

Anthropolinguistics and Sociolinguistics: A Systematic Integrative Review of Language, Culture, Identity, and Social Variation

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This systematic integrative review clarifies how anthropolinguistics and sociolinguistics can be combined without erasing their distinct explanatory orientations. Literature was identified through Google Scholar, Crossref Metadata Search, publisher platforms, Indonesian scholarly repositories, author profiles, and backward citation tracing. The search record was updated on 22 July 2026 and covered works published from 1960 to July 2026. Of 31 candidate records, four duplicates were removed, 27 records were screened, 21 full-text scholarly works were assessed, and 18 works were retained at the eligibility stage. Seventeen substantive works entered thematic synthesis; the PRISMA 2020 statement was used solely as reporting guidance. Sources were coded by disciplinary orientation, unit of analysis, treatment of culture and variation, mechanism of social meaning, evidence type, and empirical relevance. Five clusters emerged: ethnography of communication, variationist sociolinguistics, indexicality and identity, language ideology, and anthropolinguistic research on oral tradition and local wisdom. The synthesis demonstrates that anthropolinguistics explains culturally situated meaning, whereas sociolinguistics establishes the patterned social distribution of linguistic forms. Indexicality connects distribution to interactional identity work, and language ideology explains the institutional evaluation of linguistic resources. The article develops a culture-variation-indexicality framework organised by cross-level traceability: each substantive claim must connect an identifiable linguistic feature, its cultural interpretation, its social patterning, and the interactional mechanism through which it acquires social meaning. The framework offers a rigorous basis for empirical studies of Indonesian multilingualism.

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ritual discourse, local knowledge, linguistic landscapes, and intergenerational language change.

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1. Introduction

Language is both a structured semiotic system and a form of socially situated action. Anthropolinguistics examines how linguistic forms, speech genres, and communicative practices participate in cultural knowledge, social institutions, and everyday life (Duranti, 1997; Hymes, 1974; Sibarani, 2020). Sociolinguistics examines systematic relations between linguistic choice and social differentiation, including class, age, gender, social network, style, institution, contact, and historical change (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 2000). The two fields therefore converge on language-in-context, but they approach explanation from different analytical directions. Their relationship is best understood as complementary rather than interchangeable.

Anthropolinguistics generally begins with culturally organised meaning and asks how language participates in worldview, ritual, oral tradition, memory, kinship, socialisation, and local knowledge. Its evidence commonly includes ethnographic observation, speech events, oral texts, genres, interactional routines, and culturally salient lexical or grammatical forms (Ahearn, 2012; Duranti, 1997; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). Sociolinguistics generally begins with patterned linguistic heterogeneity and asks who uses a form, in which setting, at what frequency, and under which social constraints. Its evidence includes variable distributions, speaker categories, stylistic shifts, language attitudes, social evaluation, and change in progress (Eckert, 2012; Labov, 1963). The distinction concerns the point of analytical entry, not a rigid separation of subject matter.

When the two perspectives are applied in isolation, recurrent weaknesses appear. Cultural interpretation may attribute a stable meaning to an entire community without determining whether the form is restricted by generation, setting, status, gender, mobility, or communicative medium. Conversely, a variationist analysis may establish a statistically patterned distribution without explaining why the difference matters to speakers or how it relates to locally recognised values. A complete language-culture explanation therefore requires more than ethnographic interpretation or distributional measurement alone. It requires a traceable connection between linguistic evidence, social patterning, and culturally grounded meaning.

Indexicality and language ideology provide the principal conceptual bridge. Linguistic forms acquire social meaning through recurrent interaction, becoming associated with stances, personae, relationships, and social categories (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Silverstein, 2003). Language ideologies subsequently evaluate and organise those associations within wider regimes of prestige, authenticity, authority, standardisation, or stigma (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Woolard, 1998). As linguistic resources circulate across communities, institutions, and scales, their value may change even when their formal properties remain relatively stable (Blommaert, 2010). Identity is therefore produced through linguistic positioning and contrast rather than merely expressed by predetermined groups.

