

## ARTICLE

# The Social Role of the Java Deli Community in Shaping the Language and Cultural Identity of Java Descendants Born in Sumatra

Sutikno Sutikno <sup>1</sup> , Muhammad Rohmadi <sup>2</sup> , Nurbaiti Usman Siam <sup>3</sup> , Dedek Afrida <sup>1</sup> , Liesna Andriany <sup>4</sup> ,  
Yuldasheva Dilnoza Khasan Kizi <sup>5</sup> , Mukhammadkhon Soliev <sup>6</sup> , Herman <sup>7\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Department of Indonesia Language and Literature Education, Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah, Medan 20147, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Department of Indonesia Language and Literature Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik (STISIPOL) Raja Haji Tanjungpinang, Sumatera 29124, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan 20371, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup> Department of Philology and Language Education, Navoi University of Innovation, Navoi Region, Uzbekistan

<sup>6</sup> Innovative Centre, Samarqand 140100, Uzbekistan

<sup>7</sup> Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Pematangsiantar 21135, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

This research discusses the social role of the Jawa Deli community in shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Using a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, this study involved in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document studies with 40 participants from 4 districts (Deli Serdang, Serdang Bedagai, Batu Bara, and Langkat). Data were collected through daily interactions, also considering the use of everyday language, including phonetic, phonological, syntactic, and semantic aspects, to understand the linguistic adaptations that occurred. The research results indicate that 40% of participants still actively use the Javanese language, 35% understand but do not actively use it, and 25% do not master Javanese. Regarding cultural identity, 45% have a strong

### \*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Herman, Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Pematangsiantar 21135, Indonesia;  
Email: [herman@uhn timer.ac.id](mailto:herman@uhn timer.ac.id)

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 20 May 2025 | Revised: 9 June 2025 | Accepted: 19 June 2025 | Published Online: 14 July 2025  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.10109>

### CITATION

Sutikno, S., Rohmadi, M., Siam, N.U., et al., 2025. The Social Role of the Java Deli Community in Shaping the Language and Cultural Identity of Java Descendants Born in Sumatra. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(7): 257–269. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.10109>

### COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

attachment to Javanese culture, 30% have a moderate attachment, and 25% have integrated other cultures into their identity. The main factors influencing this identity are the social environment, education, and media exposure. The Jawa Deli family and community serve as central points in the transmission of cultural values and language through oral traditions, social activities, and customary practices. However, the influence of modernization and interaction with multicultural society has led to processes of acculturation and assimilation that impact the identity changes of the younger generation. This research emphasizes that cultural and linguistic identity are not static but continuously evolve in accordance with social dynamics. These findings provide insight into the preservation of Javanese culture in North Sumatra and strategic efforts to maintain cultural heritage amidst the currents of globalization.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity; Linguistic Identity; Deli Javanese Community; Acculturation; Social Interaction

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia, an archipelagic country with extraordinary ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, has invaluable local wisdom. Within this diversity, the Javanese people, with their rich cultural traditions and long history, have made significant contributions to shaping Indonesia's social and cultural landscapes. The migration of the Javanese people to various regions in Indonesia, including North Sumatra, has resulted in fascinating cultural interaction dynamics that warrant further study. A notable phenomenon is the presence of the Javanese community in Deli, North Sumatra, which has formed a significant community with distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics. This migration is generally associated with the colonization program carried out by the Dutch government in the early 20th century, when thousands of Javanese were brought to Sumatra to work on plantations. Since then, the Javanese Deli community has become an integral part of the social and cultural landscape of North Sumatra, interacting and acculturating with Malay, Karo, and other ethnic communities.

The young Javanese generation, born and raised in Sumatra, faces both challenges and opportunities in maintaining and developing their identities within a multicultural society. They grow up in an environment where Javanese culture interacts with Sumatra, Malay, and other ethnic cultures. This raises questions about how their language and cultural identities are formed and influenced by social interactions with the Javanese Deli community. The migration of Javanese people to Deli cannot be separated from the historical and social contexts of that time. The colonization programme launched by the Dutch government in the early 20th century was the main driving force behind this migration. Thousands of Javanese people

were brought to Sumatra to work on plantations, primarily for tobacco and palm oil production.

According to Reid<sup>[1]</sup>, the migration of Javanese people to Sumatra was part of the Dutch colonial strategy to optimize plantation production in the region. The Javanese were considered a resilient and skilled workforce, making them the primary choice for employment in plantations. Upon arriving in Deli, the Javanese formed their communities, built residences, and developed a distinctive social and cultural system. They brought along the traditions, customs, language, and cultural values of the Javanese, which were then passed down to the next generation.

According to Barth<sup>[2]</sup>, ethnic or cultural identity is not static or given, but dynamic and continuously negotiated and reconstructed through social interactions<sup>[3-5]</sup>. Cultural identity is also inseparable from language, as it is an important element in the inheritance and transmission of culture from one generation to the next<sup>[6]</sup>.

