Beyond simple T/V distinctions: Investigating Balti personal pronouns as markers of social distance, authority, and communal solidarity

Zulfiqar Ali[1], Dr. Muhammad Essa[2], Muhammad Mustafa[3]

University of Baltistan, Skardu, PAKISTAN[1,2]
Kolej Universiti Lincoln, MALAYSIA[3]
[3]Email: mmustafa@lincoln.edu.my

Abstract - The study was aimed at examining the sociolinguistic role of the pronouns in the Balti language and how they are used to express power and solidarity relations within the Balti community in Baltistan. Using the theoretical framework of Brown and Gilman (1960), this qualitative study uses a purposive sampling technique, whereby it applied of semi-structured interviews and observation data collected among native speakers (Balti Poets). It is in the analysis of specific variants of pronouns, including formal and informal pronoun forms of "you" (e.g. Yaang and Khyang) that speakers strategically use to maneuver in social discourses. Results showed that the use of pronouns is regulated by the contextual factors such as age, social status, formality of the environment, and the type of relationship between these people. Formal pronouns indicate respect and power (authority) to elder ones and those in higher positions vice versa, the informal pronouns promote authority, intimacy and equality (solidarity) among equals and family members within discourses. The study highlighted that Balti pronouns play a pivotal role in shaping social identity and upholding the cultural rules of respect, integrity and strengthening social ties in the targeted situations. The study would be supportive for the researchers preserve the Balti language and further advance the sociolinguistic studies by illustrating the ever-changing nature of language and social structure in a distinctly unique settings accordingly.

Keywords: Balti personal pronouns; social distance; power and solidarity; authority relations; communal solidarity; address forms

1. Introduction

The Balti language, a member of the Tibetic language family spoken predominantly in Baltistan region of Pakistan, offers a unique lens into sociolinguistics, especially in terms of how language reflects social dynamics. Balti is one of the languages spoken in Pakistan particularly in the north of Pakistan (Ali et al., 2024). Pronouns can be applied in discourses to show politeness (Doe, 2025). Like many languages, Balti uses pronouns as a tool to navigate social hierarchies and to express relationships, status, intimacy, and solidarity. Understanding these pronoun choices in Balti provides a way to appreciate not only the structure of the language itself but also the cultural norms and values underpinning social interactions. This project aims to investigate the use of pronouns as expressions of power and solidarity within the Balti language. Power dynamics in language often reveal asymmetrical relationships, such as those between superiors and subordinates or elders and younger individuals. Solidarity, on the other hand, manifests in close, horizontal relationships where equality and mutual respect are prominent. In the Balti language,

pronouns are carefully selected depending on the context, formality, and social distance, reflecting a blend of traditional respect-based culture and community closeness.

The Balti language, primarily spoken in the Baltistan region of Pakistan, is a part of the Tibetan languages (Maryam et al., 2024). Balti language possesses Tibetan roots but is distinct due to influences from Persian, Urdu, and Arabic. The language is spoken by the Balti people, who inhabit areas like Skardu, Shigar, Khaplu, parts of Ladakh in India, Tibet China and in some regions of Nepal and Bhutan. Balti language is widely used in different countries which are considered a branch of Sino-Tibetan family and most of the speakers are found in Baltistan (Mustafa et al., 2024).

Pronouns in Balti, as in many languages, play a crucial role in communication by conveying information about social relationships, power dynamics, respect, and closeness. Unlike English, Balti has multiple forms of pronouns based on context, indicating the cultural emphasis on social roles like in the second person there are two pronouns in Balti (Khhiyang & Yang) as compare to the one in English (You).

In sociolinguistics, the theory of "power and solidarity" by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman (1960) is considered of worth in linguistic research and this theory can be applied to same concept in pronouns in Balti. According to the mentioned theory, Power can be expressed through the pronouns that reflect social hierarchy, status, or authority. Solidarity is expressed through pronouns that denote closeness, equality, or a sense of camaraderie. In Balti, power pronouns are used when speaking to youngers and subordinates, people of lower social or professional rank, or strangers. Vice versa, these are used among friends, family members, or individuals of similar age and ranks.

Balti speakers often use specific pronouns or titles when addressing someone with respect or to maintain formality. Examples might include forms that convey respect when speaking to elders or authority figures. Contextual Usage: Discuss how situational factors like age, status, and the presence of an audience influence the choice of pronouns in Balti. This reflects the cultural importance of respecting social hierarchy. Specific pronoun forms in Balti "Yang, Khhiyang, Khho, Mo, Khhhong, Dhong" are applied instead of or for "you, he, she, and they" in contexts of respect and formality.

Informal or familiar pronouns are applied when addressing the close friends, siblings, or those of similar social standing. This fosters a sense of equality or mutual trust. In certain contexts, even among elders or superiors, speakers might switch to solidarity pronouns to indicate special bonds or closeness. For instance, Khhiyang, Khheri, Khheti, Khhidang, Khhudang etc. "You, Your, Yours" are used to show informality in Balti, "Ngna and other all pronouns in Balti" if repeatedly applied in discourses whether the discourse is spoken or written. The above mentioned Balti pronouns Include are being used among peers, close friends, and family members to convey power particularly in an informal way. The below examples from different languages highlight the unique aspects of Balti's approach to respect and familiarity.

