

***La Llingua Asturiana: Distintividá, Identidá y Oficialidá/The Asturian Language: Distinctiveness, Identity, and Officiality*, Corral-Esteban, A. (Ed.) (2025). Berlin, Bruxelles, Chennai, Lausanne, New York, Oxford: Peter Lang. 320 pp.**

The publication of *La Llingua Asturiana: Distintividá, Identidá y Oficialidá*, edited by Avelino Corral Esteban, constitutes a significant milestone not only for the field of Asturian Studies, but also for Romance philology in general and for the scholarship dedicated to minoritized languages, language policy, and Iberian studies. This work can be seen as a direct continuation and a thematic broadening of Corral Esteban's previous volume, *The Asturian Language: Distinctiveness, Identity, and Officiality*, which appeared in 2023, also published by Peter Lang. The present book includes a selection of research that was presented during the second edition of the International Conference on the Asturian Language, which took place in 2024 at the Autonomous University of Madrid, and it offers a current view of the scholarship on Asturian language and, to a somewhat lesser degree, of the literature of Asturias.

The book is organized into seventeen chapters. The first one, written by the editor himself, contains original research and serves as an introduction to the whole volume. The rest of the chapters, each of them dedicated to a specific question, are distributed in five thematic clusters: linguistics (lexicon, phraseology, phonology), sociolinguistics and technology, literature, historical documentation and ideological discussion about the officiality of Asturian. The majority of the chapters—ten of the seventeen—are written in Asturian (with the remainder of the chapters written in Spanish and English), which is a significant and appropriate scholarly decision. The contributions are written by established and emerging scholars, affiliated with institutions not only in Spain but also in the United States and other parts of Europe. Due to all these reasons, this volume is not only an academic exercise but a timely and strong intervention in a debate (the distinctiveness, identity and officiality of a minoritized language) that is alive and pressing in the sociolinguistic reality and the cultural fabric of Asturias.

The first essay, written by Avelino Corral Esteban, establishes the tone of the book with a direct discussion of the political status and future of the Asturian language. Corral Esteban presents a compelling argument for granting official recognition to Asturian, a demand he considers both legally grounded in the Spanish Constitution and long overdue. With a meticulous analysis, the author examines the legal framework, the political evolution and the ideological resistances that are delaying this process. At the same time, he offers comparative examples with other minoritized languages. The argument combines a militant tone with scholarly research, demonstrating that officiality would be beneficial for all, and of great importance for the future of the language and the community that speaks it.

In chapter two, renowned Romance philologist Ana María Cano González presents an erudite exploration of the *Diccionariu Etimolóxicu de la Llingua Asturiana* (DELLA), a monumental work by Xosé Lluís García Arias. She shows its relations with other important dictionaries such as the DALLA (*Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana*), the DGLA (*Diccionario General de la Lengua Asturiana*), and the DÉRom (*Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman*). The author explains how the dictionary, with its diachronic and diatopic documentation, constitutes an essential tool for Asturian and Romance philology. She argues that due to its methodology and its international projection, the DELLA situates Asturian at the same level as the rest of the Romance languages. Cano González's analysis also focuses on anthroponomastics, highlighting the historical importance of proper names. This chapter is exemplary because of its academic rigor and because of the vindication of lexicography work—and the DELLA in particular—as the scientific base of linguistic study and revitalization.

Claudia Elena Menéndez Fernández, in chapter three, continues studying names. Specifically, she analyzes the presence of onomastics (toponymy and anthroponymy) in Asturian proverbs, with various examples of meteorological, temporal, moral and dialogued sayings. Menéndez Fernández examines the occurrence and the meaning of these names, underlining their ethnographic value and their resistance to Castilianization. The chapter also shows how paremiology, the study of proverbs, is a source of popular wisdom and collective memory related to the Asturian territory and identity. Menéndez Fernández combines paremiological theory with well-documented empirical work, presenting a rigorous and original study of a topic of great relevance for both linguists and cultural historians.

In chapter four, Lluçia Menéndez Díaz delves into Asturian fixed expressions by analyzing the apparent paradox between fixation, which is one of their defining characteristics, and the variability they present. Based on a corpus of 108 phraseological units, Menéndez Díaz argues that fixation and variability are not antagonistic concepts but complementary ones, coexisting in a dynamic process. After reviewing theoretical frameworks from other Romance languages, she proposes a specific model for Asturian that organizes expressions on a center-periphery spectrum, distinguishing between institutionalized variants (lexical and grammatical) and creative, non-standardized desautomatizations. She demonstrates that while fixation and variability occur in fixed expressions broadly, each language requires a theoretical approach adapted to its unique properties.