The unresolved scholarly problem is not whether language reflects culture or society, but how cultural interpretation, social distribution, interactional enactment, and ideological evaluation can be connected in one explanatory procedure. Existing traditions offer sophisticated accounts of speech events, variation, identity, indexical order, language ideology, language shift, and local wisdom, yet these dimensions are frequently applied as parallel perspectives. Comparatively little synthesis has specified the evidential sequence required to move from an observed linguistic feature to a defensible claim about cultural continuity or change. This review addresses that gap through the principle of cross-level traceability.

The review has three objectives. First, it clarifies the conceptual and methodological boundaries between anthropolinguistics and sociolinguistics. Second, it synthesises how

ethnography of communication, sociolinguistic variation, indexicality, identity, language ideology, oral tradition, and local wisdom explain social meaning. Third, it develops an operational culture-variation-indexicality framework for empirical research, especially in Indonesian multilingual settings. Correspondingly, the review asks: (1) how do anthropolinguistics and sociolinguistics differ in their analytical entry points and preferred evidence; (2) through which mechanisms do linguistic forms acquire social and cultural meaning; and (3) how can these mechanisms be organised into a reproducible research architecture?

2. Methods for Literature Selection

2.1 Review Design and Reporting Orientation

The study used a systematic integrative literature review with interpretive thematic synthesis. An integrative design was appropriate because the relevant evidence base combines foundational monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, ethnographic studies, conceptual contributions, and Indonesian anthropolinguistic research. These sources do not report homogeneous interventions or commensurable effect sizes; consequently, meta-analysis would be methodologically inappropriate. The review nevertheless applied a transparent sequence of identification, duplicate removal, screening, eligibility assessment, coding, and thematic synthesis.

The reporting structure was informed by PRISMA 2020, particularly its principles of transparent study identification and selection (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA was used as a reporting guide rather than treated as substantive evidence. Because the review integrates theoretical and empirical scholarship across disciplines, the synthesis prioritised conceptual relevance, evidential clarity, and cross-level explanatory value rather than quantitative aggregation.

2.2 Information Sources and Search Strategy

Literature was identified through Google Scholar, Crossref Metadata Search, publisher platforms, Indonesian scholarly repositories and author profiles, and backward citation tracing from foundational works. The search record was updated on 22 July 2026 and covered publications from 1960 to July 2026. The extended time span was necessary because several central concepts - including ethnography of communication, variationist sociolinguistics, language socialisation, language ideology, and indexical order - were established before contemporary indexing systems became comprehensive.

Search strings combined disciplinary labels with mechanisms of social meaning. Core combinations included: ("anthropolinguistics" OR "linguistic anthropology") AND (culture OR "oral tradition" OR "local wisdom"); sociolinguistics AND (variation OR style OR identity); indexicality AND (identity OR stance OR "social meaning"); "ethnography of communication" AND ("speech event" OR "communicative competence"); "language ideology" AND (prestige OR stigma OR authority); and ("local wisdom" AND "oral tradition") AND (language OR discourse). Search syntax was adapted to the capabilities of each platform. Reference lists of retained works were manually examined to identify foundational sources not retrieved through platform searching.

2.3 Eligibility Criteria

Sources were eligible when they met four conditions: they were published by an established academic press or peer-reviewed outlet; they directly addressed at least one review question; they contained an identifiable linguistic, communicative, ethnographic, interactional, or distributional unit of analysis; and their bibliographic details could be verified. English- and Indonesian-language sources were eligible. Foundational monographs and book chapters were retained because many of the field's defining concepts were originally developed outside journal articles.

Sources were excluded when they consisted of non-academic commentary, described culture without identifiable linguistic evidence, reported variation without social or cultural interpretation, fell outside the review questions, duplicated another record, or lacked

sufficient bibliographic traceability. Studies of language structure without contextual or social interpretation were not retained. The criteria were designed to prevent the synthesis from equating cultural description with anthropolinguistic analysis or formal heterogeneity with sociolinguistic explanation.

