

The Roles of Javanese Phonology in Conveying Cultural Values in the Short Film *Uba Rampe* (2025)

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine how the phonological features of the Javanese language represent Javanese culture through the short film *Uba Rampe* (2025). This study used a qualitative descriptive method; the analysis focused on spoken utterances in the film that reflect elements of Javanese cultural representation. The research applied Chomsky's theory of sound change to explain how specific phonological adaptations function as markers of cultural identity within the Javanese linguistic system. In addition, Poedjosoedarmo's theory of linguistic politeness provides a framework for understanding how phonological variation can embody social values, particularly those related to respect and refinement in Javanese speech. The findings revealed several distinctive phonological phenomena, including phoneme alternations, allophonic variations, and aspiration patterns, which symbolize unique cultural characteristics of the Javanese language. Moreover, the presence of pre-nasalization in the utterances is a salient indicator of politeness, reflecting the Javanese emphasis on harmonious social interaction and deference. These phonological features were not merely linguistic markers but also served as representations of deeper cultural meanings embedded in everyday communication. Overall, this study demonstrated that the phonological system of Javanese plays a vital role in maintaining and expressing cultural identity, illustrating the intricate intertwining of language and culture within Javanese society.

Keywords: Culture; Javanese Language; Phoneme; Phonology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Javanese culture is characterized by its unique values, language, and social behavior, all of which emphasize harmony (*rukun*) and politeness (*tata krama*) (I. N. Safitri & Wiranti, 2025). As noted by Geertz (1976), Javanese society is founded on the principle of maintaining balance between the physical and spiritual worlds. This balance guides social actions toward preserving peace and harmonious relationships not only among individuals but also with nature and the divine. These cultural principles are reflected in the Javanese language, particularly through its speech level system (*undha usuk basa*), which signifies social hierarchy and serves as a means of showing respect to others, as stated by Poedjosoedarmo, 1979 in Putri and Kritstianto (2025) and Djokowidodo (2022).

Javanese culture is widely represented in various media, including contemporary YouTube. One example of cultural preservation is the short film *Uba Rampe*, which explores several Javanese traditions related to wedding preparations. The short film depicts a couple who are preparing various items for their upcoming wedding. The title “*Uba Rampe*,” which literally means “ceremonial preparations,” reflects the theme of assembling essential materials for a special occasion. Some linguistic factors can be analyzed, such as phonological aspects and the intonation of speech in the short film *Uba Rampe*. Based on that phenomenon, this study is formulated to understand how the roles of Javanese phonology conveying cultural values in the short film “*Uba Rampe (2025)*” represent and communicate Javanese cultural values to the audience.

Some studies have addressed topics similar to those in this research. First relevant study entitled *Kajian Fonologi Bahasa Jawa Berdasarkan Tinjauan Diakorinis* by Wijayanti (2024). This study analyzed historical phonological changes in Javanese, including vowel and consonant forms and allophones. Its relevance lay in examining the manifestation of cultural dynamics through the language’s sounds. This study used a historical-comparative method by analyzing the innovation and phonological retention of Proto-Austronesian in Javanese. It was found that various phonemes are undergoing innovations, including substitution, splitting, metathesis, merging, dissimilation, prothesis, and reduplication. These phonological and lexical changes occur more frequently than the preservation of original forms.

The second relevant study, entitled *Phonological Variation Technology Integration for Indonesia Cultural Preservation and Edupreneurship* by Hetilaniar et al. (2025). This study aimed to document the phonological variation in the Komering language’s local dialect in South Sumatra, examine the use of technology, and preserve the culture. This research used the digital aspect as the medium of cultural representation. The findings of this study showed a significant shift from [i] to [ɛ] and the omission of [h]. The result of the study was similar to Agustin et al. (2023), entitled *Variasi Dialek Bahasa Jawa Ngoko, Krama dan Krama Inggil di Daerah OKU Timur (Kajian Dialektologi)*. That was the change in several phonemes, one of which is the change of phoneme [a] to [o] in the word “*akeh*” to “*okeh*”. Finding of the study were also similar to Dwipayana (2022) entitled *Penggunaan Tutur di Kalangan Remaja Suku Jawa dalam Berkomunikasi di Desa Pelita Jaya Kecamatan Belitang Madang Raya Kabupaten OKU Timur Tahun 1984-2019*, which showed the change of utterances because of some factors such as time changing in technology.

