

# Superlative Expressions of Gilgiti-Shina

Toshiko Oda

## 要旨

シナー語はパキスタン北部とインドの一部で話されている言語である。その文法は未だ基本的な情報しか記述されておらず、理論言語学の分析対象となりうるデータは皆無といってよい。本稿は Oda (2023) の続編として、シナー語ギルギット方言 (Gilgiti-Shina) の程度構文 (degree constructions) の一つである最上級表現 (superlative expressions) について報告する。

シナー語には形容詞の最上級の形に相当するものがなく、「highest」のような最上級の意味を表現する場合には「higher than all」のように比較級を利用するか、あるいは「first high」のように序数を利用する。しかし、サクワー村 (Sakwar) の住民は「tallest」「shortest」に相当すると思われる二つの形容詞を使用する。これらの表現はサクワー村の隣のミナワー村 (Minawar) では観察されなかった。本稿ではこれら二つの形容詞は言語接触 (language contact) の影響の結果であり、(i) もともと存在したシナー語の形容詞最上級の名残である、あるいは (ii) 周辺言語からシナー語の一部になった、という二つの可能性を指摘する。

シナー語は口頭言語であり、2024年3月時点のパキスタンにおいて定められた表記法がない。本稿のデータは2024年3月にパキスタン北部ギルギット・バルチスタン地方のギルギット市 (Gilgit) 近郊に所在するミナワー村およびサクワー村で行ったフィールドワークで得た。

**Keywords:** *Shina, Gilgit, superlatives, language contact*

## 1. Introduction

Shina is spoken in northern Pakistan and parts of India, and its grammar has only been described in basic terms, with no data available for theoretical linguistic analysis. In Oda (2023), I primarily reported on the semantic properties of the comparative constructions of Gilgiti-Shina, a dialect of Shina spoken in Gilgit and its surrounding areas. This

study continues the research and reports on Gilgiti-Shina’s superlative expressions.

Shina does not use superlative forms of adjectives. When expressing superlative meanings such as “tallest,” comparatives are used, as in “taller than all,” or ordinal numbers are used, as in “first tall.” However, speakers of Sakwar village use two adjective forms that appear to be equivalents to “tallest” and “shortest.” These expressions were not observed in Minawar, a village adjacent to Sakwar. This study presents two hypotheses: (i) The two adjectives are remnants of the superlatives of adjectives in Shina, which have been reduced owing to language contact. (ii) They were adapted from neighboring languages into Gilgiti-Shina, spoken in Sakwar.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the fieldwork methodologies. Section 3 reviews the basic properties of the degree constructions of Gilgiti-Shina, particularly those of the comparatives from Oda (2023). Section 4 provides data on Gilgiti-Shina’s superlative expressions and indicates two adjectives observed only in Sakwar that appear to be in superlative forms. Section 5 discusses the two hypotheses that superlative-like forms of adjectives are remnants of superlative forms that were once used in Gilgiti-Shina or brought to Gilgiti-Shina from other languages. Section 6 presents concluding remarks. The numbers in square brackets for the Gilgiti-Shina data indicate that sound recordings are available for the data. See the Appendix for a list of the recordings.

## 2. Fieldwork of Gilgiti-Shina

Shina is spoken in Pakistan and India. It is a Dardic language belonging to the Indo-Aryan language family. It is spoken in ethnic communities but not taught in schools. As of September 2024, Shina had no official writing system in Pakistan.<sup>1)</sup> According to Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2023), the number of L1 speakers in Shina could reach one million, which is vigorous (status 6a). Shina has many dialects, and Gilgiti-Shina, as discussed in this study, is generally considered the standard dialect of Shina.

The data in this study were collected in March 2023 and 2024 in Minawar and Sakwar villages, both of which are located near the town of Gilgit in the Gilgit-Baltistan region (Figure 1). The local people speak Gilgiti-Shina as their home language. They learn Urdu, the national language and primary education medium, in school. People with college diplomas speak fluent English, as most higher education in Pakistan is conducted in English. Although Shina is a spoken language, speakers of Gilgiti-Shina can write down Shina

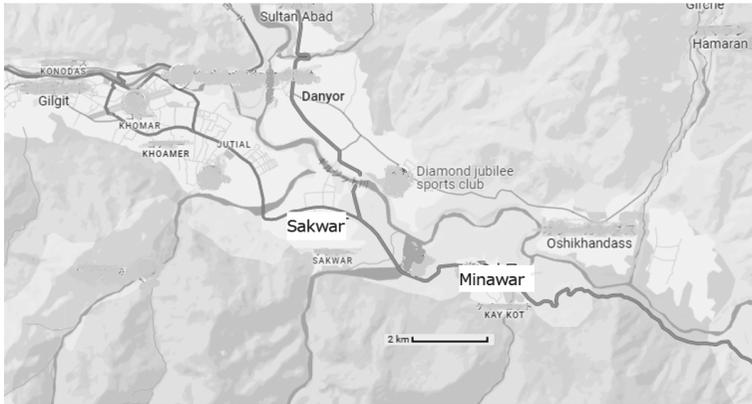


Figure 1 Map of Minawar and Sakwar (Source: Google (n. d.) modified by the author)



