

A Semiotic Analysis of Da'wah Methods in the Film Buya Hamka

Silvia Wulandari¹, Asrul Harahap¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia

 silviawulandari945@gmail.com *

Abstract

The film Buya Hamka is a biographical film portraying the life and intellectual legacy of one of Indonesia's most influential Muslim scholars. This study aims to analyze the da'wah methods represented in the film through a semiotic perspective. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research applies Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model to examine signs, meanings, and representations of da'wah practices depicted in selected scenes. Data were collected through observation and documentation techniques. The findings reveal that the da'wah methods portrayed in the film align with the principles of Quranic preaching as articulated in Surah An-Nahl (125), encompassing three main approaches: *bil hikmah*, *ma'izah hasanah*, and *mujadalah*. The *bil hikmah* method is represented through verbal communication, exemplary conduct (*da'wah bil hal*), and written expression (*da'wah bil kitabah*). *Ma'izah hasanah* appears in the form of guidance, moral advice, and educational messages conveyed both orally and through exemplary behavior. Meanwhile, *mujadalah* is depicted through calm, rational responses to criticism and slander. These findings highlight the potential of biographical films as an effective and inspirational medium for contemporary Islamic preaching in Indonesia.

Article Information:

Received October 21, 2025

Revised November 28, 2025

Accepted December 19, 2025

Keywords: *Semiotic analysis, da'wah methods, Islamic film, religious communication, Buya Hamka*

INTRODUCTION

Film represents a mass communication paradigm that integrates the simultaneous transmission of visual and auditory elements to convey meaning (Astuti, 2018; Thibodeau et al., 2019). This multimodal combination enables film to function as a medium for delivering recreational, educational, interpersonal, and commercial messages (Alcaraz et al., 2024; Aldo et al., 2023). Within the context of religious communication, film possesses a unique capacity to convey Islamic values and messages of *amr ma'ruf* and *nabi munkar* due to its broad reach and strong narrative appeal Fauzi & Indah, (2021). Among various da'wah media, biographical films (biopics) are particularly significant as they portray the life experiences of real figures and contextualize religious values within historical and social realities (Imani, 2024).

One such film is Buya Hamka Volume 2, directed by Fajar Bustomi, which depicts the life struggle of Buya Hamka an Indonesian Muslim scholar, writer, and public intellectual during periods of severe limitation, including his imprisonment while composing Tafsir Al-Azhar (Irfan et al., 2023; Lutfiah & Primi Rohimi, 2025).

How to cite:

Wulandari, S., Harahap, A. (2025). A Semiotic Analysis of Da'wah Methods in the Film Buya Hamka. *El-Rusyd*, 10(2), 474-483.

E-ISSN:

2580-0256

Published by:

The Institute for Research and Community Service

The film foregrounds Buya Hamka's persistence in preaching Islam despite physical and psychological constraints, illustrating da'wah not only through verbal communication but also through intellectual and written endeavors. This representation positions the film beyond a mere biographical narrative, highlighting alternative da'wah practices grounded in resilience, intellectual production, and moral exemplarity.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing role of audiovisual media in shaping contemporary religious understanding, particularly in the digital era where audiences increasingly engage with narrative-driven visual content (Husna, 2023; Mubarok & Sunarto, 2024). While conventional da'wah studies predominantly focus on oral preaching and sermon-based communication, representations of non-verbal and written da'wah methods especially within cinematic narratives remain underexplored. Without systematic analysis, the potential of biographical films as instruments of Islamic communication risks being overlooked, despite their capacity to transmit enduring religious values and ethical exemplars (Jaafar et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025).

