
Differential Comparatives: A Comparative Study of Pashto and Hindi/Urdu

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Abstract

The major goal of this study is to explore differential comparatives in Pashto. This is done while keeping the behavior of differential comparatives in Hindi/Urdu (H/U) (Bhatt & Homer 2018) and English before us. The analysis of differential comparatives is carried out, first, in terms of differences between bare comparatives and differential comparatives, and then, in terms of differential comparatives as a constituent, argument structure restrictions, and adjacency restrictions. Since Pashto is a TAM based split-ergative Indo-Iranian language, therefore, the expectation is that the differential comparatives in Pashto would be a replica of differential comparatives in H/U in terms of different features; however, after this study, it is established that there are substantial differences between Pashto and H/U. Consequently, an argument structure is proposed for Pashto, which is completely different from the one proposed for H/U.

Keywords: Differential Comparatives; Pashto; Argument Structure; Adjacency Restrictions

Introduction

This paper studies differential comparatives in Pashto. Differential comparatives refer to comparatives that have a measure phrase. Since, they have remained an unexplored topic in Pashto grammar, therefore, this paper makes use of Bhatt and Homer's (2018) study of Hindi/Urdu (henceforth H/U) differential comparatives as a touchstone for differential comparatives in Pashto. In this study, differential comparatives in Pashto are explored from four angles, namely, differences between bare comparatives and differential comparatives, differential comparative as a constituent, argument structure restriction, and adjacency restriction, while keeping the details of differential comparatives in H/U and English in the background. Like H/U (Bhatt & Homer 2018), it is shown for Pashto that the syntax of comparatives without differentials is quite different from the syntax of comparatives with differentials. It is followed by an analysis to determine whether the order (Num Noun more) in Pashto forms a constituent or not. To affect that analysis, Bhatt and Homer's (2018) proposal that (Num Noun *zyada*) plus postposition forms a constituent is used. Again, Pashto differential comparatives are analyzed with reference to argument structure restrictions and adjacency restrictions. While for H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) have proposed that differential comparatives are only possible with internal arguments and arguments carrying visible case marking, it is shown that in Pashto, differential comparatives are possible on both internal and external arguments and arguments with visible and invisible case marked nominals. Similarly, for H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) have proposed that the phrase (Num Noun *zyada*) do not form a constituent for the internal argument; the (Num Noun) form the noun phrase/argument phrase while the *zyada* combines directly with the verb. However, for Pashto differential comparatives, it is proposed that the phrase 'Num more Noun' is a constituent and combines with the verb as an argument. Only in situations where adverbial differential meaning is conveyed, the combination 'Num Noun more' is acceptable; for nominal differential comparative purposes, the combination 'Num Noun more'

does not work. Thus, nominal differential comparatives in Pashto are structurally different from nominal differential comparative in H/U.

The paper is laid out as follows: Section 1 introduces the topic. Section 2 gives a brief literature review of differential comparatives in general and in Pashto in particular. Section 3 gives some details about comparatives without differentials in Pashto. Section 4 has details about differential comparatives in Pashto. Section 5 tries to find out whether ‘Num Noun more’ is a constituent or not. Section 6 tries to find out whether differential comparatives in Pashto have some argument structure restrictions or not. Section 7 tries to find out whether differential comparatives follow some adjacency rules or not. Section 8 proposes a syntactic structure for differential comparative in Pashto. Section 9 concludes the paper.

Literature Review

Differential comparatives have been discussed from different angles for quite some time. However, they have not been that frequent part of academic discourse in Syntax as is the case with some other topics. At the same time, differential comparatives have been an important topic in Semantics. Some of the important efforts that have been made to explain and analyze differential comparatives from different angles are Stavrou, (2003), Schwarzschild (2005, 2008), Xiang (2005), Brasoveanu (2008), Rett (2008b, 2014), Solt (2009), Sawada and Grano (2011), Bhatt and Takahashi (2011), Grano and Kennedy (2012), Bhatt and Homer (2018, 2019), Jäger (2019), Hu (2024), Zevakhina and Shchipkova (2024), Liu (2025).

