

The Mass Neuter Phenomenon in Asturian: Adjectives and Agreement*

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE ASTURIAN language spoken in the north of Spain exhibits a curious phenomenon that has traditionally been called the «neutro de materia» (mass neuter).

The purpose of the present paper is to evaluate analyses that may be applicable to the problem we will describe, which are related to the adjective position and agreement. In section 2, we will provide an overview of the problem and consider the questions we would like to answer. Following we will consider possible analyses in section 3.

Our conclusions will be presented in section 4.

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2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

2.1. Introduction

Articles, demonstratives, and pronouns have a distinct neuter form in Asturian¹. The forms for the definite article are listed in (1):

(1)	a.	el	'the', masc. sg.
	b.	la	'the', fem. sg.
	c.	lo	'the', neut. sg.
	d.	los	'them', masc. pl.
	e.	les	'them', fem. pl.

Demonstratives are shown in (2):

(2)	a.	esti, esi, aquel(l)	'this, that, that over there', masc. sg.
	b.	esta, esa, aquella	'this, that, that over there', fem. sg.
	c.	esto, eso, aquello	'this, that, that over there', neut. sg.
	d.	estos, esos, aquellos	'these, those, those over there', masc. pl.
	e.	estes, eses, aquelles	'these, those, those over there', fem. pl.

Third person personal pronouns are shown in (3):

(3)	a.	él (elli), ella, ello	'he, she, it', nominative
	b.	ellos, elles	'they-masc., they-fem', nominative
	c.	lu, la, lo	'him, her, it', accusative
	d.	los, les	'them-masc., them-fem', accusative

¹ All examples are taken from the *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana*, Uviéu, Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 1998; or from RAMÓN DE AMORÉS DÍAZ, «Empiezo del neutru n'asturianu», *Llingua Asturiana* 49 (1993), pp. 49-84; IDEM, «Aspectos morfolóxicos del neutru n'asturianu», *Homenaje a M.^a Josefa Camillada*, Madrid, 1994, pp. 9-30; IDEM, «Concordancia y referencias neutras en asturianu», *Acti del XXI Congresu Internacionale de Llingüística e Filoloxía Románica* [Palermo, 1995], Tübingen (Max Niemeyer), II, 1999, pp. 39-48.

The neuter forms appear in **bold** above. Equivalent neuter forms can also be found in Spanish, where paradigms similar to those in (1) - (3) can be constructed. What distinguishes Asturian from Spanish, though, is that adjectives may also exhibit a neuter form, as shown in (4):

(4)	a.	mal-u	'bad', masc. sg.
	b.	mal-a	'bad', fem. sg.
	c.	mal-o	'bad', neut. sg.
	d.	mal-os	'bad', masc. pl.
	e.	mal-es	'bad', fem. pl.

Below we will describe the behavior of the neuter elements.

2.2. *Generic or indefinite antecedents.*

Neuter adjectives appear when their referent is generic or indefinite:

* Adjectives that exhibit neuter forms typically end in:

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
-C-	mal-u	mal-a	mal-o	'bad'
-á(d)-	afayá-u	afayá-a	afaya-o	'found'
-i(d)-	bebi-u	bebid-a	bebi-o	'drunk'
-ud-	picud-u	picud-a	picud-o	'sharp'
-é-	europé-u	europé-a	europé-o	'European'
-der-	faceder-u	faceder-a	faceder-o	'to be done soon'
-diz-	antoxadiz-u	antoxadiz-a	antoxadiz-o	'wants everything s/he sees'
-in-	vieyín	vieyín-a	vieyín-o	'kind of old'
-án-	folganán	folganán-a	folganán-o	'lazy'

Some adjectives allow two neuter endings:

-ón	puercón	puercón-a	puercóni-o	'dirty'
-és	montés	montes-a	montési-o	'from the mountain'
-dor	falador	falador-a	faladori-o	'talkative'

- (5) a. Gülei ra tapecto.
 Today is dark/cloudy-neut.
'Today is cloudy.'
- b. Diben, venien, xubien, baxaben... ye bewamexye. convio.
 They-went, came, went-up, went-down is-was really bustling-neut.
'People were coming and going, going up and down... it was really bustling.'

They also appear when they are predicated of a neuter element:

- (6) a. Esto ye rico.
 This-neut. is delicious-neut.
'This is delicious.'
- b. Lo blanco ye emplegao como símbolu de pureza.

