



Universität  
Zürich<sup>UZH</sup>

Romanisches Seminar



# Uninflectedness as a factor in agreement loss (with a taxonomy of partial uninflectability)

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DGfS 2023 Köln | Cologne – Arbeitsgruppe 8 | Workshop 8 – Uninflectedness



Academia Europaea  
Fellow



Korresp. Mitglied im Ausland



## Summary

1. Prologue: inflecting the (usually) uninflecting
2. Types of (partial) uninflectability
3. Sublexemic uninflectability and loss of object agreement in Romance
4. Conclusion



# 1. Prologue

Spencer (2020: 143): “We must distinguish uninflectable lexemes such as KENGURU from uninflecting lexemes such as ALMOST”



## 1. Prologue: inflecting the (usually) uninflecting

- (1) a. 'va            a    l-a            'ʃkɔ:le            'ntsje:m-i            Ripano  
 go.PRS.3    to    DEF-F.SG    school(F).SG    together-M.PL    (Paciaroni &  
 ‘they go to school together’ (male referents)            Loporcaro 2018)
- b. 'va            a    l-a            'ʃkɔ:le            'ntsje:m-a  
 go.PRS.3    to    DEF-F.SG    school(F).SG    together-F.PL  
 ‘they go to school together’ (female referents)
- (2) 'kɔm:-u / 'kɔm:-e    'ʃtje    //    'kɔm:-i    'ʃte:ni    //    'kɔm:-a    'ʃte:ma  
 how-M.SG / how-F.SG    be.2SG //    how-M.PL    be.3PL            how-F.PL    be.1PL  
 ‘how are you(SG.F/M)?’                            ‘how are they(M)?’            ‘how are we(F)?’



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## 2. Types of (partial) uninflectability

- (3) Uninflectability: whole (Russian *pal'to*) vs. partial (Polish *muzeum*) (Spencer 2020: 143: “Lexemes can also be partially (un)inflectable.”)
- (4) An inventory of the types of partial uninflectability
  - a. constructional uninflectability/non-inflectedness (Spencer 2020: 144)
  - b. featural
    - i. context-free; categorical
    - ii. context-free; optional
    - iii. contextual
  - c. sublexemic (paradigmatic: subset of the paradigm cells)
  - d. sublexemic (syntagmatic: morpheme-related)
- (5)
  - a. Baerman et al. (2005:2): «**syncretism** is the failure to make a morphosyntactically relevant distinction [...] under particular (morphological) conditions».
  - b. Baerman et al. (2005:32): «**neutralization** is about syntactical irrelevance as reflected in morphology, **uninflectedness** is about morphology being unresponsive to a feature that is syntactically relevant». [emphasis added]



## 2. Types of (partial) uninflectability

- (4) An inventory of the types of partial uninflectability  
a. constructional uninflectability/non-inflectedness (Spencer 2020: 144)

- (6) a. d-er      Mann      /d-ie      Wohnung /      German  
DEF-M.SG man(M)[SG] /DEF-F.SG flat(F)[SG] /      predicative adj.  
d-as      Haus      ist      schön  
DEF-N.SG house(N)[SG]      be.PRS.3SG beautiful  
'the man is handsome//the flat/the house is beautiful'
- b. ein      schön-er      Ausflug      German  
INDF[M.SG] nice-M.SG excursion(M)[SG]      attributive adj.
- c. ein-e      schön-e      Reise  
INDF-F.SG nice-F.SG trip(F)[SG]
- d. ein      schön-es      Wochenende  
INDF[N.SG] nice-N.SG weekend(F)[SG]  
'a nice excursion/trip/weekend'



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## 2. Types of (partial) uninflectability

- (7) a. A paradigm with forms distinguished by two intersecting features

CLASS 1

Italian/Spanish <i>ALTO</i> 'tall'		
	SG	PL
MASC	<i>alto</i>	<i>alti (altos)</i>
FEM	<i>alta</i>	<i>alte (altas)</i>

- b. A paradigm with forms distinguished by a single feature

CLASS 2

Italian/Spanish <i>VERDE</i> 'green'	
SG	PL
<i>verde</i>	<i>verdi (verdes)</i>

**featural inconsistency**

- (8) a. A paradigm with forms distinguished by two intersecting features

Italian/Spanish <i>ALTO</i> 'tall'		
	SG	PL
MASC	<i>alto</i>	<i>alti (altos)</i>
FEM	<i>alta</i>	<i>alte (altas)</i>

- b. A paradigm with same forms for one of two intersecting features

Italian/Spanish <i>VERDE</i> 'green'		
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FEM		