Table 1: Factors influencing Pronoun Choices in Social Settings

English	Urdu	Balti
We	Ham	Ngaya
She	Wo (feminine)	Mo
They	Wo (plural)	Khhong
You	Aap	Yaang (formal), khhyaan (informal)
It	Yeh	Dew/Di
He	Wo (masculine)	Khho

Formal settings like meetings or ceremonial events typically require power pronouns, while casual settings allow solidarity pronouns. Personal Relationship: Close relationships naturally lead to solidarity pronouns, even if there's a slight age or rank difference. Cultural

Nuances factors such as regional dialects, urban vs. rural distinctions, and generational changes in language are of worth in studies. Studies have indicated that pronouns can be used to show different expressions. A study found that 2.5- and 3.5-year-old children did not use pronouns differentially whether the adult (a) modeled a pronoun or a noun for the target object or (b) did or did not witness the target event (although there was evidence that they did notice and take account of the adult's witnessing in other ways) (Anderson et al., 1998). Another study showed that children of this same age (a) do not use pronouns to avoid unfamiliar or difficult nouns but (b) do use pronouns differently depending on the immediately preceding discourse of the experimenter (Aimee et al., 1998).

Research objectives and research questions are required to be aligned from the initiation of the frameworks of the study to keep the study organized and systemic (Almusaed et al., 2025). The objective of this project is to thoroughly examine how the Balti language employs specific pronouns to denote power (hierarchical distinctions) and solidarity (social closeness or familiarity). Specifically, the project focuses on these core goals: Understanding Pronoun Usage for Hierarchical Relations To identify the pronouns used in formal and informal settings, analyzing how they signal power relationships, such as between employer and employee, teacher and student, or elder and younger.

The analyses reveled how speakers use language to navigate hierarchical structures, uphold traditions of respect, and establish social roles. Exploring pronoun selection for expressing solidarity to investigate how pronouns are used in Balti to show camaraderie, familiarity, and mutual respect. This involves examining pronoun choices among friends, siblings, and individuals of equal social status or age. The project aimed to reveal how speakers use language to express solidarity and maintain bonds within their communities. Analyzing factors influencing pronoun choice to analyze social factors such as age, gender, social status, and setting (formal or informal) and how these factors influence pronoun selection.

This analysis helped in understanding the flexibility and nuances in Balti pronoun uses. Comparing and contrasting with other Tibetic Languages by drawing comparisons with other Tibetan languages or regional languages, this project helped in placing Balti within a broader linguistic framework, highlighting both unique and shared features in pronoun usage related to power and solidarity. Documenting and preserving language insights given the limited documentation of the Balti language, this project aimed to contribute to language preservation by documenting its unique aspects, especially those reflecting cultural and social norms through language. This exploration into pronouns of power and solidarity in Balti will serve to enrich understanding of the language's structure and cultural significance while preserving valuable sociolinguistic insights. The study is intended to be of interest to linguists, anthropologists, and language preservationists focused on minority languages and the socio-cultural dynamics they encode.

The objectives are given as follows: (1) To investigate the role of pronoun in Balti language to show power. (2) Aimed at finding the role of Balti pronouns to show solidarity. (3) Aimed at discussing Balti language pronouns (4)To discuss the role of pronouns in Balti linguistics

Table 2: Sets of Pronouns in Balti for showing Power and Solidarity

No	Personal Pronoun	Objective Case	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun
01	I (Nga), (Nana)	Me (Ngi) Ngini	My, Mine (Ngayi)	Myself (Ni fari)
02	We (Ngaya)	Us (Ngayi)	Our (Ngayii)	Ourself (Ngayi fari)
03	You (Yaang, Khiang)	You (yari, khiri)	Your (yatii, khiti)	Yourself (Yarifari, khirifari
04	They (Dhong, Khong)	Them (Khongi)	Their (Dhongi)	Themselves (khonifari
05	He (khho)	Him (khuri)	His (khuri)	Himself (khuri fari)

| 06 | She (Mo) | Her (Muri) | Her (Murii) | Herself (Muri fari) |
| 07 | It (di) | It (du) | Its (duni) | Itself (difari, dufari) |

In Balti, most of the pronouns such as (Ngni, Ngnai) show the power and efficiency in daily discourses to impress or pressurize others. There are some other lexical items in terms of pronouns that can be applied for the above mentioned purposes.

Pronouns can be used pragmatically to highlight politeness or impoliteness accordingly in discourses (Sorlin, 2025). The study of pronouns of power and solidarity in language often falls within the realm of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Pronouns, especially second-person pronouns, are powerful indicators of social relationships, degrees of formality, intimacy, and hierarchy. In the context of Balti language—a Tibetan-Burman language spoken primarily in the Baltistan region of Pakistan—understanding how pronouns are used to express power dynamics and solidarity is crucial, as it reflects cultural norms and social hierarchies specific to the Balti-speaking community. According to a recent study (Siraj & Sarkar, 2022), North Indian speakers strategically use the pronouns /mẽ/ and /həm/ not just for reference, but to actively construct identities and achieve professional goals, with the venue of interaction being a critical factor.

The distinction between "pronouns of power" and "pronouns of solidarity" was initially developed by Brown and Gilman (1960), who examined European languages with formal and informal pronoun forms (e.g., French tu and vous). According to their theory, Pronouns of Power are used in hierarchical relationships, (Kacewicz Eva et al, 2023) where one speaker has authority or a higher social status over the other. Pronouns of Solidarity reflect equality, mutual respect, or familiarity between speakers. This framework has since been applied across diverse linguistic landscapes, and scholars have found that pronouns not only indicate social roles but also help in establishing relationships based on cultural values of solidarity and hierarchy.

Generic pronouns are familiar in sense of common gender, gender neutral, epicene pronouns or the pronouns that are applied in discourses for both male and female genders together (Alatabi, faris July 2022). By understanding, the power of pronoun is used to indicate or to show power in Balti cultures likewise during Muharram, Khutba or conversation between the respected people such as the honour people is pronounce as "Yaan bjes" Yaan shokhs,Yangni kasal biong" as compare to while debating or speaking between the lower class people or smaller people is pronounce as "Khyang thung, Khyang song, Khyangni zer"etc.

