

## Pronouns in Simte

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### Abstract

Simte is one of the Kuki-Chin languages spoken mostly in Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts of Manipur. This paper attempts to investigate the forms of pronouns and its types in Simte. Data has been collected through elicitation from four Simte elders aged around 50-55. Pronouns in Simte are free forms that function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. Since it is a pro-drop language, the pronoun dropping is evident extensively in the reflexive pronoun and reciprocal pronoun. It is realized by the reflexive prefix ‘ki-’ added to the main verb. The emphatic pronouns, which is a common feature in Kuki-Chin languages, in this language is realized by the suffix ‘-ma?’ added to the subject pronoun. For demonstrative pronouns, Simte employs ‘hi’ for a proximal distance which is near to a deictic centre while the morpheme ‘hu’ is employed for a distal one denoting a referent that is located at some distance from the deictic centre.

**Keywords:** Pronouns, Simte, deictic centre, emphatic.

### Introduction

Simte is one of the Kuki-Chin languages spoken mostly in Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts of Manipur. According to Ching (2012), most of the Simtes are confined to the Churachandpur district, which is located in the Southern Part of Manipur. To be precise, the Simte speaking community can be found in Thanlon sub-division, Singnat sub-division and Churachandpur Town. Hangluah (2019) states the term “Sim” means “South”, and “Te” means the “People”, and thus, “Simte” literally means “The people of the South”. They live mainly in Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Myanmar.

Grierson (1904) asserts Simte is one of the indigenous tribe groups under the central Chin sub-group of the Kuki-chin group of the Tibeto Burman family. Lewis, Simons and Fennings (2013) also classified Simte under the Northern Kuki-Chin groups along with Paite, Vaiphei and Zou. According to 2001 census Reports, the total Simte population of Manipur is around 11,651. And 2011 census report shows the population of Simte falls down to 6728. (Census Report, 2011). Simte is a tonal language, with a R-less languages unlike Mizo and Hmar languages.

## 1. Literature Review

According to the general understanding, pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. Huddleston and Pulum (2005) agree pronouns as unit of grammatical features which constitutes a small class of nouns where it can be distinguished syntactically from common nouns or proper nouns. According to Christophersen and Sandved (1969:52) pronouns is a sub category of nouns. It can be established on the bases of the classification of inflectional suffixes of pronouns. Notably, the inflectional classification of pronouns includes the subject form like *i, you, he, she*. The object form such as *me, you, him, her*; the 1<sup>st</sup> genitive form includes *my, your, his, her* and the 2<sup>nd</sup> genitive form such as *mine, yours, his, hers* etc. Radford (2004) argues personal pronouns encode the grammatical properties of persons, number, gender and case. They are known as personal pronouns because they deal not only with people but also the grammatical property of a person. Morenberg (1997) agrees possessive pronouns are formed with the nouns they precede. He explains the pronoun ‘my’ as referring to the possession as in the phrase ‘my book’. In matters concerning reflexive, reciprocal and indefinite pronouns, Morenberg (1997), reflexive pronouns bounce back to the subject of the clause they are in. In fact, the reflexive and the reciprocal are bound by the antecedent. Whereas indefinite pronouns such as *somebody, nobody* are something that don’t refer to any specific nouns. Rijal (2012) explains demonstrative pronouns are used to indicate specific persons or things. Dixon (1982) argued that demonstrative pronoun is distinct from the personal pronoun in that the demonstrative have a pointing or deictic reference. Rijal (2012) further defines interrogative pronouns as pronouns used in asking questions. The pronouns such as *who, what and which* are used as interrogative pronouns.

