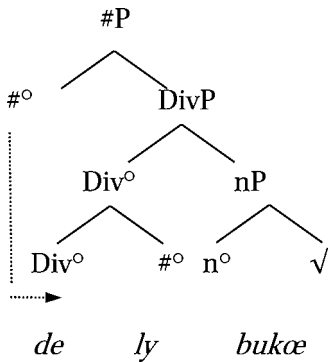


FIGURE 9.2  
Indefinite nominals in “Francoprovençal B” with lowering of #° into Div°

tures (as, in turn, available in Spanish; cf. *tengo vino*, ‘I have (some) wine’, or *tengo perro*, ‘I am a dog owner’). This nP then combines with the Div°-head, minimally expressed by *de*, and with another head, #°, responsible for “counting” in a broad sense and hosting quantifiers or numerals, or minimally, as in Figure 9.1, *le/la/les*, expressing gender and number (#° being the lowest position where this is possible in French). Post-syntactically, the morphological material hosted in #° is lowered (Embick and Noyer 2001) to Div°, which results in *du vin* or *des vins* (‘wine’, or ‘wines’) (for a detailed argumentation for this analysis, see Gerards and Stark, this volume). The structure slightly resembles so-called bare partitives with a zero quantifier, but those are followed by a PP containing a definite nominal: *Je prends du vin (que tu m’as servi)* (‘I take (an unspecified quantity) of the wine which you served me’, see Kupferman 1979, 1994; Ihsane 2008).

Applying this analysis to “Francoprovençal B”, that is, to our cases with a fully-fledged “partitive article” in the singular, results in the very same representation and postulates the very same explanatory mechanism: existence of “partitive articles” to compensate the loss of number (and gender) marking on nouns in Francoprovençal. This is shown in Figure 9.2 above.

“Francoprovençal A” with invariable DE, in turn, is a different case in point: in case no numeral or quantifier is inserted in #°, nothing is inserted in ‘Francoprovençal A’ in #°, differently from French, but similar to some Occitan dialects. This is shown in Figure 9.3 below.

“Francoprovençal A” thus admits nominal arguments that are not overtly specified for gender and number, unlike French and other Romance languages and varieties (remember: \**je bois vin* is ungrammatical). Gender and number are, however, important *phi*-features also in Francoprovençal, where gender agreement with adjectives or number agreement between the subject constituent and the finite verb is completely grammaticalized. DE-nominals in “Francoprovençal A” are almost as defective as French nPs and should accordingly also be extremely restricted as to their syntactic distribution (e.g., to positions where some sort of “incorporation meaning” is available).

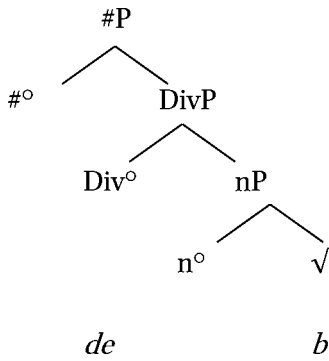


FIGURE 9.3 Indefinite nominals in “Francoprovençal A”

And this is exactly where our data point at: in Sections 4.1.8 and 4.1.9, we showed that, both with preverbal subjects of individual level-predicates and with preverbal subjects of stage-level predicates, DE is highly disfavored in “Francoprovençal A”, at least in the singular, which is thus also syntactically different from French, where such “partitive article”-constituents are fine in literary registers (Englebert 1992; Vogeleer and Tasmowski 2005). This issue is further discussed in Ihsane (2018).

Of course, the data this discussion is based on are still small in number and stem from questionnaire-based fieldwork only, which can never result in a complete picture of fully-fledged “partitive articles” or invariable DE in Aosta Valley Francoprovençal. The alleged typologically marked system of nominal declension in these Francoprovençal varieties has to be studied in more detail, also in a Pan-Romance perspective, and a methodologically more varied and bigger data set (elicitation tasks, grammaticality judgements) is necessary to better understand the underlying regularities and restrictions of fully-fledged “partitive articles” and invariable DE.