In the context of the Deli Javanese community, the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra is interesting, because they live in a multicultural environment. Interaction with Malay, Karo, and other ethnic communities influences the formation of their identity<sup>[7]</sup>. The Deli Javanese community, a community with a strong cultural heritage, plays an important role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Social interactions within the family, the surrounding environment, and the Javanese community serve as important vessels for the transmission of cultural values, traditions, and the Javanese language.

Some Javanese born in Sumatra may feel more connected to Javanese culture, while others are more inclined to adopt a local culture or create a new identity that combines

various cultural influences. This shows that cultural identity is not static, but instead continuously negotiated and reconstructed in social interactions. The Deli Javanese community plays a significant role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Social interactions, traditions, and values inherited from the Deli Javanese community influenced the formation of the young Javanese generation in Sumatra. However, the dynamics and changes in the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra are inevitable because of the influence of a multicultural environment and modernization. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of social roles in shaping language and cultural identity in a multicultural context. This research has novelty, including the Deli Javanese community, a Javanese community that migrated from Java to Sumatra at the beginning of the transmigration, where they worked as contract laborers on plantations using the original Ngoko language. They are now experiencing the revitalization of the Javanese-Malay language (Jadel) used by Javanese descendants, known as Pujakesuma (Javanese-born Sumatrans), as a new identity for the Javanese community on the island of Sumatra. The findings of this research are novel, including (1) the social role in shaping identity: examines the social role of the Deli Javanese community in shaping the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. This is a novelty because previous research has focused more on other factors, such as education and environment. (2) Language and cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra: examines the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra, a unique group because they have Javanese backgrounds but were born and raised in Sumatra. This is a novelty because previous research has focused on the language and cultural identity of the Javanese community in Java. (3) Study on the process of identity formation: examines the process of identity formation in the Javanese language and culture among Javanese-born children in Sumatra, specifically focusing on the social role of the Javanese Deli community. This is a novelty because previous research has focused more on the results of language and cultural identity rather than the process of their formation.

## 2. Theoretical Study

### 2.1. Language and Cultural Identity

Language and cultural identity are interconnected concepts that are integral to an individual's or a group's identity<sup>[8, 9]</sup>. Language identity refers to language as a symbol of identity and group membership, whereas cultural identity encompasses the values, beliefs, customs, and traditions passed down from one generation to the next<sup>[10, 11]</sup>.

According to Fishman<sup>[12]</sup>, language not only functions as a tool of communication but also as a marker of ethnic and cultural identity<sup>[13, 14]</sup>. Language can become a symbol of group solidarity, distinguishing one group from another<sup>[15–17]</sup>. In the context of the Deli Javanese community, the Javanese language plays a vital role in preserving the ethnic and cultural identities of the Javanese people in Sumatra. Although influenced by other languages, such as Indonesian and Malay, Javanese remains a primary language used in daily communication and traditional events.

Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat<sup>[18]</sup> explains that “culture is the entire system of ideas, actions, and human creations within the framework of societal life that creates the property of individuals through learning<sup>[19–21]</sup>. Wierzbicka<sup>[22]</sup> explained that culture encompasses various aspects of human life such as value systems, norms, customs, language, art, and technology<sup>[23, 24]</sup>. The Javanese culture has become an essential part of the identity of the Javanese Deli community. Javanese cultural values, such as cooperation, harmony, and respect for ancestors, remain relevant and are upheld by the Javanese Deli community.

### 2.2. The Deli Javanese Community

Definition and Distinction of Terms:

- a) Jawa Deli: This term specifically refers to the Javanese community, historically rooted and developed in the Deli region of North Sumatra. This community was formed through organized waves of migration, typically as contract plantation laborers during the Dutch colonial period from the 19th century to the early 20th century<sup>[1]</sup>. They possess a unique history of migration and cultural adaptation in the Deli area, which has formed a distinct communal identity<sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, all Jawa Deli can be categorized as Sumatra-born Javanese, but not all Sumatra-born Javanese are Jawa Deli.
- b) Sumatra-born Javanese: This category encompasses

all individuals of Javanese descent born anywhere on the island of Sumatra, regardless of their community's specific migration history or cultural adaptation patterns. This category can include Javanese communities in other provinces in Sumatra (e.g., Lampung, Riau) who may have different migration histories and cultural dynamics from the Jawa Deli community.

- c) **Javanese Descendants Born in Sumatra:** This term is very similar in meaning to "Jawa kelahiran Sumatra." The difference lies more in the emphasis on genetic lineage or ancestry ("Javanese descendants") rather than merely the place of birth. However, in practice, both terms are often used interchangeably to refer to the Javanese population permanently residing in Sumatra.