As far as differential comparatives in Pashto are concerned, a look at Pashto grammars (Raverty, 1855; Penzl 1955; Lorimer, 1902; Roos-Keppl, 1922; Shafeev, 1964; Mackenzie, 1987; Khattak, 1988; Rashteen, 1994; Zayar, 2005) reveal that they have not been discussed from any angle, let alone generativism or any other modern linguistic framework.

Comparatives Without Differentials in Pashto

To understand the syntax of differential comparatives in Pashto, let us first start with comparatives without differentials in Pashto (for different aspects of Pashto and Hindi/Urdu grammar and theoretical issues please refer to Masood (2014, 2021, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d, 2025e). This will enable us to see the differences between Pashto comparatives with differentials and Pashto comparatives without differentials. Given below are different argumental positions where bare comparatives could be used in Pashto:

Direct object

1. *Erika day Peter na zyath kitabona wolwastal.*
Erika from Peter from more books read.PST
‘Erika read more books than Peter.’

Indirect object

2. *Erika day Peter na zyath studentano tha penona warkrəl.*
Erika from Peter from more students to pens give.PST
‘Erika gave more pens to students than Peter.’

Adjunct

3. *Erika day Peter na zyatha kitchen tha laḷa.*
Erika from Peter from more kitchen to go.PST
‘Erika went to the kitchen more than Peter.’

Subjects of Transitives

4. *Nun day paroon na zyath khalqo penona math kḷal.*
Today from yesterday from more people pens break do.PST
‘More people broke pens today than yesterday.’

Subjects of Unergatives

5. *Saba ba day nun na zyath khalaq zi.*
 Tomorrow will from today from more people go.PRS
 ‘More people will go tomorrow than today.’

Unaccusatives

6. *Saba ba day nan na zyath khalq prevzi.*
 Tomorrow will from today from more people fall.PRS
 ‘More people will fall tomorrow than today.’

As can be seen from the examples above, the comparatives on nominals can appear in a range of syntactic positions. Thus, here, they behave the same as is reported for H/U (Bhatt & Homer, 2018) and English (Bhatt & Homer, 2019; Takahashi, 2011), except that in H/U and Pashto the comparative part follows the noun while in English it precedes the noun.

Differential Comparatives

Both adjectival and nominal differential comparatives can be found in Pashto. As far as adjectival differential comparatives in Pashto are concerned, the comparative degree head can be covert. Thus, they resemble their H/U counterparts.

7. *Pindai da Islamabad na las meela (zyatha) ləray da.*
 Rawalpindi from Islamabad from ten miles more away be.PRS
 ‘Rawalpindi is ten miles (more) away than Islamabad.’
8. *Rinā Minā-se do inč (zyādā) lambi hε.*
 Rinā.F Minā-than two inch more tall.F be.PRS.SG
 ‘Rinā is 2 inches taller than Minā.’ (Bhatt & Homer 2018: p. 31)

In Pashto adjectival differential comparatives, if the order ‘Num Noun more’ is changed, it results in ungrammaticality:

9. *Pindai da Islamabad na las meela (zyatha) ləray da.*
 Rawalpindi from Islamabad from ten miles more away be.PRS
 ‘Rawalpindi is ten miles (more) away than Islamabad.’
10. **Pindai da Islamabad na las (zyatha) meela ləray da.*
 Rawalpindi from Islamabad from ten more miles away be.PRS
 ‘Rawalpindi is ten (more) miles away than Islamabad.’

