

Asturian Identity Reflected in Pronoun Use: Enclisis and Proclisis Patterns in Asturian Spanish

Verónica González López
Denison University

1. Introduction

The present study reports quantitative and qualitative results from research conducted on the spontaneous production of enclisis and proclisis patterns of Asturian Spanish - the contact variety of Spanish spoken in the Spanish geographical area known as the Principality of Asturias (D'Andrés Díaz, 2007; González Quevedo, 2001; Rees 1988; Viejo Fernández, 2004).¹ The results disclose changes regarding self-identity and the use and prestige of the minority language (Asturian) in the above-mentioned geographical area. These changes are in accordance with some of the main socio-political events that have been taking place in Spain since the restoration of democracy and the beginning of a linguistic policy that recognizes and protects the minority languages of Spain. This article is organized as follows: the ensuing section provides a general account of the historical background and current status of Asturian and Castilian Spanish (henceforth Castilian) in the Principality of Asturias. It focuses on the representation of Asturian in the public educational system and the media. Section 2 offers an explanation of the rationale behind the study and includes the formulation of the main hypotheses to be explored. In Section 3 there is a description of the various methodological aspects and techniques employed during the data collection as well as further analysis. The corresponding results are reported in Section 4. Finally, in Section 5 the results are contextualized, discussed and analyzed.

Asturian and Castilian have been in contact in northwestern Spain since the unification of the Kingdoms of Castile and León in the 13th century (Viejo Fernández, 2005). Prior to that, Asturian had been the language of use in the Kingdom of Asturias (later the Kingdom of León) between the 8th and the 10th centuries. Between the 13th and 14th centuries, all the official documents issued by the Kingdom of León were written in Asturian, including laws, notary documents, and such (Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, henceforth ALLA, 2002). Soon after that and as a reflection of the hegemony that the Kingdom of Castile was exerting on Asturias, the upper classes started adopting Castilian, thus beginning the diglossic situation that was consolidated during the 1960s and that persists to the present (ALLA, 2002; D'Andrés, 2002a; Gugenberger, 2008; Merlán, 2008).

Since Castilian was adopted as the language of administration and of the educational system, it has been regarded as the prestigious variety or "high language" (cf. Fishman, 1971). Even though Asturian has been legally recognized since 1998 as the traditional language of Asturias to be protected and promulgated, it is not currently co-official in any of the Spanish territories, unlike other minority languages (i.e. Galician, Basque, Catalan) or Mirandese, a variety of Asturian that is co-official with

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¹ Even though Asturian Spanish or *amestáu* can be sometimes grouped together with Asturian (see D'Andrés, 2006, p. 203), I differentiate between Asturian and Asturian Spanish: the contact variety of Spanish that shows Asturian features (see D'Andrés, 2002b for a list of the phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features that characterize Asturian Spanish and other stages of the dialectal continuum between Asturian and Castilian).

Portuguese in the Miranda region since 2001 (ALLA, 2002; Merlán, 2008, 2009). Asturian, in fact, is regarded as the “low variety” (cf. Fishman, 1971) usually associated with uneducated farmers and unsophisticated workers who belong to the lower strata of the socioeconomic scale (D’Andrés Díaz, 2002a, 2006, 2007; Merlán, 2008; Viejo Fernández, 2005). One of the consequences of this situation is the current state of classic diglossia (see Fasold, 1984) or socially unbalanced bilingualism (cf. ALLA, 2002; D’Andrés Díaz, 2002a, 2006) that exists in the Principality of Asturias. For the most part, Asturian has not developed all of its functional potential (cf. D’Andrés Díaz, 2006, p. 201) and is generally spoken at home with family members and close friends in informal contexts, while Asturian Spanish and more so Castilian, are employed in all contexts and stylistic registers (see D’Andrés Díaz, 2002a, 2006; Merlán, 2008). Another consequence is the status of linguistic endangerment that Asturian suffers at present; in fact, Asturian is currently labeled as “definitely endangered” (Moseley, 2010) mainly due to its lack of intergenerational transmission (Whalen and Simons, 2012). In addition, Asturian has a poor and sporadic representation in the public sphere (i.e. the educational system and the media; ALLA, 2002; D’Andrés Díaz, 2002a, 2006).² Currently, the number of speakers who report knowing Asturian is estimated to be around 30% – between 350,000 and 450,000 speakers out of a total population of 1,075,381 according to the 2003 census (ALLA, 2002; Cano, 2007; Huguet, 2006; Lefin et al., 2004; Llera Ramo, 1994; Llera Ramo and San Martín Antuña, 2003; Merlán, 2008).

