

## Exploring Semantic Discrepancies of Selected Religious Terminologies in English and Arabic

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### ABSTRACT

This research tries to examine the semantic discrepancies of religious terms in both English and Arabic, concentrating on the implications of such differences for translation, intercultural communication, and understanding of such terms. Religious terminology often symbolizes deep cultural, historical, and theological nuances, which can lead to divergent interpretations when translated between these two languages. The study adopts a contrastive semantic analysis approach, identifying key terms within Islamic and Christian traditions, and analyzing their linguistic, contextual, and cultural dimensions. It highlights how religious terms in Arabic could carry layered meanings that are not fully captured by their English counterparts. Conversely, English religious terms might encompass theological connotations that may lack equivalent expressions in Arabic. This paper aims to provide insights into the difficulties of religious translation to shed light and address these semantic gaps, fostering better intercultural understanding and preserving the integrity of the original terms.

### KEYWORDS

semantics; discrepancies; religious; meaning.

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding how holy religious notions and vocabularies are communicated and understood across cultural is essential. While Arabic is the main language for both the Quran and Islamic scholarship, and English is one of the most widely understood languages, it is important for interfaith discussion, translation studies, and cultural interaction to know the differences in the terminology and usage of religion lexical between the two languages. As Arabic and English have different linguistic structures, theological nuances and cultural contexts, translating religious phrases can be problematic. These differences may lead to different interpretations and versions, which may cause religious views to be misunderstood or misrepresented.

This study examines the semantic differences between Arabic and English in terms of religious terminology, with an emphasis on the way specific religious concepts are conveyed, understood, and occasionally misinterpreted while going from one language to another. The main goal is to examine essential religious expressions in both languages, discover differences, and provide frameworks for improved translation and comprehension. The researcher will try to look at how language affects significance in religion and how the distinctions between both of those languages touch the reading of religious literature.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

### ***Semantics and Meaning***

Semantics, a central branch of linguistics, is concerned with the study of meaning in language. Understanding the semantic structure of both words and expressions is crucial when examining religious terminologies, as such terms often carry nuanced meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation.

Semantics is "the study of the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences in language. It explores how linguistic expressions convey and structure meaning, focusing on the relationships between signifiers and what they signify in different contexts" (Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2007). This definition emphasizes semantics as a field that links language structure and interpretation, analyzing how language users encode, decode, and infer meaning(s).

Semantics is seen as the field that investigates "how meaning is represented in the mind and how it interacts with conceptual structures. It includes the study of how meaning is stored in mental lexicons and how it is shaped by cognitive and cultural frameworks" (Evans & Green, 2006). This view integrates the cognitive processes underlying the interpretation of linguistic symbols and their grounding in human experience.

From a pragmatic perspective, semantics is "the systematic study of meaning as a property of expressions within a language, distinct from the contextual or situational meanings studied in pragmatics" (Lyons, 1977). This concept draws attention to the difference between pragmatics, which studies meaning in use, and semantics, which deals with meaning that is intrinsic.

### ***Denotation, Connotation And Polysemy***

The term "denotation" describes a word's fundamental sense, which is its literal or dictionary meaning. For example, the English word for faith, especially in religious contexts, is denotatively defined as trust and believe in something or someone (Crystal, 2008). While it also conveys belief, its Arabic equivalent, إيمان, adds an element of action and subordination associated with Islam (Haleem, 2011). Despite having similar denotations, the two phrases have quite different meanings.

Connotation refers to the emotional, cultural, or contextual associations that a word evokes. Faith is frequently used in English to refer to a particular and individual conviction, reflecting Western religious thought's overall emphasis on autonomy (Keddie, 2003). On the other hand, the Arabic phrase "إيمان" is firmly anchored in the ritualistic and communal facets of Islamic practice, connecting faith to external behaviors such as prayer and group worship (Abdul-Raof, 2010). This difference in meaning draws attention to the semantic ambiguities that occur while interpreting religious terms.

