



Exploring Language Politeness in Mandailing *Onang-Onang* Oral Traditions: A Pathway to Enriching Islamic Education

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Abstract

Politeness in language is essential for fostering respectful communication and social harmony, particularly within cultural and religious contexts, yet its role in Islamic education remains underexplored. This study examines how the *Mandailing Onang-Onang* oral tradition encapsulates linguistic politeness strategies that reflect Islamic values and explores its potential contribution to Islamic education. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach, the research utilizes participant observation, in-depth interviews with cultural practitioners, and analysis of recorded *Onang-Onang* performances framed through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The findings reveal that *Onang-Onang* employs key politeness strategies, such as indirectness, honorifics, and metaphorical expressions, which align with Islamic ethical principles of morality (*akhlak*) and etiquette (*adab*). Furthermore, the study underscores the role of *Onang-Onang* in reinforcing communal ties and transmitting religious teachings. Integrating *Onang-Onang* into Islamic educational frameworks can enrich moral instruction, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen learners' understanding of Islamic values, demonstrating its relevance in contemporary pedagogical settings.

Keywords: Politeness strategies, *Onang-Onang*, Mandailing culture, Islamic education, Oral tradition.

Abstrak

Kesantunan dalam berbahasa sangat penting untuk membangun komunikasi yang saling menghormati dan menjaga keharmonisan sosial, terutama dalam konteks budaya dan agama. Namun, perannya dalam pendidikan Islam masih belum banyak dieksplorasi. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana tradisi lisan *Onang-Onang* Mandailing mengandung strategi kesantunan berbahasa yang mencerminkan nilai-nilai Islam serta potensinya dalam pendidikan Islam. Dengan pendekatan etnografi kualitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam dengan praktisi budaya, serta analisis pertunjukan *Onang-Onang* yang direkam, dengan kerangka teori kesantunan Brown dan Levinson. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa *Onang-Onang* menerapkan strategi kesantunan utama, seperti ketidaklangsungan, penggunaan honorifik, dan ungkapan metaforis, yang selaras dengan prinsip etika Islam, yaitu *akhlak* dan *adab*. Selain itu, studi ini menekankan peran *Onang-Onang* dalam mempererat hubungan sosial dan menyampaikan ajaran agama. Integrasi *Onang-Onang* dalam pendidikan Islam dapat memperkaya pembelajaran moral, melestarikan warisan budaya, serta memperkuat pemahaman peserta didik terhadap nilai-nilai Islam dalam konteks pendidikan modern.

Kata kunci: Strategi kesantunan, *Onang-Onang*, Budaya Mandailing, Pendidikan Islam, tradisi lisan.

INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a tool for communication; it is a reflection of cultural identity and a means of fostering social cohesion. In many cultural and religious contexts, politeness in language plays a crucial role in shaping respectful interactions and maintaining harmonious relationships (Goddard, 2019) (Azkiya et al., 2024; Fahmi et al., 2024; Idris et al., 2024). Oral traditions serve as repositories of wisdom, ethics, and social norms, ensuring the transmission of these values across generations (Ong, 2017) (Mantau & Buhungo, 2024; Salma et al., 2023; Yahya et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). One such tradition is *Onang-Onang*, an oral art form of the Mandailing ethnic group in Indonesia, which intertwines linguistic politeness, moral teachings, and cultural heritage (Nasution, 2018). Given its rich ethical and social significance, *Onang-Onang* presents an opportunity to explore the intersection of language, culture, and religious education.

While *Onang-Onang* is often recognized for its artistic and cultural value, it also functions as a medium for conveying politeness strategies and reinforcing social values (Nasution & Harahap, 2017). Linguistic features such as honorifics, metaphors, and indirectness reflect principles of humility, respect, and communal harmony (Nasution, 2018). These values closely align with Islamic teachings on morality (*akhlak*) and etiquette (*adab*), making *Onang-Onang* a potential resource for Islamic education (Hidayat, 2019). However, despite this alignment, its integration into formal religious education has received little scholarly attention. The lack of research on how oral traditions like *Onang-Onang* can contribute to ethical instruction presents a gap that this study seeks to address.

