

## Size nouns in Romanian. Gliding along the quantifying - evaluating continuum

Mihaela TĂNASE-DOGARU<sup>1</sup>

*The paper looks at size nouns of the type **grămadă** ‘heap / pile’ in Romanian and classifies them into two categories: size nouns with a comparative interpretation (Doetjes and Rooryck 2003) and size nouns with a quantifying interpretation (Brems 2007; 2010), the latter reading being sometimes contextually extended to a third type of interpretation, the negative evaluation interpretation (Brems 2010). The two major types of readings that size nouns may have are read off a head-complement syntactic structure, typical for pseudopartitive constructions, which size nouns+de+N constitute a subcategory of (Tănase-Dogaru 2017). The comparative interpretation arises as a reflex of the semi-lexicality of the size noun, while the quantifying interpretation is a reflex of the size noun having lost its original lexical meaning, and therefore serving a functional role.*

Keywords: *size nouns, Romanian, functional, semi-lexical, pseudopartitive.*

### 1. Introduction

The present paper looks at size nouns of the type *grămadă* ‘heap’ in Romanian and classifies them into two categories (following Brems 2007; 2010): size nouns with a comparative interpretation (1) and size nouns with a quantifying interpretation (2).

(1) Un munte de moloz  
‘a mountain of debris’

(2) O grămadă de bani  
A heap / pile of money

In the comparative interpretation (1), the nominal that occupies first position in the nominal structure, from now on N1, *munte* ‘mountain’ retains part of its original lexical meaning and, therefore, its relation with the quantified element, from now on N2, can be paraphrased in terms of comparison: the quantity of books is such that it resembles a mountain. In the quantifying interpretation (2), N1 has lost its

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<sup>1</sup> University of Bucharest, Romania, [mihaela.dogaru@lils.unibuc.ro](mailto:mihaela.dogaru@lils.unibuc.ro)

original lexical meaning and it simply serves a functional role, that of indicating ‘a large amount of’.

When used with an N2 that negatively evaluates the referent, the noun *grămadă* ‘heap / pile’, used with its quantifying reading, mirrors this sort of negative evaluation and gives rise to a third interpretation, the evaluating interpretation (3) (Brems 2010).

- (3) O grămadă de tâmpiți  
 A heap of stupid.MASC.PL  
 ‘a bunch of stupid people’

Following Brems (2007, 2010), the paper argues that the three types of size nouns can be analyzed as collocationally constrained constructions, in the sense that there are specific collocational patterns for each of the three categories.

In this respect, comparative uses, i.e. Brems’ head constructions (1), are restricted to sets of countable and uncountable concrete nouns; quantifying uses (2) are associated with different types of countable and uncountable concrete and abstract nouns; finally, evaluating uses can be used with concrete animate and abstract nouns, which they typically evaluate negatively.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 offers a bit of syntactic background on size nouns, which essentially represent the (semi-lexical) head of a pseudo-partitive structure (see Tănase-Dogaru 2008; 2009; 2011; 2017). Section 3 illustrates the various readings of size nouns in English (Brems 2007; 2010). Section 4 looks at the two major types of size noun readings in Romanian and offers a syntactic analysis. Section 5 gives the conclusions.

## 2. Some theoretical background

Size nouns are a subset of nouns that appear on the first nominal position in a binominal quantitative structure, i.e. a pseudo-partitive structure (4).

- (4) a. O grămadă de probleme  
 a pile / heap of problems  
 ‘a lot of problems’  
 b. Un maldăr de lucrări  
 a pile / heap of papers  
 ‘a lot of papers’  
 c. O mână de amărăți  
 a handful of poor souls

Nouns that occupy the first position in pseudopartitive constructions are generally classified using a mixture of semantic (meaning) and syntactic (semi-lexicality)

features. In other words, both their meaning and their position on the lexical-functional continuum are taken into consideration in these sorts of classifications.

Three such classifications are given below, for Dutch (5), Greek (6) and Romanian pseudo-partitive constructions (7), from Vos (1999), Stavrou (2003), and Tănase-Dogaru (2009), respectively. As easily observable from these classifications, they are not exhaustive, nor do they purport to be so. What they clearly show, however, is that size nouns, though playing an important role in the make-up of pseudo-partitive constructions cross-linguistically, are consistently left out of such classifications. The overall aim of the paper is to remedy this situation

