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## Translating the Multiple Meanings of the Lexical Item “Al-Haq” in the Glorious Qur'an into English

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### **Abstract**

Multiplicity of meaning is one of the most fundamental issues observed in the Quranic language. This phenomenon does not exist without ambiguity, which can be perceived by translators as a problem to be solved or a natural issue to be ignored. This study is an attempt to show how these multiple meanings are conveyed into English by four reputable translators, Hilali & Khan, Pickthall, Sarwar, and Ali through an in-depth analysis of different ayahs containing the Quranic term “Al-Haq.” The main objective is to answer the following question: Should the translator use the same English word for the Arabic word Al-Haq which has different meanings? Driven by "faithfulness" and ethical motives, the translators maintain the original ambiguity out of respect to the text despite the possible loss of clarity. As a result, a literal translation is adopted and the ambiguity is retained or sometimes signaled by explanatory footnotes or paraphrasing. Despite the fact that linguists look at the situational and linguistic contexts as integrative and interrelated, the study shows that the situational context should take priority over the linguistic one in realizing the intended meaning.

**Key words:** Al-Haq, Multiple Meanings, Ambiguity, Qur'an, Translation.

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## ترجمة المعاني المتعددة لكلمة " الحق " في القرآن الكريم الى اللغة الانكليزية

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**الملخص:** تعدد المعاني من الظواهر اللغوية التي يزخر بها القرآن الكريم. وهذا التعدد لا يخلو من غموض في المعنى ينظر اليه المترجم على انه اشكال يحتاج الوقوف عليه وفك فحواه أو أنه من متطلبات اللغة فينقل الغموض بما فيه من لبس. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على المعاني المتعددة لكلمة الحق في القرآن الكريم من خلال التحليل العميق لآيات قرآنية مُنتقاة تضم في ثناياها كلمة " الحق " بالاستعانة والاستئناس بأراء المفسرين في هذا المضمار وتصبو كذلك الى تقييم ترجمات هذه المعاني الى اللغة الانكليزية لأربع من المترجمين المعروفين وهم هلاي وخان (ترجمة مشتركة) و بكثال وسرور وعبدالله يوسف علي. وتضع الدراسة نصب عينها الاجابة عن السؤال التالي: هل على المترجم استخدام لفظ واحد بعينه كمكافئ لكلمة الحق ذات المعاني المتعددة. تقترض الدراسة ان يبذل المترجمون جهودهم للحفاظ على الأمانة في نقل النص القرآني وإعطاء اولوية للمعنى الحرفي لكلمة " الحق " متجاهلين الكثير من المعاني المرافقة لها. ولرأب هذه الفجوة نَهَجَ بعض المترجمين حلاً توفيقياً وتبنوا تقنيات معينة تُبرز هذه المعاني. و أظهرت الدراسة أنه بالرغم من ان سياق المقال وسياق المقام يتكاملان فيؤيدان المعنى المقصود إلا أن الاولوية لسياق المقام في ترجيح المعنى.

### 1. Introduction

The term "Al-Haq" appears frequently in the Glorious Qur'an as there are 283 occurrences of this term in different ayahs and surahs (Al-Rawi, 1995). The extensive use of this term reflects its importance. More interestingly, there is a whole surah called (الحاقة) "Al-Haqqa" meaning "the Reality," which focuses on many themes concerning the term "Al-Haq." The name "Al-Haqqa" refers to the Day of Judgement where Allah's promise and threat become real and inevitably occur. Additionally, a better understanding of the term becomes necessary when the term is associated with fundamental matters related to Allah's holy books, attributes, words, and messengers. Equally important, beyond the religious context, the term embodies essential issues revolving around everyday transactions and social relations. Based on these points, the term should be treated with special care and its implications should not pass unnoticed.

Like other religious concepts, the term "Al-Haq" before Islam had a general linguistic meaning, but with the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, the term obtained additional meanings to meet the need of the new religious environment. This shift in use gave rise to ambiguity. The following sections provide the reader with various explanations of the term as presented by reliable commentators, and show how the translators echoed these interpretations. The study hopes to enrich the Quranic studies with useful remarks and insights for a better understanding of the long-standing issue of ambiguity.