As far as the presence of Asturian in the educational system is concerned, the language was first introduced in 6 public schools of Elementary education during the 1984-1985 academic year (ALLA, 2002; Huguet, 2006; Lefin et al., 2004). It was (and still is) voluntary, and even though it was offered during regular school hours and not as an after school program or extracurricular activity, its teaching was conceived and delivered as a foreign language. For example, it was offered only to those students in the “ciclos medio y superior” (from 8 to 14 years), and only for two or three hours a week. When Asturian first started being offered, the number of students that chose Asturian language as an optional subject were only 1,531; currently, that number has increased to 15,000 and Asturian is available in nearly all public Elementary schools (ALLA, 2002; D’Andrés Díaz, 2006, 2007; Huguet, 2006). In fact, as Huguet (2006) points out, “in those schools where the subject is offered more than 70% of students attend the Asturian lessons” (p. 418). In spite of these advances towards the representation of Asturian in the educational system, the incorporation of Asturian in the curriculum of Secondary Education is still quite precarious (see Quirós Madariaga, 2001; mentioned in Huguet, 2006). Furthermore, the current legal status of Asturian prevents it from becoming the vehicular language of instruction to deliver content pertaining other topics aside from Asturian language and culture (Huguet, 2006; Turell, 2000; Vila, 1992).

According to the report conducted by ALLA (2002), unlike Galician, Catalan, or Basque, the Asturian language is under-represented in the mass media. For instance, there are no autonomic or regional TV stations that broadcast solely in Asturian. Moreover, those TV stations that broadcast in Castilian may offer short programs in Asturian, but those are not scheduled regularly and their content tends to be limited to Asturian folklore and culture. There is currently one radio station that broadcasts in Asturian only, although every now and then one can hear short pieces of news in Asturian on other radio stations that otherwise broadcast using Castilian. Finally, there are currently two regional daily newspapers that may publish some sections in Asturian whose content tends to center around Asturian culture, folklore, and language; the remaining sections that inform about current events are always in Castilian. There is just one weekly newspaper that publishes the entirety of its contents solely in Asturian.

2. Hypotheses and rationale

Castilian and Asturian are both Romance languages with distinct morphosyntactic structures. Asturian Spanish, the contact variety that has been quickly replacing Asturian in all strata of society since the 1960s, can be identified as a variety distinct from Castilian by the presence of what D’Andrés

² See the report in ALLA (2002) for a full account of the current legal status and the representation of Asturian in the media, the educational system, and other public organisms. Even though the report dates from 10 years ago, there has been little improvement regarding the public representation of Asturian.

(2002b)³ calls “trazos diferenciales” (henceforth “differentiating features”) from Asturian that include lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic characteristics, as shown in the following examples:

- (1) a. Esti gúaḥe ye baju.
 b. Este niño es bajo.
 c. Esti gúaḥe ye baxu.
 “This child is short.”
- (2) a. Vilu leer/ *Lu vi leer.
 b. Lo vi leer/ *Vilo leer.
 c. Vilu lleer/ *Lu vi lleer.
 “I saw him read.”

The examples above in (1a, 2a) show some features of Asturian Spanish; examples (1b, 2b) show the Castilian equivalent, and examples (1c, 2c) show the Asturian equivalent. Lexically, Asturian Spanish is characterized by the use of unequivocally Asturian vocabulary, such as the noun *gúaḥe* instead of the Castilian *niño*. Phonologically, Asturian Spanish tends to show the substitution of the Asturian phoneme /j/ by the Spanish phoneme /x/, as in *baju* for *baxu* in (1a). Morphosyntactically, Asturian Spanish may display typical Asturian features, such as the Asturian “-i” ending for masculine, singular demonstratives, as in (1a). Example (2a) includes the Asturian masculine singular direct object (DO) clitic *lu* enclitic to the verb instead of the Castilian *lo* proclitic to the main conjugated verb. Crucially, Castilian and Asturian differ in terms of clitic placement in matrix clauses. While there are certain specific contexts in which proclisis is allowed in Asturian (i.e. negation, topicalization, focus; see D’Andrés, 1993; Longa and Lorenzo, 2001; Lorenzo, 1995), enclisis is the default position with finite verbs in Asturian and Asturian Spanish matrix clauses (D’Andrés, 1993, 2002b), as in (2a, 2c). Castilian, on the other hand, is a proclitic language that never allows enclisis with finite verbs (2b).

