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The Relationship Between Language and Ethnicity among Baloch people

Abstract:

The present study is a part of an ethnographic research that explored the negotiation between language and ethnicity by investigating the role of language as a component and indicator of ethnic identity in a linguistically diverse ethnic group, Baloch who speak at least four different languages i.e Balochi, Brahvi, Sindhi and Siraeki but make one single ethnic people. The study specifically inquired if language is the core value component of Baloch ethnicity. For this purpose one hundred and twenty four young educated Baloch from different universities were purposively sampled for unstructured interviews while observation was also used as a necessary tool for ethnography. The collected responses were analysed within the theoretical framework of Smolicz Cultural Core Value Theory (1981). The analysis of the collected data showed that most of the participants were monolinguals with one of the four languages mentioned above. Some were bilingual with Urdu, the lingua franca or with one or more languages of the group. The study reveals that whichever language the members of Baloch ethnic group speak, Balochi language holds an important place for them and it acts as a strong ethnic identity marker and a core value component of ethnicity for this linguistically diverse ethnic group.

Key Words: Language, Ethnicity, Baloch, Core Value.

The study of Ethnicity has remained problematic over the years. Different approaches were used to study the phenomenon but not with full success due to difficulty in categorizing people into ethnic groups and in determining identity markers. One of the major issues is the distribution of varied languages, which sometimes crosses political boundaries (Emberling, 1997). The population under study i.e 'Baloch' live in three different countries; Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Their national identity might be different but their ethnic identity is one. Such divisions are a common phenomenon in regions that remained under colonialism. The colonial division was ambiguous because people from different groups were made one tribe and similar groups were given one name. This foreign given name could not become the identity for the group members.

Language plays an important part in determining ethnicity in Pakistan. There are more than twenty languages spoken within the borders of

Pakistan (Blood, 1995) but languages that are known to be closely connected to the ethnic identity of people are Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi that belong to the Indo Aryan group of Indo European languages, whereas Brahvi is a language spoken by a group of people who identify themselves as Baloch but speak Brahvi which belongs to the Dravidian family of languages.

The present study explores the relation that language holds with ethnicity among Baloch as a linguistically diverse ethnic group. The Baloch population in Pakistan resides mainly in Balochistan but small portion of it also lives in Sindh and Punjab. According to the latest census, the total population of Baloch is 6 million of which 70% live in Balochistan and the rest in the other three provinces, as reported in 2005 (Fani et al, 2011).

Baloch can be divided into two main groups

- i. Sulaimani Baloch
- ii. Makrani Baloch

The people of these two groups speak two different but mutually intelligible dialects. The population of these two groups is divided by an area populated by the Brahvi speaking Baloch. These Brahvi speaking Baloch can also be grouped into two

- i. The Jalawan's or the low landers
- ii. The Sarawan's or the High landers

The Baloch who today live outside Balochistan in Sindh and Punjab and speak Sindhi and Siraeki are an extension of Baloch by colonization through conquest. Their language has changed over generations due to their being under the influence of their Indian neighbour (Dames, 1904).

This research is mainly a Sociolinguistic study that also takes insights from the other discipline of social sciences. Sociolinguistics itself is a multidisciplinary subject that looks at the working of the language in the society, whereby language does not stay as an objective entity. Language provides the initial information about the identities of the speaker, among which ethnic identity is the foremost (Ali, 1996). Ethnicity is a social reality, constructed through a social process and cannot be called a simple biologically determined phenomenon. It is more than a simplified relation with a family or even with a clan. Common ancestry is a defining feature for an ethnic group but geographical unity has its own significance (Embling, 1997). Language is an important but not an essential marker of ethnic identity (Fishman, 1999). The varying significance of language as an expression of ethnicity among different groups in multilingual and multicultural societies of today's world makes it a negotiated construct.