Figure 2 Interview with a language consultant  
(Photograph by author, March 2024)



Figure 3 Survey at a secondary school  
(Photograph by author, March 2024)

using the Urdu or Latin alphabets. However, individual variations have arisen in this regard.<sup>2)</sup>

Regarding fieldwork methodology, I mostly used translation tasks for elicitation. It is a widely used semantic fieldwork method. Moreover, I used acceptability judgment tasks based on Matthewson (2004, 2011). I worked extensively with several language consultants to obtain data. They were born and raised in Minawar and Sakwar areas. Shina has a wide variety of dialects. Therefore, I worked with speakers from a limited area to obtain consistent data. All the language consultants were males. They had either a BA or an MA from universities in Pakistan and spoke fluent English. I used English as the medium for fieldwork and conducted interviews in various places, including the household of a consultant (Figure 2).

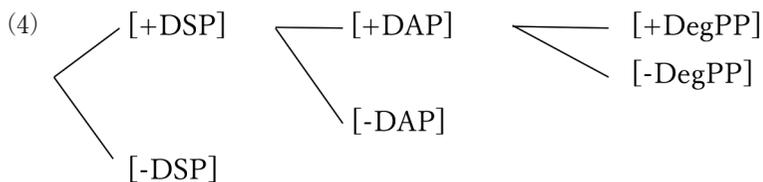
In addition to the elicitation, I conducted a survey among secondary school students in Minawar. They were pre 9th, 9th, and 10th grade students. All lived with their family

members in Minawar, and I obtained information about the villagers from the students. The students spoke Shina, Urdu, and English, and I used English as the medium for the survey (Figure 3).

### 3. Degree constructions of Gilgiti-Shina

This section reviews the basic properties of the degree constructions in Gilgiti-Shina. The data in this section are primarily cited from Oda (2023). When discussing the degree constructions of an unknown language, the parameters and classification trees in Beck et al. (2009), cited in (1)–(4), are useful. Oda (2003) examined the parameters of Gilgiti-Shina and characterized them as [+DSP] and [+DegPP] as shown in (5). It is expected to be a [+DAP] language owing to its [+DepPP] status, as only [+DAP] languages can have the parameter setting of [+DepPP].

- (1) Degree Semantics Parameter (DSP): A language {does/does not} have gradable predicates (type <d, <e, t>> and related), i. e., lexical items that introduce degree arguments.
- (2) Degree Abstraction Parameter (DAP) (Beck, Oda and Sugisaki 2004): A language {does/does not} have binding of degree variables in the syntax.
- (3) Degree Phrase Parameter (DegPP): The degree argument position of a gradable predicate {may/may not} be overtly filled.



(Slightly modified from Beck et al. 2009: 28)

| (5) Languages \ Parameters | DSP      | DAP        | DegPP    |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|----------|
| English                    | +        | +          | +        |
| Hindi-Urdu                 | +        | +          | +        |
| <b>Gilgiti-Shina</b>       | <b>+</b> | <b>n/a</b> | <b>+</b> |
| Romanian                   | +        | +          | -        |
| Japanese                   | +        | -          | -        |
| Motu                       | -        | -          | -        |

(Oda 2023: 51)

The evidence for this classification is as follows. Given in (6) is a prototypical example of a phrasal comparative in Gilgiti-Shina. Shina does not have any overt comparative morphemes that would correspond to *-er* in English. The standard of comparison is marked by *jo*, which can be translated as “from.” This means that *jo* can be an ablative case marker and can be glossed as “Abl.”<sup>3)</sup> In this study, it is glossed as “than” for simplicity. Gilgiti-Shina allows comparisons with degrees, as in (7), and is a piece of evidence for [+DSP].

## (6) Phrasal comparative

*machii shakkar-e-jo ispai hin.*

honey sugar-E-than sweet.f copula.f.sg

‘Honey is sweeter than sugar.’

[Gilgiti-Shina][1]

## (7) Comparison with degrees

*ano ek guz jo uthalo han.*

he one guz than tall.m copula.m.sg

‘He is taller than one guz.’ (*guz* is an open arm’s length.)

[Gilgiti-Shina][2]

Gilgiti-Shina can have measure phrases in the degree position of gradable adjectives, as in (8), and can measure phrases in the differential degree positions as shown in (9). These comprise evidence for [+DegPP].

## (8) Measure phrase construction

*ano ek guz uthalo hun.*

he one guz tall.m copula.m.sg

‘He is one guz tall.’ (*guz* is an open-arm length.)

[Gilgiti-Shina][3]

## (9) Differential comparative

*ano ma-jo ek hath uthalo hun.*

he me-than one hand tall.m copula.m.sg

‘He is one hand taller than me.’