Speakers of Asturian Spanish, then, may alternate between enclisis and proclisis depending on a variety of factors that include, for instance, register and style. It is hypothesized here that the rate of enclisis and proclisis in spontaneous speech depends on variables like gender (female speakers show less enclisis or none at all in their speech, following patterns related to gender and prestige uncovered by, for instance, Fasold, 1990; Labov, 1966, 1972, 1990; Trudgill, 1972, among many others), access to Asturian classes in school, self-reported identity and self-reported L1 and “lengua propia”⁴ in different age groups. Younger speakers whose self-reported L1 and “lengua propia” is Asturian (or both Asturian and Castilian) will show more enclisis in their Spanish than those who self-report only Castilian as their L1. With that purpose in mind, semi-spontaneous interviews were conducted with 35 speakers between the ages of 18-86, as described in the next section. In addition, having access to Asturian classes in school will positively impact the use and social prestige of the minority language, which will render a higher rate of enclisis.

3. Methodology

Data collection for the present study consisted of semi-spontaneous interviews conducted with 35 speakers between the ages of 18-86 at the time of the interviews (see Table 1 for a breakdown of speakers in terms of age and gender). Participants were recruited following the snowball technique and taking into account the sociolinguistic variables mentioned above whenever possible. Thus, the sample presented here is estimated to be a faithful representation of a subsection of Asturian society.

Interviews were conducted according to the following procedures: first, participants were administered a language questionnaire in Spanish that included questions about language use in

³ See D’Andrés (2002b) for an extensive list of the “trazos diferenciales” (differentiating features) that distinguish Asturian Spanish from Castilian Spanish and Asturian respectively. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this important reference.

⁴ “Lengua propia” may be translated as “the language with which you most identify” and it does not necessarily coincide with the speaker’s L1, as, in some cases, speakers whose L1 may be Asturian Spanish or Castilian, later learn Asturian and consider it their “lengua propia” for a variety of reasons (i.e. political, personal, etc.).

various contexts, personal information regarding age, gender, maximum level of studies completed, and other pertinent information. Then, the investigator recorded a semi-spontaneous interview in Asturian Spanish based on the questionnaire with each individual participant and following the Principle of Tangential Shift (Labov, 1984, p. 37).⁵ Interviews lasted between 5 minutes and 41 seconds and 48 mins. and 11 secs., with a mean duration of 16 mins. and 38 secs.⁶ As is customary, the first couple of minutes were discarded from each interview to ensure as natural a speech sample as possible. Following Hugué (2006, p. 419), all materials were presented in Spanish because it is the “default” language that anybody would expect in the Asturian context given the current situation of Asturian described earlier. Moreover, not every speaker of Asturian or Asturian Spanish is literate in Asturian or familiar with the written conventions of Asturian. Each interview was transcribed, coded and transferred from Excel to GoldVarb Lion for analysis (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith, 2005).

Age/gender	Female	Male
18-30	7	5
30-60	8	8
+60	4	3
TOTAL	19	16

Table 1. Characteristics of participants.

The envelope of variation for this study includes tensed verbs in matrix clauses that occur with a clitic pronoun either to its left or to its right. Clitic placement in those contexts is not variable in Castilian (2b), Asturian (2c), or Asturian Spanish (2b). However, speakers of Asturian Spanish have both proclisis and enclisis mechanisms available in their repertoire. Hence, as hypothesized in the previous section, alternation may occur in spontaneous speech.

4. Results

The data rendered a total amount of 855 tokens that were analyzed using GoldVarb Lion. The results partially confirm the hypotheses formulated earlier, as will be seen shortly. As can be observed in Figure 1, self-reported L1 changes dramatically among the different age groups. As expected, the number of those who report Spanish as their L1 increases in the age group that grew up and went to school during Franco’s dictatorship (30-60 group), while self-reported bilingualism is more prevalent among the younger generations (18-30).

