



Pronoun System in the Raijua Dialect of the Sabu Language: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract*

This study investigates the pronoun system of the Raijua dialect of the Sabu Language spoken in Sabu Raijua Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Pronouns are an essential grammatical category because they not only substitute nouns and noun phrases but also reflect social relationships, cultural identity, and participant involvement in communication. The objectives of this study are to identify the types of pronouns and describe their grammatical and social functions in the Raijua dialect. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and documentation involving three native speakers of the Raijua dialect. The collected data were transcribed, classified, and analyzed based on pronoun categories and their functions in discourse. The findings reveal seven categories of pronouns in the Raijua dialect, namely personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, reflexive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, relative pronouns, and distributive pronouns. The analysis further shows that pronouns perform several important functions, including replacing subjects and objects, expressing possession, distinguishing inclusive and exclusive first-person plural references, and reflecting social relationships among speakers. A distinctive characteristic of the Raijua dialect is the contrast between the inclusive pronoun *dii* ('we', including the listener) and the exclusive pronoun *'jii* ('we', excluding the listener). This inclusive-exclusive distinction represents a significant typological feature of Austronesian languages and demonstrates how linguistic forms encode social interaction and group membership. Furthermore, pronouns such as *dii*, *'jii*, *era*, and *roo* serve as markers of solidarity, cultural identity, kinship, and social boundaries within the Raijua-speaking community. This study contributes to descriptive linguistics, Austronesian language typology, and the documentation and preservation of regional languages in Indonesia.

1. Introduction (Bold 12)

Language functions as a medium of communication and cultural identity within a community. According to Kridalaksana (2008), language is a system of arbitrary sound symbols

used by members of society to interact and identify themselves. As one of the regional languages in Indonesia, the Sabu Language plays an important role in preserving the cultural identity of the Sabu-Raijua people.

Among linguistic elements, pronouns occupy a significant position because they replace nouns and noun phrases while maintaining coherence and efficiency in discourse. Pronouns are closely related to the participants involved in communication and often reflect social relationships, identity, and cultural values. Evans (2007) states that pronouns perform a deictic function by identifying speakers, listeners, and other participants in communication.

From a typological perspective, pronoun systems reveal unique linguistic characteristics. Comrie (1989) notes that many Austronesian languages distinguish between inclusive and exclusive first-person plural pronouns. Such distinctions demonstrate how grammatical structures reflect social relationships within speech communities.

The Sabu Language belongs to the Austronesian language family and consists of several dialects, including Seba, Mesara, and Raijua. Among these varieties, the Raijua dialect possesses distinctive linguistic characteristics that have received limited scholarly attention. While previous studies have explored phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects of the language, detailed studies focusing on pronouns remain scarce.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of pronouns and describe their functions in the Raijua dialect. The findings are expected to contribute to descriptive linguistics, language typology, and regional language preservation.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research enables researchers to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena in their natural settings. The study was conducted in Ledeunu Village, Raijua District, Sabu Raijua Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Three native speakers of the Raijua dialect were purposively selected as research participants based on their fluency and active use of the dialect in daily communication.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and documentation. The interviews elicited natural language use and examples of pronouns occurring in everyday communication. Audio recordings were transcribed and organized systematically. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive linguistic procedures. Pronouns were classified according to their grammatical categories and functions. The analysis focused on personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, indefinite, relative, and distributive pronouns, as well as their syntactic and semantic roles in discourse.

3. Discussions

3.1 Types of Pronouns in the Raijua Dialect

The analysis identified seven categories of pronouns used in the Raijua dialect.

a. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to participants in communication

<i>English</i>	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	Bahasa Raijua
I	Saya	ya
We	Kita	dii
We	Kami	‘jii

You	Kamu/anda	èu
He/She	Dia	nō
They	Mereka	roo

One of the characteristics of the Sabu Raijua Language is the difference between dii (we, including the person we are talking to) and 'jii (we, not including the person we are talking to)

b. Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns indicate ownership relationships

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
<i>My</i>	<i>Milik saya</i>	unu ja/oha ja
<i>His/her</i>	<i>Miliknya</i>	unu nō/oha nō
<i>Their</i>	<i>Milik mereka</i>	unu ro/oha ro
<i>Our</i>	<i>Milik kami/kita</i>	unu dii/ oha dii
<i>your</i>	<i>Milikmu/milik anda</i>	unu èu/oha èu

c. Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used when the doer and the recipient of the action are the same person.

