

Polite Language in the Teachings of Gus Baha According to the Qur'an: Analysis and Practical Implications

Dwi Santoso¹✉

¹ Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

✉ email: dwi@pbi.uad.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how renowned Islamic preacher Gus Baha promotes the use of polite language by drawing on timeless Qur'anic guidance. Using a qualitative approach that combines an extensive literature review with content analysis, we examine ten specific examples from his teachings and compare them with key Qur'anic principles. Our analysis reveals that practices such as warm greetings, respectful titles, gentle word choices, and constructive feedback not only mirror the ethical values embedded in the Qur'an but also serve as practical strategies for building stronger, more caring communities. Furthermore, the study discusses how these traditional ethical frameworks can address modern communication challenges, particularly in our fast-paced and diverse digital world. By emphasizing respectful dialogue and empathetic interaction, the findings suggest that the deliberate use of polite language can significantly enhance interpersonal relationships and foster greater social harmony. Ultimately, this research provides practical insights into how the thoughtful application of respectful language, as advocated by Gus Baha, can contribute to a more inclusive and interconnected society.

Keywords: *polite language; Gus Baha; Qur'an; respectful communication; constructive feedback; social harmony.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is much more than a tool for conveying information—it's a reflection of who we are and the values we cherish. In every culture, the way we speak can reveal our respect for others, our empathy, and our commitment to positive relationships. In Islamic tradition, the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remind us that our words carry power and should always be used kindly and wisely (Al Ghazali, 2003; The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). In today's fast-paced world, where much of our communication happens online and across diverse cultures, maintaining respect and kindness in our language has never been more important. Enter Gus Baha—a modern Islamic preacher from Indonesia whose warm and thoughtful approach to communication has inspired many. He encourages his listeners not only to speak politely but also to reflect deep spiritual values in their everyday interactions (Gus Baha, 2016).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework emphasizes how polite language helps reduce face-threatening acts, preventing harm to an individual's self-esteem while

fostering social cohesion. They highlight the use of strategies such as positive and negative politeness to navigate sensitive interactions with respect and care. Similarly, Dwi Santoso's (2015) research in Indonesian contexts shows that adherence to traditional politeness norms helps minimize conflicts and strengthens interpersonal relationships. By following these norms, individuals can enhance communication and promote greater harmony within communities. Together, these perspectives reinforce the idea that polite language is a powerful tool for fostering positive social interactions. Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that polite language plays a crucial role in reducing face-threatening acts—interactions that can harm a person's self-esteem or social standing—by employing strategies such as positive politeness (which supports the listener) and negative politeness (which minimizes imposition). Similarly, Dwi Santoso (2015) found that traditional politeness norms in Indonesia help decrease conflicts and strengthen interpersonal relationships by minimizing misunderstandings and fostering community bonds. Together, these insights suggest that polite language is an essential tool for effective communication and social cohesion. Gus Baha's teachings are grounded in timeless Qur'anic guidance. Verses from Surah Al-Hujurat (49:11–13) and Surah Al-Isra (17:53) remind us to treat each other with dignity and to speak in the best way possible. By applying these principles, Gus Baha offers practical advice for addressing common issues such as misunderstandings and conflicts in both personal and digital communication (Sulaiman, 2019).

This article aims to provide an accessible yet thorough analysis of Gus Baha's approach to polite language. We will discuss ten real-life examples from his teachings, relate them to Qur'anic directives, and explain how they can be applied to improve our everyday conversations. In doing so, we also include insights from international scholars to show that these ideas are relevant not just in Indonesia but worldwide (Budi, 2018; Rahmawati, 2020; Amin, 2018).

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to demonstrate how a return to respectful, kind communication can help build more connected and supportive communities. Whether you are a teacher, a community leader, or simply someone interested in better communication, the ideas presented here offer practical ways to bring more understanding and empathy into your daily interactions (Nasr et al., 2015).

