

## Pronouns in Poula

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss the different types of pronouns in Poula viz., Personal pronoun, Possessive pronoun, Reflexive pronoun, Interrogative pronoun and Demonstrative pronoun. Poula belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language of Kuki-Chin sub branch, it is one of the three varieties of languages spoken by the Chakhesang tribe of Nagaland, with the majority of speakers residing in parts of Manipur. The other two languages spoken by the tribe are Chokri and Khezha. As such, linguistically, this language shares a contiguous border with Manipur. This study will lay emphasis on the variety of Poula spoken in Phek district of Nagaland. Up to date, there are many literary works done on Chokri and Khezha, but Poula remains an unexplored and undocumented dialect. This dialect of Chakhesang is relatively unknown to even the other Naga language communities.

**Keywords: Pronoun, Poula, Chakhesang, Phek, Nagaland**

### 1. Introduction

The Chakhesangs are a Naga tribe who primarily inhabit the Phek district of Nagaland along with Pochury tribe who consider the district as their tribal headquarters. The name Chakhesang itself reflects three acronyms; 'Cha' which stands for Chokri, 'Khe' for Khezha and 'Sang' for Sangtam. Phek district is made up of three areas and two ranges, of which the present study uses the Razeba range as a point of departure for studying the Poula language. The range is a small one consisting of only three villages and a town who identify ethnically as Poumai. They are Zhavame (Zhamei), Zelome, Tsüpfüme (Chobama), and the town of Razeba with approximately only 6000-10,000 Poula speakers in Nagaland itself. The Poumais are classified as a sub-group of Chakhesang who in turn are further classified as a sub-group of the larger Tenyimia community. Poula language behaves differently from the slightly bigger languages of Chakhesangs - Khezha and Chokri, both morphologically and syntactically.

Pronoun is a term used in the grammatical classification of words, referring to the closed set of items which can be used to substitute for a noun phrase or a single noun (David Crystal, 2008). It is a word that can function as a noun used by itself and that refers either to the participants in the discourse or to someone or something mentioned elsewhere in the discourse. George Yule (1985), stated that Pronouns are words '...typically referring to people or things already known'. It falls under the noun sub-class on the ground that they take case and number markers just like nouns. RL Trask (1997), stated that a pronoun is 'a word class or word belonging to this class, whose member typically, form noun phrase, all by themselves, such as you, she, something or this'.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Till date, no linguistic work is found in this variety of Poula. It was only in 2021, a small booklet titled ‘*Poula Primer Dictionary*’ was published by the Poula literature committee which is the first written literature in the language. Besides this, a few linguistics works are available in the variety spoken in Manipur; Veikho (2014) (2021), Veikho & Khyriem (2015) and Veikho & Sarmah (2018), which provides a preliminary phonological description of Poula, Consonants and Vowels. Veikho (2021) provides a more detailed analysis of the grammar of Poula.

The Poula Literature Board Committee was formed in the year 2013 with the primary intention to develop its orthography and provide reading materials in the language. One of their main focus lies on the development of Bible and hymnals in their own language. At present, the literature board is working on developing school textbooks for the primary sections.

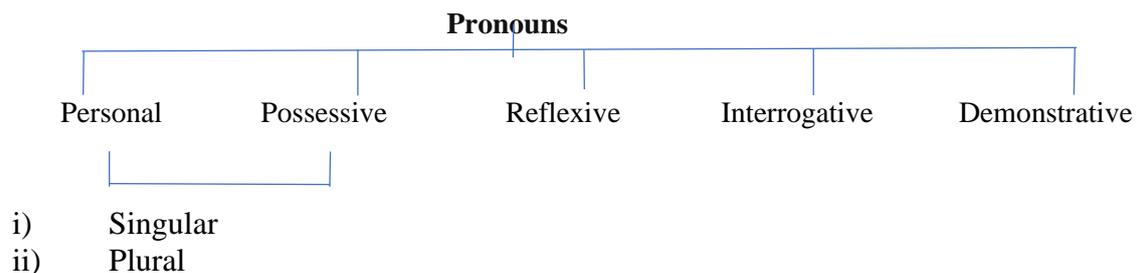
## 3. Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature and the data collected for this study were from native speakers of Razeba area in Phek district. Primary source includes observation method, structured and unstructured interviews, collection of community and personal narratives from native speakers varying in gender, age and occupation.

Secondary sources were in the form of books, journals, articles, internet sources, official documents and related literature written on the tribe to obtain information on the language and the people.