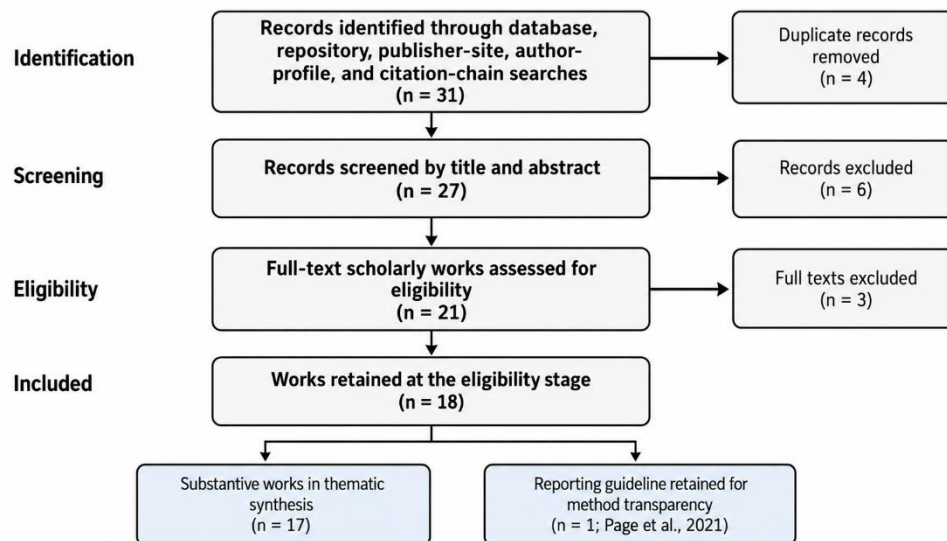
Table 1. Systematic integrative review protocol

Component	Specification
Review design	Systematic integrative literature review with interpretive thematic synthesis.
Search update and coverage	22 July 2026; publications from 1960 to July 2026; English- and Indonesian-language sources.
Information sources	Google Scholar, Crossref Metadata Search, publisher platforms, Indonesian repositories and author profiles, and backward citation tracing.
Core search domains	Anthropolinguistics/linguistic anthropology; sociolinguistic variation; ethnography of communication; indexicality; identity; language ideology; oral tradition; local wisdom.
Inclusion criteria	Foundational or peer-reviewed scholarship with identifiable linguistic evidence, direct relevance to a review question, and verifiable bibliographic details.
Exclusion criteria	Non-academic commentary; cultural description without linguistic evidence; variation without social or cultural interpretation; duplicates; insufficient traceability.
Coding dimensions	Disciplinary orientation, unit of analysis, treatment of culture, treatment of variation, mechanism of social meaning, evidence type, and empirical relevance.
Synthesis procedure	Iterative coding, comparison of recurring concepts, consolidation into thematic clusters, and cross-theme framework development.

2.4 Screening, Duplicate Handling, and Study Selection

The searches identified 31 candidate records. Four duplicates were removed, leaving 27 records for title and abstract screening. Six records were excluded at this stage because they were general commentaries or did not address the review questions.

The study-selection process is summarised in Figure 1. The search identified 31 records through database, repository, publisher-site, author-profile, and citation-chain searches. Following the removal of four duplicate records, 27 records were screened by title and abstract, of which six were excluded for failing to meet the predefined relevance criteria. Twenty-one full-text scholarly works were subsequently assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of three additional works. Eighteen works were retained at the eligibility stage; 17 substantive works were included in the thematic synthesis, while one methodological source, Page et al. (2021), was retained solely to support transparency and consistency in review reporting.



The figure separates substantive evidence ($n = 17$) from the PRISMA reporting guideline ($n = 1$), resolving the distinction between eligibility-stage retention and thematic-synthesis inclusion.

2.5 Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

Each substantive source was entered into a structured extraction matrix recording publication type, disciplinary orientation, analytical object, preferred evidence, concept of culture, treatment of social variation, proposed mechanism of social meaning, and relevance to empirical research. The purpose of extraction was not to rank theoretical traditions, but to determine which explanatory function each source contributed to an integrated account.

Codes were compared iteratively and consolidated into five thematic clusters: ethnography of communication; variationist sociolinguistics; indexicality and identity; language ideology; and anthropolinguistic research on oral tradition and local wisdom. The synthesis then examined the relations among clusters. Particular attention was given to whether a source explained cultural interpretation, social distribution, interactional enactment, ideological evaluation, or more than one of these functions.

2.6 Quality and Relevance Safeguards

Quality and relevance were assessed through four safeguards: publication by a recognised academic press or peer-reviewed outlet; direct relevance to at least one review question; explicit connection between linguistic form and social or cultural meaning; and sufficient bibliographic traceability. Foundational status did not automatically justify inclusion. A classic work was retained only when its concepts remained necessary for the explanatory architecture developed in the synthesis. This procedure favoured analytical relevance over citation prestige alone.