As can be seen from the example above, change of ‘*las meela zyatha*’ to ‘*las zyatha meela*’ has resulted in an ungrammatical construction (lack of intended meaning). Bhatt and Homer (2018) generalize that adjectival differential comparatives in H/U and English are the same: the change in order of ‘2 inches more’ does not affect the grammaticality of the construction. However, it seems that even H/U and English behave like Pashto, when it comes to adjectival differential comparatives:

11. The second cap is two dollars more expensive than the first one.
12. *The second cap is two more dollars expensive than the first one.
 (Intended meaning not available)
13. *Rinā Minā-se do inč (zyādā) lambi hε.*
 Rinā.F Minā-than two inch more tall.F be.PRS.SG
 ‘Rinā is 2 inches taller than Minā.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 31)
14. **Rina Mina-se do zyada inch lambi hai.*
 Rina Mina-than two more inches tall be.PRS
 (The intended meaning is not available as is the case with Pashto and English).

In the first English example, the canonical ‘two dollars more’ order is used and the construction is grammatical. In the second English example, the intended meaning is unavailable due to change in order of ‘two dollars more’ to ‘two more dollars’. In the first H/U example above, the canonical ‘2 inches more’ is

used and the adjectival differential comparative construction is grammatical. However, in the second example, the order is changed to ‘2 more inches’ and it has resulted in the ungrammaticality of the construction, as the intended meaning is not available. This substantiates the point that both H/U and English behave more like Pashto when it involves adjectival differential comparatives.

Nominal Differential Comparatives

For Pashto nominal differential comparatives consider the following examples: the first one has the canonical ‘Num Noun more’ order and the second one has a changed order of ‘Num more Noun’.

15. **Mina day Rina na dwa kitabona zyath wolwastəl.*
 Mina from Rina from two books more read.PST
 ‘Mina read two books more than Rina.’

16. *Mina day Rina na dwa zyath kitabona wolwastəl.*
 Mina from Rina from two more books read.PST
 ‘Mina read two more books than Rina.’

Both the constructions are grammatical and are frequently used; however, the intended differential meaning is conveyed by the second one example. To elaborate this point further, the first example conveys the meaning that the number of books remains the same (i.e. two) but the amount of their reading has increased while the second example conveys the meaning that two more/additional books have been read, in addition to the books already there.

Now, here is the interesting point that in H/U, the combination ‘Num Noun *zyada*’ conveys the comparative differential meaning and the combination ‘Num *zyada* Noun’ is unacceptable; however, in Pashto the opposite of it is there. The ‘Num Noun *zyath*’ does not convey the differential comparative meaning while the combination ‘Num *zyath* Noun’ conveys the differential comparative meaning. For comparison purposes, the following two examples are reproduced from Bhatt and Homer (2018). They think that the second construction is ungrammatical: it lacks the intended meaning. It is grammatical only if read without differential comparative meaning:

17. *Rīnā-ne Mīnā-se do kitābē zyādā parhī.*
 Rīnā-ERG Mīnā-than two books.F.PL more read.pfv.F.PL
 Intended: ‘Rina read 2 more books than Mina.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 31)

18. **Rīnā-ne Mīnā-se do zyādā kitābē parhī.*
 Rīnā-ERG Mīnā-than two more books.F.PL read-pfv.F.PL
 Intended: ‘Rina read 2 more books than Mina.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 31)

Whether ‘Num More Noun’ A Constituent or Not

For H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) propose that it does not have ‘Num more Noun’ differential comparative constructions; rather, it has only ‘Num Noun more’ differential comparative constructions. However, even the ‘Num Noun more’ is not a constituent. Thus, in this respect it is different from English, which has not only ‘Num more Noun’ and ‘Num Noun more’ differential comparatives but the ‘Num Noun more’ serves as a constituent as well. To prove their point that even the acceptable ‘Num Noun more’ is not a constituent in H/U; they suggest a test for this purpose: a postposition cannot be attached to the differential comparative. If attached to the differential comparative, then that construction becomes ungrammatical:

19. **Rīnā-ne Mīnā-se do kitābō zyādā-ko parhā.*
 Rīnā-ERG Mīnā-than two book.F.PL.OBL more-DOM read.PFV.DEF
 Intended: ‘Rina read 2 more books than Mina.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 32)

For Pashto, as already shown that the differential comparative meaning is only conveyed by the ‘Num more Noun’ combination, therefore, we will try to find out whether it is a constituent or not. For this purpose, the test of postposition attachment is applied to Pashto.

