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# A Seemingly Insignificant Romanian Word and its English Equivalents

### Summary

The paper analyses the various semantic and syntactic roles of the word **de** and the way in which this seemingly insignificant Romanian word is translated into English. **De** lacks syntactic and semantic autonomy and has developed both connective and non-connective values, which are usually revealed by the lexico-syntactic information offered by the context in which it appears. It is used as a preposition and, by conversion, as a conjunction, and in both cases, it has acquired multiple (sometimes blurred) values, which make its translation into English difficult sometimes. As a preposition, it marks only relations of subordination within a sentence, as a conjunction, it marks mainly relations of subordination between clauses.

**Key words:** translation, equivalence, (non)-connective values, meaning, syntactic role

# Navidezno nepomembna romunska beseda in njeno prevajanje v angleščino

### Povzetek

Članek analizira različne semantične in skladenjske vloge besede *de* in načine, s katerimi se ta navidez nepomembna romunska beseda prevaja v angleščino. Beseda *de* nima skladenjske ali semantične avtonomije in je dobila tako vezniške kot nevezniške pomen, ki so običajno razvidni iz besedno-skladenjskega konteksta. Beseda se rabi kot predlog in tudi kot veznik. V obeh primerih ima več (včasih zabrisanih) pomenov, zaradi česar je njeno prevajanje v angleščino včasih težavno. Kot predlog označuje podredniške odnose znotraj povedi, kot veznik pa podredniške odnose med stavki ene povedi.

**Ključne besede:** prevajanje, enakovrednost, (ne)vezniške vrednosti, pomen, skladenjska vloga

# A Seemingly Insignificant Romanian Word and its English Equivalents

## 1. Introduction

The Romanian word *de*, which lacks syntactic and semantic autonomy, was borrowed from Latin (< *de*) and is used as a preposition and, by conversion, as a conjunction; it has also developed other connective as well as non-connective values, some of which are not clearly defined. Both as a preposition and as a conjunction, *de* has multiple (sometimes blurred) values, which makes its translation into English difficult sometimes.

*De* also appears as one of the terms in many prepositional phrases (e.g., *în afară de* – “except for”, “besides”; *față de* – “towards”; *în loc de* “instead of”; *în funcție de* – “depending on”; *în jur de* – “about”) or in conjunction phrases (e.g., *de vreme ce* – “since”; *chiar de* – “even if”; *de parcă* – “as if”; *de cum* – “as soon as”; *de ce* – “the + adj./adv. [+comparative]”).

## 2. The non-connective value of *de*

2.1 The non-connective value of *de* (sometimes preceded by the adverb *numai*, “only” and always followed by the optative mood) is evident in independent, exclamatory sentences expressing a wish with reference to the present or future time. Its English equivalents are the conjunctions *if only* and *that* or the verbs *to hope* or *to wish*:

De-ar tăcea odată! / *If only* / I *wish* she would shut up!

(Numai) de n-ar fi pierdut trenul! / *If only* she hadn't missed her train! / I *wish* she hadn't missed her train! / I *hope* she hasn't missed her train!

De n-ar ajunge prea târziu! / *If only* she didn't get there too late! / I *hope* she doesn't get there too late.

De l-aș mai putea vedea o dată! / (Oh,) *that* I could see him again!

De-aș ajunge o dată acasă! / (Oh,) *that* I could get home sooner!

2.2 The non-connective value of *de* is also obvious in a special construction meant to give special emphasis to a supine, an adjective, an adverb or, more seldomly, to a noun, by placing them at the front of a clause, and then repeating them as a finite form of the same verb (in the case of the supine), as a predicative (in the case of the adjective or the noun) or as an adverbial (in the case of the adverb).

Romanian grammars, including the most recent one (Avram 2005, 2: 524, 525), usually regard this construction as an adverbial of relation, introduced by the conjunction *de*. Pană-Dindelegan (2003, 154, 207), however, underlines the non-connective use of *de* in this case, its role being simply that of marking the thematic fronting of a clause element for emphatic purposes.

This construction is difficult to translate; one solution might be to equate it to a structure introduced by *as for* or *as far as sth. is concerned*; some emphaziser may be added, if necessary:

De mâncat, am mâncat în oraş. / ***As for*** lunch, I had it in town; ***As for*** eating, I ate in town.

De frumoasă, e frumoasă. / ***As for*** beauty, she is beautiful ***indeed***.

De sigură, e sigură / She is ***very*** sure.

De repede, mergea ea repede, dar nu-l ajunse din urmă. / (***As for*** speed), she ***did*** walk fast, but could not catch up with him.

De măgar, e măgar. / He is *an ass*, ***that's for sure***.

It is also possible that *de* + the *supine* be omitted in the translation:

De scris, n-am scris nimic în acest domeniu. / (***As for*** writing / ***As far as writing is concerned***), I have written nothing in this field.

De fost acolo, am fost, dar n-am întâlnit-o. / I went there (***indeed***) / I ***did*** go there, but I didn't see her.

