

# ON THE ROMANIAN CLAUSAL SUBSTITUTE AȘA ‘SO’

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**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the syntax and interpretation of the adverb *așa* ‘so’ used as a CP substitute. The semantic difficulty raised is that a typical *adjunct* can substitute for an *argument* CP. The syntactic problem is that, though a substitute, *așa* ‘so’ may often appear in the same sentence with a CP, which determines its interpretation. Two main ingredients are used in solving these problems: a) the idea that CPs are predicative in content and combine with verbs by predicate modification (Kratzer 2006, Moulton 2015); b) the idea that in all of its occurrences, *așa* ‘so’ is a demonstrative of similarity. As an auxiliary step, we have also examined another use of *așa* ‘so’ as a substitute, specifically *așa* as an adjectival substitute. The two substitutes have identical syntax and both have property-type interpretations.

**Keywords:** demonstrative of similarity, substitute, CP-semantics, syntactic operator.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background and aims

Romanian has two designated clausal substitutes: the demonstrative pronoun *asta* ‘this’, and the adverb, *așa* ‘so’. Both are functional expressions that stand for CPs in argument positions.

The starting point of this paper was a puzzle. How can an adverb like *așa* ‘so’, a typical adjunct, replace an argument CP? There is no surprise that the demonstrative pronoun *asta* ‘this’ may operate as a CP substitute, since by definition, CPs are supposed to be nominalized clauses, which denote propositions and combine with the verb by functional application (e.g. Manzini and Savoia 2003). It is unclear, however, why an adverb should also substitute for a clause.

As helpfully pointed out and underlined by the reviewer, evidence for the “standard” view on CPs mentioned above has been gathered by syntacticians at least since the early eighties (e.g. Kayne 1982), and the view that finite clauses must be nominalized in order to be arguments of verbs has remained unchanged along the years, even if it has been implemented in different ways. The initial assumption is that in principle, it is the C(omplementizer) head which is responsible for the syntactic and semantic integration of a finite clause complement as a verbal argument. It is known that Indo-European didn’t have

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Cs (Kiparsky, 1995), and both complement and relative clauses were simply *adjoined* to the main clause, while a resumptive pronoun acted as a place-holder and allowed for the proper semantic interpretation of the adjoined clause as an argument. Such a hypothesis could lead to a re-analysis of the resumptive pronominal as a C, as suggested by Roberts and Roussou (2003:118) : *I think that [the earth is round] → I think [that the earth is round]*, a change which, roughly speaking, only involves a leftward shift of the constituent boundary. This view directly accounts for the pronominal origin of Cs in many languages (e.g. English *that*, German *dass*). The presence of a nominal element at the head of the clause secures a degree of nominalization of the finite clause, enabling it to occupy a *vP*-internal argument position in a hypotactic configuration. As far back as the early eighties, Kayne (1982) had already assumed that finite clauses require a nominal head in order to occupy an argument position (apud Roberts and Roussou (2003:119)). The impossibility of embedding finite IPs and the need for a nominal head have generally been attributed to the impossibility of Case-assignment to CPs (a line of explanation that starts with Stowell's Case Resistance Principle (1981) and goes at least up to Manzini and Savoia's (2018) Agree Resistance Theorem, which claims that CPs cannot enter into Agree relations with *v*, I probes because of their lack of phi-features (2018: 258).

In a later paper, Kayne (2005:236) states not only that for an IP to function as the argument of a higher predicate, it must be nominalized, but also that nominalization "can happen in one of two ways, broadly speaking – either through nominalizing morphology (e.g. English gerunds, Romance infinitives) or *through merger with a noun* (emphasis mine, AC)". In fact, the closer examination of the pronouns that have been grammaticalized as Cs reveals that they often introduce both complement clauses and relative clauses, and as known, relative pronouns subordinate finite clauses to overt or covert nominals. This is true of English *that*, which is a C in both complement clauses and relative clauses. The idea that Cs are a special class of relativizers is reinforced by languages where the same lexical item functions not only as a C, but also as a relative (and/or interrogative) pronoun. An example at hand is French *que* (*Je crois que le train arrive./ l'homme que je vois*); many more examples have been documented in the Italian dialects investigated by Manzini and Savoia (2018). The same view of clausal complementation as a special type of relativization is given a detailed minimalist implementation in Arsenijević (2009).

But if finite CPs are embedded as *modifiers* (adjuncts) of nominals, rather than directly as arguments, then their semantics should also be differently construed, and their denotation should be *predicative*, rather than argumental (nominal).

It is significant that recent research in the semantics of CPs has come to the very same result, convincingly arguing that CPs are *predicative* rather than nominal categories. Semanticists like Moulton (2013, 2015, 2016), Longenbough (2019) claim that CPs are *modifiers*, not arguments, *of verbs* and denote properties of propositional content *nouns*, a special class of nominals. As verbal modifiers they combine with the verb by predicate modification, not functional application. If this line of research is correct, then substitution of a CP (a verbal modifier) by the manner adverb, *aşa* 'so', another verb modifier, becomes natural and comprehensible. It will turn out that when it replaces a CP, *aşa* 'so' has exactly the same syntax as when it substitutes for other syntactic categories, a syntax which derives from the meaning of *aşa* 'so'.

The aim of the paper, therefore, is to present the syntax and interpretation of *aşa* 'so' integrating its use as a clausal substitute among the contexts where *aşa* 'so' substitutes for

other syntactic categories. To the best of my knowledge, the syntax of *așa* ‘so’, in any of its uses, has not been discussed so far, the literature mostly paying attention to the wide variety of idioms based on *așa* ‘so’.

