



Francoprovençal nominal morphology: *a Network Morphology account*

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Research project "Distribution and Function of 'Partitive Articles' in Romance (DiFuPaRo): a microvariation analysis," (<https://www.rose.uzh.ch/de/seminar/wersindwir/mitarbeitende/stark/DiFuPaRo.html>), directed by E. Stark and C. Poletto, funded by the *Swiss National Science Foundation* (project number 100012L_172751) and the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (project number: PO1642/8-1).



1. Introduction

Aim

- Model the variation of the nominal inflectional morphology (nouns, adjectives and determiners) within the highly fragmented Francoprovençal (FrPr) dialectal network

Objectives

- Descriptive: provide a systematic overview of declension classes, gender marking and number marking in FrPr to capture similarities as well as differences finding the correct generalizations both for individual varieties and for the entire diasystem
- Typological: provide a typology at the nominal expression (NE) level, as the NE is semantically and referentially involved in the notion of plurality.

2.1 State-of-the-art

2.1.1 Language background

What is Francoprovençal?

- **Non-standardised** Gallo-Romance language (Kristol 2016)
- Highly **endangered** language: 110'000 to 160'000 speakers in France, Switzerland and Italy (Zulato, Kasstan & Nagy 2018:13). Here: focus on the area circled on the map.
- At the **crossroads** between e.g., Italian Dialects (like Piedmontese), Occitan and French
- **2 types** of FrPr varieties (Kristol 2016):
 - **FrPr A**: roughly in the north; **full-fledged PA**, etymologically *de* + definite article (with gender/number distinction), **also after negation/quantifiers**
 - **FrPr B**: roughly in the south; no PA per se but a grammaticalized preposition '**DE invariable**'



Source: Holtus, G./Metzeltin, M./Schmitt, C. (ed.) Lexikon der Romanistischen Linguistik, vol. V.1 (Tübingen 1990)

2.1 State-of-the-art

2.1.2 Nominal morphology (I)



Martin Maiden

“A crude but handy typology is that ‘the west is sigmatic, the east vocalic, and **the north invariant**’. By ‘west’ I mean the Iberian Peninsula, western Occitan, French, in its written form, Romansh, Friulan, Ladin and Sardinian; by ‘east’, Italo-Romance, Dalmatian, and Daco-Romance; by ‘**north**’, **oïl dialects including spoken French, Francoprovençal, and northern Occitan**. The ‘sigmatic’ type marks plural by -s, the vocalic type by -i, -e or -a, mainly according to inflectional class and gender. In the ‘**invariant**’ type, **singular and plural are identical**.” (Maiden 2016 : 697)

2.1 State-of-the-art

2.1.2 Nominal morphology (II)



Andrès Kristol

“**Nouns derived from the Latin first declension**, in -A, also display a morphological distinction between **-[a] (singular) and -[ɛ] (plural)** [...] There is just one variety of the eastern Valais (**Evolène**) which retains **an audible plural desinence ([s] and [ʃ] both in masculines and feminines** (except for original first declension feminines” (Kristol 2016 : 357)



Elisabeth Stark

“Francoprovençal does [...] not have plural marking on nouns [...], with the notable **exception of Evolène** (Kristol 2016, 357), a small community in the Swiss canton of Valais [...]. 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.**” (Stark & Gerards 2020: 306)



David Paul Gerards

2.2 Data and methodology

Francoprovençal varieties considered

Saint-Nicolas (Aosta Valley, I)

DiFuPaRo: 5 speakers

ALAVAL: 2 speakers

Fénis (Aosta Valley, I)