## 4. Pronouns in Poula

This section presents an overview of the different types of pronouns in Poula. Pronouns in Poula are free forms that can function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. In Poula, the absence of a distinct dual marker is compensated by expressing duality through the combination with the cardinal number *ahe* ‘two’. The different types of pronouns found in the language are listed below:



### 4.1 Personal Pronouns

A personal pronoun is associated with a particular person. It can be classified into first person, second person and third person. Poula exhibits all three person and number category. The personal pronouns in Poula have singular and plural forms respectively. Morphologically, there is no separate form to distinguish between inclusive and exclusive category. It is distinguished in the conversation between the speaker and the hearer whether the hearer is excluded or included. Given below is an illustration of Poula personal pronouns basing on person and number category.

**Table 1. Personal Pronouns**

Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	/ī/ ‘I’ /a/ ‘me’	/í/ or /it <sup>h</sup> .ume/ ‘we/us’
2 <sup>nd</sup>	/ne/ ‘you’	/neme/ ‘you’
3 <sup>rd</sup>	/pû/ ‘He/She’	/pûme/ ‘they, them’

As shown in **Table 1**, the personal pronouns in Poula are not marked for gender, i.e., there is no separate forms or markers to indicate masculinity or femininity. The first person singular and the first-person plural is a case of isomorphism which are distinguished by tone. /ī/ which is the first-person singular takes the mid tone and the first-person plural takes the high tone /í/ as illustrated. Second person singular form is /ne/ and the second person plural is formed by suffixing the human marker /-me/ to the second person singular form.

Third person singular /pu/ is a free morpheme and the third person plural is formed by suffixing the human marker to the third person singular form. It is observed that there is no gender distinction in any of the person marking category.

#### 4.1.1 Singular

The singular pronoun in Poula is unmarked and it is divided into first person, second person and third person.

##### i) First person singular

The first-person singular pronoun has two forms: /i/ and /a/. /i/ exclusively occurs in the subject position and /a/ exclusively occur in the object position as illustrated in example (1) and (2).

(1) i    ʃidʒo    kobi    ʒa-le  
 1SG tomorrow cabbage harvest-FUT  
 ‘I will harvest the cabbage tomorrow’

(2) ne    a-hi    pəu-pi  
 2SG 1SG-to tell-OB  
 ‘You told me’

##### ii) Second person singular

The second person singular /ne/ has only one form which takes the position of both subject and object as illustrated below:

##### /ne/ occurring in subject position

(3) ne    i    bu    tɯ-le  
 2SG 1SG Kohima go-FUT  
 ‘You and I will go to Kohima’

- (4) ne sa soi  
 2SG tall very  
 ‘You are tall’ (You’re very tall)

**/ne/ occurring in object position**

- (5) pume ne hi vu-le  
 They 2SG to come-FUT  
 ‘They will come to you’
- (6) pu ne p<sup>h</sup>əo bue  
 3SG 2SG look PROG  
 ‘He/she is looking for you’

**iii) Third person singular**

The third person singular in Poula is represented by /pu/ and it can take both subject and object position. Given below are some examples:

- (7) pu-nəu lik<sup>h</sup>opi-le  
 3SG-NOM cook-FUT  
 ‘(S)he will cook’
- (8) pu şupafu vu nəu pu favə folu mo məpe hale şələu mo  
 3SG market go but 3SG purse take NEG remember nothing buy-CAPMOD  
 NEG  
 k<sup>h</sup>e vu-de  
 and come-PST  
 ‘She went to the market and (unknowingly) left her purse at home so she had to return empty handed’
- (9) ne pu kəu pio  
 2SG 3SG call IMP  
 ‘You call him/her’

**4.1.2 Plural**

Plurality expresses more than one person or one object. The pronoun plurals in Poula are /it<sup>h</sup>.umel/ ‘we’, /nemel/ ‘you’ and /pumel/ ‘they/them’. The pronoun plurals are suffixed by the human marker /-me/, the human marker obligatorily occurs after the pronoun which personifies the pronoun and makes it human.