In the context of this research, the selection of "Jawa Deli" as the primary focus is crucial for several fundamental reasons, supported by the nature of ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies:

- a) **Specificity of Historical Community:** This research provides a deep examination of a social entity with a distinct history of formation and development in the Deli region. The term "Jawa Deli" precisely captures this historical and geographical uniqueness, differentiating it from other Javanese populations in Sumatra who may have arrived through different migration routes or adapted in other socio-cultural environments. As revealed by Setiawan<sup>[7]</sup> in his study on Javanese society in Medan, their existence is inseparable from the local context and interaction with other ethnic groups in the area.
- b) **Unique Cultural Identity and Adaptation:** The Jawa Deli community has undergone distinctive processes of acculturation and assimilation, creating a hybrid identity that combines elements of original Javanese culture with influences from Malay Deli and other local ethnicities<sup>[21]</sup>. The choice of "Jawa Deli" allows for a more focused analysis of the dynamics of cultural and linguistic adaptation occurring within this specific community, including the phenomenon of the Jawa Deli language as a blend of Javanese and Malay elements. Considering how ethnic groups form boundaries and maintain their cultural differences<sup>[2]</sup>, "Jawa Deli" underlines an identity shaped by unique

interactions and collective experiences.

- c) **Focused Sociolinguistic Context:** From a sociolinguistic perspective, linguistic and cultural identity are not static but dynamic and constantly negotiated in social interaction<sup>[4]</sup>. By focusing on "Jawa Deli", this research can provide a more nuanced analysis of how social roles within this community influence language use patterns, dialect maintenance, and specific linguistic changes among Javanese descendants born and raised in the Deli environment.

Thus, the use of the term "Jawa Deli" in this research is not merely a semantic choice but a reflection of a theoretical and methodological framework that seeks to deeply explore the dynamics of linguistic and cultural identity within a community with a clearly defined history, adaptation, and distinctiveness. This ensures that the research findings are relevant and directed towards a specific subject group, while also opening opportunities for comparison with other Javanese communities in Sumatra.

The Deli Javanese community is an ethnic group residing in the Deli Serdang region of North Sumatra. The migration of the Javanese community to Deli is generally related to the colonization programme carried out by the Dutch government in the early 20th century. Thousands of Javanese people were brought to Sumatra to work on plantations, particularly those for tobacco and palm oil. They brought along Javanese traditions, customs, language, and cultural values, which were then passed down to the next generations. The Deli Javanese community also interacts and acculturates with Malay, Karo, and other ethnic groups, resulting in a dynamic cultural interaction that is interesting to study.

**Characteristics of the Deli Javanese Community (Ja-Del):**

1. **Language:** The Deli Javanese community speaks Javanese but uses Indonesian and Malay on a daily basis.
2. **Culture:** The Deli Javanese community has a rich and unique culture, influenced by Javanese, Malay, and Arab cultures.
3. **Culture:** The Deli Javanese community has a rich and unique culture, influenced by Javanese, Malay, and Arab cultures.
4. **Livelihood:** Most of the Deli Javanese community works as farmers, plantation laborers, and traders.

5. Tradition: The Deli Javanese community has a rich tradition, including customary ceremonies, traditional dances, and traditional music.

The Role of the Javanese-Deli Community in North Sumatra Society:

1. Economic contribution: The Deli Javanese community makes significant contributions to the economy of North Sumatra through the agriculture, plantation, and trade sectors.
2. Cultural development: The Deli Javanese community contributes to the cultural development of North Sumatra through traditions, dances, and traditional music.
3. Community development: The Javanese Deli community plays a role in developing the North Sumatra society through social, educational, and health activities.

### 2.3. The Social Role in Identity Formation

Social roles refer to the behaviors and expectations associated with a person's position or social status. Social roles can significantly influence how individuals interact with others and shape their understanding of their identity. According to Sutrisno et al.<sup>[19]</sup>, a person's self-identity is formed through social interactions with others. Individuals learn to understand themselves through their roles in society and how others respond to them. Within the context of the Deli Javanese community, social interactions within the family, the surrounding environment, and the broader Javanese community play a crucial role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra.

1. Family: Family plays a crucial role in shaping the initial identity of the Javanese Deli community. Families teach their children cultural values, traditions, and the Javanese language.
2. Community: The Deli Javanese Community shapes society's social identity. This community organizes various social, cultural, and religious events to strengthen its sense of identity.
3. Education: Education shapes the intellectual identity of the Deli Javanese community. It teaches knowledge, skills, and values that strengthen this identity.

4. Culture: Deli Javanese culture shapes the community's cultural identity. This culture encompasses traditions, customs, and values that strengthen a community's identity.
5. Religion: Religion shapes the spiritual identity of the Deli Javanese community. It teaches the moral, ethical, and spiritual values that strengthen this identity.
6. Environment: The social and cultural environment of Deli plays a role in shaping the identity of the Deli Javanese community. This environment influenced how the Deli Javanese community thinks, behaves, and interacts.
7. History: The history of the Deli Javanese plays a role in shaping a community's historical identity. This history encompasses important events, significant figures, and values that strengthen the identity of the Javanese Deli community.