### 3. Connective values: *de* as a preposition

As a preposition, *de* marks only relations of subordination within a sentence (connecting an attribute to a noun, pronoun or numeral, or an object or adverbial to a verb, adjective or adverb, a predicative to a link verb).

3.1 The Romanian **modifier (attribute)** introduced by *de* occurs in post-position to its head and its meaning often dictates the choice of a certain English structure: its equivalent may be a prepositional noun phrase (the preposition being most frequently *of*), a word in pre-modification to the head noun, or one word only.

#### 3.1.1 English post-modifiers as equivalents

3.1.1.1 The English *ofNP* modifier is quite frequently employed to replace the Romanian *deNP* and it occurs mainly when:

- the Romanian attribute has a partitive meaning:  
e.g., o carte *de a ta* / a book *of yours*;  
cadouri *de cele mai scumpe* / presents *of the most expensive kind*.
- the Romanian attribute is the modifier of some partitive noun, expressing quantity:  
e.g., - *measure partitives*: un metru *de sârmă* / a metre *of wire*; un litru *de lapte proaspăt* / a litre *of fresh milk*;  
- *typical partitives*: o felie *de pâine albă* / a slice *of white bread*; un fir *de iarbă* / a blade *of grass*; un grăunte *de adevăr* / a grain *of truth*; o tablă *de ciocolată* / a bar *of chocolate*; un bob *de orez* / a grain *of rice*; o duşcă *de votcă* / a shot *of vodka*;  
- *general partitives*: un pic *de noroc* / a bit *of luck*; un pic *de efort* / a bit *of effort*; o bucată *de prăjitură* / a piece *of cake*; o bucată *de lemn* / a piece *of wood*; o mulţime *de furnici* / a lot *of ants*.
- the Romanian attribute is the modifier of a collective noun:  
e.g., un grup *de studenţi* / a group *of students*; o familie *de medici* / a family *of doctors*; un

roi de albine / a swarm of bees

- the Romanian attribute indicates content:

e.g., o ceașcă de ceai / a cup of tea; un pahar de coniac / a glass of brandy; o carte de povești / a book of fairy-tales; o sticlă de vin / a bottle of wine; o lingură de zahăr / a spoonful of sugar.

- In a more limited number of cases, when the meaning of the attribute is different from those enumerated above, the English preposition corresponding to Romanian *de* is other than *of*:  
e.g., iubirea de țară / the love *for* one's country; setea de cunoaștere / the thirst *for* knowledge; un roman de Dickens / a novel *by* Dickens.

3.1.1.2 The Romanian modifier (*de* + a noun, *de* + an adverb) may indicate place or time, and its equivalent is an adjective or an adverb in post-position to the head-noun:

e.g. persoanele *de față* / the people *present*; prietenii mei *de acolo* / my friends *there*; zgomotul *de sus* / the noise *upstairs*; drumul *de întoarcere* / the road *back*; exemplul *de mai jos* / the example *below*; oamenii *de pretutindeni* / the people *everywhere*; orele *de mâine* / the classes *tomorrow*; discuția *de după aceea* / the discussion *afterwards*; noaptea *de dinainte* / the night *before*.

3.1.1.3 When the Romanian modifier is expressed by an infinitive or by a supine, and their English equivalents are often a gerund in the former case and an infinitive in the latter, these occur, as a rule, in postposition to the head:

a) onoarea *de a vorbi* participanților / the honour *of addressing* the participants; bucuria *de a te fi întâlnit* / the joy *of having met you*; neplăcerea *de a trebui* să mă duc acolo / the unpleasantness *of having to go there*; but also: capacitatea *de a-și imagina* / the ability *to imagine* (where an English infinitive corresponds to the Romanian infinitive);

b) o lecție *de citit* / a lesson *to read*; cuvinte *de ținut minte* / words *to remember*; o problemă *de rezolvat* / a problem *to solve*; o cuvântare *de făcut* / a speech *to make*; but also: o lecție *de condus mașina* / a *driving* lesson (where the Romanian supine corresponds to an English gerund, placed in pre-position to the head-noun).

### 3.1.2 English pre-modifiers as equivalents

3.1.2.1 Very often, in the translation of the *deNP* into English, a structure shift takes place: the word order as well as the modifier structure change, i.e. the Romanian attribute, which describes the head, and is expressed by the *deNP* in postmodification, turns into a non-prepositional noun phrase that precedes the head noun:

e.g. cântec *de iubire* / love song; ședință *de catedră* / department meeting; cremă *de față* / face cream; față *de masă* / table cloth; moară *de vânt* / wind mill; conferință *de presă* / press conference; pată *de ulei* / oil stain; pană *de curent* / power cut; raze *de lună* / moon rays; bătaie *de inimă* / heart beat; jachetă *de piele* / leather jacket; Doamna *de Fier* / the Iron Lady; proprietar *de pământ* / land owner; universitate *de stat* / state university, etc.

Occasionally, modulation is added to these changes: e.g. ceas *de mână* / wrist watch. (*mână* – “hand” becomes *wrist* in English).

The grammatical number of the modifier may also change: thus, in *vânătoare de capete* / *head hunting*, the plural *capete* turns into the singular *head*.