**syncretism**





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### featural inconsistency

- b. A paradigm with forms distinguished by a single feature

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### syncretism

- b. A paradigm with same forms for one of two intersecting features

Italian/Spanish VERDE 'green'	
SG	PL
<i>verde</i>	<i>verdi (verdes)</i>

- (9) a. Bond (2018: 413-4), based on Corbett (2005: 33; 2007: 9; 2015: 157), Spencer (2003: 252), Stump (2012: 255), inter alios: “A canonical inflectional paradigm is: Criterion 1: Exhaustive > Non-exhaustive  
Criterion 2: Complete > Incomplete  
Criterion 3: Unambiguous > Ambiguous”
- b. Thornton (2019: 91): “**exhaustiveness** (there is a cell for every possible feature combination, within a given part of speech), **completeness** (all cells are filled by a form) and **non-ambiguity** (each cell contains a form that is different from all the forms contained in the other cells of the same paradigm)”.



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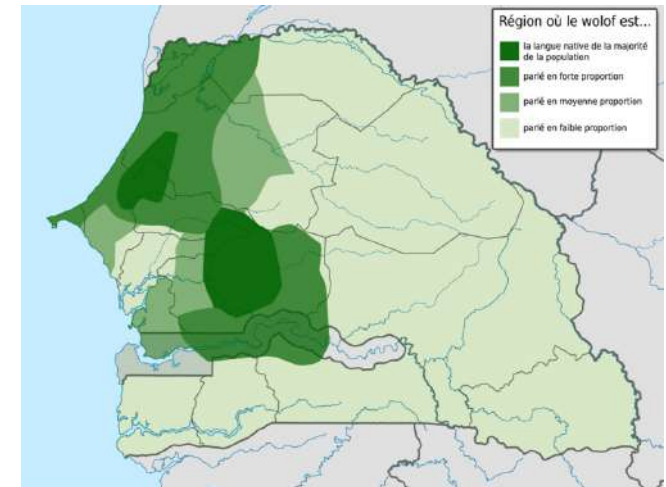
## Wolof (Atlantic, Niger-Congo)



(11) Babou & Loporcaro (2016: 10): [in Wolof] “There are very few nouns [...] for which replacing the original plural with the (formerly) singular form results in ungrammaticality, the clearest case being **këf** ‘thing’: **yëf**/**\*këf yi** ‘the.PROX.PL things’. This is the one extreme [...] on a scale by means of which one may represent the observed pattern of gradual replacement”.

(12)

	SINGULAR	PLURAL		gloss
		= SG	≠ SG	
a.	këf ki	*këf yi	yëf yi	‘the thing/-s’
b.	bët bi	<u>gët yi</u>	<u>bët yi</u>	‘the eye/-s’
c.	mbagg mi	<u>mbagg yi</u>	<sup>0</sup> wagg yi	‘the shoulder/-s’
d.	bant bi	<u>bant yi</u>	<sup>†</sup> want yi	‘the bit/-s of wood’
e.	góor gi	<u>góor ñi</u>	--	‘the man/men’





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(13)

a. \_\_.#C-

	SG	PL
M	il	i
F	la	le

b. \_\_.#V-

	SG	PL
M	l	l
F		le

Italian definite article

*l'ultimo/-a* 'the last.M/F.SG'

(14)

a. \_\_.#C-

	SG	PL
M	er	(l)i
F	(l)a	(l)e

b. \_\_.#V-

	SG	PL
M		
F		

Romanesco definite article

*l'urtimo/-a/-i/-e* 'the last.M/F.SG//  
M/F.PL'



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## 2. Sublexemic uninflectability and loss of object agreement in Romance

(15) Past participle inflection in French

affixal: a.

	M = F
SG = PL	-Ø

b.

*fāte* 'to sing' (weak)

	M = F
SG = PL	<i>fāte</i>

c.

*pɛãdɛ* 'to take' (strong)

	M	F
SG = PL	<i>pɛi</i>	<i>pɛiz</i>

(18) French (Guasti & Rizzi 2002):

- a. il a mis/ \*mise la voiture dans le garage  
 he have.3SG put.M/put.F DEF.F.SG car(F) into DEF.M.SG garage(M)  
 'The car, he put it into the garage'
- b. La voiture, il l'=a mise/%mis  
 DEF.F.SG car(F) he DO3F.SG=have.3SG put.F/ put.M  
 dans le garage  
 into DEF.M.SG garage(M)  
 'The car, he put it into the garage'



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(19)

M	F
<i>trompé</i>	<i>trompêye</i>

'deceived'