## **2. Multiplicity of Meaning:**

Multiplicity of meaning has received much attention in the literature, and the issue is of particular interest to philosophers and linguists. The early reference to the issue appeared in Aristotle's writings. It is claimed that Aristotle was the first to make a distinction between univocity (synonymy) and multivocity (homonymy) (Barnes, 1984). In the opinion of Breal (1924: 157), multiplicity of meaning is attributed to the fact that words acquire new meanings over time while the old ones are still in use. This is a natural process that exists in all languages of the world and has various functions. But the hallmark of this phenomenon is "ambiguity," which is usually exploited by writers to enrich their language, and hardly can anyone find a work on multiplicity with no reference to it. Ambiguity here is used in the strict sense of describing what is normally known as lexical ambiguity, where "two or multiple words have distinct senses" (Falkum, 2011:19).

Another way to address the issue of multiplicity appears within the traditional dichotomy of homonymy vs. polysemy. In the following section, the issue is briefly discussed.

## **3. Homonymy Vs. Polysemy:**

According to Leech (1981:228), homonymy can be described as "two or more words having the same pronunciation and/or spelling but different meanings". A typical example of homonymy is the word "*bank*" which means either "*bank of the river*" or "*bank of money*." In contrast, polysemy refers to "a lexical item which has a range of different meanings;" for example, the word "*plain*" has the different meanings: *clear*, *unadorned*, and *obvious* (Crystal 2008: 373). Linguists have long made a distinction between homonymy and polysemy (see for example Palmer 1976: 100; Lyons, 1977: 551) and there is a tendency to represent ambiguity as a "homonymy vs. polysemy" dichotomy. In addition, in any discussion of multiplicity of meaning, the distinction between the two terms is inevitably highlighted.

The close link between the terms encouraged linguists to propose criteria to draw a distinction between them. Traditionally, the criteria that are used to distinguish homonymy from polysemy are etymology and sense relatedness. Words are regarded "polysemous" if they have the same origin and are judged by native speakers to be related, or homonymous if they have different origins and unrelated meanings (Lyons, 1977: 550). Unfortunately, the two criteria proved to be unsatisfactory (for counterarguments, see Palmer, 1976: 100-104), and in spite of the heated debate over the issue, the distinction remains fuzzy and not sharply drawn, as McArthur affirms, "there is an intensive grey area between the concepts of polysemy and homonymy" (1992:795). As a result, Lipka (1992:139) and Cowie (1982:51), among others, abandoned the dichotomy view, and stressed the importance of looking at the lexical ambiguity as a continuum with polysemy at one end and homonymy at the other. It is worth mentioning that in the Arabic literature, multiplicity of meaning is normally associated with a phenomenon termed "المشترك اللفظي" (Al-Mushtarak AL-lafdhi) which is typically defined as: "ما اتفق لفظه واختلف معناه" (the same form with different meanings) (see Mukhtar, 2009: 149).

But unlike the English approach to multiplicity, Arab linguists have not made a general remark about the sense relatedness and neglected the polysemy-homonymy distinction. Thus, words like "خال" (*khal*) which has at least the unrelated meanings "شامة" (*mole*) and "أخ الأم" (*maternal uncle*), and the word "عين" (*ain*) with its related meanings "عين البشر" (*eye*), "عين الماء" (*spring*), or "عين العدو: جاسوس" (*spy*) are handled in a same way and not treated as being related or unrelated.

Typically, in the Quranic studies, the term "الوجوه والنظائر" (Al-Wujuh wal Nadhair) is exclusively used to refer to words that appear in different ayahs in the Holy Qura'n with

the same form and pronunciation, but with different meanings. The term was first introduced by Muqatil bin Suleiman in his book *Al-Wujuh wal-Nada'ir fil Qur'an al-Azeem*. The term Al-Wujuh is used to describe the multiple meanings of the word, and the term Al-Nadhair stands for the same form of the word (see Ibn-Al-Jawzi, 1984: 82-83).