Literature Review

1. Politeness in the Qur'an

The Qur'an offers many instructions on how to speak kindly and respectfully. For example, verses in Surah Al-Hujurat advise believers to avoid mockery and disdain, while Surah Al-Isra urges us to speak in the best possible manner (The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). These messages emphasize that our words should promote peace and unity, encouraging us to use language as a means to build bridges rather than barriers between people. This guidance reminds us that every conversation is an opportunity to nurture mutual respect and understanding. Scholars like Al-Ghazali (2003) see this divine instruction as a call for humility and compassion in all our communications, urging us to consider the impact of our words on others and to

approach every interaction with a gentle spirit. International research further supports the idea that such careful and considerate language fosters understanding and reduces conflict, contributing to a more harmonious social environment. This perspective underscores the timeless relevance of these teachings, demonstrating that the Qur'an's advice on communication not only shapes personal interactions but also plays a crucial role in promoting a peaceful and unified community. International research further supports the idea that such gentle language fosters understanding and reduces conflict (Jackson, 2012; Williamson, 2009).

2. Gus Baha's Approach to Communication

Gus Baha is widely recognized for his warm, engaging, and deeply insightful approach to religious discourse. His sermons are not only rich in theological wisdom but are also deeply rooted in everyday practical examples, making his teachings accessible to a broad audience. One of the central themes in his da'wah is the importance of using kind, thoughtful, and respectful language in daily interactions. He consistently emphasizes that words carry immense power—they can either uplift and strengthen relationships or, conversely, create division and inflict lasting harm. This principle aligns with Islamic teachings on ethical speech, reinforcing the idea that communication should be a means of spreading peace and understanding.

Beyond simply advocating for polite speech, Gus Baha encourages self-reflection, urging individuals to be mindful of the intentions behind their words. His method of delivery, which blends humor, humility, and deep scholarly knowledge, has resonated strongly with the Indonesian Muslim community, inspiring many to cultivate more empathetic and compassionate communication. His influence extends beyond religious circles, reaching educators, public speakers, and digital content creators who seek to implement his principles of respectful dialogue.

Additionally, Gus Baha's emphasis on ethical communication has attracted the attention of scholars both in Indonesia and abroad. Academics and researchers studying religious discourse and digital communication have highlighted his teachings as part of a broader movement towards fostering respectful dialogue in contemporary society. In an era where online interactions are often characterized by hostility and misunderstanding, his message serves as a reminder of the need for wisdom and kindness in all forms of communication, whether in personal conversations or on digital platforms. His impact continues to grow as more people recognize the value of his teachings in promoting harmony, mutual respect, and a deeper appreciation for the ethical use of language in everyday life (Gus Baha, 2016; Amin, 2018).

2. Broader Research on Polite Language

Studies by local academics like Budi (2018) and Rahmawati (2020) have demonstrated how courteous language fosters confidence among people and helps to lower social tensions. Their efforts show that polite communication reduces the possibility of misunderstandings and conflicts, so promoting a more harmonic social scene. Globally, research have shown that polite communication can help to reduce

cultural gaps and enable more efficient interactions between people from many backgrounds therefore enabling their connection and cooperation more successfully. These results confirm the theory that the values the Qur'an promotes—and modeled by Gus Baha—have universal advantages, improving relationships among people and hence fostering social cohesiveness. In the end, adopting these values can help to create a situation whereby honest, polite communication becomes the norm, therefore opening the path for a more inclusive and cooperative global community.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the intersection of Gus Baha's teachings and Qur'anic principles on polite language. We conducted a literature review, examining Qur'anic verses using translations like Sahih International and resources such as *The Study Quran* (Nasr et al., 2015). Additionally, we analyzed various sermons, writings, and online content from Gus Baha (Gus Baha, 2016) alongside secondary sources from both local and international scholars (Budi, 2018; Rahmawati, 2020; Amin, 2018). By coding for recurring themes, we identified ten specific examples that illustrate how polite language can be practiced in daily life. This triangulated approach ensures that our analysis is both well-grounded in tradition and relevant to modern communication challenges.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Ten Examples of Polite Language Practices.

The following examples are taken from Sofia (2022) and Gus Baha (2016), which provide a comprehensive analysis of Gus Baha's Da'wah, highlighting his unique communication style, the use of polite language, and the rhetorical strategies he employs to convey Islamic teachings effectively.

