

English as a Medium for Digital Da'wah Communication: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Era

Intan Trine Chodija¹, Jami'atus Sholeha¹, Novriyani^{1*}

¹Institut Agama Islam Darul A'mal Lampung

*✉: Novriyani282@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed religious communication, enabling Islamic da'wah to reach audiences beyond geographical and linguistic boundaries. This research examines the use of English as a medium for digital da'wah communication and explores its opportunities and challenges in the global era. A qualitative content analysis was employed to examine four English language digital da'wah contents focusing on patience, helping others, prayer, and peace, and respect. The findings indicate that English functions as a potential linguistic bridge for communicating Islamic values to diverse audiences. The use of accessible vocabulary and universal themes facilitates potential intercultural communication. However, the analysis also reveals challenges related to the translation of Islamic concepts, semantic reduction, cultural interpretation, and religious contextualization. The research concludes that English mediated digital da'wah offers opportunities for broader communication, provided that linguistic accessibility is balanced with religious accuracy and intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: English language, Digital da'wah, Digital religion, Islamic communication, Intercultural communication

Abstrak

Perkembangan pesat teknologi digital telah mengubah komunikasi agama, memungkinkan dakwah Islam menjangkau audiens melampaui batas geografis dan bahasa. Penelitian ini meneliti penggunaan bahasa Inggris sebagai media komunikasi da'wah digital dan mengeksplorasi peluang serta tantangannya di era global. Analisis konten kualitatif digunakan untuk meneliti empat konten da'wah digital berbahasa Inggris yang berfokus pada kesabaran, membantu orang lain, doa, damai, dan rasa hormat. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Inggris berfungsi sebagai jembatan linguistik potensial untuk mengkomunikasikan nilai-nilai Islam kepada audiens yang beragam. Penggunaan kosakata yang mudah diakses dan tema universal memudahkan komunikasi antarbudaya yang berpotensi. Namun, analisis ini juga mengungkapkan tantangan terkait terjemahan konsep Islam, reduksi semantik, interpretasi budaya, dan kontekstualisasi agama. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa da'wah digital yang dimediasi bahasa Inggris menawarkan peluang untuk komunikasi yang lebih luas, asalkan aksesibilitas linguistik diseimbangkan dengan akurasi agama dan sensitivitas antarbudaya.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggris, da'wah digital, Agama digital, Komunikasi Islam, Komunikasi antarbudaya

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has brought significant changes to society, particularly in the ways people access and consume information, including religious content. In this context, Islamic preaching (da'wah), which has traditionally been delivered through face-to-face sermons in mosques, religious study groups, and formal religious gatherings, encounters challenges in extending its reach to broader audiences. Conventional preaching practices that rely primarily on direct interaction and one-way communication are often constrained by geographical and temporal limitations. Consequently, such approaches may not adequately accommodate all

segments of society, especially younger generations whose lifestyles are increasingly mobile and whose patterns of accessing and engaging with information differ considerably from those of previous generations (*DigitalReligion-Chap.1*, n.d.)

The continuous evolution of digital technology has profoundly reshaped the way people communicate and exchange information, including the transmission of religious knowledge across geographical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. The widespread use of digital platforms, such as Youtube, Instagram, TikTok, podcasts, and various online learning application, has significantly expanded the reach of Islamic da'wah by enabling preachers, religious organizations, and Islamic institutions to engage audiences-worldwide. According to scholars in the field of digital religion, these technological developments have democratized religious communication by improving public access to Islamic knowledge and fostering greater interaction between religious leaders and online communities.

Within the sphere of Islamic preaching, social media has emerged as a strategic communication platform with considerable potential to broaden the dissemination and enhance the effectiveness of religious messages. Its multimodal nature enables da'wah content to be communicated through diverse formats, including written texts, visual materials, audio recordings, and video presentations, thereby providing greater flexibility in conveying religious teachings in ways that are accessible and appealing to different audiences. Beyond expanding outreach, social media also introduces an interactive dimension to da'wah communication. Through comments, discussion, responses, and other forms of digital interaction, the relationship between the preacher and the audience can develop into a more reciprocal communication process. Consequently, da'wah is no longer limited to a predominantly one-way transmission of religious messages but can evolve into a dialogical process that facilitate discussion, provides opportunities for clarification, and supports the development and reinforcement of religious understanding.