M	F
<i>vèyou</i>	<i>vèyouwe</i>

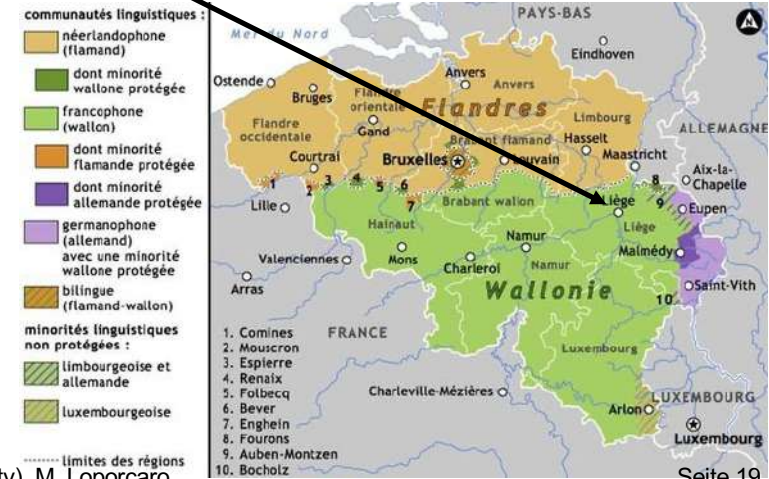
'seen'

(20) (èle) dji l'=a

(her) I OBJ3F.SG=have.1SG seen.M / seen.F

'I've seen her'

Liégeois (NE Gallo-Romance)  
(Remacle 1956: 148)





