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The Existence of Mandailing-Language Preaching as an Instrument for Strengthening Islamic Cultural Identity in Tamiang Village, Mandailing Natal Regency

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Abstract. This study examines the existence of Mandailing-language preaching as an instrument for strengthening Islamic cultural identity in Tamiang Village, Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency. Language plays an important role in religious communication because it functions not only as a medium for conveying religious messages but also as a means of transmitting cultural and religious values in society. The use of local languages in da'wah activities is considered capable of strengthening emotional relationships between preachers and the congregation so that the message of Islam can be understood more easily. This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving religious leaders, community leaders, and members of the congregation. The results show that Mandailing-language preaching still exists in several religious activities such as Friday sermons, religious lectures, recitations, and funeral gatherings. The use of Mandailing language makes religious messages feel closer to the community because it is the mother tongue used in everyday communication. However, the existence of Mandailing-language preaching currently faces challenges due to the influence of modernization and the increasing use of Indonesian among younger generations. Therefore, efforts are needed from religious leaders and the community to maintain the use of Mandailing language in religious preaching so that the Islamic cultural identity of the Mandailing community can continue to be preserved.
Keywords: Da'wah, Mandailing Language, Cultural Identity, Local Wisdom

Abstrak. *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji eksistensi dakwah berbahasa Mandailing sebagai instrumen penguatan identitas budaya Islam di Kelurahan Tamiang, Kecamatan Kotanopan, Kabupaten Mandailing Natal. Bahasa memiliki peran penting dalam komunikasi keagamaan karena tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat penyampaian pesan, tetapi juga sebagai sarana pewarisan nilai-nilai budaya dan keagamaan dalam masyarakat. Penggunaan bahasa daerah dalam kegiatan dakwah dapat memperkuat kedekatan emosional antara dai dan jamaah sehingga pesan dakwah lebih mudah dipahami. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan tokoh agama, tokoh masyarakat, serta jamaah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dakwah berbahasa Mandailing masih digunakan dalam berbagai kegiatan keagamaan seperti khutbah Jumat, pengajian, ceramah, dan kegiatan takziah. Bahasa Mandailing membuat pesan keagamaan terasa lebih dekat dengan kehidupan masyarakat karena merupakan bahasa sehari-hari yang digunakan dalam interaksi sosial. Namun demikian, eksistensi dakwah berbahasa Mandailing menghadapi tantangan akibat modernisasi dan meningkatnya penggunaan bahasa Indonesia di kalangan generasi muda. Oleh karena itu diperlukan strategi dari tokoh agama serta dukungan masyarakat untuk mempertahankan penggunaan bahasa Mandailing dalam kegiatan dakwah agar identitas budaya Islam masyarakat Mandailing tetap terjaga.*
Kata kunci: *Dakwah, Bahasa Mandailing, Identitas Budaya Islam, Budaya Lokal*

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in the social and religious life of a community, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a means of transmitting values, identity, and culture. In the context of Islamic preaching, language serves as a strategic medium for conveying religious messages so that they can be understood, internalized, and practiced by the community. Preaching delivered using language that is close to the community's daily lives tends to be more effective because it can touch the emotional and cultural aspects of the congregation (RB Harahap, 2023). The Mandailing language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of the cultural identity of the Mandailing people, which is rich in traditional and religious values. In religious life, the Mandailing language is often used in lectures, religious studies, and sermons as a form of preaching that is contextual and based on local wisdom. (Hendra et al., 2023)

Mandailing-language preaching plays a strategic role in strengthening the Islamic cultural identity of the Mandailing people. Islamic cultural identity is reflected not only in the performance of religious rituals but also in the way people understand Islamic teachings through their own language and culture. Preaching using local languages can build deeper religious awareness because Islamic values are conveyed in harmony with local culture (Adha et al., 2023). However, the currents of modernization and globalization have impacted the existence of regional languages, including Mandailing. The dominance of the national language and foreign languages, especially among the younger generation, has caused regional languages to be marginalized in various social spaces, including religious preaching activities. This condition has the potential to weaken the Islamic cultural identity that has been built through local languages (Puspitasari & Ultriasratri, 2023). Therefore, the continuation of Mandailing-language preaching is crucial in an effort to maintain a balance between Islamic teachings and the cultural identity of the Mandailing people (SR Harahap, 2022).