### 3. Data Analysis

#### 3.1. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are the pronouns that are associated primarily with a particular grammatical category—first person, second person or third person. Pronouns make three distinctions of person as first person, second person and third person; and two distinctions of number as singular and plural. One important feature of the Kuki-Chin languages is the presence of ‘clusivity’. Clusivity is the distinction between first person inclusive pronoun and first person exclusive pronoun. La Polla (2005) & DeLancey (2018) states that clusivity is a common phenomenon in Kuki-Chin and Naga languages. The singular paradigm of the first person, second person and third person in Simte are ‘kei’, ‘naŋ’ and ‘ama?’ respectively. The plural form of the first person, second person and the third person can be formed by the addition of first persons singular along with the particle ‘u?’ (Singh, 2006 & Champeon, 2019). The inclusive ‘ei’ is a plural pronoun in itself. When attached to the particle ‘ei’, it becomes ‘ei u?’. The plural form may be represented as below.

kei ‘i’            + u?            >    kei u?

naŋ ‘you’        + u?            >    naŋ u?

ama? ‘he/she’   + u?            >    ama? u?

Person	Singular	Plural	Contracted form
First	kei ‘I’	kei u? ei u?	kou (exclusive) ‘we’ ei ‘ (inclusive) we’
Second	naŋ ‘you’	naŋ u?	nou ‘you’
Third	ama? ‘he/she’	ama? u?	amau ‘they’

Champeon (2019) on her ‘Simte writers’ Handbook’ argues that the above plural pronouns are used in writing and in formal situation. However, seeing from the native use of the language this finding may be incorrect. The contracted form is used as much as the full plural pronoun forms in writing as well as in speaking.

The personal pronouns in Simte also encode the grammatical properties of persons, numbers and case. The singular forms possess no morphological markings but the plural forms are reflected by the plural marker ‘-u?’. Unlike English, Simte exhibits the same form in the nominative case as well as the accusative case. It may be listed in the table below.

Person	Number	Nominative	Accusative
First Person	Singular	kei	kei
Second Person	Singular	naŋ	naŋ
Third Person	Singular	ama?	ama?
First Person	Plural	kei -u? ei -u?	kei -u? ei -u?
Second Person	Plural	naŋ -u?	naŋ -u?
Third Person	Plural	ama? -u?	ama? -u?

### 3.2 Possessive Pronouns

The possessive pronouns in Simte can be formed into two ways. First, it is formed by suffixing a morpheme ‘-a’ (which is also a genitive marker) to the personal pronoun. Examples may be given as below.

(1) hi luk<sup>h</sup>u? kei -a ahi  
 This cap 1SG POSS DECL  
 ‘This cap is mine’

(2) hi le?k<sup>h</sup>abu nɔu -a ahi.  
 This book 2PL POSS DECL  
 ‘This book is yours’

Second, the possessive occupies the pre-head modifying position in a noun phrase. Possessive pronouns cannot stand alone; it modifies the noun or a noun phrase. The possessive markers in Simte are formed by using the pronominal clitics such as ‘ka’, ‘na’ and ‘a’ for first, second and third person respectively. Interestingly, the possessive markers for

exclusive and inclusive first person plurals are ‘kou’ and ‘ei’. The possessive pronouns may be listed in the following table below.

Person	Singular	Plural
First Person	ka ‘my’	kou ‘our’ (exclusive) ei ‘our’ (inclusive)
Second Person	na ‘your’	nou
Third Person	a ‘his/her’	amau

In example (3) and (4) possessive marker in Simte ‘ka’ and ‘ei’ precede the head noun ‘puana?’ and ‘in’, and both the possessive pronoun occupies the initial position in a sentence. However, the occurrence of the possessive marker can be altered depending on the sentential construction.

(3) ka puana? sak<sup>h</sup>au a? mit<sup>h</sup>ai um  
 1SG.POSS shirt pocket LOC sweet EXIST  
 ‘There are sweet in my shirt’s pocket.

(4) ei in ma? hoi? pen  
 1PL (incl) house one good SUPERL  
 ‘Our house is the best one’ [Lit. The house that is the one we one is the best]

### 3.3 Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronoun in Simte is used with reference to point out something from the rest of the entity. There are two demonstrative markers in Simte. They are ‘hi’ and ‘hua’. The demonstrative functions exclusively to identify a referent, either deictically in relation to the speaker and hearer in the specific speech situation or anaphorically in terms of preceding discourse. The determiner ‘hi-’ refers to the proximate reference, while ‘hu-’ refers to the distal reference. In other words, the demonstrative pronoun markers are the spatial deixis. The demonstrative pronoun occupies the head thereby acting as a pre-head modifier in a noun phrase in example (5). Example (6) the nominalized verb form ‘touna’ is preceded by a demonstrative pronoun ‘hi’ but succeeded by the verb serialization.