Polysemy, or the presence of several meanings for the same term or expression, complicates semantic analysis. For example, the term *faith* can denote to both general trust, i.e., "faith in humanity" and religious belief. In contrast, إيمان is mostly related to theological situations, with less polysemy in contextual usage. Such discrepancies indicate the difficulty of keeping semantic similarity across languages (Lyons, 1995).

### ***Componential Analysis of Meaning***

Componential analysis is a linguistic procedure that divides a word's meaning into its fundamental semantic 'components or properties'. This approach is very useful for determining semantic differences between concepts such as faith and إيمان. For example, an investigation may reveal that faith largely involves [belief] and [trust], while إيمان

incorporates other components like [submission], [obedience], and [spiritual action] (Nida, 1975).

Componential analysis offers an organized process of understanding the more deep cultural and theological origins of religious terminology by recognizing these unique semantic characteristics. It also shows how semantic gaps are intricately linked to theological and cultural frameworks and are not only linguistic in nature.

### ***Semantic Discrepancies: Definitions And Types***

When concepts and notions in different languages have various meanings, this means the existence of semantic inconsistencies. These differences occur when a single word has several meanings in one language but not in another, or when a word or phrase in one language cannot be translated and transferred directly into another without losing some of its meaning(s). These variations fall into a number of categories, such as polysemy, cultural uniqueness, and lexical gaps.

#### ***Lexical Gaps***

A lexical gap exists when one language does not have a direct counterpart or equivalence for a word or notion in another language. This is frequently observed in the translation of culturally or contextually specific terminology. For example, in English, the term or lexical entry "grief" has a broad meaning, yet there is no one Arabic counterpart or equivalent that captures all of its nuances. Arabic terminology for grief, such as حزن (huzn) or مأساة (ma'sa), may not have the same connotations or emotional impact as the English equivalent (Lyons, 1995). Such lexical gaps might impose difficulties for correct comprehension and/or translation, especially in cross-cultural religious or philosophical conversation.

#### ***Cultural Specificity***

The term "cultural specificity" refers to how words or expressions have different meanings that are prejudiced by the customs and culture of a language's speakers and hearers. Regularly, religious terminology is especially susceptible to these disparities. For example, the Arabic vocabulary إيمان (Iman) and the English word "faith" both mean believing in a higher power, yet they have diverse meanings. The English vocabulary "faith" has a wide and occasionally secular characterization, encompassing belief in anything from abstract concepts like hope or trust to religious doctrines (Crystal, 2008). Conversely, the Arabic word إيمان (Iman) is decisively rooted in Islamic theological contexts, encompassing not just belief but also deference to divine will and religious practices like prayer (Abdul-Raof, 2010). This cultural distinctiveness, when translating phrases like "faith" or "إيمان," translators must take into account the larger socio-religious context(s).

#### ***Polysemy***

A word is said to be polysemic if it has numerous meanings in the same language, some of which may or may not translate to another language. There are polysemous terms with overlapping but different meanings in both Arabic and English. For example, "salvation," as used in English, can mean both spiritual and physical release. The word خلاص (khulas) usually conveys the spiritual meaning, although the Arabic term نجاة (najat) frequently connotes survival or escape from physical danger (Haleem, 2011). Although both languages utilize words with numerous meanings in this instance, the meanings vary depending on the context, which could cause translation difficulties.

In sum, Centuries of cultural, doctrinal, and theological evolution have influenced religious vocabulary, making it a distinct subset of language. Correct reading and interfaith debates depend on the understanding of the unique features of religious language including the translation difficulties of the sacred texts.

## **Religious Language**

### **Definitions And Characteristics**

Religious language covers any specific vocabulary, expressions and idioms used to communicate religious and religious ideas, practices, and experiences. It is commonly used in holy sacred writings, liturgies, rites, prayers, and theological conversations and debates. Numerous features distinguish religious language:

#### **1. Sacredness And Reverence**

Religious language is regularly related alongside a sense of sacredness. Phrases, expressions and words are used for more than just communication; they can also invite supernatural presence or carry and convey significant truths and principles. Phrases like "God," "salvation," and "grace" evoke reverence and awe, while their usage is often related with holy rites or formal religious situations and contexts (Goddard, 2002). This feature requires that translators be aware and respect the sacredness of the phrase(s) and expression(s) while transferring it from a single language to the next.

