Available on: https://jsshrs.ep-journals.org/ E-ISSN: 3051-3561, P-ISSN: 3051-3553

Journal of Social Science and Human Research Studies

Volume: 02 Issue: 06 June-2026

Grammatical Alignment in the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay: A Typological Study Based on the Pivot System

Khairina Nasution
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Rozanna Mulyani
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Khairawati
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Nurlela
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Nursukma Suri
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Published Date: June 27, 2026 **Article DOI: 10.65150/EP-jsshrs/V2E6/2026-26**

ABSTRACT: This study aims to describe and determine the grammatical alignment system at the syntactic level of Riau Malay, Pasir Pengaraian Dialect (RMPPD). Framed within linguistic typology, the analysis focuses on the syntactic treatment of three core arguments: S (intransitive subject), A (trowitive agent), and P (trossitive patient). Adopting Dixon's Pivot System framework, this study examines mechanisms of coreference and noun phrase (NP) deletion in complex clauses. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, drawing on data from native speakers of RMPPD elicited through controlled elicitation techniques targeting eleven possible interclausal coreferential relations. The findings show that direct NP deletion is acceptable only when the deleted argument occupies the S or A function. In contrast, the P argument does not enjoy such syntactic privilege unless it undergoes structural changes, such as passivization or topicalization, which promote P to subject status. These results demonstrate that RMPPD operates an S/A pivot system and can therefore be classified as a nominative-accusative language at the syntactic level.

KEYWORDS: grammatical alignment; syntactic typology; pivot system; S/A pivot; nominative-accusative; Riau Malay

INTRODUCTION

Modern linguistic typology regards grammatical alignment as one of the fundamental parameters for classifying the world's languages, as it provides a basis for understanding the syntactic relations among core clause arguments in a cross-linguistic perspective (Comrie, 1989; Dixon, 1994; Song, 2011). Grammatical alignment refers to the pattern of syntactic treatment assigned to the three core arguments of a clause: S, the sole argument of an intransitive clause; A, the agent argument of a transitive clause; and P, the patient argument of a transitive clause. The way a language groups or distinguishes these three arguments determines its alignment type, whether it follows a nominative–accusative pattern (S=A≠P), an ergative–absolutive pattern (S=P≠A), or exhibits mixed and split alignment systems (Dixon, 1994; Payne, 2002).

Within the study of Western Austronesian languages, particularly Malay and its varieties, the issue of grammatical alignment at the syntactic level remains an active area of scholarly discussion. Malay has generally been characterized as a nominative–accusative language. This view is primarily based on its basic S–V–O word order and the productive use of distinct active and passive constructions in clause formation (Sneddon, 2003). Within this framework, the intransitive subject and the transitive agent are treated alike, whereas the transitive patient occupies a different syntactic position. Nevertheless, recent studies suggest that the determination of grammatical alignment in Malay cannot always be reduced to these surface-level characteristics alone.

Variations in active and passive constructions, as well as verbal structures across Malay and other regional languages of Indonesia, indicate that grammatical alignment cannot be determined a priori; rather, it must be established through syntactic testing across clauses. In grammatical typology, clause structure cannot be adequately analyzed solely on the basis of word order or morphological marking. Instead, it is necessary to examine the syntactic mechanisms operating within complex sentences, such as argument deletion and coreference (Artawa & Jufrizal, 2018). Studies of grammatical alignment in Indonesian regional languages, such as research on Dawan, have employed coordinate and subordinate constructions to investigate how the arguments S, A, and P are treated in processes of deletion and coreference. These studies reveal that the

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

syntactic relations among such arguments exhibit systematic patterns that are useful for typological classification (Budiarta, 2012). This approach underscores that typological analyses based exclusively on surface features, without syntactic testing, may obscure underlying grammatical relations. Consequently, the application of frameworks such as the Pivot Test is essential for accurately determining the grammatical alignment of a language.

In complex sentence structures, the grammatical status of an argument is most clearly revealed when that argument is required to maintain referential continuity across clauses, for instance through the deletion of a coreferential noun phrase. One of the most established and widely employed analytical instruments for examining this phenomenon is the Pivot Test, originally proposed by Dixon (1994) and subsequently refined in contemporary studies of syntactic typology (Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997).

The pivot is defined as the core argument that enjoys syntactic privilege in participating in interclausal operations, particularly the deletion of coreferential arguments in coordinate and subordinate constructions. In languages with a nominative-accusative alignment, the pivot typically comprises the S and A arguments (S/A pivot), whereas in ergative languages, the pivot generally consists of the S and P arguments (S/P pivot). Consequently, the identification of a pivot system serves not merely as a technical diagnostic but also as a robust theoretical basis for determining the grammatical alignment of a language at the syntactic level (Dixon, 1994; Comrie, 1989; Croft, 2022).