⁵ Even though interviews were conducted in Asturian Spanish, speakers who do not know Asturian and/or speak only Castilian (whether by choice or because that is the only linguistic variety that they know) did not accommodate to the linguistic variety employed by the interviewer. The interviewer is a native speaker of Asturian Spanish and Asturian. Likewise, the interviewer did not accommodate to those speakers who chose to use Asturian in their interviews. This hopefully eliminates any possible priming and/or accommodation effects from the data.

⁶ A reviewer considers that having 5-minute interviews may be problematic. Nevertheless, there were only a couple of interviews that lasted less than 10 minutes (in fact, these shorter interviews lasted for more than 7 minutes, but the first 2 minutes of the interview were eliminated). Even though the participants did not speak for a long time, they produced samples of enclisis and proclisis. In addition, since the statistical analysis takes tokens into account, and not individual participants, having two short interviews should not affect the analysis significantly.

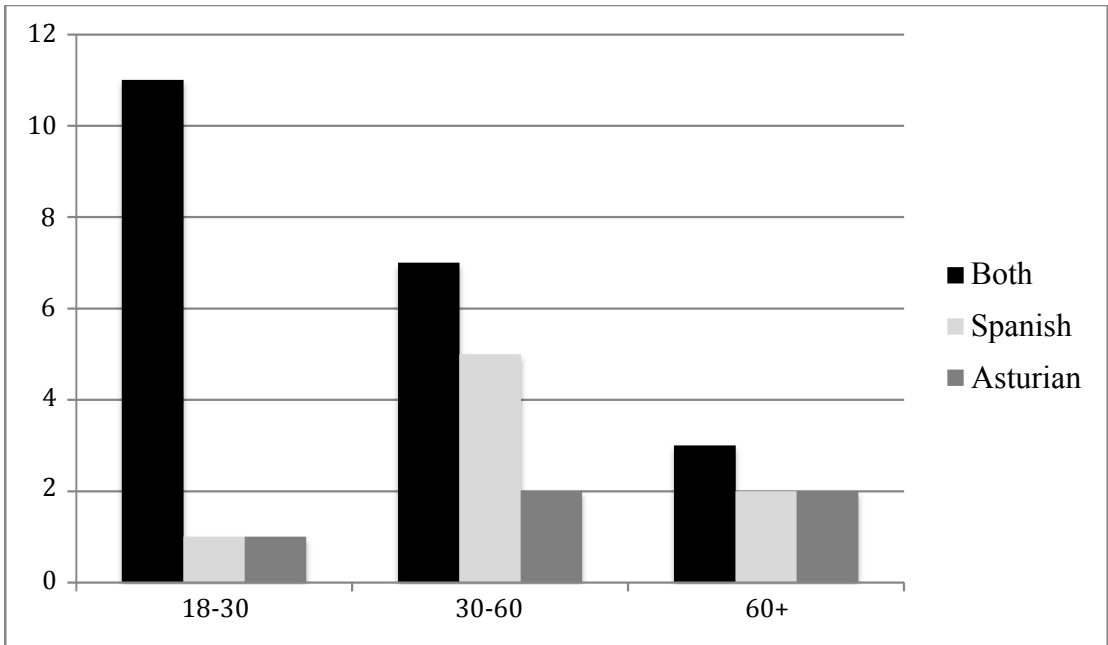


Figure 1. Self-reported L1.

Regarding the relationship between the production rates of enclisis vs. proclisis and the sociolinguistic variables mentioned the overall rate of enclisis is greater in the participants older than 60 and among the younger generation (see Table 2). As expected, those participants who grew up and went to school during Franco's dictatorship show the lowest rate of enclisis. With respect to gender differences, the hypothesized asymmetric usage of enclisis vs. proclisis is confirmed: while both genders produce a higher rate of proclisis than enclisis, men do so less than women (see Table 3).

The relationship between clitic placement and self-reported identity renders some unexpected results, as illustrated in Table 4. First, all groups appear to produce the Spanish grammatical construction (proclisis) more frequently than Asturian enclisis, with the exception of those who self-identify as "Spanish only" (see Figure 2). Even though this seems counter-intuitive, an explanation is readily available when considering Spain's recent socio-political history, as will be seen in Section 5.

