

## Morphology of Pronominals of Sheikha Gal: A Descriptive Study

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### Abstract

The present study primarily aims to provide a description of the pronominal system in Sheikha Gal, a language spoken by the marginalized indigenous community of the Kashmir region of India. The different types of pronouns have been presented with their detailed paradigms to show the variation in pronouns along the grammatical categories of person, number, and case. Interestingly, the pronouns in Sheikha Gal take case inflections like regular nouns which have been explained in a detailed manner.

**Keywords:** Pronominals, Case, Sheikha Gal, Number, Oblique.

### Introduction

Pronouns constitute a closed class of deictic and anaphoric expressions that function as pro-forms or substitutes for noun phrases in a language. As noted by Thomas E. Payne (2006), pronouns are free forms (as opposed to affixes) that can independently occupy the position of a noun phrase within a clause. Similarly, Paul R. Kroeger (2005: 45–46, 138–140) observes that virtually every position where a noun phrase may occur can be replaced by a pronoun. Kroeger further emphasizes that a pronoun substitutes not merely for a noun but for an entire noun phrase (NP). Because pronouns display a distribution distinct from that of common nouns but comparable to proper names, they are best analysed as belonging to the NP category rather than the Noun category.

Pronouns are typically not modified by determiners and only rarely by adjectives, reinforcing their status as complete noun phrases. Across languages, pronominal systems commonly encode grammatical categories such as person, number, and gender. In addition to these core categories, some languages exhibit specialized pronominal forms that reflect the speaker's social relationship with the hearer. In such cases, the choice of personal pronouns serves as an important marker of politeness, shaped by factors such as relative social status, age, and degree of intimacy. For instance, in both Hindi and Urdu, the personal pronoun /a:p/ functions as an honorific form of address for singular as well as plural referents, signalling respect toward the addressee.

Scholarly work on pronouns, politeness, and linguistic ideology highlights the complex relationship between linguistic structure and social practice. Such research demonstrates that pronominal choice is not merely a grammatical matter but also reflects ideological processes that connect language with power, identity, and social hierarchy. In this sense, language can be viewed as a system through which power relations are negotiated, as the question of who is permitted to say what to whom is closely tied to social status and authority.

At the individual level, meaning resides not only in what is said but also in who is speaking. In many languages, metalinguistic structures such as pronouns (e.g., ‘you’) function as markers of social identity, constructing intimacy, solidarity, distance, or respect between interlocutors.

The pronominal system of Sheikha Gal can be classified into seven categories: personal, reflexive, possessive, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, and reciprocal. The case system of pronouns closely parallels that of nouns, with suffixes marking various grammatical cases clearly visible on personal pronouns. In Sheikha Gal, all cases are morphologically marked except for the nominative and accusative (Rashid, 2021). The following table presents the case paradigm of the noun /kar / ‘house’.

Cases	Noun	Postpositions
Direct	Kar	∅
Oblique		kar- <i>an</i> (dative)
		kar- <i>at</i> /(locative)
		kar- <i>tũ</i> (ablative)
		kar- <i>na:l</i> (sociative)
		kar- <i>da</i> (genitive)

## 2. Personal Pronouns

In Sheikha Gal, personal pronouns are inflected for person, number, and case. There is no gender distinction in the personal pronominal system. In the third person, however, distinct forms are employed to mark proximate and remote reference.

	Singular	Plural
Ist Person	/me/‘I’	/asi/‘we’
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	/tu/ ‘you’	/tussi/‘you’
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	/he/‘he’/she’ /e/ ‘it/	/hena/ ‘they’

## First Person

In the first-person singular, no distinction is made between masculine and feminine forms. The only overt contrast in the singular paradigm is between the nominative and dative forms. In the plural paradigm, the genitive exhibits a distinct form, while the remaining case forms share a common oblique base. The nominative–oblique distinction is thus maintained in both singular and plural forms.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/me/	/asi/
Dative	/mo:nu/	/asan/
Locative	/mere:ta/	/asata/
Genitive	/mere:/	/sa: ɖa/
Ablative	/mere:la:l/	/asala:l/
Sociative	/mere:na:l/	/asana:l/

This pattern suggests a stem alternation based on case rather than gender, highlighting the role of oblique formation in the first-person paradigm.