A number of previous studies applying the Pivot Test to languages spoken in Sumatra have generally demonstrated the predominance of the S/A pivot system. Mandailing Language (Handayani & Ritonga, 2022), Simalungun Batak Language (Sinaga & Mulyadi, 2022), Acehnese Language (Kartika & Mulyadi, 2024), and Malay Language in general (Soraya & Mulyadi, 2024) have been classified as nominative–accusative languages based on interclausal syntactic evidence. Nevertheless, most of these studies have focused on languages or dialects that are relatively large and well established in terms of descriptive documentation, whereas local dialectal varieties have received comparatively little attention in the typological mapping of syntactic alignment systems.

This study focuses on the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM), a Malay dialect spoken in Rokan Hulu Regency. Geographically and sociolinguistically, this dialect is situated in a transitional area between several Malayic varieties spoken in Riau and North Sumatra and is in contact with non-Malayic languages, particularly the Mandailing Language language. Such a setting has the potential to give rise to structural variations that are not necessarily identical to those found in Standard Malay or other Malay dialects. Nevertheless, existing studies on the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay have largely been confined to phonological and historical analyses (see Sukma et al., 2024), while syntactic aspects especially its system of grammatical alignment have received little scholarly attention.

Accordingly, no previous study has empirically examined the pivot system of a local Malay dialect in Rokan Hulu using a syntactic typological framework. This absence of research creates a significant gap in our understanding of the variation and stability of grammatical alignment within the Malay language family, particularly at the dialectal level. Without such empirical investigation, the assumption that all Malay dialects exhibit a syntactically accusative alignment remains a generalization that has not been fully validated.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to address the gap in dialectal syntactic typology by systematically examining the pivot system of the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM). Specifically, the study seeks to (1) describe the patterns of core argument coreference in complex clauses of PPRM and (2) determine whether the language operates an S/A pivot or an S/P pivot system. Ultimately, the findings will enable a more definitive classification of the syntactic typology of PPRM and provide empirical evidence that contributes to the broader typological study of Western Austronesian languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic Typology and Grammatical Alignment

Linguistic typology is a branch of linguistics that seeks to investigate structural similarities and differences across languages without reference to their genetic relationships (Mallinson & Blake, 1981; Song, 2014; Velupillai, 2012). Within this framework, languages are viewed as structural systems that can be compared on the basis of universal parameters, one of which is the manner in which grammatical relations are organized within clauses. Syntactic typology, in particular, focuses on how grammatical functions such as subjects, objects, and inter-argument relations are realized in clause and sentence structure.

One of the central concepts in syntactic typology is grammatical alignment, which refers to the system of alignment or association among the core arguments S, A, and P in a language. This alignment determines which arguments are treated alike and which are treated differently by grammatical rules, both at the morphological and syntactic levels. Dixon (1994) classifies grammatical alignment systems into three major types: the nominative–accusative system, the ergative–absolutive system, and the active (or split-intransitive) system. In a nominative–accusative system, the S argument is treated similarly to A and differently from P. In contrast, an ergative–absolutive system treats S in the same way as P, while distinguishing it from A. The active system divides S into two subcategories: Sa, which patterns with A, and Sp, which patterns with P, depending on semantic factors such as volitionality or control.

Recent developments in linguistic typology have demonstrated that grammatical alignment is not always uniform across different levels of language structure. A language may exhibit a nominative-accusative pattern at the syntactic level while displaying different argument-marking patterns at the morphological level or within particular clause configurations. Recent cross-linguistic studies have further shown that the marking and behavior of core arguments may be influenced by clause structure and the linear position of arguments, indicating that grammatical alignment cannot be assumed to be homogeneous or determined solely on the basis of a single structural parameter (Seržant et al., 2025). Therefore, the classification of grammatical alignment must be conducted with reference to the specific level of analysis under investigation. In the present study, the analysis is explicitly focused on the syntactic level; consequently, the criteria used to determine grammatical alignment are syntactic in nature rather than purely morphological or semantic.

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Pivot Systems in Syntactic Typology

At the syntactic level, one of the most well-established analytical tools for determining grammatical alignment is the concept of the pivot system. The notion of the pivot was developed by Dixon (1994) to account for the core argument that enjoys syntactic privilege in interclausal operations. A pivot is defined as the argument that can control certain syntactic processes in complex sentence constructions, including the deletion of coreferential noun phrases, control in subordinate clauses, and the formation of relative clauses.