The Balti language is a distinct variant of Tibetan with vocabulary, grammar, and phonological features shaped by influences from neighboring languages, such as Urdu and Pashto. The Balti-speaking community, predominantly Muslim, has developed unique social conventions around the use of pronouns, partly due to its interaction with other regional languages. Balti culture values both respect for hierarchy and community solidarity, which is evident in its pronoun usage patterns. In Balti, as in many other languages, speakers may have a choice between different pronouns based on social context, level of familiarity, and respect. However, this has not been extensively documented in academic research, making it a relatively unexplored area for sociolinguistic study by different researchers like (Du Bois Inke 2016) Preliminary observations suggest that, similar to the T-V distinction in European languages, Balti may feature distinctions that reflect respect or familiarity.

In sociolinguistics, the power and solidarity of pronouns are used to show power in society while conversation between two people in Balti or other different languages, for instance in Balti pronoun "I" as "Ngna" is use to showing power such as in Balti ngna ngna mazer, ngya ngaya mazer, etc.

The Balti community's social structure is influenced by both Islamic values and traditional Tibetan-Buddhist cultural heritage. The religious context adds a layer of formality, especially in addressing elders, religious leaders, and others in positions of respect. For example, many Muslim communities use polite forms when addressing elders or those with religious status, which could influence pronoun selection in Balti. Socio-cultural and religious influences

in social interactions among genders in South Sudan, specifically in the context of marriage and sexual reproductive practices. The attention is placed on social construction of the influence of cultural and religious norms from a critical social science perspective to better understand the phenomenon of child marriage in South Sudan.

Therefore, this discourse emphasizes the socio-cultural and religious norms that shaped the perceptions of gender roles and social interaction between males and females in South Sudan, Western Bahr El Ghazal State (Madut, 2025). Furthermore, words from Persian and Arabic, particularly religious terminology, have also contributed formal modes of address to the Balti language.

Code-switching between Balti, Urdu, and English is common in Pakistan, especially among the educated population. The choice of pronouns in multilingual conversations can be influenced by the norms of each language involved. The occurrence of English words and smooth switching from a code to the other in Yorùbá-English code-switching The unacceptability of pronouns in this grammar is traced to the absence of vowel lengthening and floating tones which usually accompany both Yorùbá and English words at specific switch junctions 'QWURGXFWLRQ.' It is a generally attested feature of code-switched grammars that functional elements from the host language dominate those of the other substrates in the resultant grammar (Myers-Scotton, 2005; Pfaff, 1979).

The same phenomenon is observed in Yorùbá-English code-switching where functional elements such as determiners, inflection elements (tense, modal, aspect, agreement, etc.) from English grammar are barred in favour of those from Yorùbá (Banjo, 1993 in Bolaji, 2014; La-midi, 2008). Following Radford (1997; Ezzaytouni, (n.d.)), pronouns form a class of determiners that serve as factors. These pronouns are observed to be barred in Yorùbá-English code-switching (henceforth CS). For instance: In Balti, informal pronouns might be used in casual conversation between friends or family. In Urdu, speakers often use aap for politeness and respect, even in informal settings, and similar structures may be influencing Balti pronoun usage. English pronouns (e.g., "you") may be neutral, but their usage can still reflect solidarity or respect based on tone and context. This dynamic creates a unique situation where pronouns of power and solidarity may shift based on language mixing and sociolinguistic context.

In studying Balti pronouns of power and solidarity, several complementary frameworks can be woven into one narrative. The starting point is Brown and Gilman's classic T/V model, which shows how second-person forms encode two key social dimensions: **power**, understood as a vertical, unequal relation, and solidarity, a horizontal relation based on equality and intimacy (Zhou & Larina, 2024; Buyle & Smet, 2018). Power is typically realized through non-reciprocal address (a superior gives T but receives V), whereas solidarity emerges when both parties use the same form reciprocally (Zhou & Larina, 2024; Buyle & Smet, 2018).

Later work in many languages (Latin, Early Modern English, Russian, Chinese, etc.) confirms that this model can be adapted cross-linguistically to capture local distinctions (Fleming & Sidnell, 2020; Zhou & Larina, 2024; Buyle & Smet, 2018). In a Balti study, this provides the macro-framework for defining and classifying "power" vs "solidarity" uses of pronouns.

Within this macro-frame, social deixis and forms of address expand the focus beyond pronouns alone. Address forms (pronouns, kin terms, titles, personal names) are key resources for indexing social distance, hierarchy and intimacy (Fleming & Sidnell, 2020; Zhou & Larina, 2024). Research in Sasak, Bima, Indonesian and other postcolonial communities shows that these address forms closely map onto age, gender, rank, kinship, and traditional/modern status (Yusra et al., 2025; Fleming & Sidnell, 2020; Zhou & Larina, 2024). For Balti, this means pronouns should be analysed as one part of a larger address system that encodes social structure.

At the interactional level, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory links pronoun choice to the management of **face** in potentially face-threatening acts (Alharbi, 2015). Many T/V studies combine Brown & Gilman with politeness theory to explain how particular pronouns index deference, respect or informality in requests, criticisms or orders (Kulbayeva, 2020; Alharbi, 2015).

For Balti, this provides a micro-pragmatic lens on how speakers choose forms as politeness strategies in real interactions.

Ethnographic and postcolonial pragmatics highlight the **limits** of a simple power–solidarity binary. Work on Sasak and other postcolonial communities shows that address forms can encode additional dimensions such as religious identity, colonial history and local hierarchies (Yusra et l., 2025). Studies of Asian interlocutor reference argue that European T/V-based models are often insufficient, because many Asian languages use rich systems of kin terms, titles and borrowed forms to index relationships (Fleming & Sidnell, 2020). For Balti, a Himalayan minority in a postcolonial setting, this framework justifies modifying and extending Brown & Gilman to capture culture-specific categories such as religious authority, clan relations and age-graded respect.

