<u>Statement of the problem:</u> In Central Asturian, CA, some nouns formally show they are interpreted as either count or mass. While nouns in CA have either masculine (ending in *-u*, *-e*, consonant or *-a*) or feminine gender (ending in *-a*, *-e* or consonant), the mass *-o* morpheme appears on a small group of masculine nouns when they are used in mass contexts. According to ALlA (2001), in CA a very limited set of nouns use theme vowels to distinguish mass or count, and for the most part, there is no difference in theme vowel marking for mass and count nouns. At first glance, the CA examples in (1)-(3) resemble what Mathieu (2012) has analyzed in Breton and Syrian Arabic, in which the masculine mass or collective noun undergoes gender shift by adding a feminine morpheme to make the noun measurable or a countable individual.

(1)	a. fierr-u	b. fierr-o	(2)	a. pel-u	b. pel-o
	iron-MASC.COUNT	iron-MASC.MASS		hair-MASC.COUNT	hair-MASC.MASS
	'an iron object'	'iron material'		'a hair'	'hair'

(3)	a. fil-u	b. fil-o
	thread-MASC.COUNT	thread-MASC.MASS
	'a thread'	'linen'

However these examples, the so-called mass neuter, have been traditionally analyzed as a question for either neuter or mass agreement in the literature (d'Andrés 1993; Arias Cabal 1998; Camblor Portilla et al. 2005; García Carretero 2018, a.o.) with emphasis on adjective agreement, and the literature has not given nouns like those in (1)-(3) a fair analysis with the aim of explaining their formal distribution nominally.

In this talk, I will show that gender agreement is not the issue that separates these nouns from others in CA, but rather how the language uses its thematic vowels as a strategy to derive a mass noun from a count one. Following Kramer (2015), I argue that DM and Minimalism together can account for nominal derivation in a language with a unique take on thematic vowels and gender, as compared to the other languages spoken in Spain. At the same time, I aim to lay the groundwork for the derivation of not only the nouns in (1)-(3), but also to intuitively show in my proposal how they formally differ from all other nouns in CA.

<u>Background assumptions:</u> In Kramer's (2015) system, all nouns begin as unclassified roots that must be licensed by some *n* head in the nP, which contains features that specify gender. In Romance, animate nouns receive their gender from the biological sex of their referent, and said features are therefore interpretable, while inanimate nouns are arbitrarily gendered and are licensed by uninterpretable gender features. Under Kramer's treatment of Spanish applied to CA, the possible *n* licensers are listed in (4).

(4) a. [n *i*[+FEM][√NEÑ]] = 'neña'   [girl]
    b. [n *i*[-FEM][√NEÑ]] = 'neñu'   [boy]
    c. [n [√FIERR]] = 'fierru'   [an iron object]
    d. [n *u*[+FEM][√PER]] = 'pera'   [pear]

To account for the noun ending and how the root is interpreted, Kramer argues for the post-syntactic insertion of the thematic vowel, which is part of the nominal class system. This allows for the thematic vowel to be close enough to interact with the *n* where gender is tied to the theme vowel, but still be separate enough to not have to obligatorily interact with gender. The three nominal classes that Kramer presents for Spanish are adapted to CA in (5).

(5) **Asturian declension classes (first pass):**

I	-u	fierr-u 'iron object'
II	-a	rop-a 'clothing'
III	-e/Ø	xent-e 'people', carbón-Ø 'coal

While the system that Kramer (2015) proposes accounts for the derivation of nouns under DM in CA, it does not quite capture the nuance of the set of masculine nouns in (1)-(3). To account for this, further formalization of Kramer's system is needed.

<u>Proposal:</u> In the vein of *n* licensers for CA, I propose a modification of the plain *n* in (4c) in that it contains an interpretable [+MASS] feature under which all roots to be interpreted as mass in the Encyclopedia are licensed (6a). This feature is interpretable because in CA whether the nouns in (1)-(3) are count or mass carries semantic importance. Furthermore, I propose the addition of a *n* to account for inanimate masculine nouns (6b), which I adapt from Kramer's treatment of Romanian *n*s.

(6) a. [n *i*[+MASS][√FIERR]] = 'fierro' [iron material]
     b. [n *u*[-FEM][√FIERR]] = 'fierru'   [an iron object]

As another minor addition to Kramer's (2015) analysis, I include *-o* as an allomorph to roots that are members of class I nominal declension (TH I), accounting for the dichotomy in thematic vowels for masculine nouns (7). Example (8) contains a specific rule to spell out the mass *-o* morpheme, in that [TH, I, *-o*] is inserted in the context specified in (8b) and [TH, I, *-u*] appears elsewhere.

(7) **Asturian declension classes (final pass):**

I	-u/-o	fierr-u 'iron object'; fierr-o 'iron material'
II	-a	rop-a 'clothing'
III	-e/Ø	xent-e 'people'; carbón-Ø 'coal

(8) a. [TH I] ↔ -u/-o
     b. Insert [TH, I, -o] in the context of √FIERR, √PEL, √FIL licensed under [n *i*[+MASS]]
     c. Insert [TH, I, -u] elsewhere

<u>Predictions:</u> Under my proposed additions to Kramer's (2015) analysis, all mass nouns in CA will be licensed under n *i*[+MASS] while the theme vowel is inserted relevant to declension, i.e. mass *fierro* versus mass *ropa*, and why mass *xente* ends in *-e* but mass *carbón* ends in *-Ø* (cf. (7)). Additionally, the nouns in (1)-(3) with the *-u/-o* distinction can be accounted for under this system. Elsewhere, the nominal root will be licensed under the other *n*s and then have their thematic vowel inserted according to the nominal declension class that the root falls under.

<u>Selected References:</u> **Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (ALlA).** (2001). *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana*. Uviéu: ALlA.; **d'Andrés, R.** (1993). Emplegu del neutru n'asturianu. *LlA, 49,* 49-85.; **Arias Cabal, Á.** (1998). Diacronía del incontable o 'neutro de materia' en asturiano. In *Atti del XXI CILFR* (Vol. 1, pp. 35-49). Berlin/NYC: Mouton de Gruyter.; **Camblor Portilla, M. et al.** (2005). The Mass Neuter Phenomenon in Asturian: Adjectives and Agreement. *RFA, 5,* 19-40.; **Carretero García, P.** (2017). Agreement in Asturian. In M. Butt & T.H. King (Eds.), *Proceedings of the LFG' 17 Conference, UofKonstanz* (pp. 188-208). Stanford: CSLI.; **Kramer, R.** (2015). *The Morphosyntax of Gender*. Oxford: OUP.; **Mathieu, É.** (2012). Flavors of Division. *LI, 1:4,* 650-679.