20. *Jibran day Rina na dwa zyath kitabono banday lekal wok,ɟal.*
 Jibran from Rina from two more books on write do.PST
 ‘Jibran wrote on two more books than Rina.’

21. *Jibran day Suhana na dwa zyatho kasano tha chanda*
werk,ɟa.
 Jibran from Suhana from two more persons to charity
 give
 ‘Jibran gave charity to two more persons than Suhana.’

As can be seen in the two examples above, the phrase ‘Num *zyatho* Noun’ is a syntactic constituent in Pashto as the postposition is able to attach to it. An additional question can be raised as to what could be the situation of pre/postposition attachment with the phrase ‘Num Noun *zyatho*’ which has no nominal differential comparative meaning; rather, it has adverbial comparative reading.

22. *??Jibran day Rina na dwa kitabono zyath banday lekal wok,ɟal.*
 Jibran from Rina from two books more on write do.PST
 ‘Jibran wrote on two books more than Rina.’

23. **Jibran day Rina na dwa kitabona zyath banday wolwastal.*
 Jibran from Rina from two on more books read.PST

As can be seen from the two examples above, they are also unacceptable. The first example shows that the postposition could be marginally attached to the phrase but the real issue is with the phrase itself. It has ‘Num Noun more’ construction. In the second example, no pre/postposition can be attached with the phrase.

An Argument Structure Restriction

For H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) propose, “differential comparatives cannot be formed on positions that are overtly case marked” (p. 33); however, after having carried out their analysis they formulate a generalization, as given below:

Differential comparatives can only be formed on the internal arguments of verbs – hence direct objects of transitive verbs and subjects of unaccusatives or on the event argument itself. A further condition is that the arguments cannot appear with overt case marking. (p. 36)

For argument structure restrictions, different constructions in Pashto are considered to see whether the generalizations formulated above hold good or otherwise:

Transitive Subjects

24. *Nan day paroon na dray kasan zyath beray khori.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more berries eat.PRS
 ‘Today three persons more are eating berries than yesterday.’

25. *Nan ba day paroon na dray kasan zyath beray okhri.*
 Today will from yesterday from three persons more berries eat.PRS
 ‘Today three persons more will eat berries than yesterday.’

26. *Nan day paroon na dray kasano zyatho beray okwa,ɟay.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more barriers eat.PST
 ‘Today three persons more ate barriers than yesterday.’

Unergative Subjects

27. *Nan day paroon na dray kasan zyath zi.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more go.PRS
 ‘Today three persons more are going than yesterday.’

28. *Nan ba day paroon na dray kasan zyath la,ɟ shi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three persons more go do.PRS
 ‘Today three persons more will go than yesterday.’

29. *Nan day paroon na dray kasan zyath la.ɟəl.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more go.PST
 'Today three persons more went than yesterday.'

Unaccusative Subjects

30. *Nan day paroon na dray kasan zyath prevazi.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more fall.PRS
 'Today three persons more are falling than yesterday.'
31. *Nan ba day paroon na dray kasan zyath prevazi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three persons more fall.PRS
 'Today three persons more will fall than yesterday.'
32. *Nan day paroon na dray kasan zyath prevathəl.*
 Today from yesterday from three persons more fall.PST
 'Today three persons more fell than yesterday.'

Existential Constructions

33. *Nan day paroon na dray darjay garmi zyatha da.*
 Today from yesterday from three degrees hotness more be.PRS
 'It is three degrees hotter today than yesterday.'
34. *Nan ba day paroon na dray darjay garmi zyatha wi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three degrees hotness more be.FUT
 'It will be three degrees hotter today than yesterday.'
35. *Nan day paroon na dray darjay garmi zyatha wa.*
 Today from yesterday from three degrees hotnessmore be.PST
 'It was three degrees hotter today than yesterday.'

