

USE OF ENGLISH IN A FRIDAY SERMON (*KHUTBAH*)
AS A MEDIUM OF *DAKWAH* FOR MUSLIM EXPATS

Juliastuti

(Dosen Jurusan Syari'ah STAIN Datokarama Palu)

Abstrak:

Penggunaan bahasa Inggris sebagai pengantar khutbah Jum'at diawali banyaknya ekspatriat (orang asing) beragama Islam. Sebagian besar dari ekspatriat ini umumnya berbahasa Inggris dan belum memahami bahasa setempat. Berangkat dari hal itu, mulai menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai pengantar khutbah semenjak tahun 1999. penggunaan bahasa sangat penting dalam berdakwah. Shalat Jum'at sebagai medium dakwah utama tentunya harus menggunakan bahasa yang tepat sasaran dan dimengerti sehingga diharapkan dakwah yang diberikan dapat diterima dengan baik oleh jamaah.

وقد بدأ استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في الخطبة بسبب دخول الأجبيين غير المسلمين إلى الإسلام. والأغلبية منهم يتحدثون الإنجليزية ولم يفهموا اللغات المحلية. وانطلاقاً من هذا الواقع، بدأ الخطباء يستخدمون الإنجليزية في خطبتهم يوم الجمعة منذ سنة ١٩٩٩. وإن استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في الدعوة الإسلامية ضروري للغاية وأن خطبة الجمعة بوصفها وسيلة مهمة للدعوة لا بد لها من استخدام اللغة المناسبة التي يفهمها السامعون لأجل فعالية الدعوة الإسلامية.

Key Words: *friday sermon, english, muslim expatriates*

Introduction

The Friday prayer is one of the outstanding symbols of Islam that distinguishes it from other religions. Allah has blessed the Muslims by granting us this day as a day of congregational worship. One of the most important aspects of the worship performed on Friday day is the deliverance of the Friday sermon (*khutbah*).

The Friday prayer (*salat al-jum'ah*) is one form of congregational worship in Islam. It takes place every Friday. Regular attendance at the Friday prayer is enjoined on the believers. According to the prophet's

saying, congregational prayer is twenty-five times more blessed than worship performed alone.¹

Religious narration (including sermons) may be pronounced in a variety of settings and at various times. The *khutbah*, however, refers to *khutbah al-jum'ah*, usually meaning the address delivered in the mosque at weekly on Friday. The *khutbah* originates from the practice of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad, who used to deliver words of exhortation, instruction, or command at gatherings for worship in the mosque, which consisted of the courtyard of his house in Medina. Though *khutbah* is not mentioned directly in the Qur'an, one passage uses the word *khutbah* when referring to *qital*.

After the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad presented himself as a *khatib* to the city in AD 630. The first four caliphs, and the Umayyad caliphs and provincial governors all delivered sermons.² There were not necessarily exhortatory, but addressed practical questions of government and sometimes even included direct orders. Under the Abbasids, the caliph himself no longer preached, but assigned the task to the religious judges. The Abbasids insisted they were clearing Islam of the secularism of the Umayyad, and this probably helped in strengthening the religious aspect of the sermon.

One of the conditions for the validity of the Friday service is that it must be preceded by two sermons. The sermons are delivered when the number of auditors required for a valid *jum'ah* are present.

Traditionally, as instructed in classical Islamic legal treatises, Friday congregational prayers in which sermons were delivered were restricted to urban centers and normally to one major mosque in each city. Such a mosque is referred to as a *masjid jami'*, that is, a "Friday Mosque" (or a "cathedral mosque"). These mosques were distinguished by their central location, large dimensions, monumental architecture, symbolic furnishings

¹ (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

²Ahmad Redzuwan Mohd Yunus, *Sejarah Dakwah*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2001), h. 10

indicative of its exalted stature, and, the most demonstrative of all, the *mimbar* (ritual pulpit).

Expounding the Quran verses (62:10-11), they inform us of the importance of Friday - each Friday, and not any particular Friday. Whenever one is called to attend Friday prayer, one ought to come without making any excuse, without giving any importance to one's job, one's business (one's source of income). Leave everything else and hasten to Friday prayer. It is explained to always be mindful of the benefits of Friday and the acceptance of prayers during Friday prayer. This way, one could avoid being entrapped by Satan.