Conceptually, the Pivot Test is based on the assumption that, in complex sentences consisting of two or more clauses, not all arguments possess equal syntactic status. Only certain arguments can maintain referential continuity across clauses without requiring explicit re-expression in the subsequent clause. Such an argument is referred to as the pivot. Accordingly, pivot identification is carried out by examining which argument can be directly omitted in the second clause without resulting in ungrammaticality or referential ambiguity (Dixon, 1994; Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997).

In languages that exhibit a syntactic nominative–accusative alignment, the pivot generally comprises the S and A arguments (S/A pivot). Within this system, the deletion of a coreferential noun phrase is considered acceptable only when the omitted argument occupies the position of S or A. By contrast, the P argument does not enjoy such syntactic privilege and can function as a pivot only after undergoing a structural operation, such as passivization or topicalization, which elevates its status to that of a subject. Conversely, in syntactically ergative languages, the pattern is reversed: the pivot consists of the S and P arguments (S/P pivot), whereas A lacks the privilege of participating in deletion processes as a pivot.

To systematically examine the pivot system of a language, Dixon (1994) proposes a testing framework involving eleven possible coreferential relations among the arguments S, A, and P across two consecutive clauses. These relations encompass various combinations of intransitive and transitive clauses, including constructions with one or two coreferential noun phrases. Through these configurations, it becomes possible to identify which argument types are granted syntactic privilege in interclausal operations and, consequently, to determine the grammatical alignment of the language under investigation. The eleven relations are presented as follows:

Table 1. Eleven Coreferential Relations in the Pivot Test (Dixon, 1994)

No.	**Clause Type**	**Coreferential Relation**	**Description of Relation**	**Example**
1	Intransitive-Intransitive	$S_1 = S_2$	The subject of the first clause is coreferential with the subject of the second clause.	*Bill entered and sat down*
2	Intransitive- Transitive	$S_1 = P_2$	The subject of the first clause is coreferential with the patient of the second clause.	*Bill entered and was seen by Fred*
3	Intransitive- Transitive	$S_1 = A_2$	The subject of the first clause is coreferential with the agent of the second clause.	*Bill entered and saw Fred*
4	Transitive- Intransitive	$P_1 = S_2$	The patient of the first clause is coreferential with the subject of the second clause.	*Bill was seen by Fred and laughed*
5	Transitive- Intransitive	$A_1 = S_2$	The agent of the first clause is coreferential with the subject of the second clause.	*Fred saw Bill and lauughed*
6	Transitive-Transitive (One NP)	$P_1 = P_2$	The patients of both clauses are coreferential.	*Bill was kicked by Tom and punched by Bob*
7	Transitive- Transitive (One NP)	$A_1 = A_2$	The agents of both clauses are coreferential.	*Bob kicked Jim and punched Bill*
8	Transitive- Transitive (One NP)	$P_1 = A_2$	The patient of the first clause is coreferential with the agent of the second clause.	*Bill was kicked by Tom and punched Bill*
9	Transitive- Transitive (One NP)	$A_1 = P_2$	The agent of the first clause is coreferential with the patient of the second clause.	*Bob punched Bill and was kicked by Tom*
10	Transitive- Transitive (Two NPs)	$P_1 = P_2$; $A_1 = A_2$	Both the agent and the patient are identical across the two clauses.	*Fred punched and kicked Bill*
11	Transitive- Transitive (Two NPs)	$P_1 = A_2$; $A_1 = P_2$	The agent and patient exchange semantic roles across the two clauses.	*Fred punched Bill and was kicked by him*

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

These eleven relations are designed to provide a comprehensive test of whether a language grants syntactic privilege to S and A or to S and P. The patterns of acceptability and unacceptability of coreferential noun phrase deletion across these relations serve as the basis for determining the pivot system operating in the language under investigation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in the framework of syntactic typology. This approach was selected because the primary objective of the research was not to test statistical hypotheses but rather to describe and explain the patterns of grammatical alignment operating in the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) based on empirical syntactic evidence. The analysis focused on complex sentence structures containing coordinate and subordinate clauses, as interclausal constructions constitute the principal domain for examining pivot systems and determining which arguments possess syntactic privilege in coreferential mechanisms.

The data for this study were obtained from the speech of three native speakers of the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) who continue to use the dialect actively in their daily communication. Active speakers were selected because they possess sufficient grammatical competence and linguistic intuition to evaluate the acceptability of the syntactic constructions examined in this study.