3. Results

3.1 Profile of the Included Literature

The substantive corpus comprised 17 works published between 1963 and 2021: eight academic monographs, three scholarly book chapters, and six journal articles. The corpus combined foundational formulations with later developments in indexicality, identity, style, globalisation, and Indonesian anthropolinguistics. The distribution reflects the intellectual history of the field, in which major concepts were frequently established in books and chapters before being operationalised in journal-based empirical research.

Table 2. Characteristics and analytical roles of the substantive sources

Source	Type	Primary analytical focus	Role in synthesis
Ahearn (2012)	Monograph	Language in social life and contemporary linguistic anthropology	Cultural and ethnographic foundation
Blommaert (2010)	Monograph	Mobility, scale, globalisation, and unequal value of linguistic resources	Ideology, power, and scale
Bucholtz & Hall (2005)	Journal article	Identity as an interactional and relational achievement	Indexicality and identity mechanism
Duranti (1997)	Monograph	Linguistic anthropology, performance, participation, and culture	Cultural interpretation and situated practice
Eckert (2012)	Journal article	Third-wave variation, style, and social meaning	Bridge from distribution to indexical meaning
Fishman (1991)	Monograph	Language shift, intergenerational continuity, and revitalisation	Historical distribution and institutional change
Gumperz (1982)	Monograph	Contextualisation cues and inferential processes in interaction	Interactional interpretation
Hymes (1974)	Monograph	Communicative competence and ethnography of communication	Speech-event and cultural-context framework
Irvine & Gal (2000)	Book chapter	Iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure	Ideological differentiation
Labov (1963)	Journal article	Variation, local identity, and social evaluation	Empirical social patterning
Labov (1972)	Monograph	Systematic variation, stratification, style, and change	Variationist foundation
Ochs & Schieffelin (1984)	Book chapter	Language acquisition as cultural socialisation	Reproduction of cultural norms through interaction
Silverstein (2003)	Journal article	Indexical order and layered social meaning	Mechanism linking form and social value
Sibarani (2020)	Journal article	Anthropolinguistics as an interdisciplinary approach	Indonesian conceptual application
Sibarani, Deliana, & Liyushiana (2021)	Journal article	Language landscapes, text, context, and tourism communication	Indonesian empirical application
Trudgill (2000)	Monograph	Social dialectology, contact, and patterned differentiation	Variation across groups and settings
Woolard (1998)	Book chapter	Language ideology, authority, and legitimacy	Institutional evaluation of linguistic forms

3.2 Conceptual Boundaries and Complementarity

The synthesis confirms that anthropolinguistics and sociolinguistics share an interest in language-in-context but differ in their primary explanatory direction. Anthropolinguistics moves from communicative form towards cultural knowledge, values, genres, norms, and institutions. Sociolinguistics moves from linguistic heterogeneity towards social distribution, differentiation, evaluation, and change. Anthropolinguistics asks what a form means within a culturally organised system; sociolinguistics asks how use of that form varies across speakers, settings, and social positions.

Integration is analytically productive only when this distinction is preserved. Collapsing the disciplines would obscure their separate evidential obligations. A culturally grounded interpretation does not establish how widely a form is shared, while a distributional pattern does not establish the cultural significance attributed to it. Their complementarity therefore rests on division of explanatory labour: one tradition establishes situated meaning, the other establishes structured distribution, and bridging concepts explain how the two become socially consequential.

Table 3. Main synthesis themes and their position in the integrated framework

Theme	Representative literature	Analytical contribution	Position in framework
Ethnography of communication	Hymes; Gumperz; Ochs & Schieffelin	Explains speech events, participation roles, genres, contextualisation, and cultural norms of speaking.	Establishes cultural and interactional conditions of interpretation.
Variationist sociolinguistics	Labov; Trudgill; Eckert; Fishman	Explains structured variation, style, stratification, language shift, and change.	Maps distribution across speakers, groups, settings, and time.
Indexicality and identity	Silverstein; Bucholtz & Hall; Eckert	Explains stance, persona, relational positioning, and layered social meaning.	Connects distribution to interactional enactment.
Language ideology	Irvine & Gal; Woolard; Blommaert	Explains prestige, stigma, standardisation, erasure, legitimacy, and scale.	Accounts for evaluation and institutionalisation of meaning.
Oral tradition and local wisdom	Duranti; Ahearn; Sibarani; Sibarani et al.	Explains cultural knowledge, memory, values, text-context relations, and communal continuity.	Specifies cultural content reproduced or transformed through language.