Possessive Constructions

36. *Da Peter pen da Erika pen na dway ropai (zyath) gran day.*
 GEN Peter pen GEN Erika pen from two rupees more costly be.PRS
 'Peter's pen is three rupees costlier than Erika's.'
37. *Da Peter pen ba da Erika pen na dway ropai (zyath) gran wi.*
 GEN Peter pen will GEN Erika pen from two rupees more costly be.FUT
 'Peter's pen will be three rupees costlier than Erika's.'
38. *Da Peter pen da Erika pen na dway ropai (zyath) gran wə.*
 GEN Peter pen GEN Erika pen from two rupees more costly be.PST
 'Peter's pen was three rupees costlier than Erika's.'

Transitive Objects

39. *Hagha nan day paroon na dray kasano zyatho tha paisay werkawi.*
 He today from yesterday from three persons more to money give.PRS
 'He gives money to three persons more today than yesterday.'
40. *Hagha ba nan day paroon na dray kasano zyatho tha paisay werkawi.*
 He will today from yesterday from three persons more to money give.PRS
 'He will give money to three persons more today than yesterday.'
41. *Haghə nan day paroon na dray kasano zyatho tha paisay warkɟay.*
 He today from yesterday from three persons more to money give.PST
 'He gave money to three persons more today than yesterday.'

As far as case system in Pashto is concerned, nominative case bearing nominals are unmarked while accusative/ ergative case bearing nominals are case marked. Nominative case is borne by subjects in the

present and future tenses and objects in the past tense. Accusative case is borne by objects in the present and future tenses and ergative case by subjects in the past tense. As can be seen from the examples above, the grammaticality and ungrammaticality of the arguments does not arise from the fact that an argument carries a visible case marking or it does not. Thus, the first part of Bhatt and Homer (2018) generalization, namely, “the arguments cannot appear with overt case marking.” does not hold for Pashto. Again, the other part of their generalization that “differential comparatives can only be formed on the internal arguments of verbs-” does not hold well for Pashto: in Pashto, there is no restriction on differential comparatives with reference to internal and external arguments when it comes to grammaticality. Hence, it can be concluded that differential comparatives in Pashto do not follow any restrictions with reference to argument structure.

An Adjacency Restriction

Bhatt and Homer (2018) propose an adjacency restriction for H/U differential comparatives: “differential comparative interpretations are only available if the differential phrase immediately precedes the *zyādā* and the *zyādā* immediately precedes the verb.”(p. 37). This restriction is strict for nominal differential comparatives and a bit flexible for adverbial comparatives. For adverbial differential comparatives, they give the following two examples. Let us see how the adjacency restriction works for both Pashto adjectival and nominal differential comparatives.

Adverbial Comparatives

Hindi/Urdu

Zyādā XP verb:

42. *Tīnā Mīnā-se is sāl zyādā Dillī gayī.*
 Tīnā.F Mīnā-than this year more Delhi go.PFV.F
 ‘Tina went to Delhi to a greater extent than Mina.’

XP Zyādā verb:

43. *Tīnā Mīnā-se is sāl Dillī zyādā gayī.*
 Tīnā.F Mīnā-than this year Delhi more go.PFV.F
 ‘Tina went to Delhi to a greater extent than Mina.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 37)

As can be seen from the examples above, the shifting of place between *zyāda* and *Dilli* does not make any significant difference. For Pashto adverbial differential comparatives, we consider the following three examples in the three tenses with nothing intervening between the ‘Num *zyath* Noun’ and the verb, then a three examples where something is inserted between the ‘Num *zyath* Noun’ phrase and the verb, then a three examples where something is inserted inside the ‘Num *zyath* Noun’ phrase and nothing intervenes between the phrase and the verb.

Pashto

Num More Noun Verb:

44. *Peter London tha day Erika na dway zyathay ghanṭay zi.*
 Peter London to from Erika from two more hours go.PRS
 ‘Peter goes to London for two hours more than Erika.’
45. *Peter London tha ba day Erika na dway zyathay ghanṭay zi.*
 Peter London to will from Erika from two more hours go.PRS
 ‘Peter will go to London for two hours more than Erika.’
46. *Peter London tha day Erika na dway zyathay ghanṭay laḷo.*
 Peter London to from Erika from two more hours go.PST
 ‘Peter went to London for two hours more than Erika.’

