Multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali

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This paper studies the use of *le*, a unit of language (UoL) in Nepali, and its multifunctionality. As a UoL, *le* denotes one single lexical item that demonstrates different functions, depending upon the syntactic contexts *le* is used in. The study discusses four different functions of *le*: *le*-ergative, *le*-instrumental, *le*-reason, and *le*-verb. As an ergative marker, *le* is a suffix on the subject of a transitive verb. However, as an instrumental marker, *le* is attached to an object that the subject uses to perform an action. The UoL *le* is attached to past participle forms of the verb, and it shows a reason as a reason-clause marker. In addition, *le* can also be used as a lexical verb. After these four functions are discussed, the paper attempts to associate the multifunctionality of *le* with four domains of Wiltschko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis (USH): classification, point-of-view, anchoring, and linking.
Keywords: le in Nepali; multifunctionality; Universal Spine Hypothesis

1 Introduction

Nepali, which is the major lingua franca and national language of Nepal, belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family (Acharya, 1991; Verbeke, 2013). People from some parts of India, Bhutan, and Burma also speak this language (Paudyal, 2009). The present study investigates the multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali and its potential association with four domains of Wiltschko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis (USH): *classification*, *point-of-view*, *anchoring*, and *linking*.

This study is an analysis of *le* in Nepali. Since Nepali is my native language, and I have grown up with speaking and studying this language, all of the data I am going to provide to support my arguments in this paper will be from my judgements as a native speaker. They are not drawn from any sources, and no other human beings are involved in the collection of the data for this study.

Before I further discuss the topic of my investigation, I would like to briefly explain what I mean by multifunctionality. It is the feature that a linguistic element, including a word or a morpheme, carries with it such that it can appear in different syntactic contexts and represent different functions or interpretations in use of each of these contexts (Hachem, 2015). An example of *have*'s multifunctionality in English can be seen in the examples below:

a. They *have* a book

b. They *h*ave done their homework

These examples show that *have* can be used in two different ways: one as a main verb (a), and the other as an auxiliary verb (b). When used as a main verb, it possibly indicates 'possession' whereas as an auxiliary it shows a 'grammatical' *function* in constructing a complex tense structure: present perfect tense here (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 3). This is how I am defining multifunctionality for the purpose of my paper, and this is exactly the way I will be discussing multifunctional behaviors of *le* in Nepali here.

In addition to the term multifunctionality, I will briefly provide some reasons for calling *le* a UoL in this paper. Here I use the term UoL, which stands for 'unit of language', a language-specific lexical form referring to words, morphemes, features (that may include tense, number or case), or phrase- or clause-types (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 1). Similarly, I use the term UoL to cover all of the functions of *le*, and thus remain neutral about its categorial, semantic or functional behavior (Hachem, 2015). As a polysemous UoL, the UoL *le* represents one single lexical item that serves different functions, depending upon the syntactic contexts this particular UoL is used in. In this paper, the different functions I am going to investigate include *le*-ergative, *le*-instrumental, *le*-reason, and *le*-verb. From now on, I refer to *le*-ergative, *le*-instrumental and *le*-reason markers as *le*-marked phrases, as we can distinguish the function of *le*, whether it be ergative, instrumental, or reason, only when *le* is attached to an agent, instrument, or reason. However, I refer to *le*-verb as *le*, as this form of *le* can stand on its own. As an ergative[1] marker, *le* is obligatorily used with the subject (A) of a transitive verb in past or perfective tenses, and its use demonstrates the completion of the action in such Nepali clauses. Refer to example[2] (1):

(1)	Tom-**le**	griha-karya	vidhyalaya-ma	gar-yo
	Tom-ERG	home-work	school-at	do-PST.3P.S.M
	'Tom did the homework at school.'			

The UoL *le* is also used as an instrumental marker, as illustrated in example (2):

[1] A language is considered as an ergative language if a transitive subject is treated differently from an intransitive subject, and an intransitive subject and a transitive object are treated in the same manner (Dixon, 1979). Ergativity is generally defined "in terms of case marking" (Moghaddam, 2016, p. 9). *le*, which is a suffix on the subject of the Nepali clause (1), is an ergative marker.

[2] Abbreviations used are: ART = Article; ERG = Ergative; INS = Instrumental; REASON = Reason phrase/marker; COM = Command; F = Feminine; M = Masculine; NEG = Negative; INF = Infinitive; PST = Past; PP = Past Participle; 1/2/3P = First/Second/Third Person; S = Singular; PL = Plural

(2)	Usa-**le**	Tina-ko	kalam-**le**	euta	patra	lekhe-ko
	3P.S.M-ERG	Tina-POSS	pen-INS	a	letter	write-PP
	chha					
	have.3P.S.M					
	'He has written a letter with Tina's pen.'					

Just as with an instrument, *le* is also used as a reason marker:

(3)	bibah-huna-**le**	Cathy	bidhyalaya
	marriage-happen.INF-REASON	Cathy	school
	aai-nan		
	come.PST-3P.S.F.NEG		
	'Cathy didn't come to school because of the marriage's taking place.'		

As demonstrated in examples (1-3), *le* functions as a case marker. In addition, *le*[3] also functions as a lexical verb. As a verb, *le* means 'bring', and it is used by an older person when he or she asks a younger one to bring something for him or her. To illustrate this, I provide a couple of examples below:

Mother asks her son:

(4)	Tyo	kachaura	**le**
	that	bowl	bring.COM
	'Bring that bowl.'		

(5)	**le**	tyo	kachaura
	Bring.COM	that	bowl
	'Bring that bowl.'		

Several studies have explored the *le* UoL in Nepali (e.g., Acharya, 1991; Butt & Poudel, 2007; Poudel, 2008; Paudyal, 2009; Verbeke, 2013; Chadra, & Udaar, 2015). Most of these scholars have discussed this UoL in terms of ergativity only. Butt and Poudel (2007) presented the use of *le* as instrumental and reason markers; however, they did not discuss these functions of *le* in detail. To the best of my knowledge, studies, such as these, have neither related themselves to the multifunctional nature of *le* nor presented detailed syntactic analyses of *le*.