DiFuPaRo: 8 speakers

ALAVAL: 2 speakers

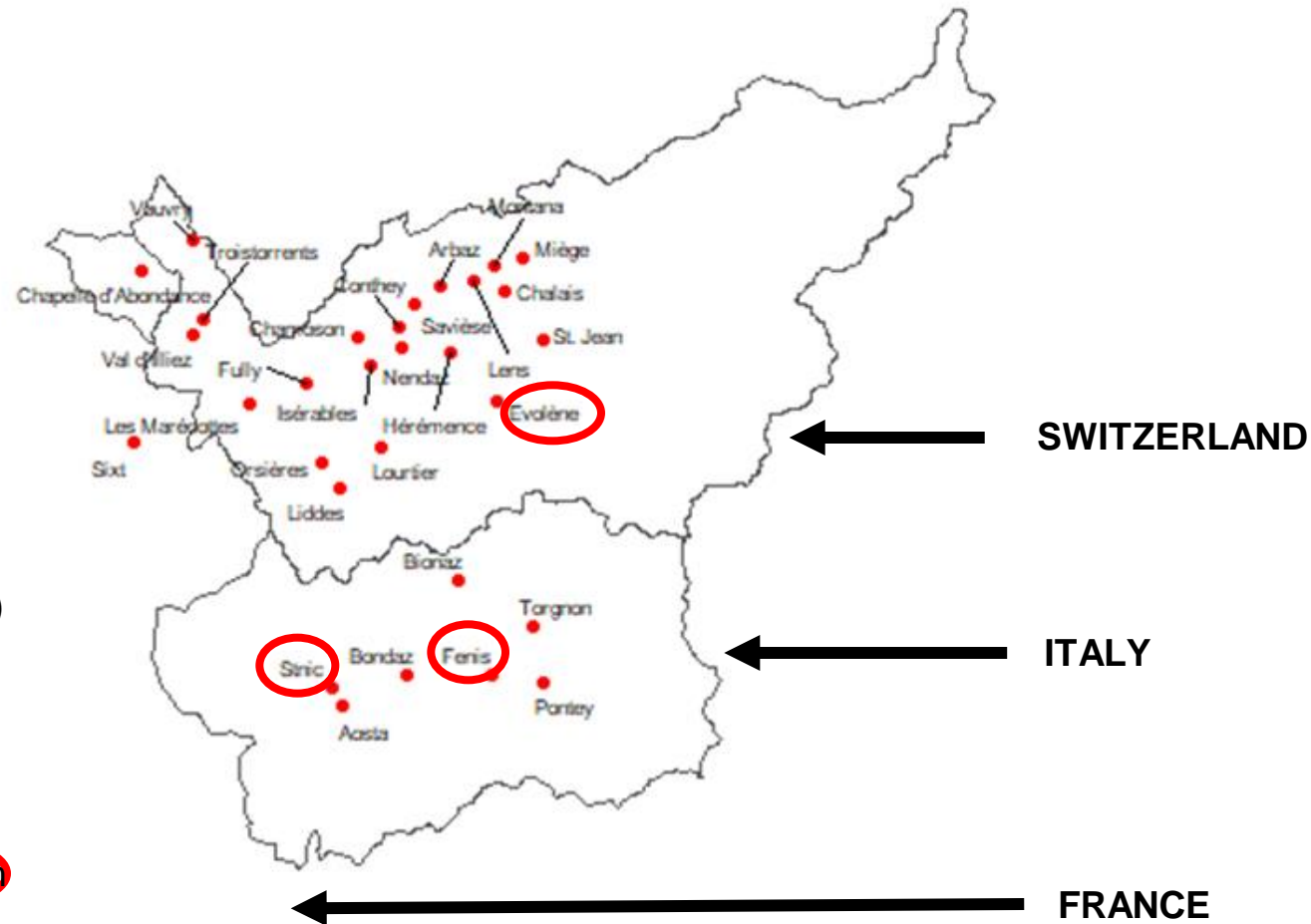
Evolène (Valais, CH)

DiFuPaRo: 4 speakers

ALAVAL: 2 speakers

Saint-Martin-La-Porte (Savoie, F)

ALF, pt. 963: 1 speaker



St. Martin

3. The framework: *Network Morphology*

- Central notions:
- '**default**' to represent what holds in every case in which nothing more specific holds, unmarked option
 - '**inheritance**' to capture the sharing of the same paradigmatic information between lexemes
 - '**override**' to represent what is irregular or exceptional