The syntactic analysis reveals the fact that *așa* ‘so’ is a multicategorical head, with realization in several syntactic categories. As a substitute, it shows a systematic variation between a simple mono-phrasal pattern and a “complex pattern”, where *așa* ‘so’ co-occurs with a phrase that it could stand for, and which determines its interpretation. This alternation is cross categorial. The syntactic diversity of *așa* ‘so’ contrasts with its central, probably unique core meaning, that of a deictic element, more exactly the meaning of a demonstrative of similarity, in the sense of Umbach and Gust (2014), explained in the next sub-section.

### 1.2. A demonstrative of similarity

The most important properties of *așa* ‘so’ as a substitute follow from its semantic description as a *demonstrative of similarity*, to use a term proposed by Umbach & Gust (U&G) (2014). *Așa* ‘so’ is in the same class with German *so* ‘so’, Dutch *zo*, or Polish *tak*. *Așa* ‘so’ contrasts with *asta* ‘this’ which, in Umbach’s classification, is a demonstrative of identity. The difference between the two demonstratives comes out in pairs like (1a–b).

- (1) a. Aș                      cumpăra                      mașina asta oricând.  
           would.1.SG            buy                              car.the this anytime  
           ‘I would buy this car anytime’
- b. Aș                      cumpăra                      așa o mașină            oricând.  
           would.1.SG            buy                              so a car                    anytime  
           ‘I would buy such a car anytime.’

With *asta* ‘this’, the speaker wants to buy a car identical to the car pointed to by the speaker. With *așa* ‘so’, it is enough for the speaker to buy a car sufficiently resembling the car he has indicated.

Like German *so* ‘so’, *așa* is a demonstrative occurring as a modifier in various syntactic phrases, thereby raising the question of how to reconcile their “demonstrative characteristics with their modifier role”. The examples in (2) illustrate deictic uses of *așa* ‘so’ and are adapted from U&G (2014: 10).

- (2) a. (speaker pointing to a person)  
       Așa înaltă este            Ana acum.  
       so tall    is.3.SG            Ana now  
       ‘Ana is this tall now’
- b. (speaker pointing to a car in the street)  
       Așa o mașina    are                      și Ana.  
       so a car            has.3.SG            also Ana  
       ‘Ana has such a car, too.’
- c. (speaker pointing to someone preparing a fish)  
       Așa a            tăiat    și            Ana    peștele.  
       so            has.3.SG cut    also    Ana    fish.the  
       ‘Ana also cut the fish like this.’

U&G (2014) consider that demonstratives are directly referential expressions (Kaplan 1989, Nunberg 1993), but dismiss the idea that the target of the pointing gesture is necessarily identical to the (intended) referent of the demonstrative. U&G propose that the target of the demonstration is the individual or the event that the speaker is pointing to, but the intended referent of the demonstrative phrase is related to the target by similarity, not identity. Similarity is established on the basis of some common property/properties supposed to be true both of the targeted contextual referent and also on the intended referent. The relevant properties must be individual-level properties, rather than stage-level ones. In other words, the object pointed to is viewed as an instantiation of some kind or subkind.

Notice that the intended referents in (2a–c) above belong to different ontological categories and are also encoded as different syntactic categories. In (2a) the intended referent is a degree of tallness similar to the tallness of the person pointed to. In (2b) the intended referent is Ana’s car, which shares sufficiently many properties with the car pointed to by the speaker for the hearer to understand what kind of car Ana possesses. U&G (2014:6) propose the analysis in (3c) for the German sentence in (3a). The demonstrative *so* ‘so’, defined in (3b), establishes a relation of similarity between the intended referent (the car owned by Ana) and a similar object indicated by the speaker, ( $x_{\text{target}}$ ), with respect to some property/properties, notated F.

- (3) a. So ein auto hat Anna  
       ‘Anna has a car like this.’  
       b.  $[[\text{so}]] = \lambda D.\lambda P. D(\lambda x. \text{sim}(x, x_{\text{target}}, F) \ \& \ P(x))$   
       c.  $[[\text{so ein auto hat Anna}]] = \exists x. \text{sim}(x, x_{\text{target}}, F) \ \& \ \text{car}(x) \ \& \ \text{own}(\text{anna}, x)$

In the same way, the demonstrative *aşa* ‘so’ should be understood as a *three place similarity relation* including the target of the demonstration, the intended referent, and, crucially, a property or set of properties, which actually represent dimensions of similarity between the two.

The analysis given to the adjectival use of *aşa* ‘so’ carries over to the adverbial use in (2c). When *aşa* ‘so’ is a manner adverb, what is at stake is similarity between *events* along certain properties, instead of similarities between individual objects, since “manners” are considered properties of events.

Like all deictic elements, demonstratives of similarity also have anaphoric uses (i.e. instances of discourse deixis). U&G call attention to the fact that “anaphoric uses differ only in the fact that possible antecedents are more diverse than real world referents which are pointed at” [2014:5].

The semantic analysis of *aşa* ‘so’ sketched above allows us to understand some essential aspects of its syntax. First, *aşa* ‘so’ expresses ‘similarity with respect to some property’ and thus *aşa* denotes a property, not an entity. Secondly, *aşa*-sentences often exhibit “mixed syntax”, combining gestures with verbal material which helps in the identification of the relevant dimension of similarity (4a).

- (4) a. Ion stătea           aşa (the speaker puts his arms akimbo), cu mâinile       în şold.  
       Ion stood.3.SG     so   with hands.the     in hip  
       ‘Ion stood like this, with hands on his hips’

- b. Ion stătea            *așa*.  
 Ion stood            like this
- c. Ion stătea            *așa*        cu mâinile        în șold.  
 Ion stood.3.SG    so        with hands.the    in hip  
 ‘Ion stood with hands on his hips.’