Thus, the social role of the Deli Javanese community in shaping its identity is very complex and involves various aspects of community life.

### 2.4. Theories of Acculturation and Assimilation

Acculturation is a process of cultural change that occurs when two distinct cultural groups interact on a continuous basis. In acculturation, members of the less dominant cultural group typically adopt some elements of the more dominant group's culture while still maintaining their original cultural identity. Meanwhile, assimilation is a more radical process of cultural change, where members of the less dominant cultural group completely lose their original cultural identity and adopt the cultural identity of the more dominant group.

In the context of the Deli Javanese community, Javanese-born children in Sumatra can undergo either acculturation or assimilation. They can adopt some elements of Sumatran culture, such as language or customs, but still maintain their Javanese identity. However, there is also the possibility that some of them fully adopted Sumatra's culture and ultimately abandoned their Javanese identity. Factors such as the intensity of interaction with the Sumatran community, level of attachment to Javanese culture, and individual preferences can influence whether someone experiences acculturation or assimilation.

## 2.5. The Social Role of the Jawa Deli Community Is Central and Significant within the Historical and Cultural Context of North Sumatra

They have a multi-dimensional role that has evolved from their early arrival to the present day:

1. **Historical Context:** Historically, the Jawa Deli community was formed through the Dutch colonization program in the 19th century. Thousands of Javanese people were brought to Sumatra, particularly to the Deli region, to work on plantations. Their arrival was organized to meet the labor demands in the plantation sector, particularly in tobacco and oil palm production. Since then, they have become an integral part of the social landscape of North Sumatra.
2. **Cultural and Hybrid Identity:** The Jawa Deli community not only preserves Javanese traditions, customs, and cultural values from their ancestral land but also adapts and interacts extensively with Malay, Karo, and other communities in North Sumatra. This interaction has shaped a unique cultural identity, a blend of Javanese and Malay Deli cultures. They have distinctive traditions and customs, such as customary ceremonies and religious rituals, which reflect this cultural synthesis.
3. **Linguistic Adaptation:** As part of their adaptation to the new environment, the Jawa Deli community also developed distinct linguistic adaptations. They

speak the Jawa Deli language, a blend of Javanese and Malay. Nevertheless, they also continue to use Indonesian as the official language for broader communication. This linguistic adaptation reflects how their language evolves alongside social and cultural interactions.

4. **Contemporary Social Role Adaptation:** The Jawa Deli community has demonstrated remarkable adaptability to social and economic changes in North Sumatra. They play important roles in various fields, such as agriculture, as both workers and farmers, trade, and education. They also contribute to maintaining the continuity of Javanese culture amidst the currents of modernization and multicultural interaction. Their current roles also include being cultural custodians, inheritors of traditions and customs, and educators who help raise public awareness and knowledge about their culture and traditions.

Thus, the Jawa Deli community serves not only as an ethnic group preserving its cultural heritage but also as an agent of adaptation and development, contributing significantly to the diversity and dynamics of North Sumatran society.

## 3. Document Study

A document study will be conducted to gather data on the history of Javanese migration to Deli, Javanese traditions and customs, as well as other materials relevant to this research (**Figure 1**).

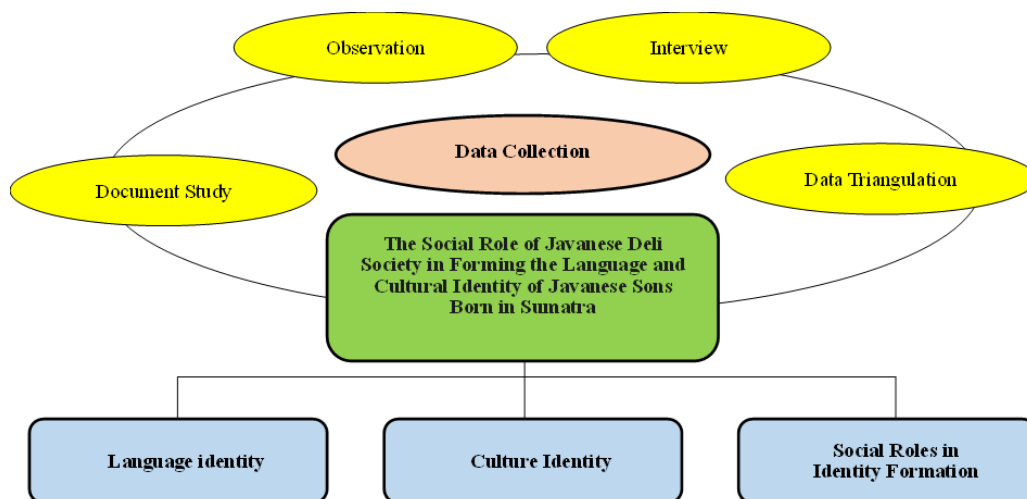


Figure 1. Research framework.