To relate the use of the UoL *le* in Nepali to Wiltschko's USH, it is important

[3] I speculate here that although it thus demonstrates its multifunctional nature, *le* still means 'bring', which is retained as its core meaning. I again assume that in the process of grammaticalization, *le* as a lexical verb is grammaticalized such that it starts to function as *le* as an ergative, instrumental and reason marker, as it has lost its core meaning. However, I will not discuss *le*'s core meaning and grammaticalization further here, as it is beyond the scope of this paper.

to see how this unit of language *le* or *le*-marked phrases associate with the spine (Wiltschko, 2014, pp. 86-88). It is thus essential that the UoL *le* be identified with respect to the assumption that "categories are constructed" (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 95). Having said this, it is important to see how *le* or *le*-marked phrases fall in the domains in the spine. With respect to Wiltschko's USH, the present paper thus aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the multifunctional behaviors of the UoL *le* or *le*-marked phrases in Nepali?
2. How can the multifunctionality of the UoL *le* or *le*-marked phrases in Nepali be associated with domains of Wiltchko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis?

I will keep the first half of the paper relatively descriptive in the sense that it will be data-driven and theory-neutral. I will then use the second half of the paper to discuss theoretical issues so that a reader first has an overview of the data that I will bring in from Nepali and connect the data with the theoretical presentation I will make later in the paper.

I provide an overall outline of the paper in the following way. In the following or second section, I will explore and analyze data for different functions, what might be called different 'syntactic footprints' or distinct syntactic behaviors, of the UoL *le* or *le*-marked phrases. Then I will provide detailed syntactic analysis for these functions on the use of *le* in Nepali. The third section lays out *le* or *le*-marked phrases' distributional patterns in Nepali clause structures. With such discussions on *le* or *le*-marked phrases' distributions in Nepali, theoretical issues about *le*'s use with respect to the USH will be presented in the fourth section of this paper. I will associate the UoL *le* with domains on the spine. Finally, the fifth or final section will conclude the paper.

2 *le* and its Multifunctionality

As a marker in Nepali, *le* has widely been studied (see Verbeke, 2013; Chadra, & Udaar, 2015). Several scholars (Paudyal, 2009; Verbeke, 2013; Chadra, & Udaar, 2015) described *le* as an ergative marker, just as *-ne* as an ergative marker in Hindi (Pandharipande & Kachru, 1977; Mahajan, 2012). Among these and many other scholars, some described Nepali as an ergative language, and some others considered it as a split-ergative[4] language (Li, 2007). However, Wiltschko (2006, p. 198), who has worked on various ergative or absolutive languages, considered that ergativity is not a uniform phenomenon. It, therefore, seems reasonable to some extent that scholars have differed in their opinion of Nepali as an ergative or split-ergative language. My point does not lie here in arguing whether Nepali is an ergative language or split-ergative language. Instead, I simply intend to briefly

[4] When a language demonstrates ergative behavior partially, it is called a split-ergative language (Sheehan, 2016). Nepali is ergative in the presence of perfective aspect whereas it usually does not appear to be ergative in imperfective constructions.

discuss the use of *le* in Nepali and its characteristics associated with ergativity as only one of *le*'s functions. Paudyal (2009) claimed that in Nepali the agent (A) of a transitive clause is always marked with the ergative marker *le* in perfective constructions or in the past tense. However, this marker can also be used with various Nepali tenses, with varying frequency of occurrence (Li, 2007; Verbeke, 2013). In addition, Paudyal (2009) discussed *le* and other markers along with the role of animacy in Nepali; however, Chadra and Udaar (2015) presented ergative patterns with respect to verbal agreement paradigms in Nepali spoken in Darjeeling. Although *le* as an ergative marker in Nepali is thus extensively discussed, none of the aforesaid or other studies, to the best of my knowledge, have carried out an in-depth study of the multifunctional nature of *le*.

Before I further discuss the multifunctionality of *le*, I will shed light on phrase and clause structures in Nepali. I assume that Nepali, with its SOV order, is a strongly head-final language with respect to both phrase and clause structures. In (1), [*vidhyalaya-ma*] 'school-at' is a postpositional phrase, in which *ma* 'at' is the head of the phrase. The head follows its complement NP *vidhyalaya* 'school' in the phrase. Similarly, the data in (2) contain PPs [*Tina-ko*] 'Tina-of' and [*kalam-le*] 'pen-with'. Within the PPs, *ko* 'of' and *le* 'with' function as the head of the phrase and appear after their complement NPs *Tina* and *kalam* respectively. [*patra lekh-yo*] 'letter wrote' in (2) is a VP, and *lekh-yo* 'wrote' is the head of the VP. Switching the order to [*lekh-yo patra*] would be ungrammatical in Nepali. In (2), the complement *patra* 'letter' precedes the verb, thus presenting a complement-head order. This pattern, verb appearing after its complements, is consistent in Nepali clause structures.

Sentences in Nepali show a number of word-order possibilities. I will discuss some of these possibilities below, starting with Object Shift – a phenomenon that involves word order change. Understanding Object Shift will be helpful in identifying syntactic domains in Nepali clause structure. Object Shift is extensively defined and studied by many scholars, including Diesing (1992, 1997), Karimi (2003), and Sells (1998). For this paper, I will limit its definition to a narrow one due to the nature and the length of the paper. Object Shift is a syntactic phenomenon discussed in a number of languages that moves direct objects out of the VP, which leaves the object in a higher position than it was previously (Diesing, 1992, 1997; Sells, 1998; Karimi, 2003). With the data (6-9), I plan to briefly show how Object Shift works in Nepali clause structure.

(6) harek.jana-**le** saptah.antya-ma chalchitra her-e
Every.one-ERG week.end-on movie watch-PST.3P.P.
'Everyone saw a/the movie on the weekend.'

(7) harek.jana-**le** saptah.antya-ma euta chalchitra her-e
Every.one-ERG week.end-on a movie watch-PST.3P.P.
'Everyone saw a movie on the weekend.'

(8) *harek.jana-**le** euta chalchitra saptah.antya-ma her-e
Every.one-ERG a movie week.end-on watch-PST.3P.P.
(Everyone saw a movie on the weekend.)

(9) harek.jana-**le** chalchitra saptah.antya-ma her-e
Every.one-ERG movie week.end-on watch-PST.3P.P.
'Everyone saw the movie on the weekend.'