The research gap addressed in this study concerns the limited scholarly attention to da'wah methods portrayed in reality-based biographical films, particularly the depiction of *da'wah bil kitabah* under conditions of confinement, as represented in Buya Hamka Volume 2. Existing literature largely emphasizes verbal preaching, leaving alternative modes of da'wah insufficiently examined. Therefore, this study offers novelty by employing a semiotic analysis to examine audiovisual representations of da'wah methods within a biographical film context, contributing to the fields of Islamic communication and contemporary da'wah media studies (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Kalsum et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyze the da'wah methods represented in the film Buya Hamka, with particular attention to the context of imprisonment and the production of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, in order to elucidate the potential of biographical films as effective and inspirational media for contemporary Islamic preaching.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytic design to examine the representation of Buya Hamka's da'wah methods as portrayed in the film Buya Hamka Volume 2. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as it emphasizes an in-depth understanding of socially and culturally constructed meanings through narrative description and interpretation (Maxwell, 2021). Given the subjective and contextual nature of audiovisual representations in biographical films, this approach allows for a comprehensive interpretation rather than quantitative measurement (Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2019, 2025).

The primary data source consists of selected key scenes from the film *Buya Hamka* Volume 2, with a total duration of 1 hour and 42 minutes. These scenes were captured as screenshots and systematically organized into analytical tables containing visual images, scene descriptions, and relevant dialogue excerpts. This procedure was applied to ensure analytical rigor and consistency in interpreting visual and auditory elements. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly journals, books discussing Buya Hamka's da'wah thought, and film-related literature, collected through online databases and library research (Langputeh et al., 2023; Lutfiah & Primi Rohimi, 2025).

Data were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on scenes that explicitly or implicitly represent da'wah practices. The data analysis was conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model, which conceptualizes meaning through a triadic relationship consisting of the representamen (sign), object, and interpretant

(Pramaskara, 2022). In this study, film scenes function as representamens that refer to specific da'wah practices as objects such as the act of composing *Tafsir Al-Azhar* during imprisonment while the interpretant reflects the meanings constructed through the interaction of visual, auditory, and contextual elements related to *amr ma'ruf* and *nabi munkar*. The analysis was carried out iteratively to develop coherent and theoretically grounded interpretations of da'wah representations within the film (Rouf, 2025; Sya'bani & Azizah, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was conducted by identifying visual images and dialogue presented in selected scenes of the film Buya Hamka Volume 2. Each selected scene was analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework by examining the relationship between the sign (representamen), object, and interpretant. Through this process, the da'wah methods represented in the film were systematically identified and interpreted.

The analyzed scenes illustrate da'wah practices based on the principles outlined in Surah An-Nahl (125), which encompass three primary methods: *bil hikmah* (wisdom-based preaching), *ma'uizah hasanah* (gentle and constructive exhortation), and *mujadalah* (dialogue or argumentation conducted in a respectful manner).

Method of Da'wah Bil Hikmah

Table 1. Scene Analysis 1 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture	1959, Hamka Building the Al Azhar Mosque
Object	This scene shows Buya Hamka and Siti Raham looking at the mosque he built, named the Al Azhar Mosque
Meaning	This scene conveys the meaning that Hamka's construction of the Al Azhar Mosque was not merely the erection of a physical building. He demonstrated his exemplary character, and this action also carries a profound meaning about the central role of the mosque as an effective means of da'wah and a valuable place for Muslims.

The method of preaching found in this scene is the method of preaching with wisdom and preaching with action (Marasabessy, 2025). The method of preaching *bil hikmah* in this scene is wisdom through exemplary behavior (Nazirman, 2018). For example, when the Prophet Muhammad SAW migrated to Medina, he built the Quba Mosque and the Nabawi Mosque, and formed a defensive trench during the Battle of Ahzab, which were acts of preaching (Athallah et al., 2025). Similarly, Buya Hamka established a mosque named Mosque Al-Azhar in 1959, which became the center of his da'wah activities, such as weekly sermons, dawn lectures, In addition to initiating various religious study forums, *majelis taklim* (Islamic study circles), and Islamic education programs, Buya Hamka was also active in encouraging the expansion and improvement of the quality of Al-Azhar Islamic educational institutions, which are rooted in the Al-Azhar Mosque environment. The establishment of this mosque is a manifestation of *dakwah bil bal*, or the delivery of religious messages through concrete actions and exemplary behavior. These da'wah efforts were carried out as part of a movement to directly eradicate immorality and uphold the values of *ma'ruf*.