### 3.1. Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis methods. The first step in the analysis involves transcribing the interview data verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness. Following transcription, a data reduction process will be conducted in which the transcripts and observation notes are read repeatedly to identify recurring themes relevant to the research question. Once these themes are identified, they will be coded to organize the data and facilitate a more systematic analysis. Finally, the coded data will be interpreted to derive meaningful insights, particularly regarding the language and cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra.

### 3.2. Validity and Reliability of the Research

To maintain the validity and reliability of the research,

the following steps will be taken:

- **Data Triangulation:** Data from interviews, observations, and document studies will be compared and integrated to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.
- **Member Check:** The results of the data analysis will be discussed with participants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation aligns with their experiences and perspectives.
- **Peer Review:** The research process will be discussed with fellow researchers to obtain feedback and suggestions for improvement.

### 3.3. Research Period

This research was conducted over 6 months, with the following activity details in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Research preparation stages.

Research Phase	Time (Months)
Preparation	1
Data collection	3
Data analysis	1
Report Preparation	1

## 4. Research Results

The results show that the Deli Javanese community plays a vital role in preserving and transmitting the Javanese language and culture to the younger generation. Social interactions within families, the surrounding environment, and the Javanese community are essential for transmitting cultural values, traditions, and the Javanese language.

However, this research also highlights the dynamics and changes in the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra because of the influence of a multicultural environment and modernization. Some Javanese-born Sumatrans have a strong sense of identity with Javanese culture. In contrast, others are more inclined to adopt a local culture or create a new identity that combines various cultural influences.

### 4.1. Language Identity Javanese Birth Sumatra Birth

This research shows that the language identity of Jav-

anese sons born in Sumatra is diverse. Three main patterns of language identity were found in this study:

#### a. Active Use of the Javanese Language

As many as 40% (16 out of 40 participants) still actively used the Javanese language on a daily basis, particularly in interactions with family and the Javanese community. They learn Javanese from their parents, grandparents, and the surrounding environment. The details of the district are as follows (**Figure 2**):

- 1) Deli Serdang : 4 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 5 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 3 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 4 people out of 10 participants

#### b. The Use of Passive Javanese Language

As many as 35% (14 out of 40 participants) understand Javanese but do not actively use it. They might use Javanese in certain situations, such as traditional ceremonies or family gatherings, but are more comfortable using Indonesian or Malay in daily conversations. Here are the details by

district:

- 1) Deli Serdang : 3 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 3 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 5 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 3 people out of 10 participants

c. Does Not Master the Javanese Language

As many as 25% (10 out of 40 participants) did not

master the Javanese language. They may have never learned Javanese or had no opportunity to interact with Javanese speakers. Here are the details by district:

- 1) Deli Serdang : 3 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 2 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 2 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 3 people out of 10 participants

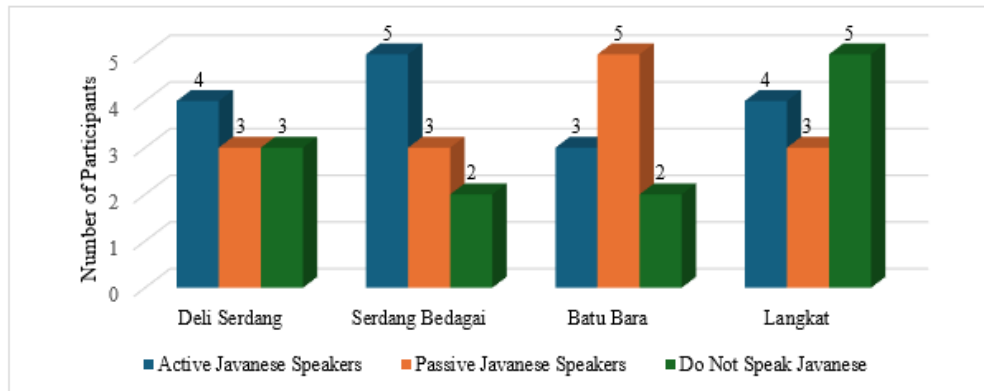


Figure 2. Participants in the research data collection.

The data above showed that the highest active use of the Javanese language is in Serdang Bedagai Regency (50%), followed by Deli Serdang and Langkat (40%). Meanwhile, Batu Bara District has the lowest proportion of active Javanese language use (30%). The passive use of the Javanese language was evenly distributed across the four districts, with slight variations. The highest proportion is found in Batu Bara district (50%), indicating that the understanding of Javanese remain quite high, even though it is not actively used on a daily basis. For participants who did not master the Javanese language, the highest proportion was found in Deli Serdang and Langkat regencies (30%), followed by Batu Bara (20%) and Serdang Bedagai (20%). This indicates significant transmission of the Javanese language across generations in various districts.