Data were collected through the observation method (*metode simak*) combined with structured interviews. In this process, the informants were presented with a series of test sentences systematically designed to represent the eleven possible coreferential relations among the core arguments S, A, and P across two consecutive clauses, following Dixon's (1994) Pivot Test framework. Each sentence construction was manipulated by deleting a noun phrase in the second clause, after which the informants were asked to assess the acceptability of the resulting structure based on their linguistic intuitions as native speakers. Their judgments encompassed aspects of grammaticality, naturalness, and referential clarity of the sentences produced.

Data analysis was conducted using the distributional method (*metode agih*) through the application of substitution and deletion techniques (Sudaryanto, 2015). The substitution technique was employed to verify the referential equivalence of coreferential arguments, whereas the deletion technique was used to examine whether a particular argument could be omitted without resulting in ungrammaticality. The acceptability of noun phrase deletion in the second clause served as the primary indicator for determining whether a given argument functioned as a pivot within the syntactic system of PPRM.

Deletion that was directly acceptable, without requiring structural modifications such as passivization or topicalization, was taken as evidence that the argument belonged to the pivot system. Conversely, the unacceptability of deletion or the necessity for structural alteration was interpreted as an indication that the argument did not possess the syntactic privilege associated with pivot status. Through this analytical procedure, the grammatical alignment system of PPRM was determined empirically on the basis of patterns of deletion and coreference among core arguments in complex clauses. Consequently, the syntactic typological classification of the language rests entirely upon systematically tested linguistic evidence.

RESULTS

The Pivot Test on the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) was conducted through the controlled presentation of test sentences to native speakers, representing the eleven possible coreferential relations among the core arguments S, A, and P. Each construction was presented to the informants in two stages: (1) the base form, in which the noun phrase (NP) in the second clause was explicitly expressed, and (2) the deletion form, in which the NP in the second clause was completely omitted.

In the presentation of data in this section, the NP targeted for deletion is first enclosed in parentheses to indicate its position analytically. The acceptability judgments that form the basis of the findings reported in this study were made on the sentence forms after the deletion of the NP, rather than on the versions containing the explicit NP.

The results of the Pivot Test indicate that the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) consistently treats the S argument (the subject of an intransitive clause) and the A argument (the agent of a transitive clause) as syntactically equivalent categories in the interclausal noun phrase deletion mechanism. Acceptable deletion was observed in the relations $S_1 = S_2$, $S_1 = A_2$, $A_1 = S_2$, and $A_1 = A_2$. In contrast, relations involving the P argument (the transitive patient) did not exhibit the same pattern. To provide a clearer overview of the findings, all tested relations are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Pivot Test in the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM)

Coreferential Relation	Deletion Acceptability	Pivot Status
$S_1 = S_2$	Acceptable	Pivot
$S_1 = A_2$	Acceptable	Pivot
$A_1 = S_2$	Acceptable	Pivot
$A_1 = A_2$	Acceptable	Pivot
$S_1 = P_2$	Unacceptable	Non-pivot
$P_1 = P_2$	Unacceptable	Non-pivot
$A_1 = P_2$	Unacceptable	Non-pivot
$P_1 = S_2$	Acceptable after passivization	Derived Pivot

1. The $S_1 = S_2$ Relation

1) *paja tu munangih, abih tu (inyo) tutiduo*

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

child DEM cry after that 3SG sleep
'The child cried, and then (he/she) fell asleep.'

2) *ayah pulang, abih tu (myo) mandi*
father return.home then 3SG bathe
'Father came home, and then (he) took a bath.'

The data representing the $S_1 = S_2$ relation demonstrate that the sole argument of an intransitive clause exhibits a high degree of accessibility in interclausal constructions in PPRM. In the utterances *paja tu munangih, abih tu (inyo) tutiduo* and *ayah pulang, abih tu (inyo) mandi*, the omission of the noun phrase in the second clause does not give rise to referential ambiguity. The informants consistently interpreted the participant in the second event as referring to the same entity as the subject of the first clause. This indicates that referential continuity across clauses can be maintained without the repeated phonological realization of the argument.

From the perspective of syntactic typology, this behavior suggests that the S argument enjoys syntactic privilege in coreferential constructions and can function as the controller of reference in the subsequent clause. The findings are consistent with the characteristics of S/A-pivot languages, in which the S argument is able to maintain referential continuity across clauses without requiring additional syntactic operations.

