

LESSON 43

The Comparison of Adjectives

First Level Comparison: Similes

There are two constructions for forming similes, both use the word **CHO** meaning **SO**:

1. **cho** in combination with the preposition **ri**. The pattern is: **cho** + adjective + **ri** + dative noun:

Tha am falt aige **cho** dubh **ri** fitheach - His hair is **as** black **as** a raven

Tha mi **cho** sgìth **ri** cù - I'm **as** tired **as** a dog

Or with prepositional pronoun. The pattern is: **cho** + adjective + **prepositional pronoun of ri**:

Chan eil Calum **cho** sean **rium** - Calum is not **as** old **as** me

Chan eil Màiri **cho** spìocach **riut** - Màiri is not **as** mean **as** you

2. **cho** in combination with the relative clause. The pattern is: **cho** + adjective + **'s a** + relative clause:

Tha e **cho** mì-mhodhail **'s a** bha e a-riamh - He's **as** rude **as** he ever was

Falbhadh sinn **cho** luath **'s a** bhios tu deiseil - We will leave **as** soon **as** you are ready

Gheibh thu a-staigh **cho** fad **'s a** tha do bhrògan glan **†** - You will get in **as** long **as** your shoes are clean

† fad is used here in preference to **fada**.

An important exception to using **cho** is when saying **as much as** or **as many as** or **so many**. For these you need to use either **an uiread de** or **na h-uiread de**.

Following pattern 1 above:

Cha robh **na h-uiread de** dhaoine ann an-diugh - There weren't as many people there today

Following pattern 2 above:

Cha robh **na h-uiread de** dhaoine ann **'s a** shaoil mi - There weren't **as many** people there **as** I thought

Tha **na h-uiread de** dh'airgead aige **'s a** tha agamsa - He has **as much** money as I do (I have)

Tha **na h-uiread de** chiall aig cù **'s a** tha aigesan - A dog has **as much** sense **as** him (he has)

Second Level Comparison: Comparatives and Superlatives

1. Regular Formation

The form for both the comparative and the superlative is the same in Gàidhlig. The easiest way to find this for regular adjectives is to find the feminine genitive singular adjective (see Lesson 42). Polysyllabic adjectives also add the terminal **-e**, although in spoken Gàidhlig this is often elided. Remember a number of important adjectives will undergo internal vowel modifications:

Feminine Genitive Singular Adjective	Second Level Comparison
na beinne àirde - of the high mountain	àirde
na beinne cudromaich - of the important mountain	cudromaiche
na beinne fiadhaich - of the wild mountain	fiadhaiche
na dreasa deirge - of the red dress	deirge
na dreasa guirme - of the blue dress	guirme

An important group are the polysyllabic adjectives where:
the final syllable has only the vowel **i** after slenderisation or
the final syllable ends in **il** after slenderisation or
with final syllable **-ainn**

This group shows a reduction or loss of the final vowel group before a terminal **-e** is added:

Feminine Genitive Singular Adjective	Second Level Comparison
na dreasa bòidhich - of the beautiful dress	bòidhche
na h-aibhne domhainn - of the deep river	doimhne
na mnà dillis - of the loyal woman	dilse
na mnà uasail - of the noble woman	uaisle

Using the Second Level Comparison to Form Comparatives

For the comparative use the verb **To Be**, adding:

nas for the present and future tenses

na bu (na b' before vowels and lenited **f)** for the past and conditional tenses

A useful word to know at this point is **na** meaning **than**:

Tha Màiri nas àirde na Calum - Màiri is taller than Calum

Tha Màiri nas àirde na mise † - Màiri is taller than me

Tha Màiri a-nis nas bòidhche na bha i a-riamh - Màiri is now more beautiful than she ever was

Tha an cù seo nas fhiadhaiche na am fear eile ‡ - This dog is wilder than the other one

Bha an taigh sin na bu bhòidhche na am fear seo § - That house was more beautiful than this one

Bha Màiri na bu toilichte na mise § - Màiri was happier than me

† Pronouns are emphatic following **na**

‡ Adjectives beginning with **f** are always lenited **nas**

§ Adjectives are lenited after **na bu**, although adjectives beginning with **d** and **t** resist lenition

Literally what is being said is:

Tha an cù seo **nas fhiadhaiche** na am fear eile - This dog is the **thing that is wilder** than the other one

Bha an taigh sin **na bu bhòidhche** na am fear seo - That house was the **thing that was more beautiful** than this one

It is not uncommon in spoken Gàidhlig to hear and use **nas** instead of **na bu** with the meaning coming from the tense of the main verb:

Bha an taigh sin nas bòidhche na am fear seo - That room was more beautiful than this one

The comparative can be used adverbially in the same way as a common adjective:

A bheil thu nas toilichte a-nis? - Are you happier now?