The examples (6-9) show an interesting alternation in Nepali. The example (6) indicates the more unmarked order of elements in Nepali, with the object position *in situ*. In example (6), the object NP *chalchitra* 'movie' appears between the time adjunct *saptah.anthya-ma* 'on the weekend' and the verb *here* 'watched'. In (6), *chalchitra* 'movie' without the use of the article *a* or *the* can be treated as either an indefinite object or a definite one in Nepali, which depends upon the context *chalchitra* 'movie' is used in. However, the article *euta* 'a' is used for the object NP *chalchitra* 'movie' in example (7). Assuming that complements of the verb, such as the direct object *chalchitra* 'movie' appear hierarchically (and therefore linearly) closer to the verb than an adjunct, such as the prepositional phrase *saptah.anthya-ma* 'on the weekend' in Nepali, the object NP is inside the VP in both examples (6) and (7), and, thus, in both sentences, the direct object *chalchitra* 'movie' can be interpreted as indefinite, with or without *euta* 'a' in Nepali. As soon as the object is shifted to the left of the PP (8, 9), arguably outside of the VP, only a definite interpretation is possible. The data in example (8), which includes the indefinite article *euta* 'a', is ungrammtical. The definiteness of the object thus depends upon its syntactic position. These are the characteristics that have been observed in the earlier discussions of Object Shift cited above, and therefore I assume that the phenomena we are observing in Nepali reflect Object Shift as well.

This conclusion is important because these facts about Object Shift and the relative order of the direct object and adverbial PPs allow us to know the extent of the VP, and thus help us to identify the hierarchical domains within Nepali sentences. This is essential to my analysis of the multifunctionality of *le* UoL.

In the subsections that follow, I plan to discuss four different categorical identities of the UoL *le* and *le*-marked phrases in Nepali. I begin my discussion with *le* as an ergative marker in Nepali.

2.1 *le* as the Ergative Marker in Nepali

In this subsection, I plan to briefly discuss the use of *le* as an ergative marker in Nepali. I do not intend to provide avery detailed discussion and analysis of *le* as an ergative marker. My plan here is to explore the data that demonstrate one of the functions of *le*, which is ergativity, and thus abstract away from the contrasts in the use of *le* as an ergative marker, as several scholars (Paudyal, 2009; Verbeke, 2013; Chadra, & Udaar, 2015) presented. I refrain myself from discussing ergative

markers in detail here, as it is outside the scope of my paper.

As an ergative marker, *le* is obligatorily used with the subject of a transitive verb in past and perfective tenses, and its use demonstrates the completion of the action in such clauses in Nepali. It is used with the subject, irrespective of gender, number, or pronominal status. This is illustrated in examples (10-15):

(10) Tom-**le** euta patra lekh-yo
Tom-ERG a-ART letter write-PST.3P.S.M
'Tom wrote a letter.'

(11) Sheila-**le** aaphno khana khai
Sheila-ERG her meal eat-PST.3P.S.F
'Sheila ate her meal.'

(12) us-**le** grihakarya gare-ko chha
3P.S.M-ERG homework do-PP.3P.S.F have-3P.S.M
'He has done homework.'

(13) uni-haru-**le** tyo kaam shuru-gareka chhan
3P.PL-ERG that work start-PP.3P.PL have-3P.PL
'They have started that work.'

(14) mai-**le** agawai mero ghar banaye-ko thi-ye
1P.S-ERG already my house build-PP.1P.S have-PP.1P.S
'I had already built my house.'

(15) tai-**le** kaam agadinai sidhya-eko thi-yis
2P.S-ERG work already complete-PP.2P.S have-PST.2P.S
'You had already completed the work.'

The examples (10-15) above show the use of *le* as an ergative marker. I have shown the use of *le* as a marker with singular (*Tom* – male, *Sheila* – female) and plural (*uni-haru* 'they') subjects and both nouns and pronouns. These examples include all persons as well. All of these examples use *le* as an ergative marker in perfectives, and they all are declarative statements. The grammaticality of sentences with *le* as an ergative marker is unchanged in questions or negative sentences. Examples are not provided for reasons of space.

In fact, the ergative NP is a grammatical subject rather than an agent. The examples (16-17) help to establish this function. Both examples (16) and (17) below have transitive subjects *yi baarharu* 'these fences' and *Rekha* 'a proper noun'. However, these subjects do not act as agents. While *yi baarharu* 'these fences' is an instrument subject, Rekha 'a proper noun' strictly speaking is an experiencer subject. In addition, forms of the verbs *ghere-ka* 'surrounded' in example (16) and *gar-thin* 'did' in example (17) are dependent upon these grammatical subjects.

(16) Yi baar-haru-**le** hamro bagaicha ghere-ka
These fence-PL-ERG our garden surround-PPT.3P.S chhan
have.3P.PL
'These fences have surrounded our garden.'

(17) Rekha-**le** una-ko hajur-buba-lai maya gar-thin
Rekha-ERG she-POSS grand-father-DAT love do-PST.3P.S.F
'Rekha loved her grandfather.'

All data in examples (10-17) demonstrate that subjects of transitive verbs are marked with *le* in perfective constructions. However, *le* is also optionally used with the subject of a transitive verb in the imperfective aspect, as given in the following examples:

(18) Rita-(**le**) geet gau-chhe
Rita-ERG song sing-3P.S.F
'Rita sings a song.'

(19) Simon-(**le**) kitab pad.dai-chha
Simon-ERG book read.PROG-be-3P.S.M
'Simon is reading a book.'

(20) hami-haru-(**le**) nibandh lekhi-rahe-thiyeu
1P-PL-ERG essay write-PROG-PST
'We were writing an essay.'

I do not plan to argue why *le* is optional in imperfective constructions and abstract away from my main purpose of discussion, which is about the multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali constructions. These data thus provide an overview of one of the functions of *le* in Nepali.

2.2 *le* as the instrumental marker

In Nepali, *le* is also used as the instrumental marker, as illustrated in examples (21-23)[5]. The form of *le* remains the same irrespective of the number or gender of the noun it is attached to.

[5] The direct objects in (21-23) are interpreted as definite or indefinite, depending upon the context. Nepali does not have a dedicated UoL or a definite article *the* to introduce nominal phrases. Noun phrases in Nepali are not explicitly marked by lexical items for definite interpretation, although demonstrative pronouns, such as this or that, may be used sometimes for this purpose.