## 6 Conclusion

Starting from the observation that fully-fledged “partitive articles” and invariable DE seem to constitute an areal phenomenon, ranging from South-Western France to the North of the country and over Switzerland to the Northern Italian dialects in the East (Bossong 2016), this paper focused on the empirical description of (questionnaire-, translation task-based) fieldwork data gathered in the Aosta Valley in May 2017, where we investigated eleven syntactic and semantic properties of invariable DE in the Francoprovençal varieties spoken there. Contrary to other Romance languages, this variety of Francoprovençal is known to have non-inflected DE (with different allomorphs) in front of

indefinite mass singulars and plurals. Except for Standard French, Standard Italian and some Italian dialects, little is known about the syntactic and semantic properties of such invariable DE-elements (and of fully-fledged “partitive articles”) in the different Romance varieties. This is especially true of Franco-provençal (and, *mutatis mutandis*, of Occitan), a highly endangered and non-standardized minor Romance language, as traditional dialectological descriptions focus at most on the etymology, morphology and geographical distribution of attestations of these elements, without even indicating their obligatory (like in Standard French) or optional character (like in Standard Italian) in the respective systems. There are several hypotheses about potential correlations between the existence of invariable DE and fully-fledged “partitive articles”, on the one hand, and other phenomena (no overt and unambiguous number marking on nouns, absence of DOM), on the other hand, according to which these indefinite mass and plural determiners seem to play a major role in the nominal morphosyntax of Romance languages. This makes them a crucial object of study for typologists and theoretical linguists alike, and this even more so in “natural”, non-standardized spoken varieties.

The major findings reported and discussed concern striking parallels to the French system. First: a quasi-obligatory use of invariable DE with indefinite mass and plural arguments, also after quantifiers and under the scope of negation, and despite the sociolinguistically more intense “vertical contact” with Standard Italian, second: the attestation of fully-fledged “partitive articles” also in Aosta Valley Franco-provençal (*contra* Kristol, 2014), and third: a quite generalized ban on preverbal subject arguments with invariable DE or “partitive articles”, at least in the singular (cf. Ihsane 2018). We correlated this last finding to the almost absent (systematic) number marking on nouns in Aosta Valley Franco-provençal, which is also the case for French. In the latter language, however, gender and number are overtly marked via determiners in argumental nominals (except under the scope of negation and after some quantifiers), whereas an expression like Franco-provençal *de bukæ* (‘wood’) is not marked for any of these *phi*-features and thus unable to occupy the preverbal subject position, where it would control number agreement on the verb and introduce a topical discourse referent. Of course, this first, admittedly tentative explanation is in need of further corroboration by means of more data (especially from grammaticality judgments and fill-in-the-gap tasks, cf. Cornips and Poletto 2005). Additionally, more theoretical discussion about *en*-pronominalization and the behavior of fully-fledged Franco-provençal “partitive articles” (which are preserved under the scope of negation, like in Italian, but contrary to French) is needed in order to fully understand the syntax (and semantics) of Franco-provençal partitive determiners.



### Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Federica Diémoz (University of Neuchâtel/Switzerland) and her team, who organized the fieldwork trip described in Section 3, and without whom contacting informants would have been impossible. Her passing is an incredible loss to us, both scientifically and as a friend. Our thanks also go to Joanna Pauchard (University of Neuchâtel) who transcribed the collected data. Additionally, we would like to thank the *Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF, project number 100012L\_172751)*, the *URPP Language and Space* (University of Zurich) and the Institute for Romance Studies (University of Zurich) for financial support. Finally, many thanks go to Jan Davatz (University of Zurich) for his invaluable help with the Franco-provençal glosses, and to two anonymous reviewers for many helpful comments. Usual disclaimers apply.

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