In this very typical example, *așa* ‘so’ is doubled by a PP which verbally specifies the event-manner, already physically demonstrated by the speaker. The gesture and the PP help the interlocutor identify the intended-referent, i.e. the manner of the event of Ion’s standing. Notice that either *așa* or the PP would have been sufficient to render the same content. What is characteristic for Romanian is that even in the absence of a gesture (4c), *așa* ‘so’ is doubled by some phrase that spells out its content, i.e. the dimension of similarity. In the syntactic analysis below, we treat such doubling structures as instances of “big, XPs”, so-called by analogy with the well-known big DPs. In order to establish valid generalizations on the substitute *așa* ‘so’, we examined two instantiations, namely, the adjectival substitute and the clausal substitute.

Accordingly the outline of the paper is as follows: Section 2 concentrates on the adjectival substitute, while Section 3 gives a detailed presentation of the syntax of the clausal substitute. Section 4 develops a more detailed semantic analysis of this clausal substitute. Section 5 presents the descriptive generalizations and the theoretical results of the paper.

## 2. AȘA AS AN ADJECTIVAL SUBSTITUTE

### 2.1. Syntactic categories that can be replaced by *așa* ‘so’

*Așa* ‘so’ is a strikingly versatile *substitute*, replacing a wide range of syntactic categories. It can stand for an AP (5), for an AdvP (6), a PP (7), or a CP (8), as shown below.

- (5) N-am            văzut    *așa* oameni        până acum.  
 not-have.1.SG    seen    so people        up-to now  
 ‘I haven’t seen such people so far.’
- (6) Aleargă repede. /        Aleargă        *așa*.  
 runs.3.SG fast        runs.3.SG        so  
 ‘He runs fast.’        ‘He runs like this.’
- (7) Rămâi [PP în fotoliu]. /        Rămâi        *așa*.  
 remain.IMP in armchair        remain.IMP        so  
 ‘Remain seated in the armchair.’    ‘Remain seated so.’
- (8) Ion a spus        [CP să plecăm]. /        Ion a        spus    *așa*.  
 Ion has.3.SG said sbjv    leave.pl        Ion has.3.SG    said    so  
 ‘Ion said that we should leave.’        ‘Ion said so.’

Generalizing over these categories, one may say that *așa* ‘so’ can substitute for any syntactic category whose *default* denotation is that of *property* or *predicate* (as opposed to

entity). On the other hand, *aşa* ‘so’ cannot be a DP (or even an NP) substitute, since the default denotation of a DP is an *individual object* i.e. *entity*. Thus, in sentence (9b), *aşa* could be interpreted as replacing an adverbial (e.g. the PP in (9c)), but not as referring to the DP in (9a).

- (9) a. Ion a citit un roman.  
 Ion has.3.SG read a novel  
 ‘Ion read a novel’
- b. \*Ion a citit așa. (in the intended meaning)  
 Ion has.3.SG read so  
 ‘Ion read like this.’
- c. Ion citea cu voce tare.  
 Ion was3.SG -reading with voice loud  
 ‘Ion was reading in a loud voice.’

The ban on DP-substitution is very strict, and does not seem to distinguish between argument DPs/NPs (9) and predicative ones. For example, in (10), the predicative NP *student la medicină* ‘student at the Medical School’ can be replaced by *asta* ‘this’, but not by *aşa* ‘so’.

- (10) (Ion este acum **student la medicină**.) \***Aşa/Asta** a devenit.  
 (Ion is a student at the Medical School) so/this has.3.SG become  
 ‘This is what he has become.’

The discussion below is centred on *aşa* ‘so’ as a *pronominal adjective* (GALR) and as a clausal substitute, to point out the structural and interpretative unity of the two.

## 2.2. Syntactic properties of adjectival *aşa* ‘so’

*Asa* ‘so’ frequently occurs as an adjectival substitute. As such it has all the properties of a *qualifying*, (as opposed to a relative) adjective, briefly reviewed below. Thus, like a qualifying adjective, when it is NP internal, it can be both pre-nominal and post-nominal (11a–b). Adjectival *aşa* ‘so’ is also frequently used predicatively after the copula *fi* ‘be’, or after copula-like verbs (11c).

- (11) a. Nu găsiți așa casă la acest preț.  
 not find.2.PL so house at this price  
 ‘You don’t find such a house at this price.’
- b. N-am mai văzut așa om.  
 not-have.I.SG more seen so man  
 ‘I haven’t seen such a person before.’
- c. Maria nu era/ arăta așa.  
 Maria not was3SG looked.3 SG so  
 ‘Mary was not like this / didn’t look so.’

Since *așa* 'so' is a gradable adjective, it has degrees of comparison (12a) and also, like other gradable adjectives it may be directly modified by degree heads like *cam* 'rather' (12b), *foarte* 'very' (12c) and *prea* 'too' (12d).

- (12) a. Tu ești mult mai așa decât el.  
 you are<sup>2</sup>. SG much more so than him  
 'You are much more so than him.'
- b. Cam așa este moda la Milano. [Google]  
 rather so is.3. SG fashion.the at Milan  
 'Fashion in Milan is rather like this.'
- c. o persoană foarte așa pe placul meu  
 a person very so on taste my  
 'a person very much to my taste'
- d. ...este o persoană fabuloasă, dar este prea puțin așa ca voi.  
 is.3.SG a person fabulous but is.3.SG too little so like you  
 'S/He is a fabulous person, but s/he is too little like you.'

Notice that in examples (12c, d) *așa* 'so' is doubled by PPs that express the property according to which the antecedent and the intended referent are found similar or identical. This kind of doubling does not appear in the English counterparts and represents a complex pattern, contrasting with the simple pattern in (12 a, b).

