

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the structure of human language, personal pronouns constitute a fundamental grammatical category that serves both syntactic and pragmatic functions. Grammatically, they operate as substitutes for noun phrases, enabling speakers to refer efficiently to participants in a discourse without unnecessary repetition. As Yule (2010) stated, “personal pronouns are used in place of noun phrases typically referring to people already known or being talked about.” Beyond their referential function, personal pronouns are pivotal in maintaining discourse cohesion, managing information flow, and reflecting the interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and interlocutor.

From a typological and functional perspective, personal pronouns are marked for various grammatical features, such as person (first, second, third), number (singular, plural), and often gender, with some languages additionally encoding inclusivity/exclusivity distinctions or social deixis. These pronominal features are not merely structural but also encode cultural and social relationships, reflecting aspects of politeness, intimacy, hierarchy, and group identity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Thus, the study of personal pronouns is crucial not only for understanding a language’s grammatical system but also for uncovering its sociolinguistic and pragmatic underpinnings.

The Dengka dialect also referred to as Dengga is one of the eighteen documented dialects of the Rote language, a member of the Central Malayo-Polynesian subgroup of the Austronesian language family (Grimes et al., 1997).

Despite its unique linguistic features and cultural significance, Dengka remains under-documented, especially in terms of its morphosyntactic structures such as the pronominal system. This gap presents an opportunity for in-depth linguistic inquiry that not only contributes to the broader typology of Austronesian languages but also aids in language documentation and revitalization efforts.

Analyzing the forms and functions of personal pronouns in the Dengka dialect offers critical insights into how speakers encode interpersonal relationships and construct social identities through language. In many Austronesian languages, pronominal systems are intricately tied to cultural values, kinship structures, and communicative norms. Therefore, a focused investigation of personal pronouns in Dengka can reveal how grammatical choices reflect broader patterns of social interaction within the community.

This research aims to systematically identify and analyze the forms of personal pronouns in Dengka, namely classified by person, number, and syntactic roles, and to examine their functional usage in various communicative contexts. By adopting a descriptive and functional linguistic framework, this study seeks to elucidate how Dengka speakers use personal pronouns not only as grammatical tools but also as markers of cultural identity and social relationships. The findings will contribute to the documentation of an endangered dialect, enrich academic discourse on Indonesian local languages, and offer empirical data for comparative studies in morphosyntax and pragmatics. Moreover, in the context of increasing language shift driven by national language dominance and globalization, this research holds cultural and

pedagogical significance. It supports efforts to preserve and revitalize the Dengka dialect, thereby contributing to the safeguarding of Indonesia's rich linguistic heritage.

1.2 Research Problem(s)

1. What are the forms and functions of personal pronouns in Dengka dialect of Rote Language?
2. What factors influence the use of personal pronouns in a social context?

1.3 Aim(s) of Study

Based on the above problems, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the forms and functions of personal pronouns in the Dengka dialect of the Rote language.
2. To identify the factors that influence the use of personal pronouns in social contexts.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research was expected to provide significant contribution both implication and application.

1.4.1 Implication

The findings of this study carry several important implications for both linguistics and sociocultural understanding:

1. Understanding the forms of personal pronouns

The findings provide a clearer understanding of the forms of personal pronouns used in the Dengka dialect of the Rote language. The classification of personal pronouns into subject pronouns, object

pronouns, possessive pronouns, and possessive adjectives provides information about the pronominal system of the Dengka dialect.

2. Understanding the functions of personal pronouns

The findings show that personal pronouns have different grammatical functions in communication, including referring to the speaker, the addressee, and other participants. The use of these pronouns according to person, number, and grammatical function demonstrates how the Dengka dialect expresses grammatical relationships through its pronominal system.

3. Understanding social factors in pronouns use

The findings indicate that the use of personal pronouns is influenced by social factors such as age, kinship, social status, and the relationship between speakers. This implies that pronoun selection is not determined only by grammatical considerations but is also related to the social context of communication.

4. Understanding Politeness and Social Relationships

The findings demonstrate that personal pronoun use can reflect politeness, respect, and social relationships among speakers. For example, the use of kinship terms instead of direct second-person pronouns when addressing older or respected individuals indicates that linguistic choices are closely connected to social norms and interpersonal relationships in the Dengka-speaking community.

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this study can be applied in the following areas:

1. Language Documentation

The findings can be used as linguistic documentation of the forms and functions of personal pronouns in the Dengka dialect of the Rote language. This information can serve as a reference for future studies of the Dengka dialect.

2. Language Preservation

The findings can support the preservation of the Dengka dialect by providing written information about its personal pronouns and their use in different social contexts. This information can help younger generations understand and maintain the use of the Dengka dialect.

3. Local Language Learning

The findings can be used as supporting material for learning the Dengka dialect, particularly in understanding personal pronouns and their appropriate use in different social contexts.

4. Further Research

The findings can provide a reference for future researchers who are interested in conducting further studies on personal pronouns, sociolinguistics, or other linguistic aspects of the Dengka dialect and the Rote language.