Table 2. Analysis of Scene 2 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture	
	
Buya Hamka:	"This is a written guide for Muslim life. Please give it to Amir this Saturday."
Object	This scene depicts Buya Hamka handing over a written work entitled <i>Guidelines for Muslim Life</i> to his child to be delivered to Amir.
Meaning	This scene signifies that Buya Hamka conveys da'wah through written media, namely <i>Guidelines for Muslim Life</i> , which contains principles and perspectives that every Muslim should possess in facing worldly life. The work is composed using precise and well-chosen words.

The da'wah method applied in this scene is da'wah bil hikmah, particularly through written expression (*bil kitabah*). This method emphasizes wisdom in selecting appropriate diction and sentence structures. A preacher is expected to communicate messages politely, clearly, and respectfully, avoiding harsh or ambiguous expressions. This approach is reflected in Buya Hamka's work published in the *Panji Masyarakat* magazine under his own leadership. A worldview essentially represents a conceptual framework held by individuals or communities to interpret life phenomena. For Muslims, this worldview is grounded in the Quran and Sunnah, with the concept of *tawhid* as its fundamental basis. Buya Hamka's writing demonstrates clarity, emotional depth, and the ability to awaken readers' spiritual awareness.

Table 3. Analysis of Scene 3 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture	
	
Rusdy:	"The sinking of the Van Der Wijck, written by Hamka, is a copy of Majdulin, written by the poet Manfaluthi, which is also an adaptation of a French novel." This is outrageous, Dad.
Zaki:	The Bintang Timur daily newspaper also published the same news, even attacking Dad personally.
Fahri:	"The sole actor in the world of literary lies!" How could they write such a story...
Buya Hamka:	Enough, son. We cannot control how others feel about us. Don't let your emotions overcome your intelligence, oh God.
Object	This scene shows Buya Hamka's children reading the news about the plagiarism allegations against Buya Hamka.
Meaning	This scene conveys the message that a Muslim must be wise, patient, and calm when facing accusations and slander. Buya Hamka faced allegations of plagiarism against his work. Instead of letting his emotions get the better of him and responding with anger, he gave his children calm and wise advice. He taught them not to dwell on other people's negative feelings and reminded them to prioritize intelligence. A calm and wise attitude in facing difficult situations must be present in the life of a Muslim.

The method of preaching used in this scene is preaching through wisdom and preaching through speech. The method of preaching through wisdom here uses wisdom in the form of speaking or remaining silent. Wisdom in speaking or remaining silent means knowing when it is the right time to speak and when it is the right time to remain silent. In this situation, Buya Hamka chose to speak in a calm and wise tone when delivering his message of da'wah. The situation faced by Buya Hamka was a severe test for an intellectual and scholar (Athallah et al., 2025). Accusations of plagiarism, especially those concerning works such as "The Sinking of the Van Der Wijck," not only damaged his reputation but also damaged his integrity and honesty as a writer. Amidst the atmosphere of anger and disappointment from his children, Buya Hamka's response truly reflected a calm and unemotional attitude. He did not allow himself to be provoked into responding with the same emotion. His words calmed his children's hearts. Buya Hamka's statement, "We cannot control other people's feelings towards us," is a wise acknowledgment of the limits of human control. Buya Hamka realized that other people's perceptions and judgments of him were beyond his control. He gave wise advice on how to deal with slander and trials. He reminded his children to keep a clear head, use common sense, and not be controlled by anger or resentment. Buya Hamka also surrendered himself to Allah SWT, asking for strength and guidance in facing this trial.

Method of Mauizah Hasanah Da'wah

Table 4. Analysis of Scene 4 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture



Buya Hamka: The days when we were divided, when we were like sheep and easily pitted against each other, ended decades ago. Now is the time for us to unite to defend our independence, lest the Dutch trample on our nation's dignity. And especially as Muslims, the independence of a country can be guaranteed to stand firm if it is based on independence of the heart. Good luck in your struggle, may Allah be with us.

Object	In this scene, Buya Hamka gives advice and motivation to the Muslims who have gone to remote villages to unite the Muslim community.
Meaning	In this scene, Buya Hamka advises Muslims not to be easily pitted against each other and emphasizes that the independence of a nation begins with ourselves by drawing closer to Allah SWT.