(21) u-le kalam-**le** nibandha lekh-yo
3P.S.M-ERG pen-INS essay write-PST. 3P.S.M
'He wrote an/the essay with a/the pen.'

(22) Larry-le laura-**le** gai-lai kut-in
Larry-ERG stick-INS cow-DAT beat-PST.3P.S.F
'Larry beat a/the cow with a/the stick.'

(23) tini-haru-le dhunga-**le** dulo pure
3P.PL-ERG stone-INS hole cover-PST.3P.PL
'They covered a/the hole with a/the stone.'

In examples (21-23), *le* is marked as an instrumental (INS) marker, unlike an ergative marker in examples (10-20). While *le* when used as an ergative marker is attached to subjects as in examples (10-20), the same *le* when used as an instrumental marker is attached to an object as illustrated in examples (21-23). In addition to *le*'s use as an ergative marker, the use of *le* with an instrument, thus, shows another identity of the UoL *le*, which is important evidence of multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali.

In addition to the use of *le* as an instrumental, I want to draw reader's attention to the phenomenon of Object Shift, which I discussed earlier in the data (6-9) in the beginning of section 2. The data in (21-23) show the more unmarked order of elements in Nepali, as opposed to the data in (8) or (9), where the object is arguably outside of the VP. As discussed earlier in section 2, since in examples (21-23), the objects *nibandh* 'essay', *gai* 'cow', and *dulo* 'hole' appear between the instrumental and the verb, the object without the use of the article *a* or *the* can either be considered indefinite or definite. Similarly, *kalam* 'pen' in example (21), *laura* 'stick' in example (22), and *dhunga* 'stone' in example (23) can either be definte or indefinite. That is why I am using the article *a* and *the* in the translation so that readers know that the object can be indefinite or definite, depending upon the context, which I have already discussed in brief in section 2.

2.3 *le* as the Reason-Clause Marker

Just as with instruments, *le* is also used as a reason marker. To clarify this, I provide the following data from Nepali:

(24) Mero didi-le bibah-gare-ko-**le**
1P.POSS sister-ERG marriage-do-PP-REASON
Ma khushi chhu
I happy am
'Because of my sister's getting married, I am happy.'

(25) bas durghatana-bhaye-ko-**le** ma aspatal gay-e
bus accident-happen-PP-REASON 1P.S hospital go-PST.1P.S
'I went to hospital, because of the bus accident's taking place.'

The data (24-25) above demonstrate the use of *le* as a reason marker[6]. *Mero didi-le bibah-gare-ko-**le*** 'because of my sister's getting married' and *bas durghatana-bhayeko-**le*** 'because of the bus accident's taking place' are the clauses that show the reasons and are thus marked with *le*. In such circumstances, *le* is attached to past participle forms of the verb in Nepali clauses and demonstrates its multifunctionality nature.

2.4 *le* as the Lexical Verb Meaning 'bring'

While the data (5-25) show *le* as a case marker, this subsection provides specific data that demonstrate the use of *le* as a lexical verb in Nepali. However, *le*'s function as a lexical verb is interesting. When an older person orders a younger one to 'bring' something for him or her, the former uses *le*, which means 'bring' in Nepali. To illustrate this, I provide the following data from Nepali.

(26) Mother asks her son or daughter:

a. Tyo kachaura **le**
that bowl bring.COM
'Bring that bowl.'

b. le tyo kachaura
bring.COM that bowl
'Bring that bowl.'

(27) An older brother to a younger brother or sister:

a. 2kilo masu **le**
2kg meat bring.COM
'Bring 2 kgs of meat.'

b. **le** 2kilo masu
bring.COM 2kg meat
'Bring 2 kgs of meat.'

[6] In Nepali, the reason can also be expressed as a noun phrase: .
bibah-**le** Cathy bidhyalaya aai-nan
marriage-REASON Cathy school come-PST.3P.S.NEG
'Cathy didn't come to school because of the marriage.'
However, I do not intend to discuss this here, as this is outside the purview of my paper.

(28) Father to his son or daughter:

a. ek gilas pani **le**
a glass water bring.COM
'Bring a glass of water.'

b. **le** ek gilas pani
bring.COM a glass water
'Bring a glass of water.'

(29) a. tero grihkarya **le**
2PS.-POSS homework bring.COM
'Bring your homework.'

b. **le** tero grihkarya
bring.COM 2P.S.-POSS homework
'Bring your homework.'

As can be noticed from examples (26-29), as a lexical verb, *le* occurs in imperative statements. As opposed to what I assumed initially, the above data exhibit how imperatives in Nepali exhibit both head-final and head-initial patterns, thus suggesting a process of verb movement restricted to imperatives.

However, *le* is not used as a lexical verb this way among speakers in all families in Nepali, as such a use of *le* is considered impolite. Some might argue that such use of *le* is prevalent among people in Nepal who are not educated. However, as a speaker of Nepali, I have noticed such uses of *le* in imperative sentences in Nepal.

More interestingly, as a request, the word *kripaya* 'please' can not be used together with *le*. However, there is also a polite version of *le*, which is *leu* 'bring', and this polite version is widely used among people in Nepal. If it is a request, the word *kripaya* 'please' can be added to the statement with *leu*, as opposed to the use of *kripaya* 'please' with *le* as a lexical verb. The following data verify my claim.

(30) An older sister to a younger one:

a * kripaya tyo kalam **le**
please that pen bring.COM
'Please bring that pen.'

b.

i. kripaya tyo kalam **leu**
please that pen Bring.COM
'Please bring that pen.'

ii. **leu** tyo kalam kripaya
bring.COM that pen please
'Please bring that pen.'

The data (30a) contains both *kripaya* 'please' and *le*, which is ungrammatical, as both can not be used in the same sentence. However, when *leu* occurs in stead of *le*, the use of *kripaya* 'please' is grammatical, as in examples (30 b: i, ii). Such uses of *le* as in examples (26-30) is prevalent among Nepali people when commanding or ordering someone to do something. This is still another interesting illustration of the multifunctional nature of *le*.