#### 4. **The Multiple Meanings of "Al-Haq":**

In *Almaani Arabic Dictionary*, the term "Al-Haq" means truth, reality, certainty, etc. This represents the daily life use. But in the Qur'anic text, the lexical term is a fundamental concept that has meanings beyond those mentioned but still maintains link to its basic linguistic meaning. Thus, contrary to the view that sheds light on the dictionary meanings of the term, this study highlights meanings through Quranic use. The noun "Al-Haq" and its derivations, as mentioned earlier, appear 283 times. These different occurrences lead to different meanings. The role of the Quran commentators is to find out the intended one, and this can be accomplished by means of putting together all the ayahs containing the term "Al-Haq," bearing in mind that different contexts reveal different meanings. This strategy yields a variety of meanings. But the meanings presented differ from one scholar to another. Al-Damghani (2002: 188-190), for instance, specified twelve different meanings for the word Al-Haq whereas Al-Naisaboori (2001: 178-191) distinguished thirty. The following table, albeit not exhaustive, shows some of the possible meanings.

No.	Qur'anic ayah	English Version	Referent
1	ولو اتبع الحق أهواءهم لفسدت السموات والأرض ومن فيهن (23:71)	But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined.	Allah
2	بل متعت هؤلاء وآباءهم حتى جاءهم الحق ورسول مبين (43:29)	However, I gave enjoyment to these [people of Makkah] and their fathers until there came to them the truth and a clear Messenger.	Quran
3	بل جاء بالحق وصدق المرسلين (37:37)	Rather, the Prophet has come with the truth and confirmed the [previous] messengers.	Tawheed
4	الذين اتيناهم الكتاب يعرفونه كما يعرفون أبناءهم وأن فريقاً منهم ليكتمون الحق وهم يعلمون (2:146)	Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad SAW or the Ka'bah at Makkah) as they recognize their sons	Prophet Muhammad
5	قال رب احكم بالحق (21:112)	[The Prophet] has said, "My Lord, judge [between us] in truth	Justice
6	وقل جاء الحق وزهق الباطل إن الباطل كان زهوقاً (17:81)	And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart."	Religion of Islam
7	والذين في أموالهم حق معلوم (70:24)	"And those in whose wealth there is a known right"	Sadaqa
8	قالوا لقد علمت ما لنا في بناتك من حق (10:79)	They said: 'Surly you know that we have neither any desire nor need of your daughters	Desire

Looking more closely at the meanings, the table reveals that it is difficult to decide between the related and unrelated meanings. So, it is natural that Arab scholars directed attention to the intended meaning of the term away from the sense relatedness and put emphasis on its communicative and rhetorical functions. To obtain the goal of this paper, it is useful to tackle this term in connection with translation.

#### 5. **The Translation of Sacred Texts:**

As this study deals with the problems of translating the lexical item "Al-Haq", it is predominantly concerned with translation at word level. In this regard, Haliday emphasized

the importance of words in understanding the text. In his words, "meanings are realized through words, and without a theory of wordings, there is no way of making explicit one's interpretation of the meaning of the text"(1985:17). However, in translation, selecting the most appropriate equivalent at word level is not an easy task, and the situation becomes more difficult, as Baker (1992: 12) observed, when the translator finds "no equivalence at word level" between SL and TL. Translation of sacred texts presents a clear example of this difficulty. Moreover, if we take into account that the Qur'anic text is full of multiple-meaning divine words (Abdul Roof, 2001: 90), one expects the challenge to become greater. Given this, the translators should have a good mastery of Arabic grammar and Qu'ran sciences, and consult Qur'an commentators when necessary. Yet, this does not easily solve the problem for "the central problem of translation has always been whether to translate literally or freely" (Newmark 1988:45). But adopting either method is associated with the ambiguous nature of language which represents the main concern for anyone who engages in translating words like the term "Al-Haq." Ambiguity has long preoccupied the minds of translators. Following Newmark (1988: 122), "the translator should attempt to reproduce the ambiguity, but if he is unable to do so, he normally translates one of the meanings and lets the other go."

#### **6. Text Analysis:**

For the purpose of brevity and avoidance of redundancy, it seems that **seven** texts that include the lexical term "Al-Haq" are sufficient to bring to light the most important meanings of the term based on scholars' commentaries. In addition, the selected data can help offer an in-depth analysis of the various techniques used by the translators.

#### **SL Text (1):**

" الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ " (البقرة:146)

#### **TL Text:**

1- "Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم or the Ka'bah at Makkah) as they recognize their sons. But verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it- [i.e. the qualities of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم which are written in the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)]" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 30).

2- "Those unto whom We gave the Scripture recognize (this revelation) as they recognize their sons. But lo! A party of them knowingly conceal the truth" (Pickthall, 1930: 42).