The method of preaching used in this scene is the method of mauizah hasanah, which is like giving advice through verbal preaching. M. Natsir said that mauizah hasanah is a description that touches the heart and leads it to goodness. As Allah SWT says in Surah Thaaha verse 44:

فَهُنَّا لَهُ فَوْلًا لَّيْتَنَا لَعَلَهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى ﴿٤﴾

Meaning: *Speak to him (Pharaoh) with gentle words, perhaps he will remember or fear.*

As Buya Hamka did as a preacher, he gave advice that touched the heart, was gentle and directed towards goodness, and provided motivation and encouragement that Muslims need to remember so that they are not easily pitted against each other. As Muslims, we must not feel fear and be overly cautious towards other people, as this can paralyze our fighting spirit. We should only fear Allah and be brave in upholding the truth. We must believe that in every step we take, Allah is always with us.

Table 5. Analysis of Scene 5 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture	
	
Object	This scene shows the work of Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka
Meaning	This scene shows that the work of Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka is one of the most influential books of tafsir and has contributed greatly to Indonesia. This tafsir contains advice, good news, wills, and good teachings. This tafsir serves as a source of inspiration and knowledge for Muslims in exploring the profound meanings of the Quran. Through the Al-Azhar Tafsir, Buya Hamka conveys the messages of the Quran in a profound and heartfelt manner to his readers.

The method of preaching used in this scene is preaching through mauizah hasanah, utilizing written works, namely dakwah bil kitabah. Buya Hamka carried out his preaching through his writings, namely Tafsir Al-Azhar. Tafsir Al-Azhar is not merely an explanation of the verses of the Quran, but also contains in-depth analysis of the meanings and messages contained therein. In Tafsir Al-Azhar, Buya Hamka often conveys messages of da'wah through heartfelt advice that is easily accepted by his readers. He uses beautiful and straightforward language, connecting the verses of the Quran with the realities of everyday life. Tafsir Al-Azhar was written by Buya Hamka while he was in prison for two years. Tafsir Al-Azhar remains a very useful tafsir to this day, and indirectly, Buya Hamka has carried out his preaching in the form of writing.

Table 6. Analysis of Scene 6 Application of Charles Sander Pearce's Analysis

Picture	
	
Object	This scene shows Buya Hamka in conversation with a mother who is asking for help on how to deal with her husband who likes to gamble.
Meaning	This scene conveys the message that Buya Hamka provides good guidance and teaching. It also contains the message to remain patient and surrender to Allah SWT. Patience here does not mean simply

giving up without doing anything, but rather actively maintaining peace of mind and continuing to strive in a good way. This scene also emphasizes the importance of being grateful in difficult circumstances, teaching us to see the positive side and the strength given by Allah, and to stay away from despair. The call to create a peaceful and religious atmosphere at home is also a form of wisdom in dealing with difficult situations.

The method of preaching found in this scene is the mauizah hasanah method of preaching, which provides good guidance and teaching through verbal preaching (Hambali, 2021). Wahidin Saputra, in his book Introduction to the Science of Da'wah, states that one of the methods of da'wah carried out by a da'i is the mauizah hasanah method, which involves providing good guidance and teaching to the *mad'u* (Haq et al., 2023). This is what Buya Hamka did as a da'i, providing good guidance and teaching to a group of women. Buya Hamka was in dialogue with a woman about her husband who often gambled. In Islamic teachings, gambling is categorized as a forbidden (*haram*) act. The Holy Quran explicitly prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages (*khamr*) and gambling, considering that both have the potential to cause negative consequences that are detrimental to individuals in various dimensions of life. In line with this, Buya Hamka always provided good guidance and teachings that emphasized the importance of patience and complete surrender to Allah SWT. As Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Ashr Verse 3:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّلِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبَرِ ﴿٣﴾

Terjemahan : Except for those who believe and do good deeds, and advise each other to seek the truth and advise each other to be patient. (QS Al-Ashr 3)

Patience here does not mean simply giving up and doing nothing, but rather actively maintaining peace of mind and continuing to strive in a good way. Buya Hamka also emphasized the importance of continuing to be grateful in difficult circumstances and taught us to always look at the positive side and the strength given by Allah, as well as to stay away from despair. Buya Hamka also encouraged mothers to create a peaceful and religious atmosphere at home so that calmness and positive energy would radiate from within the home.