- |     |    |  |                             |
|-----|----|--|-----------------------------|
| (5) | a. | een aantal voorbeelden<br>a number examples<br>'a number of examples'    | quantifier noun             |
|     | b. | drie liter melk<br>three liter(s) milk<br>'three liters of milk'         | measure noun                |
|     | c. | een snee brood<br>a slice bread<br>'a slice of bread'                    | part noun                   |
|     | d. | die krat bier<br>that case beer<br>'that case of beer'                   | container noun              |
|     | e. | een kudde olifanten<br>a herd elephants<br>'a herd of elephants'         | collective noun             |
|     | f. | vijf soorten zoogdieren<br>five types mammals<br>'five types of mammals' | kind noun                   |
| (6) | a. | ekatosti, duzina<br>a hundred, dozen                                     | cardinal noun               |
|     | b. | zevgari, arithmos<br>pair, number  | quantifier-like noun        |
|     | c. | kuti, bukali<br>box, bottle  | container nouns             |
|     | d. | plithos<br>crowd   | collective / group nouns    |
|     | e. | buketo, matsaki<br>bunch, small prig                                     | consistive / material nouns |
|     | f. | kilo   | measure / unit noun         |
|     | g. | komati, feta<br>piece, slice   | partitive noun              |

- |        |   |                  |
|--------|---|------------------|
| (7) a. | un gest de omenie<br>A gesture of humanity                  | unit nouns       |
| b.     | un pahar de vin<br>a glass of wine                          | container nouns  |
| c.     | un dram de onoare<br>an ounce of honor                      | measure nouns    |
| d.     | un bob de fasole<br>a grain of beans<br>'a bean'            | shape nouns      |
| e.     | o sută de cărți<br>a hundred of books<br>'a hundred books'' | cardinal nouns   |
| f.     | o pereche de mănuși<br>a pair of gloves                     | quantifier nouns |
| g.     | o categorie de substantive<br>a category of nouns           | kind nouns       |

As shown by the examples in (5) to (7), the classifications of the nominals that occupy the first position in a pseudopartitive structure consistently identify measure nouns and quantifier nouns, like 'kilo' or 'pair'; however, these classifications do not mention size nouns as a distinct category. It is the aim of section 3 to remedy this situation for both English and Romanian. Next, the paper casts a glance at the syntactic structure of pseudopartitive structures, in order to show what position size nouns occupy.

### 2.1. The position of size nouns in the syntactic structure of pseudopartitive structures

Romanian uses the separative strategy to encode standard partitivity, which, according to Seržant (2021) is a typical strategy for Eurasia (Seržant 2021, 27). There are two specialized prepositions, *dintre* 'of-among' (8a) and *din* 'of-in' (8b), which encode standard partitivity (see Tănase-Dogaru 2017; Tănase-Dogaru and Ușurelu 2015).

- |        |                              |           |          |
|--------|------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| (8) a. | două dintre                  | cărțile   | mele     |
|        | two PART.of-among            | books.DEF | my       |
|        | 'two of my books'            |           |          |
| b.     | o parte din                  | ceaiul    | cumpărat |
|        | a part PART.of-in            | tea.DEF   | bought   |
|        | 'a part of the spilled wine' |           |          |

While other Romance languages use the prepositional element *de* to encode standard partitivity (9 a, b) (see Tănase-Dogaru 2017, *inter alia*), in Romanian, this prepositional element is restricted to pseudopartitive constructions (9d):

- (9) a. J'ai vu deux *de* ces garçons. (French)  
 I-have seen two PART.of these boys  
 'I have seen two of these boys.'
- b. Ho visto due *di* questi ragazzi. (Italian)  
 I-have seen two PART.of these boys  
 'I have seen two of these boys.'
- c. Am văzut doi *dintre* / \**de* acești băieți. (Romanian)  
 I-have seen two PART.of-among / \* PART.of these boys  
 'I have seen two of these boys.'
- d. o ceașcă *de* ceai  
 a cup of tea

In the older stages of Romanian, *de* 'of' was used in order to encode standard partitivity (10). As the two specialized partitive prepositions have emerged, i.e. *din* (11) and *dintre* (12), *de* was restricted to the encoding of pseudo-partitivity (9d):

- (10) Carele *de* proroci nu goniră părinții voștri?  
 Which.DEF PART.of prophets not chased parents.DEF yours  
 'which prophets were not chased away by your parents'  
 (Codicele Bratul: 79 in Tănase-Dogaru and Ușurelu 2015, 245)
- (11) să-m fii frate *den* cei 4 frați  
 SBJV-me be brother DEF PART.of-in DEF 4 brothers  
 'you should be one of my four brothers'  
 (DÎR - 1600: 128 in Tănase-Dogaru and Ușurelu 2015, 246)
- (12) să dea *dentru* avuția lui  
 SBJV give PART.of-among fortune.DEF his  
 'he should give something out of his fortune'

From the point of view of their syntactic structure, pseudopartitive constructions or quantitative expressions, as they are sometimes called in the literature, consist of a classifier-noun sequence, where the classifier is a semi-lexical or functional noun (cf. Cheng and Sybesma's 1999 description of Chinese massifiers, see Tănase-Dogaru 2008; 2017).

