A Linear Approach to Mass Agreement in Central Asturian
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1. Frontmatter:

Central Asturian, CA henceforth, exhibits a well-known agreement pattern that has been difficult to account for theoretically, i.e. pre-nominal gender agreement of adjectives, but post-nominal mass agreement.

…esi asquerosu y duru fierro ferruñoso…
grotesque-masc hard-masc iron-masc.mass rusty-mass

‘that grotesque and rusty hard iron…’

[Arias Cabal, 1999:54]

Today’s objective: To account for the above pattern in a straight-forward way

While demonstratives and clitics can play a role for mass interpretation in CA, this talk will focus on nouns and adjectives. (cf. d’Andrés, 1993, 1994; Arias Cabal, 1998, 1999; San Segundo Cachero, 2015; a.o.).

2. The Data Set:

-I am introducing some new data from my dissertation surveys.
-Participants are from Les Regueres, Uviéu, La Pola Siero and Nava (within the CA area).

-Some nouns show a distinction between mass (-o in 1a, 2a, 3a) and count (-u in 1b, 2b, 3b).

2.1. fierro vs fierru

(1a) El símbol quimicu fierro ye Fe.
iron-masc.mass ‘the chemical symbol for iron is Fe.’

(1b) Dio-y con un fierru nel llombu.
iron-masc.count ‘I gave it to him/her in the back with an iron [object].’

2.2. filo vs filu

(2a) Pasame esi filo con lo que voi coser thread-masc.mass
‘Pass me that thread with which I’m going to sew.’
2.3. pelo vs pelu

(3a) Tiene un pelo precioso.

‘S/he has precious hair.’

(3b) Hai un pelu na sopa.

‘There’s a hair in the soup.’

-When nouns do not formally show mass, adjectives can indicate mass interpretations when in post-nominal position.

2.4. mass adjectives

(4a) La moneda pequeño ye poco práctico, prefiero que me paguen con billetes.

‘Small money is barely practical, I prefer to be paid with bills.’

(4b) Quiero la moneda pequeña que tienes na mano.

‘I want the small money that you have in your hand.’

-However, only pre-nominal gender agreement holds, i.e. pre-nominal mass adjectives are unattested.

2.5. split agreement patterns

(5a) …esi asquerosu y duru fierro ferruñoso…

grotesque-masc hard-masc iron-masc.mass rusty-mass

‘that grotesque and hard rusty iron…’

[Arias Cabal, 1999:54]

(5b) …esi asquerosu y duru fierru ferruñosu…

grotesque-masc hard-masc iron-masc.count rusty-count

‘that grotesque and hard rusty piece of iron…’

[Arias Cabal, 1999:54]
3. Background Assumptions:


- Lexically decomposed nouns, i.e. √NEÑ - neñu, neña ['boy, girl']
- nPs are recursive
  - the lowest one being the locus of gender
  - the highest one being the locus of [±MASS]
- Theme vowels compete for insertion

3.2. Abstract nP structure:

- Adjectives are left-adjoined
  - Pre-nominal adjectives adjoin higher
  - Post-nominal adjectives adjoin lower
- aP agreement checked by probing upward
  - agree with the c-commanding head directly above aP; n or D.

4. My Proposal:

- Two phases of noun derivation
  - (i) root > n[GENDER] (closer to root)
  - (ii) root-n[GENDER] > n[MASS]
- Adjectives left-adjoined after phase (ii)
  - agree with c-commanding head directly above it (n or D) [Baker 2008]
- Post-nominal adjectives are projected lower and show mass agreement
- Pre-nominal adjectives are projected higher and show gender agreement
4.1. Asturian Theme Vowels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III</th>
<th>-e/-Ø</th>
<th>madr-e, llápiz-Ø</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>dif-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-u/-o</td>
<td>man-u, fierr-u, fierr-o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Rules for Theme Vowel Insertion:

(6)  
 a. √MADR, √PADR, √LLÁPIZ, √LUZ \(\rightarrow\) -e/-Ø 
 b. √Dí \(\rightarrow\) -a 
 c. √MAN \(\rightarrow\) -u 
 d. [+MASS] √FIERR, √PEL, √FIL \(\rightarrow\) -o 
 e. [+FEM] \(\rightarrow\) -a 
 f. Elsewhere \(\rightarrow\) -u

4.3. Deriving Adjectives:

fresca – frescu – fresco \(\rightarrow\) √FRESC ‘fresh’

(7)  
 a. [a], [+FEM] \(\leftrightarrow\) -a 
 b. [a] \(\leftrightarrow\) -u 
 c. [a], [+MASS] \(\leftrightarrow\) -o

(8)  
 a. \([a [+FEM][√FRESC]]\) = ‘fresca’ (fresh) 
 b. \([a [√FRESC]]\) = ‘frescu’ (fresh) 
 c. \([a [+MASS][√FRESC]]\) = ‘fresco’ (fresh)

4.4. Proposed Structure in Action:

La sidra fresco:

La fresca sidra:

- √SIDR moves to n u [+FEM] 
- √SIDR [+FEM] moves to n [+MASS] 
- √SIDR [+FEM][+MASS] spells out -a 
- noun checks gender with D 
- postnominal aP left-adjointed below 
- aP probes up and finds [+MASS] on n above it 
- mass agreement spells out -o 
- result is la sidra fresco 

- √SIDR moves to n u [+FEM] 
- √SIDR [+FEM] moves to n [+MASS] 
- √SIDR [+FEM][+MASS] spells out -a 
- noun checks gender with D 
- prenominal aP left-adjointed higher up 
- aP probes up and finds [+FEM] on D above it 
- gender agreement spells out -a 
- result is la fresca sidra
4.5. Agreement Asymmetry:

Extending from the examples in §4.4, my proposed structure can also account for pre- and postnominal contexts of adjective gender agreement, and postnominal adjective mass agreement.

el duru fierro ferruñoso [Arias Cabal, 1999:54]   el duru fierru ferruñosu [Arias Cabal, 1999:54]

5. Predictions:

Under my adoption and modification of Kramer (2015) for noun and Baker (2008) for adjectives, other typological phenomena seem unproblematic under my proposed system.

5.1. Breton [Trépos, 1980:67; Mathieu, 2012]

masculine mass geot ‘grass’  →  feminine count geotenn ‘a blade of grass’

5.2. Syrian Arabic [Cowell, 2005:298; Mathieu 2012]

masculine mass ’am’h ‘wheat’  →  feminine count ’am’h e ‘a grain of wheat’
5.3. Fox [Goddard, 2002; Mathieu, 2012]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{inanimate mass } \text{zhooliyaah} \text{ ‘silver, money’} \rightarrow \\
\text{animate count } \text{zhooliyaah} \text{ ‘a coin, a bill’}
\end{array}
\]

6. The Implications:

- Two independent theories (Kramer 2015 & Baker 2008)
  - they seem to clear up the asymmetry in mass agreement
  - nouns and adjectives both lexically decomposed

- Treats adjectives uniformly
  - they are left-adjoined
  - they search upwards for agreement features; n or D

caveat: That an adjective agrees with DP instead of NP is strange, I am still working this out and looking to Bonet et al. (2015) for answers.

¡Munches gracias!