(5) hua naʔtaŋ lei xu kou -a ahi  
 That banana land/farm DEF 1 PL(EXC) .POSS DECL.

‘That banana farm is ours’

(6) hi tou -na huŋ toi in  
 this seat NMZ come bring IMP

‘Bring me this chair’

There are instance where the demonstrative pronouns ‘hi’ and ‘hua’ are attached with ‘k<sup>h</sup>u’ thereby producing the words ‘hik<sup>h</sup>u’ and ‘huk<sup>h</sup>u’. ‘k<sup>h</sup>u’ refers to the person or that being spoken of at the time of uttering a speech. Notably, ‘hik<sup>h</sup>u’ and ‘huk<sup>h</sup>u’ are used to refer a thing or a person in interrogative speech. It does not necessarily come along with the noun. The examples may be shown in (7) and (8)

(7) hik<sup>h</sup>u baŋ ahiai  
 this what Q.MKR

‘What is this?’

(8) huak<sup>h</sup>u na keŋko? amo  
 that 2SG shoes Q.MKR

‘Is that your shoes?’

The plural forms are formed in the sequence of singular demonstrative pronoun, followed by the main noun and the plural marker ‘-te’. There is no morphological marking for plural demonstrative pronouns. Thematically, it can be represented as : Singular demonstrative pronoun- Main noun-plural marker ‘-te’. They are illustrated in examples (9) and (10) as below.

(9) hi- guta- te na he viai  
 this thief PL.MKR 2SG know Q.MKR

‘Do you know these thieves?’

(10) hua- hai -te huŋ tɔi un  
 That mango PL.MKR come bring IMP

‘Bring those mangoes’

### 3.4 Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are formed by repeating a pronoun which is glued together by the conjunction ‘le?’. Another significant marker in reflexive pronouns is that, the reflexive prefix ‘ki-’ is attaches to the main verb. It serves as an anaphoric element to an antecedent referent in the same clause. The reflexive pronouns in Simte may be listed as below.

Person	Singular	Plural
First	kei le?kei ‘myself’	kou le? kou ‘ourselves (excl.) ei le?ei ‘Ourselves’ (incl.)
Second	ŋaŋ le? ŋaŋ ‘yourself’	nou le? nou ‘yourselves’
Third	ama?le?ama? ‘himself/herself’	amau le?amau ‘themselves’

In English, reflexives are bound by the antecedent pronoun. So, the pronoun has to be intact with the reflexives, thus omitting the subject pronoun results in ungrammaticality of a sentence. However, the case is different in Simte. Like other Kuki-Chin languages, Simte is a pro-drop language. The presence of subject pronoun in the initial position along with the reflexives results in the ungrammaticality of a sentence. The reflexive ‘kou le? kou’ in example (11) is sufficient enough to know that the pronoun is reflexive. Hence, the presence of ‘kou’ in the subject position seems like a double pronouns, making the sentence absurd or inconsistent.

(11) \*kou kou le? kou ka ki- nial u- hi  
 We ourselves (excl.) 1SG REFL quarrel PL.MKR DECL  
 ‘we quarrel among ourselves’

In examples, (12) and (13) the agent in the subject position is omitted as the reflexive pronoun itself expresses the subject to be of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person and 2<sup>nd</sup> person respectively. The reflexive pronoun agrees the subject in person and number. The pronominal which is omitted in the subject position can be retrieved from the reflexive element (pronoun).

- (12) ama?le?ama?      a-              ki-              t<sup>h</sup>at              hi  
 himself/herself      3SG              REFL              kill              DECL  
 ‘He/she kills himself/herself’
- (13) le?k<sup>h</sup>abu      nou le? nou              ki-              sim              un  
 book              Yourselves              REFL              do/make              IMP  
 ‘Read book by yourselves’.