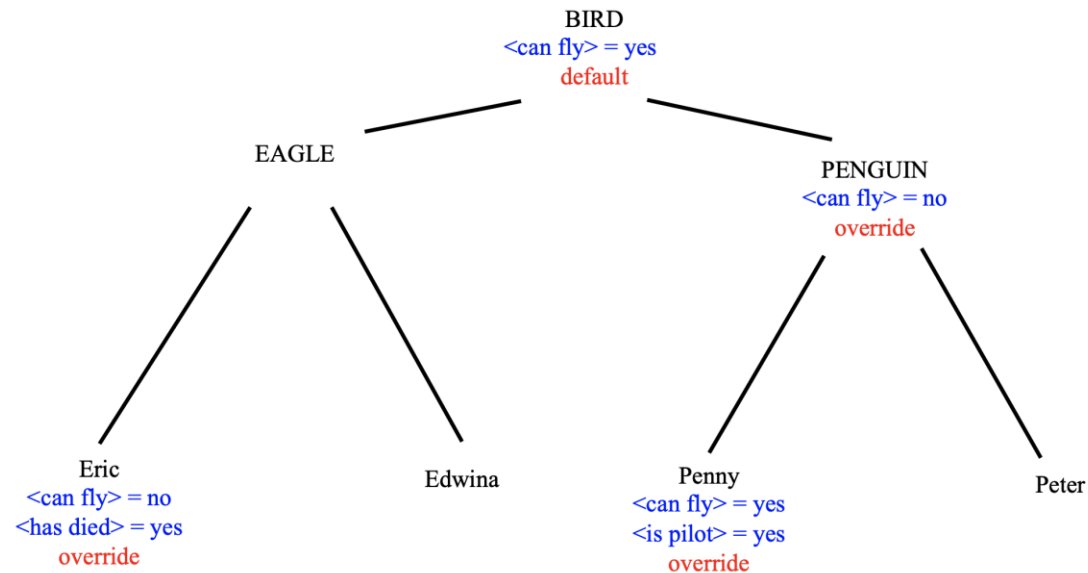


Fig. 1. Gazdar's (1990: 2) non-linguistic example of a default inheritance

3. The framework: *Network Morphology*

Crucial: we don't need to say anything when the default value applies!!!

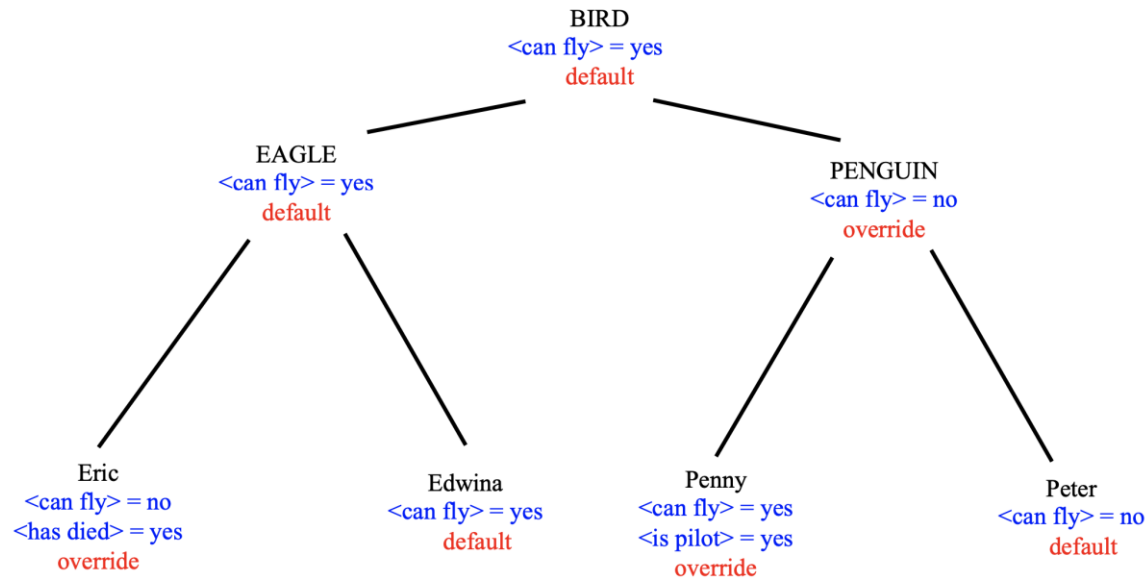


Fig. 2. Gazdar's (1990: 2) non-linguistic example of a default inheritance (with inherited values)