Friday helps us to stay on the path of virtues and do good and righteous deeds! With reference to a hadith, it's expounded that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) said that among all the days, Friday was the best day: Adam was created on Friday; he was made to enter Paradise on Friday; he lost Paradise on Friday; and a special moment comes during Friday service when a believer's prayers are accepted! Further explaining the concept of Adam entering and losing Paradise on Friday said that the purpose of creation of man and Jinn is worship of Allah. Who so ever will act on His commandments and establish worship of Allah, will gain access to Paradise. The children of Adam cannot inherit Paradise unless they fight against satanic inclinations and obey the commandments of Allah and try to come together for worship on Friday. Those who will disobey Allah, follow the Satan, and keep themselves preoccupied with their work during the Friday prayer time, shall lose Paradise.

However, successful Jihad against Satan would make one enter Paradise once again, believers are asked to come to Friday prayer leaving aside all else. Once the Friday prayer is over, believers are asked to go back to work; however, they are enjoined to keep remembrance of Allah in their hearts and to be mindful of the observance of the next *Shalat*.

There is only one certain way to reach Allah and that is by following the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) and the religion brought by him, Islam, which is the only living religion now. Expounding the significance and blessings of invoking blessings on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) by saying *salat-un-nabi*, this holds a very special

indicative of its exalted stature, and, the most demonstrative of all, the *mimbar* (ritual pulpit).

Expounding the Quran verses (62:10-11), they inform us of the importance of Friday - each Friday, and not any particular Friday. Whenever one is called to attend Friday prayer, one ought to come without making any excuse, without giving any importance to one's job, one's business (one's source of income). Leave everything else and hasten to Friday prayer. It is explained to always be mindful of the benefits of Friday and the acceptance of prayers during Friday prayer. This way, one could avoid being entrapped by Satan.

Friday helps us to stay on the path of virtues and do good and righteous deeds! With reference to a hadith, it's expounded that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) said that among all the days, Friday was the best day: Adam was created on Friday; he was made to enter Paradise on Friday; he lost Paradise on Friday; and a special moment comes during Friday service when a believer's prayers are accepted! Further explaining the concept of Adam entering and losing Paradise on Friday said that the purpose of creation of man and Jinn is worship of Allah. Who so ever will act on His commandments and establish worship of Allah, will gain access to Paradise. The children of Adam cannot inherit Paradise unless they fight against satanic inclinations and obey the commandments of Allah and try to come together for worship on Friday. Those who will disobey Allah, follow the Satan, and keep themselves preoccupied with their work during the Friday prayer time, shall lose Paradise.

However, successful Jihad against Satan would make one enter Paradise once again, believers are asked to come to Friday prayer leaving aside all else. Once the Friday prayer is over, believers are asked to go back to work; however, they are enjoined to keep remembrance of Allah in their hearts and to be mindful of the observance of the next *Shalat*.

There is only one certain way to reach Allah and that is by following the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) and the religion brought by him, Islam, which is the only living religion now. Expounding the significance and blessings of invoking blessings on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) by saying *salat-un-nabi*, this holds a very special

significance when done on Friday. Indeed, there is no mention of the last Friday of Ramadan in the Holy Quran or the a *hadith* and that it is therefore incumbent upon this that they should understand the significance of each Friday and make it certain to attend the Friday prayers.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) said that Friday prayer and Ramadan could be our redemption in that observance of sincere Friday prayer and Ramadan could bear testimony for us, redeeming our short-comings and minor misdeeds between one Friday and the next and one Ramadan and the next and that the heart of one who misses three consecutive Fridays is sealed. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) informed us that an angel stands on every door of the mosque on Friday and notes down the names in order of the arrival of the worshipers. When the Friday Sermon starts, the angels close their registers and attend the service.³

The Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) strived hard to come early to the mosque for Friday prayer and should try and follow that. In order to be deserving of the designation as mentioned in Quran, we need to put an all out effort to follow in the footsteps of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) and try to come to mosque early for prayers.