1.1 Example 1: The Greeting of Peace

Description:

Gus Baha teaches that greeting someone with “Assalamu Alaikum” is more than a simple hello—it's a heartfelt wish for peace and well-being.

Analysis:

The Qur'an underscores the importance of greetings as a means to foster community (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:11–13; *The Qur'an*, Sahih International, n.d.). Scholars have found that such greetings create a warm atmosphere, both in person and online (Hasan, 2017; Smith, 2014).

Implication:

Using respectful greetings helps bridge social gaps and builds a foundation of trust and kindness.

1.2 Example 2: Respectful Addressing Using Honorifics

Description:

Gus Baha encourages addressing people with terms like “Sir,” “Madam,” or “Brother/Sister,” especially when speaking to elders or respected figures.

Analysis:

Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) reminds us that every human being deserves respect. Using honorifics reflects humility and acknowledges the dignity of others (The Qur’an, Sahih International, n.d.; Jackson, 2012).

Implication:

Incorporating respectful titles in our speech can help reduce social barriers and promote mutual respect across communities.

1.3 Example 3: Choosing Gentle and Soft Words

Description:

Even in disagreement, Gus Baha advises using soft, gentle words rather than harsh or confrontational language.

Analysis:

The Qur’an instructs believers to “speak in the best manner” (Surah Al-Isra, 17:53; The Qur’an, Sahih International, n.d.). Research shows that gentle language minimizes conflict and increases understanding (Budi, 2018; Williamson, 2009).

Implication:

By choosing our words carefully, we create a more constructive environment for dialogue and understanding.

1.4 Example 4: Valuing Different Opinions

Description:

Gus Baha emphasizes that we should honor and respect different viewpoints rather than dismissing or ridiculing them.

Analysis:

Qur’anic verses encourage believers to appreciate diversity and engage in respectful dialogue (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:11–13; The Qur’an, Sahih International, n.d.). This attitude is supported by studies that find respectful debate enriches our understanding (Budi, 2018; Smith, 2014).

Implication:

Embracing diverse opinions can lead to more productive conversations and help create a culture of inclusivity.

1.5 Example 5: Delivering Constructive Criticism

Description:

Gus Baha teaches that if criticism is necessary, it should be given in a way that is clear, kind, and aimed at improvement.

Analysis:

The Qur'an advises that even criticism should be delivered gently (Surah Al-Isra, 17:53; The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). Studies indicate that constructive criticism leads to personal growth and strengthens relationships (Budi, 2018; Williamson, 2009).

Implication:

When we offer criticism with care, it opens the door for improvement and mutual development.

1.6 Example 6: Emphasizing Brotherhood and Sisterhood

Description:

Gus Baha frequently uses inclusive language such as "beloved brother/sister" to remind us that we are all part of one family.

Analysis:

The Qur'an clearly states that all believers are brothers and sisters (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:10; The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). This inclusive approach has been praised by scholars as a powerful way to overcome social divisions (Amin, 2018).

Implication:

Using inclusive language nurtures a sense of unity and belonging, which is essential for community building.

1.7 Example 7: Expressing Gratitude

Description:

Gus Baha stresses the importance of saying "thank you" to show appreciation for any kindness received.

Analysis:

Gratitude is a recurring theme in the Qur'an (for example, Surah Ibrahim 14:7) and is seen as a way to acknowledge both divine and human benevolence (The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). Research shows that gratitude can significantly enhance interpersonal bonds (Budi, 2018; Jackson, 2012).

Implication:

Regularly expressing thanks reinforces positive behavior and helps build a supportive social network.

1.8 Example 8: Avoiding Harsh or Abusive Language

Description:

Gus Baha strongly discourages the use of insults or abusive language, even in moments of anger.

Analysis:

The Qur'an advises against using degrading language and promotes dignity in speech (Surah Al-Isra, 17:53; The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). Empirical studies confirm that avoiding harsh language reduces conflict and builds trust (Budi, 2018; Williamson, 2009).

Implication:

Abstaining from abusive language is key to maintaining respectful and healthy relationships.