[Gilgiti-Shina][4]

#### 4. Superlatives

This section focuses on Gilgiti-Shina’s superlative expressions. Gilgiti-Shina has no morphological superlatives. However, the notion of “A-est” (“A” represents a gradable ad-

jective) can be expressed either by using comparatives as in “A-er than all” or by using ordinal numbers as in “first A.” Nevertheless, speakers in Sakwar use at least two forms of morphological superlative-like expressions *jigun* ‘tallerst’ and *khutto* ‘shortest.’ These expressions were not observed in Minawar, which is adjacent to Sakwar.

#### 4.1 “A-er than all” = “A-est”

One of the rare studies on Shina in English is Bailey (1924), which provides a brief description of superlative expressions in the Kohistani dialect of Shina. It states that superlatives in Shina are composed of comparatives. Thus, “A-(er) than all” with a gradable adjective A expresses the meaning of “A-est.”

- (10) Comparison: —There are no forms for the comparative and superlative. They are expressed by means of the prepositions *jo* ‘from,’ *zho* ‘than’.

*chunu* ‘small’

*ma jo chunu* ‘smaller than I’

*bute jo cunu* ‘smaller than all’ ‘smallest’ (Bailey 1924: 63)

This observation applies to Gilgiti-Shina as well. The example provided below demonstrates that the meaning of “highest” is expressed by “higher than all.”

- (11) “highest”

*Raji boto jo uthali sheesher (agee) gone.*<sup>4)</sup>

Raji all than high.f mountain.on on climbed.m

Lit. ‘Raji climbed the mountain that is high(er) than all.’ (Raji climbed the highest mountain.) [Gilgiti-Shina] [5]

Hindi-Urdu adopts the same strategy as presented below.<sup>5)</sup> Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. As aforementioned, it is the medium of instruction in primary education in the nation. Therefore, it naturally has some effect on the local languages spoken in Pakistan, including Gilgiti-Shina. I will discuss this point in Section 5.

Hindi/Urdu

- (12) *Sangeeta apne klass mein sab se lambi chatra hai.*<sup>6)</sup>  
 Sangeeta her.own class in all than tall.f student is

Lit. ‘Sangeeta is taller than all in her class.’ (Sangeeta is the tallest in her class.)

(Based on Beck et al. 2009: 40, modified by the author)

Similarly, the notion of “lowest” is expressed as “lower than all” as demonstrated below.

(13) “lowest”

*Areeha boto jo chuni sheesher (agee) gane.<sup>7)</sup>*

Areeha **all than small.f** mountain.on on has.gone.f

Lit. ‘Areeha has gone to the small(er) mountain than all.’ (Areeha climbed the lowest mountain.) [Gilgiti-Shina] [6]

It is noteworthy that such strategy of “A-er than all” as “A-est” is not unique in Shina. This is common among languages worldwide. Bobaljik (2012) lists languages that have adopted the same strategy for expressing the notion of superlatives. See Appendix A of Bobaljik (2012), which includes many languages whose superlative properties can be expressed by a comparative construction with a universal quantifier serving as the standard of comparison. The following is a Russian example.

Russian

(14) *Vanja vyš-e vse-x.*

Vanja tall-er all-Gen. pl

‘Vanja is the tallest.’ (lit: ‘Vanja is taller than everyone.’) (Bobaljik 2012: 226)

Other languages that adopt the same strategy include Hausa (Afro-Asiatic), Kashmiri (Indo-Aryan), Burushaski (South Asia, isolate), Limbu (Sino-Tibetan), Remo (Austro-Asiatic), and many others.

#### 4.2 “First tall”

Another strategy Gilgiti-Shina uses to express the notion of superlatives is to use ordinal numbers. The example provided in (15) uses “first high” to mean “the highest.” Similarly, “the second highest” and “the third highest” are expressed as “second high” and “third high,” respectively.

(15) “highest”

*Raji* **poomoki** **uthali** *sheesher* (*agee*) *gone*.

Raji **first.f** **high.f** mountain.on on has.gone.m

Lit. ‘Raji has gone to the first-high mountain.’ (Raji climbed the highest mountain.)

[Gilgiti-Shina] [7]

(16) “second highest”

*Saeed* **doomongi** **uthali** *sheesher* (*agee*) *gone*.

Saeed **second. f** **high.f** mountain.on on has.gone.m

Lit. ‘Saeed has gone to the second-high mountain.’ (Saeed climbed the second highest mountain.)

[Gilgiti-Shina] [8]

(17) “third highest”

*Areeha* **chamongi** **uthali** *sheesher* (*agee*) *gone*.

Areeha **third.f** **high. f** mountain.on on has.gone.f

Lit. ‘Areeha has gone to the third-high mountain.’ (Areeha climbed the third highest mountain.)