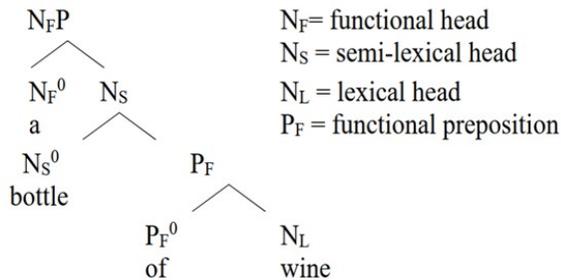
Therefore, pseudo-partitives are best seen as extended double-headed projections, with one lexical and one functional / semi-lexical head (see van Riemsdijk 1998). To put it simply, in pseudopartitive constructions, the nominal element that occupies the first position (*bucată* 'piece', *pahar* 'glass', *ceașcă* 'cup,'

etc.) behave syntactically as a classifier. The examples in (13) illustrate the usage of the Chinese classifier for tigers, i.e. *zhi*, and the classifier for houses, i.e. *zhuang*, both having the rough meaning of *piece* or *unit*.

- (13) a. Qianmian turan tiao chulai yi zhi laohu (Chen 2003, 1170)  
 Front suddenly jumps a CLAS tiger  
 'a tiger suddenly jumped in front of us'
- b. Ta mai le yi zhuang fangzi  
 He buy.PERF.ASP a CLAS house  
 'He bought a house.'

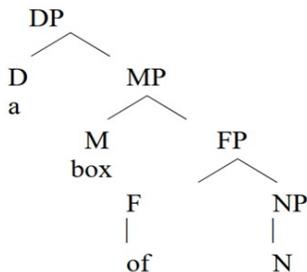
Therefore, unlike standard partitives of the type *a group of the students* or *a bottle of the wine*, which can best be described as two fully-fledged DPs, linked by a prepositional element, pseudopartitive constructions actually consist of a single DP, with one lexical head and one semi-lexical or functional head. There have been many different proposals for the syntactic structure of pseudopartitive constructions cross-linguistically (14-17 below); however, they all capture the basic intuition that they are two-headed extended projections, i.e. one DP.

(14)



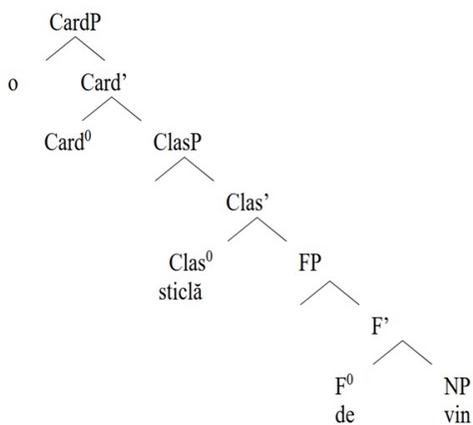
van Riemsdijk 1998

(15)



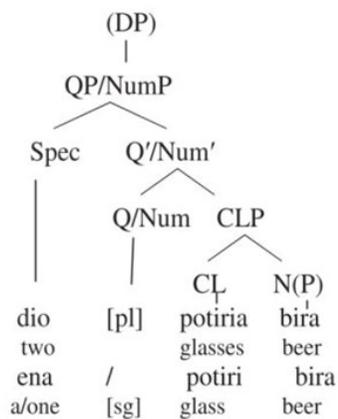
Stickney 2009

(16)



Tănase-Dogaru 2017

(17)



Alexiadou and Stavrou 2020, 725

In this extended projection, size nouns occupy the first position, where they act as the semi-lexical or functional heads of the projection. The next subsection shows that size nouns are semi-lexical / functional nouns, i.e. not fully-fledged lexical NPs, by looking at agreement, modification and selection phenomena.

## 2.2. Size nouns as semi-lexical/ functional nouns

In the literature on semi-lexicality (Corver and van Riemsdijk 2001; Löbel 2001; Stavrou 2003; Tănase-Dogaru 2017, a.o.), this feature is associated with semantic bleaching, i.e. a sort of delexicalization of the noun that occupies first position in the pseudopartitive structure (which I will refer to as N1). This migration of N1

along the lexical-functional continuum is visible when looking at three sets of data: agreement data, modification data, and selection by the main verb.

As far as agreement is concerned, N1 triggers agreement when it is lexical or semi-lexical; on the other hand, when N1 is functional (i.e. completely bleached), it is N2 that triggers agreement. In the example in (18 a), N1 triggers agreement in gender on the predicative adjective, which indicates its (semi)-lexical status; in (18 b), it is N2 that triggers agreement in gender, which indicates that N1 is completely bleached semantically and it only performs a functional role in the structure:

- (18) a. Un vârf de sare e suficient.  
 A (lit) peak.MASC of salt.FEM is enough.MASC  
 'A pinch of salt is enough.'
- b. Un pic de sare e suficientă.  
 a little.MASC of salt.FEM is enough.FEM  
 'A little salt is enough.'