Num More Noun XP Verb:

47. *Peter day Erika na dway zyathay ghanstay London tha zi.*
 Peter from Erika from two more hours London to go.PRS

‘Peter goes to London for two hours more than Erika.’

48. *Peter ba day Erika na dway zyathay ghanstay London tha zi.*
 Peter will from Erika from two more hours London to
 go.PRS

‘Peter will go to London for two hours more than Erika.’

49. *Peter day Erika na dway zyathay ghanstay London tha la.ɔ.*
 Peter from Erika from two more hours London to go.PST

‘Peter went to London for two hours more than Erika.’

Num XP More Noun Verb

50. **Peter day Erika na dway London tha zyathay ghanstay zi.*
 Peter from Erika from two London to more hours go.PRS

51. **Peter ba day Erika na dway London tha zyathay ghanstay zi.*
 Peter will from Erika from two London to more hours
 go.PRS

52. **Peter day Erika na dway London tha zyathay ghanstay la.ɔ.*
 Peter from Erika from two London to more hours go.PST

In the first three examples above, nothing intervenes between the differential phrase and the verb and the constructions are grammatically acceptable. In the second set of three examples, a phrase *London tha* ‘to London’ is inserted between the differential comparative and the verb; still the constructions are grammatically acceptable. In the third set of three examples, the phrase *London tha* ‘to London’ is inserted inside the differential comparative and the constructions are ungrammatical. This shows that the phrase ‘Num more Noun’ in Pashto behaves as a constituent and the ‘more’ part of the constituent does not combine directly with the verb, unlike H/U where it is proposed that the *zyada* directly combines with the verb.

Nominal Comparatives

For nominal differential comparatives, Bhatt and Homer (2018) demonstrate the role of adjacency by inserting an XP between the phrase ‘Num Noun more’ and the verb and then inserting XP between Num Noun and more. However, in both cases, the constructions become ungrammatical.

[Three boys] *zyādā* Verb:

53. *Āj kal-se (tīn laṛke) zyādā ā-ye the.*
 Today yesterday-than three boys more come-PFV.M.PL be.PST.M.PL
 ‘Three more boys had come today than yesterday.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p.37)

[Three boys] *zyādā* XP Verb:

54. **āj kal-se (tīn laṛke) zyādā yahā ā-ye the.*
 Today yesterday-than three boys more here come-PFV.M.PL be.PST.M.PL
 Intended but unavailable: ‘Three more boys had come here today than yesterday.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 37)

[Three boys] XY *Zyādā* Verb:

55. **āj kal-se (tīn laṛke) yahā zyādā ā-ye the.*
 Today yesterday three boys here more come-PFV.M.PL be.PST.M.PL
 Intended but unavailable: ‘Three more boys had come here today than yesterday.’ (Bhatt & Homer, 2018, p. 38)

For Pashto nominal differential comparatives, the same process is repeated; in the first set of examples,

nothing intervenes between the differential comparative phrase and the verb; in the second set of examples an XP intervenes between the differential comparative and the verb, and in the third set of examples an XP is inserted inside the differential comparative.

Num more Noun Verb

56. *Nan day paroon na dray zyath jahazona razi.*
 Today from yesterday from three more airplanes come.PRS
 ‘Today three more airplanes are coming than yesterday.’
57. *Nan ba day paroon na dray zyath jahazona razi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three more airplanes come.PRS
 ‘Today three more airplanes will come than yesterday.’
58. *Nan day paroon na dray zyath jahazona raghləl.*
 Today from yesterday from three more airplanes come.PST
 ‘Today three more airplanes came than yesterday.’