Age	Enclisis	Proclisis	Total
18-30	N= 85 52.8%	N= 76 47.2%	N= 161 18.8%
30-60	N= 103 22%	N= 365 78%	N= 468 54.7%
60+	N= 149 65.9%	N= 77 34.1%	N= 226 26.4%
TOTAL	N= 337 39.4%	N= 518 60.6%	N= 855 100%

Table 2. Enclisis and proclisis overall rates by age.

Gender	Enclisis	Proclisis	Total
Men	N= 158 46.7%	N= 180 53.3%	N= 338 39.5%
Women	N= 179 34.6%	N= 338 65.4%	N= 517 60.5%

Table 3. Enclisis and proclisis overall rates by gender.

It was hypothesized that speakers who self-report Asturian or both Asturian and Spanish as their L1 would show more enclisis than those who self-report only Spanish as their L1. This is confirmed by

the results; even though the overall rate of proclisis is slightly higher (albeit not significantly) among those who self-report either Asturian or both Asturian and Castilian as their L1, it is significantly higher among those who only report having Spanish as their L1, as expected (see Table 5).

Identity	Enclisis	Proclisis	Total
Asturian	N= 103 48.4%	N= 110 51.6%	N= 213 24.9%
Both (Asturian 1 st)	N= 167 41.5%	N= 235 58.5%	N= 402 47%
Both (Spanish 1 st)	N= 25 14.8%	N= 144 85.2%	N= 169 19.8%
Spanish	N= 42 59.2%	N= 29 40.8%	N= 71 8.3%

Table 4. Enclisis and proclisis overall rates according to self-reported identity.

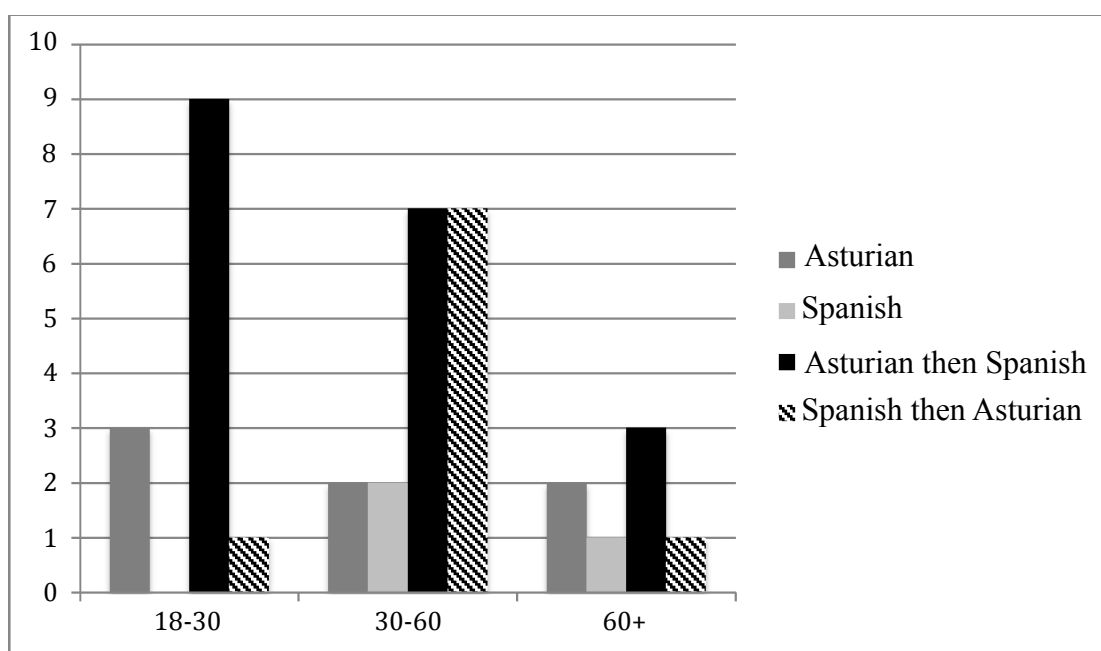


Figure 2. Self-reported identity.

With respect to the relationship between clitic placement and self-reported “lengua propia” Table 6 shows that, as hypothesized earlier, those who report having Spanish as their “lengua propia” produce more proclisis patterns. However, even though those who report having first Asturian and then Spanish as their “lengua propia” show more enclisis in their speech, contrary to all expectations, those who report only Asturian as their “lengua propia” produce the Castilian construction significantly more frequently than the Asturian one.