Some adjectives have a common form for all three cases:

-e	libre	libre	libre	'free'
-V'	zulu	zulu	zulu	'Zulu'
-s	socialista	socialista	socialista	'socialist'
-C	aciar	aciar	aciar	'tragic'

See *Gramática de la Lengua Asturiana* and RAMÓN DE ANDRÉS DÍAZ, «Concordancias y referencias.» for further details.

¹Note the contrasts in (i) below:

- (i) a. Eso ye bono.
 That-neut. is good-neut.
'That (thing) is good.'
- b. Esu ye bonu.
 That-masc. is good-masc.
'That (masc. referent) is good.'
- c. Esa ye bona.
 That-fem. is good-fem.
'That (fem. referent) is good.'

- The white-neut. is used-neut. as symbol of purity.
'White is used as a symbol of purity.'
- c. Ló que traxo Pedro ta rancia.
 The that brought Pedro is used-neut.
'What Pedro brought is rancid.'
- d. Lo malu que ye'l neñu, sábelo la ma.
 The bad-masc. that is-the boy, knows-it-neut. the mother.
'How bad the boy is, his mother knows it.'

When the adjective is predicated of an infinitive, it also appears in the neuter form¹:

- (7) Fumar ye malo.
 To-smoke is bad-neut.
'Smoking is bad.'

If the adjective is predicated of a tensed declarative or interrogative sentence, a neuter form is also found:

- (8) a. [Que fumés peles mañanes] ye malo.
 [That you-smoke by-the mornings] is bad-neut.
'That you smoke in the morning is bad.'
- b. Nun ta claru [si a eses hores taben en casa].
 Not is clear neut. [if at those hours they-were in house].
'It is not clear if they were home at that (late) time.'

¹ Infinitives that have become nouns take \bar{c} masculine agreement:

- (9) L'andar de Xisacu ye reviráu.
 The \bar{c} -walk of Xisacu is bent-masc.
'Xisacu's walk is bent, i.e. Xisacu bends over when he walks.'

- c. [(El) cómo logró pasar la frontera] ye bien misterioso.
 [(The) how s/he-got to-cross the border] is well mysterious-neut.
 'How s/he got to cross the border is very mysterious'.

It might appear that the above facts could be unified if we assumed that the neuter form of the adjective appears when the referent of the adjective is not specified for [\pm fem]. However, it is possible to find nouns clearly specified for [\pm fem] where a neuter adjective can be found. We will discuss these examples in the following section.

2.3. *Mess nouns and modifying adjectives.*

Nouns are typically specified for [\pm fem]; as such, we expect the adjective to agree in gender and number with the noun. This is the case with count nouns:

¹ Neuter adjectives can be found with noncount nouns:

- (i) a. Los militares dexaron l'Argentina too fastidiado.
 The militaries left the-Argentina-fem all messed-up-neut.
 'The military left Argentina all messed up'.
 b. La Costa del Sol ta muy desfecho.
 The Costa del Sol is very undone-neut.
 'The Costa del Sol is all run down'.

However, Bascón in *Asunción*, 'Complejo del neutro...' observes that it is possible to find a non-neuter form in these constructions as well:

- (ii) a. Los militares dexaron l'Argentina too fastidiada.
 The militaries left the-Argentina-fem all messed-up-fem.
 'The military left Argentina all messed up'.
 b. La Costa del Sol ta muy desfecha.
 The Costa del Sol is very undone-fem.
 'The Costa del Sol is very run down'.

- (g) a. Est camín paez largu.
That-masc. road seems-long-masc.
'That road seems long.'
- b. La mañana ta soleyera.
The-fem. morning is sunny-fem.
'The morning is sunny.'
- c. El neñu vien cansáu.
The-masc. child comes tired-masc.
'The child comes/is tired.'
- d. Los paxos tráxelos enllenos.
The-masc. baskets s/he-brought-them-masc. full-masc.
'The baskets, s/he brought them full.'

Notice that in (g) both the determiner and the adjective agree with the noun in gender and number, although in this paper we will focus on the analysis of adjective agreement.

