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THE BALOCHI LANGUAGE

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the dialects of the Balochi language, its official and educational status in the educational institutions and to take a glance over the written history of Balochi language. The phonological and morphological systems of the Balochi language will be focused to point out the grammatical system of the Balochi language.

A) Balochi Language

i. Origin

Balochi belongs to the Iranian group of the Indo European Language family. Balochi is a North West Iranian Language but is nowadays spoken in the south western corner of Iranian linguistic area. Balochi is the language of the Baloch a mainly tribal people, the great majority of whom live in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, smaller populations also in Punjab and Sindh, a larger group lives in Karachi Pakistan, as well as in south east Iran in the province of Siatan-o-Balochistan, a smaller group in Helmand and Nimruz provinces of Afghanistan, Gulf states, and some parts of Mari province in Turkmenistan.¹

Balochistan has been classified as West Iranian Group of the Iranian (Iranic) branch of the Indo European language family, the most related languages to Balochi from this group are Kurdish, Sughdi, Dari and other north west Iranian languages, Persian (Farsi), Pashto, Tajiki, Ossetian and other east Iranian Languages.²

ii. Dialects

Balochi language has three major dialects i.e. Eastern Balochi, Western Balochi and Southern or Rakhshani Balochi dialects. There is a noticeable difference in infinitive verbs between Rakhshani and Mekrani dialects.³

There are probably around six million Balochi speakers around the world, most of whom speak Western dialects. It is

worth mentioning that this dialects has been most widely used in Balochi Literature. The eastern Balochi dialects is spoken in the north east parts of Balochistan (Pakistan), some parts of south Punjab and in Sindh. Eastern dialects is less developed in many ways and it is most influenced by Sindhi and Siraki languages spoken closest to it.

Most linguists are of the opinion that Balochi was more widely spoken in the 19th and early 20th centuries than nowadays. Especially in Punjab and Sindh there are today many people who recognize themselves as Baloch but speak other Indo Aryan languages, Siraki, Sindhi and Punjabi. There are Baloch both in the Gulf States and Africa who have switched over from speaking Balochi to speaking and writing Arabic and Swahili languages respectively.

iii. Medium of Education and Officials Status

The Past history of Balochi language is witnessed that it has been used only as an oral language till post - colonial period in Balochistan. There was no tradition of using Balochi as medium of instruction or in writing. The first printed book on Balochi has been written by Major E. Mockler an Englishman by Hency S. King & Co. in 1877. Another earliest manuscript of a language teaching book has been written by Kamalan Gichki a native writer of Balochistan in Mekran in same period. The most well known book of its kind is M. Longworth Dames's "A text book of the Balochi language" (Grammar, dialogue, stories, legends, poems) published in 190 revised edition 1922 from Lahore. Hathu Ram an important historian author of many books on Balochistan and Baloch history, and an Indian official wrote his book "Balochi nama" in the end of nineteenth century in Persian and Urdu. While the British Army officers in India learned Balochi in order to protect their power and authority over native people.⁴

The first institution where Balochi and Brahui were introduced as medium of instruction in the end of nineteenth century was the "MADRASA-E-DURKHAN" or Durkhani Religious institution established in 1880 the village of Durkhan near Dhadar (Balochistan). This was the first religious school where Balochi was first time used as medium of instruction. The efforts made by the Madrasa - e- Durkhani can be mentioned as a literary and religious movements for spreading religious

awareness among the Baloch people through their native languages.⁵ According to an estimate 91 books including translation of Holy Quran in Balochi were published from here.⁶

The countries including Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and the Arab Gulf state, in which Balochi is spoken, but neither is it considered an official language nor medium of instruction for Balochi speaking areas. In Pakistan in 1989, during the government of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in Balochistan adopted use of Balochi as medium of primary education in the province until desolation of his government in 1992.⁷ At present courses in Balochi language and literature are offered at the Colleges in Balochistan at Inter and Degree levels while in the University of Balochistan Quetta at Masters, M.Phil and Ph.D level.

B) Balochi Grammar

a) Phonology

The phonetic system of Balochi is characterized by a phoneme catalog comprising of eight vowels, (five long a,i,u,e,o and three short a,i, u) two diphthongs (*ai and au*) and some linguists use *āy* also as a third diphthong. There are twenty-five consonants. Among the vowels a long/short distinction exists and is contrastive in the language. The use of retroflex articulations is a characteristic property of the Balochi sound system influenced by the Indio Aryan languages of India.