The third relevant study was conducted by Subaweh et al. (2022) entitled *Analisis Kemiripan Fonologi Bahasa Jawa Dialek Indramayu dengan Dialek Lumajang*. This study focused on comparing consonant and vowel changes in the Javanese dialects of Indramayu and Lumajang. It was found that there were many changes from both segmental and suprasegmental factors. The most striking thing was in the suprasegmental factor, namely, in the intonation. The dialect from Indramayu tended to be rougher than that from Lumajang. It was marked on the people who always said that dialect from Indramayu called “*medhok*”.

The next relevant study, entitled *Peran Budaya dalam Pembentukan Identitas Manusia* by Febrian et al. (2025) aimed to explore the role of culture in the formulation of human identity, which focused on the influence of local cultures and global cultures, as well as some cultural elements such as language, religion, and cultural symbols. This study used a qualitative method, specifically library research, by collecting data from writings, including books and articles in journals. The findings of this study revealed that culture plays a fundamental role in the foundation of human identity, specifically in shaping human attitudes and norms.

The relevant study of the representation of the Javanese language through the movie was conducted by Kaish et al. (2024) entitled *Representasi Budaya Jawa dalam Film Hati Suhita*. Javanese culture is depicted as a theocentric and ethically grounded system that values respect, empathy, and social harmony. It encourages speakers to exercise caution in communication, to provide considerate counsel, to make deliberate and reflective decisions, and to uphold the virtue of forgiveness in interpersonal relationships. Similar relevant studies were conducted by Khikmah et al. (2024) that entitled *Representasi Nilai-nilai Budaya Jawa dalam Film Primbon (Studi Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Pierce)*, Kurniawati et al. (2022) entitled *Analisis Semiotika Budaya Jawa Tengah pada Film Mangkujiwo Karya Azhar Kanoi Lubis*, and Bangsawan (2021) entitled *Representasi Budaya Jawa pada Film*

Animasi “Knight Kris”. These related studies consistently examined the representation of Javanese culture through a semiotic lens, utilizing films as a medium of cultural expression. The research findings were articulated through interpretive analyses of objects that functioned as cultural symbols, embodying elements of spirituality, morality, and the intrinsic attributes of Javanese cultural identity. This approach highlights how visual semiotics in film serves as a powerful tool for understanding the deeper philosophical and ethical values embedded within Javanese cultural practices.

The relevant studies discussed the roles of culture in the formation of human identity and dialect variation in the Javanese language. Most of them analyzed phonological phenomena themselves, such as segmental and suprasegmental factors. Some relevant studies tended to use story texts, traditional texts, or daily talks as the medium of the research. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in creating a new atmosphere by using contemporary media as the research medium. Moreover, this research is also a form of modernization in phonology research, presenting a representation of Javanese culture through contemporary media.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study. Qualitative descriptive research is a method that describes the results of its analysis using words that reflect the aspects studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The descriptive qualitative method describes the research problem. This study presented the various types of utterances that appear in the film *Uba Rampe* (2025). Each utterance type was analyzed to identify the linguistic characteristics that emerge within the film’s communicative context. The data were collected by transcribing the dialogue from the short film *Uba Rampe*. Besides that, researchers compared the Javanese language with *Bahasa Indonesia*, which revealed the characterization of Javanese culture. The data analysis procedure consisted of several stages. First, the researcher observed the short film *Uba Rampe* in its entirety. Next, utterances that reflected elements of Javanese cultural representation were identified and extracted. To facilitate phonological comparison, the researcher used the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). In the final stage, the collected data were analyzed, interpreted, and synthesized into comprehensive findings to reveal the representation of Javanese culture through phonological aspects.

This study aimed to demonstrate the representation of Chomsky and Halle (1968) theory of sound change. It sought to provide empirical evidence for the occurrence of the phonological changes described in the theory. This research also reflected Poedjosoedarmo’s (1982) concept of language as a symbol of politeness. It demonstrated how linguistic forms can embody cultural values of respectful, refined communication. At the end, the researcher would provide a summary of the role of the Javanese language in conveying cultural values in the short film *Uba Rampe*.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Role as a Characteristic of the Language

A. The Change of Phoneme Distribution

- (1) “*Iya iya maaf, gitu aja marah-marah*”

Based on utterance (1), a phonemic shift from [f] to [p] also occurs in the pronunciation of the word “*maaf*”. This phenomenon arises from the absence of the phoneme [f] in the Javanese phonemic inventory. As a result, Javanese speakers frequently substitute the labiodental fricatives [f] and [v] with the bilabial stop [p]. This substitution should not be interpreted as an inability to articulate the sounds [f] or [v], but rather as an adaptive strategy to maintain naturalness and articulatory ease within the phonological constraints of the Javanese language system.