(Tănase-Dogaru 2009, 100)

It is sometimes the case that the same N1 engages in agreement variations (Stavrou 2003; Ștefănescu 1997), which is an indication of its gliding along the lexical-functional continuum (see 19 from Romanian and 20 from Greek):

- (19) a. Un număr de studenți mă așteptau pe hol.  
 A number.SG of students.PL me expect.IMPERF.PL on hallway  
 'A number of students were waiting for me in the hallway.'
- b. Un număr mare de studenți a venit.  
 A number.SG big of students.PL have.SG arrived.

(Tănase-Dogaru 2009, 100)

- (20) a. Iparhun/iparhi mia sira diavathmis.  
 Are / is a range.SG gradations.PL  
 'There are a number of gradations.'
- b. Ena buketo luludja itan pesmen-o/-a sto patoma.  
 A bunch flowers was/were thrown on.the floor.  
 'A bunch of flowers was thrown on the floor.'

(Stavrou 2003, 338)

The same kind of variation in agreement can be seen with size nouns. In (21 a), N1 is completely bleached, i.e. functional, so that it cannot trigger agreement; instead, in (21 b) N2 has preserved some of its lexical features and it therefore can trigger agreement:

- (21) a. Pe jos zăceau o grămadă de cărți.  
On down lie.IMPERF.PL a heap.SG of books.PL  
'A heap of books was/were lying on the floor.'
- b. Pe jos zăcea un maldăr de cărți.  
On down lie.IMPERF.SG a pile.SG of books.PL  
'A pile of books was/were lying on the floor.'

The second set of data that point to N1 being bleached and performing a semi-lexical / functional role, while the role of lexical head is reserved to N2 relate to selection by the main verb. In a pseudopartitive structure, the verb selects N2, as shown by the example in (22), where the verb selects N2 *prăjituri* 'pastries':

- (22) Au mâncat o tavă de prăjituri.  
Have.PL eaten a tray of pastries  
'They have eaten a tray of pastries.'

(Tănase-Dogaru 2009, 107)

It is important to point out that, in such cases, N1 does not have a separate referent in the universe of discourse; rather, it functions as a measure noun, while the pseudopartitive construction as such has a unique referent, although it consists of a double-headed projection.

The same phenomenon holds with respect to size nouns. In (23), the verb 'eat' selects N2, while N1 performs a functional role, that of indicating size:

- (23) Au mâncat o grămadă / un morman de prăjituri.  
Have.PL eaten a heap / a pile of pastries.  
'They have eaten a pile of pastries.'

Finally, modification phenomena also point to the fact that N1 is semantically bleached, and therefore, transparent to modification, so that the adjective modifies N2, as shown by the examples in (24) and (25), where (24) contain container and group nouns and (25) contain size nouns.

- (24) a. un pahar înghețat de lapte (Romanian)  
a glass freezing of milk  
'a freezing glass of milk'
- b. o sticlă minunată de șampanie  
a bottle wonderful of champagne  
'a wonderful bottle of champagne'
- c. un stol grăbit de școlărițe  
a bevy hurried of schoolgirls  
'a hurried group of schoolgirls'

- d. un cățel aromat de usturoi  
a puppy fragrant of garlic  
'a fragrant clove of garlic'

(Tănase-Dogaru 2017, 17)

- (25) a. un maldăr prăfuit de dosare  
a pile dusty of files  
'a dusty pile files'  
b. un morman enervant de lucrări  
a heap annoying of papers  
'an annoying heap of papers'  
c. o grămadă mucegăită de hârtii  
a heap moldy of papers  
'a moldy heap of papers'

The section has shown that, typically, nouns which occupy first position in a pseudopartitive structure are semantically bleached, therefore performing a functional role. Size nouns also exhibit different degrees of bleaching, which may account for their different uses. It is to these uses that the next section turns.

### 3. Three uses of size nouns: Brems (2003; 2007; 2010)

According to Brems (2003; 2007; 2010), size nouns give rise to three main types of meaning: head nouns referring to a particular constellation or shape of the noun following *of*, grammatical quantifying meaning and grammatical evaluating meaning (Brems 2010, 83-85).

When they are head nouns referring to a particular constellation or shape of the noun, size nouns take N2-collocates which are restricted to specific subsets of count and uncountable concrete nouns, depending on the lexical semantics of the individual size noun, as shown in (26).