It was mentioned the exemption to Friday prayers of four categories: slaves, women, children and the ailing. It is emphasized that young mothers should not come to Friday prayers with small children. He said it is very important to be mindful of the etiquettes of Friday; complete silence must be observed during the Sermon and even to communicate in low voice is undesirable! Therefore, mothers with small children, who may cause distraction to the worshipers, are exempted by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) from coming to the mosque.

We prayed that may the blessings obtained during Ramadan and the changes for the better become permanent part of our lives, and that may Allah keep us away from sin throughout the year, grant us forgiveness

³ Al-Jarjawi, Syekh Ali Ahmad, *Indahnya Syariat Islam*, penerjemah: Faisal Saleh, (Jakarta: Gema Isani Press, 2006), h. 35

and may Ramadan become redemption for us. In contemporary times, Friday congregational prayers with sermons are common in mosques of all sizes and conditions, and not just restricted to a few central locations. Sermons are also dispensed through newspapers and broadcast on radio and television.

The language of obligatory Friday prayers, called *Juma*, is not part of the debate; those prayers must be in Arabic, the language of the Quran. The disagreement focuses on whether that requirement should extend to the sermon, or *Khutba*, on Fridays, the Muslim day of congregational prayer, and other assemblies in the mosque.

Imams and scholars who insist on using Arabic say it's mandatory because the Prophet Muhammad gave his sermons in the language. Others say that Muhammad used Arabic only because it was what he and his community spoke, and that Islam is a universal fait.

The worry is that younger people who do not find the mosque a satisfying experience, and women who find it a hostile environment, will drift away from the mosque," said Abdullahi An-Na'im, a specialist in Islamic law at Emory University School of Law. "That means the mosque will become the exclusive domain of a very archaic understanding of Islam."⁴

Location matters. In small communities comprised of immigrants from many countries, the prayer leaders have no choice but to use English so they can be understood. However, in major cities, immigrants usually arrive in such large numbers that they can find a mosque where their native language is spoken

The majority of Muslim communities of expatriates prefer the Friday sermon delivered in English rather than Arabic. It was born from the needs of Muslim communities of the Expatriates to Islamic teachings easier to understand.

⁴Cak anto, '*Alhamdulillah Makin Banyak expatriates yang ucapkan syahada*

(<http://id.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20111107021343AAA6Y0j>), accessed on April, 2nd 2012.

We have always been fascinated with Friday sermons delivered at institutions of higher learning primarily because of their openness and unbound by the politics of the ruling government. We wish we've had recorded all of them since in younger years. Current technologies make things easier now to record and share opinions and thoughts. Hope on Friday sermons attended in recent years will trigger us to dig deeper into the knowledge of Allah. Allah shows us the right path.

The Community of Muslim Expatriates

Expatriate (UK : *expatriate*) means a person who lives temporarily or settled outside the country where he was born and raised, or in other words, people are foreign nationals living in Indonesia, usually because of a state or professional duties. Taken from the Latin *ex* = out, *patria* = nation or motherland.⁵

The *Khutbah* is used to preach about Islamic issues during Friday prayer. The expatriate population in Saudi Arabia was 8.4 million as of August 2010, compared to 18.7 million Saudis, according to General Statistics Department of the Ministry of Economy and Planning. "Most expatriates do not understand or speak Arabic. No one thinks about these 8.4 million people who are hampered by language barriers. We all want to learn about Islam, the difference is no one wants to walk that extra mile and help us to connect with society," Indian expatriate Hussein told Arab News.⁶

In its broadest sense, an expatriate is any person living in a different country from where he or she is a citizen. In common usage, the term is often used in the context of professionals sent abroad by their companies, as opposed to locally hired staff. The differentiation found in common usage usually comes down to socio-economic factors, so skilled professionals working in another country are described as expatriates, whereas a manual

⁵Expatriates, (On-Line), (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expatriate>) accessed on April 5th, 2012

⁶ Staff (On-Line), *Millions don't understand a word of Friday sermon*, (<http://www.emirates247.com/news/millions-don-t-understand-a-word-of-friday-sermon-2011-02-08-1.353366>) accessed on April 2nd, 2012

laborer who has moved to another country to earn more money might be labeled an 'immigrant'. There is no set definition and usage does vary depending on context and individual preferences and prejudices. 'Expatriation' has also been used in a legal sense to mean 'renunciation of allegiance;' the Expatriation Act of 1868 said in its preamble, 'the right of expatriation is a natural and inherent right of all people, indispensable to the enjoyment of the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Director of the Centre Dar Al Ber, Yusuf Al-Saeed, said that every day hundreds of people, from various countries visiting to learn about Islam. The figure was likely to rise each day, and more importantly those who come to better understand how Islam is so tolerant and peaceful. "Non-Muslim converts have the opportunity to meet and listen to their experiences in their own language. As the result, the messages conveyed about Islam received and responded well," he said.