Table 1. The Change of Phonemes [f] to [p]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>Maaf</i>	[maʔaf]	[maʔap]	Sorry

Table 1 shows that phonological change reflects a process known as substitution or phoneme replacement, which happens when speakers of a language encounter sounds that do not exist in their native phonological inventory. Since the Javanese language lacks the labiodental fricative [f], speakers naturally replace it with the most similar sound available in their language. In this case, the voiceless bilabial stop [p]. Both sounds share similar articulatory features: they are voiceless and produced at the front of the mouth (labial region), though [f] involves friction (fricative). In contrast, [p] involves complete closure (a stop).

This phenomenon is common in language contact situations, where speakers adapt foreign or loan words into their native phonological system. In Javanese, words borrowed from Indonesian or other languages that contain [f] are thus frequently realized as [p], leading to pronunciations such as “*maap*”.

- (2) “— *namane batik kontemporer, terus ini batik klasik.*”
- (3) “*Bolu Putat, dari Patuk, Gunungkidul.*”
- (4) “*Mas, cetek lo iki*”

Based on the utterance in data (2), (3), (4), there is a noticeable shift in the articulation of the alveolar stop [t] to the retroflex stop [ɮ]. The words batik, Patuk, and cetek originally derive from the Javanese language; however, when adopted into standard Indonesian, they are pronounced with the alveolar stop [t]. This variation indicates a phonetic adaptation in which the retroflex articulation reflects the influence of the Javanese phonological system, while the alveolar realization corresponds to the standardized pronunciation in Indonesian. Such a shift illustrates the dynamic interaction between regional and national linguistic norms within the phonetic realization of shared lexical items.

Table 2. The change of phoneme [t] to [ɮ]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>Batik</i>	[batik]	[b ^h aɮik]	Batik (name of thing)
2	<i>Patuk</i>	[patuʔ]	[paɮuʔ]	Patuk (name of the place)
3	<i>Cetek</i>	[ceteʔ]	[cəɮeʔ]	Shallow

Table 2 illustrates the phonemic shift from the voiceless alveolar plosive [t] to the voiceless retroflex plosive [ɮ]. This phonological variation occurs when Javanese speakers pronounce words that originate from the Javanese language. In contrast, non-Javanese speakers tend to articulate these words using the alveolar plosive [t], in accordance with the standardized pronunciation of Indonesian. This difference indicates that Javanese speakers maintain the original phonological characteristics of their regional language, whereas non-Javanese speakers conform to the phonological norms of Standard Indonesian.

- (5) “*Kan kita udah beli souvenir to*”

Data (5) shows the change indicates a vowel-lowering process influenced by the Javanese sound system. The high back vowel [u] shifts to the mid back rounded vowel [ɔ], reflecting the speaker’s tendency toward Javanese vowel patterns, which are generally more open than those in Standard Indonesian.

Table 3. The change of phoneme [u] to [ɔ]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>suvenir</i>	[sufənir]	[sɔfənir]	souvenir

Table 3 shows that the phonemic change occurs when Javanese speakers commonly lower vowels in words with multiple syllables containing high vowels. This tendency reflects a natural phonological adjustment to maintain articulatory balance and ease of pronunciation within the Javanese speech pattern.

A phonemic change from [f] to [p] occurs in *maaf*, as in “*Iya iya maaf, gitu aja marah-marah*,” due to the absence of [f] in the Javanese phonemic system. Javanese speakers replace [f] or [v] with [p] as an adaptive strategy to ease articulation, producing forms like *maap*. Similarly, in utterances such as “*namane batik kontemporer*” and “*Bolu Putat*,” the alveolar stop [t] shifts to the retroflex [ɮ], reflecting Javanese phonological influence while Standard Indonesian retains [t]. Additionally, in “*Kan kita udah beli souvenir to*,” a vowel lowering from [u] to [ɔ] appears in *suvenir*, showing Javanese speakers’ tendency toward more open vowel articulation.

This phenomenon aligns with Chomsky and Halle (1968) theory of sound change, which posits that when a certain phoneme from a foreign or contact language is absent in a speaker’s native phonological system, speakers will naturally substitute it with the closest available phoneme. This substitution serves as a form of phonological adaptation, allowing speakers to maintain articulatory ease while preserving communicative intelligibility, which supported findings from Bhakti (2020). In the context of Javanese speakers, this explains why non-native sounds such as [f] or [v] are often realized as [p], reflecting the systematic process by which linguistic structures adapt to the phonemic constraints of a given language.

B. Allophonic Variations

- (6) “*Rasanya kaya embun yang disaring sama moloekat (malaikat)*.”