Much of the research on the relationship between language and ethnicity is done on the immigrant population in a foreign land where they nego-

tiate their ethnic identities in response to the dominating ethnicities. But this study has explored the negotiation between language and ethnicity by investigating the role of language as a component and indicator of ethnic identity along with other variables in an indigenous group.

Joso (2009) believes that language is a loose component of ethnicity among the other five like religion, race, skin colour and birthplace; as it is the first to be shed from one's ethnic identity especially among immigrants. Ethnicity is one's relationship with his ethnic group and any component of ethnicity can dominate the other while forming the basis of this relationship and plays its role in further strengthening it. It is usually these components of ethnicity that are manipulated at the time of ethnic conflicts (Ali, 1996).

In a set of different studies on components of ethnicity as its indicators, it was found that language is a salient indicator of ethnic identity among groups. For Hispanics, Spanish language appeared to be a dominant indicator (Organista, Chun, Martin, 1998). But in certain cases language was found to be less significant like for Jewish identity. Ethnicity, to a large extent is self-ascription by a group and various groups define it by making use of different components of ethnicity.

A number of studies suggest that language is one of the most important elements of ethnic identity. The salience of language as a marker of ethnicity depends on the setting in which the study is being conducted; moreover language is not included in the studies on ethnicity in all groups. Ethnicity does not become an issue except when seen in the context and in contrast to other ethnic groups usually in a majority culture (Rosenthal and Hrynevich, 1985). Components of ethnicity are present in all groups but the degree of presence varies.

Literature Review:

Language is now studied in a social context, away from its fragmented elements like phonology, morphology, syntax etc. It is now seen in the context of human behaviour. Weber in Ramahoba (2008) observes that:

"Common language and ritual regulation of life as determined by shared religious beliefs everywhere are conducive to feelings of ethnic affinity, especially since the intelligibility of the behaviours of others is the most fundamental presupposition of group formation'. (p.2)

He further says that language makes a group stronger because a common language facilitates communication, it is therefore suggested that if the origin of the ethnic group is linguistic, then the in-group bond would be stronger. Thus there is a strong link between language and ethnicity.

Language has never remained a static phenomenon. Changes within a language and change of group language after years is a regular feature of a

living language and an alive ethnic group. Language therefore sometimes determines ethnic identity but is not always an essential component for ethnicity. On the other hand Kaikkonen, (1996) opines that the identity of an individual is inseparable from his language. Language becomes a reference point for group identity, which brings them closer to those who speak the same language. It is commonalities among the group members, be it national or ethnic; that are usually focused for the purpose of enhancing ethnic identity and Kaikkonen believes it to be the ethnic language more than any other aspect of culture of a group.

Language underpins identity and this sense of belonging is further reinforced if the language is or becomes a means of communication, fulfilling the basic need of the group members. With this mutually intelligible language it is easier to transmit group's ideologies and aspirations among the members. Elevation of a language to a legally formal status is necessary when an ethnic group aspires to become a nation, and such an elevation needs conscious and deliberate efforts to make the language stand out and look different from the languages it comes in contact with (Beswick, 2007).

According to Ramahoba (2008) language can be the means of expression within a group but it does not mean that a group specially an ethnic group cannot have an existence without a common language. Language is a tool or an instrument for the expression and assertion of ethnic identity and by all means improves group cohesion and strengthens its bonds but language is not ethnicity. Ramahoba studied a Tswana group in Botswana and found that despite having a common language; the members of the group had differences in tradition, history, value system etc. In the same way some groups shared a single language but were not a single ethnic group due to political, social and economic circumstances. For example in Botswana, Babrma, Batswapory shared a single language with Tswana group but did not identify themselves as one ethnic group.

Mutually intelligible language is the usual practice among the members of an ethnic group but it is not mandatory and compulsory. There are ethnic groups where members speak different languages but are still one ethnic group. The basis of unity among these groups is therefore not the language but other social factors. For example the long existing groups like the Arabs and Jews have moved from their own languages, classical Arabic and Hebrew respectively and now speak different vernaculars but the sanctity attached to the language of their holy scriptures has become the means of uniting the members of the two groups. In the same way different ethnic identities in The United States use English for the common binding American identity (Emberling, 1997).