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
myself	Saya sendiri	ja miha/ ja we miha

d. Demonstrative Pronouns

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
That	itu	ni'de
These	ini	na'ddi
Which one	Yang mana	ro mi

e. Indefinite Pronouns

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
someone	seseorang	hede'u
Anyone	siapapun	nede'u we

f. Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns indicate entities or locations.

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
That	Itu	ni'de
which	yang mana	ro mi

g. Distributive pronouns

English	Indonesian	Raijua Dialect
every	Setiap	'ja'ji wari

Pronouns in Sabu Raijua have important functions in communication, namely replacing subjects and objects, expressing ownership, indicating social relationships, and distinguishing between inclusive (**dii**) and exclusive (**'jii**) pronouns. The existence of this inclusive-exclusive system demonstrates the linguistic richness of Sabu Raijua and reflects the social and cultural values of its speakers. It also highlights the importance of group membership, participation, and interpersonal relationships in the Raijua-speaking community.

3.2 Functions of Pronouns

The research findings reveal that the pronouns used in the three stories function as subject and object substitutes, markers of possession, indicators of inclusive and exclusive distinctions, and representations of social interactions.

1. Replacing Subject

One of the main functions of pronouns in the analyzed stories is **to replace the subject** of a sentence. Pronouns such as **I, we, they, she, and you** are used to refer to people or groups that perform actions.

A pronoun that functions as a replacement subject is a pronoun that is the main actor in a sentence. Here are the identification results:

- j'aa (Saya/I) J'aa mulai ta j'èga pa awe wèba èpa tuu olahraga perai.
- j'ii (Kami/We exclusive) J'ii maho la d'ara kelas tu ta mulai proses lii aj'a.
- dii (Kita/We inclusive) Pedutu lii dèu uru dii, roo perlu d'o ta pee ma era ro tatu.
- roo (Mereka/They) Roo perlu d'o ta pee ma era ro tatu.
- Rotai / no (Dia/She) Hari-hari womone hud'e perage noo

Pronouns that function as replacements for subjects in the three stories include:

- j'aa = I / Saya
- j'ii = We / Kami (exclusive)
- dii = We / Kita (inclusive)
- roo = They / Mereka
- naa = They / Mereka
- no /noo = She/He / Dia
- era = They / Mereka

These pronouns function as the actors of the action in the sentence, so they are included in the Replacing Subject category. This finding is also in line with the analysis of the function of pronouns in the Raijua dialect, namely that personal pronouns such as I, We, They, and She are used to replace the subject in a sentence.

2. Replacing Object

Another important function of pronouns found in the analyzed stories is to replace the object of a sentence. An object is the person or thing that receives the action performed by the subject. Instead of repeating a noun or noun phrase, object pronouns are used to make sentences more concise and cohesive.

Based on the analysis of Sabu Rajua language stories, pronouns that function as replacing objects are pronouns that receive actions from the subject in a sentence.

Here are some data that can be categorized as Replacing Objects: Pronoun Sentence Function Explanation:

- **j'aa (I/me)** "... *j'aa mate jemputan ri ama j'aa ma hekola.*" Replacing Object **j'aa** receives the action of being "picked up" by the father. The meaning is the same as mine in the sentence "My father picked me up from the school grounds."
- **era (they/them)** "*Era ne lii pelole ta ro ngèdi ta jad'i pemuhu...*" The replacing object **era** refers to a group of people who are the target of an action or conversation.
- **noo (she/her)** "...*ne kedu'e nga nyiu ro ègo la noo...*" Replacing Object **noo** (Rotai) receives the action "brought/given provisions". Functions as an object.
- **noo (she/her)** "... *tuu noo.*" Replacing Object **noo** becomes the recipient of the action or destination of the object being carried.
- **j'aa (me/me)** "... *ma awe wèru pidu hetèu-hetèu ta dèka ma j'aa...*" Replacing Object **j'aa** receives the action "come to see me". Function is equivalent to me.

From the three stories, the pronoun that functions as a Replacing Object is:

j'aa = me (as an object)

era = them (them as an object)

noo = him/her (him/her as an object)

3. Replacing possessives

Another function of pronouns in the stories is to express possession or ownership. Possessive pronouns such as his, our, and your show that something belongs to a person or group.