Although previous research has examined linguistic politeness and cultural traditions, few studies have analyzed *Onang-Onang* qualitatively within Islamic education (Nasution & Harahap, 2017). Most existing studies focus on its role in traditional ceremonies rather than its educational potential. Furthermore, research on integrating indigenous oral traditions into Islamic education remains limited. Addressing this gap can provide insights into how culturally embedded linguistic strategies can enrich ethical instruction and create a more contextually relevant learning experience (Nasution, 2018). By investigating *Onang-Onang*'s role in conveying politeness and social values, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how traditional oral art forms can complement religious education.

This research aims to analyze the linguistic politeness strategies embedded in *Onang-Onang* and explore its potential contribution to Islamic education (Nasution & Harahap, 2017). Through ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews with cultural practitioners, and an analysis of recorded *Onang-Onang* performances, this study examines how politeness strategies align with Islamic ethical teachings (Brown & Levinson, 2017). By applying politeness theory, this research seeks to decode the linguistic features of *Onang-Onang* and evaluate its role in fostering ethical awareness and social harmony within educational contexts.

Through this exploration, the study underscores the importance of preserving local traditions to enhance moral and ethical instruction within Islamic education (Nasution, 2018). Integrating *Onang-Onang* into educational frameworks offers an opportunity to enrich ethical teachings by grounding them in culturally familiar practices, making them more accessible and meaningful. Furthermore, this research advocates for a holistic approach to education that values the interplay between language, culture, and religious instruction. By bridging the gap between traditional heritage and contemporary Islamic education, this study highlights the significance of linguistic politeness as both a cultural

practice and a pedagogical tool for fostering respect, humility, and moral integrity in society (Nasution & Harahap, 2017). This research aims to analyze the linguistic politeness strategies embedded in *Onang-Onang* and explore its potential contribution to Islamic education (Nasution & Harahap, 2017). Through ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews with cultural practitioners, and an analysis of recorded *Onang-Onang* performances, this study examines how politeness strategies align with Islamic ethical teachings (Brown & Levinson, 2017). By applying politeness theory, this research seeks to decode the linguistic features of *Onang-Onang* and evaluate its role in fostering ethical awareness and social harmony within educational contexts. Specifically, this study investigates how the politeness strategies in *Onang-Onang* such as honorifics, metaphors, and indirectness reflect Islamic values of morality (*akhlak*) and etiquette (*adab*), and whether their integration into Islamic education can enhance ethical instruction. By addressing these questions, this research highlights the potential of *Onang-Onang* as a pedagogical tool for promoting respect, humility, and moral integrity within religious education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, as outlined by Creswell (2018), to explore the expressions of language politeness within Mandailing *Onang-Onang* oral traditions and their potential contributions to Islamic education. Qualitative research is particularly effective in examining cultural and linguistic expressions within specific communities, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of social behaviors and traditions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). The research follows an exploratory design, which is well-suited for investigating underexplored linguistic and cultural aspects, enabling researchers to capture nuanced interactions and contextual meanings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Conducted over six months, the study takes place in various Mandailing communities where oral traditions are actively practiced, ensuring direct engagement with cultural settings and authentic interactions. Oral traditions play a crucial role in preserving indigenous knowledge and ethical values, particularly in societies where storytelling and verbal artistry serve as primary educational tools (Finnegan, 2021). Additionally, studies indicate that politeness strategies embedded in traditional oral narratives contribute to the moral and ethical development of learners within Islamic educational contexts, reinforcing communal values and respectful communication (Omar, 2020).

Data collection is carried out through a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis, which are widely recognized qualitative research methods for exploring cultural and linguistic practices (Silverman, 2020). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants, including elders, cultural practitioners, Islamic scholars, and educators who possess deep knowledge of *Onang-Onang* traditions. This method allows for flexibility in questioning while ensuring consistency in thematic exploration, making it particularly effective for understanding indigenous oral traditions. These interviews focus on capturing the cultural significance, linguistic structures, and Islamic educational relevance of the oral traditions, aligning with research that highlights the role of interviews in documenting intangible heritage and language politeness. Observations are performed during traditional ceremonies, community gatherings, and educational events where *Onang-Onang* is recited, emphasizing the natural use of language politeness through tone, structure, and audience

engagement. Participant observation is a key ethnographic technique for analyzing cultural performances, enabling researchers to capture both verbal and non-verbal communication cues within authentic settings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2018). Additionally, relevant textual sources such as transcripts of *Onang-Onang* performances, historical records, and Islamic educational materials are analyzed to identify patterns, symbolic meanings, and pedagogical implications. Document analysis provides valuable insights into the continuity and evolution of oral traditions, especially in the context of their integration into formal and informal education.