#### **2. Symbolism and Metaphor**

Religious discourse is rich in symbolism and metaphors. Words frequently relate to notions or ideas that extend beyond their literal meaning, communicating profound spiritual truths. As an example, the Christian phrase "light" is frequently employed metaphorically to denote divine appearance, knowledge, or purity. In Islam, نور (nur), which means "light," has symbolic meanings relating to divine direction and knowledge (Abdul-Raof, 2010). Translating these metaphors is especially difficult because their symbolic significance might not be immediately obvious in another language.

#### **3. Cultural of Embeddedness**

The language used in religion is intrinsically linked to the civilization in which it originated. The Arabic word إيمان (Iman), for instance, not only signifies belief but is also ingrained in the Islamic philosophy of obedience and doing what is right. Similar to this, Christian conceptions like "grace" and "salvation" are deeply rooted in the everyday events of Christian communities and are not just theoretical concepts. Translating religious terminology toward a foreign language is difficult due to their cultural distinctiveness (Nida, 1975).

#### **4. Normativity And Doctrine**

Religious language frequently expresses fundamental facts about the faith. These phrases encompass normative beliefs and practices, and are therefore important to the religious community's identity. For example, in Islam, phrases like توحيد (tawhid), meaning the oneness of God, constitute the foundation of Islamic monotheism. Similarly, Christian doctrinal concepts such as "the Trinity" and "the Resurrection" are central to the faith's theological structure. Translating these terminology necessitates a thorough comprehension of the theological background, as they may have distinct doctrinal connotations that are difficult to convey in another language (Crystal, 2008).

## 5. Challenges In Translating Sacred Texts

The interpretation of sacred writings has significant obstacles because it requires not just linguistic abilities additionally cultural, theological, along with interpretive factors. Some of the most major problems are:

### *Loss Of Meaning In Translation*

One of the most difficult aspects of translating religious phrases is the loss of meaning, which frequently occurs when converting from one language to a different one. Words in religious scriptures are frequently nuanced and contain historical and theological importance. As an example, the Hebrew phrase *chesed* within the Old Testament is sometimes rendered as "mercy" into English. However, *chesed* conveys ideas of loving-kindness with covenant fidelity that may not be totally compatible with the English term "mercy" (Bauer, 2000). This disparity can result in an absence of the term's full biblical significance.

### *Linguistic Relativity*

Concepts are expressed differently in different languages. According to linguistic relativity, a language's lexicon and structure influence how its speakers see the outside world (Whorf, 1956). This implies that religious ideas in one language might not have exact translations in another. For instance, *توحيد* (*tawhid*), which means the ultimate oneness of God in Arabic, is a concept that is profoundly ingrained in Arabic culture and is essential to Islamic theology. However, attempts to interpret this phrase as "monotheism" may diminish its entire meaning because it lacks an exact equivalent in the majority of Western languages (Abdul-Raof, 2010).

### *Contextual Variability*

Depending on the situation, religious expressions frequently have several meanings. For example, the English word "church" may be referring to a physical structure, the community of believers, perhaps the establishment of Christianity. The notion of the Christian Church as a community as well as institution may be expressed variously depending upon their doctrinal position, while the name *كنيسة* (*kanisa*) in Arabic may exclusively refer to the building. In order to ensure that the translated text retains the original religious context while accurately reflecting the intended significance in the source language, translators must negotiate this contextual diversity (Nida, 1975).

### *Theological Sensitivity*

Millions of people's ideas and activities are shaped by sacred writings, which are more than just verbal representations. Because even minor phrasing changes might change the interpretation of a passage or doctrine, translators need to be theologically careful. For instance, interpreting the Christian expression "Son of God" as a way that suggests a biological rather than a religious relationship may cause confusion or conflict. One of the biggest problems in translating religious texts is striking a balance between theological integrity and linguistic accuracy (Lyons, 1995).