Joseph revealed in August, Dar El Ber announced more than 1,000 expatriates of different nationalities embraced Islam this year. Last year, the number of expatriates who embraced Islam reached 1521 people (548 men and 973 women). Previously, in 2009 ago, the number of expatriates who embraced Islam reached in 1059 (309 men and 750 women).⁷

This has created a different type of expatriate where commuter and short-term assignments are becoming more common and often used by organizations to supplement traditional expatriation. Private motivation is becoming more relevant than company assignment. Families might often stay behind when work opportunities amount to months instead of years. The cultural impact of this trend is more significant. Traditional corporate expatriates did not integrate and commonly only associated with the elite of the country they were living in. Modern expatriates form a global middle class with shared work experiences in a multi-national corporation and working and living the global financial and economical centers. Integration

⁷ ibid

is incomplete but strong cultural influences are transmitted. Middle class expatriates contain many re-migrants from emigration movements one or two generations earlier.

The important of using English in Friday Sermon for The Muslim Expats

Since English is set as an introduction to the sermon Friday, expatriates and foreigners flocked to Friday prayers at this place. Not only was invaded expatriates, employees and local residents did not want to lose jazz up the place. Unfortunately, as the Indonesian economy was in crisis, expatriates gradually leave Indonesia. As a result, the atmosphere is warm because it contains the first worshipers of cultural backgrounds, are now beginning to diminish. However, we optimistic, soon returning expatriates will come and we consistent economic development that occurs. In addition, arguably, the Friday prayer worshipers in this place are actually quite spoiled. The air-conditioned room and a row of clean mat are proofed of quality sermons. Finished Friday prayers, the pilgrims even treated to a cup of coffee or tea and snacks.

There are not a few expatriates who decided to embrace Islam in Indonesia. But until now the language is still a major stumbling block formation of foreign converts. Because there are not all coaches have the ability to convert good English. So instead, just a bit of expat fluent in Indonesia. As a result the Islamic message conveyed is not necessarily fixed target. Now it is working on a program that specifically include English language training as an introduction to the converts.

The Friday prayer at the House Granadi, Brass, Jakarta, in this building, the Friday prayer sermon is using the introductory in English. That tradition has carried out long enough for the pilgrims Granadi Miyah Agency (BDI). BDI is the body which deals with religious activity in the building. The origin of English as the introduction begins Friday sermon

many expats (foreigners) are Muslims who work in the Brass. Most of these expatriates are generally not yet proficient in English and Bahasa.⁸

Departing from this, the Agency Miyah Granadi which was supported by the Community Nahla start to use English as an introduction to the sermon since 1999. Secretary General of Nahla, Sultan Hamid, said the use of language is very important in preaching.⁹ According to him, preaching the Friday prayer as the main medium of course have to use language that is targeted and understandable so that the mission is expected to be well received by the congregation.

The whole point of a sermon is to understand and spread the word of Allah, but it seems no one cares enough to delve into the matter. People repeat verses or utter 'Ameen' without understanding what is being said. It has become a formality that they just want to get over with. That is not the purpose or way of preaching Islam," Indian expatriate Hannah told Arab News, We all want to learn about Islam, the difference is no one wants to walk that extra mile and help us to connect with society," Indian expatriate Hussein told Arab News.

The khutbah is used to preach about Islamic issues during Friday prayer. The expatriate population was 4 million as of August 2010, according to General Statistics Department of the Ministry of Economy and Planning.