Chart of Balochi Consonants								
	Bila-bil	Labio-Dental	Alveolar	Post-Alveolar	Pala-tal	Ve-lar	Uvu-lar	Glotal
Stops	P – b	...	ʈ – d	.	...	k – g	q	..
Fricatives	..	f - v	S - z	ʃ – ʒ	X	.....	.....	H
Affricates	...	...	..	Tʃ dʒ	...	...	...	...
Nasals	M	...	ɳ	...	...	...	..	..
Lateral approximants	...	..	L	...	..	...	...	...
Trill	..	...	R	...	...	...	...	...
Retroflex trill	..	..	!	..	..	..	..	..
Approximants (semi-vowles)	W	...	..	...	j..	...	...	...

The / \underline{t} /, /d/, / \underline{n} /, / / are retroflex consonants in Balochi and these are pronounced with the tongue rounded back so that its bottom touches the roof of the mouth. This type of articulation is typical of other languages of the Indian subcontinent.

The Balochi has borrowed retroflex phonemes from its neighboring languages Brahui and Sindhi. The nazal phoneme / \underline{n} / is found only in the Eastern Balochi. The phonemes / $\underline{\text{ṣ}}$ /, / $\underline{\text{ṣ}}$ / are found only in “learned pronunciation”. The Arabic phonemes are not found in Balochi sounds but in orthography these phonemes represent the loan Arabic and Persian words in Balochi.⁸

b) Morphology

i) Noun

Balochi nouns in their formation correspond closely with Persian. Balochi distinguished with two numbers singular and plural and there are four cases in Balochi. There is no grammatical gender or historical stem in Balochi. Noun inflection is given below for “*mard*” man as under:-

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>mard</i> (man)	<i>mard</i> (men)
Genitive	<i>marde</i> (man’s)	<i>mardaanee</i> (men’s)
Accusative /dative	<i>mardaa</i> (to man)	<i>mardaan</i> (to men)
Oblique	<i>mardaa</i> (to man)	<i>mardaan</i> (to men)

ii) Adjectives

All adjectives can, and adjectives in attributive position must take the suffix /-en/. The attributive takes / en/ and precede the noun they qualify as under:-

<i>Mazanen mard</i>	‘the old man’
<i>Washen naa</i>	‘delicious dates’
The predicative adjectives do not take / en:/	
<i>aa mard shar na int</i>	‘That man is not good’
<i>e janik shar int</i>	‘This girl is good’.

Comparative adjectives in Balochi are compared by adding the ending of /tir –tiren/ to the positive form. However, adjectives in the positive can also be used in comparison some time.

‘My pen is the best off all’		
<i>Manee kalam sha</i>	<i>drustaan</i>	<i>shartir int</i>

'my' (nom.sg.)	'pen' (obl.pl)	'form' 'all' 'best' 'is' (positive)(pres.ind.3p.sg)
'Boy is elder than girl.'		
<i>Bachak</i>	<i>sha jinic</i>	<i>mastir int</i>
'boy'	'from' 'girl'	'elder' 'is'

The main interrogative adjective are e.g. chunt/ 'how may' chinkas/ 'how much' etc. The main adjective of quantity are 'baaz' many, several; cheezen / few, a little, some; kam/ 'little, few.'⁹

iii) Pronouns

A pronouns is a word used instead of a noun. The personal pronouns have the following forms:

	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Singular			
Nominative	<i>man</i>	<i>tau (ta)</i>	<i>aa</i>
Genitive	<i>manee (maee)</i>	<i>tahee(tee)</i>	<i>aahee</i>
Accusative / dative	<i>manaa</i>	<i>taraa</i>	<i>aa, aairaa</i>
Oblique	<i>man</i>	<i>tau, ta, to</i>	<i>aahee</i>
Pural			
Nominative	<i>man</i>	<i>shumaa</i>	<i>aa</i>
Genitive	<i>manee (maee)</i>	<i>shumae</i>	<i>aawaanee</i>
Accusative / dative	<i>manaa</i>	<i>shumaaraa</i>	<i>aawaenee</i>
Oblique	<i>man</i>	<i>shumaa</i>	<i>aawaan</i>