Factors influencing the language identity of Javanese children born in Sumatra include the following:

Internal Factor

1. Cultural values: The strong cultural values of the Deli Javanese community can influence the social roles that shape its language and cultural identity.
2. Language: The Javanese Deli community's use of

the Javanese language can influence the identity of children born in Sumatra.

3. Tradition: The still-maintained Deli Javanese traditions can influence the cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra.
4. Education: Education received by Javanese sons born in Sumatra can influence their language and cultural identity.

External Factor

1. Environment: Sumatra's social and cultural environment can influence the language and cultural identity of Javanese-born children.
2. Globalization: Globalization can influence the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants in Sumatra by introducing new values and cultures.
3. Media influence: Mass media can introduce new values and cultures that affect the language and cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra.
4. Government policy: Government policy can influence the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra by introducing educational and cultural programmes.



#### Interaction Factor

1. Interaction between generations: Older and younger generations can influence the language and cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra.
2. Interaction between communities: Interaction between the Deli Javanese community and other communities in Sumatra can influence the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese-born children in Sumatra.
3. Interaction between cultures: Deli Javanese culture and other cultures in Sumatra can influence the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese-born children in Sumatra.

Thus, the social role of the Deli Javanese community in shaping the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra is influenced by various internal, external, and interactional factors.

#### 4.2. Cultural Identity of Javanese Descendants Birth in Sumatra

The cultural identity of Javanese men born in Sumatra is diverse. Three main patterns of cultural identity were found in this study (**Figure 3**):

##### a. Strong Javanese Identity

As many as 37% (15 out of 40 participants) had a strong Javanese identity. They embody Javanese cultural values, such as cooperation, harmony, and respect for ancestors.

They also actively participate in Javanese cultural activities, including art, performances, and traditional ceremonies. Here are the details by district:

- 1) Deli Serdang : 4 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 3 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 4 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 4 people out of 10 participants

##### b. Moderate Javanese Identity

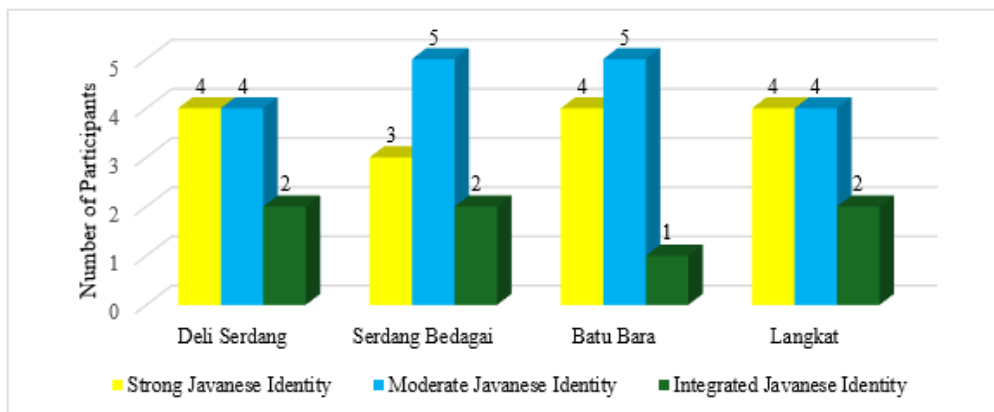
As many as 46% (18 out of 40 participants) have a moderate Javanese identity. They appreciate Javanese culture but are also open to other cultures. They may be interested in Javanese cultural activities, but they are not very active. Here are the details by district:

- 1) Deli Serdang : 4 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 5 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 5 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 4 people out of 10 participants

##### c. Integrated Javanese Identity

As many as 17% (7 out of 40 participants) have a Javanese identity integrated with other cultures. They adopt elements of different cultures, such as language or customs, but still maintain their Javanese identity. Here are the details by district:

- 1) Deli Serdang : 2 people out of 10 participants
- 2) Serdang Bedagai : 2 people out of 10 participants
- 3) Batu Bara : 1 people out of 10 participants
- 4) Langkat : 2 people out of 10 participants



**Figure 3.** Cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra.

From the data above, it can be seen that the moderate Javanese identity is the most commonly found (46%), followed by the strong Javanese identity (37%), and the least common is the integrated Javanese identity (17%). For a strong Javanese identity, the proportion in each district is relatively the same, at approximately 40%. For a moderate Javanese identity, the highest proportion was found in the districts of Serdang Bedagai and Batu Bara (50%), followed by Deli Serdang and Langkat (40%).

For integrated Javanese identity, the highest proportion was found in Deli Serdang and Langkat regencies (20%), followed by Serdang Bedagai (20%), and the lowest was Batu Bara (10%). Factors influencing the cultural identity of Javanese sons born in Sumatra include the following:

- **Social Interaction:** Interaction with the Deli Javanese community and other ethnic communities influences the formation of the cultural identities of Javanese descendants.
- **Personal Experience:** Personal experiences, such as migration experiences or life successes, can also influence the cultural identity of Javanese descendants.
- **Mass Media:** Mass media, including television, radio, and the Internet, also shape the cultural identity of Javanese descendants.