Most expatriates do not understand or speak Arabic. No one thinks about these 8.4 million people who are hampered by language barriers. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), mosques used to be full of knowledgeable and meaningful debates about Islam. The purpose

⁸ Republika, (on-line) 14 oktober 2010 '*khutbah Jumat Berbahasa Inggris di gedung Granadi*' (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/republika-tv/ummat/10/10/14/140147-khutbah-jumat-berbahasa-inggris-di-gedung-granadi>) accessed on april 25th, 2012

⁹ Republika, (on-line) 14 oktober 2010 '*khutbah Jumat Berbahasa Inggris di gedung Granadi*' (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/republika-tv/ummat/10/10/14/140147-khutbah-jumat-berbahasa-inggris-di-gedung-granadi>) accessed on april 25th, 2012

of the *khutbah* is defeated because most of us do not understand a word but we go (to the mosque) because we are obliged to.

Other countries in the Middle East where Arabic is the first language have mosques that deliver Friday sermons in English. Middle Eastern society experienced profound changes in the 19th century due to the impact of European expansion. In time, ideas about politics changed as technology advanced and a diverse culture was introduced. Mixed marriages and foreign minds began to infiltrate Arab society.

Bangladeshis, Indians, Indonesians, Pakistanis, Filipinos and Africans started to make their presence felt in the labor force. However, Arabic is not the first language of any of these nationalities. English is a common second language spoken by nurses, assistants and salesmen in contrast to Arabic.

Society should cater to others' needs and instill a sense of unity at the mosque, as the purpose of religion is to come together to share the same beliefs and follow them. It is unfair to hear talk about equality and brotherhood at the *khutbah* when none of the brother's cares to ensure his expatriate brothers even understand what is being said. Islam is not limited to one language," said Mohammed, a Filipino.

Lubna, a local Saudi said: "We all know the best way to preach Islam is through compassionate dialogue. If the Arabic *khutbah* has been going on for centuries, we must adapt it to our culture so our Muslim brothers and sisters in the country can also follow the message of Islam." Young male expatriates told Arab News most of them do not understand the *khutbah* but nevertheless attend the Friday prayer because it is an Islamic duty.¹⁰

"Even though we don't understand a word, I make sure I go to listen to the *khutbah* because it's obligatory and I do not want to miss out on the rewards from Allah. There is no choice. If there was a choice of a few

¹⁰ Ismail Simjee (On-Line), *Jummah Khutbah*
(<http://www.ummah.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-285511.html>) accessed april 22nd, 2012

mosques where they deliver the *khutbah* in Urdu, then it would be up to us to go," Indian expatriate Faisal said.¹¹

Saira, an Indian expatriate, said: "We have a lot of non-Muslim friends who would be interested in listening to the words of Islam. However, they are rather stumped by the fact that we do not have access to a sermon in our language and I wish we had a few mosques specifically for us so even if women hear the sermons at home through loudspeakers, they will gather so much more knowledge and wisdom about."¹²

In an unprecedented move Islamic scholar has suggested English Friday sermons for certain mosques, along with the reduction in the time gap between prayer call and the actual prayer in certain mosques. The committee has also decided to install LCD screens at the pulpit for Imams to read out the sermons from, rather than using paper.

The suggestion came during a workshop organized by the General Authority for Islamic Affairs (GAIA) and the decision would be implemented soon as part of the UAE's 39th National Day celebrations. A certain number of mosques would be allocated for English Friday sermons in each emirate, the GAIA concluded after successfully piloting the project in a few mosques in the capital as well as other cities.¹³

Chairing the workshop, it is necessary to communicate with imams from each emirate on a regular basis to boost the performance as well as help them in all aspects of their life. Announcing the initiatives of LCD screens would be installed for imams to read their sermon from, as an advanced alternatives to paper.

In a significant move, he added, that the normal gap of around 15 to 20 minutes between prayer call (Adhan) and the prayer in mosques located in certain areas would be reduced to around five minutes. The decision comes for keeping in mind the convenience of the people at market place, malls, Highways, etc.

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ UAE (online), 'Friday Sermon in English soon in Mosques', ABNA (online) <http://www.abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=210422>

Asad Rifaat, a non-Arabic Moroccan, seemed impressed with the decision to have English Friday sermons. "I think it's necessary, because Islam is not regional, it's global. Faith should extend beyond language, since most expats here speak English; this will be a beautiful way of extending Islam and making it more relevant for non-Arabic speakers."¹⁴

A lot of non-Arabic speaking Muslims here feel alienated because they are disconnected from the general Muslim community. Sermons can bring the Muslim community closer together, regardless of nationality. Now many questions and matters could be answered. The GAIA, in coordination with several ministries, agencies as well as private institutions and companies, directly supervises all mosques in the country and offers them with programmed, religious guidance and choice of Imams.