Padilla (2000) argues that ancestral heritage can be one of the many criteria to be identified as a member of a certain ethnic group but other aspects of culture such as language use that facilitates inter and intra group

communication and following of group traditions are also pertinent criteria. It is not necessary that all members should fulfil all criteria but the suggestion of demonstrating at least one criterion to be constructed as a group member of an ethnic group is also valid, and language is an easily detectable criterion.

Fishman (1999) declares the relation between language and ethnicity as variable, meaning thereby that sometimes language is a prime indicator of ethnicity while at other times it becomes optional. Ethnicity itself is prone to changes due to the social developments in the society, which oftentimes are more powerful than fixedness of ethnicity. Grievances among the members of a minority against the dominating group strengthen ethnic bond. The ethnic language as an index of ethnicity is spoken more among the members of the dominated group in such situations.

Starks at el (2005) studied 'Language as a Marker of Ethnic Identity in New Zealand' opines that ethnicity is an awareness about oneself which is maintained by language and religion and one's own subjective feelings, but such a criteria is not fixed as it changes with the adaptation of the group to confronting social forces. In such a situation language does not remain an identity marker. It can therefore be said that language shift is a normal phenomenon and other cultural features can replace language as a mark of identity. Since ethnicity is a social construction, it is prone to changes as the group can redefine itself according to the changing circumstances; language being one of those changing indices of identity, becomes a negotiated construct.

Language has two basic and important functions. One is the everyday communication; the other is representation of the speaker. This representation becomes evident in the form of identities. Linguistic identities are a binding as well as a dividing force at the same time. Joseph (2006) calls linguistic identities 'a double edged sword' (p. 261) which on one hand gives a sense of belonging to the group member, while on the other hand develops in him a sense of division between 'us' and 'them', which carries a negative impact and can be dangerous in certain situations. Linguistic identities can be misinterpreted, as the speech of the person can provoke prejudice and discrimination. He maintains that national and ethnic identities would always matter, no matter how strong the majority language might be. There are hardly any cases where people would abandon their mother tongue completely in favour of a majority and a preferable language.

Language is not just the chief marker of ethnicity but there have been cases where it became the sole marker of ethnic identity (Dorion, 1980). For instance language in Vaupes, especially the Bara language distinguishes its speaker from Indians, speaking other languages, where otherwise rest of the aspects of the culture are quite similar. In other cases in a multilingual setting language becomes one of the several markers of ethnicity along with dress, food, geographical boundaries, and ways of worshipping etc and therefore acts as a negotiated construct. Two dimensions come into play here, one is

what the natives take as the marker of ethnicity and what the outsider think, assume and consider the index of ethnic identity for a particular group.

McCorkle (1955) co relates language and ethnicity by giving a contrast of two Indian groups of South America. One is Fulnio of Brazil who has been leaving their lands for the last three centuries to preserve their language in the form of an annual religious function where their language is of prime importance. Therefore they retain their identity through preservation of their language. On the other hand there are Guayqueries in Venezuvela who have left their aboriginal language, for these people their socio economic system forms the basis of their identity (cited in Dorian 1980). Dorian (1980) reports that the fishermen of East Sutherland have preserved their identity through the use of their distinct language. Their profession of fishing and their staple seafood remained identity marker for a long time but now that these people have left fishing, they are still recognized by their language which is the Scottish variety of Gaelic and their mother tongue, besides the interesting fact that all of them are fluent in English. The new generation who might be more fluent in English than in their mother tongue still identify themselves with Galic.

Ethnic language proficiency can be taken as an important factor in determining ethnic identity. Language is perhaps mentioned most frequently as a contributor to ethnic identity (Gudykunst and Ting Toomey, 1990 cited in Phinney et al, 2001). Ethnic language becomes a kind of a reminder for the group members about their culture, customs, group feeling and exclusion of the members of the out-group. It becomes a symbol of cultural solidarity in this way.