The fifth chapter, by Michela Russo, represents one of the most technical and innovative approaches of the volume. Russo proposes that metaphony—a vocalic phonetic change—in Asturian is not a purely phonological phenomenon; rather, it is also morphosyntactic. Her analysis demonstrates that non-metaphonic forms are related to mass, non-countable, nouns, whereas metaphonic ones indicate countable nouns. This opposition, that emerges from the Latin neutral, remains in central varieties such as the Asturian of Pola Llena and constitutes a distinctive feature of Asturian. This chapter is not only relevant for Asturian linguistics, but it has broad theoretical implications for the study of metaphony, and its relation to grammar, in Romance languages. Russo’s “non-miopic” focus for metaphony challenges purely local explanations and highlights the need to consider morphosyntactic factors in the phonological analysis.

Chapter six, by Cristina Bleorțu and Miguel Cuevas-Alonso, represents an innovative study which applies artificial intelligence tools to Asturian linguistics. Bleorțu and Cuevas-Alonso demonstrate how GANs (Generative Adversarial Networks) can produce high-quality synthetic data to compensate for the relative scarcity of the human-produced Asturian corpus. Their study creates and compares megacorpora in Spanish and Asturian and shows the potential of these tools for comparative analysis in multilingual contexts. Their work is relevant due to their pioneering method and their technological rigor. This is a daring contribution by two leading scholars that are experimenting with new avenues of research with non-traditional methods as they can be applied to all minoritized languages.

Carmen Ainoa Martínez Cuervo, in chapter seven, studies attitudes toward Asturian through comments on YouTube. She identifies five main attitudes: linguistic criticism, cultural pride, political frustration, defense of Asturian and skepticism. Her analysis continues to show that social media is today a central space where the legitimacy of minority languages is negotiated.

Patricia Fernández Martín examines literary works from a linguistic perspective in chapter eight, studying reproduced and referred discourse in texts written in Asturian by women, specifically those that appear in Paquita Suárez Coalla’s 2017 anthology, *Hestories pa contaes*. (*Más nomes de muyer*). The chapter shows the evolution of these forms of direct speech, identifying the increase in frequency of the forms of reproduced discourse and the decreased occurrence of the referred discourse over time. Fernández Martín’s framework of analysis is noteworthy because it

proposes clear empirical data while employing a sociolinguistics perspective in combination with literature and gender. Her study also shows how women writers use Asturian to express multiple voices, and, more broadly, how feminine literature contributes to the vitality of language.

In chapter nine, Covadonga Lamar Prieto turns to the nineteenth century to recover Eulalia de Llanos Noriega and a key narrative poem for Asturian Romanticism, her “El vuelo mental por los montes de Europa” (1848). Lamar Prieto’s analysis situates Eulalia de Llanos in the context of European Romanticism, where an Asturian voice engages with scientific, philosophical and religious references. The piece, written during the 1848 revolutions, shows the tension between faith, nature and modernity, while revealing the political and cultural aspiration of an Asturian writer. The chapter’s value is, at least, twofold: it rescues a little-known text by an Asturian woman writer, and at the same time offers a comparative reading that breaks away from a strictly Spanish canon. Lamar Prieto pioneers a hypothesis that rethinks previous conceptualizations of Spain: what can be seen as a “Cantabric turn”, that is, understanding Iberia, and Europe, through the relations brought about by the Cantabric sea. This is a model study of both literary recovery and cultural resignification.

Aymara González Montoto continues engaging with literature in chapter ten, analyzing the translation of the first chapter of Virginia Woolf’s ‘A Room of One’s Own’ (1929) into Asturian from the point of view of feminist translation. The chapter studies how to incorporate strategies of inclusive and non-binary language, eschewing the generic masculine. Her contribution demonstrates how translation is not only a technical operation but also a political act, especially in a minority language that seeks to project inclusive models. This chapter connects Asturian with international debates about translation and gender.

The book turns to archival research in chapter eleven. Adrián Martínez Expósito studies unpublished documents and press materials to reconstruct the failed attempts to publish the so-called *Rimas valdesanas* by Fernán-Coronas (Padre Galo Antonio Fernández). This chapter offers a detailed chronology of two editorial projects: one by the author himself in the 1920s and another one by Casimiro Cienfuegos in the 1950s, that were never published. This research has a great philological value; it enriches the knowledge of Asturian literary tradition and illustrates the editorial difficulties that conditioned it historically.

Memory and repression are the themes of the contribution by Inaciu Galán y González in chapter twelve, who presents the Archivu de la Represión Llingüística del Asturianu (ARLAS), a project that started in 2023. This project documents the discrimination suffered by speakers of the Asturian language and turns it into an archive for future research. The chapter contains a description of a resource fundamental for the study and recovery of historical memory, which functions as a reminder of the injustices that still shape the present. The project, and Galán y González’s contribution, combine academic and activist dimensions in a very effective way.