The difference in the structure of the English noun phrase may sometimes result in different meanings: *o ceașcă de ceai* translated as *a tea cup*, with *tea* in pre-modification, denotes the type of cup in which tea is served, while *a cup of tea* refers to the content of the cup; *a gold ring* is a ring made of the precious yellow metal, while *a heart of gold* has an abstract meaning and refers to someone who has a very kind nature.

3.1.2.2 The English premodifier that corresponds to the Romanian *deNP* may be a noun in the Saxon / synthetical genitive; this happens particularly when the attribute denotes time or the author: e.g., *o ședință de trei ore* / *a three hours' meeting*; *vacanță de două săptămâni* / *a two weeks' holiday*; *discuțiile de ieri* / *yesterday's talks*; *lucrarea de student* / *a student's paper*; *cuib de pasăre* / *a bird's nest*; *pânză de păianjen* / *a spider's web*.

3.1.2.3 There are instances when the structure shift (the change in word order) is accompanied by a class shift (a change in the morphological class to which the modifier belongs). Thus:

- The Romanian *deNP* modifier denoting the quality of the head may be translated as an adjective into English: e.g., *un tânăr de nădejde* / *a reliable young man*; *o săptămână de groază* / *an awful week, a terrible week*; *o casă de toată frumusețea* / *a splendid house*; *inimă de om* / *human heart*; *măsea de minte* / *wise tooth*; *umeri de bărbat* / *manly shoulders*;
- The Romanian *deNP* (still a descriptive modifier) may have a participle as equivalent: e.g., *organ de conducere* / *governing body*; *ochi de broască* / *bulging eyes*; *limbă de viperă* / *forked tongue*.

3.1.2.4 An interesting case of translation concerns the *deNP* which, from the point of view of its meaning, is only formally a modifier, while its head is only formally a head, because in fact, semantically, the latter modifies the modifier: e.g., *o frumusețe de fată* means *o fată foarte frumoasă*, *o splendoare de inel* means *un inel splendid*. The translation of such noun phrases takes their semantics into account, and the translator must deal with an overlapping of shifts: a double function shift (the modifier – the *deNP* - turns into the head of the phrase in English, and the Romanian head turns into an English modifier); at the same time, a class shift takes place as well, the Romanian head (a noun) becoming an adjective in English:

e.g., *o frumusețe de fată* / *a splendid girl, a very beautiful girl*; *o splendoare de inel* / *a wonderful / splendid ring*; *un drac, o pramatie de copil* / *an awful child*; *o mizerie de salar* / *very poor pay*; *o spoială de cunoștințe* / *superficial knowledge*; *o grozăvie de vreme* / *terrible weather*; *o porcărie de prăjitură* / *a very bad, an awful cake*.

3.1.2.5 There are Romanian noun phrases that contain modifiers expressed by *de + supine*; these are translated into English as noun phrases containing gerunds or, occasionally, participles in pre-position to the head:

e.g., cremă *de ras* / *shaving cream*; mașină *de cusut* / *sewing machine*; apă *de băut* / *drinking water*; vagon *de dormit* / *sleeping car*; (am folosit o) mașină *de închiriat* / (I used a) *rented car*.

### 3.1.3 One word equivalent

Having one referent in reality, the whole Romanian noun phrase (head + *de* modifier) may be rendered into English by one word only. This is mainly a noun:

e.g., articol *de fond* / *editorial*; minister *de finanțe* / *the Treasury*; o lună *de zile* / *a month*; pui *de lup* / *cub*; pui *de găină* / *chicken*; zori *de ziuă* / *dawn*; dare *de seamă* / *report*; dangăt *de clopot* / *toll*; concediu *de odihnă* / *holiday, vacation*; fier *de călcat* / *iron*, etc.

3.2 The preposition *de* may introduce a **predicative**. When the link verb is *a fi* (“to be”), the predicative *deNP* is often translated as an *of phrase* (although other prepositions are also possible) or as an infinitive:

e.g., a fi *de aceeași vârstă* / to be *of the same age*; a fi *de părere* / to be *of the opinion*; e *de-ai noștri* / s/he is one *of ours*; casa e *de vânzare* / the house is *for sale*; X e *de vină* / X is *to blame*.

If the predicative is expressed by *de + supine*, an infinitive is used in English:

e.g., (casa) este *de închiriat* / (the house) is *to let*; rămâne *de văzut* / it remains *to be seen*; ce e *de făcut?* / what can *be done?*

If the predicative denotes the matter out of which the subject is made, the translator may employ either the passive of the verb *to make* followed by an *of phrase* that refers to the matter, or shifts the subject into the position of the predicative, having the latter pre-modified by the word(s) denoting the matter:

e.g., Inelul e *de aur* / The ring is *made of gold*; This is *a gold ring*; Poarta e *de fier forjat* / The gate is *made of wrought iron*; This is *a wrought iron gate*.

3.3 The preposition *de* also introduces various **adverbials**.

3.3.1 The adverbial of **place** usually indicates the starting point of the action, and the preposition in English that corresponds to *de* is *from*:

e.g., Primesc multe scrisori *de acolo*. / I receive many letters *from there*.