**i) First person plural**

(10) it<sup>h</sup>.ume ba .u ki ʃa so-le  
1PL time six at tea drink-FUT

‘We will drink tea at 6’

(11) it<sup>h</sup>.ume vu-dia koi  
3PL come-EXIST call

‘They called us to come’

**ii) Second person plural**

(12) neme atɪuku-me muʃu pio  
2PL others-HM inform IMP

‘You inform the others’

(13) i neme ʒe səu hasə ni  
1SG 1PL hard do work want

‘I want you all to work hard’

**iii) Third person plural**

(14) pume tsəfə-me me  
3SG tsüpfüme-HM people

‘They are from Tsüpfüme’

(15) i pume dəu hotəu ŋo  
1SG them field go see

‘I saw them going to the field’

(16) pume dapa.u bue  
they razeba be.LOC

‘They are in Razeba’

**4.1.3 The dative in Personal Pronouns**

Personal pronouns in Poula can be marked with the dative suffix /hi/ as illustrated in the given examples. The dative marking in nouns in these examples are used for the semantic roles as recipient and beneficiary.

(17) a. dani a-hi larü li fopi  
Danyi 1SG-DAT book one give

‘Danyi gave a book to me’

- b. dani pume-hi ɹafi fopi  
 danyi 3PL-DAT fruit give  
 ‘Danyi brought fruits for them’

#### 4.1.4 Personal Pronouns and Degree of Comparison

The personal pronouns in Poula are also marked for the degree of comparison. The comparative marker /dzə/ occur independently after the pronouns. Given below are some examples:

- (18) pu a dzə ʂo hi  
 3SG 1SG than long more  
 ‘She is taller than me’
- (19) dani ne dzə t<sup>h</sup>ɹu hi  
 Danyi 2SG than strong more  
 ‘Danyi is stronger than you’
- (20) pu a dzə vi hi  
 3SG 1SG than good more  
 ‘He is better than me’

#### 4.2 Possessive Pronouns

A possessive pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun to show possessiveness or ownership. The possessive case marker in Poula is /vi/ and it occurs as an independent morpheme.

**Table 2. Possessive Pronouns**

Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	/a vi/ ‘mine’	/it <sup>h</sup> .rume vi/ ‘ours’
2 <sup>nd</sup>	/ne vi/ ‘yours’	/neme vi/ ‘yours’
3 <sup>rd</sup>	/pu vi/ ‘his/hers’	/pume vi/ ‘theirs’

The first-person singular possessive pronoun is formed by adding the possessive form /vi/ to the first-person singular form /a/ which is an allomorph of the morpheme /i/. Similarly, second person singular possessive pronoun is formed by adding the possessive form /vi/ to the second person singular form /ne/. Second person plural is suffixed by a human marker and the possessive marker occur as a free morpheme to form second person possessive pronoun. The third person possessive pronouns are formed by adding the possessive marker /vi/ to the pronouns, and the third person plural is formed by suffixing the dual cardinal number and the human marker to the third person respectively.

##### i. First person

- (21) ki he a vi  
 house this 1SG POSS  
 ‘This house is mine’

(22) ki he it<sup>h</sup>.ume vi  
 house this 1PL POSS  
 ‘This house is ours’

**ii. Second person**

(23) ki huna ne vi  
 house that 2SG POSS  
 ‘That house is yours’

(24) ki huna neme vi  
 house that 2PL POSS  
 ‘That house is yours’

**iii. Third person**

(25) ki huna pu vi  
 house that 3SG POSS  
 ‘That house is his/hers’

(26) ki huna pume vi  
 house that 3PL POSS  
 ‘That house is theirs’

**4.3 Reflexive Pronouns**

The reflexive pronoun in Poula is morphologically marked by a bound form */-lia/* ‘self’. The marker is uniform and it can occur with any pronoun.

**Table 3. Reflexive Pronouns**

Person	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	/ilia/ ‘myself’	/it <sup>h</sup> .umelia/ ‘ourselves’
2 <sup>nd</sup>	/nelia/ ‘yourself’	/nehelia/ ‘yourselves’
3 <sup>rd</sup>	/pulia/ ‘him/herself’	/pumelia/ ‘themselves’

As shown in the above Table 1.3, the reflexive marker in Poula is suffixed to the pronouns to form a reflexive pronoun. It can occur in the first person (27a) and (27b), second person (28a) and (28b) and third person (29a) and (29b) category respectively.