The phonemic changes are evident in the utterance (6). This example reveals an allophone from phoneme [a] to [ɔ] in the syllable *mala*. It also occurred an allophone from phoneme [i] to [e] in the syllable preceding the final closed syllable *kat*. Another piece of evidence is data (5) showing that the allophone of the phoneme [i] is [e] in the syllable *nir* (souvenir).

Table 4. Allophonic Variations

No	Words	Transcript	
		Indonesian Standard	Javanese Allophony
1	<i>Malaikat</i>	[malaikat]	[mɔləekat]
2	<i>suvenir</i>	[sufənir]	[sɔfəner]

Table 4 explains allophonic variations as a characteristic of the Javanese language. These alterations signify a systematic modification in vowel quality that characterizes the phonological features of the local speech variety. Such shifts may be influenced by articulatory tendencies, regional linguistic norms, or socio-phonetic patterns inherent to the speech community represented in the film. Overall, these variations reflect how phonological adaptation can serve as a marker of regional identity and cultural expression within spoken discourse.

C. Emphasis of the Phonemes

In Javanese, certain voiced consonants are produced with a noticeable burst of breath, known as aspiration. This phonetic feature is especially observed in voiced plosives such as [b], [d], and [g], as well as in the voiced affricate [j]. The aspiration in these sounds makes their release phase more audible than in languages like Indonesian or English, where voiced consonants are typically unaspirated.

This characteristic gives Javanese pronunciation a distinct auditory quality, often described as “breathy” or “thick” in release. The presence of aspiration in voiced sounds can also serve as a dialectal or regional marker within Javanese speech, as its intensity may vary across dialects. It is symbolized with diacritic [^h] in the transcript to show breathy distribution of the phonemes, which is described in the following table.

Table 5. Aspirated Javanese Phonemes

No	Transcript				Meaning
	Phonemes	Words	Indonesian	Javanese	
1	[b ^h]	<i>Batik</i>	[batik]	[b ^h at̪ik]	<i>Batik</i> (name of thing)
2	[d ^h]	<i>Dek</i>	[deʔ]	[d ^h eʔ]	Dear
3	[g ^h]	<i>Goyang</i>	[goyan̩]	[g ^h oyaŋ]	Dance
4	[j ^h]	<i>Jangan</i>	[jaŋan]	[j ^h aŋan]	Do not (instruction)

Table 5 shows the existence of aspiration in the Javanese language. This characteristic is one of the most distinctive phonetic features of Javanese, marked by a strong emphasis on certain phonemes. Javanese speakers typically produce voiced plosives and voiced affricates, particularly [b], [d], [g], and [j], with a noticeably heavier or more aspirated articulation. This results in a speech quality often described as “*medhok*,” a term for the thick, regionally marked accent associated with Javanese pronunciation. The “*medhok*” quality reflects not only phonetic distinctiveness but also serves as a sociolinguistic identity marker, signaling a speaker’s regional and cultural background. Such articulation patterns highlight how phonetic realization in Javanese carries both linguistic and social meaning within the broader Indonesian speech community.

3.2. Role as a Politeness of the Language

A. Pre-nasalization Articulation

The analysis revealed several occurrences of pre-nasalization phenomena in the film. This finding also supported the findings of Windaryanti and Suryadi (2022) that highlight distinctive phonological features of Javanese speech patterns.

(7) “*ini **baca***”

(8) “*Anu, ayo kita ke **Baros** aja, naik kano*”

One indicator of politeness in Javanese speech is the occurrence of pre-nasalization. The data (7) and (8) show the presence of the pre-nasal sound [m] in the pronunciation of the words “Baca” and “Baros,” reflecting a phonological feature associated with refined and polite speech patterns.

Table 6. Pre-nasalization Pronunciation [m]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>baca</i>	[baca]	[mbaca]	To read
2	<i>Baros</i>	[baros]	[mbaros]	Baros (name of place)

Based on Table 6, the data indicate the presence of pre-nasalization [m] in the pronunciation of *baca* and *Baros*. While these words are expected to be pronounced as [baca] and [baros], Javanese speakers tend to articulate them as [mbaca] and [mbaros]. This finding suggests that pre-nasalization [m] typically occurs when a word begins with the voiced bilabial plosive [b], reflecting a systematic phonological pattern in Javanese speech.

(9) “*Maksudmu, **Jawani** to?*”

Data (9) reveals the occurrence of pre-nasalization [n] preceding the voiced palatal affricate [j], as observed in the word “*Jawani*,” which is realized as [njawani]. A similar pattern is also found with the voiced alveolar

plosive [d], as in the word “*damel*” (‘to make’), pronounced [ndaməl]. Refer to the table below for a detailed illustration of the described phonological phenomenon.