Tamiang Village, Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, is one of the areas that still maintains Mandailing cultural traditions and Islamic religious life relatively strongly. The Mandailing language is still used in social interactions and religious activities, especially by religious leaders and the older generation. Religious leaders in this area play a central role in maintaining the existence of Mandailing-language da'wah through sermons, religious studies, and commemorations of Islamic holidays. Geographically, Tamiang Village is dominated by residential areas interspersed with agricultural land and smallholder plantations. According to village data, the population is approximately 2,300, with the majority being Muslim. (Ashari et al., 2022)

Research on da'wah has so far focused more on da'wah methods, the use of digital media, and Islamic communication strategies in the face of technological developments and social change (Ibrahim Sidiq et al., 2024; Az-Zahra et al., 2025). Meanwhile, several other studies have examined da'wah based on local wisdom and cultural integration in conveying Islamic teachings, but their discussions have focused more on cultural acculturation, multicultural communication, or the use of local traditions as a da'wah medium without paying specific attention to the role of regional languages as instruments for strengthening Islamic cultural identity (Muhaemin &

Yunus, 2023; Puspitasari & Ultriasratri, 2023; Hendra et al., 2023). Aini's (2023) research also emphasizes that regional languages serve as a medium of communication and the transmission of cultural values, but has not yet examined how regional languages are actually used in da'wah practices to maintain the Islamic identity of society amidst the currents of modernization. Thus, there is still a research gap regarding the relationship between the use of regional languages in preaching, their preservation strategies, and their contribution to strengthening Islamic cultural identity in local communities.

Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in its analysis of Mandailing-language da'wah not only as a medium of religious communication, but also as an instrument for preserving the regional language and strengthening the Islamic cultural identity of the Mandailing people amidst the challenges of modernization. This research specifically examines da'wah practices in the local context of Tamiang Village, Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency by examining the relationship between the use of Mandailing, the strategies of religious leaders in maintaining it, and the factors that support and hinder its sustainability. This approach provides a perspective that has not been widely discussed in previous research that tends to focus on aspects of da'wah communication in general or digital da'wah media.

Based on the description, the focus of the study in this research is to analyze (1) how the existence of Mandailing language preaching strengthens the Islamic cultural identity of the community in Tamiang Village, (2) how religious leaders' strategies are in maintaining the use of Mandailing as a language of preaching, and (3) what are the supporting factors and inhibiting factors for the sustainability of Mandailing language preaching amidst social changes in society. The focus of the study is the basis for compiling the results and discussion of the research so that each finding presented is directed to answer these three aspects systematically.

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to deeply understand the existence of Mandailing-language da'wah (Islamic preaching) as an instrument for strengthening Islamic cultural identity in society. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to comprehensively describe social phenomena based on the perspectives of informants and actual conditions occurring in the field. The research was conducted in Tamiang Village, Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province. The research location was chosen because this area still maintains the use of Mandailing in social life and community religious activities, including da'wah activities in mosques and religious study groups. (Darussalam, 2023)

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from in-depth interviews with informants including religious leaders (ustaz, preachers, and religious lecturers), community leaders, mosque administrators, mosque youth, and congregations who actively participate in Mandailing-language da'wah activities. In addition, primary data also includes observations of da'wah activities, such as Friday sermons, religious studies, religious lectures, and condolence activities using Mandailing. Secondary data were obtained from various written sources such as books, scientific journal articles, previous research results, religious documents, da'wah activity archives, and documents related to regional languages, Islamic da'wah, and the cultural identity of the Mandailing community.