3.3 Ethnography of Communication and Cultural Rules of Speaking

Hymes (1974) redirected linguistic analysis from abstract grammatical competence towards communicative competence: the culturally organised knowledge required to speak appropriately. Speech events are structured by participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instruments, norms, and genres. These dimensions show why an identical lexical or grammatical form may carry different meanings across ceremonies, households, institutions, or peer interactions. Gumperz (1982) extended this account by demonstrating that prosody, code choice, sequencing, and contextualisation cues guide inference, often below the level of explicit propositional content.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) further show that language acquisition is simultaneously cultural socialisation. Speakers learn not only structures and vocabulary but also participation roles, affective expectations, epistemic rights, and socially appropriate ways of positioning self and others. This insight is crucial for intergenerational research because continuity cannot be inferred merely from whether younger speakers know a lexical item. Researchers must examine whether they reproduce the genre, participation structure, pragmatic force, and normative conditions through which the item becomes meaningful.

For anthropolinguistic analysis, lexical translation is therefore insufficient. Ritual speech, kinship address, customary deliberation, oral narrative, ceremonial formulae, and linguistic landscapes must be analysed as situated performances. Their interpretation depends on who may speak, who may respond, how turns are sequenced, what genre is recognised, which contextual cues are salient, and what authority the event confers. Ethnography of communication supplies the cultural conditions under which linguistic evidence becomes interpretable.

3.4 Sociolinguistic Variation and Social Differentiation

Variationist sociolinguistics established that linguistic heterogeneity is systematic rather than random. Labov (1963, 1972) demonstrated that phonological and grammatical variants correlate with social positioning, style, local orientation, and patterns of evaluation. Trudgill (2000) further showed how social differentiation and contact shape dialect patterns. Fishman (1991) extended the temporal and institutional dimension by examining how intergenerational transmission, domains of use, and collective organisation affect language maintenance or shift.

Eckert (2012) moved variation research beyond fixed demographic categories by treating variants as resources for stylistic practice. A form does not possess one invariant social meaning; it acquires meaning through its placement within a local field of contrasts. This position is especially important for culturally oriented research because it prevents the analyst from treating elders, youth, migrants, ritual specialists, professionals, and digitally active speakers as a homogeneous community. The same linguistic resource may index tradition in one setting, humour in another, and social distance in a third.

A credible language-culture analysis must therefore specify the population and distribution of a form. Relevant questions include whether use is stable or declining, whether it is restricted to particular genres, whether younger speakers reinterpret it, whether digital circulation expands or transforms its function, and whether institutional contexts alter its value. Variation analysis corrects cultural essentialism by demonstrating the internal differentiation through which cultural meanings are reproduced, contested, or abandoned.

3.5 Indexicality and Identity

Silverstein (2003) explains social meaning through indexical order. A linguistic feature may initially point to an immediate interactional condition or stance, subsequently become associated with a recognisable social persona, and later acquire a broader ideological evaluation such as refined, rural, modern, authentic, pious, educated, or improper. Indexicality therefore supplies the mechanism through which recurrent linguistic choices become socially interpretable.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) conceptualise identity as relational and interactionally achieved through adequation and distinction, authentication and denaturalisation, and authorisation and illegitimation. These principles prevent identity from being reduced to a demographic label. Speakers enact identities by selecting, combining, exaggerating, avoiding, or recontextualising linguistic resources in relation to interlocutors and available social categories. The analytical task is to demonstrate the interactional work performed by the form, not merely to associate it with a predefined group.

The integration of variation and indexicality is consequential. Distribution shows that a form is patterned; indexical analysis explains how that pattern is transformed into stance, persona, authority, solidarity, or distance. Without distributional evidence, indexical

interpretation may be anecdotal. Without interactional analysis, distribution remains descriptively accurate but socially under-explained.