3. The framework: *Network Morphology*

'Nodes' (Ns) : containers for lists of rules

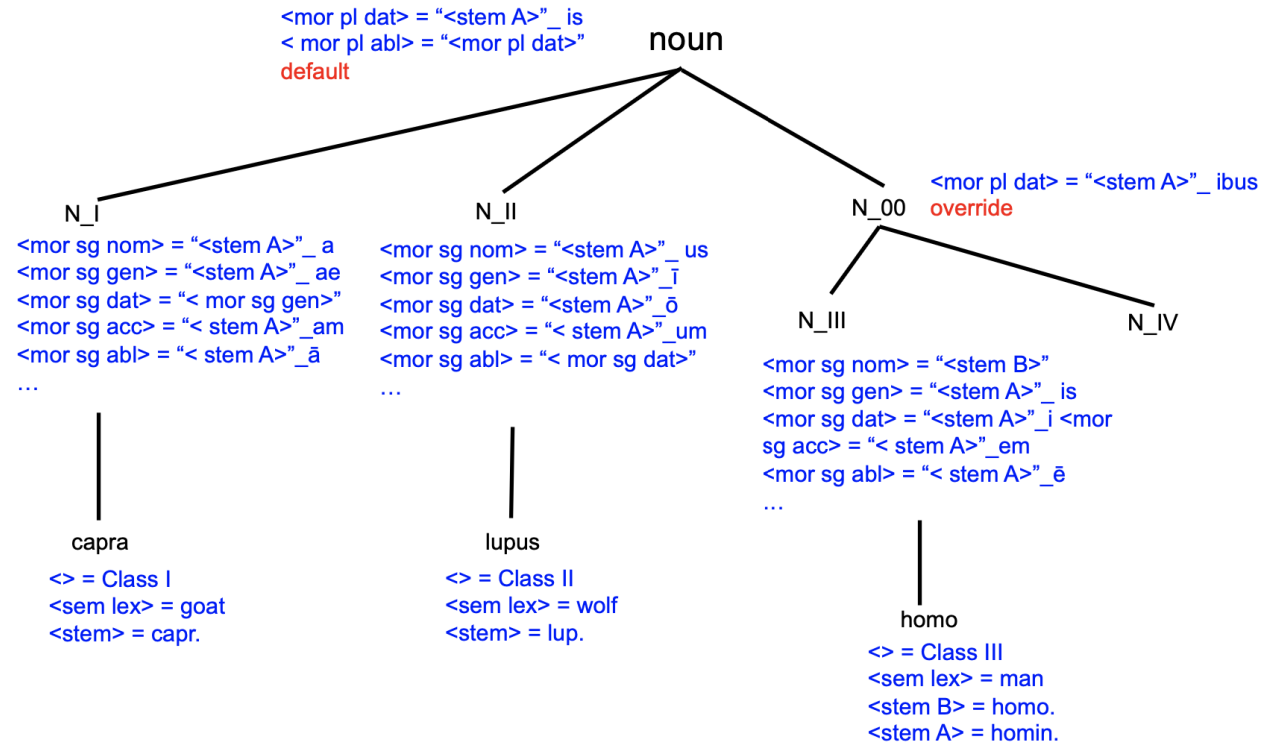


Fig. 3. A fragment of the inheritance hierarchy for Latin nouns

4.1 Saint-Nicolas

4.1.1 Noun inflectional classes (I)

(3)

IC	NUMBER		example		gloss	GENDER
	SG	PL	SG	PL		
I	A-a	A-ə	'pɔm:a	'pɔm:ə	'apple'	F
II	uninflected		'dzor	'dzor	'day'	M
			'ɲɥi	'ɲɥi	'walnut'	F

A = A: stem identity;