### 3.5 Reciprocal Pronouns

Reciprocal pronouns in Simte can be formed by the repetition of numeral ‘k<sup>h</sup>at’ meaning ‘one’ joined by the conjunction ‘le?’ thereby forming ‘k<sup>h</sup>at le? k<sup>h</sup>at’ (one after another). The morpheme ‘tua?’ (each) is also employed, perhaps optionally, to ascertain the reciprocity of a sentence construction. The reflexive marker ‘ki-’ is attached to the verb to express its reciprocal meaning. In examples (14) and (15) though the subject pronoun is dropped, it can be retrieved from the pronominal clitics ‘a-’ and ‘i-’ respectively.

- (14) nam      k<sup>h</sup>at le? k<sup>h</sup>at              ki-              tua - lou?      -na      a-      piaŋ  
 tribe      one after another              REFL              peace NEG      NMZ 3SG      born  
 ‘There exists an enmity between one tribe after another’
- (15) ei le?ei              I      ki-              kə      tua?      u-      hi  
 ourselves (incl).      IPL      REFL              point      each      PL              DECL  
 ‘ we point at each other’

### 3.6 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns in Simte are used to ask questions about person, place, time or situation. The interrogative pronouns such as ‘baŋ’ (what), k<sup>h</sup>əi (which), kəi (who/whom/whose), ‘baŋci’ (how)’ are employed.

Examples (16) and (17) employ the interrogative pronoun ‘baŋ’. The presence of both the question markers ‘hiai’ and ‘diai’ show evidence of the sentence as an interrogative sentence.



- (16) jon baŋ bəl na hiai  
 John what do 2SG Q.MKR  
 ‘what are you doing, John?’
- (17) bazar a? ho? diŋ, baŋ ka huŋ lei diai  
 market LOC go FUT what 1SG Come buy Q.MKR  
 ‘I am going to the market, what shall I buy?’

In Simte, there is no exact lexical term for the interrogative pronoun ‘where’, however they can be understood based on the directional reference as given in examples (18) and (19). In these examples, the interrogative pronoun ‘where’ is explained by the presence of the locative marker ‘-lam’ attaches to ‘k<sup>h</sup> ɔi’, forming ‘k<sup>h</sup> ɔilam’ literally means ‘which way’ or ‘which direction’.

- (18) k<sup>h</sup> ɔi -lam pai diŋ na hiai  
 which way go FUT 2SG Q.MKR  
 ‘where are you going?’
- (19) nehu zotna lampi k<sup>h</sup> ɔi -lam a? hiai  
 NEHU connecting road which way LOC Q.MKR  
 ‘Where is the bypass road connecting towards NEHU?’

Examples (20) and (21) explain the interrogative pronoun ‘which’ is realized by the presence of ‘k<sup>h</sup> ɔi’ in the sentence initial position.

- (20) k<sup>h</sup> ɔi pen na luŋsiat, luni maw mɔi  
 which DEF 2SG love Luni or Mawi  
 ‘Which one do you love, Luni or Mawii?’
- (21) k<sup>h</sup> ɔi gam na faŋ -ut  
 Which country 2SG explore like  
 ‘Which country do you like to explore?’

In example (22) the interrogative pronoun ‘kɔi’ refers to ‘who’ and is singular in nature. But the insertion of ‘-teŋ’ indicates that the pronoun not only refers to one person, but more than one. Reversely, in example (23) the interrogative pronoun ‘kɔi’ is only employed referring to one person. In fact, this pronoun is used to refer only to human beings.

- (22) kɔi -teŋ khompi a hɔʔ diŋ  
 who all conference 3SG go FUT

‘Who all will go for the conference’

- (23) ka in kɔi suʔsiat ahiai  
 1SG house who destroy Q MKR  
 ‘who destroyed my house?’

The interrogative pronoun ‘kɔi’ also possesses the meaning ‘whose’ as seen in example (24). However, example (25) is a case of plural reference, the plural marker ‘-te’ is attached with ‘kɔi’. Both the examples are also indicated by the presence of the question marker ‘ahiai’.

- (24) hiak<sup>h</sup>u kɔi nasep ahiai  
 this whose work Q MKR  
 ‘whose work is this?’