3.6 Language Ideology, Power, and Institutional Evaluation

Language ideology connects interactional meaning to institutions and power. Irvine and Gal (2000) show how iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure transform linguistic differences into apparently natural social differences. Woolard (1998) demonstrates that beliefs about language organise authority, legitimacy, and social hierarchy. These processes explain why one form may be treated as prestigious or standard while another is represented as backward, impure, inauthentic, or inappropriate.

Blommaert (2010) adds the dimension of scale. Linguistic resources do not carry equal value across neighbourhoods, schools, markets, bureaucracies, tourism sites, digital platforms, or transnational institutions. A form that provides local authenticity may lose authority in formal education, while a nationally prestigious form may appear distant or socially marked in intimate interaction. Fishman's (1991) account of language shift similarly shows that ideological value is inseparable from domains of use, institutional support, and intergenerational transmission.

Language ideology operates across culture, variation, and indexicality. It shapes which cultural meanings are recognised, which variants circulate, which identities are authorised, and which speakers are granted epistemic or institutional legitimacy. The framework developed below therefore treats ideology not as a separate terminal stage but as a cross-cutting evaluative regime.

3.7 Anthropolinguistics, Oral Tradition, and Local Wisdom

Anthropolinguistics contributes cultural depth by treating language as part of knowledge systems, moral orders, performance, and social institutions (Ahearn, 2012; Duranti, 1997). In Indonesian scholarship, Sibarani (2020) defines anthropolinguistics as an interdisciplinary approach to the relations among language, culture, and other dimensions of human life. This orientation is particularly relevant to oral traditions in which metaphor, parallelism, formulaic expression, address systems, narrative sequence, and performative language preserve communal knowledge and regulate social relations.

Local wisdom, however, should not function as an abstract or celebratory label. A defensible claim requires identifiable linguistic evidence and an observable connection between form, communicative function, social uptake, and collective memory. Sibarani, Deliana, and Liyushiana (2021), for example, analyse language landscapes at Toba Caldera geosites through the relation among textual form, visual and situational context, cultural representation, and tourism communication. Their study illustrates how linguistic evidence can connect cultural interpretation with public circulation and institutional purpose.

The principal analytical risk is essentialism. A ritual formula or traditional lexicon cannot be assumed to carry one stable meaning for all community members. Its current significance depends on who still uses it, in which contexts, with what competence, under which ideological evaluations, and whether it has been recontextualised for education, tourism, administration, or digital media. Anthropolinguistic depth is strengthened, rather than weakened, by sociolinguistic evidence of differentiation and change.

3.8 The Culture-Variation-Indexicality Framework

The synthesis supports a three-level framework. The culture level identifies the knowledge, value, norm, genre, historical association, or communicative expectation encoded or presupposed by a linguistic form. The variation level establishes how the form is distributed across speakers, groups, settings, media, generations, and historical moments. The indexicality level explains how speakers use the form to enact stance, identity, authority, solidarity, distance, or authenticity. Language ideology operates across all three levels by evaluating forms and stabilising, contesting, or transforming their meanings.

The framework's distinctive contribution is cross-level traceability. A substantive claim is analytically complete only when the study: (1) specifies an observable linguistic unit; (2) establishes its culturally grounded interpretation; (3) documents its social distribution or patterned circulation; (4) identifies the interactional mechanism through which the form becomes meaningful; and (5) considers the ideological conditions that authorise, stigmatise, or recontextualise it. The contribution is not a new grand theory but an integrative analytical architecture that makes evidential obligations explicit.

Cross-level relations are dynamic rather than strictly linear. Cultural meanings influence linguistic choice, but repeated patterned use can also transform cultural interpretation. Indexical associations may become institutionalised as ideologies, and ideological interventions may alter distribution by promoting, restricting, standardising, or commodifying particular forms. The framework therefore accommodates continuity, contestation, and change.