- (13) \*a person very much so/like this to my taste

A characteristic syntactic property of adjectival *așa*, which it does not share with lexical adjectives, is that it has an (optional) *operator feature*. Accordingly, within DPs, adjectival *așa* may retain its post-nominal or pre-nominal position within the NP, or it may (or must) raise to the left of (certain) indefinite determiners (e.g. the indefinite articles *un* 'a' and *niște* 'some'), occurring as an edge constituents of the DP phase (14c), in contrast with (14a), or (15b), in contrast with (15a)).

- (14) a. un om așa  
 a man so  
 'such a man'
- b. un așa om  
 a so man  
 'such a man'
- c. așa un om  
 so a man  
 'such a man'
- (15) a. niște copii așa (în halul ăsta)  
 some children so in condition this
- b. așa niște copii  
 so some children  
 'this type of children'

A word of caution is in order here. *Așa* ‘so’ is an adjectival substitute, only when the NP does not contain another adjective. When the DP does contain a lexical adjective, *așa* ‘so’ is automatically interpreted as a constituent of the AP, and functions as a *degree head*, as in (16a). As a degree adverb, *așa* continues to be attracted to the periphery (16b).

- (16) a. un copil așa cuminte  
a child so good  
b. așa un copil cuminte  
so a child good  
‘such a good child.’

An identifying property which distinguishes the adjectival substitute from the degree-*așa* is that, as a degree word, *așa*-phrases (17a) alternate with synonymous *așa de* ‘so’ phrases, where *așa* is linked to its head by the preposition *de* ‘of’ (17b) (See Cornilescu & Giurgea 2013 for details on *așa*-degree constructions). This alternation is impossible when *așa* is an adjective (18b).

- (17) a. un om așa generos  
a man so generous  
‘such a generous man’  
b. un om așa de generos  
a man so of generous  
‘such a generous man’
- (18) a. N-am mai văzut așa un om.  
not-have.1.SG more seen so a man  
‘I haven’t seen such a person.’  
b. \*N-am mai văzut așa un de om  
not-have.1.SG more seen so a of man  
Intended: ‘I haven’t seen such a person.’

In conclusion, the alternation of *așa*-A with *așa de* -A diagnoses the degree use of *așa*, in contrast with the adjectival substitute *așa*. The difference between the two uses is further confirmed by sentences like (19) where the two functional items, degree *așa* and adjectival *așa* co-occur. In (19), the second *așa* ‘so’ is the substitute *așa*, i.e. an adjectival head part of the compound adjectival head *așa și pe dincolo* ‘this way and the other’. The higher *așa* is the degree word, in the *așa de* ‘so’ construction.

- (19) Nu știam că ești așa de așa și pe dincolo. (adapted from DLR)  
not knew.1.SG that are.2.SG so of so and on the-other-side  
‘I didn’t know that that you were so this way and the other.’

### 2.3. Interpretative properties of adjectival *așa*

In the first place, the adjective *așa* ‘so’ may have deictic uses. Thus, in an example like (20), the speaker shows a picture to the interlocutor and requires him to identify a referent on the basis of the similarity between the person targeted in the picture and the



intended referent. In such cases the descriptive content of *așa* is supplied by the object indicated by the speaker.

- (20) Ați văzut vreun om așa umblând prin parc?  
 have.2.PL seen a man so walking about park  
 'Have you seen a man like this/this man walking about the park?'

When *așa* 'so' is used anaphorically, the property-content of *așa* is inferred from previous discourse. The role of the *așa* -NP is to place its referent within the subkind determined by previous discourse information. Thus, in example (21), the NP *așa om* places *Ion* in the subkind 'person who works (too) hard', etc.

- (21) Ion stă tot timpul la birou. N-am mai văzut așa om!  
 Ion stays3.SG all time.the at office not-have.1.SG more seen so man  
 'Ion spends all his time at the office. I haven't seen such a man/person before!'

A frequent category is that of cataphoric uses, in which case *așa* 'so' is followed by a phrase (a PP or CP) which specifies its property content. The cataphoric use is quite similar to the deictic use, i.e. *așa* 'so' "points to" some property, in a bi-phrasal "complex pattern". The semantic functions of the complex pattern depend on whether the complex AP occurs in an argumental DP or in a predicative DP/NP.

In argument DPs, the referent of the *așa*-DP is some individual that (best) illustrates the property expressed by the PP (assumed to be shared by some implicit antecedent).

- (22) a. N-aș vrea să moară așa om cu inimă mare.  
 not-would.I.SG want sbjv die.3.SG so man with heart big  
 'I wouldn't want such a man with a big heart/a man with such a big heart to die.'
- b. Unde pot găsi așa un om ca tine?  
 where can.1.SG find so a man like you  
 'Where can I find such a man/person like you?'
- c. O persoană foarte așa pe placul meu mă roagă asta.  
 a person very so on taste my me.1.SG.cl.acc-asks this  
 'A person very much to my taste is asking me this'

Thus in (22a) the relevant property is 'having a big heart', in (22b), it is the property of 'being like you', in (22c), what counts is being a person to my liking. Since *așa*-DPs are indefinite, the (implicit) antecedent is a kind - instantiation and the intended referent is an instantiation of the subkind generated by the PP. Thus, in the examples in (22), the implicit antecedent is some instantiation of the kind 'person', while the intended referent should realize the subkind categories: 'person having a big heart', 'person to my taste', etc.

Syntactically phrases which express the property content of *așa* are mostly PPs, or CPs (23). When the property is a CP, one of the most frequent realization is a free relative clause introduced by the manner adverb *cum* 'how' and its variants *după cum*, 'how, as' or *precum* 'how, as', which express similarity up to identity. In combination with *așa* 'so', these FRCs express a high degree of similarity, or even identity between the implicit antecedent and the intended referent.

- (23) a. Am găsit o casă așa cum dorești.  
 have.1.SG found a house so how want.2.SG  
 ‘I have found a house as you wish.’
- b. Autorul descrie o viață de om așa cum a fost.  
 author.the describes.3.sg a life of man so how has.3.SG been  
 ‘The author describes a man’s life, such as it was.’