Now a 20-year-old junior at Northwestern University, she, like many other American-born Muslims, is most comfortable with sermons and lectures in English, although they can't always find U.S. mosques that offer them. "I don't really get the time to study Arabic," Rahim said. "With all the different groups in America, English is a unifying thing that ties us together."

Like Jewish immigrants who fought over English-language prayer and Roman Catholics who resisted the new Mass in English, U.S. Muslims are waging their own debate about how much English they can use inside mosques without violating Islamic law and abandoning their culture.

Imam Hassan al-Qazwini ¹⁵ leads the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, a community with a mix of recent immigrants and families who have been in the U.S. for generations. When he first arrived at the center in 1997, he noticed most of the mosques in the Dearborn area used Arabic only. He decided to give his sermon first in English, then in Arabic to serve English speakers. He also lectures in English on Friday nights for young Muslims and again on Sundays, even though some older attendees speak only their native language.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ UAE (online), 'Friday Sermon in English soon in Mosques', ABNA (online) <http://www.abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=210422>

"Some people say I'm too Americanized," said al-Qazwini. "I would say I'm being realistic. We have to be realistic. There are more and more Muslims who are born into this faith in America and there are more and more people who are converting to this faith in America and these are non-Arabic people."¹⁶

The issue is part of a broader discussion within the Muslim community about young U.S. Muslims and their alienation from American mosques. Houses of worship founded by older immigrant Muslims often held fast to the culture and language of their native countries. For them, English in the mosque threatened Muslim identity. Their American-born children, however, can't relate.

"This is a constant problem talked about -- young people in mosques," said Shahed Amanullah, co-founder of salatomatic.com, which lists thousands of mosques and reviews from users. "It's not just about the Friday prayers. It's the response that mosques have to the cultural reality of growing up Muslim in America. If young people don't find what they need in the mosque, they'll find it on the Internet."¹⁷

The language of obligatory Friday prayers, called juma, is not part of the debate; those prayers must be in Arabic, the language of the Quran. The disagreement focuses on whether that requirement should extend to the sermon, or khutba, on Fridays, the Muslim day of congregational prayer, and other assemblies in the mosque.

Imams and scholars who insist on using Arabic say it's mandatory because the Prophet Muhammad gave his sermons in the language. Others say that Muhammad used Arabic only because it was what he and his community spoke, and that Islam is a universal faith.

English-language sermons were accepted without protest at several U.S. mosques, he was derided by one South Florida congregation as a

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ Miriam Nihal (On-Line), 20 april 2012, *Expates want Friday sermon translated in more mosque*, (<http://www.indianmuslimobserver.com/2012/04/expats-want-friday-sermon-translated-at.html>) accessed on June 3rd, 2012

modernist who violated Islamic law. Foreign-born imams, or prayer leaders, who moved here to serve immigrant communities, have sometimes reinforced the thinking that only Arabic is acceptable. Other mosques might use Arabic and Urdu -- a language from Pakistan, India and elsewhere in Asia -- but no English. "My worry is that younger people who do not find the mosque a satisfying experience, and women who find it a hostile environment, will drift away from the mosque," said Abdullahi An-Na'im, a specialist in Islamic law at Emory University School of Law.¹⁸

That means the mosque will become the exclusive domain of a very archaic understanding of Islam. The mosque is one of the largest in the city and attracts a diverse group of Muslims who sit shoulder-to-shoulder on the carpeted floor. We need for a positive outlook, human dignity and connecting prayer and fasting with behavior. He underscored his points by quoting Arabic verses from the Quran.