Nevertheless, the other researchers argue that digitalization also introduces complex challenges, including the fragmentation of religious authority, algorithm-mediated content visibility, the rapid dissemination of misinformation, and the increasing commercialization of religious messages. These divergent perspectives suggest that digital da'wah should not be viewed solely as a technological innovation but rather as a multifaceted communicative practice shaped by the dynamic interplay of religion, language, digital media, and contemporary society (Kholili et al., 2024)

Language constitutes another fundamental dimension in digital da'wah because the effectiveness of religious communication is closely associated with linguistic accessibility and intercultural understanding. English has increasingly functioned as the global lingua franca in higher education, international communication, digital media, and cross-cultural interaction, making it an important medium for disseminating Islamic teachings beyond Arabic-speaking and Muslim-majority communities. English, functioning as a global lingua franca, constitutes a pivotal medium through which these discourses reach a broad and heterogeneous audience (Novriyani, Anugrah, n.d.). Several scholars argue that the use of English expands the global reach of Islamic messages and promotes intercultural dialogue among diverse religious communities. Nevertheless, other researchers emphasize that translating Islamic concept into English involves semantic, theological, and cultural complexities because many Islamic terminologies lack direct lexical equivalence. This debate illustrates that English functions not only as a communication tool but also as a medium that shapes the interpretation, reception, and legitimacy of Islamic discourse in multicultural digital environments.

The increasing prominence of English-language digital da'wah also reflects broader social transformations driven by globalization and changing patterns of information consumption. Millions of internet users increasingly seek religious guidance through digital platforms rather than conventional face to face religious gatherings, while Muslim scholars, educators, and digital

influencers actively produce multilingual Islamic content to engage global audiences. This development creates significant opportunities for strengthening religious literacy, promoting peaceful Islamic values, and correcting misconceptions about Islam among non-Muslim communities. However, digital communication simultaneously introduces challenges related to cultural sensitivity, communication ethics, digital literacy, online polarization, and platform algorithms that influence the visibility and interpretation of religious messages. Consequently, effective digital da'wah requires not only theological competence but also English proficiency, intercultural communicative competence, persuasive communication strategies, and responsible engagement with digital media ecosystems (Wali Al-Khalidi, n.d.)

Despite the growing body of research concerning digital religion, Islamic communication, and English language studies, substantial research gaps remain. Existing studies predominantly examine digital da'wah from perspectives of media utilization, religious authority, communication ethics, broadcasting regulation, or social media engagement. Other studies focus on English as a Lingua Franca, intercultural communication, or English language teaching without explicitly examining its strategic role in communicating Islamic values through digital platforms. Although several recent publications discuss persuasive English discourse in digital da'wah, comprehensive investigations integrating linguistic, intercultural, technological, and religious communication perspectives remain limited. This gap demonstrates the need for an interdisciplinary framework capable of explaining how English simultaneously functions as a linguistic resource, a medium of intercultural dialogue, and a strategic instrument for expanding the global impact of digital da'wah (Maulidah et al., 2024)

Addressing this research gap is important because the success of contemporary digital da'wah increasingly depends on communicators' ability to integrate language competence, digital literacy, communication ethics, and Islamic values within culturally diverse online communities (Victoria et al., 2025). Understanding both the opportunities and challenges associated with English-mediated digital da'wah may contribute to developing more effective strategies for international Islamic communication while enriching theoretical discussions in applied linguistics, digital communication, and Islamic communication studies. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the role of English as a medium for digital da'wah communication in the global era by identifying its opportunities, challenges, and strategic implications. Based on this objective, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does English function as a medium for digital da'wah communication in the global era? (2) What opportunities and challenges emerge in the implementation of English-mediated digital da'wah? (3) What communication strategies can enhance the effectiveness, authenticity, and intercultural responsiveness of English-language digital da'wah?

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the use of English as a medium for digital da'wah communication and to explore its challenges and opportunities in the global era. The data consisted of four English language digital da'wah contents selected from digital platforms. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation. The selected contents were analyzed based on their language use, Islamic messages, and communication strategies. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through coding, categorizing, and identifying relevant themes. The findings were organized into three main aspects: the use of English, opportunities, and challenges in digital da'wah communication.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

English as a Medium for Digital Da'wah

The analysis of four English language digital da'wah contents shows that English functions as a medium for presenting Islamic teaching through accessible and internationally recognizable concepts. The first content (C1) focuses on patience, the second content (C2) on helping others, the third concept (C3) on prayer and peace, and the fourth concept (C4) on respecting others. The use of familiar English vocabulary allows Islamic messages to be framed through everyday human experiences. This finding supports the view that digital media can expand the reach of Islamic communication beyond traditional geographical boundaries. Recent studies also indicate that social media have become important channels for disseminating Islamic knowledge and reaching more diverse audiences (Siti Maharani et al., n.d.)