Observations were conducted to directly observe ongoing da'wah activities in the community, particularly those using the Mandailing language (Ningsih & Puteri, 2021) . In-depth interviews were conducted with research informants to obtain information on da'wah practices, language strategies, and community perceptions of da'wah in Mandailing. Documentation was conducted by collecting various supporting data, such as records of religious activities, photographs of da'wah activities, and other documents relevant to the research. (Fathurrozi, 2023)

The data analysis technique in this study uses an interactive analysis model that includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by selecting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives. The data is then presented in descriptive form to facilitate researchers in understanding patterns and relationships between data. The final stage is drawing conclusions, which is carried out gradually throughout the research process until a comprehensive understanding of the existence of Mandailing-language da'wah in society is obtained. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from various informants, while method triangulation is carried out by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. (Muhaemin & Yunus, 2023; Wahyuni, 2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Tamiang Village and Characteristics of the Mandailing Language

Tamiang Village is an area in Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province, known for its well-preserved socio-religious and cultural life. The majority of the population is Muslim and comes from the Mandailing ethnic group, who still uphold traditional values, such as Dalihan Na Tolu, a kinship system that regulates social relations based on the principles of mora, kahanggi, and anak boru. This traditional system not only serves as a guideline for holding traditional ceremonies but also shapes communication patterns, intergenerational respect, and the community's religious life. These traditional values coexist with Islamic teachings, forming the distinctive Islamic cultural identity of the Mandailing people.

In daily life, the people of Tamiang Village have diverse backgrounds in age, education, and occupation, dominated by farmers, traders, civil servants, and small business owners. Nevertheless, the use of Mandailing remains an important part of social interactions, especially within the family environment, traditional activities, community meetings, and religious activities such as religious studies, lectures, Friday sermons, and condolences. Mandailing is seen not only as a means of communication, but also as a symbol of collective identity that represents the history, cultural values, ethics, and religiosity of the local community.

The survival of the Mandailing language in Tamiang Village is influenced by several factors. First, the strong cultural ties and kinship system of the Mandailing community encourage the community to continue using the regional language in various social and customary activities. Second, the role of religious and traditional leaders who consistently use Mandailing in delivering sermons, religious studies, customary advice, and various religious activities, so that the language still has a social and religious function. Third, the community views Mandailing as a cultural heritage that must be preserved because it serves as a medium for

passing on moral values, customs, and Islamic teachings to the next generation. Although modernization and the dominance of Indonesian have begun to influence the communication patterns of the younger generation, the people of Tamiang Village still maintain Mandailing as a language that reflects cultural identity and strengthens emotional closeness in community life.

These socio-cultural conditions provide a crucial foundation for the sustainability of Mandailing-language da'wah (Islamic outreach). Using the local language to convey Islamic teachings not only facilitates the congregation's understanding of the da'wah material but also strengthens the internalization of Islamic values through a cultural approach that has been alive and developing within the community. Thus, the Mandailing language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as an instrument for preserving local culture and strengthening the Islamic cultural identity of the Tamiang Village community.

The existence of the Mandailing language in the effectiveness of preaching in Tamiang Village

Mandailing language preaching still exists in the religious life of the community. Mandailing is used by religious leaders in various preaching activities, such as Friday sermons, religious lectures, regular religious studies, and condolence events within the community. An interview with Ustadz Lubis (2025) , known as Asan Poso, shows that the use of Mandailing in preaching has been carried out since the beginning of his preaching. He stated that Mandailing began to be used in lectures in 2004 and is still used today, although not always consistently. The language is used in various religious activities such as Friday sermons, women's religious studies, lectures on the Prophet's birthday, and condolence activities in the community. According to informants, the use of Mandailing in preaching makes it easier for people to understand religious messages because it is the native language of the local community. Using a language that is close to the community's daily lives makes the process of delivering preaching more communicative and easily accepted by the congregation. This aligns with Effendy's (2017) view that effective communication in preaching activities is greatly influenced by the appropriateness of the language used to the community's social and cultural background. Language that is understood by the community will help convey the preaching message more clearly and easily.

Figure 1. Da'wah Activities in Tamiang Village

Source: Documentation photo of researcher's observations

This is also emphasized in the Qur'an, the importance of da'wah in community life, which is explained in QS. An-Nahl Verse 125.

ٱدۡعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلۡحِكۡمَةِ وَٱلۡمَوۡعِظَةِ ٱلۡحَسَنَةِۖ وَجَٰدِلۡهُم بِٱلَّتِي هِيَ أَحۡسَنُۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦۖ وَهُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِٱلۡمُهۡتَدِينَ

"Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good lessons and refute them in a good way. Indeed, it is your Lord who knows better who strays from His path and He who knows better those who are guided." (Basri, 2021)

Verse 125 of the Quran, An-Nahl, explains Allah SWT's command to Muslims to convey their da'wah in a good, wise, and gentle manner. In this verse, Allah commands that people be invited to His path with wisdom, good advice, and dialogue in the best manner. Wisdom in the context of da'wah refers to a preacher's ability to adapt methods, language, and appropriate approaches to the conditions and character of the community being preached to. Furthermore, this verse emphasizes that da'wah should not be carried out in a harsh or coercive manner, but rather through a persuasive and communicative approach so that the message conveyed is well received by the community. Thus, the success of da'wah is greatly influenced by the method of delivery, the language used, and the da'wah's ability to understand the social and cultural conditions of the community. (Bakri, 2021)

The content of this verse is closely related to the research discussion on the use of regional languages in da'wah activities. The use of Mandailing in da'wah is one form of applying the principle of wisdom in conveying Islamic teachings. The regional language used in lectures can

make it easier for the public to understand religious messages because it is the language used in everyday life. By using a language familiar to the community, da'wah messages can be conveyed more effectively, so that the goal of da'wah to provide understanding and increase religious awareness in society can be achieved. Therefore, the use of Mandailing in da'wah activities functions not only as a communication tool, but also as a da'wah strategy in accordance with the principles taught in QS. An-Nahl verse 125, namely conveying da'wah with wisdom and a good approach (N. Harahap, 2024) .

The Mandailing language plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic preaching in the Tamiang community. Interviews with religious leaders and congregation members revealed that the use of regional languages in Islamic preaching is considered easier for the community to understand because it uses language familiar to them in everyday life. ("Hata Andung in Mandailing Culture: Historical Study and Social Meaning," 2026) Ustadz Hasanuddin Lubis explained that Mandailing is more easily accepted by the congregation because it is the community's mother tongue. Islamic preaching messages delivered in Mandailing are more engaging and foster emotional closeness between the speaker and the congregation. (Suriyati et al., 2023)

Some of the interviewed congregation also stated that sermons using Mandailing made it easier for them to understand the content of the preaching. The language used in everyday life helps the congregation connect religious messages with their life experiences. This is in line with Mulyana's (2018) opinion, which states that the use of local languages in social communication can strengthen the emotional closeness between the communicator and the communicant. In the context of preaching, this closeness can increase the community's understanding of the religious message being conveyed. Furthermore, the use of Mandailing in preaching also serves as a means of preserving local culture. Regional languages are an important medium in passing on social, moral, and religious values that exist in society. From an Islamic perspective, the use of language that is appropriate to the conditions of society is also in line with the principles of preaching contained in the Qur'an. Allah SWT says in Surah Ibrahim (14): 4

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ

"We did not send any messenger except with the language of his people, so that he might explain things to them."

This verse indicates that religious teachings should be conveyed in a language understood by the community so that the message can be clearly received. This principle also forms an important basis for community outreach activities, including the use of Mandailing in religious sermons within the Mandailing community.

Religious Figures' Strategies in Maintaining Mandailing-Language Preaching

Religious leaders play a crucial role in maintaining the use of Mandailing in religious outreach activities. Interviews revealed that preachers in Tamiang Village employ several

strategies to maintain the continuity of Mandailing-language preaching amidst social changes. One strategy is to combine Mandailing with Indonesian during sermons. According to Ustadz Hasanuddin Lubis, the use of mixed languages ensures that sermons can be understood by all groups, including the older generation, who are more fluent in Mandailing, and the younger generation, who are more accustomed to using Indonesian.

In addition, religious leaders also strive to involve the younger generation in da'wah activities by inviting mosque youth to learn to deliver sermons in Mandailing. This effort is carried out as a form of learning as well as a step to raise awareness among the younger generation about the importance of preserving regional languages. This strategy shows that da'wah must be able to adapt to the social conditions of society. (Sari & Haris, 2023) This is in line with the opinion of Arifin (2015) who stated that effective da'wah is da'wah that is able to adapt its methods and approaches to the social and cultural conditions of the community being the target of da'wah. (Habeahan, 2024) Efforts to maintain da'wah in a language understood by the community are also in line with Islamic teachings which emphasize the importance of good methods and approaches in da'wah. Allah SWT says in Surah An-Nahl (16): 125

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ وَجَٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ

"Call (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good lessons and refute them in a good way."