3- "Those to whom We have given the Book (Bible), know you (Muhammad) just as a well as they know their sons. It is certain that some of them deliberately hide the truth" (Sarwar, 2011: 20).

4- "The people of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know" (Ali, 1983: 33).

#### **Analysis and Discussion:**

The meaning of the term "Al-Haq" in the ayah under consideration draws heavily on the referent of the pronoun "هاء" which appears in the preceding text "يعرفونه". The referent of the pronoun "هاء" can be understood endophorically or exophorically. These referential relations are essential to clarify the intended meaning. Under endophoric interpretation, the pronoun "هاء" derives its reference cataphorically from elements mentioned earlier in the text. The preceding ayahs talk about the injunction of "Allah" to the believers to pray in the direction of the Ka'bah instead of Al-Quds. Following this, many commentators take the pronoun "هاء" to refer to the Ka'bah, and consequently the term "Al-Haq" implicitly stands for it (Al-Tabari, 2001).

Under exophoric interpretation, the pronoun "هاء" is deictic and its referent is not mentioned in the text but understood from the situation that surrounds the text. In simple words, the pronoun "هاء" refers to something outside the text. Depending on historical and cultural knowledge, the pronoun "هاء" is taken to refer to the prophet Muhammad. To clarify the occasion of this ayah, it is necessary to mention that Omer bin Al-Khatab asked Abdullah bin Salam, who was a rabbi before converting to Islam, "Do you recognize Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as you recognize your sons?" He replied, "Yes, and more than our sons" (Al-Qurtubi, 2006). It is interesting to note that when the Arabs want to refer to something that one knows without any doubt, they use a parable and draw an analogy between the recognition of this thing and the recognition of one's sons. In this regard, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 32) point out that situational exophoric reference precedes any type of reference. Thus, taking the prophet Muhammad as the implicit meaning of the term "Al-Haq" takes priority over other interpretations.

The above discussion reveals clearly why some commentators have the view that "Al-Haq" refers to "the Ka'bah" as the right direction in prayer; while others hold the view that "Al-Haq" stands for the prophet Muhammad.

This dispute over the interpretation of the pronoun "هاء" and subsequently over the term "Al-Haq" is noticeable in the translation. Hilali & Khan used the English pronoun "him" as an equivalent to the Arabic pronoun "هاء" identifying the true antecedent of the pronoun in the coming sentence. When adding explication to the term "Al-Haq" in the commentary note, they referred to the prophet Muhammad and his qualities. Alternatively, Sarwar, Ali and Pickthall translated the term "Al-Haq" literally into "truth" with no further explication. Thus, they did not convey the commentators' views and deprived the reader of getting the intended meaning.

**SL Text (2):**

قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَالَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكُمْ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ " (هود: 79)

**TL Text:**

1. "They said: 'Surly you know that we have neither any desire nor in need of your daughters, and indeed you know well what we want!'" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 297).
2. "They said: Well thou knowest that we have no right to thy daughters, and well thou knowest what we want" (Pickthall, 1930: 230).
3. "They said, You certainly know that we have no right to your daughters and you know what we want" (Sarwar, 2011: 206).
4. "They said: 'Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters: indeed thou knowest quite well what we want'" (Ali, 1983: 535).

**Analysis and Discussion:**

Looking at this ayah out of its context leads to a poor understanding of the term "Al-Haq." The word "context" here is used in a broad sense to embrace the linguistic context and the surrounding environment which includes, among other things, the events in which the words are uttered, the addresser, and the addressee. This ayah refers to the argument made between the prophet Lot and his people. He did his utmost to prevent his people from committing the hideous act of sodomy with his guests (the disguised angels) and, in order to turn them away, he pleaded them to take his daughters in marriage as mentioned in the preceding ayah: "قال يا قوم هؤلاء بناتي هنن أطهر لكم" (he said: "O my people! Here are my daughters (i.e., the women of the nation), they are purer for you (if you marry them lawfully) (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 296).

Some commentators believe that the word "daughters" does not refer to his real daughters, but to the women of his people in general, for every prophet can be seen as a father of his nation (see Al-Tabari, 2001). This contextual information is crucial for a better understanding of the term "Al-Haq".