## Loss of object agreement

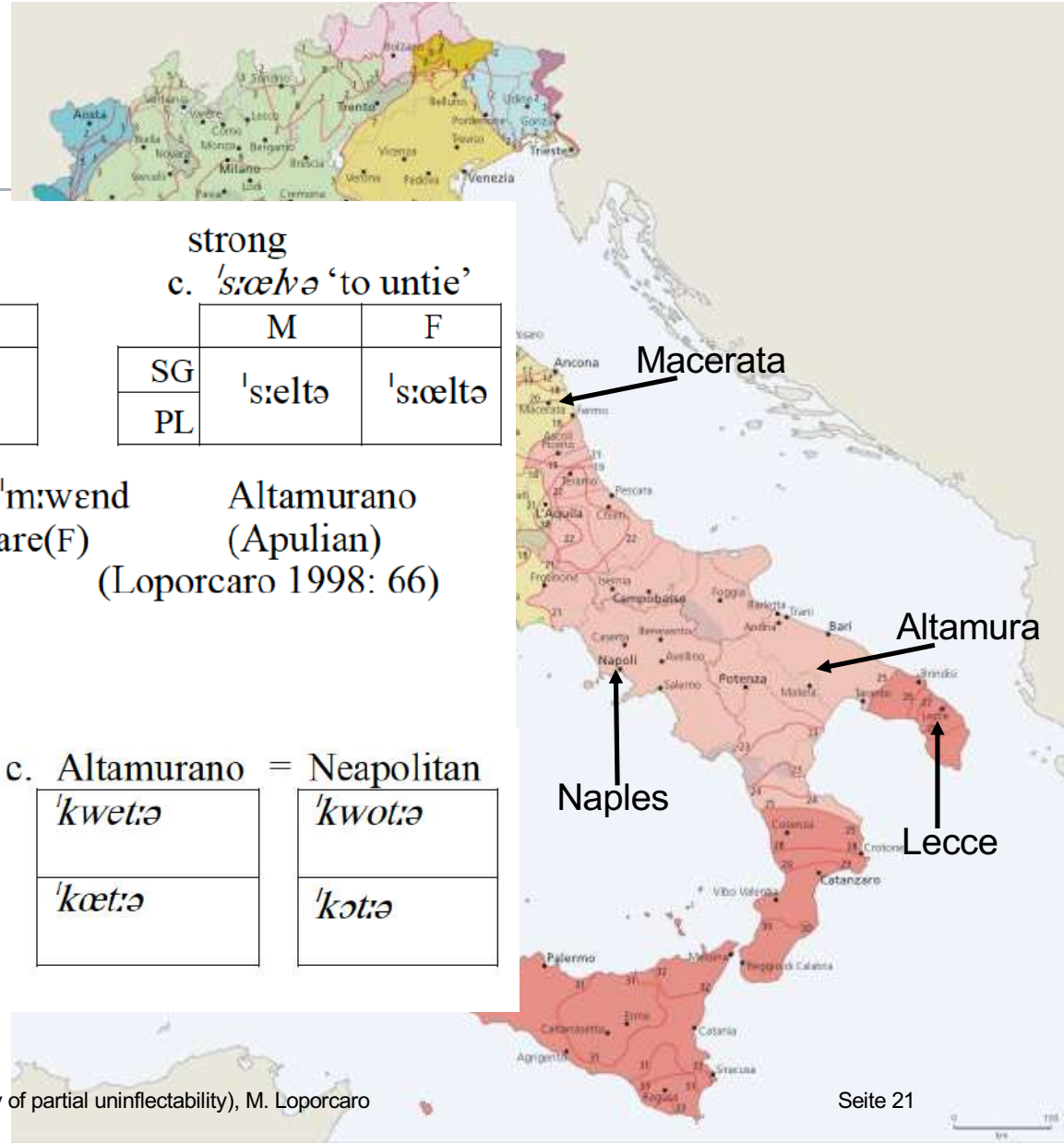


- (21) a. tə l a sa'ri:ä/də'vertə (la 'p:ortə/ʊ k:ian'tʃɛd:zɛə)      Guardiolo (Occitan)  
 'you closed/opened it (the door(F)/the gate(M))'      (Loporcaro 1998: 183f.)
- b. 'ifta 'k:ɔ:z/i'k:ɛ 'd:ziək ə β<sup>w</sup> ɛ pa 'm:aj 'fajt  
 'this thing(F) I never did/this game(M) I never played'
- c. 'iftə 'd:ət:ərə z ɛ pa 'ʃkrɪ:tə 'mɪ  
 'these letters(F) I did not write'
- d. k:ɛ 'fəj:ə l ɛ pa 'ʃkrɪ:tə 'mɪ  
 'I didn't write this leaflet(M)'
- e. la 'p:ɔstə/ʊ tʃa'b:ɪrɛ tə l a 'c:ɛut  
 'the pasta(F), did you cook it?'/the kid(M), did you cook it?'
- f. ʃi m:ak:a'r:ɔn iʃ ɛ 'c:ɛut  
 'the maccheroni(M), I cooked them'



Guardia  
Piemontese





(22) Past participle inflection in Altamurano weak

affixal:

a.

	M	F
SG	-ə	
PL		

b. *la've* 'to wash'

	M	F
SG	la'vetə	
PL		

strong

c. *'s:ælvə* 'to untie'

	M	F
SG	's:eltə	's:eltə
PL		

(23) a. *'aʃ:ə* *'s:æltə* / \**'s:eltə* *la* *ʃu'm:rwend* Altamurano  
have.1SG unfastened.F/unfastened.M DEF.F.SG mare(F) (Apulian)  
'I have unfastened the mare' (Loporcaro 1998: 66)

b. *'aʃ:ə* *la'vetə* / *n:rɣ:tə* *la* *ʃu'm:rwend*  
have.1SG washed/brought DEF.F.SG mare(F)  
'I have washed/brought the mare'