[Gilgiti-Shina] [9]

Therefore, it is a productive strategy. The following is a list of ordinal numbers in Gilgiti-Shina: Ordinal numbers in Gilgiti-Shina

- (18) *poomoko/poomoki* first.m/f  
*doomongo/doomongi* second.m/f  
*chamongo/chamongi* third.m/f  
*charmongo/charmongi* fourth.m/f  
*poshmongo/poshmongi* fifth.m/f  
*chamongo/chamongi*<sup>8)</sup> sixth.m/f  
*satmongo/satmongi* seventh.m/f  
*ashmongo/ashmongi* eight.m/f  
*novmongo/novmongi* ninth.m/f  
*daimongo/daimongi* tenth.m/f

[Gilgiti-Shina] [10]

Note that the strategy of using ordinal numbers is not unique to Gilgiti-Shina. Japanese uses practically the same system. Japanese degree adjectives do not have superlative morphemes. Adverbial expressions for ordinal numbers modify bare forms of gradable adjectives.



Japanese

- (19) *Taro-ga ichiban sekagatai.*  
 Taro-Nom number.one tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is tall firstly.' (Taro is the tallest.)
- (20) *Taro-ga niban-me-ni sekagatai.*<sup>9)</sup>  
 Taro-Nom number.two-th-Adv.Inf tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is tall secondly.' (Taro is the second tallest.)
- (21) *Taro-ga sanban-me-ni sekagatai.*  
 Taro-Nom number. two-th-Adv.Inf tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is tall thirdly.' (Taro is the third tallest.)

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Japanese has *mottomo* 'most' as presented in the following example, which appears to be missing in Gilgiti-Shina. However, it can only be used to describe the highest degree, and the second and following degrees cannot be described using *mottomo* 'most'; at least, such examples are marginal.

Japanese

- (22) *Taro-ga mottomo sekagatai.*  
 Taro-Nom most tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is most tall.' (Taro is the tallest.)
- (23) *\*?Taro-ga niban-me-ni mottomo sekagatai.*  
 Taro-Nom number.two-th-Adv.Inf most tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is secondly most tall.' (Taro is the second tallest.)
- (24) *\*?Taro-ga sanban-me-ni mottomo sekagatai.*  
 Taro-Nom number.two-th-Adv.Inf most tall  
 Lit. 'Taro is thirdly most tall.' (Taro is the third tallest.)

#### 4.3 Possible superlative forms of gradable adjectives in Gilgiti-Shina

We have observed two types of strategy for expressing the notion of superlatives in Gilgiti-Shina. They were widely observed in Minawar and Sakwar. Nevertheless, I found some superlative-like expressions in Sakwar.

Some informants from Sakwar provide the data in (25), in which *jigun* intuitively means "tallest."

(25) Possible ‘tallest’?

*Ano jigun hun.*

he tallest is.m

‘He is the tallest.’

[Gilgiti-Shina] [11]

The sentence can be paraphrased as in (26), where *jigun* is replaced by *boto jo (dobo) jigu* ‘taller than all.’

(26) “taller than all”

*Ano boto jo (dobo)<sup>10</sup> jigu hun.*

he all than more.m tall.m is.m.sg

‘He is the tallest.’

[Gilgiti-Shina] [12]

Given in (27) is a similar sentence with a female subject. Again, *jigun* the sentence can be paraphrased by *boto jo (bodi) jigi* ‘taller than all’ as presented in (28).

(27) Possible ‘tallest’?

*Anay jigun hin.*

she tallest is.f.sg

‘She is the tallest.’

[Gilgiti-Shina] [13]

(28) “taller than all”

*Anay boto jo (bodi) jigi hin.*

she all than more.f tall.f is.f.sg

‘She is the tallest.’

[Gilgiti-Shina] [14]

Importantly, the morphological similarity is evident between *jigun* “tallest” and *jigu/ jigi* “tall (er). m/f.” It is noteworthy that the same word *jigun* can be used for both male and female subjects, as presented in (25) and (27). This is unexpected, considering that Gilgiti-Shina normally exhibits gender agreement between subjects and adjectives.

A male informant in his 40s–50s from Sakwar village further mentioned the following: Utterances such as (29) is typical with *jigun* ‘tallest.’ It describes animate subjects, most likely humans, and the speaker is likely to be upset. He also mentioned that this was an old expression.

(29) Possible ‘tallest’?

*Tu jigun!*

you tallest

Lit. ‘You, tallest!’ (You are the tallest!)

[Gilgiti-Shina] [15]

An immediate question arises as to whether such superlative expressions are productive. Unfortunately, the answer to this question is no. I checked various types of gradable adjectives with the male informant and discovered only one other example, presented in (30).

(30) Possible ‘shortest’?

*Tu khutto!*

you shortest

Lit. ‘You, shortest!’ (You are the shortest!)

[Gilgiti-Shina] [16]

I expected that *khutto* could be paraphrased by *boto jo khutto/khutti* ‘short(er).m/f than all.’ However, it was not confirmed. Importantly, *khutto*, which is glossed as ‘shortest,’ is the same as the male form of ‘short,’ that is, *khutto*. There does not appear to be a unique morpheme in the superlative form.