2. The $S_1 = A_2$ Relation

3) *udaku kulua, abih tu (inyo) mboli nasi padang*
elder brother.1SG go.out then 3SG buy Padang rice
'My elder brother went out and then bought Padang rice'

4) *inyo olah sampai pasa,tapi lai (inyo) mboli boreh do*
3SG already arrive market but still 3SG buy rice NEG
'He had arrived at the market, but he did not buy any rice'

5) *kami olah bukumpul dari tadi, abih tu (kami) etongkan masalah tu*
1PL already gather since earlier then 1PL discuss problem DEM
'We had gathered since earlier, and then we discussed the issue'

The $S_1 = A_2$ relation demonstrates that the S argument in the first clause can serve as the controller of reference for the A argument in the second clause. In examples (3–5), the noun phrase functioning as A in the second clause can be omitted without affecting the intended referential interpretation. The informants consistently identified the actor of the second event as the same referent as the S argument in the first clause.

The acceptability of this deletion indicates that the coreferential relationship between S and A operates directly, without requiring additional syntactic processes such as passivization or topicalization. From the perspective of syntactic typology, this finding suggests that S and A belong to the same grammatical domain. Accordingly, the $S_1 = A_2$ relation provides evidence that PPRM treats S and A similarly in interclausal coreferential mechanisms, a characteristic typically associated with S/A-pivot systems and nominative–accusative alignment.

3. The $A_1 = S_2$ Relation

6) *apak tu munanam sawit, abih tu (inyo) pulang ku rumah*
uncle DEM plant oil.palm then 3SG return to house
'The uncle planted oil palms and then went home'

7) *inyo nenang bola, abih tu (inyo) tujatuh*
3SG kick ball then 3SG fall
'He kicked the ball and then fell down'

8) *anak tu munukua paku sukali, abih tu (inyo) bronti*
child DEM hit nail once then 3SG stop
'The child hit the nail once and then stopped'

The $A_1 = S_2$ relation demonstrates that the A argument in the first clause can function as the controller of reference for the S argument in the second clause. Examples (6–8) show that the noun phrase occupying the S function in the second clause can be omitted, yielding the constructions *apak tu munanam sawit, abih tu pulang ku rumah*, *inyo nenang bola, abih tu tujatuh*, and *anak tu munukua paku sukali, abih tu bronti*.

The deletion does not alter the intended referential interpretation, as the argument occupying the S position in the second clause is still understood as referring to the A argument in the first clause. Referential continuity across clauses is therefore maintained without the repetition of the noun phrase. Furthermore, no additional syntactic strategies—such as passivization, topicalization, or constituent reordering—are required to preserve this coreferential relationship.

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

The $A_1 = S_2$ relation provides further evidence that PPRM exhibits an accusative tendency at the syntactic level, whereby A and S function as the primary arguments for maintaining referential continuity across clauses. This pattern supports the analysis that PPRM operates an S/A pivot system, in which the intransitive subject (S) and the transitive agent (A) are treated alike in interclausal coreferential constructions.

4. The $A_1 = A_2$ Relation

9) *pak haji tu murawat masjid dan (pak haji) busurokah duik*
Pak Haji DEM maintain mosque and give.alms money
'Pak Haji maintained the mosque and donated money as alms'

10) *punyuri itu mungamiek dompet dan (punyuri) mucampak pisau*
thief DEM take wallet and throw knife
'The thief took the wallet and threw away the knife'

11) *kami mumasak nasi, dan (kami) mumasuh priuk*
1PL cook rice and 1PL wash pot
'We cooked rice and washed the pot'

The $A_1 = A_2$ relation likewise demonstrates the consistent acceptability of noun phrase deletion. In the construction *Pak Haji tu murawat masjid dan (Pak Haji) busurokah duik*, the noun phrase in the second clause can be omitted, resulting in *Pak Haji tu murawat masjid dan busurokah duik*. The informants judged this omission to be fully acceptable because the referent of the agent remains unambiguous. The same pattern is observed in *punyuri itu mungamiek dompet dan (punyuri) mucampak pisau* and *kami mumasak nasi dan (kami) mumasuh priuk*. In these constructions, the transitive agent serves as the primary controller of referential continuity across clauses.

The four relations discussed above exhibit a consistent pattern: no syntactic restrictions arise when deletion involves the S and A arguments. Both S and A can function as controllers of reference and maintain interclausal referential continuity without requiring additional syntactic strategies. This pattern indicates that these two arguments constitute a single grammatical grouping. Within the framework of grammatical alignment typology, the shared behavior of S and A provides strong evidence for the existence of an S/A pivot system in PPRM. By contrast, relations involving the P argument generally do not permit direct noun phrase deletion, suggesting that P does not enjoy the same syntactic privilege as S and A in interclausal coreferential constructions.