### *Cultural Sensitivity*

It is frequently necessary to be mindful of the cultural norms that exist in the target and source language communities while translating religious writings. Certain ideas or customs from one religion might not be recognized or understood in another. For example, there might not be a clear Christian or other religious equivalent for Islamic

terminology pertaining to ceremonial hygiene, like وضوء (wudu). Translators need to figure out how to interpret these terminologies without offending anyone or changing their religious meaning (Haleem, 2011).

## 6. Data Selection

The researcher tries to cover the different features of the religious language as well as the difficulties in translating sacred literature in the previous part. Some concrete instances of religious terms and the difficulties are presented while being translated, paying special attention to lexical gaps, cultural specificity, and polysemy—problems that frequently arise when translating religious terminology between languages.

## 7. The Analysis

### *Example No. 1*

#### 1. "Pope" vs. المرجع الأعلى (Al-Marja' al-A'la)

The contrast between the Pope (as the Roman Catholic Church) versus المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) (which is, in Shia Islam) offers an informative view into religious leadership between Christianity and Islam. Both characters wield tremendous spiritual influence in both of their communities, but their functions, theological ramifications, and cultural connotations differ greatly. This analysis will look at the semantic differences between these two theological titles, concentrating on definitions, religious contexts, including cultural nuances.

##### a. **The Pope: Definition and Role in Christianity**

##### b. **English term: "Pope"**

As the Bishop of Rome and the spiritual heir to Saint Peter, whom Catholics believe Christ appointed as the head of the Church, the Pope is the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church. Regarded as Christ's earthly vicar, the pope has the final say on issues of faith, ethics, and church leadership. He oversees the worldwide Catholic community, offers theological advice, and renders final judgments on doctrinal problems in his dual function as spiritual and administrative leader. Speaking ex cathedra (from the chair of St. Peter), the Pope also has the rare power to declare infallibility in aspects of faith and morality. This concept was established by the First Vatican Council in 1870.

##### c. **Key Aspects of the Pope's Role:**

- i. **Spiritual Leader:** The papacy's leader is regarded as Catholicism's leading figure and spiritual father, offering counsel on moral, theological, and ethical matters.
- ii. **Authority:** As the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope has ultimate power over matters of governance, doctrinal judgments, and bishop selection.
- iii. **Infallibility:** Under some circumstances, for example when he speaks on issues of faith or morality using the power of his position, the Pope's doctrinal teachings are regarded as infallible.
- iv. **Global Role:** The Pope symbolizes the entire Catholic community and is frequently involved in interfaith discussion and diplomatic contacts with governments and religious groups.

## 2. المرجع الأعلى (Al-Marja' al-A'la): Definition and Role in Shia Islam Arabic term: المرجع الأعلى (Al-Marja' al-A'la)

The term المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) of Shia Islam denotes to the highest spiritual authority within Shia Muslims, particularly within the Twelver sect. The word مرجع (marja') indicates "reference" / "source of emulation," while الأعلى (al-A'la) represents "the highest." A Marja' is a skilled scholar with the greatest level of religious education, and Shia Muslims obey his or her verdicts on Islamic law (fiqh), theology, and personal conduct. The term المرجع الأعلى refers to the highest-ranking marja', who Shia Muslims consult for religious guidance and legal verdicts.

### a. Key Aspects of المرجع الأعلى's Role:

- i. **Spiritual and Juridical Authority:** The Marja' is not just a spiritual leader, but also a judicial figure. His verdicts are regarded binding on Shia Muslims, notably in questions of Islamic law, ethics, including religious practice.
- ii. **Religious Leadership:** The Marja' does not have a centralized administration responsibility over the whole Shia community, in contrast to the Pope. Instead, Shia Muslims are able to adhere to the Marja's teachings that they believe in the most, and the Marja's power is mostly concentrated on providing religious and legal counsel.
- iii. **Non-infallibility:** The Marja' is not regarded as infallible in Shia Islam, unlike the Pope. Though based on scholarly interpretations of Islamic sources, mainly the Qur'an and Hadith, the Marja' is a highly esteemed scholar, and his decisions are subject to debate.