The UoL *le* thus bears multifunctional behaviors in Nepali, and these behaviors are clearly observable in the data provided above. The uses of the UoL *le*, whether it be as an ergative, instrumental, or reason marker or as a lexical verb, are *le*'s multifunctional behaviors, which is the research question (1) this study thus attempts to answer.

The syntactic distributional pattern of *le* or *le*-marked phrases differs in each of the above functional uses of *le*, and this determines interpretational differences. As an ergative marker, *le* is used with subjects; however, as an instrumental, it marks instruments or objects with the help of which something is done. While *le* is attached to clauses to show reasons when it is used as a reason marker, it also stands alone when used as a lexical verb, meaning 'bring'. Therefore, *le* is thus treated as an ergative, instrumental or reason marker or lexical verb based on syntactic distribution. I will now show *le*'s association with different domains in the universal spine.

3 Distribution of *le*

In this section, I explore further into the data the of *le* as ergative, instrumental, and reason markers as well as its use as a lexical verb. I extend my consideration of the use of *le* with respect to various word order possibilities, including Object Shift. With different word orders, I plan to demonstrate whether these word orders, including Object Shift, are revealing of syntactic contrasts when using *le* for four different interpretations. An additional interpretation I like to include here is marked and unmarked word orders in Nepali. While different word orders in a clause may denote different interpretations in Nepali (see 6, 9 above), this may sometimes make no difference in interpretations, especially in imperative constructions in Nepali (46 a-f, 47 a-f).

As illustrated in the discussions below, I find that *le*-reason phrases in most unmarked positions are merged higher in clause structure than *le*-ergative phrases, which in turn stay higher than *le*-instrumental phrases.

3.1 *le* and Different Interpretations

In this subsection, I plan to discuss *le* and *le*-marked phrases that include different interpretations of *le*, such as *le* as ergative, instrumental and reason markers as well as *le* as a lexical verb.

3.1.1 le *as the ergative marker in Nepali*

In this subsection, I have chosen to work with *praya-jaso* 'usually' as a habitual adverb and *hijo* 'yesterday' as a time adverb. In fact, both are time adverbials. Later in the subsection, I want to see how replacing one adverb with the other affects the use of *le* or *le*-marked phrases in Nepali clause structure. The same constituents occur in different positions in examples (31-34) and show their (un)grammaticality.

(31)	Rita-**le**	praya-jaso	griha-karya	gar-chhin
	Rita-ERG	usually	home-work	do-3P.S.F
	'Rita usually does homework.'			

(32)	praya-jaso	Rita-**le**	griha-karya	gar-chhin
	usually	Rita-ERG	home-work	do-3P.S.F
	'Rita usually does homework.'			

(33)	*praya-jaso	griha-karya	Rita-**le**	gar-chhin
	usually	home-work	Rita-ERG	do-3P.S.F
	'Rita usually does homework.'			

(34)	*praya-jaso	griha-karya	gar-chhin	Rita-**le**
	usually	home-work	do-3P.S.F	Rita-ERG
	'Rita usually does homework.'			

I assume that the clauses with the most unmarked options consist of the base position of the subject, adverbs and objects. The example (31), which is the most unmarked, consists of the base position of the subject *Rita* with *le* to the left of the adverb *praya-jaso. Rita-le* appears to the right of the adverb *praya-jaso* in example (32). Both of these word orders in examples (31-32) are grammatical, as opposed to examples (33) and (34), which are ungrammatical. In example (33), the subject *Rita-le* follows the direct object *griha-karya*, which does not align with the SOV structure in Nepali. Example (34) is ungrammatical with the subject following the verb. In fact, no *le*-marked phrases can grammatically follow the verb in Nepali, no matter what their interpretation. For this reason I will not include such examples in this paper.

Making standard assumptions about how grammatical relations are mapped to tree structures, the above data (31-34) show that the subject with *le* as the ergative marker occurs structurally higher than the VP. Such a subject can either precede the adverbial as in example (31) or follow the adverbial as in example (32). However, it always remains to the left of the object NP in Nepali clause structures.

(35)	Kate-**le**	hijo	kaam	sak-in
	Kate-ERG	yesterday	work	finish-3P.S.F
	'Kate finished work yesterday.'			

(36) hijo Kate-**le** kaam sak-in
yesterday Kate-ERG work finish-3P.S.F
'Kate finished work yesterday.'

(37) *hijo kaam Kate-**le** sak-in
yesterday work Kate-ERG finish-3P.S.F
'Kate finished work yesterday.'

(38) *hijo kaam sak-in Kate-**le**
yesterday work finish-3P.S.F Kate-ERG
'Kate finished work yesterday.'

The above data (35-38) replace *praya-jaso* 'usually' with *hijo* 'yesterday'. However, the pattern in both set of data (31-34), and (35-38) remains the same. It shows that this pattern works with other adverbs and is not specific to *praya-jaso* 'usually'.

3.1.2 le *as the instrumental marker in Nepali*

The NP with the UoL *le* appears in different positions in examples (39-41). In these data, I am only considering the NPs which *le* as an instrumental marker is attached to.

(39) *bancharo-**le** Tina-le rukh kat-eki chhan
axe-INS Tina-ERG tree cut-PPT.3P.S.F have.3P.S.F.
'Tina has cut a/the tree with an axe.'

(40) Tina-le bancharo-**le** rukh kat-eki chhan

Tina-ERG axe-INS tree cut-PPT.3P.S.F have.3P.S.F.
'Tina has cut a/the tree with an axe.'

(41) Tina-le rukh bancharo-**le** kat-eki chhan
Tina-ERG tree axe-INS cut-PPT.3P.S.F. have.3P.S.F
'Tina has cut the tree with an axe.'

Making standard assumptions about the representation of grammatical relations in clause structure, the above data (39-41) confirm that the *le*-instrumental phrase occupies a place that is structurally lower than the *le*-marked subject. Particularly significant is the ungrammaticality of example (39), in which the instrumental *le* in *bancharo-le* 'axe-INS' appears higher than the subject. I assume for now that the instrumental phrase is a constituent of the VP, and I provide justification for this assumption in section 3.3. However, in both the circumstances as in examples (40-41), the use of the *le*-instrumental is grammatical. When the *le*-instrumental occupies the place structurally higher than the subject, as in example (39), it is then ungrammatical.