Sentence Pronouns Function Adverbs:

- **ina nèi (my mother)** *Ina nèi ta tali wèngu.* Possessive indicates the speaker's ownership of the mother ("my mother").
- **ama nèi (my father)** *Ama nèi ta penga'a manu haj'a noo.* Possessive indicates the speaker's ownership of the father ("my father").
- **J'aa mate jemputan ri ama j'aa ma hekola.** The possessive indicates that the father belongs to the speaker ("my father").
- **ana èpu j'ii (our children and grandchildren)** *Ana panah ana èpu j'ii.* Possessive Shows ownership of the group "we".

Pronouns that function as replacing possessives in this data include:

nèi = me/myself (ina nèi, ama nèi)

j'aa = me (ama j'aa, tugas j'aa)

j'ii = us (ana èpu j'ii)

Kinship forms such as ama-ina and a'a-ari are used to indicate ownership or kinship.

4. Distinguishing Inclusive and Exclusive Pronouns

Based on the Sabu Raijua language story, pronouns that demonstrate Distinguishing Inclusive and Exclusive Pronouns are: Pronoun Type Meaning Function;

dii (Inclusive) Pronoun kita Includes the speaker and listener

“Pedutu lii dèu uru dii, roo perlu d'o ta pee ma era ro tatu...”

The pronoun *dii* means "we." The speaker invites or involves the listener in the same group. Because the listener is included in the group being referred to, this is an inclusive pronoun. So the function: Demonstrates togetherness and involvement between the speaker and listener.

j'ii (Exclusive) Pronoun kami Includes the speaker and their group, but not the listener

“Ne pej'ari rai ne b'èb'a kehanga j'ii ro Raijua.”

The pronoun *j'ii* means "we." Refers only to the Raijua community or group. The listener is not included in the group being referred to. So the Function: Demonstrates the speaker's group identity without involving the listener.

These findings indicate that the Sabu Raijua language has an inclusive-exclusive pronoun system which is one of the characteristics of Austronesian languages and reflects the social relationship between speakers and listeners.

5. Reflecting Social Relationships

Pronouns Sentences in the Story, Social Function.

he (we/us inclusive) ***“Peduli lirik dèu uru di, roo perlu d'o ta pee ma era ro tatu...”***

Shows togetherness between the speaker and the listener in the same group.

j'ii (we are exclusive) ***“...ne b'èb'a kehanga j'ii ro Raijua.”***

Indicates the speaker's group identity (the Raijua people) without involving the listener.

j'ii (we are exclusive) ***“J'ii hari-hari udu ada Rona Dida...”*** Affirming the social and cultural identity of the Rona Dida group.

j'ii (we are exclusive) ***“...ana panah ana èpu j'ii.”*** Shows kinship and group solidarity.

era (them) ***“Era ne lii pelole ta ro ngèdi ta jad'i pemuhu...”*** Indicates other groups in society, thereby forming a social boundary between “us” and “them.”

roo (they) “Ta wie ke roo lai lua pema...” Refers to a particular group in the community and the social relations between members of the community.

The pronouns that most clearly reflect social relationships in this story are:

dii (we/us inclusive) → reflects the togetherness of the speaker and listener.

j'ii (we/us exclusive) → reflects group identity, community, and kinship.

era and roo (they) → reflect the existence of other groups in society and the social boundaries between the speaker's group and other groups.

Of all the data, *j'ii* and *dii* are the pronouns that most strongly reflect social relationships because they indicate solidarity, cultural identity, and membership in the Rajua community.

4. Novelities

This study contributes to linguistic scholarship in several ways.

First, it provides one of the few detailed descriptions of pronouns in the Rajua dialect of the Sabu Language. Previous studies focused primarily on phonology, morphology, and syntax without specifically examining pronouns.

Second, the study documents the inclusive-exclusive distinction in first-person plural pronouns, which represents an important typological feature of Austronesian languages.

Third, the findings reveal how pronouns function as markers of social identity and cultural relationships within the Rajua speech community.

Finally, the study contributes to language documentation and preservation efforts for regional languages in eastern Indonesia.

5. Conclusion

The study identified seven categories of pronouns in the Rajua dialect: personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, indefinite, relative, and distributive pronouns. These pronouns perform various grammatical and social functions, including replacing subjects and objects, expressing possession, and distinguishing inclusive and exclusive references, and reflecting social relationships.

A notable characteristic of the Rajua dialect is the distinction between inclusive (*dii*) and exclusive (*jii*) first-person plural pronouns. This feature highlights the close relationship between language structure and social interaction.

The findings contribute to descriptive linguistics, Austronesian language studies, and efforts to preserve regional languages in Indonesia.

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