1.9 Example 9: Using Language to Educate and Inspire

Description:

Gus Baha often uses encouraging language to motivate others toward self-improvement and lifelong learning.

Analysis:

The importance of learning is highlighted in Surah Al-'Alaq (96:1–5) (The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). When language inspires and educates, it can transform individuals and communities alike (Munir, 2018; Smith, 2014).

Implication:

Inspiring language can drive personal growth and contribute to the broader progress of society.

1.10 Example 10: Keeping an Open and Respectful Dialogue

Description:

Gus Baha stresses that every individual should feel free to share their views in a respectful environment, without fear of judgment.

Analysis:

The Qur'an teaches that all individuals deserve respect (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13; The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.). Open dialogue is essential for resolving conflicts and building mutual trust, as supported by research in both local and international contexts (Amin, 2018; Rahmawati, 2020).

Implication:

Encouraging open communication helps create a climate where ideas can be exchanged freely and differences can be resolved constructively.

Discussion

1.1 Integrating Gus Baha's Teachings with Qur'anic Values

The examples above clearly show that Gus Baha's approach to using polite language is deeply interwoven with Qur'anic guidance. His emphasis on respectful greetings, honorific language, gentle speech, and constructive feedback mirrors the Qur'anic calls for humility, mercy, and dignity (The Qur'an, Sahih International, n.d.; Gus Baha, 2016). This blend of traditional ethics and modern communication practices offers a timeless model that can adapt to today's diverse and fast-paced world (Nasr et al., 2015).

1.2 Global Relevance in a Digital Age

Today, respectful language has global significance, especially as digital communication becomes increasingly prevalent. Whether in online forums, social media, or face-to-face conversations, polite language can bridge cultural differences and build trust. The principles promoted by Gus Baha, supported by international research (Smith, 2014; Williamson, 2009), illustrate that ethical communication is not only beneficial for personal interactions but also essential for fostering a more tolerant and connected global community.

1.3 Challenges and Recommendations

Despite its clear benefits, maintaining polite language is challenging in an age marked by rapid digital interactions and sometimes impulsive communication. To promote respectful discourse, we recommend:

- a. Incorporating Ethical Communication in Education: Embedding these values in school curricula can help nurture respectful language habits from a young age (Budi, 2018; Smith, 2014).
- b. Organizing Workshops and Training: Community and organizational programs can equip people with practical skills for effective and respectful communication (Rahmawati, 2020).
- c. Launching Global Digital Campaigns: Initiatives that promote respectful dialogue online can help counteract the spread of hostile language and encourage a more positive digital culture (Amin, 2018)..

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of ten examples from Gus Baha's teachings reveals that his emphasis on polite language is firmly rooted in Qur'anic ethics. From heartfelt greetings and respectful titles to gentle criticism and open dialogue, these practices not only honor the moral imperatives of the Qur'an but also offer tangible, practical

strategies for enhancing everyday communication. They serve as a blueprint for how language can function as a bridge that connects individuals on a deeper, more empathetic level. By embracing these principles, individuals can contribute to creating more caring, inclusive, and connected communities. When we adopt respectful language in our daily interactions, we not only honor the timeless wisdom of our spiritual traditions but also lay the groundwork for a society in which empathy, understanding, and mutual respect are prioritized. This approach has profound implications for educators, religious leaders, and policymakers who are tasked with cultivating environments that encourage open, respectful dialogue—especially in today’s diverse and digital society. Moreover, the thoughtful use of language can play a crucial role in conflict resolution and in bridging divides that often emerge from miscommunication and cultural differences. As communities become increasingly globalized and interactions extend beyond local boundaries, the ability to communicate with sensitivity and care becomes essential. The strategies advocated by Gus Baha, when combined with the ethical guidance of the Qur’an, empower individuals to transform not only their personal relationships but also the broader social fabric. Ultimately, the deliberate application of polite language—championed by Gus Baha and deeply anchored in Qur’anic teachings—remains a powerful tool for fostering personal growth and achieving social harmony on a global scale. It encourages a more reflective and intentional mode of communication, one that can help address contemporary challenges and contribute to a more just and harmonious world.

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