L-am adus *de jos*. / I've brought it *from downstairs*.

M-a condus *de acasă* până la bancă. / He accompanied me *from home* to the bank.

3.3.2 An adverbial of **time** introduced by *de* has translation rules that take three important moments into account: the starting point of the action, the duration of the action and the starting point as well as the end of the action.

- For the exact starting point of the action, the preposition or adverb *since* is used, associated with the present perfect tense:

e.g., Nu l-am văzut *de ieri*. / I haven't seen him *since yesterday*. (preposition)

Nimeni n-a mai sunat *de atunci*. / Nobody has called *since*. (adverb)

If the starting point is a present or a future moment, the adverbial of time may not need any preposition:

*De azi / de mâine încep să fac cură de slăbire. / I shall start a slimming cure today / tomorrow.*

*De acum nu mai vorbesc cu tine. / (From now on) I won't talk to you any longer (starting right now).*

When the adverbial indicating the starting point is expressed by a noun or an adjective which, in the deep structure, are predicatives, the English equivalent of the *de NP* is a time clause introduced by the conjunction *since*:

e.g., *O cunosc de fată (= de când era fată). / I've known her since she was a young girl.*

*Nu l-am văzut de mic (= de când era mic). / I haven't seen him since he was a child.*

- The duration of the action is usually expressed in English by the preposition *for*, associated with the present perfect tense in direct speech:  
e.g., *Lucrez la acest proiect de o lună. / I have been working on this project for a month.*

*Nu l-am văzut de mult. / I haven't seen him for a long time.*

- The starting point and the end of an action are present in the following example, where *de* is correlated with *până* and its equivalent, *from*, with *till*:  
e.g., *Muncește de dimineața până seara. / She works from morning till evening.*

- Sometimes the preposition *de* connects two identical items, with an iterative meaning (denoting that something is happening repeatedly or continuously):  
e.g., *M-am dus acolo zi de zi. / I went there day after day.*

*Era de servici săptămână de săptămână. / He was on duty week after week.*

- The adverbial of time may be expressed by an adverbial numeral or by similar constructions that have an iterative meaning; in English similar multiplicative or frequency adverbials are used; these, however, do not need a preposition:

e.g., *S-a servit de trei ori. / He helped himself three times.*

*Te-am rugat de o mie de ori. / I have asked you a hundred times.*

*De nenumărate ori m-am întrebat ce face. / I have often wondered how you were doing.*

3.3.3 The preposition *de* may often introduce an adverbial of **cause** and an adverbial of **purpose**, being translated by various prepositions:

e.g., *Plângea de bucurie. / She was crying for joy. (cause)*

*Plângea de durere. / She was crying with pain. (cause)*

*Am murit de rușine. / I died of embarrassment. (cause)*

*Ne plângem mereu de prețurile mari. / We are constantly complaining about the high prices. (cause)*

Avem timp *de discuții*? / Do we have time *for discussions*? (purpose)  
L-am primit *de cadou*. / I have received it *as a gift*. (purpose)

### 3.3.4 The adverbial of **manner** is often introduced by *de*.

- When the adverbial is of manner proper, it is mainly expressed by a *deNP*, which is translated as an adverb or as some prepositional noun phrase:

e.g., *De obicei* mă culc târziu. / (As a rule) I (usually) go to bed late.

Am luat această decizie *de comun acord*. / We have taken this decision *by common consent* / *with one accord*.

- When the adverbial of manner is a quantifier expressing measure, value, or having a superlative meaning, one may distinguish the following patterns that are interesting from a translational point of view:

a) the preposition *de* precedes some noun that is determined and quantified by a cardinal numeral; the English translation will consist of a noun phrase (cardinal number + noun) that precedes an adjective:

e.g., un drum *lat de patru metri* / a road *four meters wide*

o clădire înaltă *de șapte etaje* / a building *seven storeys high*

b) the preposition *de* is part of a noun phrase that has a superlative or emphatic meaning; this may be translated as a (prepositional) noun phrase, as an adjective or an adverb with similar meaning:

e.g., M-am speriat *de moarte*. / I was scared *to death*.

M-am distrat *de minune*. / I had a *wonderful* / a *great* time.

Răcnea *de mama focului*. / He was yelling *awfully* / *like hell*.

Notice the class shift in the last two examples, where the Romanian *deNP* turns into an adjective (*wonderful, great*) or and adverb (*awfully*).

c) the preposition *de* introduces an adverb or an adjective preceded by a quantifier, an adverb or adverbial phrase that denotes the force of an action or the quality of a noun. What we have in English is simply an adverb or an intensifying adverb followed by another adverb or by an adjective (the two often representing in fact an absolute superlative):

e.g., Nu știi *cât de urât* s-a purtat. / You don't know how *awfully* he has behaved.

Vorbește *atât de frumos*. / He speaks *so beautifully*.

Este *extraordinar de interesant*. / It is *most interesting*.

Este un gest *cât se poate de frumos*. / It is a *most wonderful* gesture.

d) *de* may connect two identical items to suggest that something is done in the manner or at the rate specified; its equivalent in English is the preposition *by*:

e.g., Am verificat sumele *cifră de cifră*. / We have checked the sums *figure by figure*.