The extent to which language becomes the determiner of ethnic identity depends on the situation and place, where the group is being studied, makes the relation between language and ethnicity a negotiated construct. For instance the immigrant population in the Unites States and the minorities living in Canada might not be comparable because Canada is an officially bilingual country whereas the United States of America has an immigrant history, where the retention of an ethnic language is looked down upon which makes English only policy implicit. But it should be acknowledged that bilingual education gained importance in the United States and the children of the ethnic minorities are being provided early education in their mother tongue. But the issue of ethnic language retention remains a controversial one (Rumbant, 1995). Recent research has shown that there is a positive relation between the retention of the ethnic language and the development of adolescents of the minority language groups which are mostly immigrants. Parents in the immigrant family are desirous to retain their ethnic identity through the language, because it's the language through which they can transfer their own values and customs to the next generation, parental socialization in this context is very important (Cited in Phinney, 2001).

Researchers working on ethnic identity have pointed out that language is not an essential condition for ethnic identity. For instance, all Irish do not speak Galiac but still identify themselves as Irish (Riley, 1975). Members might use the dominant or a more utilitarian language but keep a symbolic affiliation to the group through group's language.

Language is not necessarily central to the maintenance of ethnic identity. Hence if second or third generation Galicians speak little or no Galician and attach little importance to this, this does not imply that they have rejected their sense of Galicianness because they use other core values to construct and demonstrate their Galician Identity (Beswick, 2007). On the other hand, for some other groups like Hispanic, Spanish is more than just a language. Anzaldua (1987) calls linguistic identity and ethnic identity as 'twin skin' as he says 'I am my language'. To lose one means to lose the other (cited in Gibson, 2004 p.4).

The extent to which language marks the identity of an ethnic group decides the fortune of its people, the members of the group. For instance the Scots and Catalonians both form strong ethno national group, but the civil society of Catalan was able to develop a strong sense of ethnic and regional identity through the promotion of its language and literature. This sense of identity was successfully turned into an ideology at a national level, which formed the basis for self determination (Joseph, 2004). May (2001) argues that language may or may not be a factor for group's identity in most of the cases, maintaining that every group has a right to maintain ethnolinguistic identity and abandoning the use of language may amount to abandoning an identity (cited in Beswick, 2007).

Fishman (1999) calls the link between language and ethnicity as clear as well as variable. Clear because most of the time it denotes kinship and refers to a common territorial belonging and variable for the reason that sometimes language becomes the prime marker of ethnicity and in other cases it is peripheral or marginal. This link between the two is fostered if an ethnic group has grievances against the majority or the dominating group. If the language or the people are denigrated then the ethnic identity grows stronger among such people and they would use their ethnic language more than in the absences of such grievances.

In today's world of multiculture and multilanguages, cohesion among the group members increases with the presence of the other group around, because an external presence enhances the very notion of 'us' and 'them' (Kaikkonen, 1996). In many groups the individual names show ethnic identity. In Balochistan, the research site of the present study, the name of the caste or tribe becomes a part of the name itself. Sometimes the person's first name makes evident, his belonging to a certain ethnic group, for instance few of the typical Baloch names are Shameer, Kiyya, Beburg. (Taken from the actual research participants).

Fishman, (1999) argues that one people one language is not as simple a phenomenon in today's multilingual world as it sounds. Labels, which are ethnic, are not good guides when it comes to language. There are cases when two groups that consider and call themselves different speak and behave alike. On the other hand ethnic group may include people who speak different languages. There can be a list of social changes in circumstances where people would redefine themselves like war, migration or some other kind of catastrophe. Such transformation in the social matrix can make separate distinct group out of a single cohesive one. Similarly many sub groups over a period of time become one large group.