- (26) heaps of bricks / rubble / glass  
a bunch of grapes / tulips / parsley (Brems 2010, 84)

A typical example is the one in (27) (from the corpus in Brems 2010).

- (27) 'My first impression was not that it was an earthquake', said Heinz Hermanns, standing by a **heap of bricks** that had fallen from his 100-year-old house. (CB-Today in Brems 2010, 83)

Brems (2010) associates such uses of size nouns with a construction where N1s are head nouns while the *of*-phrase is a post-modifier, as shown in (28).

(28) [[head: SN [postmodifier: of + N2]]

The grammatical quantifying meaning (Brems 2010, 74) is illustrated in (29):

(29) The graphics are very polished, with pitch detail, markings and the like adding **heaps of atmosphere**. (CB-Today in Brems 2010, 74)

When size nouns take on the grammatical quantifying meaning, N2-collocates can be different kinds of abstract nouns and concrete nouns, including concrete animate nouns, which are not allowed in head uses. According to Brems (2010), *heaps of* in (29) functions as a quantifier substitutable by *much*, while the structure *heaps of atmosphere* (hyperbolically) measures the size of the abstract noun *atmosphere*.

Again, Brems (2010) associates this interpretation of size nouns with a particular structure, where the size noun together with *of* has modifier status and N2 functions as the head noun (30).

(30) [quantifier: SN + of] [head: N2]

The third type of interpretation a size noun may have is the evaluating meaning, illustrated in (31):

(31) Warts-only copperdom, presenting the police as **a bunch of hamfisted dimwits**. (CB-Today in Brems 2010, 84)

With this reading N2-collocates are systematically restricted to abstract and concrete animate nouns which are negatively evaluated. In (31), *a bunch of* serves to emphasize the negative value of *hamfisted dimwits*, more than simply quantifying the referents (see Brems 2010: 84). In such case, the size noun together with *of* has modifier status and N2 functions as the head noun (32).

(32) [valuing quantifier: SN + of] [head: N2]

Having looked at the three types of uses size nouns may have, two observations are in order. First, as acknowledged by Brems herself, the context plays an important part in construing the evaluating meaning. For instance, in (31), the word *presenting* is an important contextual clue (Brems 2010, 84-85). Secondly, there are a number of what Brems (2010, 85) calls *ambivalent* cases, that is cases where more than one interpretation is available. A relevant example is provided in (33).

- (33) A spokesman for her London agents, Storm, confirmed yesterday: ‘At the moment she’s looking at **a heap of movie scripts**. Another possibility Kate has toyed with recently is becoming a fashion photographer.’ (CB-Today in Brems 2010, 85)

In (33), *a heap of* may refer to an actual heap of papers, that is the sequence has an actual referent in the universe of discourse and it overlaps what has been called in this paper the semi-lexical use. On the other hand, the sequence may simply refer to a great number of papers, that is it only has a functional role. The next section will show that the same holds for Romanian size nouns.

#### 4. Size nouns in Romanian

The section argues that size nouns in Romanian enter the same syntactic structure, i.e. a head-complement structure (see section 2.1) where they, however, take on different interpretations, depending on the context, the lexical semantics of both N1 and N2, and degrees of semantic bleaching, i.e. semi-lexicality. Secondly, the evaluating use, as discussed in section 3 for English, arises as a reflex of the context rather than as a separate interpretation.

In this respect, I will operate a distinction between the semi-lexical and the functional uses of size nouns in Romanian. The first use is one in which the size noun preserves (some of) its lexical features, while the second use is one in which the size noun only has a functional role, i.e. that of referring to a great amount.

The discussion owes a lot to the distinction operated by Doetjes and Rooryck (2003) between a comparative reading (34) and a ‘pure degree’ interpretation of N1s (35) in quantitative (and qualitative) binominal constructions.

- (34) Une montagne de livres \*sont / est tombée  
a mountain of books are / is fallen

- (35) Beaucoup de livres sont / \*est tombé(s)  
A lot of books are / is fallen (Doetjes and Rooryck 2003, 278)

Doetjes and Rooryck (2003) start from the observation that in both quantitative and qualitative constructions<sup>2</sup>, agreement can be triggered by the element

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<sup>2</sup> The investigation of binominal qualitative constructions, i.e. *an imbecile of a professor*, falls outside the scope of this paper. For details on the syntax and interpretation of this type of construction see Tănase-Dogaru (2011, 2012).

preceding *of* or by the element following *of*, i.e. by either N1 or N2, and correlate this difference in agreement with differences in the interpretive nature of the quantitative / qualitative element, i.e. N1.