The commentators oscillated between two opinions; they took the Arabic word “Al-Haq” to refer either to “the right to marriage” (see Al-Qurtubi, 2006 and Al-Tabari, 2001), or 'need' or 'desire' (see Ibn Kathir, 1998). These two different interpretations imposed themselves on the translator's decision and choice. Ali and Hilali & Khan took the word “Al-Haq” to mean “need.” But in an attempt to reflect the shameful behavior of the people of Lot, Hilali & Khan added the word “desire.” The words “need” and “desire” are similar in nature but they show slight differences. “Need” refers to those things that are essential for survival, “desire” is something we want for ourselves. Our desires never end. So, in a religious view, they are a source of corruption, trouble, and indignation. Since the people of Lot are described as being corrupt and shameless, “desire” seems more appropriate than “need” and best suits the text. Moreover, the word “desire” subsumes the meaning of “need” and can alone convey the implicit meaning of “Al-Haq.” Thus, using both of them, as done by Hilali & Khan, violates the principle of economy. On the other hand, Sarwar and Pickthall had the opinion that “Al-Haq” stands for “the right to marriage.” The use of the term “right” is incompatible with the surrounding events, for the people of Lot showed the lowest level of degradation to the extent that they did not distinguish between what was right and what was not, between lawful and unlawful.

**SL Text (3):**

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا (الاسراء: 81)

**TL Text**

1. "And say: Truth (i.e. Islamic Monotheism or this Quran or Jihad against polytheists) has come and Batil (falsehood, i.e. Satan or polytheism, etc.) has vanished. Surely! Batil is ever bound to vanish (Hilali & Khan, 1996:380).
2. "And say: Truth hath come and falsehood hath vanished away. Lo! falsehood is ever bound to vanish" (Pickthall, 1930:290).
3. And say, Truth has come and falsehood has been banished; it is doomed to banishment" (Sarwar, 2011: 260 ).
4. "And say: 'Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish" (Ali, 1983: 868).

**Analysis and Discussion:**

The term "الحق" (truth) here is used in conjunction with its opposite "الباطل" (falsehood). The juxtaposition of two opposites in the same grammatical structure gives rise to a rhetorical device termed “antithesis” achieving a contrast effect. A direct literal translation seems a prerequisite to reproduce the similar figurative effect on the English reader and at the same time preserve faithfulness.

The commentators were divided on the precise meaning of the word and the translator had to decide which one should he follow. Some of the commentators took "الحق" as a general term used in reference to everyday life. Others believed that the term has a religious tone referring to jihad, Quran, or Islam (see Al-Qurtubi, 2006 and Al-Tabari, 2001). These different views were mirrored particularly in Hilali & Khan's translation. It resorted to explication by putting in brackets the aforementioned religious meanings. This strategy does not guide the reader to the exact meaning, it is too informative violating the maxim of quantity, and it leaves the reader confused. A literal rendering adopted by Pickthall, Sarwar, and Ali does justice to the original and preserves the figurative effect of the antithesis device.

**SL Text (4):**

"ولو أتبع الحق أهواءهم لفسدت السماوات والأرض" (المؤمنون: 71)

**TL Text:**

1. "And if the truth had been in accordance with their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth, and whosoever is therein would have been corrupted!" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 461).
2. "And if the Truth had followed their desires, verily the heavens and the earth and whosoever is therein had been corrupted" (Pickthall, 1930: 352).
3. "Had the truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth and all that is in them would have been destroyed" (Sarwar, 2011: 313).
4. "If the Truth had been in accord with their desire, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption" (Ali, 1983: 886).

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

The majority of the commentators hold the view that the term "Al-Haq" implicitly stands for "Allah," the Almighty (see Ibn Kathir, 1998 and Al-Tabari, 2001). In this regard, Al-Nahas (cited in Al-Qurtubi, 2006) further explained that the term "الحق" (the truth) is metonymically used here to imply "صاحب الحق" (the possessor of the truth). That is, the possessed entity, the truth, is used instead of "Allah" the possessor of this entity (possessed for possessor metonymy). The uttered term "truth" is used as a vehicle to provide access to the actual unexpressed target entity "Allah."