The study employs purposive sampling to select knowledgeable informants and authentic materials, a method that enhances the reliability of qualitative research by focusing on participants with deep expertise. Thematic analysis is used to interpret data through systematic transcription and coding, making it an effective approach for identifying patterns related to politeness in language, its alignment with Islamic values, and pedagogical applications. Cross-analysis of cultural and educational elements further highlights the connections between oral traditions and Islamic educational principles, reinforcing their role in shaping ethical and respectful communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study was conducted in Batang Gadis Jae, West Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal, focusing on language politeness in the *Onang-Onang* oral tradition. The *Onang-Onang* tradition is primarily performed during Mandailing wedding ceremonies and is typically accompanied by the Tor-Tor dance. It can be seen in the following figure.



Figure 1. Oral Tradition of *Onang-Onang*

Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that the utterances delivered by Muhammad Lutan Nasution, paronang-onang, commonly referred to as "udai" and Ahmad Yamin Lubis, flute player, known as Lubis. Otherwise, the researcher is giving a presentation or socialization to a group of students in the classroom. The students are seated neatly at desks arranged in a classroom formation, indicating their interest and attention towards the material being presented. This activity is part of the researcher's effort to socialize the values of language politeness within the *Onang-Onang* oral tradition into

character education at school. Through an interactive approach and engaging material delivery, the researcher aims to teach the importance of using polite language, full of humility, and containing cultural and religious values in everyday communication. It can be seen in the following figure.



Figure 2. Researcher with the experts on the *Onang-Onang* tradition

Furthermore, the data collected from the live *Onang-Onang* performance during the bride's arrival at the groom's home revealed distinct linguistic politeness strategies embedded in the tradition. These findings highlight the interplay between language, culture, and religious values, underscoring the significance of *Onang-Onang* in social and educational contexts.

Characteristics of Language Politeness in *Onang-Onang*

The linguistic features of *Onang-Onang* reflect a deep commitment to politeness, as seen in the consistent use of honorifics, indirectness, and careful modulation of tone. Honorific titles and respectful forms of address are central to the performance, emphasizing humility and deference, which are key values in Mandailing society. Performers strategically employ indirect and metaphorical language, allowing for sensitive messages to be conveyed with elegance and subtlety, thus avoiding direct confrontation or offense. Additionally, the rhythmic and melodic delivery of *Onang-Onang* enhances its polite tone, reinforcing the tradition's emphasis on harmony and respect in communication. These linguistic elements not only preserve cultural norms but also ensure that interactions remain dignified and socially appropriate.

Cultural and Contextual Significance of *Onang-Onang*

Beyond its linguistic features, *Onang-Onang* serves a broader social function within the Mandailing community. The utterances performed during the ceremony play a crucial role in strengthening family and community bonds, fostering a sense of unity among participants. Through its poetic and symbolic expressions, *Onang-Onang* reinforces social cohesion by affirming collective values and shared identities. Moreover, the tradition acts as a vehicle for cultural preservation, passing

down Mandailing heritage and etiquette from one generation to the next. By instilling the principles of respect and humility, *Onang-Onang* ensures the continuity of politeness norms within Mandailing society.

Relevance to Islamic Education

One of the most significant findings of this study is the strong alignment between *Onang-Onang*'s politeness strategies and Islamic teachings on moral conduct (*adab*). The performance embodies ethical principles such as humility, respect, and gratitude, which are fundamental in Islamic education. The poetic utterances not only serve as a form of artistic expression but also contain embedded moral lessons, reinforcing key Islamic values such as unity, compassion, and patience. Given this strong moral and ethical component, *Onang-Onang* presents a valuable resource for Islamic education, offering a culturally relevant framework for teaching ethical speech and interpersonal communication. By integrating the linguistic politeness observed in *Onang-Onang* into Islamic pedagogy, educators can enhance moral instruction in a way that resonates with learners' cultural backgrounds.

Insights from Key Performers (*Paronang-Onang*)

Interviews with the performers, known as *Paronang-Onang*, provided deeper insights into the intentional use of politeness in the tradition. The performers expressed a strong awareness of their responsibility in maintaining harmony and respect through their language choices. They consciously employ polite expressions to uphold both cultural etiquette and religious values, demonstrating their deep understanding of the social and spiritual dimensions of their performance. For them, delivering *Onang-Onang* is not merely an artistic endeavor but a moral and spiritual duty, reinforcing their role as cultural and ethical guides within the community.