(27) a. i-lia i dɔulu-ɾe  
 1SG-RFLX 1SG fool-PST  
 ‘I fooled myself’

b. i ɹut<sup>h</sup>ɹa bu mo vasəu i-lia kikha haməti səu modashi-e  
 1SG helper have NEG that's why 1SG-REFX home everything do should-HB  
 'No one is there to help me at home, so I do the work all by myself'

(28) a. ne-lia ne muli-ləu  
 2SG-RFLX 2SG trust-IMP  
 'Trust yourself'

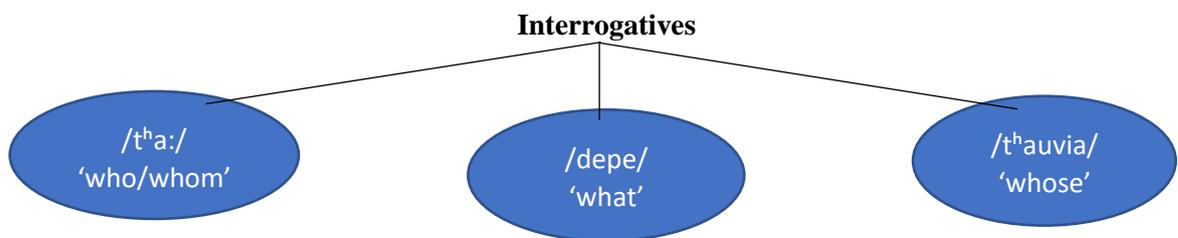
b. ne-lia bu mosəu si  
 2SG-RFLX do harm bad  
 'Don't harm yourself'

(29) a. pu-lia pu mədo-ləu  
 3PL-RFLX 3SG teach-IMP  
 '(S)he taught herself'

b. pu-lia hao-na səe  
 3PL-RFLX work-DEF do  
 '(S)he did the work himself'

#### 4.4 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns act as question word in a sentence. There are three types of interrogative pronouns in Poula which are used in human class forms.



**Figure 1. Interrogatives Pronouns**

The human interrogative pronouns can be marked for number and gender. For human interrogative pronouns, Poula uses specific distinctions with regard to gender, i.e., masculine, feminine and diminutive interrogatives. The forms are given below:

**Table 4. Interrogative Pronouns (Human)**

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	/t <sup>h</sup> au/ 'who/whom'	/t <sup>h</sup> ame/
Feminine	/t <sup>h</sup> aufəpe/ ~	/t <sup>h</sup> amefə/
Diminutive	/t <sup>h</sup> anai/ ~	/t <sup>h</sup> amenai/

The respective interrogative forms are exclusively used for human. It is used when the person is known to the speaker as human (male/female). There is no marker to indicate masculine gender as such. The singular interrogatives can be used for both male and neuter beings where the gender of the person is unknown. In all the aspects, /*t<sup>h</sup>au*/ is the common base where different forms are suffixed to it to form the different interrogatives. Example (30a), (30b) are illustrations of interrogative pronouns (human).

- (30) a. pu      t<sup>h</sup>au  
           3SG    who  
           ‘Who is he?’
- b. pu      t<sup>h</sup>aufəpe  
           3SG    who  
           ‘Who is she?’

The other interrogative pronouns which can be used for both human and non-human consist of a number of free morphemes. /*kena*/ ‘which’, is the only form which have dual, plural and diminutive forms. /*dezo*/ or /*kiʒo*/ ‘what (cost)’ is the only interrogative pronoun which is exclusively applicable only in non-human interrogative pronouns. The other forms are spontaneously applicable in both human and non-human interrogatives.

**Table 5. Interrogative Pronouns**

Singular	Plural
kana ‘which’	kenat <sup>h</sup> io
depe ‘what’	~
deki/dekihi ‘where’	~
desənu ‘why’	~
kat <sup>h</sup> iia ‘how’	~
dezo ‘what cost’	~
desuki ‘when (of time)’	~

Given below are some sentential examples of interrogative pronouns:

- (31) a. kana    ne    si-a  
           which 2SG dog-Q  
           ‘Which one is your dog?’
- b. i      zavame    vu-le    dzo    ludu    kalo    vu-la  
           1SG zhavame go-FUT so road which go-Q  
           ‘Which road should I take to reach Zhavame?’

In Poula, the interrogative pronoun ‘which’ has two forms: /*kana*/ and /*kalo*/. /*kana*/ is used when the object being referred to is visible to the speaker (31a) and /*kalo*/ is used when the object being referred to is not visible to the speaker (31b).

- (32) ne pe deki buē  
 2SG grandmother where have  
 ‘Where is your grandmother?’
- (33) pu desənu tɪæ  
 2SG why cry  
 ‘Why is she crying?’
- (34) ne kaɪ<sup>h</sup>ɪa bau da-a?  
 2SG how granary basket weave-Q  
 ‘How do you weave a granary basket?’
- (35) mutɪbi mu kɪzɔ  
 potato price what(cost)  
 ‘What is the price of potatoes? (per Kg)’
- (36) desəki naoni muni-la  
 when naoni celebrate-Q  
 ‘When do you celebrate Naoni festival?’