- (25) kɔi -te k<sup>h</sup>ut -nuŋ ahiai  
 who PL.MKR hand behind Q.MKR  
 ‘whose handiwork is this after all?’

The interrogative pronoun ‘whom’ is realized by the presence of ‘toʔ’ ‘accompany or with’, attached to ‘kɔi’ meaning ‘who’, making the pronoun ‘kɔitoʔ’. Its literal meaning is ‘with who’ or ‘who do you accompany with?’.

- (26) tuni kɔi -toʔ pɔt na hiai  
 today who accompany roam 2SG Q.MKR  
 ‘With whom do you roam today?’

- (27) kɔi -to? sem na hiai  
 who accompany work 2SG Q.MKR  
 ‘Whom do you work with?’

Examples (28) and (29) provide the interrogative pronoun ‘when’ in Simte. It is composed of two morphemes ‘baŋci’ literally means ‘what happen’ and ‘cia?’ talks about the time reference. Thus, the combination of both morphemes ‘baŋci cia?’ produces the interrogative pronoun ‘when’.

- (28) baŋci -cia? damdɔi in a? hoh diŋ  
 what time medicine house LOC go FUT  
 ‘when will you go to the hospital?’

- (29) baŋci -cia? exam nei diŋ  
 what time exam have/possess FUT  
 ‘when will you have your exam?’

### 3.7 Indefinite pronouns:

Simte possesses a morphological pronoun which refers to an object that is not specified. The Indefinite pronouns are ‘kɔima?’ (no one/ nobody), ‘kɔiak<sup>h</sup>at’ (someone/somebody), ‘baŋma?’ (nothing), ‘k<sup>h</sup>atpɔu?’ (anything/anything), ‘baŋak<sup>h</sup>at’ (something) etc. An indefinite pronoun which starts with ‘kɔi’ , which is an interrogative pronoun ‘who’ by itself, refers to a human object or human being. Those starting with ‘baŋ’ , which is also an interrogative pronoun ‘noun’, is used to refer to non-animate object.

The indefinite pronoun ‘no one/ no body’ in Simte is indicated by the combination of two morphemes i.e kɔi ‘one’ and ‘ma?’. In its occurrence the indefinite pronoun occurs in the subject position, and the negation ‘-si?’ or ‘lou’ are attached to the main verb. They are illustrated in examples (30) and (31) in the following.

- (30) kɔi -ma? van gu -si? un  
 one EMPH property steal NEG IMP  
 ‘Do not steal others (Lit.no one) property’

- (31) kɔi -maʔ    hoi    bukim    um-    lou  
 One    EMPH    good    perfect    Exist    NEG  
 ‘No one is perfect’ (Lit.No one is perfectly good.)

In examples (32) and (33) the indefinite pronoun ‘someone’ is evidenced by the presence of kɔia ‘someone’ and k<sup>h</sup>at ‘one’. The subject (agent) is marked by the presence of the ergative marker ‘-in’.

- (32) kɔia    -k<sup>h</sup>at    -in    ei    bəŋnoi    a    huŋ    pia    hi  
 someone    one    ERG    us(incl)    milk    3SG    come    give    DECL

‘Someone has given us (incl.) milk.’

- (33) t<sup>h</sup>autəŋ    -in    kɔia    k<sup>h</sup>at    kap    k<sup>h</sup>a    hi  
 bullet    ERG    someone    one    shoot    happen    DECL  
 ‘The bullet had hit someone’

Examples (34) and (35) indicate that there is no proper word for the indefinite pronoun ‘nothing’ but it is realized by the presence of ‘ baŋ -maʔ’ and the negation ‘-siʔ’ attaches to the verb.