This verse emphasizes that preaching must be carried out with wisdom and in a good manner so that the message is accepted by the community. One way to apply wisdom in preaching is by using language appropriate to the social and cultural conditions of the community. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) set an example in delivering his preaching in a way that was easily understood by his followers. A hadith states:

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

"Make things easy and don't make things difficult, give good news and don't make people run away." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith demonstrates that da'wah must be delivered in a way that makes it easier for the community to understand Islamic teachings. Therefore, the use of Mandailing in da'wah activities is one strategy that religious leaders can employ to facilitate the delivery of religious messages to the Mandailing community. Therefore, the strategy of religious leaders in maintaining da'wah in Mandailing aims not only to preserve the regional language but also to increase the effectiveness of da'wah so that Islamic values can be better understood and practiced by the community. (Siregar et al., 2024)

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Mandailing-Language Preaching

The existence of Mandailing-language preaching in Tamiang Village is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. Based on research results, the main supporting factors are the continued strength of Mandailing culture in the community and the ability of the older generation to use the regional language. Most adults and elderly people still use Mandailing in

their daily lives. This makes the use of regional languages in preaching still relevant and acceptable to the community. Furthermore, Mandailing traditional values, which uphold good manners, also support the use of regional languages in religious activities. (Widiatmaka, 2022)

On the other hand, several factors hinder the implementation of Mandailing-language da'wah (Islamic outreach). (Fitriono et al., 2021) One major factor is the changing communication patterns of the younger generation, who increasingly use Indonesian. Modernization and technological developments also influence the use of regional languages in everyday life. According to Koentjaraningrat (2015), social change and the development of the times can affect the sustainability of local cultural elements, including regional languages. Without ongoing preservation efforts, the use of regional languages could decline in society. Overall, the research results indicate that Mandailing-language da'wah still plays an important role in the religious life of the Tamiang Village community. In addition to serving as a medium for conveying Islamic teachings, regional languages also serve as a means of cultural preservation and strengthening local community identity (Saing et al., 2023).

Despite various obstacles, da'wah must still be carried out as part of the Muslim community's obligation to convey religious teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً

"Convey from me even one verse." (HR. Bukhari). (Maulidatun, 2023)

The hadith demonstrates that every Muslim has a responsibility to convey Islamic teachings to others. Therefore, various challenges in da'wah, including changes in language use in society, must be addressed with appropriate strategies to ensure effective da'wah. Therefore, supporting and inhibiting factors for da'wah in Mandailing are crucial factors that need to be considered in efforts to maintain the existence of da'wah in society. Support from religious leaders and the community, as well as awareness to preserve regional languages, are key to ensuring that da'wah in Mandailing can continue and benefit the community's religious life. (Kezia, 2023)

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Mandailing-language da'wah in Tamiang Village still exists as a medium for conveying Islamic teachings as well as an instrument for strengthening the Islamic cultural identity of the local community because the use of regional languages can improve the congregation's understanding of religious messages, strengthen emotional closeness between da'wah and the community, and maintain the continuity of local cultural values. This existence is maintained through various strategies carried out by religious leaders, including combining the use of Mandailing with Indonesian in da'wah activities and involving the younger generation in religious activities so that they continue to know and use the regional language as part of the da'wah tradition. The sustainability of Mandailing-language da'wah is supported by the continued strength of Mandailing culture, the use of regional languages by the community, and the commitment of religious leaders to preserve them. However, modernization, changes in

communication patterns, and the increasing dominance of Indonesian among the younger generation are major challenges that have the potential to reduce the use of Mandailing in da'wah. Therefore, preserving Mandailing language preaching requires ongoing synergy between religious leaders, the community, families, and the younger generation so that the regional language continues to function as an effective medium of preaching as well as a means of preserving Islamic cultural identity amidst the dynamics of social change.

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