

**INTRODUCTION.** It is well-known that in many languages certain classes of *structural objects* (normally including animates, specifics, or a combination thereof - Bossong 1991, Aissen 2003, Comrie 1989, etc., see also 6) must be introduced by an obligatory marker, under an instantiation of *differential object marking* (DOM). This paper addresses a less discussed DOM context – ‘unexpected’ DOM morphology in constructions that look like (equality) comparatives of the type illustrated in (1), (2) from Nepali:

- (1) Raaj-le aalu-<sup>\*/??</sup>(laay) (pani) bhaat jastai pakaucha. Nepali  
 Raj-ERG potato-DOM also rice like/as cook.3.M.SG  
 LIT. ‘Raj cooks (the) potato(es) like/as rice (as he cooks the rice).’ [<sup>\*/??</sup>aalu laay pakaucha]
- (2) Raaj-le lekh-<sup>\*/??</sup>(laay) (pani) upanyash jastai padcha.  
 Raj-ERG article-DOM also novel like/as read.3.M.SG  
 LIT. ‘Raj reads an/the article as a/the novel.’ (as he reads a/the novel) Nepali

Interestingly, equality comparative structures that are similar to (1) and (2) also require DOM across Romance - another family where DOM morphology is normally possible only with (specific) animates:

- (3) Ama (\*a) los libros como \*(a) su vida. Spanish  
 loves DOM the.PL book.PL as DOM his life  
 LIT. ‘He loves the books as his life.’ (as he/one loves his life) [<sup>\*/??</sup>ama a su vida]
- (4) L-a aruncat ca \*(pe) o minge. Romanian  
 CLT.3.ACC.SG.M-has thrown as DOM a.F.SG ball  
 LIT. ‘He has thrown it as a ball’ (as one throws a ball) [<sup>\*/??</sup>a aruncat pe o minge]

Just like in Romance, DOM is obligatory in Nepali when the comparison holds between VPs; what is compared in (1) are two instances of cooking – cooking potatoes and cooking the rice. Romance DOM is required only on the comparison pivot, irrespective of animacy; the antecedent in the matrix cannot take DOM, if it is inanimate (3). In Nepali we see DOM on the antecedent (1, 2), but patterns in which DOM appears on the pivot are also possible, as illustrated in (5):

- (5) Raaj-le aalu bhaat laay jastai pakaucha.  
 Raj-ERG potato rice DOM like cook.3.M.SG  
 LIT. ‘Raj cooks (the) potato(es) like/as rice (as he cooks the rice).’

The relevance of DOM in such contexts is at least twofold. **First**, although neglected in both formal and descriptive accounts alike, the systematicity of comparative DOM morphology across various language families points to a general property which requires more detailed investigation. **Second**, despite the challenges DOM comparatives pose for formal theories of differential marking and comparatives alike, they also have the potential to provide non-trivial disambiguation between various mechanics, and crucial insights into the very nature of this process. For example, they can also help us understand why in those instances in which DOM can be omitted, the reading is rather that of a *secondary predicate* on a DP (i.e., for 1 indicating *potatoes that are like rice*, instead of being cooked like rice). This paper aims at both a descriptive contribution (integrating Nepali within the cross-linguistic landscape, and illustrating previously unnoticed generalizations) and a formal implementation (building on *conjunctive* analyses of DOM, and adjusting *small clause* accounts for comparatives).

**DOM COMPARATIVES UNDER VARIOUS IMPLEMENTATIONS OF DM. I** The ‘puzzling’ requirement of DOM even on *inanimates* (which could also be interpreted non-specific, under the most prominent reading in 2, 4, etc.) is highly problematic for traditional implementations in terms of *scales* (6). These see DOM as a disambiguation strategy for those objects that have prototypical subject properties like *animacy*, etc. (Aissen 2003, Lambrecht 1994, Bossong 1991, Comrie 1989, Næss 2004, 2006, etc.). Such scales normally leave inanimate/non-specific DPs outside of the scope of DOM. Adding the ‘comparative’ to the scale would not amount to more than a simple stipulation.

- (6) 1/2 > 3 > proper name > human > animate > || inanimate, etc.

**II** The same type of problem is patent in functionalist approaches where DOM is formalized as the reflex of information structure at the VP level, as *secondary topic/givenness* (Darlymple and Nikolaeva 2011, etc.). But assimilating the comparative pivot to a secondary topic cannot explain why some comparatives do not allow DOM on the pivot, as seen in (7):

- (7) Au vopsit uși-le mai urât de-cât pereți-i/\*pe pereți.  
 have.3.PL painted door.the.PL more ugly.ADV de-how much wall.the.PL/DOM walls  
 LIT. ‘They have painted the doors more ugly(ly) than the walls’ Romanian

**III)** A more careful investigation also indicates that such constructions are problematic even for (current) formal syntactic theories of DOM which could avoid the problem with inanimates. For example, for López (2012) a *Short scrambling* operation which moves the object to an intermediate position above V but below *v* is the core of adpositional DOM cross-linguistically:

(8) López (2012) – [<sub>VP</sub> EA *v* [<sub>OP</sub> DOM α [<sub>VP</sub> V <DO>]]]

Despite numerous advantages, one major problem is that the tests (binding from the DO into the EA, etc.) López uses to diagnose this position do not go through in Nepali (as well as some Romance).