Consider now mass nouns. When the adjective is predicated of a mass noun, whether the noun is masculine or feminine, the adjective must appear in the neuter form.⁴ Note in (10) that the determiner does agree in gender and number with the noun:

⁴ A class of structures that exhibit agreement failure in Romance may be related to the Asturian facts. JOHN HARRIS, *The Romance Romance Language*, London-New York (Routledge), 1991, págs. 206-20, generalises that the subject in such structures does not refer to a specific object, but instead to a general concept. These subjects, which he classifies as *trifles*, occur without articles and show agreement behavior similar to that of mass-neuter in Asturian, as seen in the following examples:

- (1) *quesu* *é* *bien*.
cheese [masc.sing] *is* good [neut.sing].
'Cheese is good.'

- (10) a. El carbón ta duro /^{*}duru.
The-masc. coal is hard-neut. /^{*}hard-masc.
'The coal is hard'.
b. La ropa ye guapo /^{*}guapa.
The-fem. clothing is pretty-neut. /^{*}pretty-fem.
'The clothes are pretty'.

A neuter form of the adjective is also found inside the nominal phrase if the adjective follows the mass noun (10a,c). However, if the adjective precedes the noun, it must agree in gender and number with the noun (10b,d):

- (11) a. el carbón duro /^{*}duru.
the-masc. coal hard-neut/^{*}hard-masc.
b. el duru /^{*}duru carbón.
the-masc. hard-masc./^{*}hard-neut coal.
'the hard coal'.
c. la ropa guapo /^{*}guapa.
the-fem. clothing pretty-neut. /^{*}pretty-fem.
d. la guapa /^{*}guapo ropa.
the-fem. pretty-fem. /^{*}pretty-neut. clothing.
'the pretty clothes'.

The same occurs even when there are two adjectives preceding or following the noun.

- (12) cigarettas ei nuschéivel
cigarettes [fem.pl.] is [3sing.] harmful [neut.sing.]
'Cigarettes are harmful.'

(12) shows a curious difference between Rhaeto-Romance and Asturian. Notice that the plural subject *cigarettas* can be classified as a title in Rhaeto-Romance while only singular nouns are classified as mass in Asturian.

- (12) a. la madera bueno negru.
 the-fem.wood-fem. good-neut. black-neut.
 'the good black wood.'
- b. la buena negra madria.
 the-fem. good-fem. black-fem. wood-fem.
 'the good black wood.'

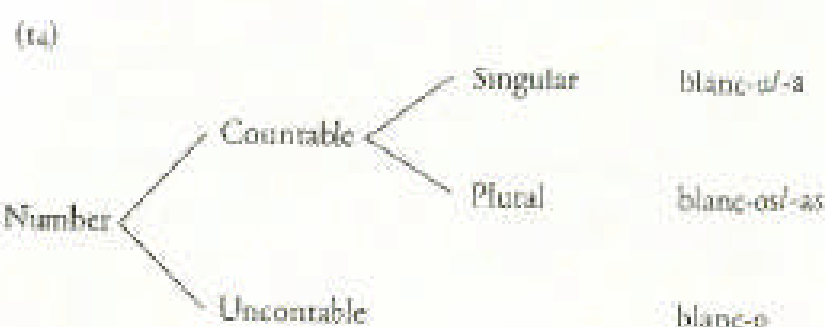
Following Arias Cabal⁷, among others, we will assume that the «neuter» morpheme is not a morpheme for gender but a morpheme that indicates «mass.» In keeping with the traditional terminology, we will continue to refer to these cases as «neuter.» It seems clear, however, that the true difference is [\pm mass].

- (13) a. atopó nel llibru una fueya seca.
 s/he found in the book a leaf dry.
 'S/he found a dry leaf in the book.'
- b. ta tol suelu enllerau de fueya seco.
 it-is all-the floor full of leaf dry.
 'The floor is full of dry leaves.'
- c. apunró'l teléfonu nun papel blancu.
 s/he-wrote-the phone in a-paper white.
 'S/he wrote the phone number on a white paper.'
- d. baxó a la librería a mercar papel blancu.
 s/he-went to the bookstore to buy paper white.
 'S/he went to the book store to buy white paper.'
- e. nun comí mas qu'una pera madura.
 not I-eat more than-a pear ripe.
 'I just ate one ripe pear.'

⁷ ALVARO ARIAS CABAL, *El morfema de 'neutro de materia' en asturiano*, Santiago (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela), 1989.