The Mujadallah Method of Da'wah

Table 7. Analysis of Scene 7 Using Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis

Picture



Police: We have a witness who stated that Kyai was involved in a plot to assassinate the President.

Buya Hamka: By Allah, he is my close friend. It is impossible for me to be involved.

Police: Liar! It is clearly written here that you attended a meeting in Tangerang. You are an agent of Malaysia attempting to overthrow the President.

Buya Hamka: That is slander.

Object

This scene depicts Buya Hamka being accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate the President. In responding to the accusation, Buya Hamka chooses to remain patient and honest, while firmly maintaining his personal integrity in the face of slander.

Meaning

This scene conveys the meaning that Buya Hamka is accused of participating in a presidential assassination plot. Confronted with a

tense and oppressive situation, Buya Hamka demonstrates patience, honesty, and integrity. He refrains from immediately responding to the accusation; instead, after considering the situation carefully, he offers a well-mannered and reasoned rebuttal to the allegations.

The da'wah method reflected in this scene is *da'wah bil mujadalah*, conducted through debate and *da'wah bil lisān* (Alfiyah & Khiyarah, 2022). Buya Hamka's patience, honesty, and commitment to integrity illustrate the proper attitude of a *da'i* when facing pressure and unjust accusations. His response to slander delivered with truthful, polite, and respectful language represents *da'wah bil mujadalah*, which emphasizes rebuttal or argumentation using good and ethical speech.

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا أَلَيْهِ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَنَ يَنْزَعُ بَيْنَهُمْ لَأَنَّ الشَّيْطَنَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَلُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾

Meaning: And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces dissension among them. Indeed, Satan is ever to mankind a clear enemy (QS Al-Isra 53)

Although this verse explicitly addresses speech, it also emphasizes that good words must be accompanied by righteous conduct. Buya Hamka's words, reinforced by his integrity, exemplify this principle. *Da'wah bil hal* is also exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who was known as *Al-Amin* (the Trustworthy) even before prophethood an attribute that became the foundation for the acceptance of his da'wah.

According to *Tafsir An-Nasafi*, *mujadalah* is understood as a constructive dialogue carried out through the most effective methods of argumentation. This includes the use of gentle and courteous diction, avoidance of harsh language, and the employment of expressions that touch the heart, enlighten the soul, and sharpen reason. Such an approach functions as a means of engaging and responding to individuals who are reluctant to participate in religious discourse.

CONCLUSION

Based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis of *Buya Hamka Vol. 2*, three principal da'wah methods representing Surah An-Nahl verse 125 are identified: *bil hikmah*, *ma'āidzah hasanah*, and *good mujadalah*. These methods are portrayed through visual auditory representamen that refer to the object of Buya Hamka's da'wah struggle and produce interpretants that are inspirational for contemporary *da'i*. *Da'wah bil hikmah* is manifested through *da'wah bil hal* (exemplary action, such as the establishment of Al-Azhar Mosque as a center for da'wah and education), *bil karya tulis* (written works, particularly *Pedoman Hidup Muslim*, which employs precise and emotionally resonant language), and *bil lisān* (spoken da'wah), reflected in Buya Hamka's wise speech or deliberate silence when facing accusations of plagiarism.

Ma'āidzah hasanah (good and gentle exhortation) appears through *da'wah bil lisān* (motivating unity among the Muslim community), written works (the *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, composed during imprisonment, containing advice, moral guidance, and religious instruction that later became a major reference), as well as benevolent guidance (dialogue with the mother of a gambling-addicted husband, offering counsel on patience, gratitude, trust in God, and the cultivation of a religious household). Meanwhile, *good mujadalah* is illustrated through *da'wah bil lisān* when Buya Hamka confronts accusations of involvement in the President's assassination. In this context, he demonstrates patience, honesty, and the preservation of personal integrity by delivering rebuttals that are truthful, polite, and constructive in response to slander.

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