Num more Noun XP Verb:

59. *Nan day paroon na dray zyath jahazona daltha razi.*
 Today from yesterday from three more airplanes here come.PRS
 ‘Today three more airplanes are coming here than yesterday.’
60. *Nan ba day paroon na dray zyath jahazona daltha razi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three more airplanes here come.PRS
 ‘Today three more airplanes will come here than yesterday.’
61. *Nan day paroon na dray zyath jahazona daltha raghləl.*
 Today from yesterday from three more airplanes here come.PST
 ‘Today three more airplanes came here than yesterday.’

Num XY more Noun Verb:

62. **Nan day paroon na dray daltha zyath jahazona razi.*
 Today from yesterday from three here more airplanes come.PRS
63. **Nan ba day paroon na dray daltha zyath jahazona razi.*
 Today will from yesterday from three here more airplanes come.PRS
64. **Nan day paroon na dray jahazona daltha zyath raghləl.*
 Today from yesterday from three airplanes here more come.PST

In the first set of examples, no XP intervenes between the nominal differential comparative phrase and the verb. In the second set of examples, an XP *daltha* ‘here’ intervenes between the differential comparative phrase and the verb, still, unlike H/U, they are grammatical. In the third set of examples, an XP *daltha* ‘here’ is inserted inside the differential comparative phrase and the examples are all ungrammatical. This shows that, unlike the H/U, the *zyath* part of the nominal differential comparative does not combine directly with the verb. At the same time, the ungrammaticality of the last set of examples where an XP is inserted inside the differential comparative phrase shows that Pashto nominal differential comparative phrases follow an adjacency restriction.

Syntactic Structure for Differential Comparatives in Pashto

As per the forgoing discussion, it is established that nominal differential comparatives in Pashto are syntactic constituents, they do not follow argument structure restrictions, and they follow an adjacency restriction. Due to these characteristics, what could be the possible consequences for the syntactic structure of these comparatives?

For H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) propose a tentative explanation that differential comparative plus noun

does not constitute a syntactic constituent. The *zyada* combines directly with the verb while the ‘Num NP’ forms the syntactic projection of the noun phrase and serves as an argument of the verb. This also explains the ungrammaticality of the ‘Num NP *zyada* K’ order in H/U. However, for Pashto differential comparatives things are different.

Frist, we consider cases where the phrase *zyath*¹ combines with the verbal projection but not as a differential. Consider the following plain comparatives:

65. *Mina [zyath kitaboona] wolwasthal.*
 Mina more books read.PST
 ‘Mina read more books.’
66. *Mina [day Nina na [zyath kitabona]] wolwastal.*
 Mina from Nina from more books read.PST
 ‘Mina read more books than Nina.’
67. *Mina [day Nina na [kitabona zyath]] wolwastal.*
 Mina from Nina from books more read.PST

Intended: ‘Mina read books more than Nina.’ (Manner of reading is intended; not the number)

In such constructions, the phrase *zyath* forms part of the syntactic projection of the noun phrase and this *zyath*-modified NP serves as the argument of the verb. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that if we change the places of the phrase *zyath* and the noun, the meaning changes, as now it does not tell about the number of books but the manner of their reading. In the latter case, the phrase *zyath* combines directly with the verb. Hypothetically, if we try to extract a comparative meaning from the phrase *kitaboona zyath*, then such a meaning is unavailable as in Pashto we rarely have (if at all) post nominal modifiers; and, at best it would sound very pedantic phrase.

For comparatives with differentials, we start with adjectival differential comparatives. They are ungrammatical if the sequence ‘Num Noun more’ is changed to ‘Num more Noun’. Thus, they resemble H/U adjectival differential comparative construction.

68. *Pindai day Islambad na las meela zyatha laray da.*
 Rawalpindi from Islamabad from ten miles more away be.PRS
 Intended: ‘Rawalpindi is ten miles more away than Islamabad.’
69. **Pindai day Islamabad na las zyatha meela laray da.*
 Rawalpindi from Islamabad from ten more miles away be.PRS
70. *Mina day Rina na dwa incha zyatha chaga da.*
 Mina from Rina from two inches more tall be.PRS
 Intended: ‘Mina is two inches more tall than Rina.’