All the translators tried to be faithful to the original text as much as possible. They adopted a literal translation and kept the original expression without modification. Nevertheless, the translators showed disagreement over the use of reverential capitalization. This practice is problematic. The Arabic original text does not make a punctuation distinction between the term "Al-Haq" and the other words; so why should the translation highlight this word? There is a theological reason to do so. In English, the capitalization of the word "Truth" leads to a wide range of connotations (God, Jesus, Spirit, etc.) which are not parallel to those conveyed by the source text. Thus, capitalization used by Pickthall and Ali to distinguish between a religious and an ordinary meaning is not a successful strategy if not supplemented by a clarification to direct the reader to the implicit meaning. Hilali & Khan and Sarwar, on the other hand, overlooked capitalization. Consequently, the term lost its SL religious overtone and acquired familiar meanings like fact, reality, certainty, etc. which are typically used in a non-religious context.

### **SL Text (5):**

"فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أُوتِيَ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوْ لَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَافِرُونَ " (القصص:48)

### **TL Text:**

1. "But when the truth (i.e. Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم with his Message) has come to them from Us, they say: Why is he not given the like of what was given to Musa (Moses)? Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Musa (Moses) of old? They say: Two kinds of magic, the Taurat (torah) and the Qur'an, each help the other! And they say: Verily! In both we are disbelievers" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 522).
2. "But when there came unto them the Truth from Our presence, they said: Why is he not given the like of what was given unto Moses? Did they not disbelieve in what which was given unto Moses of old? They say: Two magics that support each other; and they say: Lo! In both we are disbelievers" (Pickthall, 1930: 399).
3. "When the Truth from Us came to them they said, Would that he, (Muhammad), had received what was given to Moses (by his Lord). Did not they reject what Moses had brought to them saying, "These two, Moses and Aaron, are two



magicians who support each other. We do not have any faith in them" (Sarwar, 2011: 353).

4. "But (now), when the Truth has come to them from Ourselves, they say, Why are not (Signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses? Do they not then reject (the Signs) which were formerly sent to Moses? They say: "Two kinds of sorcery, each assisting the other!" And they say: "For us, we reject all (such things)!" (Ali,1983: 1016).

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

The theme of the ayah is to refute the objections raised by the unbelievers and to invalidate their excuses. The interpreters showed no unanimity over the term "الحق". For instance, Al-Qurtubi (2006) and Al-Tabari (2001) held the view that the term "Al-Haq" refers to the prophet Mohammad. Alternatively, Al-Saadi (2000), among others, mentioned that "Al-Haq" describes the Holy Qur'an. In this sense, the ayah carries the metaphorical device of personification where the Holy Qur'an is described as having the animate property of "coming." The appropriate meaning is better inferred if reference is made to the relations within the ayah or between the successive ayahs. The word "سحران" within the ayah provides a plausible solution for resolving the ambiguity. The word "سحران" has two readings. It is either pronounced /sahiran/ or /sihran/ (see Al-Tabari, 2001, Ibn Kathir, 1998). Based on the first reading, the word means the prophet Mohammad and Musa, or Musa and Aaron. The unbelievers call them magicians. This reading is compatible with the first interpretation of "Al-Haq" as referring to the Prophet Mohammad. According to the second reading, the context reveals that the two sacred books, the Qur'an and the Torah are meant. This reading strengthens the choice of the Holy Qur'an as an equivalent to the Arabic term "Al-Haq." Again, the translators adopted a literal translation and used the English term "truth" as an equivalent. Apart from Hilali & Khan, they resorted to capitalization which reflects the translators' desire to adopt the English norms in expressing respect and reverence for spiritual and holy entities. Another point of divergence between Hilali & Khan and the others is the resorting to explanatory notes to include all the commentators' suggested meanings. It is apparent that Hilali & Khan adopted the first reading which is illustrated in the selection of the Prophet Muhammad with his message as an interpolation into the text.

### **SL Text (6):**

" بل مَتَّعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ وَأَبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ " الزخرف (29)

### **TL Text:**

1. "Nay, but I gave (the good things of this life) to these (polytheists) and their fathers to enjoy, till there came to them the truth (the Qur'an), and a Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) making things clear" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 663).
2. "Nay, but I let these and their fathers enjoy life (only) till there should come unto them the Truth and a messenger making plain" (Pickthall, 1930: 504).
3. "In fact, We allowed them and their fathers to enjoy themselves until the truth and a strong Messenger came to them" (Sarwar, 2011: 445).
4. "Yea, I have given the good things of this life to these (men) and their fathers, until the Truth has come to them, and a messenger making things clear" (Ali, 1983: 1330).