#### **4.3. The Social Role of the Deli Javanese Community in Identity Formation**

The Deli Javanese community plays a vital role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Social interactions within families, the surrounding environment, and the Javanese cultural community serve as key platforms for passing down cultural values, traditions, and the Javanese language to the younger generation.

The family is the primary unit of cultural transmission. Parents and grandparents serve as agents of socialization, transmitting cultural values, traditions, and the Javanese language to their children and grandchildren. Daily conversations, participation in traditional events, and involvement in family traditions help the younger generation to understand and internalize their cultural identity.

Besides the family, the surrounding environment also plays a vital role in shaping the language and cultural identity

of Javanese sons born in Sumatra. Interaction with peers, neighbors, and the surrounding community strengthens their attachment to the Javanese culture. Social activities, such as cooperation, traditional celebrations, and participation in the Javanese cultural community, provide space for the younger generation to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.

The Javanese community, including associations, social organizations, and artistic groups, plays a role in preserving and developing the language and cultural identity of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. This community serves as a platform to interact, share experiences, and strengthen their sense of togetherness in preserving cultural values.

However, although the Deli Javanese community plays a significant role in shaping the language and cultural identity of the younger generation, social dynamics and modernization are inevitable. The multicultural environment and the influence of globalization often trigger changes in the patterns of language use and interpretation of Javanese culture among Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Therefore, efforts to preserve the Javanese language and culture must continue so that this cultural identity remains sustainable and can be passed on to future generations.

The form of the Deli Javanese language, due to the social role of the Javanese community in Deli, born in Sumatra, can be seen from several aspects, among others:

##### **Language Change**

1. **Use of local words:** Deli Javanese in Sumatra uses local words that are not found in standard Javanese, such as “gawe” (to work) and “lirik” (to look).
2. **Use of the Malay language:** Deli Javanese in Sumatra also uses Malay words and phrases, such as “sama-sama” (same) and “terima kasih” (thank you).
3. **Phonological changes:** Deli Javanese in Sumatra exhibits phonological changes, such as the use of “e” instead of “a” in certain words.

##### **The Influence of Other Languages**

1. **The influence of the Malay language:** Deli Javanese in Sumatra is strongly influenced by the Malay language, especially in the use of words and phrases.
2. **The influence of Indonesian:** Deli Javanese in Sumatra also had an impact on Indonesians, particularly

in the use of formal words and phrases.

3. Influence of other regional languages: Deli Javanese in Sumatra is also influenced by other regional languages, such as Batak and Minangkabau.

#### Characteristics of the Deli Javanese Language

1. Use of unique words: The Deli Javanese language in Sumatra features unique words that are not found in standard Javanese, such as “gawe” (to work) and “lirik” (to look).
2. Unique intonation usage: Deli Javanese in Sumatra has a distinctive intonation, characterized by the use of higher pitches in specific words.
3. Use of a more relaxed language: Deli Javanese in Sumatra employs a more relaxed and informal language, characterized by the use of casual words and phrases.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese children born in Sumatra are highly diverse and are influenced by various factors, including age, environment, education, attitudes, social interactions, personal experiences, and mass media. The Deli Javanese community plays a vital role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese-born children in Sumatra through social interactions within families, their surrounding environment, and the broader Javanese cultural community. This study reveals that the Deli Javanese community plays a vital role in shaping and maintaining the linguistic and cultural identities of Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Their language and cultural identities show variations influenced by the social environment, education, and interactions with other cultures. Most participants still maintain elements of Javanese culture, but some have adapted to the local culture. Family and community have proven to be the primary elements in the transmission of culture, but modernization and globalization pose significant challenges. The results of this study confirm that cultural identity is dynamic and continuously evolving within diverse social contexts. Therefore, preserving Javanese culture in North Sumatra requires a strategic approach that combines education, cultural activities, the integration of technology to remain relevant to the

younger generation.

This study, while providing valuable insights into the social role of the Java Deli community in maintaining and shaping the cultural and linguistic identity of Java descendants in Sumatra, is limited by its scope and methodology. The research focused primarily on a specific geographical and cultural setting, which may not fully represent the diversity of experiences across all Java descendant communities in Sumatra or other regions. Furthermore, the reliance on qualitative interviews and observational data, though rich in depth, restricts the generalizability of the findings. Variables such as generational differences, urban versus rural settings, and levels of formal education among participants have not been thoroughly examined, which may influence the retention and transformation of language and cultural identity.