Table 7. Pre-nasalization Pronunciation [n]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>Jawani</i>	[jawani]	[njawani]	Having a Javanese personality

Table 7 shows that pre-nasalization occurs in Javanese. These instances indicate that pre-nasalization [n] commonly occurs before voiced palatal and alveolar plosive consonants, reflecting a distinctive phonological feature of Javanese speech. This pattern suggests that Javanese speakers tend to introduce a nasal element preceding certain voiced stops and affricates, resulting in articulations such as [nj] and [nd]. The phenomenon serves as a form of phonetic reinforcement, producing a smoother, more natural transition between sounds during speech.

(10) “*ini ganggu ini*”

(11) “... *dari Patuk, Gunung Kidul*”

Prenasalized pronunciation is also found in the data (10) and (11). In these examples, Javanese speakers tend to produce a pre-nasal [ŋ] sound in the words “*ganggu*” and “*Gunung Kidul*,” resulting in pronunciations such as [ŋganggu] and [ŋgunuŋ kidul]. This phenomenon reflects a distinctive phonological feature of the Javanese language, where voiced plosive consonants like [g] are often preceded by a nasal sound to create smoother and more natural articulation. Such a pattern demonstrates how Javanese phonetic habits influence the pronunciation of Indonesian words, revealing a process of phonological transfer from Javanese. Rather than being viewed as an error, this feature signifies the preservation of local linguistic identity and rhythm within a broader linguistic context. To further illustrate this phenomenon, the following table compares Javanese and Indonesian pronunciations.

Table 8. Pre-nasalization Pronunciation [ŋ]

No	Words	Transcript		Meaning
		Indonesian	Javanese	
1	<i>Ganggu</i>	[ganggu]	[ŋganggu]	To disturb
2	<i>Gunung Kidul</i>	[gunuŋ kidul]	[ŋgunuŋ kidul]	<i>Gunung Kidul</i> (name of place)

Table 8 shows that the occurrence of pre-nasalization [ŋ] was identified in words beginning with the voiced velar plosive [g]. This finding indicates that Javanese speakers tend to insert a nasal element before the velar consonant, resulting in a smoother, more natural articulation pattern. Such a process exemplifies a common feature of Javanese phonology, in which nasalization eases pronunciation and maintains the rhythmic flow of speech.

Moreover, pre-nasalization played an important role in Javanese speech as a politeness symbol, as found in a study by I. N. Safitri and Wiranti (2025). As shown in earlier findings, Javanese speakers have a unique way of pronouncing voiced plosives and affricates. However, when these sounds are preceded by a nasal element, the usual aspiration becomes softer, making the pronunciation less forceful. This shows that pre-nasalization does not just change how individual sounds are made but also shapes the overall sound pattern and rhythm of Javanese speech.

These findings indicated that Javanese phonology played a significant role in conveying Javanese cultural values, as phonological features functioned not only as linguistic elements but also as carriers of cultural meaning. The results were in line with previous studies conducted by Kaish et al. (2024), Khikmah et al. (2024), Kurniawati et al. (2022), Putri and Kritstianto (2025), and P. I. Safitri et al. (2025) that employed contemporary media as the main source of data to examine cultural representation in language use. Nevertheless, this study extended earlier research by Bhakti (2020) in emphasizing the relevance of a phonological perspective in cultural analysis. By focusing on phonological patterns, this study demonstrated that cultural values could be embedded and transmitted

through sound structures, thereby underscoring the contribution of phonological analysis to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture.

4. CONCLUSION

The Javanese language exhibits a high degree of complexity, particularly evident in its phonological system. An examination of Javanese phonology reveals that phonological features play an implicit yet significant role in representing Javanese cultural values and social identity. The presence of phonemic alternations, allophonic variations, and aspirated consonants reflects the distinct phonetic characteristics that define the language, independent of the speaker's background. Furthermore, the phenomenon of pre-nasalization—often associated with politeness and refinement in Javanese speech—serves as an additional marker of cultural expression. This feature, as exemplified in the short film *Uba Rampe* (2025), demonstrates that Javanese culture is manifested not only through spoken interaction but also through artistic and media representations, emphasizing the deep interconnection between language and cultural identity. By conducting this study, it was expected that the findings would make theoretical and empirical contributions to the development of linguistic research, particularly research on culture examined through a phonological approach. This study was expected to serve as a reference for future research focusing on the relationship between phonological elements and the representation of cultural values. Furthermore, subsequent studies were expected to uncover new findings that more comprehensively represent Javanese culture through phonological analysis, with a view to understanding the role of phonology in the construction and transmission of cultural values.

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