Another important observation is that *jigun* ‘tallest’ was confirmed with multiple speakers in Sakwar village, however, only a few speakers in Minawar were aware of the expression. I had a chance to ask more than 20 teenage secondary school students of Gilgiti-Shina in Minawar village, which is adjacent to Sakwar, however, none of them used it. Only a male speaker in his 30s–40s from Minawar village said that he used to hear elderly people using *jigun* ‘tallest’ when he was a child.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Questions

We have observed two expressions in Shina that appear to be in superlative forms, that is, *jigun* ‘tallest’ and *khutto* ‘shortest.’ Two questions that immediately arise are as follows.

(31) Questions

- a. Why are there only two superlative adjectives in Gilgiti-Shina?
- b. Why are these two adjectives observed only in Sakwar?

To answer these questions, I assume that *jigun* ‘tallest’ and *khutto* ‘shortest’ observed in Sakwar are results of language contact, and present two hypotheses. In summary, the first assumes that superlative forms have been reduced in Shina, whereas the second takes an opposite approach and assumes that they have been added to Shina.

The reason for assuming language contact to be the source of the two adjectives is evident. Gilgit-Baltistan is known for its diverse languages. It is located in the northern part of Pakistan, which is part of the Old Silk Road. It shares its borders with China, India, and Afghanistan. Since ancient times, it has had a diverse range of languages, some of which have different grammatical properties. Although the exact number of languages is unknown, *North Times*, a website in Gilgit-Baltistan, lists some local languages, as presented in (32). Moreover, it mentions that “many other languages, like Pashto, Punjabi, English, Urdu, and Persian, are also spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan.”

(32) Languages of Gilgit-Baltistan

- a. Balti (Sino-Tibetan)
- b. Burushaski (isolate)
- c. Shina (Indo-Aryan)
- d. Wakhi (Indo-European)
- e. Domaki (Indo-Aryan)
- f. Kohistani (Indo-Aryan)
- g. Khowar (Indo-Aryan)
- i. Gojarri (Indo-Aryan)

(North Times, 2023 Language families are added by the author.)

## 5.2 Hypothesis 1

Considering the morphological similarity between *jigun* ‘tallest’ and *jigu/jigi* ‘tall(er).m/f’ and also between *khutto* ‘shortest’ and *khutto/khutti* ‘short(er).m/f,’ it is plausible to assume that Gilgiti-Shina once used full-fledged superlative forms of gradable adjectives, and *jigun* ‘tallest’ and *khutto* ‘shortest’ are their remnants. We term this Hypothesis 1.

## (33) Hypothesis 1

Gilgiti-Shina used to have full-fledged superlative forms of gradable adjectives, however, they have been reduced owing to language contact; *jigun* ‘tallest’ and *khutto* ‘shortest’ are remnants of the superlative forms.

This hypothesis is also motivated by the fact that Urdu, Kashmiri, Burushaski, and Limbu, spoken in and around Gilgit-Baltistan, adopt comparatives to express superlative notions, as aforementioned. When Shina speakers interact with speakers of these languages, their chance of mutual understanding is higher if they avoid superlatives and retain comparatives. An example of such “loss” can be found in Thomason and Kaufman (1988).<sup>11)</sup>

(34) ...Loss of previously existing categories is exemplified by the disappearance of the dual number in Ethiopic Semitic and of gender distinctions in Asia Minor Greek...

(Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 56)

Today, the most likely source of influence on Gilgiti-Shina is Urdu, the national language of Pakistan. It also serves as a medium for primary education. Urdu does not have a superlative construction, and the notion of superlatives is expressed by comparatives, as aforementioned in (12) and repeated below in (35).

Hindi/Urdu

(35) *Sangeeta apne klass mein sab se lambi chatra hai.*<sup>12)</sup>

Sangeeta her.own class in all than tall.f student is

Lit. ‘Sangeeta is taller than all in her class.’ (Sangeeta is the tallest in her class.)

(Based on Beck et al. 2009: 40, modified by the author)

Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, there have been no previous studies on how Urdu influenced the grammar of Gilgiti-Shina. However, the study by Shammim Ara Shams et al. (2020) examined how Urdu and English have influenced the Shina lexicon. It mentions:

(36) ...Young Shina speakers have been greatly influenced by the dominant languages, English and Urdu. The middle aged Shina speakers indicated the direct influence of

the Urdu language on the variety of Shina spoken by them. It was revealed that the old generation is not influenced by any of the dominant languages as the only language they can speak is Shina...