When the adjective *așa* ‘so’ is predicatively used, what is at stake is retrieving the property expressed by *așa*, on the basis of its similarity to a property overtly expressed. The overt property is syntactically encoded as a PP (24a), a CP (24b), and even an AP (24c). The recovered property is attributed to the subject.

- (24) a. Ești așa ca un copil  
 are.2.SG so like a child  
 ‘You are (so much) like a child.’
- b. Dar tu ești prea așa ca să pricepi asta.  
 but you are.2.SG too so that SBJW understand.2.SG this  
 ‘But you are too much like that to understand this.’
- c. Ești prea așa, cum am zice, sensibil.  
 are.2.SG too so as would.1.PL say sensitive  
 ‘You are, as we would say, too sensitive.’ (DLR: 282)

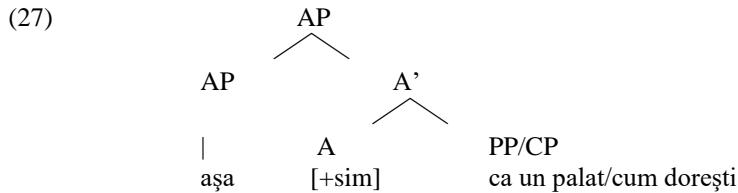
Summing up, adjectival *așa* appears in two syntactic configurations, which match its interpretations. First *așa* ‘so’ may project an AP with no particular internal structure as in (25). *Așa* ‘so’ may be preceded by degree heads, and also has comparative degrees. The simple pattern corresponds to the anaphoric use of *așa*.

- (25)
- |    |      |       |
|----|------|-------|
|    | NP   |       |
|    | └─┬─ |       |
| NP |      | AdjP  |
| om |      | așa   |
|    |      | [+op] |

The second pattern, typical of cataphoric deictic uses, is syntactically complex. Specifically, the adjectival *așa* ‘so’ co-occurs with a property-denoting phrase which approximately identifies the content of *așa*, and thereby contributes to the identification of the intended referent of the *așa*-DP (26). The co-occurrence of *așa* with an identifier phrase is free in Romanian, but constrained or not possible in English

- (26) Ion a construit o casă așa ca un palat.  
 Ion has.3.SG built a house so like a palace.  
 ‘Ion built a house like a palace.’

For the complex pattern, we propose a big AP configuration with a null adjectival head bearing a [similarity] feature. The head c-selects the identifier PP or CP, while *așa* ‘so’ is the specifier of the big AP.



### 3. AȘA AS A CP SUBSTITUTE

#### 3.1. Anaphoric and deictic/cataphoric uses

As far as the clausal substitute *așa* ‘so’ is concerned, the simplest hypothesis is that its syntax is identical with the syntax of the adjectival substitute. This hypothesis is fully confirmed by the data. Just as for the adjective *așa*, there is a simple and a complex pattern, which match the two different uses of CP-*așa*, the anaphoric use, which employs the simple pattern, and the deictic/cataphoric uses which employ the complex pattern. The hypothesis that *așa* ‘so’ is a demonstrative of similarity is thus fully confirmed. In this section we present the internal syntax of CP-*asa* phrases correlated to the uses of CP-*așa*.

In the simple pattern, the clausal substitute *așa* ‘so’ stands alone in the phrase that it projects, and it is used anaphorically (discourse deixis). The antecedent is a previously mentioned targeted sentence. The intended proposition is similar up to identity with the antecedent after processing, (28).

- (28) Agenția a anunțat că trenurile nu circulă.  
 agency.the has.3.SG announced that trains.the not run.3.PL  
 Așa a comunicat acum.  
 so has.3. SG announced now  
 ‘The railway agency has announced that trains are not running. They have just announced this.’

In contrast, in the deictic use, *așa* ‘so’ directs attention to some sentence already written or which is about to be pronounced. As in the case of the adjective *așa*, deictic uses may be viewed as cataphoric ones, (29).

- (29) Pe afiș scrie așa: „Vândut”.  
 on bill writes.it so: “Sold-Out.”  
 ‘The bill reads like this: “Sold-Out!”’

Cataphoric uses of clausal *așa* ‘so’ are also frequent, the sentence which is pointed to is identical or similar to the intended propositional referent. The sentence which *așa* targets is sometimes realized as an instance of direct speech, i.e. there are no markers of subordination, as in (30). It is more frequently the case that the sentence pointed to by the speaker is a CP which doubles *așa*, in the complex pattern, as in (31).

- (30) (Aşa) mi-a zis (aşa): „Grăbește-te!”  
 (So) me.1.SG.cl.DAT has.3.sg said (so) hurry.IMP – yourself.2.SG.cl.ACC  
 ‘S/He told me so/That’s what s/he said?: “Hurry up!”’
- (31) Aşa ne-a spus, că-și asumă  
 so us.1.PL.cl.DAT-has.3.SG said that himself.3.SG.cl. DAT assumes.3.SG  
 el răspunderea.  
 he.3. SG.NOM responsibility  
 ‘He told us that he would assume responsibility himself.’

### 3.2. The distribution of *aşa* in the verbal domain

There are at least two properties that characterize CP-*aşa* in the verbal domain: it is focused, and it has an operator feature. What’s more visible is that *aşa* ‘so’ is endowed with an operator feature [+op], which forces it to be fronted to the *focus* position of the phase where it merges. Since at merge, the CP occupies an internal argument position, it means that clausal *aşa* raises at least to the FocP of the *v*P periphery and that it is prosodically stressed. This is apparent in examples like (32), where *aşa* is post-verbal (because of V-Movement) but remains higher than the indirect object (32a) or the subject (32b), both inside *v*P. In other sentences, *aşa* remains post verbal and focused, while the subject or the indirect object or both are topicalized and occur preverbally (32c).