Methodology:

This qualitative ethnographic study was conducted in Quetta. Quetta is the capital of Balochistan, which is by area the largest province of Pakistan. The study comprised of the members of the indigenous Baloch population. They hailed from almost all the adjoining areas and maintained their language, culture and identity. Non random purposive sampling was done for this study and the selected participants were the young educated Baloch who were well aware of ethnic identity among different ethnic groups in the area. Participant observation being the basic strategy used for data collection was supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Further Smolicz's 'Core Value Theory' was adopted as a theoretical and analytical framework for data analysis.

Theoretical and Analytical framework:

The Analytical framework of this research is Smolicz's 'Core Value Theory', adopted from humanistic psychology. Cultural/Ethnic Core value theory is constructed on the notion that every ethnic group has certain traits which are essential for its existence and maintenance of its identity. The theory examines these building blocks, which are called as core value by Smolicz. Smolicz (1981) believes that language is a core value for most of the ethnic groups, so much so that without their ethnic language, the groups' ethnic identity remains incomplete and sometimes become vulnerable when the language is not maintained over the generations. But Smolicz concedes that for many ethnic groups language does not become the 'core value' for ethnic identity, such groups rely on cultural aspects other than language for the purpose of identification. The other elements that can form the core value of identity can be family structure, religion, descent, racial affiliation, and cultural aspects such as dress, food, social and cultural norms. The cultural core values are used not only for reinforcing the group's identity but also to resist outside pressures of assimilation in a dominant multiethnic context.

The traits that form the core value for ethnic identity of a certain group are the ones that differentiate the group in a multiethnic state. Beswick (2007) informs that the core values are not necessarily practiced and exercised by all members of the group. Further language can be used to articulate these core values but not necessarily used by ethnic group for the demonstration and depiction of its ethnicity.

The presence and significance of the core values might not be the concern of everyday life of the group but each element of the core value carries a heavy symbolic load in itself. It aims at maintaining the boundary between the in group and the out group; 'us' and 'them', therefore becomes an emblem of collective identity for a group.

Smolicz core value theory is the result of his research in Australia, where he found that every group has some component of the culture that becomes its core and attain 'core value' (Leuner, 2008). Such components not only become the identity marker for the group but also become significantly important for its existence. All members are expected to accept this component as essential for remaining in the group, in other words rejection may result in exclusion. The component of core value is symbolic for the membership in a group (Clyne, 2003).

The elements such as language, religion, family or some political and historical ideals can become core values for a group. Maintenance of identity of a group depends on this element of core value. Language is usually taken to be that component of culture, which forms 'core value' for most groups (Leuner, 2008). Besides fulfilling the basic function of communication among the group members, language also acts to indicate the group to which a person belongs.

Different groups have different elements as their core value. For example Smolicz (1981) informs that family structure is a core value for Anglo Saxons and Italians. For other ethnic groups such as Greeks, Chinese, Latvians and Poles, language is directly related to their ethnic identity as it forms the core value of their respective cultures. Such groups do maximum to maintain their language by retaining it over generations. On the other hand Dutch do not try hard to maintain their language and were found to adopt English on reaching Australia. It can be said therefore that for Dutch ethnicity is not language dependent (Cited in Clyne, 2003).

Researchers have tried to find out the ethnic 'core value' of different groups especially with regard to language in the recent years. Among communities like Latvian, Greeks, Dutch, Croatian, Chinese, Tamil, all except Dutch were found to have language as the core value component of their culture (Omonigi and Fishman, 2005).