## 3. Theological and Semantic Differences

a. **Infallibility:** The idea of infallibility is among the most important theological distinctions between the Pope with المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la).

- i. When the Pope speaks ex cathedra upon faith and morals, he is regarded as infallible in some theological questions. As a result, the Pope's teachings and choices are unquestionably authoritative within Catholicism.
- ii. On the other hand, al-Marja' al-A'la, or المرجع الأعلى, is not regarded as infallible. His rulings are supported by interpretations of Islamic texts and legal logic. Shia Muslims think that because religious scholars might understand things incorrectly, their decisions can be challenged or changed.

### b. Role in Leadership:

- i. Since he is regarded as the highest leader and authority of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope plays a vital role in church governance. In addition to spiritual issues, his leadership has an impact on the global Church's political and organizational framework.
- ii. In contrast, al-Marja' al-A'la does not have centralized administrative authority over all Shia Muslims. Rather, his influence is mostly jurisprudential and spiritual. Various Marja' can be observed by Shia Muslims based on their locality or personal preferences.

### c. Cultural Context:

- i. The papacy's authority but its historical evolution within the Church are linked to the word Pope, which conveys a strongly Christian and distinctively Catholic connotation. As a single, unified worldwide organization, the Pope also symbolizes the Catholic Church's unity.
- ii. The phrase المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) is specifically Shia and illustrates how Islamic religious authority is dispersed, with several religious leaders potentially

influencing various groups of believers. Shia Muslims have no obligation to adhere to any one of the Marja's; rather, they are a personal guide.

#### **d. Cultural and Political Implications**

In certain situations, the Pope's role as chief of the Vatican's Catholic Church is both religious and political. The Pope maintains diplomatic ties with nations and is involved in world events, frequently voicing Christian opinions on ethical, social, and governmental issues.

In contrast, Shia Islam's المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) may also have a political function(s) and duties, especially in nations like Iran where the highest religious authority—typically a Marja' المرجع—has influence and power over both religious and political issues. However, unlike the Pope, the Marja's position or status is not always political; rather, it regularly functions in a more regional and context-specific way. A Marja's position may be strictly and specifically spiritual and legal in other areas, but it could be political in Iraq or Lebanon in specific contexts or situations.

**To conclude**, with respective theological traditions, the Pope and المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) are both important persons who provide their followers spiritual leadership, advice and direction. But when it comes to theological authority, legal leadership, infallibility and cultural context, their duties and obligations are very different. While المرجع الأعلى (al-Marja' al-A'la) has jurisprudential authority lacking infallibility within the communities of Shia Muslim, the Pope has a centralized, infallible role among the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the Marja' regime has been more decentralized, with several leaders controlling various Shia communities, whereas the Pope's leadership is associated with a single firm organization.

The different theological and semantic meaning(s) of these names indicates the various cultural and religious context(s) in which these characters' function. Understanding these distinctions is decisive to understanding how various faith traditions view and use religious power.

### **Example No. 2**

#### **1. "God"**

The supreme being of monotheistic religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam is typically referred to by the English word "God." The word "God" is equivalent to "الله" (Allah) in Arabic. Nevertheless, when considering these expressions from the perspectives of power, rule, infallibility, and universal function, notable cultural and theological distinctions emerge, even though both names relate to the ultimate deity.

#### **2. Authority and Power**

##### **a. English ("God"):**

According to Christian faith, "God" is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and he has absolute authority and power. This idea is frequently conceived in a personal relationship with humans. In the framework of divine sovereignty—which is especially highlighted in the ideas of creation, providence, and salvation—this power and authority are grasped.

##### **b. Arabic ("الله"):**

The term "Allah" in Islam denotes the one and only God, who is supremely powerful and sovereign. Islamic theology is based on the conviction that Allah is entirely one (Tawhid), and that Allah has absolute authority. The universe's creation, the application of natural rules, and the final judgment all demonstrate Allah's omnipotence.

In contrast to Christianity, Allah is conceived as being a transcendent, all-encompassing manner rather than in a personal nor relational sense with creation.