(36) The quantitative / qualitative agreement principle

1. in quantitative / qualitative constructions, the quantified / qualified element determines agreement if the quantifier / qualifier has a 'pure degree' interpretation of quantity / quality = the 'degree' interpretation
2. the quantifier / qualifier determines agreement if the relation between the quantified / qualified noun and the quantifier / qualifier is paraphrasable in terms of a comparison in which the quantifier / qualifier keeps its lexical interpretation = the 'comparative' interpretation

(Doetjes and Rooryck 2003, 279-280)

The example in (35) above exhibits the 'pure degree' interpretation. In this example, *beaucoup* 'a lot' has completely lost its original lexical meaning and indicates a quantity of high degree. In contrast, in (34), *montagne* 'mountain' still retains part of its lexical meaning and its relation with the quantified element, i.e. N2, can be paraphrased in terms of comparison: the quantity of books is such that it resembles a mountain.

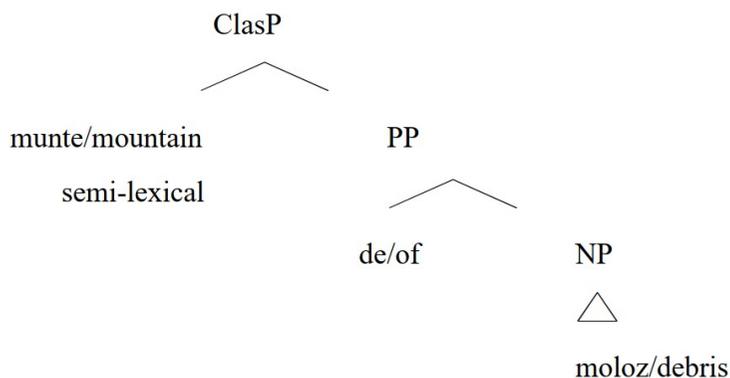
The distinction operated by Doetjes and Rooryck (2003) between the comparative and the pure degree interpretation can also differentiate between two interpretations of size nouns, one in which N1 still retains parts of its lexical meaning, i.e. it is semi-lexical (37), and one in which N1 has completely lost its lexical meaning, i.e. it is functional (38).

- (37) [...] s-au transformat în muntele de moloz și pământ uscat din fața gardului<sup>3</sup>.  
 [...] REFL-have turned in mountain.DEF of debris and dirt dry from face.DEF fence.DEF  
 'They have turned into the mountain of debris and dried dirt in front of the fence.'

In (37), N1 *muntele* 'mountain' has retained part of its lexical meaning and can, therefore, be paraphrased in terms of a comparison, i.e. the quantity of debris is such that it resembles a mountain. N1 occupies the classifier head in a double-headed extended projection, as shown by the structure in (38).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/vadu-rosca-satul-in-care-timpul-a-impietrit-147954>

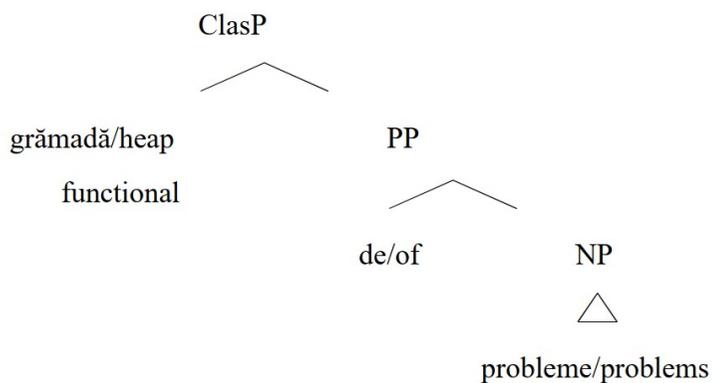
(38)



(39) Avem o grămadă de probleme<sup>4</sup>.  
 Have.PRES.1PL a heap of problems.  
 'We are having a lot of problems'

In (39), N1 *grămadă* 'heap' has lost its original lexical meaning and it only performs a functional role, that of indicating a great amount. N1 occupies the classifier head in the extended projection, as shown by (40).

(40)



<sup>4</sup> <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/vladirmi-putin-critici-dure-pentru-modul-in-care-a-gestionat-criza-covid-19.html>

In what follows, the paper further investigates the two main readings of size nouns in Romanian by looking at the collocational restrictions of N1 in both readings. The evaluating interpretation will be shown to arise from an interplay of the overall context and the lexical semantics of both N1 and N2.

#### 4.1. The comparative interpretation of size nouns

The present subsection looks at size nouns with a comparative interpretation, i.e. Brem's (2010) head uses of size nouns (41-44).

(41) Președintele chilian a căzut de pe o grămadă de moloz<sup>5</sup>.

President.DEF Chilean has fallen of on pile / heap of debris  
'The Chilean president has fallen off a pile of debris.'

(42) A intrat cu mașina într-un morman de bolovani<sup>6</sup>.

