

Pronominal and Alignment Systems in Sikule

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This study examines the morphosyntax of the pronominal and alignment systems in Sikule (ISO 639-3: *skh*; Glottolog: *sikul242*), an Austronesian language spoken in northern Simeulue, Aceh Province, Indonesia, with approximately 20,000 speakers. Genealogically, Sikule belongs to the Central Barrier Islands branch of the Sumatran subgroup (Hammarström et al. 2024; Billings & McDonnell 2024). The data presented here was collected through preliminary remote research with two Sikule speakers. Our analysis highlights two notable aspects of the Sikule pronominal system: (i) its formal paradigmatic sets, and (ii) its syntactic distribution in relation to typological patterns of ergative versus accusative alignment.

Sikule free and bound pronominal sets are presented in Table 1, with examples (1)-(3) illustrating their key morphosyntactic properties. The free and bound pronouns—e.g., *ifeita* and *-ita* in (2)—are anaphorically related via co-indexing system if both are present in the same sentence (cf. Bhat 2004; Dixon 1979, Haspelmath 2019). The bound pronouns function as the true core arguments, as their presence is obligatory, while the co-indexed free pronouns or NPs are optional, as shown by the bracketing of *ifāaga* in (1).

	Free		Bound	
	NOM.	ACC.	Ergative	Absolutive
1sg.	<i>ietu</i>	<i>(i-)ietu</i>	<i>u-</i>	<i>-du</i>
2sg.	<i>iegā</i>	<i>(i-)iegā</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>-ge</i>
3sg.	<i>ifāi</i>	<i>(i-)fāi</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>-di/-ya</i>
1PL.Incl.	<i>ifāita</i>	<i>(i-)fāita</i>	<i>mi-</i>	<i>-ita</i>
1PL.Excl.	<i>ifāaga</i>	<i>(i-)fāaga</i>	<i>ta-</i>	<i>-ga</i>
2PL.	<i>ifāami</i>	<i>(i-)fāami</i>	<i>mi-</i>	<i>-ami</i>
3PL.	<i>ifāila</i>	<i>(i-)fāila</i>	<i>la-</i>	<i>-ila</i>

Table 1. Pronominal Paradigm in Sikule

- (1). (*ifāaga* *nen*) *mo-ami* *ta-ila* *mānefi*
 1PL.Exc.NOM Dem.Dist PST-2PL.ABS 1PL.Exc.ERG-see yesterday
 ‘We saw you(PL) yesterday’
- (2). *ifeita* *mānefi* *mo-ita* *khumundung*
 1PL.EXC.NOM yesterday PST-1PL.INC.ABS run
 ‘Yesterday we ran’
- (3) *iegā* *u-ge* *butāng* *ma-nolong* *feita* *lale’e*
 2SG.NOM PRS(REAL)-2SG.ABS currently AV-help 1PL.INC.ACC now
 ‘You are currently helping us now’

Morphosyntactically, the Sikule pronominal system exhibits a split nominative–ergative alignment. The free pronoun pattern is nominative–accusative, with S/A forms marked by the prefix *i-*, while P arguments typically lack this prefix (i.e., *ifeita* in (2) vs. *feita* in (3)). In contrast, the bound pronouns follow an ergative–absolutive pattern, with the ergative A form (e.g., *ta-* in (1)) distinct from the S/P form *-ita* in (2). Due to the presence of pronominal co-indexing in Sikule, the notion of a syntactic subject or pivot—as found in Indonesian-type languages—is either weakened or absent; for example, coordination does not require shared-argument gapping. (Examples are not provided here due to space constraints but will be discussed in the full paper.)

This research contributes to our understanding of grammatical relations and alignment systems—accusative and ergative—not only in Sikule but also across the Barrier Islands region and beyond

Keywords : *pronominal system, ergativity, accusativity, Austronesian languages, alignment system*

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