Finally, critical discourse and identity/stance approaches allow pronouns to be read as tools for constructing identity and ideology. Analyses of political discourse show that personal pronouns are used to build powerful "I" identities and inclusive or exclusive "we" identities that signal solidarity or distance (AliAkbariHamed et al., 2020; Alharbi & Rucker, 2023).

Critical Discourse Analysis treats pronoun choice as a way of legitimizing hierarchies and constructing collective identities (AliAkbariHamed et al., 2020). In a Balti context, especially in political, religious or media texts, this approach reveals how pronominal choices help reproduce power structures and create in-groups and out-groups.

Table 2: Overview of integrated framework

Level	Theoretical focus	Role in Balti pronoun study
Systemic / macro	Brown & Gilman power–solidarity T/V	Define "power" vs "solidarity" pronominal uses (Zhou & Larina, 2024); Buyle & Smet, 2018); Fleming & Sidnell, 2020).
Social structure	Social deixis & address-form studies	Link pronouns + kin terms/titles to age, rank, gender, religion (Yusra et al., 2025); Fleming & Sidnell, 2020).
Interactional	Brown & Levinson politeness	Explain choices in FTAs: requests, criticism, orders (Kulbayeva, 2020); Alharbi, 2015).
Cultural / postcolonial	Ethnographic & interlocutor-reference work	Extend binary to multidimensional, culture-specific continua (Yusra et al., 2025); Fleming & Sidnell, 2020).
Discourse / identity	CDA, stance & identity	Analyse "I/we/you" as resources for power and solidarity (AliAkbariHamed et al., 2020); Alharbi & Rucker, 2023).

Studies mentioned that the language users sometime refrain pronouns the referential nominee share the equal gender (Fukumura et al., 2025). Pronouns and Gender in Balti Language Gender also plays a role in pronoun usage. In some languages, men and women may use or be addressed by different pronouns to reflect cultural expectations. In Balti, gender roles and relationships are traditionally defined, and pronoun use may reflect this gendered hierarchy, particularly in more conservative or rural areas. For instance, younger speakers may avoid using informal pronouns with older individuals of the opposite gender to show respect. 6. Implications of Pronoun Usage for Cultural Identity Pronoun usage in Balti is tied to cultural identity, which is reflected in community solidarity, group identity, and ethnic pride. In the face of increasing external influences (such as Urdu and English), the conscious or subconscious choice of Balti pronouns serves as a marker of identity and solidarity within the Balti-speaking community.

A comparative analysis with neighboring languages like Urdu, Pashto, and Punjabi, which also have forms of address reflecting respect and familiarity, could provide insights into the evolution of pronouns in Balti. For example, Urdu's aap, tum, and tu distinctions may influence similar patterns in Balti, particularly in mixed or bilingual settings. There is limited formal research on the specifics of Balti pronoun usage, especially regarding sociolinguistic

dimensions of power and solidarity. A comparative analysis of pronouns in Russian and Karakalpak, two typologically distinct languages showed the variant features of both accordingly. While Russian, a Slavic Indo-European language, utilizes an inflectional system marked by grammatical gender and extensive case usage, Karakalpak, a member of the Turkic language family, features agglutinative morphology and gender-neutral structures.

Comparative work on honorific pronouns highlights how pronominal forms encode deference, hierarchy, and intimacy. A cross-linguistic anthropological account of honorific pronouns contrasts European T/V systems with non-European systems, emphasizing that in Europe, pronominal meaning is heavily shaped by token-sourced interdiscursivity (the history of interaction between the same dyad), and the ritualized shift from V to T as a key moment of "dispensation" into intimacy (Fleming, 2022). Outside Europe, systems often rely more on type-sourced interdiscursivity, where pronouns index socially typified relationships (e.g., kin type, rank), and plural or elaborate forms frequently signal respect (Fleming, 2022). This framework is directly relevant for Balti, where kinship, authority, and community may structure pronoun choice more than dyadic history.

Research on Bengali second-person pronouns explicitly compares a complex Asian system with the relatively reduced English "you," showing how Bengali forms encode relative rank, deference, formality, social distance/proximity and politeness (Uddin, 2019). Bengali has a tripartite second-person system (apni/tumi/tui), only partially mappable onto T/V, allowing finer distinctions of respect and emotional closeness (Uddin, 2019). This suggests that Balti may similarly exceed binary T/V categories, using multiple second-person forms or alternations to mark nuanced authority and solidarity relations.

Typological work on Asian languages underscores that many Southeast and East Asian languages (Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese) employ elaborate honorific pronoun systems conditioned by status, age, and formality (Uddin, 2019). In Thai, for example, certain second-person items function as intimate or affectionate terms toward equals/inferiors, but can also convey anger or a rupture of intimacy depending on context (Uddin, 2019). Such findings show how a single pronoun can simultaneously encode stance, affect, and relational change, a useful comparative lens for Balti.

A closer regional parallel is the study of Balinese pronouns, where choice is systematically shaped by the **traditional caste system** and speech levels (Satyawati et al., 2021). Forms such as *titiang, tiang,* and *icang* function as first-person pronouns with different style levels; more respectful forms are used toward high-status addressees, while low-style forms occur in everyday village communication (Satyawati et al., 2021). Second- and third-person pronouns are likewise stratified, and incorrect choice can be perceived as offensive, since pronouns signal the speaker's and addressee's relative social standing and politeness (Satyawati et al., 2021). This work demonstrates how pronoun paradigms can be tightly bound to local social hierarchies and norms of respect, paralleling what might be expected for Balti's authority and distance marking.