There is no pronoun of third person in Balochi. The demonstrative pronouns are used in its place. The demonstrative pronouns have the following forms. The proximate demonstrative pronouns are:

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>e,esh</i>	<i>eshaa</i>
Genitive	<i>eshee</i>	<i>eshaanee</i>
Accusative / dative	<i>eshiraa</i>	<i>eshiaaraa</i>
Oblique	<i>eshee</i>	<i>eshiaa</i>

The remote demonstrative pronouns are:

Nominative	<i>aa</i>	<i>aawaan</i>
Genitive	<i>aahee</i>	<i>aawaanee</i>
Accusative / dative	<i>aaheearaa</i>	<i>aawaanaaraa</i>
Oblique	<i>aayaa</i>	<i>aayaa</i> ¹⁰

iv) Interrogative pronouns

The main Balochi interrogative pronouns are:

Che (what) *kay* (who) *kujaam* (which)

v) Verb system in Balochi

Verbal categories in Balochi are person, number, tenses, mood and voices. Persons are first, second and third. Numbers are singular and plural. Tenses are present, past and future. There are two voices active and passive while moods are indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

Negation in Balochi is expressed with the help of the prefixial particles /na/ with the verb while the negative prefix /ma/ is used in the imperative and the subjunctive. The modal imperative prefix is /bi/ or /pi/ but this prefix is dropped in the compound verbs.

vi) Personal endings

The personal endings in Balochi for present tense are:

	Singular			Plural	
1	<i>een</i>	<i>kaneen</i> (I do)	<i>an</i>	<i>kanan</i>	(We do)
2	<i>ay</i>	<i>kanay</i> (you do)	<i>it</i>	<i>kanit</i>	(You do)
3	<i>t</i>	<i>kant</i> (He / She do)	<i>an</i>	<i>kanan</i>	(They do)

The personal endings in Balochi for preterit tenses are:

1	<i>un</i>	<i>kurtun</i> (I did)	<i>an</i>	<i>kurtan</i>	(We did)
2	<i>ay</i>	<i>kurtay</i> (you did)	<i>it</i>	<i>kurtit</i>	(You did)
3	<i>zero</i>		<i>ant</i>	<i>kurtant</i>	(They did)

Verbal system of Balochi is like that of the other Iranian languages, is based on two stems, present and past. The present tense is formed by present stem + personal endings for examples:

Aa kaar kant	(he does)
Man naan wareen	(I eat food)
Maa rawaan	(We go)

vii) Imperative

The imperative in Balochi is used only in the second person singular and plural. The modal imperative prefix is /bi/ or /ei/ but this prefix is dropped in the compound verbs.

viii) Compound verbs

The compound verbs in Balochi are formed i.e nouns, adjectives or adverbs plus the colorless verbs like *knang* (to do) or *boohag* (to become) for example.

<i>Hisab kanag</i>	(to count)
<i>tawaar kanag</i>	(to call)
<i>bahaa kanag</i>	(to sell)

In Rakhshani dialect instead of *kanag*, *boohag* is used.

d) Syntax

Word order in Balochi is like many other Indo-Iranian languages, as Sub + Obj + Verb (SOV)¹¹

The order between direct and indirect object is also quite free, the more emphasized object preceding the other one for example. The verbal's system of the language is comprised of two voices (active & passive), four moods (indicative, interrogative, imperative and subjunctive), two tenses (past and present/ future – nb. morphologically there is no formal distinction between present and future forms in all verb forms with the singular exception of the copula 'to be'), and two aspects (perfect, imperfect / continuative). Verbs agree with their subjects in person and number. Complex or so-called "light" verb constructions are productive in the language. In this construction, a nominal, adjectival or verbal element is followed by an auxiliary verb such as 'come', 'become', 'do' etc.

Manee biraat taraa zar data

<i>data</i>	<i>zarr</i>	<i>taraa</i>	<i>bitraat</i>	<i>manee</i>
"to give"	"money"	"you"	"brother"	"My"
(gen.sg.)	(nom.pl)	(dat.sg)	(nom.sg.)	(gen.sg)

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