**c. Infallibility**

**English ("God"):** As Christian theology, God is thought of as infallible, particularly in relation to the Trinity and the divine characteristics of omniscience with perfection. The concept of God's infallibility extends to Jesus Christ's teachings and activities, as he was regarded as the Son of God as well as God incarnate. Jesus' divine nature ensures that his activities are error-free.

**Arabic ("الله"):** Islam also holds that Allah is flawless and unaffected by any faults or imperfections. Allah's qualities—such as justice, mercy, and wisdom—are flawless and unalterable. The Quran emphasizes Allah's perfection and the fact that neither humans nor other creations can ever doubt His will.

**d. Global Role**

**English ("God"):** In Christianity, God's worldwide involvement is defined by the Church's evangelical goal to spread the message of Jesus and deliver salvation to all countries. The global function is frequently defined in terms of God's plan for humanity along with the universality of forgiveness via Christ.

**Arabic ("الله"):** Islam frames Allah's role in the world in terms of providing direction through the words given by the Prophet Muhammad and the Quran. Muslims hold that Islam is the last and all-encompassing religion for humanity, and that Allah's job is to lead everyone to live moral lives by submitting to His will (Islam denotes "submission" to God). The main objective of Islam is for everyone to worship and follow Allah, who has a global role.

**Example No. 3**

**1. "Trinity"**

The **Trinity** is a *unique idea* in Christian theology, which means the belief within one God who exists in three persons: Father, the Son, or Christ, then the Holy Spirit. The Arabic name for "Trinity" includes "الثالوث" (Al-Thālūth). This phrase has various theological meanings that are interpreted differently across languages as religious traditions.

**2. Authority and Power**

**English ("Trinity"):** According to Christian doctrine, the coexistence of three persons—all equally authoritative and fully divine—is symbolized by the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, Father, and Son are co-equal in authority and power, reflecting the same divine essence. Theologically speaking, this indicates that each member of the Trinity possesses God's authority and power concurrently rather than in separate parts. With the Trinity's members in a dynamic interaction with one another and the outside world, this idea places a strong emphasis on relational authority.

**Arabic ("الثالوث" / Al-Thālūth):** Although the Arabic phrase "الثالوث" conveys the same idea, it is frequently interpreted incorrectly in Islamic situations. Since the Trinity goes against the Islamic view of God's absolute oneness (Tawhid), Muslims reject it. The idea of the Trinity is frequently discussed critically into the Arabic version of the Quran, with a focus on the conviction that God doesn't have partners and divisions in His nature. Therefore, Islamic theology rejects the idea of the Trinity because it sees it as a possible deformation of pure monotheism.

### 3. Infallibility

**English ("Trinity"):** In Christianity, Trinity's infallibility is upheld. Each member of the holy Trinity—Father, Son, along with Holy Spirit—is considered as flawless and without error. The unity of the human and divine natures within Jesus Christ is additionally recognized as infallible, guaranteeing that the real person of Christ cannot make mistakes in His earthly ministry.

**Arabic ("الثالوث" / Al-Thālūth):** Because the Trinity is not a component of Islamic theology, there's is no unique infallibility linked with it in Arabic Islamic discourse. According to the Islamic worldview, Allah's single nature is immaculate, and humans, including prophets such as Jesus, are fallible instead of divine.

### 4. Global Role

**English ("Trinity"):** Christian theology's understanding of the Trinity's global significance is based on the Church's global mission to share the good news of Christ's redemption. Christians hold that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are responsible for God's redemptive activity in the world, and that the Trinity is essential to their conception of God's relationship with humanity. The Holy Spirit enables believers to live in accordance with God's will, while the Father provides the Son to save humanity.

**Arabic ("الثالوث" / Al-Thālūth):** Because the Trinity cannot be accepted in Islam, God (Allah) is stressed on a global scale. Allah's role is to lead and direct humanity by means of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's teachings. The emphasis is on God's unity and oneness, and Islam expresses God's worldwide role via worship, obedience, and surrender to His will.