- f. llego un camiónu de pera maduro.
 it-arrived a truck of pear ripe.
'There arrived a truck full of ripe pears.'

We will propose the number system of Asturian to be described as below:



Demonstratives, indefinites and numeral adjectives and possessives follow the same basic agreement pattern.

The questions that will guide our paper are the following:

- How do adjectives agree with nouns?
- Why does the neuter agreement appear only in post-nominal position?
- Is neuter 'agreement' really agreement or lack of agreement?

3. POTENTIAL ANALYSES

Several analyses may be considered in order to explain the mass neuter phenomenon in Asturian. We begin by reviewing Demonte's⁴ account of adjective position and interpretation and will then turn to

⁴ VIOLETA DEMONTE, «A minimal account of Spanish adjective position and interpretation», en *Grammatical analyses in Basque and Romance Linguistics*, ed. by J. Franco, A. Landa y J. Martín, Amsterdam (John Benjamins), 1999, pp. 45-75.

Bernstein's⁷ proposal on nominal structure. Following, we will examine analyses of Kayne, Cinque and Bosque & Picallo⁸ to determine whether we can use these analyses as a foundation for explaining the Asturian mass neuter phenomenon described above.

3.1. *Demonte: Adjective Movement*

Demonte's minimalist analysis of adjectives, which considers data from Spanish, offers clues which might contribute to an account for the Asturian mass agreement phenomenon. She proposes that the «generation and derivation of adjectives is due to thematic discharge and feature checking» (p. 47). Demonte argues that prenominal and postnominal adjectives must not be uniform due to semantic differences. Prenominal adjectives can be modal epistemic, intentional 'privative,' circumstantial (or eventive), or qualitative non-restrictive. Only qualitative restrictive adjectives can occur postnominally. For the purposes of this paper, we are concerned only with the set of adjectives that can be generated in both positions, i.e. qualitative adjectives.

Demonte notes that when qualitative adjectives occur prenominally as in (15) or postnominally as in (16), they carry a semantic difference.

- (15) *la nieve sucia*
 the dusty snow
 'snow having dust on it'

⁷ JUDY BERNSTEIN, «DP's in French and Walloon: evidence for parametric variation in topical head movement», *Probus*, 3.2 (1991), pp. 101-126.

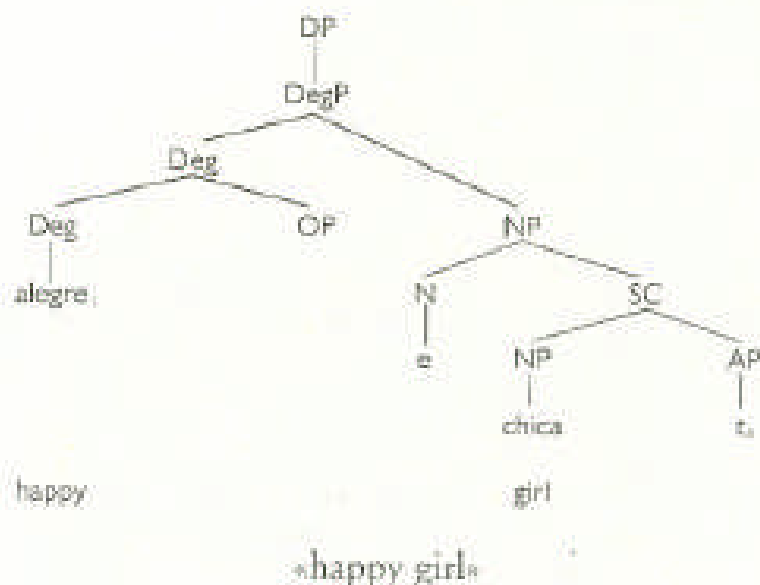
⁸ RICHARD KAYNE, *The Asymmetry of Syntax*, Cambridge, (MIT Press), Linguistic Inquiry Monograph, 25, 1992. GUGLIELMO CINQUE, «On the Evidence for Partial N-Movement in the Romance DP», in *In Path Towards Universal Grammar: Studies in honor of Richard S. Kayne* ed. by Cinque et al., Washington DC (Georgetown University Press), 1993, pp. 85-110. ISACIO BOSQUE and CARMEN PICALLO, «Postnominal adjectives in Spanish», in *Journal of Linguistics*, 32 (1996), pp. 349-381.