Future research should consider a broader and more comparative approach, involving multiple Java descendant communities across different provinces or islands in Indonesia. Quantitative studies could complement qualitative findings by measuring language use, identity markers, and cultural participation on a larger scale. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer insights into how these identities evolve over generations in response to social change, migration, and modernization. Exploring the impact of digital media and formal education on cultural and language preservation among younger generations may also yield important contributions to understanding the dynamic nature of ethnic identity in multicultural settings.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.S. and M.R.; methodology, S.S., H.H., and N.U.S.; validation, D.A., M.S., and L.A.; formal analysis, S.S. and Y.D.K.K.; investigation, S.S. and H.H.; resources, S.S. and M.R.; data curation, S.S.; writing—original draft preparation, S.S. and H.H.; writing—review and editing, H.H., Y.D.K.K., and M.S.; visualization, S.S. and H.H.; supervision, S.S., H.H., Y.D.K.K., and M.S.; funding acquisition, S.S. and H.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Funding

This work received no external funding.

## Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

No New data were created.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declares that they have no conflict of interest.

## References

- [1] Reid, A., 1979. *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra*. Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- [2] Barth, F., 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Waveland Press: Long Grove, IL, USA.
- [3] Errington, J.J., 1986. Continuity and change in Indonesian language development. *Journal of Asian Studies*. 45(2), 329–353.
- [4] Hymes, D., 1974. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- [5] Hall, S., 1994. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: Williams, P., Chrisman, L. (eds.). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Harvester Wheatsheaf: London, UK. pp. 227–237.
- [6] Nasution, T., Herman, H., Resmi, R., et al., 2023. Character values in the oral tradition of folk songs from Dairi. *Studies in Media and Communication*. 11(5), 10–17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i5.6009>
- [7] Setiawan, B., 2010. *Ethnic identity in a multicultural society: A study of Javanese society in Medan City [in Indonesian]*. Universitas Sumatra Utara Press: Medan, Indonesia.
- [8] Herman, H., Purba, R., Saputra, N., 2024. The realization of interpersonal meanings in cosmetic Maybelline New York in 2018 advertisements. *F1000Research*. 12, 968. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.129750.3>
- [9] Purba, R., Sibarani, B., Murni, S.M., et al., 2022. Conserving the Simalungun language maintenance through demographic community: the analysis of taboo words across times. *World Journal of English Language*. 12(1), 40–49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n1p40>
- [10] Duranti, A., 1997. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- [11] Juanda, J., Purba, R., Setiyadi, M.W., et al., 2025. Investigating the use of word choice and students' achievement in English language learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*. 14(2), 195–206. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v14n2p195>
- [12] Fishman, J.A., 1977. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to the Sociology of Language*. Newbury House: Rowley, MA, USA.
- [13] Sneddon, J.N., 2003. *The Indonesian language: Its history and role in modern society*. UNSW Press: Sydney, Australia.
- [14] Siahaan, C., Hutahaean, R.I., Gea, E.C.Y., et al., 2024. A contrastive between English and Batak Toba language in kinds of adverb. *Journal of Education, Linguistics, Literature, and Art*. 2(1), 13–19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62568/ella.v2i1.122>
- [15] Purba, R., Saddhono, K., Herman, H., et al., 2023. Women's language features: identifying language and gender in a talk show from a sociolinguistics perspective. *Research Journal of Advanced Humanities*. 4(4), 33–44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58256/mbjnc027>
- [16] Herman, H., Sipayung, R.W., Nasution, I., et al., 2025. Contrastive analysis of imperative sentences in English and Batak Toba: a case study using Si Mardan film. *World Journal of English Language*. 15(4), 355–367. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n4p355>
- [17] Purba, A., Purba, R., Herman, H., et al., 2023. Identifying turn-taking strategies in Toba Batak wedding traditional "Mangulosi": A case on conversation analysis. *Research Journal of Advanced Humanities*. 4(4), 223–237. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58256/8tvsk791>
- [18] Koentjaraningrat, 1985. Rice import policy for meeting government rice reserves [in Indonesian]. Balai Pustaka: Jakarta, Indonesia.
- [19] Sutrisno, D., Rafiek, M., Sintaningrum, R., et al., 2023. Intercultural linguistic borders, stereotypes and representations in Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A socio-linguistic perspective. *ISVS e-journal*. 10(11), 421–436. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61275/ISVSej-2023-10-11-27>
- [20] Susanto, A., 2016. Dynamics of Javanese cultural identity in North Sumatra: An ethnographic study among the Pujakesuma [in Indonesian]. PT RajaGrafindo Persada: Jakarta, Indonesia.
- [21] Lombard, D., 2005. *Nusa Java: Cross-cultural (Part 1) [in Indonesian]*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama: Jakarta, Indonesia.
- [22] Wierzbicka, A., 1997. *Understanding cultures through their key words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. Oxford University Press: New York, USA.
- [23] Purba, R., Corry, C., Herman, H., et al., 2024. Simalun-

- gun addressing terms based on the kinship system of the Tolu Sahundulan Lima Saodoran. Research Journal of Advanced Humanities. 5(3), 37–49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58256/fm64kj51>
- [24] Ewing, M.C., 2014. Language endangerment in Indonesia. *International Journal of Education*. 8(1), 12–22.