(24) a. ProtoRom. b. Maceratese = Lecce c. Altamurano = Neapolitan

MSG	<i>coc-t-u</i>	>
MPL	<i>coc-t-i</i>	
FPL	<i>coc-t-e</i>	
FSG	<i>coc-t-a</i>	

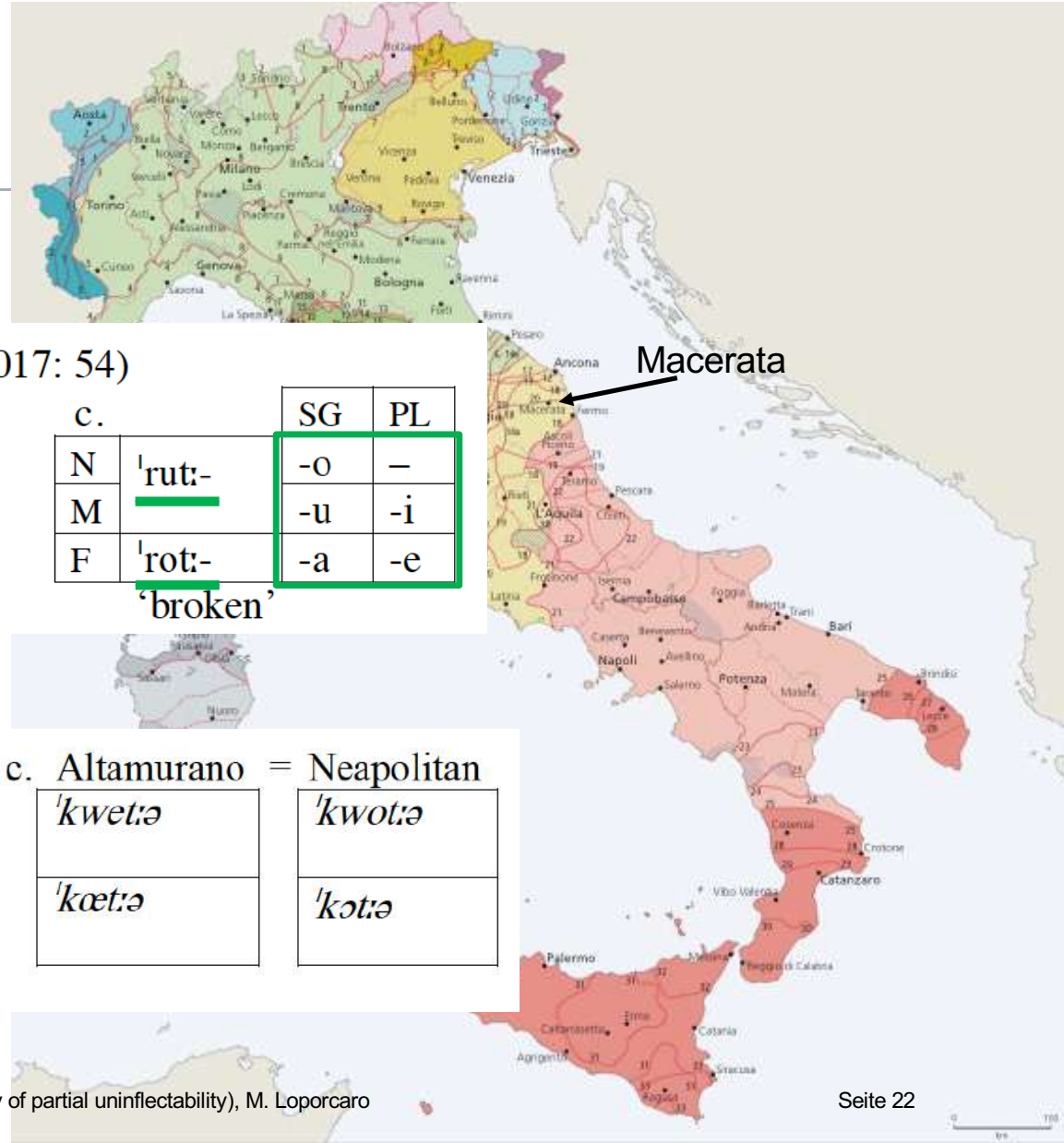
'cooked'

<i>'kot:-</i>	<i>-u</i>	<i>'kwet:-</i>	<i>-u</i>	>
<i>'kot:-</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>'kwet:-</i>	<i>-i</i>	>
<i>'kət:-</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>'kət:-</i>	<i>-e</i>	>
<i>'kət:-</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>'kət:-</i>	<i>-a</i>	>

<i>'kwet:ə</i>	<i>'kwot:ə</i>
<i>'kæt:ə</i>	<i>'kot:ə</i>



# Different agreements in one form



(25) Participle inflection in Maceratese (Paciaroni 2017: 54)

a.

	SG	PL
N	-o	-
M	la'at- -u	-i
F	-a	-e

'washed'

b.

	SG	PL
N	'kot:- -o	-
M	-u	-i
F	'kɔt:- -a	-e

'cooked'

c.

	SG	PL
N	'rut:- -o	-
M	-u	-i
F	'rot:- -a	-e

'broken'

(24) a. ProtoRom.

MSG	<i>coc-t-u</i>	>
MPL	<i>coc-t-i</i>	
FPL	<i>coc-t-e</i>	
FSG	<i>coc-t-a</i>	

'cooked'

b. Maceratese = Lecce

'kot:-	-u	>
'kot:-	-i	>
'kɔt:-	-e	>
'kɔt:-	-a	>

c. Altamura = Neapolitan

'kwetə	'kwotə
'kœtə	'kɔtə



(26) Northern Calabrese (province of Cosenza): dialects of Castrovillari (Pace 1993-94: 128-147; Loporcaro 2010b: 167-171, 2015: 119-123), Verbicaro, Viggianello, San Biase, ecc. (Loporcaro & Silvestri 2011: 350-353):

- a. participles with double exponence of gender  $\Rightarrow$  agreement rule 1 (including agreement with lexical direct objects)
- b. participles with affixal exponence of gender  $\Rightarrow$  agreement rule 2 (more restrictive)

(27) Participle inflection in Castrovillarese (refs. in (26))