Figure 2. Culture-variation-indexicality framework and cross-level traceability

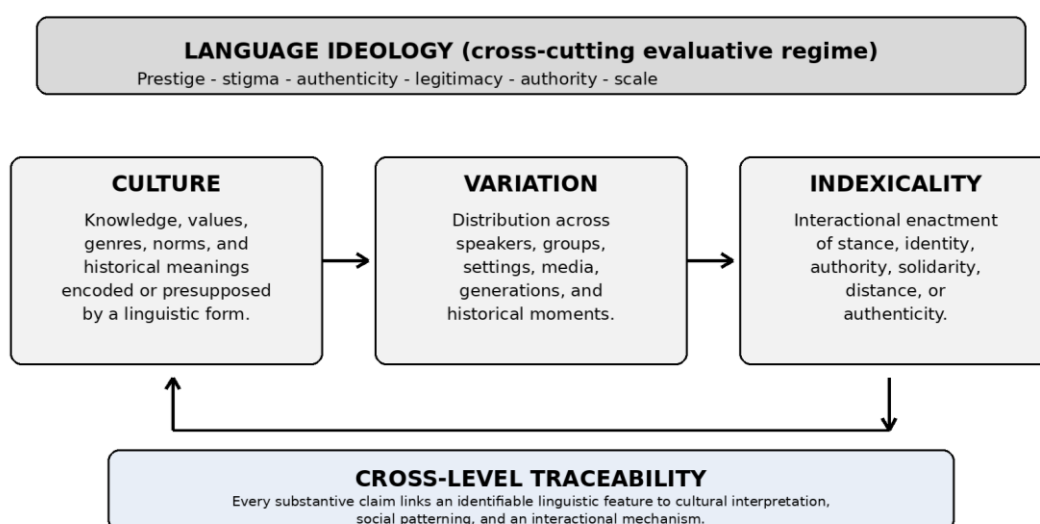


Table 4. Operational guide for applying the culture-variation-indexicality framework

Analytical level	Core question	Preferred evidence	Expected output
Culture	What knowledge, value, norm, genre, or historical meaning is encoded or presupposed?	Ethnographic observation; oral texts; interviews; archival materials; lexical and discourse analysis.	Culturally grounded interpretation of form and communicative function.
Variation	Who uses the form, where, when, and with what distribution?	Recorded interaction; corpus counts; speaker variables; questionnaires; intergenerational comparison.	Evidence of differentiation, stability, shift, or change in progress.

Indexicality	What stance, identity, relationship, or authority does the form enact?	Sequential interaction analysis; style analysis; language attitudes; metapragmatic commentary.	Mechanism linking linguistic choice to social meaning.
Language ideology	How is the form evaluated, ranked, standardised, commodified, or stigmatised?	Institutional texts; policy documents; media discourse; educational materials; public signage.	Explanation of legitimacy, power, prestige, or marginalisation.
Cross-level synthesis	How are meanings reproduced, contested, or transformed through patterned use?	Triangulation across ethnographic, distributional, interactional, and institutional evidence.	An explanation of continuity or change that avoids cultural essentialism and formal reductionism.

4. Discussion

4.1 Theoretical Contribution: Cross-Level Traceability

The review's central theoretical contribution lies in converting disciplinary complementarity into an explicit evidential standard. Earlier scholarship has already established the importance of cultural context, structured variation, indexicality, identity, and language ideology. The present framework does not claim originality for those components individually. Its contribution is to specify how they must be connected if a study is to explain, rather than merely describe, the relationship among language, culture, identity, and social variation.

Cross-level traceability addresses two forms of reductionism. Cultural essentialism occurs when a form is presented as the expression of a unified community without evidence of internal differentiation. Formal reductionism occurs when a variant is measured accurately but detached from local interpretation, interactional practice, or institutional evaluation. By requiring movement across culture, variation, indexicality, and ideology, the framework imposes a stronger chain of evidence on both traditions.

The framework also clarifies the status of identity. Identity is neither a fixed cultural essence nor a simple independent variable. It is an interactional outcome produced through patterned linguistic contrasts and interpreted within ideological fields. Consequently, demographic categories may be analytically relevant, but they cannot substitute for evidence showing how speakers themselves produce, recognise, contest, or reject social meanings.

4.2 Implications for Indonesian Multilingual Research

Indonesia is a strategically important setting because local-language diversity intersects with national-language consolidation, religious multilingualism, migration, education, tourism, urbanisation, and digital communication. Local languages should not be treated

only as endangered objects or static repositories of tradition. They are active semiotic resources through which speakers negotiate modernity, regional belonging, humour, commerce, authority, memory, and intergenerational relations (Fishman, 1991; Sibarani, 2020).