5. The $S_1 = P_2$ Relation

12) *punyahat tu lari koncang, dan (inyo) dikoja polisi*
criminal DEM run fast and 3SG chased.by police
'The criminal ran quickly and was chased by the police'

13) **kuciang tu tidua lomak, habih tu dipogang adiek*
cat DEM sleep soundly then held.by younger. sibling
'The cat slept soundly and was then held by the younger sibling'

The $S_1 = P_2$ relation exhibits a pattern that differs significantly from those involving S and A. In the construction *punyahat tu lari koncang, dan (inyo) dikoja polisi*, deletion of the noun phrase in the second clause yields the form *punyahat tu lari koncang, dan dikoja polisi*. From a pragmatic perspective, this construction remains interpretable to native speakers. However, within the framework of the Pivot Test, such deletion cannot be regarded as syntactically controlled deletion by the P argument, because the second clause lacks a subject that is overtly realized or structurally controlled.

In this case, the recovery of the omitted referent relies on discourse inference rather than on a syntactic pivot mechanism. A similar pattern is observed in *kuciang tu tidua lomak, habih tu dipogang adiek*, which is semantically understandable but fails to satisfy the criteria for pivot-controlled deletion at the syntactic level.

These findings indicate that the P argument does not possess the same syntactic privilege as S and A in maintaining referential continuity across clauses. Although the intended referent may be recoverable through contextual interpretation, the omission is not licensed by the grammatical system itself. Consequently, the $S_1 = P_2$ relation does not provide evidence for an S/P pivot system and instead supports the conclusion that PPRM does not treat P as a core pivot argument in interclausal constructions.

6. The $P_1 = P_2$ Relation

14) *Buku tu diboli dek aku dan (buku tu) dikirim ku inyo*
book DEM bought by 1SG and sent by 3SG
'The book was bought by me and sent by him/her'

15) *sayua tu diamiek dek kakak dan (sayua tu)dibasuh dek omak*
vegetable DEM taken by elder.sibling and washed by mother
'The vegetables were taken by my elder sibling and washed by my mother'

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

The $P_1 = P_2$ relation demonstrates that noun phrase deletion is not supported by the syntactic system of PPRM. In the construction *buku tu diboli dek aku dan (buku tu) dikirim ku inyo*, deletion of the noun phrase in the second clause yields the form *buku tu diboli dek aku dan dikirim ku inyo*. Although this construction remains semantically interpretable because the referent can be recovered from the discourse context, the second clause lacks an argument that structurally controls the coreferential relationship. Consequently, the deletion does not satisfy the criteria for pivot-controlled deletion.

A similar pattern is found in *sayua tu diamiek dek kakak dan (sayua tu) dibasuh dek omak*. In this construction, the omitted patient argument can be inferred pragmatically, but its omission is not licensed by a syntactic pivot mechanism. These findings indicate that the transitive patient (P) does not possess the syntactic privilege required to control interclausal noun phrase deletion.

From a typological perspective, the $P_1 = P_2$ relation provides further evidence that P is excluded from the core pivot system of PPRM. While referential continuity may be maintained through discourse-based interpretation, it is not established through the grammatical mechanisms that characterize pivot relations. Therefore, the data support the conclusion that PPRM does not operate an S/P pivot system, but instead aligns with an S/A pivot system, in which the syntactic privileges associated with interclausal coreference are reserved for S and A arguments.

7. The $A_1 = P_2$ Relation

16) **punyuri tu muncuri ayam dan (punyuri tu) ditangkok polisi*
thief DEM steal chicken and DEM arrested by police
'The thief stole a chicken and was arrested by the police'

The $A_1 = P_2$ relation indicates that noun phrase deletion is not licensed by the syntactic system of PPRM. In the construction *punyuri tu muncuri ayam dan (punyuri tu) ditangkok polisi*, deletion of the noun phrase in the second clause results in the form *punyuri tu muncuri ayam dan ditangkok polisi*. Although native speakers can still recover the intended meaning from the discourse context, the resulting construction does not qualify as a case of syntactically controlled deletion within the framework of the Pivot Test.

The crucial factor is that the same referent undergoes a change in grammatical role, functioning as the agent (A) in the first clause and as the patient (P) in the second clause. This shift in argument status prevents the establishment of a direct syntactic coreferential relationship. As a result, no argument structurally controls the interclausal reference, and the omission cannot be regarded as pivot-controlled deletion.