I want to draw the readers' attention to the positions of the object NP *rukh* 'tree' in examples (40-41) and remind them of the data I provided in examples (6-9) in the beginning of the section 2. The explanation I gave for those data earlier was about Object Shift. The same is taking place here. In example (40), the object NP *rukh* 'tree' means either indefinite or definite without the use of the article *euta* 'a' or 'the'. However, as soon as the object *rukh* 'tree' moves to the left of the *le*-instrumental, it falls outside of the VP's scope. As a result, the object turns out to have a definite interpretation although there is no use of the definite article 'the' or demonstrative pronouns in example (41), which again supports my claim that the interpretation of the object relies on where it lies because of Object Shift – outside or inside of the VP.

3.1.3 le as the reason marker

In examples (42-45), I extend the consideration of the placement of the NPs attached to *le* as a reason marker in different positions in the sentences.

(42)

kehi	mahatwa purna	kaam-haru	pare-ko-**le**
some	important	task-PL	happen-PPT-REASON
Rita-le	yatra	radda-garin	
Rita-ERG	trip	cancel-PST.3P.S.F	

'Rita canceled a/the trip because of some important tasks' taking place.'

(43)

Rita-**le**	kehi	mahatwapurna	kaam-haru
Rita-ERG	some	important	task-PL
pare-ko-**le**	yatra	radda-garin	
happen-PPT-REASON	trip	cancel-PST.3P.S.F	

'Rita canceled a/the trip because of some important tasks' taking place.'

(44)

Rita-**le**	yatra	kehi	mahatwapurna
Rita-ERG	trip	some	important
kaam-haru	pare-ko-**le**	radda-garin	
task-PL	happen-PPT-REASON	cancel-PST.3P.S.F	

'Rita canceled the trip because of some important tasks' taking place.'

(45)

*Rita-**le**	yatra	radda-garin	
Rita-ERG	trip	cancel-PST.3P.S.F	
kehi	mahatwapurna	kaam-haru	pare-ko-**le**
some	important	task-PL	happen-PPT-REASON

(Rita canceled a/the trip because of some important tasks taking place.)

It can be seen from the data above that *le* as a reason marker can occur structurally higher as in example (42) or lower as in example (43) than the subject with *le*. As well, *le*-reason can appear lower than the direct object *yatra* 'trip' as in example (44). However, such a placement is not possible with *le*-marked ergative phrases. That shows that the two *le*-marked phrases, *le*-ergative and *le*-reason, exhibit different placements options.

3.1.4 *le* as the lexical verb, meaning 'bring'

The use of *le* as a lexical verb is different from the uses of *le* as case markers that I have discussed thus far. I use *le* as a lexical verb in different positions in examples (46 a-f) and (47 a-f). I want to point out that I am using a different semantic type of adverbial in this subection, as 'usually' and 'yesterday' are semantically incompatible with imperatives.

(46) Older sister asks a younger one:

a. **le** chhittai bhai-lai
bring quickly younger brother-DAT
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

b. chhittai **le** bhai-lai
quickly bring younger brother-DAT
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

c. chhittai bhai-lai **le**
quickly younger brother-DAT bring
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

d. **le** bhai-lai chhittai
bring younger brother-DAT quickly
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

e. bhai-lai **le** chhittai
younger brother-DAT bring quickly
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

f. bhai-lai chhittai **le**
younger brother-DAT quickly bring
'Bring younger brother quickly.'

The data in (46) confirm that *le* as a lexical verb occupies several places in the same imperative clause, just as other ordinary verbs (*padh* 'read' in example 47 below) do. There is no debate among scholars that Nepali is SOV, except in imperatives, as observed in examples (46-47).

(47) Older sister asks a younger one:

a. **padh** katha bistarai
read story slowly
'Read the story slowly.'

b. katha **padh** bistarai
story read slowly
Read the story slowly.

c. katha bistarai **padh**
story slowly read
Read the story slowly.

d. **padh** bistarai katha
read slowly story
'Read the story slowly.'

e. bistarai **padh** katha
slowly read story
'Read the story slowly.'

f. bistarai **katha** **padh**
slowly story read
Read the story slowly.

The data in (47 a-f) show the use of an ordinary verb *padh* 'read' in imperatives in Nepali. When the use of *le* as a lexical verb in the data in (46 a-f) is compared with the use of an ordinary verb *padh* 'read' in Nepali, it is clearly observed that the pattern remains the same. *le* in examples (46 a-f) is used just as *path* 'read' is used in examples (47 a-f). Both *le* 'bring' and *padh* 'read' as lexical verbs can occupy different positions in imperative clauses in Nepali, without the change in interpretations.

The UoL *le* is available in all of these syntactic contexts (31-47). However, its interpretation as an ergative marker in examples (31-38) is different from its interpretation as instrumental in examples (39-41), or reason in examples (42-45), or as a lexical verb in examples (46-47). It is apparent here that the use of *le* and *le*-marked phrases in one syntactic context differs from another in its distributional patterns, which shows that these different syntactic interpretations do not "instantiate the same category" (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 16). In addition to the data above, *le* from all four interpretations can be used in one single sentence as in example (48), which creates a complex expression as below:

(48) rukh thulo bhaye-ko-**le** Harry-**le**
tree huge be-PPT-REASON Harry-ERG
usa-ko banchara-**le** rukh kat-yo
he-POSS axe-INS tree cut-PST.3P.S.M

ra	usa-ko	chhora-lai	rukh-ko
and	he-POSS	son-DAT	tree-POSS
shakha-haru	ghar	**le**	bhan-yo
branch-PL	home	bring	say-PST.3P.S.M.

'Because of the tree's growing huge, Harry cut down the tree with his axe and asked his son to bring home the branches of the tree.'

All four functions of *le*, ergative marker, instrumental marker, reason marker, and a lexical verb appear in a single Nepali clause as in example (48). As these four uses of *le* with different functions in a single clause yields grammaticality, it shows the multifunctionality of *le* as a UoL. This analysis of the data thus far shows that the use of *le* and *le*-marked phrases differs in their distributional properties depending upon the syntactic environment they are used in. These differences occur in different syntactic contexts.

Adverbs have been the subject of grammatical as well as semantic discussion and analysis for a long time (Wyner, 2008). Adverbs "are treated as an important window into the universal functional architecture" (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 73). However, due to the limited space, I will not be able to establish the relative order of *le*-marked phrases and some adverbs in Nepali.