L1	Enclisis	Proclisis	Total
Asturian	N= 96 44%	N= 122 56%	N= 218 25.5%
Both	N= 227 49.6%	N= 231 50.4%	N= 458 53.6%
Spanish	N= 14 7.8%	N= 165 92.2%	N= 179 20.9%

Table 5. Enclisis and proclisis overall rates according to self-reported L1.

Lengua propia	Enclisis	Proclisis	Total
Both (Asturian 1 st)	N= 192	N= 53	N= 245
	78.4%	21.6%	28.7%
Both (Spanish 1 st)	N= 81	N= 227	N= 308
	26.3%	73.7%	36%
Spanish	N= 52	N= 145	N= 197
	11.4%	88.6%	23%
Asturian	N= 12	N= 93	N= 105
	11.4%	88.6%	12.3%

Table 6. Enclisis and proclisis overall rates according to self-reported "lengua propia."

Finally, Table 7 shows the constraint ordering rendered by the VarbRul analysis. As can be observed in the table, all variables favor the use of enclisis to different degrees. The variable that appears to have the more positive effect on the production of enclisis is having both Asturian and Spanish as one's "lengua propia," more so in the case of Asturian (.81 for Asturian 1st, and .50 for Spanish 1st). Having only Spanish or Asturian as "lengua propia" appears to not have a positive effect on the spontaneous production of Asturian enclisis (.25 for Spanish only, and .20 for Asturian only). With regards to the role of self-reported L1, the VarbRul weights for reporting both Asturian and Spanish or only Asturian as one's L1 appear to show some significant positive effect on the production of enclisis (.67 for both languages as L1s, and .54 for Asturian L1). This is followed by self-reported identity. As expected, the weights obtained for the self-identification as Asturian correlate positively with a higher production of enclisis (.57 for Asturian only and .53 for Asturian first), but so does self-identifying as Spanish only, against all expectations. In fact, with a value of .78, this has the highest weight in this variable. Regarding the role of age, the weight .76 indicates some positive effect for those participants who were born and grew up before the 1960s. Even though the weight for younger speakers who have access to Asturian language and culture classes does not show a positive effect (.41), it is higher than the weight obtained for those participants who grew up during Franco's dictatorship (.39) and who strongly disfavor the use of enclisis in their speech. Finally, the weights obtained for gender clearly show differences between males and females regarding their production of enclisis patterns. While the weight obtained for male speakers (.65) indicates a positive effect, the weight observed for female speakers (.40) shows a negative effect, as hypothesized earlier. Next, a contextualization, discussion, and analysis of the results presented here is shown.

Input	.30		
Log likelihood	-359.945		
Total N (p<.05)	855		
<i>Factor</i>	<i>Factor weight</i>	%	N
Self-reported “lengua propia”			
Asturian 1 st	.81	78	192
Spanish 1 st	.50	26	81
Spanish	.25	26	52
Asturian	.20	11	12
<i>Range</i>	<i>61</i>		
Self-reported L1			
Both	.67	50	227
Asturian	.54	44	96
Spanish	.12	8	14
<i>Range</i>	<i>55</i>		
Self-reported identity			
Spanish	.78	60	42
Asturian	.57	48	103
Asturian 1 st	.53	41	167
Spanish 1 st	.24	15	25
<i>Range</i>	<i>54</i>		
Age			
60+	.76	66	337
18-30	.41	53	85
30-60	.39	22	103
<i>Range</i>	<i>37</i>		
Gender			
Male	.65	46	158
Female	.40	34	179
<i>Range</i>	<i>25</i>		

Table 7. Constraint ordering.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The results reported in the previous section partially confirm the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this study and raise some questions to be addressed in future research. First, there are some general tendencies regarding self-identification and language use that reflect some recent socio-political events. For example, those participants who were born and grew up during Franco’s authoritarian, nationalistic dictatorship (age group 30-60) regard Spanish, the official, national language of Spain as their L1 (and, in some cases, as their only language). Younger speakers, however, report higher rates of bilingualism and consider both Spanish and Asturian as their L1s. Similarly, self-identification as “Spanish only” increases for the 30-60 age group. As for the younger speakers, not only do they not identify as “Spanish only,” but the percentage of those who identify as “Asturian only” increases. Overall, the most widely adopted self-identification for all groups is “Asturian first, then Spanish.” This may reflect an all-encompassing attitude towards self-identification that emphasizes regional identity without denying national identity.