Based on the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca, English can function as a shared communicative resource among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds (Victoria et al., 2025). In digital da'wah, this role potentially enables Islamic messages to participate in wider transnational communication. The finding, however, indicates only potential accessibility, not actual global effectiveness, because this study does not examine audience statistics or responses.

Islamic Values and Intercultural Communication

The four contents predominantly employ values that have broad human relevance. Patience, helping others, peace, prayer, and respect provide accessible entry points for introducing Islamic perspectives to audiences with different cultural and religious backgrounds. This strategy is particularly visible in the first and fourth contents, where Islamic teaching are connected with social values that can be understood across cultures.

The finding suggests that English mediated da'wah has an intercultural dimension. Digital platforms allow religious messages to encounter heterogeneous audiences, while English provides a linguistic bridge for such communication. Existing research similarly identifies digital da'wah as an increasingly important form of communication capable of reaching diverse audiences and adapting to changing audience characteristics (Komunikasi dan Dakwah Islam et al., n.d.)

Linguistic and Cultural Challenges

Despite its potential, the analysis reveals an important challenge in translating Islamic concepts into English. The first content represents *sabr* through "patience," while the third content represents *salat* through "prayer". These expressions are understandable, but they do not necessarily convey the complete theological meanings of the original Islamic concepts. Consequently, English mediated da'wah requires contextualization rather than simple word for word translation.

The challenge is also cultural. Terms such as prayer, respect, and tolerance may be interpreted differently by audiences from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Research on digital da'wah similarly identifies audience diversity and changing digital environments as challenges requiring adaptation in communication strategies (Fithriyah et al., n.d.). the findings therefore suggest that effective English digital da'wah requires a balance between linguistic simplicity religious accuracy, and cultural sensitivity.

Opportunities and Overall Finding

The analysis indicates three principal opportunities; (1) wider linguistic accessibility, (2) intercultural communication, and (3) participation in global digital discourse. The four contents demonstrate that Islamic teachings can be communicated through accessible English while

maintaining their central religious themes. Digital media strengthen this opportunity because they enable Islamic messages to circulate beyond local communities. Recent research confirms that social media can expand the reach of da'wah and support religious education and interaction (Aulia Rachmah, 2026)

The central finding of this study is that English can serve as a potential bridge between Islamic teachings and global digital audiences, but its effectiveness depends on how religious concepts are translated, contextualized, and culturally framed. The study therefore positions English mediated digital da'wah at the intersection of language, religion, culture, and technology.

Table 1. The summary of Findings

Content	Main Finding	Opportunity	Challenge
Patience in Islam	<i>Sabar</i> is presented through “patience”	Accessible Islamic values	Meaning of <i>sabar</i> may be narrowed
Helping others	Helping others is framed as an Islamic value	Intercultural communication	Islamic context needs clarification
Prayer and Peace	<i>Salat</i> is connected with peace	Accessible Islamic spirituality	“Prayer” does not fully represent <i>salat</i>
Respecting others	Respect is presented as Islamic teaching	Common ground across cultures	Cultural interpretation may differ

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that English has significant potential as a medium for digital da'wah communication in the global era. The analysis of four English language digital da'wah contents demonstrates that Islamic teachings can be communicated through accessible English by using familiar and universally relevant themes, including patience, helping others, prayer, peace, and respect. The use of English potentially expands the linguistic accessibility of Islamic messages and provides opportunities for intercultural communication beyond local and national boundaries.

The findings also reveal that English mediated digital da'wah faces linguistic and cultural challenges. The representation of Islamic concepts such as *sabar* through “patience” and *salat* through “prayer” demonstrates that direct translation may not fully convey the theological and cultural meanings of Islamic terminology. Effective digital da'wah therefore requires more than grammatical accuracy; it requires contextual translation, religious authenticity, and intercultural sensitivity.

Overall, English and digital media provide complementary opportunities for expanding the communicative space of Islamic da'wah. English function as a linguistic bridge, while digital

platforms provide an environment for wider dissemination. However, broader accessibility should be accompanied by careful contextualisation to avoid semantic reduction and cultural misunderstanding. The study contributes to the discussion of digital religion by highlighting language as an important dimension of digital da'wah. The future research should examine a larger number of digital contents and incorporate audience reception data to investigate how different linguistic and cultural groups understand and respond to English mediated Islamic messages.

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