Data Analysis and Discussion:

The participants of this research were speakers of four different languages i.e Balochi, Brahvi, Sindhi and Siraeki. The initial analysis of linguistic profiles of the participants revealed that many of the speakers of Balochi knew Brahvi and vice versa. Sindhi and Siraeki were mostly found to be monolinguals but emphasized on their Baloch identity apart from their language. It is an interesting finding that speakers of a different language may still identify themselves with the ethnic group. The participants were asked about the linguistic situation at home to find out whether they have a monolingual or a bi/multilingual home. Bilingualism at home was further investigated if they were bilinguals with another language of Baloch community or they were bilinguals with the lingua franca Urdu. The data analysis showed that most of the Baloch homes were monolinguals with one of the four languages already mentioned. Few participants said that their homes were bilingual with their ethnic language and Urdu. This is a common scenario in Pakistani homes as Urdu is the language of communication; it's a lingua franca and taught as a compulsory subject at schools.

The two languages of Baloch people that are Balochi and Brahvi were found to be known by many members and the speakers of these two languages were seen to have a close affinity with each other, more than those members who speak Sindhi or Siraeki. Interestingly Balochi and Brahvi are two very different languages; one belongs to the Indo Iranian groups of languages and the other to the Dravidian language family (Ansari, 2007). These two languages are simultaneously spoken in some Baloch homes for the reason that one parent speaks Balochi and the other speaks Brahvi and the children acquire both the languages at the same time. There are many regions in Balochistan where Balochi and Brahvi speaking people are harmoniously living together as they identify themselves with the single ethnic group. The respondent who spoke Sindhi and Siraiki as their first language could not speak Balochi but claimed to understand it or they said so, so that they should not be considered an out group. The claim of the group members to have knowledge of Balochi language even if its not their mother tongue is a way of asserting ethnic identity linguistically by showing association with a language which is not their first tongue.

Speakers of four languages showed their belongingness to a single ethnic group by agreeing to one single language 'Balochi' to be made compulsory in the educational system of Balochistan during the interview when asked about the language that should be taught in the schools of Balochistan. Few of them suggested Brahvi but the number of such respondents was markedly less than those who opined that it must be Balochi. Balochi is also the language of majority population of the area and more importantly an ethnic marker of Baloch ethnic identity. Balochi is taught in certain areas of Balochistan but not as a compulsory subject. The subject is also offered at the

graduate and the postgraduate levels.

The Sindhi and Siraeki speaking Baloch also replied in favour of Balochi to be introduced and made compulsory in the educational institutions of Balochistan. Balochi is taken as a national language of Baloch today so it is acceptable to all the Baloch irrespective of their mother tongues.

A Saraiki speaking participant asserted that 'it should be Balochi because it is our identity. The presence of many ethnic and linguistic groups in Balochistan is a geographical fact which cannot be denied but since I am a Baloch so I prefer Balochi'. Such suggestions and recommendations are part of the social dynamics for constructing, asserting and maintaining Baloch ethnic identity. The best way to keep the language alive and maintained is to make it a part of education, which automatically raises the prestige of the language and keeps it as an alive and a working language well in form and shape. (Beswick, 2007).

The Saraiki and Sindhi speaking Baloch who might not be proficient in Balochi, advocate Balochi for education in Balochistan. Another participant said 'at this time, it should be Balochi'. The time is critical, if Balochi is made compulsory, it would be acknowledging Baloch identity, the group as the majority group in the province and Balochistan as their land. With such responses it seems that Balochi language is the core value of this ethnic group. But then the second most important language of the group that is Brahvi whose speakers are in good number is entirely different from Balochi.

To a certain extent language seems to be the core value of Baloch, but it is not the differentiating factor or a characteristic that separates the group from other ethnolinguistic groups. All Balochi speaking people or to put it more precisely all people with Balochi as their mother tongue are necessarily Baloch but all the speakers of Sindhi and Saraiki might not share Baloch ethnicity. Smolicz core value theory further identifies that besides being a differentiating factor, the core value element of culture of an ethnic group carries vitality and is well maintained by the ethnic group (Beswick, 2007). Language is not common among Baloch but all the four languages spoken by them that are Balochi, Brahvi, Saraiki and Sindhi are maintained and all have ethnolinguistic vitality. All these languages are preferred at homes of the respective speakers and acquired by their children. Despite no support at government level is being provided for the maintenance of these regional languages but the speakers themselves are keeping their languages alive by passing them down to the next generation and by ensuring that it remains a home language. The case of Baloch might be different because of the linguistic diversity within the group but it is the common language that not only facilitates communication but also brings closeness among the group members. (Ramahoba, 2008).