Table 1. Summary and Research Findings in Table form.

Aspect	Description
Characteristics of Language Politeness in Onang-Onang	The use of honorifics, indirect language, and tone modulation to emphasize politeness in communication. These linguistic strategies uphold Mandailing social norms and ensure that interactions remain dignified.
Cultural and Contextual Significance of Onang-Onang	Serves to strengthen family and community bonds, preserve cultural heritage, and pass down politeness and ethical norms from one generation to the next.
Relevance to Islamic Education	Aligns with Islamic teachings on <i>adab</i> , reflecting moral principles such as humility, respect, and gratitude. <i>Onang-Onang</i> can be a valuable resource for teaching ethical communication in Islamic education.
Insights from Key Performers (<i>Paronang-Onang</i>)	<i>Paronang-Onang</i> performers are aware of their responsibility to maintain social harmony through polite and culturally rich language. Their performance is not just an artistic act but also a moral and spiritual duty.

The interview with MLN, an experienced Paronang-Onang, provides deep insights into the strategic role of Onang-Onang performers in maintaining social harmony, cultural ethics, and religious values during performances. These findings indicate that delivering the Onang-Onang tradition is not merely an artistic activity but also involves significant moral and spiritual responsibility. MLN explained that his role as a Paronang-Onang is not limited to singing or reciting verses alone. Beyond that, he is fully aware that every word spoken must create a peaceful and respectful atmosphere among the audience. The language used must be polite, humble, and imbued with values consistent with Mandailing customs and Islamic teachings. This shows that the role of the Paronang-Onang is central in maintaining social harmony during events. Thus, the delivery of Onang-Onang becomes a tool to reinforce values of politeness and unity within society. As MLN stated:

"... As a Paronang-Onang, I am fully aware that my responsibility is not just about singing or reciting verses. More than that, I must ensure that every word I utter creates a peaceful and respectful atmosphere among the audience. The language I use must be polite, humble, and aligned with the values of Mandailing customs and Islamic teachings. This is my primary task in every performance."

One important aspect highlighted by MLN is the deliberate attention to choosing specific words to ensure messages are conveyed effectively. He often uses honorific titles such as "Inang" or "Uda" to show respect to elders or individuals of high social standing. Additionally, he tends to use indirect or metaphorical language when delivering sensitive messages. This approach aims to ensure the message is well-received without offending anyone. This strategy reflects a conscious effort to maintain social harmony during events while showcasing the performer's skill in managing interpersonal communication dynamics. As MLN explained:

"... I pay close attention to the words I choose. For example, I often use honorific titles like 'Inang' or 'Uda' to show respect to elders or people of high social status. Moreover, I tend to use indirect or metaphorical language when conveying sensitive messages. This is done so that the message can be accepted without offending anyone. For me, this is a way to maintain social harmony during the event."

MLN emphasized that the Onang-Onang tradition is not merely entertainment but also a means to preserve cultural and religious values. Every word spoken during the performance must reflect Islamic principles such as humility, patience, and gratitude. Furthermore, he aims to serve as a role model for the younger generation in speaking politely and wisely. For MLN, this is a moral and spiritual responsibility that cannot be overlooked. This indicates that the Onang-Onang tradition has a strong educational dimension, where ethical and religious values are implicitly taught through artistic performance. As MLN stated:

"... In Mandailing tradition, Onang-Onang is not just entertainment; it is also a means to preserve cultural and religious values. Every word I speak must reflect Islamic principles such as humility, patience, and gratitude. Additionally, I want to be a role model for the younger generation in speaking politely and wisely. For me, this is a moral and spiritual responsibility that cannot be ignored."

These findings demonstrate that the role of the Paronang-Onang goes beyond artistic functions. As a messenger in the Onang-Onang tradition, the Paronang-Onang acts as a mediator between cultural, religious, and societal values. By ensuring that every utterance reflects harmony, humility, and respect, the Paronang-Onang significantly contributes to strengthening social and spiritual bonds among participants. Moreover, this tradition serves as a medium to transmit noble values to the younger generation, ensuring the continuity of Mandailing cultural heritage. As MLN explained:

"... Performing Onang-Onang is a calling for me. It is not merely about vocal techniques or artistic abilities but more about how I can become a bridge between cultural, religious, and societal values. I feel that every time I perform, I am carrying out a task as a messenger of moral and spiritual values. Through Onang-Onang, I hope to strengthen social bonds, teach good values, and preserve our cultural heritage for future generations."