- (16) *la nieve arenosa*
 the snow dusty
 'snow being like dust.'

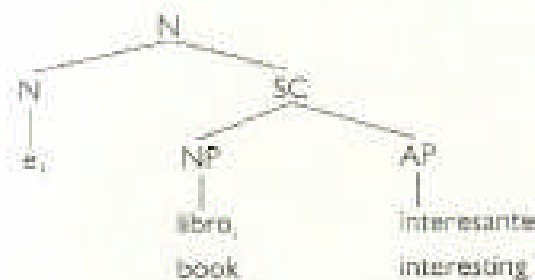
Prenominaly they are non restrictive, while postnominally they are restrictive. According to Demonte's analysis, all qualitative adjectives are generated in canonical complement position, but will have different syntactic derivations. They will have different locations due to the features they need to have checked.

Demonte proposes that DegP is a functional category, headed by a Deg operator, which is the functional checking domain between NP and DP. Whether the Degree head is generated or not depends on the semantics of the adjectives. The [+Deg] feature is an optional feature of potentially gradable adjectives. When [+Deg] is present, it is strong and must be checked before PF; therefore, an adjective moves up to check the feature. If [+Deg] features are formal, then they are discharged when the adjective moves overtly and adjoins to Deg OP.

- (17)



(18)



«interesting book»

Prenominal qualitative adjectives are marked by a [+Deg] feature related to their semantics. They must move to DegP to check the feature with a Deg head. Therefore, prenominal placement of qualitative adjectives is the result of movement to Degree of a base-generated postnominal adjective. Thus, the surface locations of these adjectives are a result of their feature checking.

Demonie also purports that agreement is exhaustive when the adjective is postnominal. It is partial when the adjective precedes the noun.

- (19) El gran buen rey -- El rey grande y bueno.
 the great-sg. good-sg. king-sg. -- the king-sg. great-sg. and goodsg.
'the great and good king'

- (20) *Sus distinguidos mérito y servicio.
 his-pl. distinguished-pl. merit-sg. and service-sg.
'his distinguished merit and service'

- (21) Presunción y osadía irracionables.
 vanity-sg. and audacity-sg. unforgivable-pl.
 'unforgivable vanity and audacity'

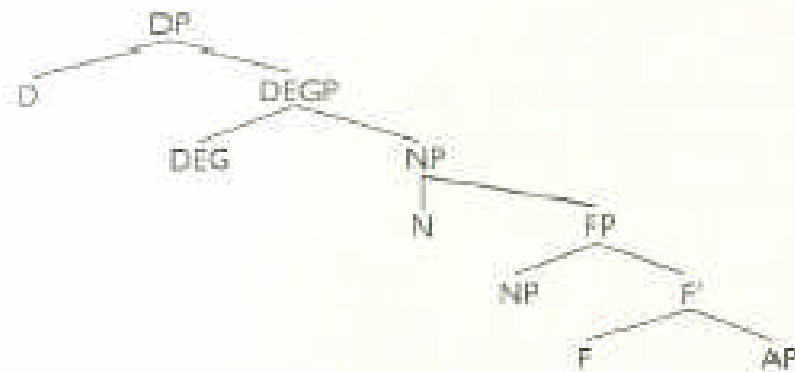
She takes these facts as evidence that agreement features can be checked through covert movement. She suggests that the adjective and noun share all the features of the noun in a local relationship because in such a relationship, through covert movement, the agreement features may be checked. No direct account is provided for the differing degrees of agreement.

The question for us is whether these ideas can be applied to the Asturian data. In our data, we see prenominal and postnominal adjectives that behave differently. We can similarly analyze our postnominal adjectives as having complete agreement since they are the only ones that show the mass morpheme. Therefore, we may be able to draw from Demonte's feature-checking analysis and apply it to the fact that prenominal adjectives do not overtly show mass, while postnominal adjectives do.

What one might propose is that there is a mass feature under F. If the adjective is realized postnominally, F must send out a probe. When it finds the mass feature, the feature is checked and pronounced. We then find the adjective along with its gender, number, and mass morphemes, as in *buen* + *e* + \emptyset + *o*. A morphophonological rule then eliminates the gender affix, leaving *bueno* as the surface form¹¹.