A ≠ B: non phonologically conditioned allomorphy

IC I → only feminine nouns

from the Lat. 1st declension, with the conservation of *-a/* and the evolution of *-ə/* < *-AS*

both hereditary lexicon (e.g., [tʃevʁa/-ə] 'goat/-s') and loanwords (e.g., [kaŋ'gura/-ə] 'kangaroo female/-s')

several phonic variants of *-a/* and *-ə/*

IC II → both feminine and masculine nouns

one form in the two number cells

consequence of regular sound changes, especially of the general loss of word-final *-s/*

4.1. Saint-Nicolas

4.1.1 Noun inflectional classes (II)

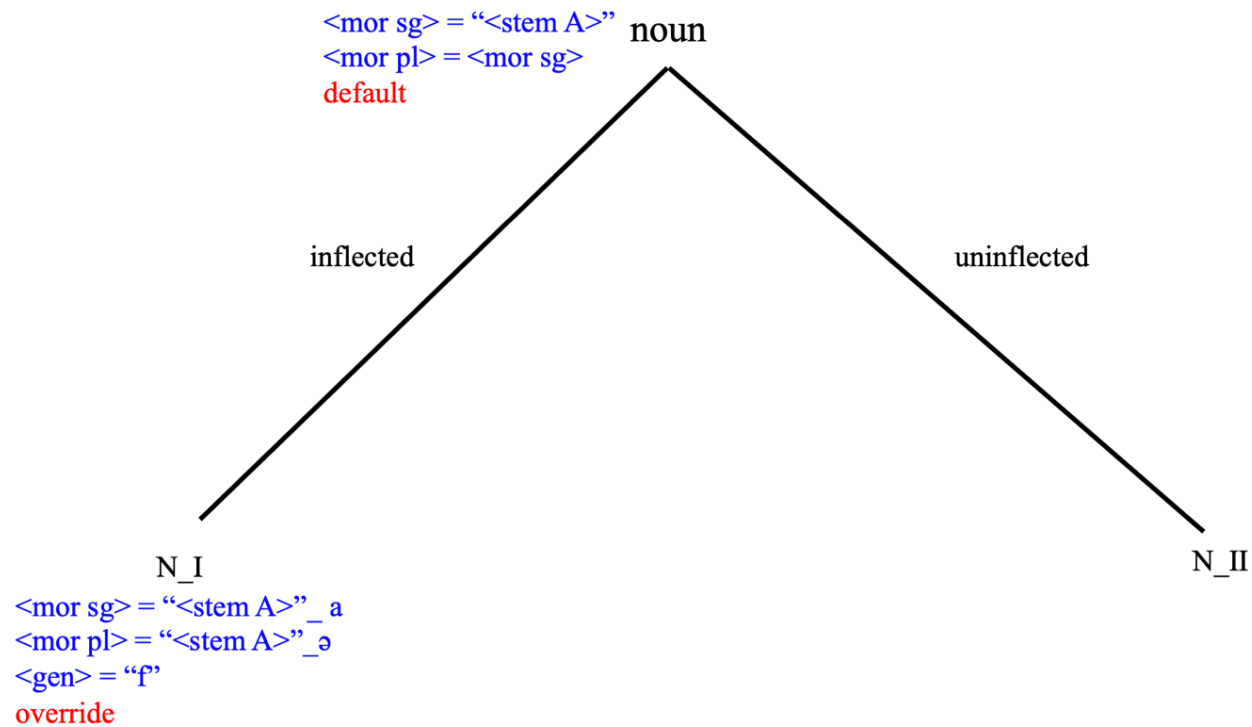


Fig. 4. Inheritance hierarchy for Saint-Nicolas nouns

4.1 Saint-Nicolas

4.1.2 Determiners: DEF, INDF and PA

(4)

	SG	PL
M	lo; l	lə (= lə / lœ / lɛ); lɛ[z]
F	la; l	

DEF

(5)

	SG	PL
M	ən [= œ̃, ən]	—
F	aŋ	

INDF

(6)

	SG	PL
M	də (= də / døe); %dy	də (= də / døe); %də[z] (= də[z] / dɛ[z])
F	də; %də la	