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

As mentioned in the theoretical part, the term "Al-Haq" has various meanings which give rise to ambiguity. Therefore, if there is any ambiguity, it will be necessary to seek solutions by referring to other ayahs which contain the same expression. In other

words, taking this ayah on its own with no reference to the context leaves the door open to various interpretations. Importantly enough, the Holy Quran explains itself. This ayah can be clarified in connection with the ayah that follows:

"وقالوا لولا نزل هذا القرآن على رجلٍ من القريتين عظيم" (الزخرف:31)

(And they said: "why is not this Qur'an sent down to some great man of the two towns (Makkah and Ta'if)?" Hilali & Khan (1996).

This ayah provides a contextual clue and tells without equivocation that the term "Al-Haq" in the previous ayah refers to the Holy Qur'an. So, it is evident why most of the commentators agree that "Al-Haq" here stands for the Holy Quran (see Al-Tabari, 2001). All the translators preferred the first sense of the term and used "truth" as an equivalent, but with certain stylistic variations; Pickthall and Ali used capitalization, but Hilali & Khan and Sarwar opted for the lowercase "t". This literal strategy retained the ambiguity and gave the TL text reader the chance to work his/her imagination and infer the exact meaning from the context.

Keeping in mind that the intended meaning is not easily accessible to the target reader, Hilali & Khan tried to make the text as clear as possible and relieve the burden of looking for the exact meaning. One of the adjustments made by Hilali & Khan to further clarify the ayah is the addition of the word "Quran" in brackets immediately after the term "truth."

**SL Text (7):**

"والذين في اموالهم حق معلوم" (المعارج:24)

**TL Text:**

1. "And those in whose wealth there is a known right" (Hilali & Khan, 1996: 785).
2. "And in whose wealth there is a right acknowledged" (Pickthall, 1930: 608).
3. "They are those who assign a certain share of their property" (Sarwar, 2011: 526).
4. "And those in whose wealth is a recognized right" (Ali, 1983: 1608).

**Analysis and Discussion:**

There is no consensus among commentators on the meaning of the phrase "حق معلوم". Some of them have the opinion that the phrase refers to the religious obligation of Zakat which means the "right" of the poor and the needy in the wealth of the rich believers. The second opinion holds the view that the ayah refers to Sadaqa, a voluntary act of giving something to the poor seeking only Allah's pleasure in return (see Al-Tabari, 2001). The differences of opinion that exist among commentators can be settled when referring to the time of revelation. This ayah was revealed during the Mecca-period which extended from the first revelation till Hijra, but Zakat was established and made obligatory after Hijra. This chronological context blocks the meaning of Zakah in favor of Sadaqa. Thus, lacking knowledge of the chronological order of revelation may lead to misinterpretation and would not clear up ambiguity. Apart from Sarwar, the translators adopted a literal translation. So, they reproduced the ambiguity and did not specify which meaning is intended. Sarwar mistakenly gave hint to the meaning of Zakat. The phrase "certain share" used in his translation excludes the meaning of Sadaqa, for in Sadaqa, the share and the exemption limit are not fixed

**Conclusions:**

The translation of essential Quranic terms such as Al-Haq is an area that needs particular attention. Nevertheless, the multiple meanings of the term and the sacred nature of the text pose a challenging obstacle. Thus, many clues are required to solve this problem. The study shows how the linguistic and situational contexts served as additional factors that partially or wholly influenced the commentators' interpretations and assisted in resolving the ambiguity. But when there is a conflict, the study emphasizes that the situational context should precede the linguistic one in determining the true meaning.

Different strategies were adopted by the translators. They tried to be as literal as possible. Yet, the translations differed with respect to the use of notes. A number of translations contained explanatory notes, and a variety of words were used to deal with the ambiguity and make the text clearer. This strategy affects the smooth flow of information, and may lead to the wrong impression that the footnotes are as important as the sacred text itself. Some translations capitalized the term "Truth" when implicitly referring to Allah. It seems that the reason behind this practice is to show more respect and reverence for God. This practice results in confusion, thus, a suitable explanation is required to eliminate such confusion.

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