¹¹ This type of process can be observed, for example, in Spanish verb conjugation. The thematic vowel is elided in the formation of first person singular of the present tense: *canta* + *a* + \emptyset → *canto*.

(22)



When an adjective occurs prenominally, however, it is because it has undergone further raising to check its [+Deg] feature. The adjective moves from AP through F to DEG. When it moves through F, the mass feature is checked and deleted. An open question in this analysis is why a mass feature should be eliminated while gender and number are realized. This analysis also fails to address how nouns check their features. We also note that in this analysis we must generate different structures for phrases with prenominal adjectives than for postnominal ones.

3.2 Bernstein: Noun Movement

Bernstein uses noun movement to provide an analysis for the unrealized feminine plural marking on Walloon nouns. While this marking may appear orthographically, it is never realized in spoken form. However, in (23) and (24), we see that a feminine plural marker co-occurs with prenominal adjectives.

- (23) les beles feyes
the pretty girls

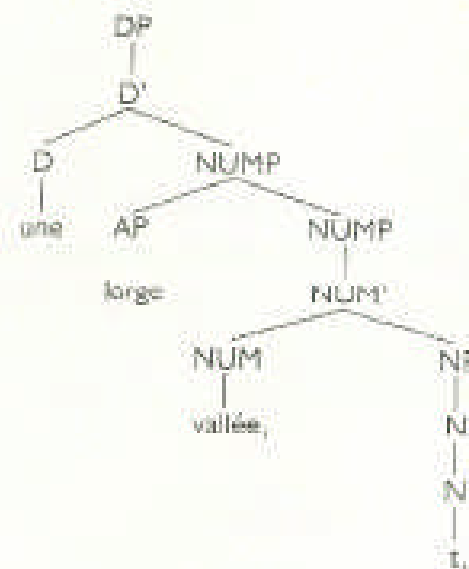
- (24) *dès nèie - z' amonnes*
 some blackberries

Since the mass feature in Asturian is never realized on nouns but rather on adjectives, we may find a commonality in Walloon on which to base our analysis.

Bernstein argues that noun movement accounts for word order relationships between nouns and adjectives. She proposes that the underlying order is always Determiner + Adjective + Noun. She notes that the Determiner + Noun + Adjective order allowed in many languages occurs when the Noun has raised. In order for this to occur, a landing site between the Determiner and the Adjective must exist. Bernstein proposes a NUM category. She argues that Noun movement is parametric, similar to V-to-I movement. The French phrases (25) and (26) are then accounted for by structures (25') and (26'). Assume that the NUMP is generated in different positions due to semantics.

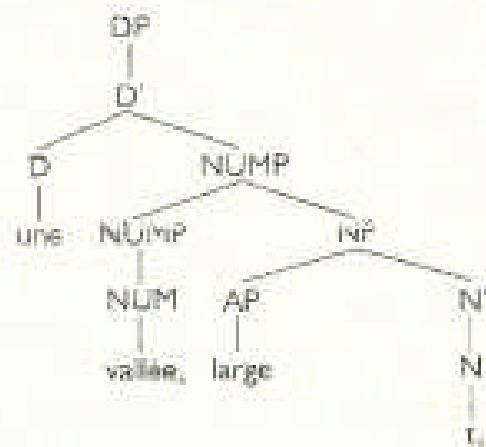
- (25) *une large vallée*
 a large valley

(25')



(26) *une vallée large*
 a valley large

(26')

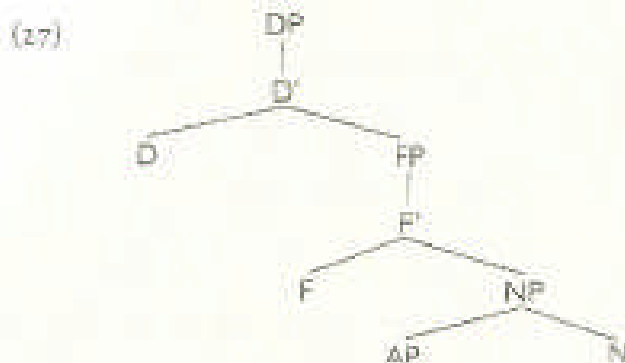


Given the structures above, Bernstein argues that for Walloon, (25') is always selected with the restriction that Noun movement is not allowed. The result is that whatever material is included in NUM cannot be attached to the end of the noun. Therefore, the fact that the noun appears 'unmarked' is explained. In fact, the material under NUM is thought of by speakers to be enclitic on the adjective. Bernstein provides several arguments to show that this material, specifically *-es*, is really proclitic on the noun.