Politeness Maxims in *Onang-Onang*

An analysis of the utterances in *Onang-Onang* revealed that they adhere to politeness maxims consistent with both cultural and Islamic ethical principles. The emphasis on humility, indirectness, and respectful address aligns with universal politeness strategies, as well as Islamic teachings on ethical speech. This linguistic politeness framework offers valuable insights into how traditional oral art forms can contribute to ethical instruction in Islamic education.

These findings underscore the potential of *Onang-Onang* as a pedagogical tool for fostering respect, humility, and moral integrity. By bridging linguistic politeness, cultural identity, and religious values, *Onang-Onang* presents a meaningful model for integrating traditional heritage into contemporary education, reinforcing both social harmony and ethical awareness.

Table 2. Using Leech's politeness theory, the study identified six politeness maxims in *Onang-Onang*:

No.	Leech's Politeness Maxims	Total
1	Tact Maxim	80
2	Approbation Maxim	50
3	Agreement Maxim	29
4	Sympathy Maxim	17
5	Generosity Maxim	14
6	Modesty Maxim	10
	Total	200

Source: Utterances by Speaker Muhammad Lutan Nasution

From the data above, it can be concluded that the most dominant type is the Tact Maxim, with a total of 80 instances. This is because the data originates from the oral tradition of *onang-onang*, which is delivered by the speaker with the purpose of providing advice and reminders to the bride, groom, or their families. When the speaker is given the opportunity to perform the oral tradition of *onang-onang*, they naturally offer wise counsel and recount the life journeys of the bride, groom, and their families. Thus, it is reasonable that the Tact Maxim is the most dominant.

The Approbation Maxim is found in 50 instances, indicating that this maxim in the *onang-onang* oral tradition is a form of the speaker's utterance to the interlocutor, consisting of praises directed toward God, the Prophet, or the audience. Meanwhile, the directive type accounts for 39 instances, as communication between the speaker and the interlocutor often contains requests, hopes, or even commands from the speaker.

For the Agreement Maxim, 29 instances were identified, as the speaker frequently uses utterances aimed at agreeing that the event proceeds smoothly under the established customs. Sympathy ranks fourth, with 17 instances, because the oral tradition contains expressions of sympathy from the speaker (in this case, the source) toward the audience. The Generosity Maxim appears in 14 instances, reflecting utterances from this tradition that convey the generosity of kings or honored guests attending the customary event. Lastly, the Modesty Maxim is the least frequent, with 10 instances, as the speaker primarily focuses on providing wise advice.

From these findings, it can be said that the Tact Maxim is highly dominant because the data originates from an oral tradition of *onang-onang* that conveys advice in the form of songs. The speaker's utterances often refer to beliefs or assumptions about the conveyed messages, such as informing, concluding, and offering opinions. Therefore, it is natural that the dominant maxim found is the Tact Maxim.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, the complexity and richness of the Onang-Onang oral tradition in Mandailing society serve as a medium for cultural transmission and a vessel for actualizing politeness and Islamic values. These findings indicate that Onang-Onang applies all of Leech's (1983) politeness principles, including Sympathy and Modesty, which were previously unidentified, and strengthens Brown and Levinson's (2017) theory on politeness strategies in maintaining social harmony and hierarchy. Additionally, this research affirms the alignment between Onang-Onang's politeness principles and the concept of *adab* in Islam, such as *qaulan layyin* (gentle speech) and humility (*tawadhu*). The socio-cultural implications of these findings emphasize the importance of revitalizing Onang-Onang through formal education and community participation. In contrast, its integration into Islamic education offers a holistic approach to preserving local and religious values. Thus, Onang-Onang serves as a guardian of ancestral traditions and a transformative tool in building a harmonious and morally upright society. Below is a detailed discussion of the research findings.