- (32) a. Preşedintele le-a declarat *aşa*  
 president.the them.3.PL.cl.DAT-has.3.SG declared so  
 jurnaliştilor americani.  
 journalists.DAT American  
 ‘The president declared this to the American journalists.’
- b. Ieri a afirmat *aşa* chiar preşedintele.  
 yesterday has.3SG stated so even president.the  
 ‘The president himself stated this/so yesterday.’
- c. Să cumperi repede apartamentul acela, eu te  
 SBJV buy.2.SG quickly apartment.the that I you.2.SG.CL.ACC  
 sfătuiesc *aşa*.  
 advise.1.SG so  
 ‘You should buy that apartment soon. This is what I advise you.’

Importantly, *aşa* ‘so’ may raise cyclically to the Focus of the main clause or even a higher clause, so that it frequently occurs at the CP Periphery. Notice sentence (33), where *aşa* ‘so’ occurs one sentence up from its original position.

- (33) (...și-i zboară capul dintr-o singură lovitură. ...)  
 (‘and chops his head off at one blow’)  
 Aşa trebuie să pățească *aşa* cine calcă  
 So must.3.SG SBJV happen.3 SG so who breaks.3.SG  
 jurământul!  
 oath.the  
 ‘This is what should happen to whoever breaks an oath.’

As has repeatedly been shown in the literature on Romanian (e.g. Alboiu 2002, Hill 2002, Nicolae 2019, Barbosa, 1998), focused constituents occupy the specifier of the highest position to which the verbs raise in Romanian (dubbed Spec,Foc here, for convenience). The presence of *așa* in Spec,Foc influences the syntax of the subject. When *așa* is in Spec,Foc at the left periphery, the subject tends to occur postverbally or be null (34a, b). If the subject itself is topicalized and occurs in the left periphery, it will occupy a higher topic position, necessarily preceding focused *așa* 'so' as in sentence (35).

- (34) a. Să pleci                      cât mai repede!    Așa  
 SBJV    leave.2.SG                      as more soon    so  
 a spus                      tata.  
 has.3.SG said                      father.the  
 ‘‘Leave here as soon as possible’’, father said so.’
- b. Dar nu va face                      el ce vrea                      îndelung,  
 but not will do.3 SG                      he what wants.3.SG                      for-long  
 așa cred eu!  
 so think.1.SG I  
 ‘He isn’t going to have his own way for long, or so I think.’
- (35) Să pleci                      cât mai repede, eu așa te                      sfătuiesc.  
 SBJV leave.2.SG    how more soon    I so                      you.2 SG.CL.ACC advise  
 ‘Leave as soon as you can, this is what I advise you.’

### 3.3. The complex pattern

What we have called the complex pattern is an instance of cataphoric/deictic use, where *așa* is doubled by a CP which is similar or identical with the intended sentence, spelling out the content of *așa*. *Așa* is often sentence initial, and the doubling sentence is a CP in its post-verbal merge position. As noticeable in the glosses English hardly allows the doubling of *so* by a full CP.

- (36) a. Așa a                      declarat,                      că va                      demisiona  
 so has.3.SG                      declared                      that would.3. SG                      resign  
 dacă nu câștigă procesul.  
 if not wins3.SG lawsuit.the.  
 ‘He declared that he would resign if he didn’t win the lawsuit.’
- b. Așa îmi                      vine                      uneori,  
 so me.1.SG.cl.DAT comes sometimes  
 să-mi                      iau                      lumea în cap. (DLR: 283)  
 SBJV me.1. SG.cl.DAT                      take                      world in head (idiom)  
 ‘Sometimes I feel like going into the wide world.’

Alternatively, the CP may merge in a topic position at the left periphery, preceding *așa* which is in Focus and occupies a fixed position. The opposite order *așa*+ CP is ungrammatical and should be underivable:

- (37) a. Că va demisiona imediat, așa a declarat.  
 that would.3.SG resign immediately so has declared  
 ‘That he would resign immediately, that’s what he declared.’
- b. \*Așa, că va demisiona imediat a declarat  
 so that would.3.SG resign immediately has declared

DLR [Tomul 1: 283] comments that (in examples of cataphoric use), the presence of *așa* in fronted position is a means of making a stronger assertion (“prin așa se afirmă cu tărie ceva”) and that fronted *așa* ‘so’ is used when a truth is being stated (fronted *așa* “se folosește când se enunță un adevăr”). This is probably a consequence of the fact that preverbal *așa* is focused and calls attention to the clause that it correlates with.

- (38) a. Așa să știți, că mâine-i sărbătoare!  
 so SBJV know.2.PL that tomorrow-is holiday  
 ‘This you should know, that tomorrow is a holiday.’

Summing up, the most characteristic property of CP- *așa* is the possibility of the doubling configuration, whereby *așa* is accompanied by a CP which evokes the propositional content which is retrieved.

*Așa* is categorized as a CP, relying on the principle that a *pro*-form and its antecedent should be of the same syntactic category. The configuration that we dubbed a “big CP” is the same as for the adjectival substitute. The head of the small clause bears a similarity feature and expresses the similarity or identity of the predicative content of CP-*așa* (in specifier position) with the content of the complement CP. As a specifier, *așa* may raise to a FocP (in the *v*P or CP periphery) an operator position, as shown above.