A examinat dosarul *foaie de foaie*. / He examined the file *page by page*.

Am analizat textul *cuvânt de cuvânt*. / I have analysed the text *word by word*.



3.3.5 The preposition *de* may introduce an adverbial of **relation**, which usually modifies an adjective, an adverb or a verb. The Romanian adverbial may be expressed by:

a) a prepositional noun phrase:

e.g., E foarte sigură *de ea*. / She is very sure *of herself*.

E bun *de gură*. / He has a *glib tongue*. (notice the modulation: *gură* “mouth”

becomes *tongue* - and the function shift: the predicative *bun* turns into the attribute *glib*)

E încet *de minte*. / He has a *slow mind*. (notice the function shift: the predicative *încet* becomes the attribute *slow*)

b) a supine that modifies an adjective or, sometimes, is in free variation with a prepositional noun phrase. In the former case, the adverbial (*de + supine*) and the modified part of sentence (the adjective) may turn into one English word only or the adverbial (*de + supine*) becomes an infinitive; in the latter case, the supine becomes a gerund, while its alternate (*de + noun*) remains a prepositional noun phrase in English as well:

e.g., Ion este bun *de însurat*. / John is *marriageable/ eligible*.

Prăjitura este bună *de mâncat*. / The cake is *edible/ eatable*.

Comportamentul său este greu *de înțeles*. / His behaviour is *difficult to understand*.

Textul este ușor *de urmărit*. / The text is *easy to follow*.

Este demn *de admirat / de admirație*. / He is *worth admiring*. / He is *worthy of admiration*.

3.4 One of the most frequent uses of the preposition *de* is that of introducing a **prepositional object** after a great number of verbs. Its equivalent in English varies a lot, depending to a high degree on the semantic features of the verb (i.e. the head of the verb phrase).

*De* is the typical preposition for the agent (the doer of the action) in passive sentences, and its equivalent is *by* in English:

e.g., A fost invitat *de mine*. / He was invited *by me*.

Other examples of prepositional objects and their translations are:

Vorbeau *de mine*. / They were talking *about me*.

Și-au apărat țara *de dușmani*. / They defended their country *against enemies*.

Te rog să nu râzi *de mine*. / Please don't laugh *at me*.

A încercat să se prindă *de bară*. / He tried to clutch *at the rail*.

L-au luat *de nebun*. / They took him *for a madman*.

S-a despărțit *de ea* acum cinci ani. / He separated *from her* five years ago.

Am dat *de el* la teatru. / I ran *into him* at the theatre.

Îmi amintește *de sora mea*. / She reminds me *of my sister*.

Ține-te *de brațul meu*. / Lean *on* my arm.

Aluatul mi s-a lipit *de degete*. / The dough stuck *to my fingers*.

Succesul tău mă umple *de bucurie*. / Your success fills me *with joy*, etc.

Particular attention must be paid to the frequent cases when Romanian prepositional verbs have English transitive verbs as equivalents, and the Romanian prepositional object turns into an English direct object:

e.g. Îmi amintesc *de povestea aceea*. / I remember *that story*.  
 M-am folosit *de toate relațiile mele*. / I have used *all my connections*.  
 Am nevoie *de un sfat*. / I need *a piece of advice*.  
 Te rog să-ți vezi *de treabă*. / Please mind *your own business*.  
 Nu se teme *de nimeni*. / She fears *no one*.  
 Cred că se ferește *de mine*. / I think he is avoiding *me*.  
 Am șters mobila *de praf*. / I have dusted *the furniture*.  
 M-am apucat *de brodat / de broderie* / I have taken up *embroidering*.

The Romanian prepositional object may also modify an adjective and in this case it is translated mainly as a gerund or as a (prepositional) noun phrase:

e.g. Este incapabil *de a lua* o decizie. / He is incapable *of taking* a decision.  
 Este demn *de laudă*. / He deserves *being praised*; he is worth *praising*; he deserves *our praise*.  
 Este iubitoare *de pisici*. / She is *a cat-lover*.  
 Este plin *de bani*. / He is loaded *with money*.

3.5 Very often the Romanian verb is transitive and the syntactic function of the word introduced by *de* is that of **direct object**; this is expressed mainly by a supine, but can also be a noun phrase:

e.g., Am *de spus* ceva despre asta. / I have something *to say* about it.  
 Mi-a adus *de băut*. / He brought me something *to drink*.  
 Am *de rezolvat* două probleme. / I have two problems *to solve*.  
 Am terminat *de gătit*. / I have finished *cooking*.  
 Avem *de toate*. / We have *everything*  
 Ne-a dat *de mâncare*. / She gave us *food*.

As one can see, the supine is translated either as an infinitive (part of an accusative + infinitive construction) or as a gerund; the Romanian prepositional noun phrase becomes a non-prepositional noun phrase in English.

3.6 Unusual as it may seem, **subjects** expressed by *de* + *supine* are also possible, and they are translated into English as infinitives:

e.g., Este imposibil *de ajuns* acolo. / It is impossible *to get* there.  
 Este bine *de știut*. / It is good *to know*.