The literature on social deixis frames pronouns as primary sites where social information is grammaticalized. Following Levinson and Lyons, studies argue that personal pronouns are key vehicles for encoding participants' roles and status, and for indexing social relationships in interaction (Satyawati et al., 2021; Uddin, 2019).

This is reinforced by comparative discourse work showing that in some languages (e.g., Albanian) subject pronouns are often omitted and function more in coherence than cohesion, while in others (e.g., English, German) they are obligatory surface markers of participants and reference (Idrizi & Çeliku, 2025). Such structural differences shape how social meanings can be packed into pronominal choice and alternation.

Further, Chinese "personal pronoun + know" discourse markers demonstrate how pronominal elements can develop interactional functions such as signaling shared knowledge, managing topic progression, seeking agreement, and facilitating alignment (Su, 2025).

Although not overtly honorific, these markers show how first- and second-person forms participate in relational work at the discourse level, potentially relevant for Balti if similar discourse markers exist.

Recent work on gender-neutral pronouns reveals that pronoun systems increasingly encode identities and social alignments that go beyond traditional T/V and rank relations. Gender-neutral forms are shown to have cognitive and social-psychological effects, influencing the well-being of nonbinary people and functioning as cues of identity safety, norm support, and solidarity in organizations and everyday interaction (Jäggi et al., 2025).

This research conceptualizes pronoun choice as a site of inclusion/exclusion, stigma, and political contestation, widening the notion of "social distance" to include marginalization and community belonging.

Studies of politeness in human–machine interaction, applying Brown & Levinson's theory, also show that perceived politeness varies with social distance and familiarity (e.g., "friend" vs "stranger" speakers), with greater distance generally prompting more polite expressions but with cultural differences in evaluation (Ribino, 2023).

While involving artificial agents, this work operationalizes how addressee type and relationship modulate expectations about formality and mitigation—central issues in pronoun selection in languages with rich address systems.

Descriptive work on Bua languages in Central Africa documents intricate pronominal paradigms including inclusive/exclusive contrasts, logophoric pronouns, tonal oppositions between subject and object forms, and multiple possessive constructions (Boyeldieu, 2020).

Although the primary focus is morphosyntax rather than social indexicality, these systems show that person paradigms can be internally complex even in relatively small, under-described languages. This supports a methodological argument for detailed paradigmatic and functional description in Balti before reducing its system to a T/V-like binary. Across these studies, several themes emerge that can ground a Balti-specific analysis: (a) Pronouns are central resources for social deixis, routinely encoding status, authority, deference, and solidarity rather than merely reference (Fleming, 2022; Satyawati et al., 2021; Uddin, 2019). (b) Many languages, especially in Asia, move beyond T/V via multi-term address systems, speech levels, or caste-linked forms (Satyawati et al., 2021; Uddin, 2019). (c) Shifts in pronoun use (e.g., from V to T, or between caste-indexed forms) often mark changes in relational intimacy or authority over time (Satyawati et al., 2021; Fleming, 2022). (d) Pronoun choice interacts with broader processes of identity, inclusion, and political contestation, as seen in gender-neutral pronoun debates (Jäggi et al., 2025).

A study of Balti personal pronouns as markers of social distance, authority, and communal solidarity can therefore situate itself within the cross-linguistic literature on honorific person deixis, Asian pronominal systems, and social deixis, arguing that Balti offers another case where a rich, locally grounded system resists reduction to a simple T/V opposition.

Table 2: Key Comparative Studies on Socially Indexed Pronouns

Focus	Main contribution for Balti research
European vs non-European honorific pronouns	Token vs type interdiscursivity; ritual V→T shift; plural for deference (Fleming, 2022).
Bengali 2nd person pronouns vs English	Tripartite apni/tumi/tui system encoding rank, distance, formality; beyond T/V (Uddin, 2019).
Balinese pronouns & caste	Pronouns tied to caste and speech level; mischoice as impoliteness (Satyawati, 2021).
Asian honorific systems (Thai etc.)	Complex personal reference systems linked to status and affect (Uddin, 2019).
Gender-neutral pronouns	Pronouns as identity and solidarity markers, with macro-social effects (Jäggi, 2025)

Bua pronominal systems	Structural elaboration (incl./excl., logophoric) in small languages (Boyeldieu, P. (2020).

The study explores various categories of pronouns including personal, possessive, demonstrative, reflexive, interrogative, indefinite, and relative pronouns. Through this comparison, key differences and similarities are highlighted, with a focus on morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects. The research underscores how these languages encode meaning through different grammatical strategies and reflects on the implications for language learning and translation studies. This study has explored how language contact has shaped in Balti pronoun use, and how younger generations are adapting or modifying these norms would offer a valuable contribution to understanding Balti sociolinguistics.

2. Method

This qualitative study aimed to analyze the commonly used Balti pronouns and categorize them based on their social implications particularly their applications in conveying the sense of power and solidarity. Qualitative research method can be used to discuss complex issues, and can uncover complex insights positively and explicitly (Subrahmanyam, 2025). To conduct this study the researcher consulted the Balti language resources to create an exhaustive list of pronouns and contexts so that the objectives of the study can be fulfilled positively. Records and required data were gathered from three persons aged above 50 (Two males and a female) in various social settings—such as family interactions, work environments, and community gatherings—where Balti is spoken through purposive/ selective sampling that is very commonly applied in qualitative studies.