4 Theoretical Discussion

The present paper on the multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali explores the phenomenon in the context of Wiltschko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis (USH) and discusses both the multifunctionalty of the UoL *le* as well as the USH postulation. What follows in this section is a brief introduction to the postulation of the USH. I then discuss how different functions of *le* and *le*-marked phrases associate with the domains of the USH.

4.1 The Universal Spine Hypothesis (USH)

The USH postulates a universal syntactic spine with a hierarchical organization of a set of limited universal categories defined by the function wherein the UoLs of languages merge in order for expressions to take place (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 24). The USH, as Wiltschko claimed, fills the middle ground between the Universal Base Hypothesis' (UBH) claimed universality of categorical properties and the No Base Hypothesis' (NBH) rejection of a universal set of categories in favor of language-specific set categories (Wiltschko, 2014, pp. 10-28).

The UBH, which draws on the works of generativist linguists, including Chomsky (1965) and Ross (1970) and many subsequent authors, assumes the same functional or universal structure across languages in the world. The clausal architecture is identical across languages (Cinque, 1999). Universal Grammar (UG) is "conceived of as a repository of categories available to individual languages" (Wiltschko, 2014, pp. 10-11). However, according to Wiltschko (2014, pp. 12-13), tense and number that are usually considered to be universal according

to the UBH are not, in fact, universal. While tense is not among the morpho-syntactic categories in Blackfoot, an Algonquian language, number marking does not either form a morpho-syntactic category in Mandarin. In addition, Blackfoot does not have any UoLs or morphemes for introducing complement clauses, although the UBH claims that languages share categories such as complementizer and determiner. Similarly, using illustrations from English and Halkomelem, Wiltschko (2014) showed that UoLs or morphemes that stand for the same content, such as temporality or plurality, do not behave in a universal or identical way either. Wiltschko, thus, challenged the UBH on the grounds of its problems, such as the lack of some categories in some languages and different distributional properties of the same categories in different languages. Similarly, Wiltschko (2014) refused to accept the postulation put forward by scholars, including Joos (1957) and Haspelmath (2007), against the UBH – the postulation that she called the No Base Hypothesis (NBH). Scholars favouring the NBH have denied the universality of categories. However, with data from English and Blackfoot, Wiltschko (2014) claimed that there exist universal ordering effects as well as universal categorical patterns, such as patterns of multifunctionality and contrast, which are not acknowledged by the NBH scholars (p. 22). Because she saw the "tension between the observed universality of categorical properties on the one hand and their variability on the other", Wiltschko (2014, pp. 23-24) proposed the USH, as per the following two claims:

i) Language-specific categories (*c*) are constructed from a small set of universal categories *K* and language-specific UoLs

ii) The set of universal categories *K* is hierarchically organized where each layer of *K* is defined by a unique function.

> "The central thesis behind the USH is that the language-specific categories (c) are constructed out of language-specific Units of Language (UoL) and a limited set of universal categories (*K*) as in *c* = *K* + UoL…the set of universal categories C_{UG} does not serve as a repository for language-specific categories… it serves as the basis for the construction of categories, as a universal categorizer. (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 24)

When a category, such as tense, is missing in a language, it does not mean that there is no temporal content in that particular language. As Wiltschko claimed, tense is constructed out of an abstract *K* and a language-specific UoL that supplies the specific temporal content.

According to the USH, to provide a (complex) expression, different UoLs combine together in a hierarchically order, forming a universal syntactic spine where the set of universal categories are hierarchically placed. The spine is category-neutral. The USH assumes four layers as such on the spine: C_{UG} = *K:linking* > *K:anchoring* > *K:point-of-view* > *K:classification*, wherein C_{UG} denotes the set of universal categories and *K* stands for a limited set of universal categories (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 24). *K:classification* is the lowest layer on the spine

and related to classification of events or individuals; the second from the bottom is the *K:point-of-view* layer that determines a viewpoint with which the event or individual is presented; higher than this layer is *K:anchoring*, which helps anchor events or individuals to the utterance; on the top is the layer called *K:linking*, which demonstrates a relationship existing between the ongoing discourse and the proposition (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 28).

Wiltschko (2014) argued that each domain is associated with specific roles that the "nominal arguments introduced in the VP may bear" (p. 72). Therefore, Wiltschko illustrated that in addition to bearing the thematic roles, arguments may also play grammatical roles, such as subject and object, and discourse roles, such as topic and focus. The IP-projection here corresponds to IP: anchoring and AspP: point-of-view domains in the spine.

4.2 Parameters for the Association with the USH

It is now important that I illustrate where on the spine the given UoL *le* and *le*-marked phrases associate with *K*. The universal spine contains a small number of *K*s wherein each *K* is associated with an abstract and distinct function. These *K*s are *K*:classification, *K*:point-of-view, *K*:anchoring, and *K*:linking, as just noted above.

4.3 *le*'s Association with the USH

Now I turn to associating the four different functions of *le* and *le*-marked phrases in Nepali with the USH. When associating the *le* UoL with Wiltschko's (2014) USH, I am considering *le*-ergative, *le*-instrumental, and *le*-reason phrases, and *le*-verb as various functions or categorial identities of the *le* UoL under the patterns of its multifunctionality (p. 3). As Wiltschko (2014) explained, "…the presence of a categorial identity mediates the relation between UoLs and their interpretation" (p. 9), and "the presence of categories is reflected in the pattern of multifunctionality..." (p. 20), there is thus one multifunctional UoL with four distinct identities, and interpretations, depending on how these UoLs are used in a syntactic context.

Here I argue that *le* or *le*-marked phrases associate to different domains of Wiltschko's universal spine. In the earlier sections, I showed that *le* is in fact a complex UoL, as it serves different functions depending upon the syntactic environment it is used in. When analyzing *le* and *le*-marked phrases in terms of the USH, it is important that we know where on the spine it sits. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I provide some motivation for associating *le* with the spine in different ways, depending upon its use in various syntactic contexts.