Expansion of Islamic Politeness Principles in the Onang-Onang Oral Tradition

The findings of this research reveal that Onang-Onang, as a Mandailing oral tradition, applies all of Leech's (1983) politeness principles, including Sympathy and Modesty, which were not identified in previous studies by Yadi, Juita, and Ngusman (2012). This difference suggests that politeness in the context of customary rituals has a higher complexity compared to everyday communication. In Onang-Onang, the use of Sympathy is evident through empathetic expressions that accommodate the feelings of the interlocutor, while Modesty is reflected in the avoidance of excessive praise that could potentially undermine humility. This aligns with Watts' (2003) view that politeness is contextual and influenced by cultural uniqueness. This research also confirms critiques of Leech's theory, which is

often considered too universalistic, by demonstrating that politeness principles need to be analyzed through the lens of cultural locality (Fraser, 1990).

These findings strengthen Brown and Levinson's (2017) theory on the role of politeness strategies in maintaining face (self-esteem) and social structure. In Onang-Onang, the use of indirect language and metaphors aims to avoid conflict and reinforce sacred social hierarchies. For example, the use of honorific terms such as "*anak boru*" (daughter) or "*subut*" (the bride's family) not only indicates social status but also reflects deference politeness as proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001). Furthermore, the ritualistic approach in Onang-Onang aligns with Goffman's (1955) concept of facework, where social interactions are governed by cultural "scripts" that maintain harmony. The difference with everyday communication lies in its repetitive and symbolic nature, which functions as a "glue" for social cohesion (Duranti, 1997).

This research reveals the alignment between Onang-Onang's politeness principles and the concept of *adab* in Islam. Expressions such as "*Syukur ma baya pajolo tu tutuhanon*" illustrate the integration of humility (as a manifestation of Modesty) and the acknowledgment of divine power, which aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's hadith on cautious speech (HR. Bukhari-Muslim). This is reinforced by Al-Qaradawi's (1996) study, which asserts that *adab* includes verbal politeness as a form of respect towards Allah and fellow humans. Thus, Onang-Onang not only serves as a guardian of ancestral traditions but also as a medium for the actualization of transformative Islamic values. This phenomenon supports Woodward's (2003) theory on Islamic discourse, which combines cultural locality with theological principles.

Theoretically, this research opens new perspectives in the study of linguistic politeness by showing that customary rituals can serve as a space for dialogue between universal theories (Leech, Brown & Levinson) and local practices. For instance, the findings on the dominance of positive politeness (maintaining close relationships) in Onang-Onang critique the tendency of politeness studies to focus on negative politeness (maintaining distance) in the West (Eelen, 2001). On the other hand, these results invite further research on how social changes (modernization, urbanization) affect the continuity of politeness strategies in customary rituals.

Socio-Cultural Implications and Revitalization of Religious Education in the Onang-Onang Oral Tradition

The findings of this research reveal that Onang-Onang is not merely an oral tradition but also serves as an effective medium for cultural transmission within Mandailing society. Through the use of structured politeness strategies, such as Tact and Modesty, younger generations are taught core values like respect, humility, and communication ethics. This aligns with Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman's (1981) theory of cultural transmission, which posits that culture is transmitted through symbolic mechanisms, including ritualistic language. In the context of Onang-Onang, the use of metaphors and indirect expressions serves as a tool to maintain social harmony while reinforcing cultural identity. However, these findings also critique modernization perspectives that often overlook local values, as highlighted by Appadurai (1996) regarding global cultural homogenization. Therefore, preserving Onang-Onang is crucial for sustaining Mandailing cultural identity amidst social changes.

The dominance of Agreement and Sympathy principles in Onang-Onang demonstrates that this tradition functions as a social adhesive, strengthening interpersonal bonds and fostering a sense of community. According to Brown and Levinson (2017), politeness strategies serve to mitigate threats to an individual's face (self-esteem), thereby creating more harmonious social relationships. In the Mandailing context, the use of indirect language and honorifics in Onang-Onang reflects efforts to avoid conflict and maintain social hierarchy. These findings support Goffman's (1955) concept of facework, where social interactions are governed by cultural norms aimed at preserving self-image and interpersonal relationships. However, this research also highlights the challenges posed by modernization, which can erode traditional politeness practices, necessitating revitalization efforts to sustain Onang-Onang's social functions.