Have.3SG entered with car in-a pile / heap of rocks  
'He drove the car into a pile of rocks.'

(43) Explică metafora 'un munte de cărți'<sup>7</sup>.

Explain.IMP metaphor.DEF 'a mountain of books'  
'Explain the metaphor 'a mountain of books).'

(44) Grămezi de bani descoperite de protestatari<sup>8</sup>

Heaps.FEM of money.MASC discovered.FEM.PL by protesters  
'Heaps of money discovered by protesters'

With respect of the collocational restrictions of N1 size nouns with the comparative interpretation (see Brems 2010), these N1s collocate with both countable and uncountable concrete N2s. The comparative interpretation arises from an interplay between the lexical semantics of N1 and N2, i.e. books, debris, dirt, etc. usually assume the shape of heaps and piles, and the selectional restrictions of the verb, i.e. in (41), the verb 'fall' shows that N1 is an actual object in the universe of discourse that the Chilean president fell off. (44) offers an example where gender agreement indicates the semi-lexical reading of N1, one in which it is retained parts

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/presedintele-chilian-a-cazut-de-pe-o-gramada-de-moloz-113090>

<sup>6</sup> <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/sofer-aiurit-a-intrat-cu-masina-intr-un-morman-de-bolovani.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://brainly.ro/tema/120126>

<sup>8</sup> <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/video-gramezi-de-bani-descoperite-de-protestatari-in-casa-presedintelui-din-sri-lanka.html>

of its original lexical meaning and it is able, therefore, to trigger agreement on the adjective.

#### 4.2. The quantifying (pure degree) interpretation of size nouns

The first observation about the quantifying interpretation of size nouns, i.e. the pure degree reading where N1 indicates ‘a large amount of’ arises mainly in the plural (see the examples in 46 to 48).

(45) A transformat un maldăr de fiare într-un business<sup>9</sup>  
 Have.3SG turned a pile / heap of irons in-an business.  
 ‘He has turned a pile/heap of scrap metal into a business.’

(46) Nu ar trebui [...]să vedem grămezi de cadavre acolo<sup>10</sup>

(47) Grămezi de legume, stropi de apă “veșnici” și culori de verde<sup>11</sup>  
 Heaps of vegetables, drops of water “eternal” and shades of green  
 ‘Heaps of vegetables, ‘eternal’ drops of water and shades of green.’

(48) Părerii despre mormanul de cărți necitite din casă<sup>12</sup>.  
 Opinions about heap.DEF.NEUT of books.FEM.PL unread.FEM.PL. from house  
 ‘Opinions about the heap of unread books in the house.’

In the examples in (45-48), N1 serves a purely functional role that can be paraphrased as ‘a large amount / quantity of’. The fact that it has completely lost its original lexical meaning is shown in (48) by its inability to trigger agreement on the adjective, which agrees with N2.

As for the collocational restrictions of N1 in cases of the quantifying reading, the preferred types of N2s are various sorts of countable and uncountable concrete as well as abstract nouns (see Brems 2010).

The quantifying use also arises in (49-53), i.e. with nouns that are ambiguous between the size and container interpretations, all of which indicate a large amount of money.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Companii/162612/a-transformat-un-maldar-de-fiare-intr-un-business-cu-multe-zerouri-ce-urmeaza-pentru-magiunul-de-topoloveni.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-25647935-gramezi-cadavre-gasite-intr-camion-abandonat-drum-din-texas-tragedie-ingrozitoare.htm>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.tripadvisor.fr/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g295393-d18996890-i466707478-Consomme-Sibiu\\_Sibiu\\_County\\_Central\\_Romania\\_Transylvania.html](https://www.tripadvisor.fr/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g295393-d18996890-i466707478-Consomme-Sibiu_Sibiu_County_Central_Romania_Transylvania.html)

<sup>12</sup> <https://stefaniastrate.ro/club-de-carte-pareri-despre-mormanul-de-carti-necitite-din-casa/>

- (49) Aparatul care mănâncă o **groază** de bani<sup>13</sup>  
 Device.DEF which eats a horror of money  
 ‘The device that’s spending a lot of money’
- (50) Smiley a încasat o **poală** de bani din drepturile de autor!<sup>14</sup>  
 Smiley has gained a lapful of money from rights.DEF of author  
 ‘Smiley has gained a lot of money from royalties!’
- (51) Zodia care va face o **gălăgie** de bani în 2022<sup>15</sup>.  
 Sign.DEF which will make a clamor of money in 2022  
 ‘The sign that will make a lot of money in 2022.’
- (52) Bă, luați o **cârcă** de bani din gărzi!<sup>16</sup>  
 Yo, take.PRES.2PL a back of money from on-duty.PL  
 ‘Yo, you gain a lot of money from being on duty.’
- (53) Câștigă relaxat o **pălărie** de bani!<sup>17</sup>.  
 Earn.IMP relaxed a hatful of money.  
 ‘Earn a lot of money in a relaxed way.’