- (39)
- 
- ```

graph TD
    CP1[CP<e, st>] --- CP2[CP<e, st>]
    CP1 --- C_prime[C']
    CP2 --- asa[așa]
    asa --- op["[op]"]
    C_prime --- C[C]
    C --- sim["[+sim]"]
    C_prime --- CP3[CP<e, st>]
  
```

## 4. A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF AȘA ‘SO’ AS A CLAUSAL SUBSTITUTE

### 4.1. The semantic content of CPs

In the logical semantic tradition, finite CPs are *arguments* of verbs of attitudes (*believe, think, want, order, etc.*). The semantic type of a CP is that of proposition in extension  $\langle t \rangle$  (in extensional semantics) or a proposition in intension  $\langle s, t \rangle$  in intensional semantics. Also a generally accepted result of modal logic is that) propositions are sets of possible worlds (type  $\langle s, t \rangle$ ). Moreover, the standard analysis of propositional attitude verbs (e.g. Hintikka 1969) encourages translating CPs into propositions, so construed. Moulton (2015) argues that this view is too simple and has little explanatory power. In his

view, what is required is recovering a set of worlds (proposition) from individuals with propositional content (e.g. *ideea*, *belief*), a nominal category that we briefly present below.

On the syntactic side, the idea that CPs are always propositional arguments of predicates which c-select CP was also challenged. Stowell (1981) is the first who noticed that there is a handful of nouns, not related to verbs, like *idea*, *fact*, *proposition*, *story* which do not have argument structure but combine with CPs, nevertheless. The question is that of the status of the CP in this structure. Nouns that take clauses which are not their arguments have been called (*propositional*) *content nouns*. Stowell's class was further extended by formulating the generalization that *result nominals* (in the sense of Grimshaw 1990), which do not have arguments by definition, may also combine with *that* - clauses. In (40b) the deverbal noun *claim* can be followed by a CP but the impossibility of a nominal CP-substitute like *that/this* in this structure proves that the CP is not an argument of the head. In contrast, the *event nominalization* in (40d) can c-select nominal arguments, as well as clausal arguments, which can be substituted by nominals (40e). Here are examples of clause-taking result-nominalizations: *answer*, *assertion*, *belief*, *claim*, *comment*, *prediction*, *prophecy*, *theory*.

- (40) a. The idea/fact that pigs fly.  
 b. He claimed that/\*his claim of that  
 c. I believe the story/\* the belief of the story  
 d. But: I read the story/ my reading of the story/my reading of that  
 e. I read that the champion had won/ my reading that the champion had won.

The next important step in the reinterpretation of CPs comes from Kratzer's (2006) lexical decomposition analysis of clause-taking verbs into an eventuality component and a propositional content noun. This amounts to saying that clause-taking verbs *incorporate* (*cognate*) *content nouns*. The result of this assumption is that even when a CP combines with the verb, the semantic combination continues to be that of a content noun with a CP, a combination to which we now turn.

#### 4.1.1. The denotation of content nouns and CPs

Consider examples of the following type:

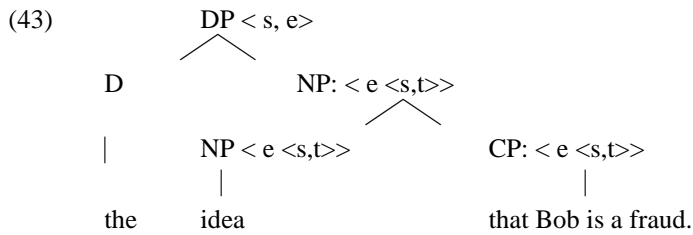
- (41) The idea/myth/story/rumour/fact is that Bob is a fraud.

As Potts (2002) argues, the *be*-predication in (41) is equative: what the DP subject denotes is also denoted by the CP. Now, if the CP denotes a set of possible worlds, then the DP subject would have to denote propositions too. But as remarked by Moulton (2016), literally, equating ideas and stories with sets of world cannot be correct since stories have *properties not shared by sets of worlds*. Stories can be long, boring, or funny, but propositions cannot be.

Semanticists (Kratzer 2006, Moulton 2013, Longenbough 2019) have settled on the view that nouns like *myth*, *story*, *rumour*, *belief*, *hope* etc, denote *individuals with propositional content* (corresponding variable  $x_c$ ). Even if they are things that can be mean, old, long and stupid, they still carry propositional content. Thus, *idea* in (42) is the class of contents that are ideas in some world  $w$ .

$$(42) \quad [[\text{idea}]] = \lambda x_c \lambda w. \text{idea}(x_c)(w)$$

Given the identity expressed in (41), it follows that CPs denote something similar and of the same semantic type with content nouns. Kratzer (2006) proposes that finite CPs are *predicates that spell out propositional contents*. They combine with the nouns with propositional content. Therefore, both Ns with propositional content and CPs have the same type and compose by Intensional Predicate Modification, as in (43).



the idea the content of which is that Bob is a fraud

Kratzer (2006) furthermore argues that it is the C which is a bridge from things with propositional content to propositions proper. Intuitively, the change from the classical analysis is that now the set of worlds representing some proposition  $p$ , is determined by the *content of the head noun*. This mode of projection involves the function CONT, which takes such a contentful individual at an evaluation world and returns the set of possible worlds compatible with the information content of that individual. According to Kratzer (2006) it is the C which houses this function: C takes a proposition  $p$ , a content argument  $x_c$ , and some world of evaluation argument  $w$ , and identifies  $p$  as the propositional content  $x_c$ . Content nouns thus have a double role. They enrich the content of propositions, which are now labelled by content nouns, e.g. *the belief that he came*, *the hope that he came*, *the decision that he should come*, etc. The content noun, a component of the verbal meaning accounts for the many syntactic and semantic difference between complements of different verb classes. At the same time, content nouns anchor propositions in the context of utterance, since what counts as an idea, a hope, a decision is determined by the context of utterance (i.e. the world of evaluation)

In conclusion content nouns and CPs have the same semantic  $\langle e, st \rangle$  type, and CPs express *properties* of content nouns.