The possible explanation for adjectival differential comparatives could be that the phrase ‘Num Noun more’ forms a constituent with the adjective *laray*. Thus, they in fact modify the predicate adjective. For details on how the subject of a copular clause originates inside vP and how its adjective part is left behind in Pashto and other languages please refer to Masood (2021).

Let us take the case of nominal differential comparatives in Pashto. For nominal differential comparatives in Pashto, the phrase ‘Num more Noun’ has a differential meaning:

71. *Nina day Mina na dwa zyath kitabona wolwasthal.*
 Nina from Mina from two more book read.PST
 ‘Nina read two books more than Nina.’

Thus, they are different from H/U where the phrase ‘Num Noun more’ give differential comparative meaning. Thus for Pashto nominal differential comparatives it is proposed that since the phrase ‘Num more Noun’

¹ In some varieties of Pashto and in some situations instead of the phrase *zyath* or *zyatha*, the phrase *noor* or *noora* is used for male and female respectively to convey differential meaning.

serves as a syntactic constituent, therefore, unlike H/U where the ‘more’ combines directly with verb, in Pashto the phrase ‘Num more Noun’ combines with the verb as a whole resulting in the projection of the verb phrase.

Moreover, in Pashto if we replace the ‘Num more Noun’ with the ‘Num Noun more’ phrase, the construction loses its differential comparative meaning; however, it is still grammatically acceptable as having adverbial comparative meaning. Thus, if in the former case, the number of books increases by two books, in the latter case, the number of books remains the same but the reading has increased.

72. *Nina day Mina na dwa kitabona zyath wolwasthal.*
Nina from Mina from two books more read.PST

Intended: ‘Nina read more two book than Rina.’

For such constructions, it is proposed that only the ‘more’ part combines directly with the verb to give projection to the verb phrase while the ‘Num Noun’ part later joins the derivation as a noun phrase/ argument. This proposal also points towards the fact that in such constructions the phrase ‘Num Noun more’ is not a syntactic constituent. This proposal is substantiated by the fact that in Section 5 (see e.g. 22 and 23) of the paper, we noticed that the postposition was unable to attach to the ‘more/ *zyath*’ part of such constructions.

Conclusion

In this paper, an effort was made to explore differential comparatives in Pashto. Since, no prior study on differential comparatives in Pashto was there to serve as the touchstone; therefore, they were explored while keeping the findings on H/U and English before us. The analysis of Pashto differential comparatives was carried out in terms of differences between bare comparatives and differential comparatives, then, the differential comparatives were analyzed in terms of differential comparative as a syntactic constituent, argument structure restrictions, and adjacency restrictions. It was found out that differential comparatives exist in Pashto and they behave differently from bare comparatives in Pashto. In terms of constituency, while it had been proposed for H/U differential comparatives that the phrase ‘Num Noun more’ does not work as a constituent, for Pashto it was established that the phrase ‘Num more Noun’ behaved as a constituent. While for H/U, Bhatt and Homer (2018) had proposed that differential comparatives can only appear on internal arguments and they cannot appear on arguments which have visible case marking, for Pashto it was shown that differential comparatives can appear on both internal and external arguments and on arguments which have visible case marking. For adjacency restriction, Pashto differential comparatives were analyzed in the light of the proposal for H/U that a differential comparative should immediately precede the *zyada* and the *zyada* should immediately precede the verb. However, for Pashto it was observed that Pashto did allow the existence of an item between the differential comparative and the verb but it did not allow an item inside the differential comparative. This again pointed towards the fact that a nominal differential comparative was a syntactic constituent and that the ‘more’ part of the differential comparative did not combine with the verb directly. Based on these facts it was proposed that differential comparatives in Pashto had significant differences from differential comparatives in H/U; and, that unlike H/U where the ‘more’ part had been proposed to combine directly with the verb, for Pashto it was proposed that nominal differential comparative formed a projection of the noun phrase and combined with the verb as an argument.

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