(Shammim Ara Shams et al. 2020: 1092)

How widely is Urdu spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan? I surveyed 49 secondary school students in Minawar in March 2024. They also provided information on the languages in which their family members spoke. Table 1 presents the languages spoken by the 262 people in Minawar. All spoke Shina, and 82.1% spoke Urdu. This indicates that most people are at least bilingual.

|            | Shina speakers | Urdu speakers | English speakers | Speakers of other language(s) |
|------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Number     | 262            | 215           | 116              | 25                            |
| Percentage | 100%           | 82.1%         | 44.3%            | 9.5%                          |

Table 1 Languages spoken in Minawar village (n=262)

To pursue Hypothesis 1, additional fieldwork with elderly monolingual speakers from Gilgiti-Shina would be useful. This is because they are likely to preserve older forms of Shina. However, the exact number of monolingual speakers of Shina remains unknown. According to the a survey in March 2024, which revealed that there continued to be monolingual speakers of Shina, many of whom were women (Table 2). Of the 262 Gilgiti-Shina speakers in Minawar mentioned in Table 1, 41 (about 15.6%) were monolingual speakers of Gilgiti-Shina; 32 of them were described as “grandfathers” or “grandmothers” by the secondary school students. One sibling, who was reported as a monolingual speaker in Table 2, is likely to be a young child who has not yet begun attending school.

|              | Male | Female |
|--------------|------|--------|
| Grandparents | 10   | 22     |
| Parents      | 1    | 7      |
| Siblings     | 0    | 1      |

Table 2 Monolingual speakers of Gilgiti-Shina (n=41)

The generational and gender gaps are evident in Table 2. According to some locals in



Figure 4 'Pink Bus Service' for women  
(Photograph by the author in March 2023)



Figure 5 Suzuki (shared taxi) in Gilgit  
(Photograph by the author in March 2024)

Minawar, school education was not widely available when the elderly were young. Therefore, they did not have the opportunity to learn Urdu or any other major languages. The situation improved significantly for the generation of fathers and mothers.

Unlike large cities in Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, which includes Gilgit, Minawar, and Sakwar, is a conservative area, and women typically stay home and do not have much contact with other areas. This explains why women tend to be more monolingual than men. When I visited Minawar in 2023 and 2024, grocery shopping was performed by men, and women needed to be accompanied by men when they went out.

Mobility for the female population was low as of March 2024 in Gilgit-Baltistan because public transportation for women was restricted. Only two means of affordable public transportation were available for local women in 2023 and 2024. One is the “Pink Bus Service” that was launched by the Gilgit-Baltistan government in 2022 (Jamal 2022), which runs on the main road of Gilgit (Figure 4). The second service is a shared taxi service called Suzuki, which is widely available in Pakistan. Women are typically allowed to sit next to drivers (Figure 5).

The reader may imagine that villagers may be exposed to the world outside their village via mass media and the Internet. It is a possibility, however, not to the extent that the reader may imagine. Most adults in Minawar and Sakwar have cell phones. However, they rely on their mobile data to connect to the Internet. Hotels and major institutions offer Wi-Fi access to the Internet. However, it is not widely available to ordinary households. One part of this problem is the lack of stable electricity. The Gilgit area relies on hydropower for electricity, and it is difficult to obtain stable electricity, particularly in winter, because the area has less water when the weather is cold. Power outages fre-



Figure 6 Houses in Minawar village  
(Photograph by the author in March 2024)



Figure 7 A kerosene lamp  
(Photograph by the author in March 2023)

quently occurred when I visited the Gilgit area in March 2023 and March 2024. Hotels, hospitals, and other public institutions have generators to keep lights on and maintain internet access. However, ordinary villagers who live in traditional houses often use kerosene lamps and simply do not use electric devices when the power is out (Figure 6 and 7). Thus, women in Minawar and Sakwar, particularly married women who keep their households, may not have much access to the world outside.

### 5.3 Hypothesis 2

Another hypothesis worth pursuing is as follows. This is the opposite of Hypothesis 1 and assumes that some speakers of Gilgiti-Shina obtained additional grammar owing to language contact.

#### (37) Hypothesis 2

Some superlative forms of adjectives have been adopted by some Gilgiti-Shina speakers owing to language contact.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988) stated that it is possible for a language to complicate its grammar through language contact, although simplifying grammar is more common (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 131). Moreover, they mention that Shina formally spread into Burushaski-spoken areas, and consequently, Shina was influenced by Burushaski.

#### (38) ...The singulative suffix of Burushaski, for instance, is unusual in Shina ... is certainly



due to Burushaski influence. A related morphosyntactic development in Shina, though more complex, also falls into this category: in Shina, as in Burushaski, the indefinite/interrogative pronoun takes a plural verb. In Burushaski, the pronoun itself, *mɛn*, is plural; the singulative suffix - *ʌn* must be added to make it singular. Now, Shina has inherited singular and plural forms for this pronoun...

(Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 131)

If such an influence from Burushaski on Shina is possible, a similar process could also be possible with other languages. Minawar, adjacent to Sakwar, has multilingual speakers who speak Gilgiti-Shina and other languages. It is possible that the superlative-like adjectives in Sakwar were brought to Gilgiti-Shina by multilingual speakers. Table 3 lists some languages spoken by Gilgiti-Shina speakers in Minawar. Some options to pursue Hypothesis 2 would be to explore whether any of the local languages have superlative forms and whether Gilgiti-Shina speakers in Sakwar speak the language.

| Langagues  | Number of speakers |
|------------|--------------------|
| Burushaski | 6                  |
| Punjabi    | 4                  |
| Khowar     | 4                  |
| Pashto     | 3                  |

Table 3 Speakers of other local languages out of 262 Gilgiti-Shina speakers

It is noteworthy that Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and they should be examined independently of each other. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 can be true simultaneously. A possible scenario is as follows: Language X has superlative forms of adjectives, and Shina invaded a large area of Language X at a certain point in history. Consequently, some Shina speakers began using the superlative forms of adjectives, as described in Hypothesis 2. Later, such superlative forms were reduced because of the influence of a third language, for example, Urdu, as described in Hypothesis 1.