As mentioned at the beginning of the study, recent socio-political events may help explain some of the results obtained here. For example, younger and older speakers (age groups 18-30 and +60 respectively) show more enclisis than those speakers who grew up during Franco’s dictatorship (age

group 30-60). This is most likely due to a combination of factors such as the language used at home and in the private sphere (Asturian was the only language spoken at home in the case of older speakers) and access to Asturian classes (available since 1984/1985). Since there was an attempt to suppress regional languages during Franco's regime, it is natural that those speakers who had access to formal education during dictatorship show the lowest rates of the Asturian construction. Formal education was delivered only in Castilian Spanish, and those who did not employ this variety in public were ridiculed and sometimes even punished. In fact, the linguistic stigmatization of Asturian was consolidated during those times.

Even though the various surveys conducted in the Principality of Asturias show that, in general, the usage of the Asturian language in different contexts does not vary with respect to gender (see, for instance, D'Andrés, 2006; Llera Ramo 1994; Llera Ramo and San Martín Antuña, 2003), a close examination of a specific construction may unveil small, albeit important, differences. Results from the VarBRul analysis show that male and female participants produce enclisis and proclisis at different rates in spontaneous speech. While the .65 value obtained for male speakers indicates a positive effect on the production of enclisis, the .40 weight obtained in the case of female speakers shows that females, in general, produce the Castilian proclitic construction at a higher rate. Taking into consideration the low value that society as a whole imposes on Asturian, these results can be easily accounted for in terms of the very well documented gender pattern (cf. Fasold, 1990). As numerous studies in a wide variety of contexts and on different languages have shown, female speakers tend to avoid the use of linguistic forms that are stigmatized within the community (see Fasold, 1990 and references therein; Eckert, 1989; and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992 for criticism of the gender pattern; Labov, 1966, 1972, 1984, 1990; Rissel, 1989 for a review of several studies conducted in Spain; Sidnell, 1990; Trudgill, 1972, among many others). Consequently, it is expected that female speakers produce the still quite stigmatized Asturian construction less frequently than male speakers. Nevertheless, the rate of enclisis in spontaneous production increases for female speakers in the 18-30 age group, possibly as a reflection of the progressive destigmatization that Asturian seems to be experiencing lately.

As hypothesized, those speakers who self-identify as Asturian over Spanish show higher rates of enclisis in their Spanish. Unexpectedly, the group of participants who self-identify as "Spanish only" produced the highest rates of enclisis. Crucially, the cross-tabulation shows that it is the participants from the +60 age group who tend to identify as Spanish more than Asturian for political reasons. As mentioned, Franco's regime tried to eradicate all forms of regionalisms, including linguistic varieties other than Castilian. Thus, the apparent discrepancy observed between what was hypothesized earlier regarding self-identification and the production rates of enclisis vs. proclisis can be easily explained. Finally, the fact that self-identification as "Asturian only" correlates with higher rates of proclisis is unexpected. One possible explanation may be the desire on the part of the speaker to make a political statement as identifying solely as Asturian usually implies certain political tendencies that tend to favor regional nationalism. This issue remains to be explored in future research.

All in all, the results obtained here may signal that Asturian is being progressively destigmatized as a result of recent efforts towards its standardization, promulgation, and normalization in all spheres of society. On the one hand, younger speakers, who now have the option of taking Asturian lessons in primary and (some) secondary schools, show higher rates of self-identification as Asturian as well as higher rates of a distinctively Asturian construction in their Spanish, more so in the case of male speakers. On the other hand, older speakers, whose educational experience took place during the last years of Franco's dictatorship, still regard Asturian as the stigmatized dialect of uneducated peasants and blue-collar workers. Consequently, there is a tendency among this age group to report knowing and speaking only Castilian Spanish, hence the low rates of Asturian enclisis in their speech.

Even though the majority of speakers interviewed mention the position of object clitics as a characteristic of Asturian Spanish, it remains to be seen how salient clitic placement really is. Thus, future research on Asturian Spanish includes a series of perception, production, and linguistic attitude studies that include a variety of phonological and morphosyntactic features.

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