The imam is Indonesian and a fluent English speaker who said later in an interview that he struggles with all the invitations he receives to lecture Muslim student groups. "My schedule is tight because I'm among the very few who can address the English-only speakers," Shamsi Ali said.¹⁹

Some imams bridge the language gap by giving a lecture in English and a short sermon in Arabic at Friday prayer. But only the sermon and the prayer are obligatory. As a result, many people skip the English-language talk, even if they don't understand the Arabic sermon, said Asad Ba-Yunus, 35, an attorney in Fort Lauderdale, Fla and board member for the Islamic Society of North America.²⁰

Muslims of South Asian descent often have a particularly strong attachment to using Arabic for sermons because it is a tradition in mosques in their native countries. About one-third of Muslims in the United States are of South Asian descent.

¹⁸ UAE (online), 'Friday Sermon in English soon in Mosques', ABNA (online) <http://www.abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=210422>

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ UAE (online), 'Friday Sermon in English soon in Mosques', ABNA (online) <http://www.abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=210422>

Location matters. In small communities comprised of immigrants from many countries, the prayer leaders have no choice but to use English so they can be understood. However, in major cities, immigrants usually arrive in such large numbers that they can find a mosque where their native language is spoken. The growing number of American-born Muslims is likely to force a resolution of the issue.

Recently, in Karet, Central Jakarta, they have a weekly gathering, on Thursdays after *maghrib* prayer, for English-speaking people wish to learn the Quran. The gathering was named 'English Quranic Studies', and perhaps one of the very few available gatherings for muslim expats in Jakarta. A woman named Cary, 27, at the gathering. She was from Oklahoma and converted to Islam in 2001. Funny enough, she learned about Rahmania Foundation when she was in Oklahoma (from Indonesian muslim society there). Cary brought her two children, Jasmine (5) and Nayla (2) to the gathering. You're allowed to do that. In fact, you're encouraged to bring your family, 'coz the atmosphere was very-very informal. Everyone sits on the floor, listen to the *ustadz* (preacher) speaking in English, while the children usually play around.²¹

There also talked to the *ustadz*, Rikza Abdullah, 56, a former reporter of the daily english newspaper The Jakarta Post. He graduated from IKIP Jogja, majoring in English. It was surprised to learn that Rikza was a *hafidz* (an arabic term, meaning someone who's able to memorize all verses in the Al Quran). To be frank, it's not easy to find a *hafidz* in Jakarta, or in Indonesia, these days. Why? Because many muslims (including me) believe that it takes a pure heart to memorize all verses in the Quran. The more you commit a sin; it's very likely that the more you will forget verses you're having memorized.²²

It was even more surprised to learn that Rikza was the elder son of KH. Abdullah Umar, a famous Islamic scholar in Semarang, Central Java.

²¹ Basfin, siregar, 18 september 2008, *Muslim Expats community in Jakarta*, (on-Line) (<http://basfinsiregar.com/muslim-expats-community-in-jakarta>) diakses tanggal 10 april 2012

²² *ibid*

For more than 30 years, KH Abdullah Umar was an ustadz at Kauman Mosque, Semarang, and teaching Quranic interpretation to villagers. KH Abdullah Umar (he passed away in 2004) was also a well-known hafidz. He chaired Tahfidzul Quran traditional Islamic boarding school (aka *pesantren*) in Kauman, which is famous since many of its graduates are *hafidz*. I phoned Rikza again after we parted, and just like I thought, he was fully trained in the *pesantren* tradition. He also could read *Kitab Kuning* (arabic books mostly used in *pesantren*, very difficult to read 'unless you speak Arabic'). I speak Arabic first, then I learn English said Rikza. And after I speak Arabic, I found English was easier," he added.²³

It's very advantageous for Muslim expats to have such a qualified *ustadz* at the gathering. Islam can be a beautiful thing to observe, even if from the outside, particularly in a reasonably religiously tolerant place. Some attends the Friday Khutba at their local mosque every week without understanding its meaning or relevance. It is imperative to make the message easier and clearer for people.