**TOWARDS AN ANALYSIS.** A battery of diagnostics (Table 1) signal that *as* comparatives fail several phrasal properties. For example, in Nepali (just like across Romance), grammatical roles are tracked:

(9) Raaj-le/\*laay      Mary-le/\*laay      jastai      bhaat      pakaucha.  
 Raj-ERG/DOM      Mary-ERG/DOM      as      rice      cook.3.M.SG

INTENDED: ‘Raj cooks the rice as Mary.’ (as Mary cooks the rice)

	<u>PHRASAL</u> ( <i>Napoli 1983, Hankamer 1973, Bhatt &amp; Takahashi 2011, etc.</i> )	<u>REDUCED CLAUSAL</u> ( <i>Merchant 2009, Lechner 2001, etc.</i> )	<u>SMALL CLAUSE</u> ( <i>Pancheva 2005, etc.</i> )	<u>DM</u>
Only one pivot	YES	NO	YES	<b>YES</b>
Only DP pivot	YES	NO	YES	<b>YES</b>
Inherent Case	YES	NO	YES	<b>NO</b>
Pied-piping	YES	NO	YES	<b>NO</b>
Reflexive binding	YES	NO	YES	<b>??NO</b>
Negative concord	YES	NO	YES	<b>??NO</b>
Adjective head	YES	NO	YES	<b>NO</b>

TABLE 1. DOM VS. OTHER COMPARATIVES

At the same time the table illustrates a mixed behaviour. Examining first the DOM-pivot strategy (5), we propose that a *small clause structure* (projecting at most up to *vP*, see also recent discussion in Wurmbrand 2015, etc.) in the comparative derives these characteristics, as well as DOM. Against Pancheva (2005), we show that *small clause* comparatives are not restricted to the phrasal type only.

(10) ....[ Op [<sub>VP</sub> EA [[[Obj V] *v*] Top]] as]

Another important observation is that in many languages comparative DOM is only possible with those configurations which require *obligatory ellipsis*. For ellipsis to be implemented, two conditions have been shown to be necessary in structures similar to the comparatives under discussion here (in order to link the relevant categories to the discourse, see also López 2009, Nicolae 2013, etc.): i) *VP topicalization* (‘for a VP to elide, it must first topicalize’, Johnson 2001, etc.); ii) object *topicalization* (Prince 1990, Pancheva 2012, Bhatt and Takahashi 2005, etc.) or *focus* (Reglero 2007, Brucart 2003, etc.). Following Alberecht and Haegeman (2012), we assume that V raising to a lower Topic position below *vP*, satisfies the first condition. However, as the structure does not contain a high Topic position above *vP* (following recent discussions in Moulton 2012, and Sportiche 2005 which have shown that small clauses lack quantificational/functional layers above *vP/aP* – against Basilico 2003), object topicalization cannot take place. As a last resort operation, the Object exceptionally adjoins the Op via an UnderMerge process (Sportiche 2005, Pesetsky 2014, etc.). The process reminds the last-resort activation of a licenser, as in (11) (Levin and Massam 1985, Bobaljik 1993, Laka 1993, 2000, Rezac 2011, etc.) - even though in this configuration the problem does not strictly appear to be one of Case per se.

(11) *A (secondary) licenser is activated iff the derivation will otherwise not converge.*

This allows ‘linking to the discourse’, but also introduces a K layer above the DP, thus creating the context for *differential marking* which has generally been shown to (only) affect KPs. The *small clause* account can also explain why in these constructions temporal information is underspecified at most (see also Heim 1985 for similar examples like *He loved him more than a brother*). The antecedent-DOM strategy can be derived under the assumption that the matrix object is part of a correlative (Bhatt 2003, etc.)

**SELECT REFERENCES.** Aelbrecht, L. and L. Haegeman. 2012. VP-Ellipsis is not licensed by VP-topicalization. *LI* 43 (4): 591-614. Bhatt, R. 2003. Locality in correlatives. *NLLT* 21 (3): 485-541. López, L. 2012. *Indefinite objects*. MIT Press. Schikowski, R. 2013. *Object conditioned differential marking in Chintang and Nepali*. University of Zurich.