The study investigated the specific pronouns, role of those targeted pronouns, and choices of the targeted pronouns that are reserved for authority figures, elders, or people of higher social settings to show their feelings. To collect the required data, the researcher conducted interviews with Balti speakers (Poets) across different demographics to gather perceptions on respectful and authoritative pronoun usage particularly the application of pronouns to show power and solidarity. Furthermore, it examined the cultural norms that govern the usage of the mentioned pronouns that are capable of disclosing Solidarity and power in the community bonding and also analyzed how certain pronouns are used to build rapport, establish equality, and strengthen solidarity or power among the Balti speakers. **Thus,** the Balti pronouns were identified that signify closeness or mutual respect, power or efficiency in daily discourses. Furthermore, assessed how pronoun choice fosters inclusivity and communal identity and the cultural and historical influences in applied in Baltistan. Pronoun usages over time in Balti language was investigated within the purposive or selective sampling from the local poets or cultural experts to gain insight into the evolution of Balti pronouns in reflecting social attitudes.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 Results

A comprehensive understanding of how pronouns are used to communicate power and solidarity among Balti speakers. A contribution to sociolinguistic knowledge that highlights the rich, culturally embedded expressions of respect, authority, and unity can be performed with use to specific pronouns in the Balti language. Practical insights for language preservation efforts aimed at maintaining these nuanced aspects of Balti language and culture. This project could serve as a valuable resource for linguists, anthropologists, and cultural historians interested in the Balti language and its unique linguistic expressions of social relationships.

Conducting a project on the use of pronouns of power and solidarity in the Balti language would be fascinating and highly valuable in understanding the social dynamics within this language community. The objectives including, the analyses of the use of pronouns in the Balti language as markers of power (hierarchical distance) and solidarity (closeness or equality) within

various social contexts, to identify specific pronouns that signify power and solidarity, to understand the contexts in which these pronouns shift, such as family, professional, and community settings, to explore how factors like age, gender, social status, and familiarity influence pronoun choice. Thus this study examined previous research on politeness theory, especially work by sociolinguists like Brown and Gilman (1960), to understand foundational concepts and looked into specific studies on pronoun usage in Tibetan or related languages, as Balti is a Tibetic language, which may share linguistic similarities.

For the data collection interviews were conducted (semi-structured interviews) with participants with purposive sampling and asked about typical pronoun choices in daily life discourses. Elicit specific contexts where they switch between pronouns to express either respect (power) or closeness (solidarity). Recorded the themes and information shared by the participants in written discourse for accurate linguistic analysis and observed naturally occurring conversations, took detailed notes on pronoun usage within varying contexts, paying attention to shifts when speakers address those of different social standing. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews to get the ideas on Balti pronouns from the targeted participants (Balti Poets).

For the data analyses, transcription and coding as firstly, transcribed the interviews and other recorded conversations, focusing on pronoun use. Code instances of pronoun choice as indicative of "power" or "solidarity" based on contextual clues (e.g., with elder vs. peer). Thematic Analysis was applied to identify themes, such as situations that lead to shifts in pronoun usage, expressions of respect, or familiarity, examined the influences of gender, age, and social standing on pronoun choice and summarized the data in tables showing the distribution of pronouns used in different contexts.

Personal Pronoun	Objective Case	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun
I (Nga), (Nana)	Me (Ngi) Ngini	My, Mine (Ngayi)	Myself (Ni fari)
We (Ngaya)	Us (Ngayi)	Our (Ngayii)	Ourself (Nayifari)
It (di)	It (du)	Its (duni)	Itself (difari, dufari)

In Balti, most of the pronouns such as (Ngni, Ngnai) show the power and efficiency in daily discourses to impress or pressurize others

For data collection, obtained consents for ethical consideration from all participants (poets) and ensure confidentiality and ensured the project respects social dynamics specific to the Balti-speaking community.

Fore validation and triangulation sources of data were used in term of interviews and observations to cross-check findings and shared initial findings with the participants to confirm the interpretations align with their linguistic experience as the project aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Balti pronoun system, showcasing how pronouns are used to signify relationships and social hierarchies. The findings could reveal patterns that contribute to sociolinguistic knowledge and help preserve linguistic nuances in the Balti language. Thus, the methodology guided a thorough exploration of pronouns in Balti as they reflect power and solidarity, revealing both linguistic patterns and social structures within the community systematically.

3.1.1 The Uses and their Types of Pronouns

Qualitative data analyses were based on dynamic procedures function a central role in research studies in deriving meanings, comprehensions, insights, and complex ideas systematically (Tariq, 2025). The Balti language, primarily spoken in Baltistan (a region in northern Pakistan and Ladakh, India), is a Tibetic language with strong influences from Persian, Urdu, and Arabic. Pronouns play an essential role in Balti, serving as substitutes for nouns and enabling fluent and concise communication. This project highlights the types, uses, and examples of pronouns in Balti.

Types of Pronouns in Balti

(1). Personal Pronouns

These pronouns refer to specific persons or entities.

Examples:

First Person:

Singular: nga (I)

Plural: ngaya, ngayan (We)

Second Person:

Singular: kho, yaan, khyaan (You)

Plural: yidang gama, khidang gama (You all)

Third Person:

Singular: kho, mo, dow (He/She/It)

Plural: khong (They)

Usage:

Nga wn yod (I am going)

Kho ongsed (He has come)

(2). Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns are used to point out the specific people or things.

Examples:

di (This)

do (That)

dun (These)

don (Those)

Usage:

Du ngi in (This is mine)

Do khwe in (That is his)

(3). Interrogative Pronouns

Such sentences are used to ask questions or interrogations.

Examples:

su (Who)

chi (What)

gaar, gaa (Where)

Usage:

Su ga song? (Who went?)

Chin du? (What is this?)

(4). Possessive Pronouns

Used to indicate possession or ownership.

Examples:

ngari (Mine)

khori (informal), yari (formal) (Yours)

khoni (His/Hers)

Usage:

Di ngari in (This is mine)

Do khori in, khongi in (That is yours)

(5). Reflexive Pronouns

Refer back to the subject of the sentence.