## 6. Conclusion

This study discusses Gilgiti-Shina's superlative expressions. It adopts comparatives to express the notion of superlatives, that is, "A-er than all" to mean "A-est"; or it can use ordinal numbers to express superlative meanings, for example, "first high" to mean "highest." Although most speakers use these two strategies, it was discovered that some speakers in Sakwar additionally use two superlative-like forms of adjectives, namely *jigun* 'tallerst' and *khutto* 'shortest.' I proposed two hypotheses to account for the discovery: Hypothesis 1 assumes that Shina used to have full-fledged superlative forms of gradable adjectives including *jigun* 'tallest' and *khutto* 'shortest,' however, they have been reduced to these two owing to an influence of languages without superlatives. Hypothesis 2 assumes that superlative forms of adjectives have been brought to Gilgiti-Shina from other languages. These two hypotheses adopt opposite approaches. Nevertheless, they are not mutually exclusive, and both can occur. Additional fieldwork is required to pursue these hypotheses.

Finally, this study shares the concern of Shammim Ara Shams et al. (2020) in that "Shina might become an endangered language in future if it is not properly documented." (p. 1092) Therefore, the contribution of this study is to document, even if only partially, the grammar of Gilgiti-Shina as of 2024, which is in a wave of modernization and language contact.

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP20K00582. I thank the organizing members, teachers, and students at the Outliers Secondary School in Minawar, Gilgit, Pakistan. I would also like to thank the informants of Gilgiti-Shina for their patience. My thoughts are with the Minawar and Sakwar villagers. Any errors are my own.

## Appendix

Sound recordings of the data of Gilgiti-Shina listed in this paper are available from the following link.

· Oda, Toshiko. 2024 Sound recordings of Gilgit-Shina

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A0NI5HTI5sC9KpkYVNS8-3wE\\_guAIX4F?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A0NI5HTI5sC9KpkYVNS8-3wE_guAIX4F?usp=sharing)



(QR code for the link)

| Data  | Data number of recordings |
|---|---------------------------|
| (6) <i>machii shakkar-e-jo ispai hin.</i><br>'Honey is sweeter than sugar.'   | [1]                       |
| (7) <i>ano ek guz jo uthalo han.</i><br>'He is taller than one guz.' ( <i>guz</i> is an open arm's length.)   | [2]                       |
| (8) <i>ano ek guz uthalo hun.</i><br>'He is one guz tall.' ( <i>guz</i> is an open-arm length.)   | [3]                       |
| (9) <i>ano ma-jo ek hath uthalo hun.</i><br>'He is one hand taller than me.'  | [4]                       |
| (11) <i>Raji boto jo uthali sheesher (agee) gone.</i><br>'Raji climbed the highest mountain.'   | [5]                       |
| (13) <i>Areeha boto jo chuni sheesher (agee) gane.</i><br>'Areeha climbed the lowest mountain.'   | [6]                       |
| (15) <i>Raji poomoki uthali sheesher (agee) gone.</i><br>'Raji has gone to the first-high mountain.'  | [7]                       |
| (16) <i>Saeed doomongi uthali sheesher (agee) gone.</i><br>'Saeed has gone to the second-high mountain.'  | [8]                       |
| (17) <i>Areeha chamongi uthali sheesher (agee) gane.</i><br>'Areeha has gone to the third-high mountain'  | [9]                       |
| (18) <i>poomoko/poomoki</i> first.m/f<br><i>doomongo/doomongi</i> second.m/f<br><i>chamongo/chamongi</i> third.m/f<br><i>charmongo/charmongi</i> fourth.m/f<br><i>poshmongo/poshmongi</i> fifth.m/f<br><i>chamongo/chamongi</i> sixth.m/f<br><i>satmongo/satmongi</i> seventh.m/f<br><i>ashmongo/ashmongi</i> eight.m/f<br><i>novmongo/novmongi</i> ninth.m/f<br><i>daimongo/daimongi</i> tenth.m/f | [10]                      |
| (25) <i>Ano jigun hun.</i><br>'He is the tallest.'  | [11]                      |
| (26) <i>Ano boto jo (dobo) jigu hun.</i><br>'He is the tallest.' (He is taller than all.)   | [12]                      |
| (27) <i>Anay jigun hin.</i><br>'She is the tallest.'  | [13]                      |

Superlative Expressions of Gilgiti-Shina

|  |      |
|--|------|
| (28) <i>Anay boto jo (bodi) jigi hin.</i><br>'She is the tallest.' (She is taller than all.) | [14] |
| (29) <i>Tu jigun!</i><br>'You are the tallest!'  | [15] |
| (30) <i>Tu khutto!</i><br>'You are the shortest!'  | [16] |