		SG	PL
M	la'vat-	-u	-i
F		-a	-i

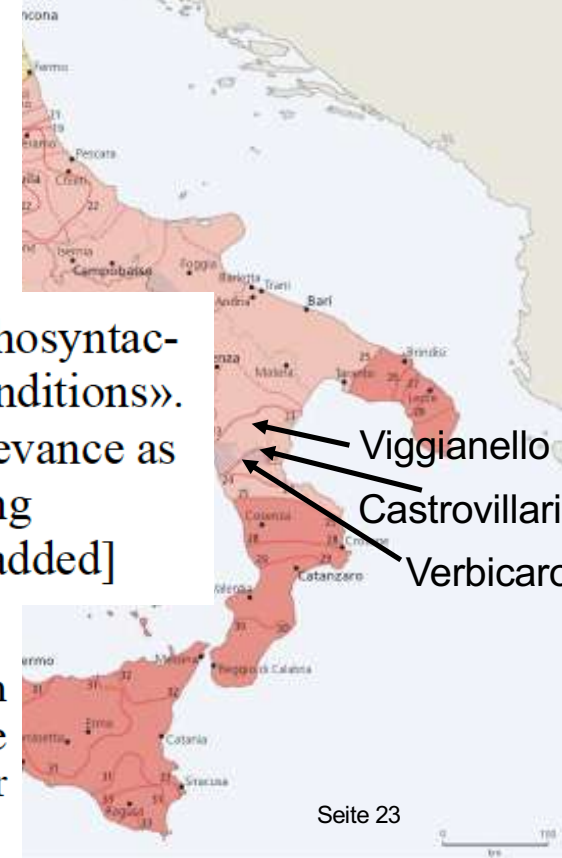
'washed'

		SG	PL
M	'kut:-	-u	-i
F		'kɔt:-	-i

'cooked'

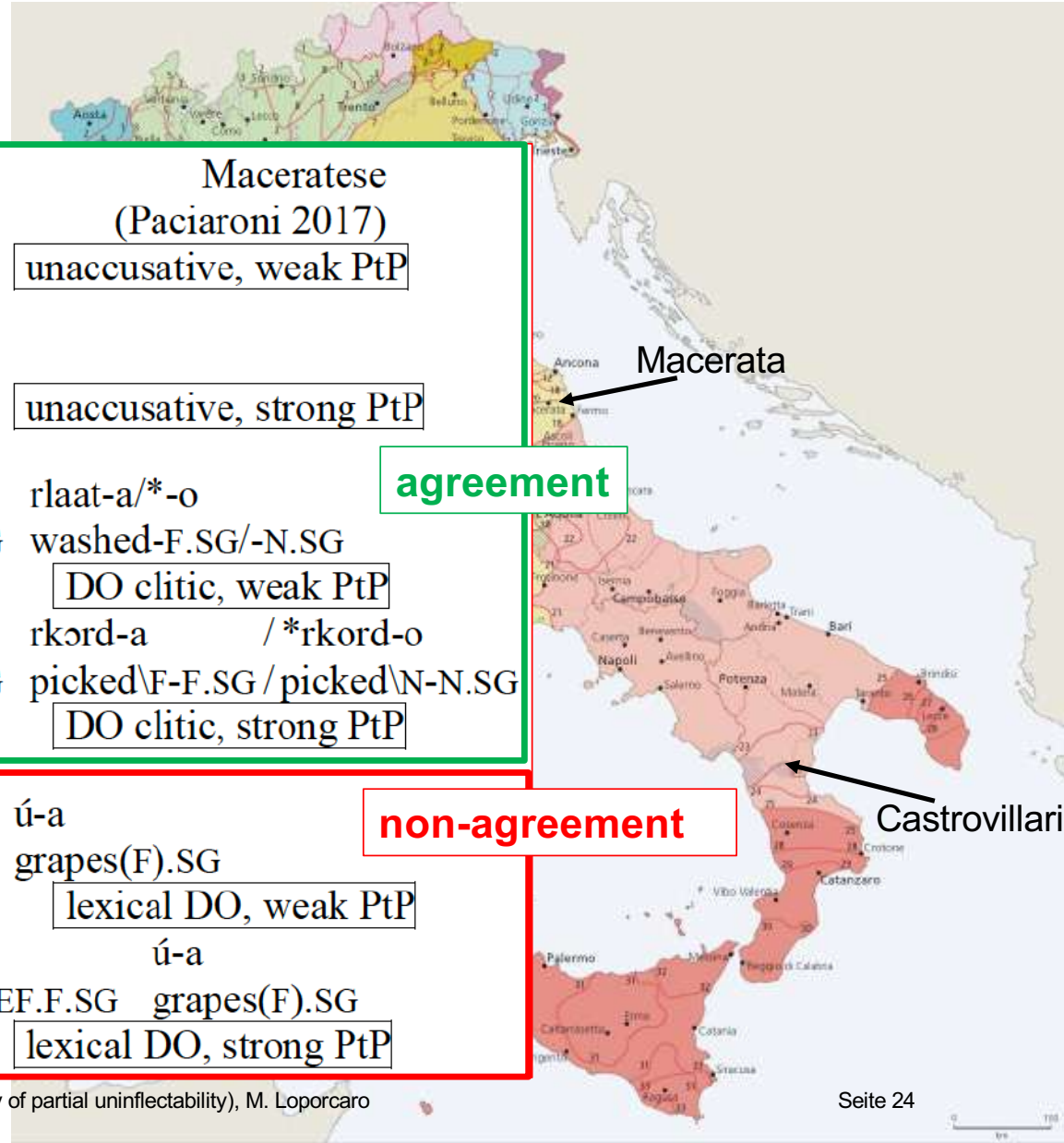
		SG	PL
M	a'pɛrt-	-u	-i
F		a'pirt-	-i

'open'