Similarly to the function of direct object (which, however, with many Romanian verbs, is marked in the accusative case by the preposition *pe*, not by *de*, – e.g., *Îl văd pe tata* / *I can see father*), the subject is not normally governed by a preposition. Pană-Dindelegan (2003, 206-7) suggests that, when *de* introduces a direct object or a subject expressed by a supine, it is not a preposition, but a complementizer that marks this Romanian verb form (just like English *to*, which marks the infinitive).

3.7 Two other uses of *de* as a preposition are those of connecting cardinal numbers (except for numbers 1-19 or compounds with them) to *mii* (“thousands”), *milioane* (“millions”), *miliarde* (“billions”) to form compound cardinal numerals (e.g., *treizeci de mii* / thirty thousand, *două sute douăzecișisapte de milioane* / two hundred and twenty seven million, *cincizeci de miliarde* / fifty billion), and the adjectival articles *cel*, *cea* to an ordinal numeral (e.g., *cel de al cincilea copil* / the fifth child, *cea de a șasea carte* / the sixth book).

In a construction typical of the Romanian language (cf. Avram 2005, 1: 296; 2: 87), the cardinal numeral (again, only from 20 upwards) is connected by the preposition *de* to a noun (e.g., *25 de mesaje* / 25 messages); since the numeral is a quantifier, it may be considered to form a unit with the preposition, and together be the determiner of the noun, regarded as the nucleus of the phrase. On the other hand, when the numeral has an indefinite meaning, the syntactic relations within the noun phrase are less clear (e.g., *mii de oameni* / thousands of people, *zeci de cărți* / tens of books).

Except for this last case, when in English the preposition *of* is used, in all the other instances where numerals are present, no preposition is necessary in the translation.

## 4. Connective values: *de* as a conjunction

As a conjunction, *de* may mark relations of coordination between clauses that have the same syntactic function (this happens less and less frequently in the literary language) or, more often, relations of subordination between clauses; in the latter case, *de* is often part of a conjunction phrase.

4.1 *De* serves as a **copulative conjunction** when it introduces alternative concessive-conditional clauses. This value is rendered into English by the correlative sequence *whether (...) or*, which coordinates two subordinate clauses: e.g., *De vorbesc, de tac, tot atâta-i.* / It's all the same **whether** I speak **or** I keep silent. The same meaning is obtained if the conjunction *whether* is followed by *or not*, with ellipsis of the verb in the second clause: **Whether** I speak **or not**, it's all the same.

If the verb of the first Romanian clause is repeated in the second clause, it is obligatorily negated. In this case, *de* of the second clause may alternate with the conjunction *ori*, with the same coordinating value:

*De-ți place, de / ori nu-ți place, mă duc la petrecere.* / **Whether** you like it **or not**, I'll go to the party.

When the repeated Romanian verb is the verb *a fi* (“to be”), but the predicatives differ in the two clauses, the negation is absent; in English both the first and the second coordinated clause may display ellipsis of conjunction, subject and verb:

*De e vară, de e iarnă, alergă în fiecare dimineață în parc.* / [**Whether it is**] summer or winter, he will jog in the park every morning.

4.2 As a **subordinating conjunction**, *de* may have both adverbial and non-adverbial values, depending on the type of clause it introduces.

#### 4.2.1 Adverbial values

4.2.1.1 *De* may introduce clauses that are on the **borderline** between coordination and subordination, allowing for different interpretations. The case discussed by various linguists is that of the imperative clause connected by *de* to another imperative clause; the latter is regarded either as a clause coordinated to the former or as a final clause (cf. Avram 2005, 1: 646; Pană-Dindelegan 2003, 202-3; Avram 2001, 410, 441; Avram 1963, 1: 408). The main reason why *de* is regarded by many linguists as a copulative coordinator in this case is that the imperative mood is not typical of subordinate clauses. Such sentences will be best translated into English by employing the copulative conjunction *and*:

Du-te de vezi ce se întâmplă. / Go **and** see what is going on.

Vino de-ți ia o prăjitură. / Come **and** take a cake.

The Romanian verb in the clause introduced by *de* is not necessarily an imperative, but may occur in one of the tenses (usually past) of the indicative mood; this does not make the relation between the two clauses any clearer. A non-finite form (an infinitive) is preferred in English in this case (in free variation with an *and* clause):

Mergea la el săptămânal de-i povestea ce s-a mai întâmplat. / He would visit him every week, (**in order**) **to** tell him / **and** told him the latest news.

Se duse de cumpără niște zarzavat. / He went **to buy** **and** bought some vegetables

A venit de l-a rugat să-l ajute. – He came **to ask** / **and** asked him for help.

A class shift or transposition may take place, by means of which the Romanian subordinate verb turns into a noun phrase, with no change of meaning:

S-a dus de s-a culcat. – He went **to bed**.

It is interesting to note that, in all these cases, the Romanian verb in the clause introduced by *de* is in the same tense and mood, expressing a real action (indicative or imperative), as the main clause verb (which is mostly a verb of movement).