PA

% = acceptability for some speakers



4.1 Saint-Nicolas

4.1.3 Summary: Number marking

- **Nouns:**
 - invariance is the dominant strategy, but not as pronounced as in StFr (cf. Smith 2016: 302)
 - feminine: some nouns are contrasting singular with plural, but by vocalic marking (in equipollent opposition), not sigmatic/agglutinative; number value results from knowledge of the whole paradigm!
 - both strategies are productive.
- **Definite articles** display a vocalic plural marking – with vocalic differentiation of masculine vs feminine gender in the singular only.
- **Indefinite articles** do not have any plural form.
- **PA** in front of indefinite mass singulars and plurals has mostly the form of an invariable DE, but fully-fledged forms have been also attested (cf. Stark & Gerards 2020).



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4.2 Evolène

4.2.1 Noun inflectional classes (I)

(7)

IC	NUMBER		example		gloss	GENDER
	SG	PL	SG	PL		
I	A-a	A-ə	'poma	'pomε	'apple'	F
II	uninflected		'dzor	'dzor	'day'	M
			'ɲɥi	'ɲɥi	'walnut'	F
III	A-ə	A-ε	'vatə	'vatε	'cow'	F
IV	A	A-f	'zɔ	'zɔf	'day'	M
V	A	B-s	'tsat	'tsas	'cat'	M
VI	A	A-s	tε'va	tε'vas	'horse'	M

4.2 Evolène

4.2.1 Noun inflectional classes (II)

- "N00" is a node.
- "A node is a named location at which one or more facts may be stored." (Corbett & Fraser 1993: 117).

- Explanation for N_02:
IV is chosen over V and VI as N02 because V, with stem B, would require overrides in every terminal node, which is less elegant.