- (5) a. Baerman et al. (2005:2): «**syncretism** is the failure to make a morphosyntactically relevant distinction [...] under particular (morphological) conditions».
- b. Baerman et al. (2005:32): «**neutralization** is about syntactical irrelevance as reflected in morphology, **uninflectedness** is about morphology being unresponsive to a feature that is syntactically relevant». [emphasis added]

(28) Zwicky (1996: 301): “syntax can be sensitive to abstract properties realized in morphology, but not to specific inflectional marks for these properties (to dative case, say, but not to a particular dative case marking, or to a declension class for nouns)”.



- (29) a. rōsa ε rvinut-a /\*-o jeri  
Rose be.3SG come-F.SG/-N.SG yesterday  
'Rose has come yesterday'
- b. rōsa ε mmort-a / \*mmort-o  
Rose be.3SG died\F-F.SG/ died\N-N.SG  
'Rose has died'

Maceratese  
(Paciaroni 2017)  
unaccusative, weak PtP

unaccusative, strong PtP

- (30) a. (l ú-a) rōsa l=a  
DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG Rose DO3F.SG=have.3SG  
'(The grapes) Rose has washed them'
- b. (l ú-a) rōsa l=a  
DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG Rose DO3F.SG=have.3SG  
'(The grapes) Rose has picked them'

rlaat-a/\*-o  
washed-F.SG/-N.SG  
DO clitic, weak PtP

rkord-a /\*rkord-o  
picked\F-F.SG / picked\N-N.SG  
DO clitic, strong PtP

agreement

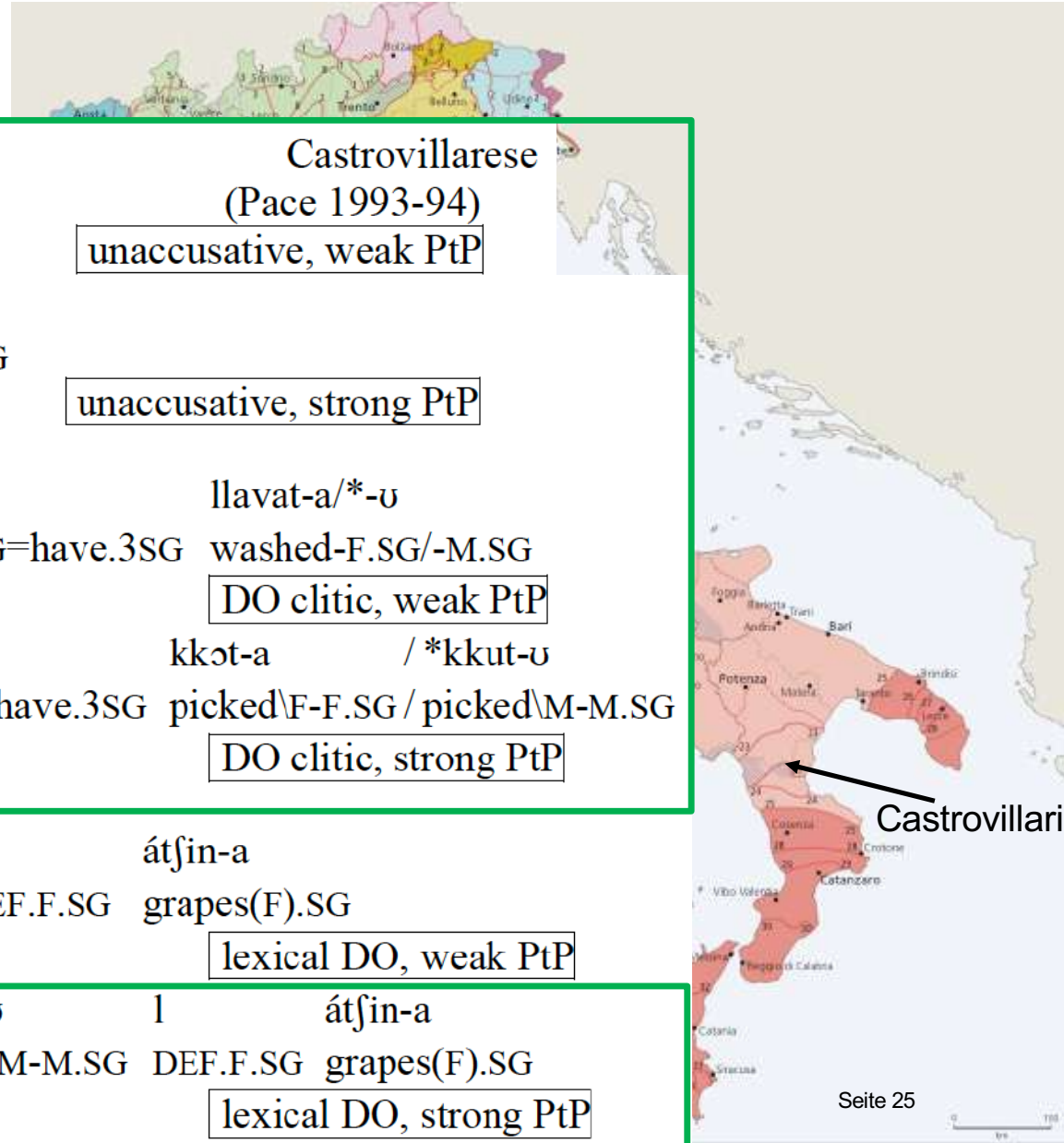
- (31) a. rōsa a rlaat-o/\*-a l ú-a  
Rosa have.3SG washed-N.SG/-F.SG DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG  
'Rose has washed the grapes'
- b. rōsa a rkord-o /\*rkord-a l ú-a  
Rosa have.3SG picked\N-N.SG / picked\F-F.SG DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG  
'Rose has picked the grapes'