- (34) baŋ    maʔ    luŋhimɔʔ    -siʔ    un  
 what    EMP    anxious    NEG    IMP  
 ‘Do not be anxious for nothing’

- (35) ka    t<sup>h</sup>uhilʔ    -na    baŋ    maʔ    -n    ŋai    siʔ  
 1SG    advice    NMZ    what    EMPH    ERG    listen    NEG  
 ‘He takes no heed to my advice’

The indefinite pronoun ‘everyone’ is formed by the combination of two morphemes. That is the combination of the numeral ‘k<sup>h</sup>at’ ‘one’ and pɔuʔ ‘any’

- (36) kitenə aʔ diŋ puanaʔ siaŋ k<sup>h</sup>at pəuʔ silʔ mai in  
 marriage LOC FUT cloth clean one any wear just IMP  
 ‘For marriage, just wear any cloth that is clean.’
- (37) mi k<sup>h</sup>at pəuʔ -in deiʔtel -na i nei hi  
 people one any ERG freewill NMZ 1PL possess DECL  
 ‘Everyone has a right to free will’

The indefinite pronouns ‘something’ in Simte does not possess any lexical term. It is formed by the combination of ‘baŋa’ which means ‘something’, and ‘k<sup>h</sup>at’ which is the numeral ‘one’.

- (38) baŋa k<sup>h</sup>at bəl diŋa kisa, ka bəl diŋ ka maŋhilʔ  
 something one do CONJ prepare 1SG do FUT 1SG forget  
 dimdem  
 completely

‘I was about to do something, but I completely forgot’

- (39) baŋa k<sup>h</sup>at gen tum ka hi  
 something one say about 1SG DECL

‘I was about to say something’

### 3.8 Emphatic Pronouns

Emphatic pronouns are used to intensify the given referent pronoun. Emphatic pronouns in Simte are marked by ‘maʔ’ carrying the semantic notion of a reflexive pronoun ‘self’. It is suffixed to the personal pronouns. Fundamental to this analysis is that the emphatic marker ‘maʔ’ is applied to both the singular and plural pronouns. And the reflexive marker ‘ki-’ is attached with the verb to accentuate the reflexivity of the sentence.

In Example (40), the emphatic marker ‘-maʔ’ is suffixed to the 1SG pronoun, along with the ergative marker ‘-in’ thereby occupying the subject (agent) position of a sentence.

‘ki-’ is also attached with the verb to explain that the verb reflects back to the person in reference. The same notion implies in example (41). However, the presence of ‘u-’ indicates the plurality of the referent pronoun.

(40) kei -ma? -in ki- bəl niŋ  
 1SG EMPH ERG REFL do COP. IRREAL  
 ‘I will do it myself’

(41) amau -ma? -in ki- bəl u- hi  
 They EMPH ERG REFL do PL.MKR DEF  
 ‘They themselves do it’

## 6. Conclusion

Pronouns in Simte are free forms that function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. The personal pronouns encode the grammatical properties of persons and number, but no distinction in the nominative and accusative case. The demonstrative markers in Simte ‘hi’ refers to an entity near to the deictic centre, while ‘hu’ denotes the distal reference that is quite far from the deictic centre. Concerning the reflexive and reciprocal pronouns, the reflexivity is realized by the morpheme ‘-ki’, and reciprocal pronouns are realized by the repetition of the numeral ‘k<sup>h</sup>at’ clued together by the conjunction ‘le?’. There is no exact lexical term for the interrogative pronoun, but it is realized by the locative marker ‘-lam’ attached to the form ‘k<sup>h</sup>ɔi’, thereby producing ‘k<sup>h</sup>ɔilam’, which means ‘which way’ or ‘which direction’. Interestingly, the emphatic pronoun is evidenced by the presence of ‘-ma?’ attached to both singular and plural nouns.

## 5. Abbreviations

1PL (INCL):	First Person Inclusive
1PL:	First Plural
2 PL (EXCL.):	Second Plural Exclusive
1 SG:	First Singular

2SG:	Second Singular
CONJ:	Conjunction
COP. IRREAL:	Copular Irrealis
DECL:	Declarative
DEF :	Definite
EMPH:	Emphatic
ERG:	Ergative
EXIST:	Existential
FUT:	Future
IMP:	Imperative
LOC:	Locative
NEG:	Negative
NMZ:	Nominalization
PL.MKR:	Plural Marker
POSS:	Possessive
Q.MKR:	Question Marker
REFL:	Reflexive
SUPERL:	Superlative

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