In North Sumatra, the framework can guide studies of Batak ritual speech, Malay politeness, Mandailing oral tradition, Karo ecological lexicon, Nias narrative forms, tourism linguistic landscapes, and urban Medan multilingualism. The unit of analysis must be explicit - for example, a speech event, ritual formula, address term, metaphor cluster, lexical field, narrative sequence, politeness strategy, code-switching pattern, public sign, or phonological variant. Each unit should then be investigated for cultural function, social distribution, indexical meaning, and ideological evaluation.

These examples constitute research applications rather than findings generated directly by the 17-source corpus. Their purpose is to demonstrate how the framework can organise empirical design. The distinction is important: the systematic synthesis establishes the analytical architecture, whereas claims about particular Indonesian communities require new field-based evidence.

4.3 Methodological Implications for Future Empirical Design

Future studies should combine methods according to the evidential demands of each level. Ethnographic observation identifies participation norms and culturally recognised genres. Recorded natural interaction preserves linguistic form and sequential organisation. Elicited narratives and interviews reveal cultural models and metapragmatic interpretations. Sociolinguistic questionnaires and corpus counts establish distribution and attitudes. Institutional documents, educational materials, policy texts, tourism media, and public signage reveal ideological framing.

Triangulation should be claim-specific rather than ceremonial. Researchers should not simply list several methods; they should explain which evidential gap each method addresses. For example, observation may establish that a ritual formula is culturally salient, corpus comparison may show that it is restricted to older specialists, interactional analysis may reveal that younger speakers use it humorously, and institutional discourse may show that tourism agencies reframe it as a marker of authenticity. The integrated explanation emerges from the relation among these findings.

Intergenerational and digital-offline comparison is particularly important. A form may decline in domestic interaction while expanding through social media, education, tourism, or cultural performance. Such circulation can preserve linguistic visibility while transforming pragmatic force, ownership, and authority. The framework enables researchers to distinguish continuity of form from continuity of meaning.

4.4 Limitations and Research Agenda

This review is conceptual and integrative rather than bibliometric. The substantive corpus is deliberately selective, comprising 17 highly relevant works, and therefore prioritises analytical depth over exhaustive coverage. The search relied on Google Scholar, Crossref, publisher and repository searching, author profiles, and citation tracing rather than subscription-only comprehensive indexing. Relevant scholarship in languages other than English and Indonesian may not have been captured.

The broad temporal span was necessary to retain foundational works, but it also creates asymmetry between classic theory and recent empirical research. Indonesian applications are represented by a limited number of sources and should not be interpreted as exhaustive coverage of the country's multilingual scholarship. The review did not aggregate effect sizes, map citation networks, or conduct bibliometric trend analysis because the included evidence was theoretically and methodologically heterogeneous.

Screening and coding were not independently duplicated, and inter-coder agreement was not calculated. These constraints increase the possibility of selection and interpretive bias. Future reviews should expand database coverage, preregister a protocol where feasible, use independent dual screening, publish the complete extraction matrix, and compare the

framework across particular language communities, genres, institutional domains, and digital settings.

5. Conclusion

Anthropolinguistics and sociolinguistics are complementary but analytically distinct. Anthropolinguistics explains how language participates in cultural knowledge, oral tradition, socialisation, performance, and communicative norms. Sociolinguistics explains how linguistic forms are distributed across speakers, groups, settings, institutions, and historical processes. Indexicality connects patterned use to stance and identity, while language ideology explains how linguistic resources become authorised, standardised, commodified, prestigious, or stigmatised.

The culture-variation-indexicality framework contributes an explicit procedure for connecting these explanatory functions. Its central principle, cross-level traceability, requires every substantive claim to identify a linguistic unit, establish its cultural interpretation, document its social patterning, explain its interactional indexicality, and consider the ideological conditions of its circulation. This architecture avoids both cultural essentialism and formal reductionism.

For empirical research, the practical recommendation is precise: define the linguistic unit, collect evidence appropriate to each analytical level, and triangulate only where each source of evidence performs a specified explanatory function. Applied carefully, the framework can strengthen research on Indonesian multilingualism, oral tradition, local wisdom, linguistic landscapes, ritual discourse, language shift, and digitally mediated identity by explaining not only what cultural meanings are represented in language, but how those meanings are distributed, enacted, evaluated, contested, and transformed.

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