lexical DO, weak PtP

lexical DO, strong PtP

non-agreement

Castrovillari



(32) a. rōsa je vvinut-a/\*-u Castrovillarese  
 Rose be.3SG come-F.SG/-M.SG (Pace 1993-94)  
 ‘Rose has come’ unaccusative, weak PtP

b. rōsa je mmort-a / \*mmurt-u  
 Rose be.3SG died\F-F.SG / died\M-M.SG  
 ‘Rose has died’ unaccusative, strong PtP

agreement

(33) a. (l átfin-a) rōsa a llavat-a/\*-u  
 DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG Rose DO3F.SG=have.3SG washed-F.SG/-M.SG  
 ‘(The grapes) Rose has washed them’ DO clitic, weak PtP

b. (l átfin-a) rōsa a kkot-a / \*kkut-u  
 DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG Rose DO3F.SG=have.3SG picked\F-F.SG / picked\M-M.SG  
 ‘(The grapes) Rose has picked them’ DO clitic, strong PtP

(34) a. rōsa a llavat-u/\*-a l átfin-a  
 Rose have.3SG washed-M.SG/-F.SG DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG  
 ‘Rose has washed the grapes’ lexical DO, weak PtP

no agreement!

b. rōsa a kkot-a / \*kkut-u l átfin-a  
 Rose have.3SG picked\F-F.SG / picked\M-M.SG DEF.F.SG grapes(F).SG  
 ‘Rose has picked the grapes’ lexical DO, strong PtP

agreement

Castrovillari





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(35) Loss of object agreement in Spanish perfective periphrastics:

(tu cart-a) no la he lei-d-o /\*lei-d-a  
 2SG letter(F)-SG not OBJ3F.SG have.PRS.1SG read-PTCP-M.SG/ read-PTCP-F.SG  
 ‘(Your letter) I didn’t read it’

(36) Past participle inflection in Spanish weak

affixal:

a.

	M	F
SG	-o	-a
PL	-os	-as

b.

*cantar* ‘to sing’

	M	F
SG	<i>canta-d-o</i>	<i>canta-d-a</i>
PL	<i>canta-d-os</i>	<i>canta-d-as</i>

c.

strong

*hacer* ‘to make’

	M	F
SG	<i>hech-o</i>	<i>hech-a</i>
PL	<i>hech-o-s</i>	<i>hech-a-s</i>

(37) Object agreement preserved in Spanish participial absolutes:

lei-d-a / \*lei-d-o la sentenci-a,  
 read-PTCP-F.SG / read-PTCP-M.SG DEF.F.SG sentence(F)-SG  
 el juez se retir-ó  
 DEF.M.SG judge REFL withdraw-PRET.3SG  
 ‘Having read the sentence, the judge withdrew’



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  - d. sublexemic (syntagmatic: morpheme-related)



## 2. Types of (partial) uninflectability

### (4) An inventory of the types of partial uninflectability

a. constructional uninflectability/non-inflectedness (Spencer 2020: 144)

b. featural

i. context-free; categorical

ii. context-free; optional

iii. contextual

c. sublexemic (paradigmatic: subset of the paradigm cells)

d. sublexemic (syntagmatic: morpheme-related)

Castrovillarese



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