## Notes

- 1) Some attempts have been made to create Shina textbooks to preserve the language. See the following YouTube video: “Do you want to teach your children writing Shina? This book is for you” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BigqQ5GVv8> (Retrieved on September 14, 2024)
- 2) Some Shina terms are spelled differently from those in Oda (2023) owing to variations of spellings among individuals.
- 3) The following abbreviations are used throughout the paper.  
 Abl: ablative case  
 Adv. Inf: adverbial inflection  
 DP: discourse particle  
 f: feminine  
 Gen: genitive case  
 m: male  
 Nom: nominative case  
 pl: plural  
 sg: singular
- 4) The example is ambiguous between an absolute and a relative reading. Thus, the sentence is true when Raji climbed Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world. It is also true in a scenario where three people including Raji climbed different mountains, and the mountain that Raji climbed was the highest.
- 5) A correction is required on one of the Hindi/Urdu data. In Oda (2023), I described *sab se* as a superlative morpheme and mentioned that it made a contrast against Gilgiti-Shina. However, *sab se* means ‘than all,’ thus the superlative expressions in Hindi/Urdu are made using comparative expressions as presented in (12).
- 6) In Beck et al. (2009), *sab* is glossed as SUP, a superlative marker.
- 7) Note, the sentence means that Areeha climbed the lowest mountain in a relevant comparison class, but she still climbed a high mountain. This is because *sheesh* ‘mountain’ refers to high mountains. Other expression of “mountain” in Gilgiti-Shina’s are *koar* and *shaar*, both of which refer to common mountains.
- 8) They are spelled the same as “3rd” but pronounced differently.
- 9) The gloss of ordinal numbers was adopted from Tanaka & Mizutani (2023).
- 10) *bodo/bodi* ‘more. f/m’ is an optional item. It is primarily used in the Gilgiti region including Minawar and Sakwar.
- 11) Other representative literatures on language contact include Heine & Kuteva (2005), Winkler (2005), and Matras (2020).
- 12) In Beck et al. (2009), *sab* is glossed as SUP, a superlative marker.

### References

- Bailey, T. G. (1924). *Grammar of the Shina (Şinā) Language: Consisting of Full Grammar, with Texts and Vocabularies of the Main or Gilgiti Dialect and Briefer Grammars (with Vocabularies and texts) of the Kohistani, Guresi and Drasi dialects*. The Royal Asiatic Society.
- Beck, S., Krasikova, S., Fleischer, D., Gergel, R., Hofstetter, S., Savelsberg, C., Vanderelst, J., & Villalta, E. (2009). Crosslinguistic variation in comparison constructions, *Linguistic Variation Yearbook 2009*, 1–66.
- Beck, S., Oda, T., & Sugisaki, K. (2004). Parametric variation in the semantics of comparison: Japanese vs. English. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, 13(4), 289–344.
- Bobaljik, J. D. (2012). *Universals in comparative morphology: Suppletion, superlatives, and the structure of words* (Vol. 50). MIT Press.
- Eberhard, M., Simons, G. and Fennig, C. (eds.) (2023). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Twenty-sixth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- Google. (n.d.). [Google Maps Gilgit, Pakistan]. Retrieved Augst 21, 2024, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@35.9168797,74.3842659,12.75z?entry=ttu> (Retrieved on September 14, 2024)
- Heine, B., & Kuteva, T. (2005). *Language Contact and Grammatical Change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jamal, S. (October 6, 2022). Free bus service launched for women in northern Pakistan. *Gulf News*. <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/free-bus-service-launched-for-women-in-northern-pakistan-1.91089117>
- Matras, Y. (2020). *Language Contact*. Cambridge University Press.
- Matthewson, L. (2004). On the Methodology of Semantic Fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 70 (4), 369–451.
- Matthewson, L. (2011). Methods in Crosslinguistic Formal Semantics. In: *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*. Ed. by C. Maienborn, K. von Heusinger & P. H. Portner. Vol. 1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 268–284.
- Norh Times (2023. 10. 21). The languages of Gilgit Baltistan. <https://www.northtimes.org/the-languages-of-gilgit-baltistan/> (Retrieved on September 14, 2024)
- Oda, T. (2023). Notes on degree constructions of Gilgiti-Shina. *Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences*, 153, 37–59. Tokyo Keizai University.
- Shams, S. A., Khan, M., & Shah, M. (2020). The impact of dominant languages on regional languages: A case study of English, Urdu and Shina. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 4 (3), 1092–1106.
- Tanaka, E., & Mizutani, K. (2023). The semantics of ordinals and superlatives in Japanese. *Paper presented at the Semantics Workshop in Osaka*. (2023. 8. 28)
- Thomason, S. G., & Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. University of California Press.
- Winkler, E. G. (2005). An introduction to contact linguistics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisi-*

*tion*, 27 (3), 484-485.