I begin my discussion on *le* and *le*-marked phrases' association with *le*'s use as an ergative marker. In this syntactic context, I claim that the *le*-ergative phrase associates with *K*:*anchoring*. According to Wiltschko (2014), "The anchoring domain is a core grammatical domain. It is where the grammatical subject-relation is introduced and it serves to relate the reported event to the ongoing discourse"

(p. 98). Similarly, "…*K*:anchoring hosts grammatical subjects" (Wiltschko, 2016, p. 157).
In 2.1, I illustrated that *le*-ergative phrases are grammatical subjects rather than agents.

(49)	Yi	baar-haru-le	hamro	bagaicha	ghere-ka
	These	fence-PL-ERG	our	garden	surround-PPT.3P.S
	chhan				
	have.3P.PL				
	'These fences have surrounded our garden.'				

(50)	Rekha-le	una-ko	hajur-buba-lai	maya	gar-thin
	Rekha-ERG	she-POSS	grand-father-DAT	love	do-PST.3P.S.F
	'Rekha loved her grandfather.'				

In examples (49-50) (repeated from 16-17 above), *baar* 'fence' and *Rekha* 'a proper noun', which *le*-ergative is attached to, act as grammatical subjects; these subjects are not agents. Since grammatical subjects are hosted in *K*:*anchoring* according to Wiltschko, I claim that *le*-ergative phrase, too, associates with *K*:*anchoring* in the spine.

Considering linear ordering, the *le*-marked ergative phrase obligatorily precedes the object and the verb in Nepali, as seen in all preceding examples. This positioning may be analyzed as scoping over all categories with which objects are associated, such as the aspectual information, i.e., *K:point-of-view*. Thus the linear ordering is found to be consistent with the conclusion based on grammatical function, supporting *le*-ergative's associating with *K*:*anchoring* on the spine.

Now I turn to providing explanation on the *le*-marked phrase's association with the spine when it is used as an instrumental in Nepali. Structurally, as an instrumental, *le*-marked phrase occupies the position lower than the *le*-marked subject phrase (see 10-15, 31-38, and 21-23, 39-41). Evidence for this claim comes from the fact that it necessarily follows the subject, or it may also follow the object in Nepali. However, it can not precede the subject. As can be seen, the instrumental is mostly considered as impersonal or it means an object which is used to do something, as in *bancharo* 'axe' in examples (39-41) and is in use with verbal expressions involving personal agency. Sentences are still complete without the use of noun phrases with instrumentals. The data (51), which is repeated from example (40) above, is missing *le*-instrumental *bancharo-le* 'axe-INS'. However, it is still grammatically correct in Nepali.

(51)	Tina-**le**	rukh	kat-eki	chhan
	Tina-ERG	tree	cut-PPT.3P.S.F	have. 3P.S.F
	'Tina has cut the tree.'			

However, the *le*-instrumental can not exist in a Nepali clause in the absence of an agent. The data (52, which is repeated from 17 above and modified) is missing an agent in the form of *le*-ergative NP and is ungrammatical in Nepali.

(52) *Rekha-le una-ko hajur-buba-lai
Rekha-ERG she-POSS grand-father-DAT
geet-le maya gar-thin
song-INS love do-PST.3P.S.F
'Rekha loved her grandfather with a song.'

I thus argue that the agent and the *le*-instrumental thus are necessarily linked together. The *le*-instrumental can not exist if there is no agent in Nepali clause structure. I assume that the instrumental is within the vP based on its connection with agency, which I showed just above. Agents define the class of agentive verbs, and as *le*-instrumental is dependent on agency, this leads me to say that *le*-instrumental is associated with agent. By Wiltschko's characterization, agent lies within the vP which introduces and classifies events, so I claim that *le*-instrumental is associated with *K:classification* in the spine.

With regards to the use of *le* as a reason marker, the data, including in examples (24-25), and (42-45) clearly show that it creates a link and establishes relationships between events, circumstances, or discourse patterns. The *le*-reason phrase can appear in a higher position within the clause in Nepali than subjects, suggesting that it belongs in a higher domain. The use of this type of *le*-marked phrases is independent of tense or aspect (see examples 21, 40) or the nature of the subject: singular, plural, pronouns or nouns (see examples 21, 22, 23). Similarly, the use of *le*-reason phrase is also independent of transitivity as well as thematic relations (see examples 24, 25), such as agent that shows characteristics of the classification domain. Therefore, I conclude that *le*-reason phrase belongs to the *K:linking* domain in the spine.

When used as a lexical verb, I assume *le* is of a category V and does not belong to the USH, as the spine is a functional architecture, not a lexical one.
These explanations thus provide an answer to the research question (2) above. In Nepali, language-specific categories are thus constructed from the small repository of universal categories. This is the way that the multifunctionality of *le* UoL in Nepali can be associated with different domains of Wiltchko's USH, depending upon the syntactic environments it is used in.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown the multifunctional behaviors of the *le*-UoL and its association at different levels of the spine of the USH. *Le* can be used as an ergative marker, as an instrumental marker, as a reason-clause marker, and also as a lexical verb. Depending upon the syntactic context, *le* may be used as a verb or simply as a marker, either ergative, instrumental, or reason, which means *le* is "intrinsically associated with categorical identity (Wiltschko, 2014, p. 94). This shows that *le* remains category-neutral until the syntactic environment it is used in is known. The meaning of *le* cannot be interpreted appropriately until it is used in a syntactic environment, as its behaviors are not associated with any substantive content. Depending upon its syntactic use on different environments, the *le* UoL

has different interpretations, and different categorial identities as constructed from the small repository of the universal categories. As it has been noticed earlier, depending upon these categorial identities and interpretations, *le* fulfills a particular function at a particular syntactic environment. Therefore, the *le*-marked phrase UoL is either placed on the *K:linking, K:anchoring, or K:classification* domain on Wiltschko's (2014) functional architecture. Specifically, the *le*-ergative phrase associates with *K*:anchoring in the spine while the *le*-instrumental phrase is associated with *K:classification*. Similarly, the *le*-reason phrase belongs to the *K:linking* domain in the spine. However, as a lexical verb, *le* is not associated with the USH and is of a category V. Based on the syntactic footprint of *le*'s use, *le* may lie on the USH's domain. This paper thus demonstrates the multifunctionality of *le* in Nepali and *le*'s association on the USH. However, more research is warranted in order to discuss the use of *le* in contexts that involve additional adverbials and UoLs and to illustrate *le*'s association on the spine in relation to those UoLs.

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