#### 4.1.2. Do content nouns combine with clausal substitutes

Moulton (2012, 2016) argues that CP-substitutes like English *so* should be viewed as propositional content nouns, on the basis of their distribution. His main argument is that content nouns combine with CPs, but they don't combine with the CP substitutes *so*. In other words, CP substitutes like *so*, semantically carry propositional content, but do not express properties of propositional content nouns, as CPs do.

$$(44) \quad *my \text{ belief of } so.$$



This distribution does not extend to Romanian. Romanian content nouns *can* project DPs which include the CP substitute *așa* ‘so’. The only particular feature of these DPs is that the clausal substitute *așa* tends to appear mostly at the periphery of the DP, to the left of the determiner. Thus *așa* ‘so’ may appear in the simple pattern, used anaphorically, with reference to an antecedent sentence. It is also used in the complex pattern, where it is, expectedly doubled by a CP. In both examples below, the nouns are propositional content ones and combine with the CP substitute *așa* ‘so’.

- (45) a. Gramatica este înnăscută. Există și așa o ipoteză.  
 grammar.the is inborn exists.3.SG also so a hypothesis  
 ‘Grammar is inborn. There exists such a hypothesis, too.’  
 b. Nu pot face așa o promisiune, că voi returna  
 not can.1.SG make such a promise that will.1.SG return  
 suma în două luni.  
 sum.the in two months  
 ‘I can’t make such a promise, that I will repay the sum in two months.’

The important fact is that these examples warrant the conclusion that CP substitutes have the same denotation as full CPs, i.e. they denote properties of propositional contents.

#### 4.2. When *așa* ‘so’ combines with verbs

Since we have categorized *așa* ‘so’ as a CP, we will assume that CPs and CP substitutes have the same syntax.

Unlike content nouns, which do not have arguments, verbs do project argument slots and can syntactically integrate CPs as arguments. Semantically, however, verbs cannot directly combine with CPs because of type mismatch. Verbs are  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , while CPs are  $\langle e, st \rangle$ , as proposed above. Type mismatches are usually solved by movement, since a constituent that moves leaves behind an individual variable of type  $\langle e \rangle$ . Accordingly, the CP **moves from its complement position** and leaves behind an individual variable  $\langle e \rangle$ , which correctly saturates the V’s argument slot. The CP targets a Spec,VP modifier position. The individual variable left behind when the CP moves allows for the formation of a lambda abstractor (property), so that the VP can now be interpreted as a property of type  $\langle e, st \rangle$ . At this moment the CP and the VP lambda abstractor have come to have the same  $\langle e, st \rangle$  type and may combine by Intensional Predicate Modification, in the manner in which propositional content nouns combined with CPs.

The semantic combination relies on the fact that, as shown by Kratzer 2006), CP selecting verbs include in their semantic make-up, NPs that denote **propositional contents**, such as: *belief, desire, fact, idea, order, information*, etc. This allows the CP to be interpreted as a modifier of the implicit content noun, a modifier which spells out the content of the nominal (e.g. *the belief that Tom will win*). The final post verbal clausal position of the CP is the result of remnant movement of the VP to the left, but still within the  $vP$  (see Moulton 2013, 2015, Hinterhölzl 1999).

By assumption *aşa* ‘so’ is a CP substitute with the same CP syntax as just described. Semantically however, *aşa* ‘so’ is a place-holder for a propositional content. The combination of *aşa* with the V determines the domain of the worlds where the (intended) CP is evaluated, on the basis of the propositional content noun included in the verb.

Such an analysis would be incomplete, however, since it would ignore the essential component in the meaning of *aşa* ‘so’, *the fact that it expresses similarity up to identity between contents of the same semantic type*. As a propositional substitute, *aşa* ‘so’ expresses similarity between two propositional contents, one of which is supplied deictically. In the anaphoric use, the content of *aşa* ‘so’ is similar up to identity with the content of some antecedent proposition. In the cataphoric use the content of *aşa* is supplied by a quoted sentence or a CP which co-occurs with *aşa*. It is the contextually retrieved CP which is evaluated in the worlds determined by the propositional content noun included in the verb.

This interpretation is directly visible in Romanian (see (43) above) where the two propositional contents may co-occur. CP-*aşa* is ultimately interpreted in the same configuration as the adjective and the adverb *aşa* ‘so’. CP-*aşa* thus expresses the property of being similar in content with some other content identified in an antecedent or following clause.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

1. *Aşa* ‘so’ is a multicategorical syntactic head. Evidence was given above that *aşa* can be a degree head, an adjective, an adverb, and a CP. The syntactic diversity of this lexical item contrasts with its unique meaning, that of a demonstrative of similarity. *Aşa* ‘so’ expresses a relation of similarity between two entities, one of them contextually supplied. The content of *aşa* is that of a predicate of similarity, and this relation is stable across the different syntactic categories which *aşa* substitutes for. Thus, as an adjective it expresses the resemblance up to identity between two nominal properties. As a CP, *aşa* has the property of expressing similarity in content with some other (preceding or following) propositional content. The similarity-based semantic analysis is derivable from the complex syntax of *aşa* –phrases, where *aşa* ‘so’ co-occurs with a phrase that interprets it.

2. In the syntax of *aşa*-phrases, there is a distinction between a simple mono-phrasal configuration and a complex small-clause-like phrase, headed by a similarity predicate and whose semantic arguments are *aşa* in the specifier position and some ZP, which is the phrase matching the property expressed by *aşa*. The complex pattern is systematically available in Romanian, producing iconicity between syntax and interpretation.

3. *Aşa* ‘so’ has a (generally optional) operator feature which explains why *aşa* often surfaces in periphery positions, where it typically occupies a prosodically marked focus position.

4. The analysis of the clausal substitute *aşa* ‘so’ strengthens the view that complementizers turn clauses into predicates.

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