

## Balochi - Notes

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The following notes (from Bashir 1991, unless otherwise indicated) are intended as the briefest of introductions to Balochi materials.

**The language.** Balochi is a Western Iranian language, thus grouping with Persian, in contrast to Pashto, which is Eastern Iranian. It is an SOV language, some of its dialects showing partial ergativity. It also displays much lexical influence from various stages of Persian.

**Dialects.** Elfenbein (1966, 1990) identifies six dialects: (1) Rakhshani, (2) Kechi, (3) Coastal dialects (in some sources called Mekrani), (4) Sarawani, (5) Lashari, (6) Eastern Hill dialects. Of these, Rakhshani, Kechi, the Coastal dialects, and the Eastern Hill Dialects are spoken in Pakistan; while Sarawani and Lashari are spoken mostly in Iran. There are also substantial numbers of Rakhshani speakers in Afghanistan, and (former Soviet) Turkmenistan.

The dialects of Balochi form a continuum, with the westernmost varieties most heavily influenced by Persian, the easternmost by Sindhi and Siraiki, and the dialects adjacent to the Brahui-speaking area by Brahui. In Pakistan, Rakhshani and the Coastal dialects are culturally dominant: radio and television programs from Quetta are broadcast mainly in Rakhshani, while much of classical Balochi literature is written in one or the other of the coastal dialects.

There is an excellent color map of Balochi dialects at <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/karten/iran/baloc.htm>

The names of the dialects on this map differ somewhat from Elfenbein's names above.

Within **Balochistan**, the dialect distribution is as summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Speakers of Balochi in Balochistan

Dialect	Number of Speakers
Eastern	630,000
Western	
Rakhshani	590,000
Mekrani (=Coastal dialects + Kechi)	660,000
Total	1,880,000

### Phonology.

#### Balochi consonant system

##### Original Balochi phonemes

Bilabial Labio-dental    Dental    Alveolar    Palatal    Retroflex Velar    Post-velar    Glottal

Stops

Voiceless p t k  
Voiced b d g

Affricates

Voiceless □  
Voiced j

Fricatives

Voiceless s ☉ h  
Voiced z ʃ

Nasals

m n

Laterals

l

Trills

r

Semivowels

w y

Borrowed phonemesStops

Voiceless T q  
Voiced D

Fricatives

Voiceless f x  
Voiced (

Flaps

R

**Selected linguistics-oriented references**

- Elfenbein, J. 1966. *The Baluchi Language: A Dialectology with Texts*. Royal Asiatic Society Monographs, Vol. XXVII. London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. [Important work by this preeminent scholar of Balochi.]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982. Baluchi-Brahui Linguistic Commensality. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 77-98. [Discusses the long-standing cultural and linguistic interaction between Balochi and Brahui. An important paper, and accessible to the non-specialist.]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. Baloci. *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*. Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag. pp. 350-362. [A thumbnail sketch of Balochi grammar, with emphasis on historical development]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1990. *An Anthology of Classical and Modern Balochi Literature*, Vol. I. Anthology, Vol. II, Glossary. Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz. [This is the largest and best anthology of Balochi literature in English. Indispensable for English speakers trying to gain a familiarity with Balochi literature.]
- \_\_\_\_\_. Baluchi language and literature. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (web-based edition), pp. 633-644. ed. Ehsan Yarshater. (<http://www.iranica.com>) [A good introduction to both language and literature. Contains examples of written literary Balochi and nominal and verbal paradigms.]
- Jahani, Carina. 1989. *Standardization and Orthography in the Balochi Language*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. *Studia Iranica Upsaliensia* 1. Uppsala: University of Uppsala.

[This book is a detailed study provides a description and assessment of the development of Balochi as a written literary language. Its conclusion is that at present there is no single accepted standardized norm for written Balochi.]

Korn, Agnes. *Towards a Historical Grammar of Balochi: Studies in Balochi Historical Phonology and Vocabulary*. Ph.D. thesis ms. (at <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/personal/agnes/diss.htm>) [This very recent work of historical linguistics contains a very detailed and recent bibliography on Balochi and Balochi studies. Though this work itself is not pedagogically oriented, some of the references listed may be helpful in preparing educational materials.]

The following book is in press, and promises to be an extremely valuable new resource for Balochi studies. Jahani, Carina and Agnes Korn (eds.) *The Baloch and Their Neighbours: Ethnic and Linguistic Contact in Balochistan in Historical and Modern Times*. Wiesbaden (Reichert). [Contains articles by important scholars of Balochi. Sections are: I. Historical linguistics; II. Language contact in modern times with subsections on Iran, Pakistan, and other countries; III. History, culture, and the future of the Balochi language. Includes ten maps. (full table of contents can be viewed at: <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/personal/agnes/contents.pdf>)]

### Selected pedagogically oriented references

- Ahmad, Mumtaz. 1985. *Baluchi Glossary: A Baluchi-English Glossary: Elementary Level*. Dunwoody Press. [A pedagogic work for beginning learners of Balochi. Part of the Dunwoody series of readers in uncommonly taught languages. May represent Balochi of Pakistan, concentrating on core vocabulary that is probably common to most written dialects found in Pakistan.]
- Barker, Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman and Aqil Khan Mengal. 1969/1980. *A Course in Baluchi*. Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. [Parallel in format to Barker's three-volume introductory Urdu course, these materials were developed with A. K. Mengal at the University of Balochistan. Volume II contains 197 pages of Balochi-English vocabulary, coordinated with the grammar materials and texts. Pages 604-660 are an English-Balochi index. This reflects Balochi usage in Pakistan current in the late 1960s, which is likely to be closest to standard literary usage in Pakistan.]
- Bashir, Elena. 1991. *A Contrastive Analysis of Balochi and Urdu*. Peshawar, Pakistan: Directorate of Primary Education; Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development. [This study was prepared with the aim of identifying areas of Balochi phonology or grammar which might illuminate differences faced by Balochi-speaking children in learning Urdu.]