Tha thu a' coimhead nas toilichte - You are looking happier

Bha iad a' faireachdainn na bu toilichte - They were feeling happier

Using the Second Level Comparison to Form Superlatives

For the superlative use the Assertive Verb, adding:

as for the present tense

a bu (a b' before vowels and lenited **f)** for the past/conditional tense

Care is needed here as the Assertive verb can convey the comparative with the meaning derived from the context:

'S mise as òige anns a' chlas - I am the youngest in the class

Bu mhise a b' òige anns a' chlas - I was the youngest in the class

'S mise as òige den dithis † - I am the younger of the two

† The Assertive Verb has only served here to emphasise and the meaning is obviously comparative.

Generally, however, you will use it in a superlative manner:

I s mise as glìce anns a' chlas - I am the wisest in the class

B' e Sìm a bu ghlice § - Simon was the wisest

An e Calum a b' àirde ? ‡ - Was Calum the tallest?

Nach mise a bu toilichte? - Was it not I who was happiest?

§ Adjectives are lenited after **a bu**, although adjectives beginning with **d** and **t** resist lenition.

‡ As stated in Lesson 19 unless stress is required then usually only the present of the Assertive Verb need be used.

You might recognise the forms **as** and **a bu** as relative forms of the Assertive Verb. So what is literally being said is:

'S mise as òige anns a' chlas - It is I who is the younger/youngest in the class

Bu mhise a b' òige anns a' chlas - It was I who was the younger/youngest in the class

General Rules of Usage

If you are unsure which form to use then a good rule of thumb when describing a noun directly (attributely) is:

An Indefinite Noun Uses Nas/Na Bu	A Definite and Proper Noun Uses As/A Bu
duine nas àirde/duine na b' àirde	an duine as àirde/an duine a b' àirde
cù nas òige/cù na b' òige	an cù as òige/an cù a b' òige
baile nas bòidhche/baile na bu bhòidhche	am baile as bòidhche/am baile a bu bhòidhche

'S e duine nas àirde a tha sinn ag iarraidh - We want a taller man. lit It's a taller man that we want

'S e an duine as àirde a tha sinn ag iarraidh - We want the tallest man. lit It's the tallest man that we want

'S e Dìleas an cù as òige ‡ - Dìleas is the youngest dog

'S e cù nas òige a tha dhìth orm - I want a younger dog. lit. It's a younger dog that I want

'S e Glaschu am baile as bòidhche ‡ - Glasgow is the most beautiful town

‡ You could drop the noun and simply have:

'S e Dìleas as òige ‡ - Dìleas is the youngest

'S e Glaschu as bòidhche - Glasgow is the most beautiful

2. Irregular Formation

There are a number of common irregular Second Level Comparisons:

Basic Form	Second Level Comparison	Basic Form	Second Level Comparison
beag - small	lugh	làidir - strong	treasa & regular làidire
cumhang - narrow	cuinge	leathan - broad	leatha
dona, olc - bad	miosa	math - good	fheàrr
duilich - difficult, sorry	duilghe	mòr - big	motha, mò
fada - long	fhaide	reamhar - fat	reamhra
furasta - easy	fhasa	tana - thin, narrow	taine
goirid - short	giorra	teth - hot	teotha

Some Common Idioms Using the Second Level Comparison

When directly describing an action after the Assertive Verb:

'S e Calum am fear as àirde a leumas - Calum jumps the highest (lit. Calum is the one who is the highest that jumps)

'S tusa a bu mhaile (mall=slow) a bhruidhinn - You spoke the slowest (lit. It's you who was the slowest that spoke)

'S ann leamsa a tha an càr a bu luaithe a ruith - I own the car that ran the fastest (lit. I own the car which was fastest that ran)

Using:

mar + second level comparative + relative clause, **'s ann** + second level comparative + relative clause:

Mar as fhaide a choisich e, **'s ann as sgithe** a dh'fhàs e - **The further** he walked **the more tired** he became

Mar as àirde a streapas tu, **'s ann as taine** a bhios an t-adhar - **The higher** you climb, the thinner the air will be

NEW WORDS

Adjectives

cudromach - important

furasta - easy

rag - stiff

sgiobalta - neat, tidy

tana - thin

uasal - noble

cumhang - narrow, thin

leathan - broad, wide

ruadh - red, auburn

spiocach - mean, miserly

tapaidh - smart, clever, robust

Nouns

cidsin (m) - kitchen

flùr (m) - flower

iarann (m) - iron

togalach (m) - building

Gàidhealtachd (f) - Gàidhlig speaking area

fiodh (f) - wood, timber

troigh (f) - foot

fitheach (m) - raven

gnìomh (m) - act, deed

sràbh (m) - straw

fiacail (f) - tooth

gualainn (f) - shoulder

stàilinn (f) - steel

Verbs

tagh, taghadh - choose, elect

EXERCISE 1 Translate into English

1. Tha e cho mòr ri each
2. Chan eil e cho glic rithe
3. Tha an togalach sin cho àrd ri beinn
4. Tha i cho bòidheach 's a bha i a-riamh
5. 'S urrainn dha ruith nas luaithe na thusa