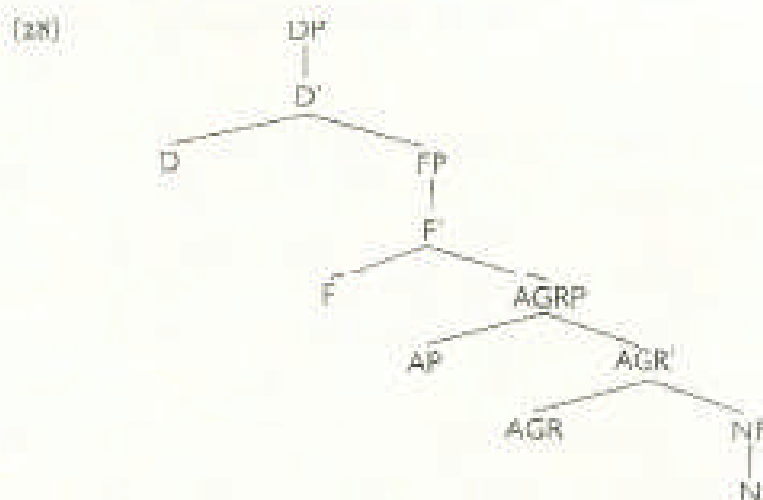
How does this relate to our Asturian data? Perhaps the vowel *-o* on an adjective modifying a mass noun is really contained in the NUMP. The ability of the Asturian noun to raise or not might then provide varying orders in which the *-o* morpheme could be realized with the adjective, as in postnominal positions, or not realized, as in prenominal positions. This analysis is viable only to the extent that Asturian mass can be considered parallel to Walloon plural. But while mass is inherent to a noun, plural is accidental (i.e., selected according to the speaker's intentions).

Similar to what Bernstein proposes, we may be able to account for the facts by proposing a functional node between DP and NP to which the noun may move. If the noun raises, the mass feature is activated and the adjective (which now surfaces as postnominal) appears with

the *neuter* morpheme. However, when the noun remains *in situ* the mass feature is not activated and only gender and number features are seen on the (prenominal) adjective.



In order to explain gender and number agreement, we might propose an Agr node, through which an agreement relation is established, as in (28):



Under this analysis, the noun moves to Agr to check number and gender features. It then optionally moves to F (a mass phrase), activating the realization of the mass morpheme as in (27). If this analysis is to be accepted, it remains to be explained why it is that movement activates a realized mass feature.

3.3 *Kayne, Cinque, Bosque & Picallo: Noun Movement II*

Our final analysis will be based on work by Cinque, Kayne and Bosque and Picallo²², which are closely related in some aspects. These authors agree that it is the noun that moves in Romance with respect to the adjective in accounting for the order of DP structure. Cinque argues that the base position of Adjective Phrases in the NP is to the left of N and that the differing surface positions of adjectives seen in Romance and Germanic are due to the raising of the N in Romance as in (29a) compared to Germanic in (29b)

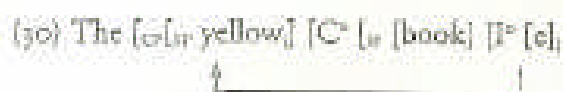
(29) a.	[D...[AP Y [AP N]]] (Rom.)	Le livre jaune The book yellow
	↑	
b.	[D...[AP Y [AP N]]] (Germ.)	The yellow book
	↑ X	

Cinque holds that this N raising is obligatory in Romance since the order (D) N AP complement is the only allowed (*l'invasione italiana dell'Albania*). In the spirit of the «cartographic» approach, he identifies several functional heads between D and X (to the left of N) where attributive adjectives can be generated. However, he also adheres to the idea that predicative adjectives are generated in a reduced relative clause, to the right of N, thus allowing for two very different sources of adjective generation (93).

Kayne's account of adjectives as reduced relative structures shows that *the yellow book* will have the same structure as *the book is yellow*.²³

²² R. KAYNE, «The Antisymmetry...», J. CINQUE, «On the Evidence...», I. BOSQUE and G. PICALLO, «Postnominal adjectives...».