## Second Person

In the second person, as in the first person, no distinction is observed between masculine and feminine forms. The plural paradigm exhibits a distinct genitive form, while the remaining case forms share a common oblique base. Thus, similar to the first-person paradigm, the second-person forms maintain a nominative–oblique contrast alongside a specialized genitive form in the plural.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/tu/	/tussi/
Dative	/tu:nu/	/tosan/
Locative	/tere:ta/	/tosata/
Genitive	/tere:/	/tusa: ɖa/
Ablative	/tere:la:l/	/tosala:l/
Sociative	/tere:na:l/	/tosana:l/

The parallel morphological patterning of first- and second-person pronouns suggests a systematic case-based stem alternation across participant roles in Sheikha Gal.

### Third Person

As noted earlier, third-person pronouns in Sheikha Gal distinguish between proximal (referents within the speaker’s field of vision) and distal (referents outside the field of vision). In both singular and plural forms of the proximal and distal series, a nominative–oblique distinction is maintained. Case suffixes are attached to the oblique stem in both numbers, indicating that the oblique serves as the base for case inflection in the third-person paradigm.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup>Person Proximate

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/he/	/henna/
Dative	/he:nu/	/henan/
Locative	/hes ta/	/henata/
Genitive	/hez da/	/henada/
Ablative	/hes la:l/	/henala:l/
Sociative	/hes na:l/	/hena na:l/

#### 3<sup>rd</sup>Person Remote

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/ho/	/hona/
Dative	/ho:nu/	/honan/
Locative	/hos ta/	/hona ta/
Genitive	/hozda/	/una da/
Ablative	/hos la:l/	/una la:l/
Sociative	/hos na:l/	/una na:l/

This proximal–distal contrast reflects a deictic system grounded in visual accessibility, a feature commonly attested in many Himalayan and South Asian languages.

### 3. Demonstrative Pronouns

In Sheikha Gal, /e/ ‘this’ and /hova/ ‘that’ function as the primary demonstrative pronouns and are used with both human and non-human referents. These demonstratives are neutral with respect to gender but are inflected for number and case.

Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
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/e/	‘this’	/en/	‘these’
/hova/	‘that’	/hovən/	‘those’

The binary contrast between /e/ and /hova/ reflects a proximal–distal deictic opposition that parallels the third-person pronominal distinction in the language.

### 3. Reflexive Pronoun

Sheikha Gal has a single reflexive pronoun, /a:pe:/ ‘myself’. This form does not inflect for person, number, or gender and is therefore used across contexts to refer to ‘myself’, ‘ourselves’, ‘yourself’, ‘yourselves’, ‘himself’, and ‘themselves’.

Word	Gloss
a:pe	‘myself’
a:pe	‘ourselves’
a:pe	‘yourself’
a:pe	‘himself/herself’
a:pe	‘themselves’
a:pe	‘itself’

The invariant nature of the reflexive pronoun suggests that reflexivity in Sheikha Gal is expressed through a generalized reflexive strategy rather than agreement-based marking.

### 3. Interrogatives

One of the most frequently used interrogative pronouns in Sheikha Gal is /kooj/, which is sometimes pronounced as /koj/. This form is multifunctional and can express meanings such as ‘who’, ‘which’, and the indefinite ‘someone’ or ‘anyone’. It also functions as a relative pronoun in appropriate contexts.

The interrogative does not inflect for person, number, or gender; however, distinct case-marked forms are attested.

Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
keḍa	‘who’	keḍe:	‘who’
keḍza	‘which’	keḍze:	‘which’
kinta:ra	‘whose’	kinta:re:	‘whose’

ki:	‘what’	ki:	‘what’
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The multifunctionality of /kooj/ reflects a common pattern in many South Asian languages, where interrogative forms extend to relative and indefinite functions.

### 3. Conclusion

Sheikha Gal exhibits a rich morphological system. The elaborate pronominal paradigms, inflected for person, number, and particularly case, reflect the morphological complexity of the language. The data further indicate that Sheikha Gal follows a nominative–oblique alignment pattern, wherein most case forms are derived from an oblique stem. This pattern is consistently attested in both nominal and pronominal paradigms.

These findings contribute to the documentation of an underexplored Himalayan language and provide insights into the typology of pronominal systems in South Asia.

Furthermore, the analysis opens up new directions for future research, including the exploration of syntactic alignment, language contact influences, and diachronic developments within the language. In this way, the study not only fills an existing gap in the literature but also lays the groundwork for continued scholarly engagement with Sheikha Gal and related linguistic traditions.

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