6. Is leamsa a' chathair as cofhartaille anns an rùm
7. B' e sin an là a b' fhliche a chunnaic mi a-riamh
8. 'S i Màiri an tè as tapaidhe anns an sgoil
9. Tha an seòmar agamsa nas sgiobalta na an seòmar agadsa
10. Tha stàilinn nas cruaidhe na iarann
11. 'S e an cidsin an rùm as glaine anns an taigh agam
12. Bha na fiaclan aice cho geal ris an t-sneachd
13. 'S e Calum as miosa de na bràithrean
14. Tha an abhainn nas cuinge faisg air an drochaid
15. Thagh mi an sràbh as giorra
16. Cò am fear as treasa dhiubh?
17. Is ise as lugha den teaghlach ach an neach as sine
18. 'S ann aigesan a tha na troighean as motha a chunnaic mi a-riamh
19. Tha mo thaigh-sa nas motha na do thaigh-sa
20. Bha a' cheist sin na b' fhasa na an tè eile

EXERCISE 2 Translate into Gàidhlig

1. She is as quiet as a mouse
2. Her hair is as black as coal
3. He is the most industrious person that I know
4. The room was a lot warmer when we had a coal fire
5. Where will I find the most beautiful girl in the world?
6. His hair was as white as snow
7. It's in the highlands that you'll find the tallest tree
8. I was much thinner when I was a young boy
9. His hair is much more auburn than his younger sister
10. It's heather that has the most fragrant flower
11. The room was hotter with a coal fire
12. He has much broader shoulders than his brother
13. They have the smallest garden that I ever saw
14. The glen road was longer than I remembered
15. He committed (did) the most evil act
16. The main road was wider than this one
17. Steel is stronger than wood
18. I was much thinner when I was young
19. Edinburgh is the busiest city in Scotland
20. Calum ran the mountain the fastest
21. The further we swam the colder the sea became
22. The older she grew the stiffer she was

5. C'ait am faigh mi a' chailleag as bòidhche anns an t-saoghal?
6. Bha am falt aige cho gear ris an t-sneachd
7. 'S ann air a' Ghàidhealtachd a gheibh sibh a' chraobh as àirde
8. Bha mi mòran na bu chaoille nuair a bha mi nam bhalach òg
9. Tha am falt aige mòran nas ruaidhe na falt a pheathar as òige
- 10a. 'S ann aig an fhraoch a tha am flùr as cubhraidhe
- 10b. 'S e flùr an fhraoich as Cùbhraidhe
11. Bha an rùm na bu teotha le teine guail
- 12a. Bha a ghualinean fada na bu leatha na a bhràthair
- 12b. Bha na gualinean aige fada na bu leatha na a bhràthair
13. 'S ann aca a tha an gàrradh as lugha a chunnaic mi a-riamh
14. Tha rathad a' ghlinn nas fhaide na chumhnic mi
15. Rinn e an gnìomh a bu mhiosa
16. Bha a' phrìomh rathad na bu leatha na am fear seo
17. Tha stàillinn nas treasa na fiodh
18. Bha mi fada na bu taine nuair a bha mi òg
19. 'S e Dun Eideann am prìomh bhaile as traingean ann an Albainn
20. 'S e Calum as luaithe a ruith a' bheinn
21. Mar as fhaide a shnàmh sinn, 's ann as fhuaire a dh'fhàs a' mhuir
22. Mar as sine a dh'fhàs i, 's ann as raige a bha i

LESSON 43: ANSWERS 1

1. He is as big as a horse
2. He isn't as prudent as her
3. That building is as high as a mountain
4. She is as beautiful as she ever was
5. He can run faster than you
6. I possess the most comfortable chair in the room
7. That was the wettest day I ever saw
8. Mairi's the smartest one in the school
9. My room is tidier than your room
10. Steel is harder than iron
11. The kitchen is the cleanest room in my house
12. Her teeth were as white as the snow
13. Calum is the worst of the brothers
14. The river is narrower near the bridge
15. I chose the shortest straw
16. Who's the strongest (man) of them?
17. She's the smallest of the family but the oldest
18. He has the biggest feet I ever saw
19. My house is larger than your house
20. That question was easier than the other one

LESSON 43: ANSWERS 2

1. Tha i cho sàmhach ri luch
2. Tha am falt aice cho dubh ri gual
3. 'S esan an duine as deanadaiche as aithne dhomh
4. Bha an seòmar fada (mòran) na bu bhlaithhe nuair a bha teine guail againn