A Turkish expatriate living in Jeddah, said neighboring countries, where Arabic is the first language, have mosques that deliver the Khutba in English. "Most expatriate families in Dubai take their children to the mosque every Friday to gain insight and knowledge about Islam. Islam has spread across borders, infiltrating foreign minds and with the rising influx of expatriate Muslims; it is a logical next step that has yet to be implemented at a national level by Saudi Arabia." Qesbe said that with "advances in technology, diverse cultures, mixed marriages and globalization, we need to reassess our methods and standing in preserving core Islamic values. The need to diversify our methods to unify Muslims living in the country, be it pilgrims or residents, is absolutely fundamental".²⁴

²³ Basfin, siregar, 18 september 2008, *Muslim Expats community in Jakarta*, (on-Line) (<http://basfinsiregar.com/muslim-expats-community-in-jakarta>) accessed on 10 april 2012

²⁴ Miriam Nihal (On-Line), 20 april 2012, *Expates want Friday sermon translated in more mosque*, (<http://www.indianmuslimobserver.com/2012/04/expats-want-friday-sermon-translated-at.html>) accessed on June 3rd, 2012

Conclusion

Islam is not limited to one language. Once at Friday prayers said they were all Muslim brothers and advised him to be patient when listening to the *Khutba*. We are all Muslim brothers, which sounded like an oxymoron. It was unfair to hear them talk about brotherhood when none of the brothers cared enough to share the message of Islam with me. Listen and learn from a sermon that our Prophet (peace be upon him) used as a means to educate and enlighten minds for the well-being of society as a whole.

The Friday *Khutba* was established to bring Muslims together for *Duhr* (noon) prayers, to help them understand Islam in detail, to deal with major problems in society, and to deliberate and pray to Allah.

Here we have millions of people who religiously attend the *Khutba* because of its importance but do not understand a word of it. We should have sections in the mosque for a complete translation or a summary of the *Khutba* for expats so that everyone understands and benefits from it. You cannot simply choose your language of preference and disregard the rest of the expats. The words of the imam fall on deaf ears. Millions of expats from Indonesia, Philippines, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India do not speak our language.

The objective of the sermon during the Friday prayer is to remind the worshippers of their religion and to teach them. If all of them are Arabs or the majority of them understand Arabic, then the sermon should be in Arabic. If they are non-Arabs, then the sermon should be in the language that they understand.

However, the beginning of the sermon should be in Arabic, wherein the one giving the sermon must praise Allah and bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. He must also mention at least one verse of the Qur'ân in Arabic.

MasyhaAllah we are blessed to have the world's fastest growing religion and we should ensure that we spread the message of Islam with precision and compassion. When people hear and do not understand, they cannot act. Hence, no lesson is learnt and the entire *Khutba* becomes a wasted exercise.

Daftar Pustaka

- Abidin, Djamiluddin, Dodi Mardannus. *Komunikasi dan Bahasa Dakwah*. Jakarta. Gema Insani Press. 1996.
- Al-Jarjawi, Syekh Ali Ahmad, *Indahnya Syariat Islam*, Penerjemah: Faisal Saleh, dkk, Jakarta: Gema Insani Press. 2006.
- Bagir, Zainal Abidin, Jarot Wahyudi, Afnan Anshori (Eds), *Integrasi Ilmu dan Agama: Interpretasi dan Aksi*, Bandung: Mizan, 2005.
- Basfin, Siregar, "Muslim Expats community in Jakarta" dalam <http://basfinsiregar.com/muslim-expats-community-in-jakarta>. (akses: 10 April 2012).
- Hafiduddin, Didin, *Agar Layar Berkembang*, Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2006.
- Hafiduddin, Didin, *Dakwah Aktual*, Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 1998.
- Khutbah (on-line), 24 maret 2012, *Khutbah "Origin and Definition"*, (on-Line) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khutbah>), diakses pada tanggal 5 april 2012.
- Pitakasari, Ajeng Ritzki "Pembinaan Muallaf Asing Masih Terganjil Bahasa" dalam <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/mualaf/11/04/26/lk9fxu-pembinaan-mualaf-asing-masih-terganjal-bahasa>.
- Republika "Alhamdulillah Makin Banyak Expatriates yang mengucapkan Syahadat," dalam <http://id.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20111107021343AAA6Y0j> (akses: 2 april 2012)
- Staff (online), "Millions don't understand a word of Friday sermon," dalam (<http://www.emirates247.com/news/millions-don-t-understand-a-word-of-friday-sermon-2011-02-08-1.353366>), (akses: 2 April 2012).
- Suprayogo, Imam, "Membiasakan Berbahasa Asing," dalam <http://rektor.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/artikel/1845-masjid-ulul-al-baab-membiasakan-berbahasa-asing.html> (akses: 5 april 2012).