Examples:
Kgantang (Myself)
Khontang (Yourself)
Usage:
Nga ngantang tca os (I came by myself)
Kho khontang tca os (He came by himself)

(6). Relative Pronouns
Used to connect clauses and refer to a noun mentioned earlier.
Examples:
Susi, su (Who)
Gobo (Which)
Usage:
Di ofi mi ngi dos in (The person who came is my friend)
Di chik in khwangi nga fchos (This is the one he made)

(7). Indefinite Pronouns
Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific people or things, often used when the exact identity is unknown.
Examples
Susa (Someone)
Chīsa (Something)
Susa (Anyone)
Gama / Sangma/ Xhangma (Everyone)
Usage:
Susa osedpa (Someone has come)
Chīsa duk (There is something)
Susisang yo ben (Anyone can do this)

(8). Distributive Pronouns
These pronouns refer to individuals within a group, emphasizing them separately.
Examples:
Gama gama (Each)
Thepthap (Either)
Usage:
Gama thonsedpa (Each person arrived)
Thepthap chi dingna lensed (Either of them is acceptable)

(9). Reciprocal Pronouns
Used to express mutual actions or relationships.
Examples:
Chonchi gamina, gamala (Each other)
Usage:
Ngadang madad bespin gamala (We helped each other)

(10). Negative Pronouns
 Such pronouns are used to indicate the absence of someone or something.
Examples:
So medang (No one)
Chang md (Nothing)
Usage:

Su haan mathons (No one came)
Deka su medang (There is nothing)

(11). Quantifier Pronouns
Quantifiers are applied to express quantity or amount without specifying exact numbers.
Examples:
Rgady (Many)
chunchi (Few)
Usage:
Rgaty mi thons (Many people came)
Chonchi thonsed (Few attended)

(12). Compound Pronouns
In some cases, Balti combines pronouns with suffixes or words to create nuanced meanings.
Examples:
Chi gi sa (Whatever)
Su gi sa (Whoever)
Usage:
Chi gik ya nga ongan ud (Whatever happens, I am coming)
Su gi sa ongna aju xhereemo (Whoever arrives is welcome)

3.2 Discussion

Advanced Forms: Some of these pronouns, like compound or reciprocal pronouns, are more advanced and may not be as commonly used in day-to-day speech. Context-Specific: Certain pronouns, like distributive and negative pronouns, are more situational and might not fit within a basic introductory framework. Focus on Simplicity: The initial explanation focused on the foundational categories to establish a clear understanding for beginners.

The Balti language employs a sophisticated pronoun system that encodes social relationships through distinct morphological forms. For personal pronouns, English "I" corresponds to Nga or Nana, while the objective case "me" is Ngi or Ngini, the possessive "my/mine" is Ngayi, and the reflexive "myself" is Ni fari. The first-person plural "we" is Ngaya, with "us" as Ngayi, "our" as Ngayii, and "ourself" as Ngayi fari. Crucially, the second-person pronoun demonstrates the power-solidarity distinction: the formal Yaang (you) with its objective yari, possessive yati, and reflexive yarifari conveys respect and hierarchy, whereas the informal Khhiang (you) with khiri, khiti, and khirifari expresses familiarity and solidarity. Similarly, third-person forms include Kho (he) with khuri, khuri, and khuri fari; Mo (she) with Muri, Murii, and Muri fari; and Dhong/Khong (they) with Khongi, Dhongi, and khonifari. Notably, pronouns like Ngni and Ngnai are strategically employed in daily discourse to assert power and social pressure, demonstrating how Balti speakers navigate complex social hierarchies through deliberate pronoun selection.

Understanding power and solidarity framework: **Power**. This refers to asymmetrical relationships where one person holds more authority or seniority. Pronouns in this context often reflected social distance, respect, or deference. **Solidarity**: This pertains to symmetrical relationships where people share a close or equal relationship, like friends, family, or colleagues of the same rank. Pronouns here often conveyed intimacy or familiarity.

Balti pronoun system overview personal pronouns were analyzed the pronouns used for "I," "you," "he/she," "Ngna" "Yang" "Kho" "Mo" etc.., and the variations in formal, informal, respectful, and familiar contexts. In honorifics were investigated the presence of honorific pronouns or suffixes, which may change based on whom one is addressed. In plural forms some languages used plural pronouns to expressed respect or formality, even when referred to a single individual. Checked out for this phenomenon in Balti.

Data collection and variables collected data through purposive sampling also asked native speakers to provided pronouns used in different social contexts. Role play scenarios were set up scenarios where participants addressed various figures, like elders, bosses, friends, and younger people. Recorded conversations were also analyzed natural conversations where pronoun choices revealed patterns of power and solidarity and recorded different data within the page when asking the mentor regarding related items while covering the variables in relationship type, e.g., friend, family member, superior, subordinate, age, elderly vs. younger people, furthermore, gender were examined if gender affected pronoun choices.

Detail data analysis frequency analysis were counted the usage frequency of pronouns across different contexts. Contextual analysis of Power **pronouns** were analyzed the pronouns that denoted a power dynamic, like deferential pronouns used for elders or authorities. **Solidarity pronouns** were analyzed the pronouns that showing familiarity or equal status, like those used among friends or siblings. Successful example of data analysis are contrasted with those that can yield wrong insights, and the reader is taken on an engaging yet educational journey that depicts how using data can have significant public impact (Saghafian, 2025). Context shifts on track show that how pronouns changed if the same speaker addressed someone in a formal versus informal setting. Age and gender influence cross-tabulated different data to see if age or gender influences pronoun choice.