In chapter thirteen, Darío de Dios Sanz reconstructs the history of the Real Academia Asturiana de Artes y Letras, created in 1919, by studying journalistic sources. De Dios Sanz highlights the cultural aspirations of early twentieth-century asturianism and also its institutional shortcomings: the need for more resources, organizational problems and political changes. This well-documented and well-argued analysis offers a nuanced image of a short-lived but symbolic institution. The chapter helps to understand the precedents of current Asturian cultural movements and is a reminder that institutions are necessary for the prospering of languages, but also vulnerable without sufficient support.

Lourdes Guadalupe Montes Hernández, in chapter fourteen, puts forward a comparative analysis between the work of Asturian philosopher and writer Lluís Xabel Álvarez and Ayuukjä’äy linguist and writer Yásnaya Aguilar, authors who write in a minoritized language (Asturian and Mixe, respectively). The comparison shows the differences in context between Asturias and Mexico and the

common points, such as the defense of the community of speakers and the need for collaboration with institutions. Montes Hernández's work explores themes of identity, nationalism and power and aims to build bridges between different continents and experiences.

Chapter fifteen, by Violeta Caballero Caballero, examines linguistic activism in Asturias from the perspective of Peace Studies. The author shows how the demands for the official recognition of Asturian are formulated as a non-violent practice, oriented to dialogue and social transformation. The analysis shows the importance of recognizing linguistic rights to achieve social justice and clarify historical conflicts. This is an original contribution of high political value, which places the struggle to get the official recognition within an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, connecting sociolinguistics with Peace Studies.

The role of print culture is emphasized, in chapter sixteen, by Lluçia Menéndez Menéndez, who studies Asturian cultural journals from the 1970s to the present, focusing on their contribution to the defense of the Asturian language. The chapter demonstrates how these journals were spaces for cultural resistance and platforms for identity expression in the absence of official recognition. It also underlines the need to catalog this ephemeral but important heritage. Menéndez Menéndez's analysis is of great value because it carefully documents cultural production and underlines the importance of independent, militant press for the continuity of the language.

The volume closes with David Guardado Diez, who examines the ideology of linguistic renunciation promoted by the Spanish state during the turn of the nineteenth century in chapter seventeen. The chapter combines glottopolitics and discourse theory to demonstrate how the marginalization of Asturian was presented as a natural effect of modernization. Guardado Diez's analysis is rigorous and revealing: it illustrates the role of political and scientific power in constructing diglossia. His chapter is a strong reminder that language loss is not neutral, but the result of ideological processes. It is a powerful ending that connects the historical with the contemporary.

Although the chapters differ in focus and methodology, the book maintains a cohesion thanks to the three thematic axes that aim to structure it and are announced in the title: distinctiveness, identity, and officiality, although most articles relate to all three. The *distinctiveness* of Asturian, for example, is demonstrated through detailed studies of its lexicon (Cano González), paremiology (Menéndez Fernández), phraseology (Menéndez Díaz) and phonology—and morphosyntax—(Russo). *Identity* could be identified as one of the themes for the analysis engaging with literature (such as Lamar Prieto's, González Montoto's and Martínez Expósito's). Finally, *official recognition* is the prospect that connects the more politically committed chapters (like the ones by Corral Esteban, Caballero Caballero and Guardado Diez). This threefold structure not only points at the themes but also reflects the multidimensional reality of the language: it is not only a linguistic system, but also a social, historical, and political phenomenon. It is worth noting, however, that while the diversity of perspectives is one of this book's greatest strengths, it can also at times give an impression of dispersion, as it often happens with volumes that arise from conferences. Some chapters are highly technical (for example, Russo's or Bleorțu and Cuevas-Alonso's), while others are more descriptive or overtly advocatory. This mixture can make the book less accessible to a non-specialist audience. Nevertheless, such variety is also a reflection of the complexity of the object of study itself.

*La Llingua Asturiana: Distintividá, Identidá y Oficialidá* is, without doubt, a fundamental volume for anyone interested in the Asturian language, in the sociolinguistics of minority languages, or in Romance philology. Its value lies not only in the individual quality of its chapters but also in its capacity to articulate a multifaceted discourse on a subject of great complexity and relevance. The book demonstrates that Asturian is not a language of the past, but a living phenomenon, supported by solid academic research and by an active community of speakers who continue to fight for its official recognition. At the same time, the work presented here transcends the Asturian case,

offering methodological and theoretical reflections of general interest. In a context of globalization and cultural homogenization, books like this are a reminder of the importance of linguistic diversity as part of humanity's heritage. The Asturian language, with its history, its linguistic distinctiveness, and its role as a marker of identity, deserves not only academic respect but also the political recognition that corresponds to it. This volume represents one more step in that direction.

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