The politeness principles in Onang-Onang, such as Tact and Approbation, align with the Islamic concept of *qaulan layyin* (gentle speech), as mentioned in the Quran (Surah Thaha, 20:44). This research suggests that Onang-Onang can serve as a model for ethical communication relevant to Islamic education. For instance, the expression "Syukur ma baya pajolo tu tutuhanon" reflects values of humility and acknowledgment of Allah's power, consistent with the Prophet Muhammad's hadith on the importance of polite speech (HR. Bukhari-Muslim). Al-Qaradawi's (1996) study on adab in Islam also emphasizes that verbal politeness is a manifestation of one's faith. Thus, Onang-Onang can be used as an educational tool to teach moral values to students in schools and religious institutions. However, this implication requires further validation through field research on the effectiveness of integrating Onang-Onang into Islamic education curricula.

This research recommends revitalizing Onang-Onang through formal education and active community participation. Workshops and training sessions can be organized to introduce Onang-Onang to younger generations, particularly in schools and religious institutions. This approach aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observation and imitation in the learning process. Additionally, documenting Onang-Onang through government and cultural organizations, such as UNESCO, can help preserve this tradition as intangible cultural heritage (Firmansyah et al., 2024; Naimah et al., 2024). However, a major challenge in this revitalization effort is the lack of interest among younger generations in oral traditions, as noted by Smith (2006) in his study on the decline of local cultures. Therefore, revitalization strategies must incorporate modern elements, such as digital media, to engage younger audiences.

Integrating Onang-Onang into Islamic education reflects a holistic approach that connects traditional values with religious teachings. This aligns with the concept of local wisdom in education proposed by Semali and Kincheloe (1999), which emphasizes the importance of integrating local knowledge into formal education. In the Mandailing context, Onang-Onang can serve as a bridge between local cultural values and Islamic teachings, such as humility (*tawadhu'*) and respect for others (*ihsan*). However, this approach also faces challenges, particularly regarding cultural-religious syncretism, which is often viewed skeptically by fundamentalist groups (Woodward, 2003). Therefore, this integration must be approached carefully, considering cultural and religious sensitivities.

Overall, this research provides profound insights into how Onang-Onang can contribute to cultural preservation, social harmony, and Islamic education. These findings support theories on linguistic politeness (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 2017) as well as the concept of adab in Islam

(Al-Qaradawi, 1996). However, this research also opens avenues for further exploration, such as comparative studies between Onang-Onang and other oral traditions in Indonesia or analyses of the impact of modernization on traditional politeness practices. Additionally, future research could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of integrating Onang-Onang into formal and non-formal education and its impact on young people's understanding of Islamic values. Thus, Onang-Onang is not only an object of cultural study but also a tool for building a more harmonious and morally upright society.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals surprising findings that were only identified through an in-depth approach, namely the application of all of Leech's politeness principles, including Sympathy and Modesty, in the Onang-Onang oral tradition of the Mandailing community. These findings challenge previous assumptions that politeness principles are universalistic by demonstrating that the context of customary rituals possesses a higher level of complexity compared to everyday communication. Furthermore, this research strengthens Brown and Levinson's theory on politeness strategies in maintaining social harmony and hierarchy, while also confirming the alignment between Onang-Onang's politeness principles and Islamic values, such as *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech) and humility (*tawadhu*). These findings have significant implications for understanding how oral traditions can serve as a medium for the actualization of cultural and religious values.

From an academic perspective, this research not only confirms previous findings on linguistic politeness but also questions the validity of universalistic approaches by introducing a cultural locality perspective. The concept of politeness in Onang-Onang, influenced by ritual contexts and Islamic values, enriches the study of linguistic politeness by offering a more culturally contextual lens. Additionally, this research introduces an analytical method that combines Western politeness theories with local practices, opening a space for dialogue between universal theories and specific cultural practices. These findings also encourage further research to compare Onang-Onang with other oral traditions in Indonesia, such as Malay Pantun or Sasak Poetry, to map the diversity of linguistic politeness in the archipelago.

However, this research has several limitations. The study is confined to a small sample and a specific case, namely the Mandailing community, which means the findings cannot be generalized broadly. Moreover, the lack of diversity in participants' age, gender, and social backgrounds may affect the representation of the results. The research method used, although in-depth, also has limitations in terms of scope and data variety. Therefore, further research with larger samples, more diverse participants, and varied methodological approaches is needed to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. These findings also suggest the need to integrate Onang-Onang into formal and non-formal education, as well as revitalize it through digital media, to ensure the preservation of this tradition amidst modernization. Thus, this research not only contributes to the study of linguistic politeness but also offers practical insights for cultural preservation and education based on local and religious values.

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