Patterns of power and solidarity were identified that pronoun patterns associated with relationships were characterized by hierarchy (such as elder-younger or teacher-student) versus those characterized by equality (like friendships). Power pronouns were appeared more frequently in situations requiring respect or formality, such as when younger people addressed elders. Solidarity pronouns were more common in peer relationships or among family members of similar age.

Statistical analysis used a chi-square test and determined if pronoun choice significantly varies across different contexts. Further calculated the correlation between pronoun type and relational factors (age, social status).

Interpretation and conclusions were summarized were found, and indicated how pronoun choice in Balti reflected power structures and social intimacy. Also discussed any unique findings, such as specific pronouns exclusive to certain relationships, or the used of particular honorifics across all power contexts. Furthermore, addressed implications for social dynamics, indicating how Balti speakers negotiated respect and closeness through language in daily discourses. This structured were helped by provided a clear, detailed analysis of how pronouns in the Balti language are used to express power and solidarity across different social contexts.

A brief overview of the Balti language elaborated with its origins, geographic location (spoken mainly in Baltistan in northern Pakistan, with influences from Tibetan and Kashmiri), and its unique features in connection with Balti pronouns in its application to real life discourses (to show power, integrity and solidarity etc.). It further explained the concept of "power" and "solidarity" pronouns, inspired by sociolinguist (Brown & Gilman's (1960) theory which suggests that pronouns can reveal social power dynamics and kinship or familiarity between speakers.

These are the sentences were adopted after completing this project. In Balti, most of the pronouns such as (Ngni, Ngnai) show the power and efficiency in daily discourses to impress or pressurize others.

Power and Solidarity in Language background were described in power and solidarity dichotomy. In many languages, there are specific pronouns or forms that reflect either hierarchical power (e.g., formal or polite pronouns used to show respect) or solidarity (e.g., informal or familiar pronouns used to show closeness or equality). Mention examples from more commonly known languages like French (tu vs. vous) or Spanish (tú vs. usted) to help contextualize. In Balti examples like first person singular "I" pronounced as "Ngna" if repeated this pronoun on few times then it show the power in daily discourse.

Pronouns in Balti Language described the pronoun system in Balti for instance, first-person, second-person, and third-person pronouns. For example "I" "You" "Your" pronounced as "Ngna" "Yaan" "Yidang". Highlighted the differences in pronouns based on age, social status, gender, and relationship (such as kinship).

Power Pronouns in Balti discussed how pronouns were used to establish social hierarchy and respect in the Balti language. For instance, respect for elders, often. There are specific pronouns or polite forms used when addressed elders or people of higher social standing. Titles and honorifics, besides pronouns, show some languages used titles or honorifics to show respect and manner. Balti language employed such forms in addition to pronouns. In formal contexts, Balti speakers switch to formal pronouns or structures in certain social contexts (e.g., during formal events, when addressing a superior, or in professional settings) to show power or solidarity.

Solidarity pronouns in Balti also discussed pronouns that expressed closeness, equality, and familiarity. Within family and close friends, highlighted pronouns or forms that are typically used between family members, friends, or people of similar age and status to show solidarity. In same-social-level relationships, described how Balti speakers may used solidarity pronouns with individuals they considered equals or people with whom they shared a close relationship.

Factors influencing pronouns showed the social hierarchy and age. Further explained how age and social rank impacts pronoun selection. Setting and context show formal vs. informal settings, professional vs. personal contexts, and so on. Kinship and community highlighted how Balti's community-oriented culture influences the choice of pronouns, with distinct pronouns used within families and among friends.

Furthermore analyzed and discussed and summarized the findings, examining the role of these pronouns in maintaining social cohesion and acknowledging social roles in Balti-speaking communities. Comparative analysis were also included if possible, also compared the Balti usage with other similar languages or dialects in the region, such as Tibetan or Pashto, were identified unique features or shared trends.

4. Conclusion

The Balti language employs a sophisticated pronoun system that encodes social relationships through distinct morphological forms to show power and solidarity in the targeted settings of Baltistan region. Balti possesses various forms of pronouns like English as for personal pronouns, English "I" corresponds to Nga or Nana, while the objective case "me" is Ngi or Ngini, the possessive "my/mine" is Ngayi, and the reflexive "myself" is Ni fari. The study of pronoun usage in the Balti language revealed significant insights into social dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and cultural values within the Balti-speaking community. Balti, like many languages, employs different pronouns that reflect various levels of respect, hierarchy, and solidarity among speakers. As we reach the closing pages of this history lesson, it's helpful to pause and reflect on how far we've come and how much further we still need to go (Haber, 2025). The findings of this project underscore how language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a mirror of social structure and cultural identity.

The research highlights that pronouns in Balti serve as markers of both "power" and "solidarity." The use of certain pronouns conveys respect or authority depending on the social relationship and context. For instance, in formal or hierarchical settings, pronouns reflecting power and respect are used to address elders, officials, or individuals of higher status. In contrast, pronouns indicating solidarity are prevalent among friends, family members, and individuals of similar status or age, reinforcing group identity and equality. One of the key observations is that Balti pronouns create a balance between maintaining social order and fostering community bonds. While respectful pronouns help preserve cultural traditions and social norms, the solidarity pronouns enable more informal, intimate, and cooperative interactions.

This duality within Balti pronouns aligns closely with the sociolinguistic theories that explore how language functions in both constructing and reflecting social realities. In conclusion, this study affirms the role of language as a dynamic entity shaped by societal structures. Pronouns in Balti reflect a deep-rooted cultural ethos of respect, hierarchy, and community bonding. The implications of these findings suggest that linguistic choices, particularly pronoun selection, are crucial in understanding and appreciating the social fabric of Balti-speaking communities. Further research could explore how these pronoun usages evolve with social change, offering broader insights into the relationship between language and societal transformation.

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