

# THE ROMANIAN PRESUMPTIVE AND ITS EVIDENTIAL NATURE

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**1. The topic:** This paper explores the semantics of the so-called presumptive mood in Romanian, with particular focus on its mapping to the morphological composition. Several assumptions are made regarding this mood: i). it encodes an indirect evidential type (Friedman 2000, 2004), ii). it has a more complex structure than a “canonical” perfect evidential, as described by Izvorski (1997) for other Balkan languages (Bulgarian) or Aksu-Koç (2000) for Turkish, c). its non-past/ non-future specification is contributed by the present participle, which makes use of an inherent continuous/progressive specification, added to a non-deictic perfect and a modal marker.

**2. The data:** The Romanian presumptive has never before been analyzed from the point of view of its formal representation. Traditional grammars (*The Academy Grammar 1966, 2006*) include this form among the non-indicative moods, besides the so-called conditional-optative and the subjunctive. What is puzzling about this "mood" is its multiple combinatorial capacity; more specifically, it can be formed from the perfect of either the conditional-optative (C.O.) or the subjunctive (SUBJ.), as well as from the perfect form of the future (in its popular or literary constructions). In Romanian, the so-called conditional-optative is realized, in its perfect forms, from idiosyncratic *have/want* auxiliary conjugations plus the infinitive of the verb *be* (*fi*), and the past participle; the perfect subjunctive has the marker *SĂ* followed by the infinitive *be* plus the past participle. Lastly, the literary perfect future (indicative) is a combination of the auxiliary *want* followed by the infinitive *be* plus the past participle; the "popular" future has a similar composition, with the exception that reduced forms of the auxiliary *want* are employed. What makes the presumptive morphologically peculiar is that, instead of the past participle, the present participle (gerund) is added, which in Romanian has the characteristic suffix *-nd*; examples (1-4) below illustrate these four possible structures of the presumptive:

A). Romanian presumptive (1<sup>st</sup> person illustrated here)

1). C.O.	perfect	}	+ <i>mirosind</i>	a	parfum
<i>aș</i>	<i>fi</i>				
2). Subjunctive	perfect				
<i>să</i>	<i>fi</i>				
3). Literary future	perfect	}	(smell, present participle	like	perfume)
<i>voi</i>	<i>fi</i>				
4). Popular future	perfect				
<i>oi</i>	<i>fi</i>				

= ‘I apparently have a scent of perfume *or* I might be having a scent of perfume (that's what people say)’

**3. Contexts of use:** In Romanian the presumptive generally indicates the availability of indirect evidence for the truth of a proposition. Following this line, the presumptive forms in (1-4) can be uttered by the speaker to indicate what other people are asserting (that is, that she has a scent of perfume), based on the evidence they might have; crucially, the speaker might not be able to endorse this information (for example, the speaker might not feel the scent of perfume). Nevertheless, the four morphological possibilities are distinguished by distinct contexts of use. Presumptive forms constructed out of the C.O. are the most frequent,

while the subjunctive ones are restricted to interrogative environments, with or without an interrogative particle as in (5 a):

- 5). *Presumptive formed from the subjunctive*  
a). (Oare) *să fi existând* strigoi?  
(I wonder) exist. Presumptive ghosts  
'I wonder, is it possible that ghosts exist?'

The presumptive is also possible in Romanian in embedded clauses introduced by (impersonal) *verba dicendi*, as in example (6) exhibiting a presumptive formed from a C.O.:

- 6). *Presumptive in embedded sentences*  
Se spune că *ar fi având* și această pajură.  
SE. impersonal say.3.sg. that have.Presumptive.3.sg. even this eagle.  
'They say that he apparently has this eagle, too'. (based on indirect evidence; they have probably seen the eagle, but I, as the speaker, cannot endorse such information).

**4. Analysis:** A minimal semantic account of the Romanian presumptive has to explain where the indirect evidential meaning comes from. An answer this question starts from the observation that, similarly to some perfect evidentials exhibited by Bulgarian (Izvorski 1997) or Turkish (Aksu-Koç&Slobin 1986), which also take a perfect morpheme, the Romanian ones are never interpreted as present perfect; as such, they do not accept adverbs generally preferred by the perfect (McCoard 1978, Izvorski 1997): *at present, up till now, lately*. Following Izvorski (1997), indirect evidentials are analyzed in this paper as epistemic modals, which have a more restricted domain of quantification than regular epistemic operators. The temporal and the aspectual behavior of the Romanian perfect morpheme suggests that it carries a strictly modal contribution, in a similar pattern to Bulgarian or Turkish. In the domain of evidentiality, the perfect is considered to be the spell-out of an EXCLUSION (Iatridou 1996/2000) feature, responsible for extending the set of possible worlds quantified over beyond the set of epistemically accessible worlds, and giving rise to the evidential semantics. Izvorski's (1997) analysis carried in a possible world semantics framework also entails that the present (participle) is crucial in constructing the modal interpretation, by imposing the salient relations between possible worlds. The empirical evidence from Romanian reveals, nevertheless, that an account of evidentiality also has to explain the presence of the modals (the conditional, the subjunctive and the future, the latter always back-shifted to the present). Although conditionals and subjunctives carry an indirect evidential interpretation in many languages, not many formal analyses have been formulated which could explain their contribution. The present paper argues that the modal base is a language-specific constraint, due to the peculiarities of Romanian. First of all, the present perfect does not exist in the language as an independent deictic tense/aspect; moreover, due to the lack of *consecution temporum*, Romanian tenses are interpreted deictically; thirdly, the conditional never receives as past / future in the past specification (see also D'hulst et al. 2004), and the subjunctive is constructed from an uninflected particle. The implications of such featural configurations for Romanian (and for indirect evidentiality, in particular) are that the present perfect morpheme needs the contribution of a modal base in order to attain the non-deictic interpretation.

**5. Conclusion:** This preliminary analysis of the presumptive in Romanian illustrates not only a different type of evidential in the Balkan area, but might also provide hints into other understudied grammatical phenomena in Romanian, like counterfactuality, the semantics of the future, and the subjunctive. Moreover, the presence of an indirect evidential constructed from a future, which is rare cross-linguistically, may also shed light into the nature of evidentiality and its possible morphological incarnations in human language.