4.2.1.2 In colloquial Romanian or in poetry, *de* is the equivalent of *dacă* in **conditional** clauses, and its English equivalent is *if* or *unless* (if the clause is negative):

De/dacă vine și el, o să mă bucur foarte mult. / **If** he comes too, I'll be very happy / pleased.

De nu mă invită, nu mă duc. / I won't go **unless** he invites me.

De-oi adormi, te rog să mă trezești. / **If** I should fall asleep, please wake me up.

De-aș ști, ți-aș spune. / **If** I knew, I would tell you.

*De* may introduce elliptic negative conditional clauses, a sentence pattern used to express a warning or threat:

De vine, bine, de nu, voi ruga pe altcineva să mă ajute. / **If** he comes, fine, **if** he doesn't, I'll ask someone else to help me.

Să speli vasele, că de nu, vezi tu! / Do the dishes **or else!**

Notice in the last example that *or else* (“if not”, “otherwise”) also takes over the threat or warning expressed by “vezi tu!”.

4.2.1.3 When introducing **concessive** clauses, *de*, preceded sometimes by *și* (“and”) is translated as *although, even if, even though, in spite of the fact that*:

Și de-i dau bani, tot nu e mulțumit. / **Even if/ even though** I give him money, he is not happy.

(Și) de-aș ști că te superi, nu pot să nu-ți spun ce gândesc. / **Even though/ even if** I knew you would get angry, I can't help telling you what I think.

The conjunction phrases *de unde, chiar de, nici de, de bine ce* may also introduce a concessive clause.

De unde / de bine ce zicea că nu vine, a apărut pe la ora opt. / **While / in spite of the fact that / although** he said he wouldn't come, he showed up around eight.

Chiar de mă invită, tot nu mă duc. / **Even if** she invites me, I won't go.

Nu mă mișc de aici nici de mă plătește cu aur. / I won't budge from here, **even if** I'm paid in gold.

4.2.1.4 In **causative** clauses, when followed by an adverb or an adjective that is thematized, *de* is often correlated with *ce*:

De mult ce vorbește, mă doare capul. / I have a head ache **because** she talks so much.

De răcită ce sunt, de abia vorbesc. / I can hardly speak, **because** I have a bad cold. / **As** I have a bad cold, I can hardly speak.

Avram (2001, 441) interprets such clauses as clauses of manner proper.

Since the adverb or the adjective preceded by *de* is felt to be slightly emphasized, it is also possible to translate such sentences by performing a double shift: a class shift, as the intensifier *so* or the pronoun *such* take the place of the conjunction, and a syntactic shift, which changes the role of the two clauses: the causative clause becomes the main clause, while the main clause turns into a clause of result:

She talks **so** much / **so** much does she talk, that I have a headache.

I have **such** a bad cold, that I can hardly speak.

Pană-Dindelegan (2003, 201) claims that the causative use of *de* is limited to clauses that depend on a rhetorical question or an imperative clause:

De ești așa obosită, de ce ai venit? / nu veni! / **Since / as** you are so tired, why have you come? / don't come!

The pattern containing the imperative in the Romanian main clause may, however, also be interpreted as containing a condition, in which case, *de* will correspond to English *if*:

**If** you are so tired, don't come!

4.2.1.5 A special use of *de* occurs in correlative conjunction phrases (*de ce ... de ce, de ce ... de aceea*) introducing adverbial clauses of **manner** that denote a gradual progress of the action in the main clause: the latter increases / decreases in direct proportion to the increase / decrease of the action in the former. One or both of the clauses contain either a comparative of inequality or some verb denoting gradual action:

De ce câştiga *mai mulți* bani, de aceea se făcea *mai zgârcită*. / **The more** money she made, **the more tight-fisted** she became.

De ce îl asculta, de ce își dădea seama că nu are dreptate. / **The more** she listened to him, **the more** she realized he was wrong.

De ce se înnoarează, se întunecă. / **The cloudier** it gets, **the darker** it gets.

The two equivalent English clauses are joined asyndetically and each is opened by an adjective or an adverb in the comparative degree, preceded by the definite article.

The conjunction phrase *de parcă* introduces a comparative clause, and its equivalents are the conjunctions *as if, as though*:

Se poartă de parcă ar fi stăpân aici. / He behaves **as if** he were the master here.

4.2.1.6 The **consecutive** use of *de* is quite frequent; the clause of result may sometimes have a superlative meaning or may suggest a superlative evaluation:

A venit mai aproape, de l-a putut vedea toată lumea. / He came closer, **so that** everybody was able to see him.

N-am avut nici o veste câteva zile, de-am crezut că înnebunesc. / I had no news for several days, **so** I thought I would go insane.

An intensifier may occur in the main clause, while the clause of result further intensifies the sentence meaning:

Era *așa* un praf, de nu mai vedeai nimic. / There was such dust, **that** you couldn't see anything.

Era *extrem* de deșteaptă, de toată lumea o admira. / She was so very intelligent, **that** everybody admired her.

*Așa* frumos a cântat, de am început să plâng. / So beautifully did she sing, **that** I started to cry.