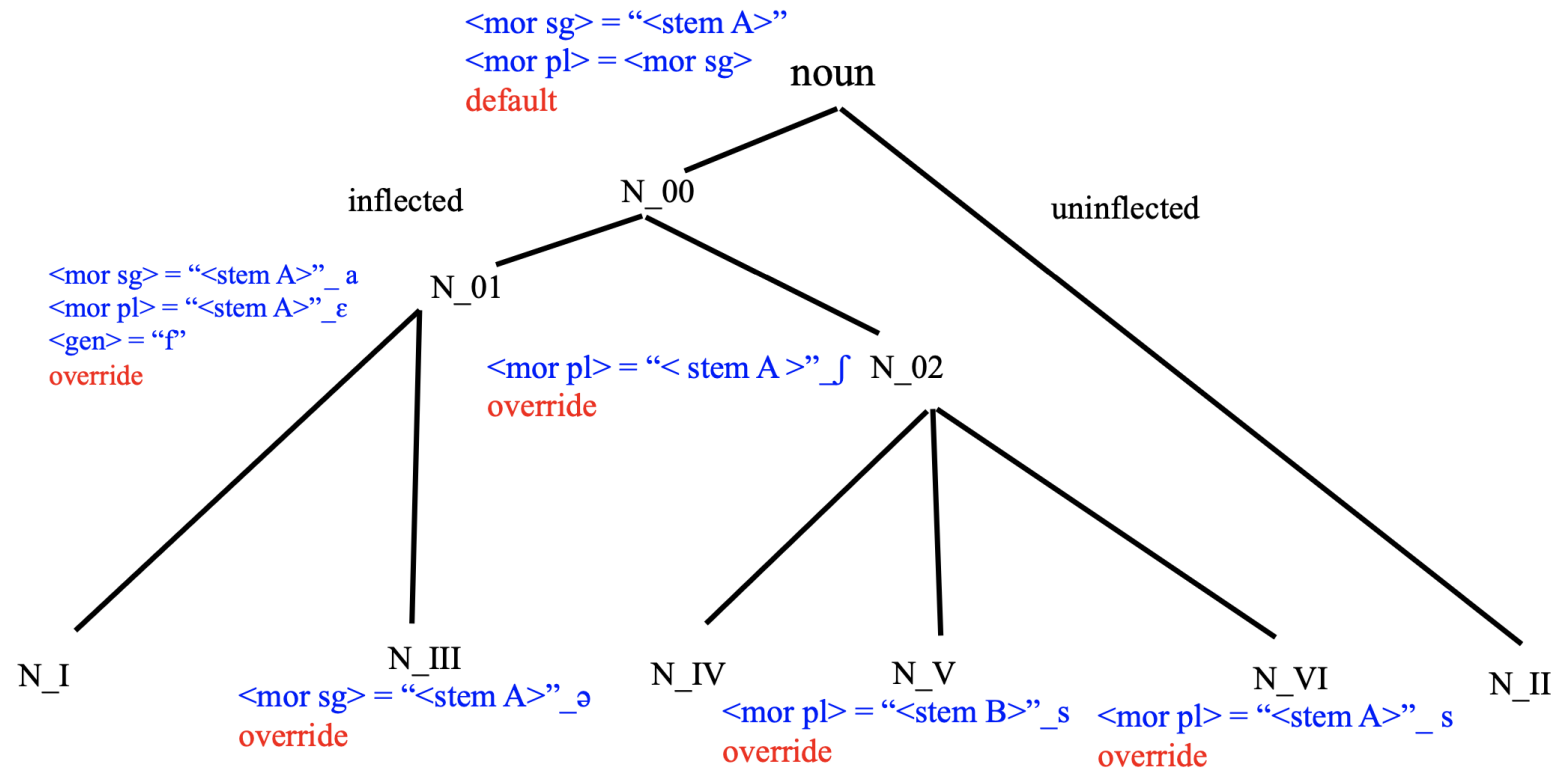


Fig. 5. Inheritance hierarchy for Evolène nouns

4.2 Evolène

4.2.2 Determiners: DEF, INDF and PA

(8)

		SG	PL
M	NOM	lɥ (= lɥ / lə); l	lɥ (= lɥ / ɥ), lɛ; lɥ[3]
	-NOM	lɔ; l	
F	NOM	lɥ (= lɥ / lø); l	lɛ (= lɛ / lø / lœ / lə); lɛ[3]
	-NOM	la; l	

DEF

(9)

		SG	PL
M		ũ (= ỹ / ũ); ũñ / n	—
F		ũana (= ũana / yna / na); ũñ (= yn / ũñ / n)	

INDF

(10)

		SG	PL
M		dɛ (=də / dɛ);	dɛ[3]
F			

PA



4.2 Evolène

4.2.3 Summary: Number marking

- **Nouns:** number is marked segmentally, either with a vocalic alternating suffix *-/a/* (or *-/ə/*) in the singular vs. *-/ɛ/* in the plural (feminine Ns) or with a suffix *-/ʃ/* (or *-/s/*) in the plural, contrasting with non-overt marking in the singular (masculine Ns).
- **Definite articles:** only non-sigmatic number marking.
- **Indefinite articles** do not have any plural forms.
- A grammaticalized '**invariable DE**' is obligatory with indefinite mass singulars and indefinite plurals.



5. Conclusion

- **Our descriptive findings:**

- Clear noun declension class systems (2 ICs in St-Nicolas, 6 in Evolène)
- Productive strategies for number marking on N, generally related to gender
- Different paradigms for definite articles

- **Our typological findings:**

- In each variety we found both strategies, invariance (IC II) and vowel change/alternation (IC I). Both are productive.
- Some NEs may have no overt number marking at all (e.g., with some Ns with 'invariable DE'): cf. Ihsane/Winistörfer/Stark's talk.



5. Conclusion

- **Relevance to the project?**
 - RQ: Why do we find PAs? One possibility in the literature: to compensate the absence of unambiguous sigmatic number marking on the noun (Delfitto/Schroten 1991, Gerards/Stark 2020, Pinzin/Poletto, 2021, 2022, a.o.). See Ihsane/Winistörfer/Stark's talk for a finegrained geographical picture.
 - To understand the relation between overt number marking and gender: the relevant factor at play is number marking on masculine Ns (varieties without overt contrast between singular and plural in masc Ns cannot express the least marked kind of indefinites by means of BNs and therefore have PAs (NID) or at least DE (FrPr B); Pinzin/Poletto 2021, 2022).



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