Accordingly, the explicit realization of the noun phrase in the second clause remains necessary to preserve the syntactic relationship between the two clauses. This finding further demonstrates that the P argument does not enjoy the syntactic privileges associated with pivot status in PPRM. The unacceptability of the $A_1 = P_2$ relation therefore provides additional evidence that the language operates an S/A pivot system, rather than an S/P pivot system, at the syntactic level.

8. The $A_1 = P_2$ Relation

17) *kambiang tu disumolieh pak ustadz, abih tu (inyo) dibagi-bagikan*
goat DEM slaughtered by ustaz then 3SG distributed
ku anak yatim
to orphaned children
'The goat was slaughtered by the ustaz and then distributed to orphaned children'

18) **pak ustadz menyembelih kambiang tu lalu dibagi-bagikan*
Pak Ustadz slaughtered goat DEM then distributed
ku anak yatim
to orphaned children
'Pak Ustadz menyembelih kambing itu, lalu dibagikan kepada anak yatim'

The $P_1 = S_2$ relation is the only relation involving the P argument that is acceptable in the Pivot Test, and even then only under specific structural conditions. In the construction *kambiang tu disumolieh pak ustadz, abih tu (inyo) dibagi-bagikan ku anak yatim*, deletion of the noun phrase in the second clause yields the form *kambiang tu disumolieh pak ustadz, abih tu dibagi-bagikan ku anak yatim*. This construction is judged acceptable because, in the first clause, the argument *kambiang tu*, which is semantically a patient, has been promoted to the subject position through a passive construction. By acquiring subject status, the same argument is able to control coreference in the subsequent clause, allowing the noun phrase to be omitted without causing any syntactic problems.

In contrast, deletion of the noun phrase in the active construction in example (18) is syntactically unacceptable. In this construction, *kambiang tu* remains a patient and does not occupy the subject position; consequently, it lacks the syntactic privilege required to control the following clause. This comparison demonstrates that the acceptability of deletion in the $P_1 = S_2$ relation is determined not by semantic interpretation or event continuity, but rather by a syntactic restructuring process that elevates the P argument to subject status.

DISCUSSION

The Pivot Test results presented above show that the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) consistently grants the syntactic privilege of interclausal noun phrase deletion only to arguments functioning as S (intransitive subject) and A (transitive agent). The acceptability of deletion in the relations $S_1 = S_2$, $S_1 = A_2$, $A_1 = S_2$, and $A_1 = A_2$, together with the unacceptability of deletion in relations involving P without structural

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

modification, provides strong syntactic evidence that the language operates an S/A pivot system. Accordingly, S and A form a single grammatical category, namely the grammatical subject, whereas P is systematically excluded from that category.

These findings directly confirm the predictions of the nominative–accusative alignment theory proposed by Dixon (1994) and Comrie (1989). In a syntactic nominative–accusative system, the subject of an intransitive clause and the agent of a transitive clause are treated alike in interclausal operations, particularly in the deletion of coreferential arguments. The present study demonstrates that PPRM consistently satisfies this criterion, as noun phrase deletion is acceptable only when the omitted argument functions as S or A. Conversely, the unacceptability of deleting P arguments without structural modification confirms that patients do not possess syntactic pivot privileges.

The role of passivization in the present findings provides a more precise understanding of the syntactic boundaries of PPRM. A P argument can function as the controller of interclausal deletion only after undergoing a structural transformation that promotes it to the status of a passive subject. This fact indicates that any apparent equivalence between S and P in PPRM is not an inherent property of the language's syntactic system but rather the outcome of a derivational grammatical process. Therefore, PPRM exhibits neither an S/P pivot system nor evidence of syntactic ergativity.

When compared with previous studies on languages spoken in Sumatra and surrounding regions, the present findings reveal a high degree of typological consistency. Studies on the Mandailing language (Handayani & Ritonga, 2022), the Simalungun Batak language (Sinaga & Mulyadi, 2022), the Acehnese language (Kartika & Mulyadi, 2024), and Malay in general (Soraya & Mulyadi, 2024) have likewise concluded that these languages operate S/A pivot systems. PPRM exhibits a pattern that closely parallels these findings, both in the acceptability of deletion involving S and A and in the rejection of deletion involving P in the absence of passivization.