4.2.1.7 Conjunction phrases like *de când, de pe când, de cum, de îndată ce*, which mark the beginning of a period of time, or (*ori*) *de câte ori*, which indicates the repetition of an action, introduce **time clauses**:

A crescut iarba de când am fost aici. / The grass has grown **since** I was here.

Se pricepea la toate de pe când era tânăr. / He had been good at everything **ever since** he was a young man.

Am intrat în casă de cum / de îndată ce s-a înserat. / I went in **as soon as** it got dark. (Ori) de câte ori îmi pune întrebări, îi răspund. / **Whenever** he asks me questions, I answer.

#### 4.2.2 Non-adverbial values

*De* may also introduce subject, object and predicative clauses, having the English *if*, *whether* and *that* as equivalents; it also introduces relative clauses, and then it corresponds to the English relative pronouns *that* and *which*.

4.2.2.1 As a connector in **subject clauses**, *de* blurs the difference between an assertion, typically introduced by the conjunction *că*, and a statement or a claim that something is or was possible, typically introduced by *să*; in both cases, *de* is translated as *that*:

S-a întâmplat odată de- / *că* a venit mai târziu. / It once happened **that** he came later.

S-a întâmplat de a pus / *să* pună și întrebări prostești. / It happened **that** he also asked stupid questions.

The English sentences may allow the application of the transformational rule known as subject-subject raising, in which case *that* is deleted:

He happened to also ask stupid questions.

When *de* is a synonym of *dacă*, it introduces subject clauses that occur after verbs typical of reported speech; sometimes these clauses are wrongly taken for conditional clauses in Romanian, but are often best translated into English as conditional clauses; however, in English they may also be subject clauses or object clauses:

De-ar fi plecat pentru totdeauna ar fi fost nemaipomenit. / **If** he had left for good, it would have been great.

Ar fi mai bine de-ar pleca acum. / It would be better **if** he left now.

Nu se știe de va ajunge la timp. / One doesn't know **whether** / **if** he'll get there in time.

De a cumpărat casa ori nu e absolut neimportant. / **Whether** he has bought the house *or* not is absolutely unimportant.

4.2.2.2 *De* may introduce **predicative clauses**, normally associated with [+ abstract] main clause subjects:

Întrebarea este de poți să te duci acolo singur. / The question is **if** / **whether** you can go there by yourself.

Certain sentences undergo syntactic shifts in the process of translation; thus in the following example, the predicative clause may turn into a noun phrase which functions as a predicative or into an infinitive which is part of an aspective predicate; also in the latter case, the subject of the main clause in the source language becomes an object of the infinitive in the target language:

A ajuns de ți-e milă de dânsul. / He has turned into *a pitiful person*. / One has come *to pity him*.

4.2.2.3 In colloquial speech, **object clauses** (direct and prepositional) may be introduced by *de*. If the object clause is a reported one, it occurs after words belonging to the sphere of information

in the main clause:

A încercat să afle de-or ajunge și acolo. / He tried to find out *if/ whether* they'd get there.

Sunt curioasă de va zice ceva. / I am curious *whether* she'll say something.

The connector is often a phrase (*de unde, de când, cum de*), introducing an indirect question or an indirect exclamatory sentence:

M-a întrebat cum de-am terminat așa repede. / He asked me *how come* I had finished so quickly.

Se mira de unde am atâtia bani. / He wondered *where* I had so much money *from*.

A vrut să știe de când sunt acolo. / He wanted to know *how long* I had been there.

4.2.2.4 *De* may have the value of a **relative pronoun**, introducing relative clauses; its English equivalents will be relative pronouns:

Cartea de-am cumpărat-o ieri este scrisă de un celebru autor. / The book *that* I bought yesterday is written by a famous author.

Rochia e aia de-ai văzut-o în vitrină. / The dress is the one *which / that* you saw in the shop-window.

The relative clause may have a consecutive meaning:

Am să fac o prăjitură de o s-o țină minte toți. / I shall make a cake *that* everybody will remember.

## 5. Conclusion

I am aware that, in spite of its length, my paper does not exhaust the topic and that there may be more uses of *de* that may not have been taken into account.

Both as a preposition and as a conjunction, as well as when it has other uses, *de* has a great number of equivalents in English (*about, after, against, as, at, by, for, from, into, of, on, since, to, with*, when *de* is a preposition, and *and, although, as, as if, as though, as soon as, because, even if, even though, if, since, so that, that, unless, whether, while*, when *de* is a conjunction). Of the 54 uses identified in the paper, *de* was not translated in fourteen cases only, while seven of the structures in which it occurs allowed, depending on their meaning, either a translation where *de* had an equivalent or one in which it was omitted.

One can easily notice that, in the translation process, *de* cannot be viewed as a separate, independent item; the translator must take into consideration the whole structure in which the word is used, the meaning and the syntactic role of this structure. As a result, in the translation of such structures into English, besides instances when word for word translation is possible, various shifts may take place – changes in the morphological class of the words introduced by *de*, changes of word order, of grammatical case or number, changes of syntactic function or of point of view.



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