#### 4.5 Demonstrative Pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun is used to point out or represent the nouns that act as the subject or object in a sentence. The demonstrative pronouns in Poula have different forms to indicate proximity, visible or not visible to the eye and remoteness basing on the distance in time.

**Table 6. Demonstrative Pronouns**

Distance	Singular	Plural
Proximate	/hena/ ‘this’	/het <sup>h</sup> ɪo/ ‘these’
Medial	/həuna/ ‘that’	/həut <sup>h</sup> ɪo/ ‘those’
	/təna/ ‘that’	/tət <sup>h</sup> ɪo/ ‘these’
Remote	/səna/ ‘that’	/sət <sup>h</sup> ɪo/ ‘those’

The demonstrative pronouns (proximate) /hena/ and /het<sup>h</sup>.ɔ/ are used to refer to a particular person, place, animal or thing that is closer in time and distance. The other forms (medial)- /həuna/ and /həut<sup>h</sup>.ɔ/ which indicates medial are used to refer to a particular person, place, animal or thing that is away from both the speaker and the listener in time and distance yet visible to the eye. The other forms of medial demonstrative pronouns are /təna/ and /tət<sup>h</sup>.ɔ/ which is used to indicate an object which is far away from the speaker but near the listener. The demonstrative pronouns (remote) such as- /səna/ and /sət<sup>h</sup>.ɔ/ are used in order to indicate remoteness of an object or to refer to a particular person, place, animal or thing that is not visible in the eye. Some sentential examples are illustrated below:

**Proximate:**

- (37) a. i    jadi   he    ʒə   ni    bue  
           1SG land DET buy want PROG  
           ‘I want to buy this plot’
- b.       pu    pɔpa   he-t<sup>h</sup>.ɔ   dzəpai  
           3SG flower DET-PL like  
           ‘She likes these flowers’

**Medial:**

- (38) a. tɔalo   həu-na       fopi  
           please DET-DEF give  
           ‘Please pass me that cup’
- b. me       həu-t<sup>h</sup>.ɔ   hi   ʒe -je   mo-de  
           people DET-PL in live-HB NEG-PST  
           ‘People don’t live in those places anymore (Pointing at a deserted place in the east)’

**Remote:**

- (39) a. i       bu    sə-na       ʃo-e  
           1SG place DET-DEF know  
           ‘... I know that place (Oh, yes! I know that place)’
- b. ʃi       sə-t<sup>h</sup>.ɔ   p<sup>h</sup>əu   ʒə-ləu  
           story DET-PL find collect-IMP  
           ‘Collect those stories’

## 5. Conclusion

This paper presents five different types of pronouns in Poula, viz., personal pronoun, possessive pronoun, reflexive pronoun, interrogative pronoun and demonstrative pronoun. Despite the fact that Poula belongs to the Tenyimia group, precisely Tenyidie, where both the languages share an enormous similarity in morphological aspects. However, it was observed that the pronouns in Poula share very less similar features with the other Tenyimia group languages. Kuolie D. (2006), presents a detailed analysis of pronouns in Poula where he gave a clear distinction between inclusive and exclusive category both in first-person dual and first-person plural respectively. Citing the above stated examples, Poula particularly does not have a separate form to distinguish between inclusive and exclusive category. It is only through the conversation between the speaker and the hearer, the exclusive and the inclusive is distinguished. The possessive pronoun is marked by the independent morpheme /vi/. Reflexive pronouns have two forms /-lia/ and /-le/ whose functions are the same. The different types of interrogative pronouns and demonstrative pronouns were discussed in the latter sections. This study also observed that there is no diminutive marker in Poula.

### Abbreviations:

1SG	- first person singular	2SG	- second person singular
3SG	- third person singular	1DU	- first person dual
2DU	- second person dual	3DU	- third person dual
1PL	- first person plural	2PL	- second person plural
3PL	- third person plural	DAT	- dative
DEF	- definitive	DET	- determiner
EXST	- existential	FUT	- future
HB	- habitual	HM	- human marker
IMP	- imperative	LOC	- locative
NEG	- negative	PL	- plural
POSS	- possessive	PROG	- progressive
PST	- past	RFLX	- reflexive
Q	- question particle		

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