Ethnicity relies and makes use of the material culture for its expres-

sion. Sometimes the relation is so explicit that 'individuals wear ethnically charged clothes' (Clark, 2005 p, 440). In fact there can be doubts about language being the cultural ethnic core value of the linguistically diverse group but other parts of culture specially the dress that is common among all Baloch no matter whether they speak Balochi, Brahvi, Saraiki or Sindhi. They named it differently according to their area but the dress was found to be one and common. Baloch traditional dress is an identity marker and may be stronger than the language as the dress is one as agreed by all interviewees and the languages are at least four. Therefore the dress can be said to be the cultural/ethnic core value of Baloch along with the language.

To the question of what is central to Baloch identity, the spontaneous answer of most of the Balochi speaking and Brahvi speaking people was "language is central to Baloch identity". There is an acceptability and consensus over Balochi as the language of the whole group. Language therefore is central to Baloch identity in a way that no matter whatever language is spoken by any of the group member they give importance to Balochi.

To the last query of the interview the question was asked, "Do group members identify themselves more with the language or with the ethnic group?" All Balochi speaking respondents identified themselves with the language as well as with the ethnic group. There is no confusion for them as they speak Balochi and are ethnically Baloch. But those who speak Brahvi, Saraiki and Sindhi completely identify themselves with the Baloch ethnic group and not with their respective languages. As I got the following replies 'first I identify myself with my tribe, language comes afterwards because we have Saraiki and Sindhi speaking Baloch with us'. Another said 'I identify myself with the ethnic group, because if people ask me who am I, I will never say I am a Sindhi I'll always say I am a Baloch. Khosas are basically Baloch who speak Sindhi, if you ask any Khosa, what your mother tongue is, he would never say Sindhi he would say Balochi'.

A Saraiki speaking respondent replied 'I identify with my ethnic group basically, because there are Baloch who speak Sindhi, Saraiki and Brahvi so the joining force is the ethnic group and not the language.' Another tried to keep her linguistic identity intact by saying, 'I am a Saraiki speaking Baloch.' Another emphasized more on her particular caste that is Khosa than on the language Sindhi or the ethnic group that is Baloch.

Balochi is seen as one ethnic language for the whole Baloch community and it is considered as a unifying force for the group members who are seemed to be divided on linguistic lines. Balochi language is considered to be central to Baloch identity and respondent believed it to be the strongest determining identity markers.

Conclusion:

The study explored the cultural core value of a linguistically diverse ethnic group, Baloch who are speakers of at least four mutually unintelligible languages with special focus on the role of language as an ethnic component of their ethnicity. The study revealed that most of the Baloch homes are monolingual with one of the four languages i.e Balochi, Brahvi, Sindhi or Siraeki. Some are bilingual either with Urdu, which is the lingua franca or with another language of the group. For instance many Balochi speakers know Brahvi and vice versa. Siraeki and Sindhi Baloch are often monolinguals but they emphasize their Baloch ethnic identity apart from their linguistic identity. These speakers of varied languages identify themselves as one group and community. Balochi as a language is their identity marker irrespective of their mother tongue. It has a special place for the group members; they want it to be made a compulsory language in the educational institutions of Balochistan since it is the language of the majority. Balochi is taken as a national language for Baloch today. It is the language that asserts Baloch identity. The data indicate that Balochi is a core value component of this ethnic group. Despite little support from the government, the speakers of Balochi along with those who do not speak this language but identify themselves as Baloch are trying to maintain it. There are other similar shared identity markers like the common culture, customs, values, dress, food history etc. but Balochi as a language still holds an important place as core value component of the group identity.

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