Having looked at the comparative and quantifying, ‘pure degree’ readings of size nouns in Romanian, the next section investigates the evaluating uses of such nouns.

### 4.3. Evaluating uses

In the evaluating use, N1 simply emphasizes the negative evaluation of N2 (see Brems 2010). It is a sort of contextual mirroring of the negative connotations of N2 by an N1 that possesses a quantifying interpretation, which can be paraphrased as ‘a large amount of’. The Romanian size noun that typically lends itself to an interpretation in terms of a negative evaluation of N2 is *grămadă* ‘heap / pile’ (43-56).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.capital.ro/toata-lumea-il-are-in-casa-aparatul-care-iti-mananca-o-groaza-de-bani-cat-curent-consuma-de-fapt.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.wowbiz.ro/galerie/smiley-a-incasat-o-poala-de-bani-din-drepturile-de-autor-andra-i-a-luat-fata-loredanei-groza-iar-connect-r-se-afla-pe-locul-2-vezi-topul-si-sumele-incasate-de-artisti-16301080>

<sup>15</sup> <https://playtech.ro/stiri/zodia-care-va-face-o-galagie-de-bani-in-2022-e-anul-lor-toti-astrologii-s-au-pus-de-acord-453047>

<sup>16</sup> Ziare.com [https://ziare.com/tg-jiu/stiri-actualitate/fiica-unui-fost-consilier-judetean-refuzata-de-medic-ba-luati-o-carca-de-bani-din-garzi-nu-va-e-rusine-obrazului-8634489?utm\\_source=Ziare.com&utm\\_medium=copy-paste](https://ziare.com/tg-jiu/stiri-actualitate/fiica-unui-fost-consilier-judetean-refuzata-de-medic-ba-luati-o-carca-de-bani-din-garzi-nu-va-e-rusine-obrazului-8634489?utm_source=Ziare.com&utm_medium=copy-paste)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.concursuri.biz/concurs-palarie-bani-ciucas/>

- (54) În România și Italia sunt o grămadă de proști<sup>18</sup>.  
In Romania and Italy are a heap / pile of stupid.MASC.PL  
'In Romania and Italy there are lots of stupid people.'
- (55) Pe lumea asta sunt o grămadă de idioti<sup>19</sup>.  
On world.DEF this are a heap / pile of idiots  
'There are a lot of idiots in this world.'
- (56) O grămadă de monștri crețini<sup>20</sup>.  
A heap / pile of monsters moronic  
'A bunch of moronic monsters'

This kind of negative extension of N2 properties to the interpretation of N1 can sometimes be seen with what Brems (2007) calls 'small size nouns', like the English 'a jot of', 'a scrap of', 'a flicker of' (Brems 2007, 293). In Romanian, the category of small size nouns includes *o mână de* 'a handful of', *o iotă de* 'an iota of', *o urmă de* 'a trace of', *un pic de* 'a little of'.

- (57) o mână de oameni săraci <sup>21</sup>  
a hand of people poor  
'a handful of poor people'

It can, therefore, be concluded that the evaluating interpretation of size nouns in Romanian can be subsumed under the quantifying interpretation, as a kind of metaphorical extension or negative mirroring of the lexical meaning of N2.

## 5. Conclusions

The paper has investigated size nouns of the type *grămadă* 'heap / pile' in Romanian. It has shown that there are two major uses of such nouns, the comparative and the quantifying or 'pure degree' interpretation (cf. Doetjes and Rooryck 2003; Brems 2007; 2010). The quantifying interpretation can sometimes be extended metaphorically to express a negative evaluation of the referent, by a process similar to a negative mirroring by N1 of the inherently negative lexical meaning of N2.

<sup>18</sup> <https://adevarul.ro/sport/mancini-in-romania-si-italia-sunt-o-gramada-de-1176882.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://iasi365.com/blog/696-din-categoria-qpe-lumea-asta-sunt-o-gramada-de-idiotiq>

<sup>20</sup> <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/6663/Carmen-Mezincescu/O-gramada-de-monstri-cretini-Aliens-vs-Predator-Requiem.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/educatie/minunea-de-la-iazu-satul-in-care-tiganii-isi-1663119.html>

The syntactic structure that the two interpretations can be read off is that of a pseudopartitive structure, i.e. a single extended double-headed projection, where N1 is semi-lexical or functional and N2 is lexical. The comparative interpretation is read off a syntactic structure containing a semi-lexical N1, while the quantifying interpretation is read off a syntactic structure containing a functional N1, where N1 can be paraphrased as ‘a large amount of’.

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