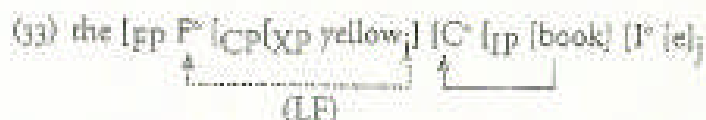
²³ We are proposing a CP following Kayne's analysis of reduced relatives in order to explain the adjective-noun relation, but in our opinion, other structures, such as an Agr phrase, as proposed by Bosque and Picallo, may also be able to successfully account for this relation.



Following Kayne, *book* here receives Case through a (n incorporation) relation with *the*, and the fact that *book* has Case allows it to license the trace. Kayne proposes that there is only a single source of the adjective-noun relation, that of the reduced relative, with the adjective position in [Spec, CP], and two different positions to where the noun moves, F' before the adjective and C' after the adjective, resulting in the two different patterns as seen in Romance and Germanic.



We will follow Kayne in his reduced relative structure, based partly on our intuition that this phenomenon is related to the predicative type structure. The noun moves to C' in order to get its number and gender features checked. Following Bosque and Picallo we will claim that [gen.] and [num.] are strong features and thus they need to be checked overtly. The noun checks its features but it does not delete them. Again following Bosque and Picallo, we will assume that the adjective's gender and number features are checked by the noun in a Spec-Head relation, causing morphological realization of the gender and number morphemes. We also propose a new feature, [mass], which can be optionally checked overtly or covertly depending on the language (generally, the pattern would be overt movement in Romance and covert in Germanic).



This feature is proposed to be located under F^0 , the site of the further noun movement observed in Romance*. In some languages, this overt movement seems to be optional, as in Spanish and Asturian.

- (34) Spanish: a. La hierba seca
The grass dried
'the dried grass'.
b. La seca hierba
The dried grass
'the dried grass'.
- (35) Asturian: a. La hierba seca
The grass dried
'the dried grass'.
b. La seca herba
The dried grass
'the dried grass'.

In Asturian, if the movement is overt, then the weak [mass] feature will be checked and if its value is [+mass], the \emptyset morpheme will be

* Under the analysis we have described, we have movement of the noun to the Head of \bar{F} , where a [mass] feature is located. Here, the noun would check the [mass] feature of the adjective in the [Spec, \bar{C}] position, below the noun. This analysis, while giving the correct surface order, does not fit in well with feature-checking mechanisms (such as Spec-Head relations, cf. SAMUEL LARSON, 'About Ag(P)', in *Linguistic Inquiry*, 21:4 (1990), pp. 551-577). One possible way to adjust the analysis to account for feature checking would be to propose that it is the adjective that moves to the head of the \bar{F} while the noun actually moves to [Spec, \bar{F}]. This yields the same surface order as well as a Spec-Head relation. This solution to a wrinkle in the analysis seems somehow forced.

Alternatively, as suggested by E. ZANUTTI in personal communication, we may propose that the noun in F^0 probes and finds the adjective in [Spec, \bar{C}].

realized. We will maintain that the movement may also be covert, and that the difference between these two options is a semantic one¹¹.

Returning to our original questions, this analysis provides a relation in which adjectives check agreement features with nouns; for us, this is in a Spec-Head relation within a functional node. As for why the neuter agreement appears only in post-nominal position, we have said that the raising of the noun past the adjective allows the checking of the weak feature [mass]. We thus believe that the realization of the neuter morpheme shows complete agreement (rather than some sort of default agreement).

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have synthesized existing descriptions of mass neuter in Asturian. Drawing from the analyses of Deromoni, Bernstein, Cinque, Kayne and Bosque & Picollo, we have outlined possible accounts for the agreement disjunction. An analysis based on Cinque, Kayne and Bosque and Picollo seems to have more potential for further development, since it provides satisfactory answers to the questions we formulated at the beginning of this paper. Thus we hope to have contributed to the theoretical discussion on adjective feature checking as well as to have provided some viable possibilities for accounting for the phenomenon seen in Asturian mass neuter.

¹¹ We refer the reader to V. DEROMONI, 'A minimal account...', for further details. The unmarked order is that of the postnominal adjective.