This comparison suggests that dialectal variation within the Malay language family does not necessarily alter the fundamental principles of syntactic alignment. Although PPRM differs from other Malay dialects in a number of phonological and lexical respects, its organization of core arguments at the syntactic level remains stable. The findings therefore indicate a strong tendency toward S/A pivot systems across a number of Malayic languages and dialects that have been investigated, particularly in the Sumatran region.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that the findings not only support the widely accepted assumption that Malay exhibits an accusative alignment, but also provide more detailed empirical validation at the local dialectal level. By situating PPRM within a broader comparative context among previously studied languages, this research strengthens the typological generalization concerning the stability of the S/A pivot system within the Malayic language family and highlights the importance of dialect-based studies in the typological mapping of syntactic systems in the languages of Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Pasir Pengaraian Dialect of Riau Malay (PPRM) operates an S/A pivot system at the syntactic level. Through the application of the Pivot Test to eleven coreferential relations, it was found that interclausal noun phrase deletion is acceptable only when it involves the S argument (intransitive subject) and the A argument (transitive agent). In contrast, the P argument (transitive patient) cannot be directly omitted unless it undergoes passivization, which promotes it to subject status. These findings indicate that S and A constitute a single grammatical category, namely the grammatical subject, whereas P falls outside the pivot system. From a typological perspective, PPRM can therefore be classified as a syntactically nominative accusative language, a classification that is consistent with findings reported for other Malayic languages in Sumatra. The results highlight the stability of syntactic alignment across dialectal varieties of Malay and further reinforce the validity of the Pivot Test as an effective analytical tool in syntactic typology.

REFERENCES

1) Artawa, K., & Jufrizal. (2018). *Tipologi linguistik: Konsep dasar dan aplikasinya*. Denpasar: Larasan Artwa.
2) Budiarta, I. W. (2012). Aliansi gramatikal Bahasa Dawan: Kajian tipologi bahasa. *Linguistika: Buletin Ilmiah Program Magister Linguistik Universitas Udayana, 19*(1).
3) Comrie, B. (1989). *Language universals and linguistic typology: Syntax and morphology* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
4) Croft, W. (2022). *Typology and universals* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
5) Dixon, R. M. W. (1994). *Ergativity*. Cambridge University Press.
6) Handayani, D., & Ritonga, M. (2022). Sistem pivot Bahasa Mandailing: Kajian tipologi bahasa. *KODE: Jurnal Bahasa, 11*(1), 88–97. https://doi.org/10.24114/kjb.v11i1.30547
7) Himmelmann, N. P. (2005). The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar: Typological characteristics. In A. Adelaar & N. P. Himmelmann (Eds.), *The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar* (pp. 110–181). Routledge.
8) Jufrizal. (2009). Fenomena tipologi gramatikal Bahasa Minangkabau: Akusatif, ergatif, atau campur? *Leksika, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.30595/lks.v3i1.2236
9) Kartika, R., & Mulyadi. (2024). Grammatical alliance in the Acehnese language. *Journal of Language Development and Linguistics, 3*(2), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.55927/jldl.v3i2.9481
10) Mallinson, G., & Blake, B. J. (1981). *Language typology: Cross-linguistic studies in syntax*. North-Holland Publishing Company.
11) Manning, C. D. (1994). *Ergativity: Argument structure and grammatical relations*. CSLI Publications.
12) Payne, T. E. (2002). *Describing morphosyntax: A guide for field linguists*. Cambridge University Press.
13) Seržant, I. A., Say, S., Hölzl, A., Zakharova, A., Gao, X., & Pregla, A. (2025). A typology of positional differential argument marking. *Linguistic Typology*. https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2024-0021
14) Sinaga, L., & Mulyadi. (2023). Grammatical alliance and pivot system of Batak Simalungun language: A syntactic typology study. *LINGUA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra, 17*(2), 237–246. https://doi.org/10.18860/ling.v17i2.16673

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

15) Sneddon, J. N. (2003). *The Indonesian language: Its history and role in modern society*. UNSW Press.
16) Song, J. J. (2014). *Linguistic typology: Morphology and syntax*. Oxford University Press.
17) Soraya, R., & Mulyadi. (2024). Grammatical alliance in Malay language: A study of linguistic typology. *Journal of Language Development and Linguistics*, *3*(2), 123–138. https://doi.org/10.55927/jldl.v3i2.9485
18) Sudaryanto. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Duta Wacana University Press.
19) Sukma, S., Widayati, D., Dardanila, D., & Lubis, T. (2024). Perubahan bunyi Bahasa Proto Austronesia ke dalam Bahasa Melayu Riau Dialek Pasir Pengaraian. *Deskripsi Bahasa*, *7*(2), 99–121. https://doi.org/10.22146/db.13997
20) Van Valin, R. D., Jr., & LaPolla, R. J. (1997). *Syntax: Structure, meaning, and function*. Cambridge University Press.
21) Velupillai, V. (2012). *An introduction to linguistic typology*. John Benjamins.

License: This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Corresponding Author: Khairina Nasution