**To conclude**, when comparing Western Christian theology versus Arabic Islamic thinking, the names "God" and "Trinity" hold important distinctions in terms of power, authority, infallibility, and worldwide role. Although God is regarded as strong and unyielding in all religions, the theological frameworks around the idea vary, particularly with regard to relationality (Islamic monotheism against Christian trinitarianism). Islamic philosophy stresses the complete oneness of God (Tawhid), which is distinct from the Christian concept of the Trinity. As a result, the two languages' and religions' semantic disparities reveal profound theological distinctions that influence how each tradition views God in the world.

### *Example No. 4*

#### 1. Caliph (خليفة - Khalīfa)

In Islamic tradition, the concept of "caliph" (Arabic: خليفة, Khalīfah) has important theological, political, and historical connotations, and its meaning can change based on the linguistic and cultural environment. The term "caliph" describes the political and religious head of the Muslim community who takes over from the Prophet Muhammad shortly after his passing. There are significant semantic differences between the both English and Arabic meanings of the term when seen through the prisms of power, authority, infallibility, and worldwide role. This is a thorough analysis:

##### a. Authority:

**Arabic Perspective:** خليفة (Khalīfah) is Arabic for "successor" or "deputy." The caliph is regarded as the political and religious head of the Muslim community, or ummah. A caliph's power is frequently seen as originating from both communal consensus (ijma)

and divine law (Sharia). The caliph is responsible for upholding Islamic beliefs and enforcing Islamic law, which keeps the ummah united under a single ruler.

**English Perspective:** Although the title "caliph" in English can also allude to the Prophet Muhammad's successor, it is most commonly used to describe a political figurehead who governs a state or empire with a majority of Muslims. In contrast to the Arabic understanding, the English context might not place as much emphasis on the caliph's religious authority. In English-speaking nations, the idea of a caliph may be more closely linked to a political figurehead than to the theological need to interpret divine law.

#### b. Power

**Arabic Perspective:** In Arabic, the caliph is a political leader who also serves as the guardian of the religious and spiritual obligations of the Islamic community. Although this was frequently limited by the counsel and consent of religious scholars (ulama), the caliph has the authority to impose religious laws, control the armed forces (historically), and occasionally make theological choices. As a dual function of governmental and religious power, the caliph's authority encompasses both temporal and spiritual affairs.

**English Perspective:** The word "caliph" in English frequently refers to the political aspect of power, stressing control and direction over Islamic lands. The military and political facets of authority are frequently more stressed, especially in historical situations (such as the Ottoman Caliphate), even though the caliph has a certain spiritual significance in English interpretations. Instead of focusing on the caliph as a religious authority in and of himself, the English perspective would highlight the caliph to be a monarch-like person with centralized control.

#### c. Infallibility:

**Arabic Perspective:** The idea of infallible (Arabic: عصمة Ismah) is fundamental to some Islamic traditions, especially Shia Islam. However, in Sunni Islam, the caliph is not seen as infallible; instead, it is thought that the caliph may make mistakes and is still the rightful head of state. Nevertheless, the caliph is viewed as having been chosen by God, and God's will is thought to be the source of the authority to properly lead the people. An imam who is not the caliph, is more strongly associated with the concept of infallibility in Shia Islam. As a result, a Shia would not regard a caliph as possessing direct divine guidance or infallibility, unlike an Imam. A caliph is regarded in Sunni Islam as a human leadership who is prone to error but should make an effort to govern in accordance with Islamic law.

**English Perspective:** The idea of infallibility is frequently completely ignored in the English definition of caliph. In Western political and historical narratives, the caliph is not usually linked to the idea of divine protection from wrong. In this way, a caliph could be viewed as a ruler who has the same weaknesses as other political figures and who is not inherently protected by divine immunity from mistakes or poor judgment.

#### d. Global Role

**Arabic Perspective:** In the past, especially in the early years of Islam, when the caliphate spanned enormous swaths of territory from Spain to India, the caliph was considered the head of the Muslim world. The caliph was considered the supreme authority in both politics and religion and was in charge of maintaining harmony within the Islamic world. It was believed that the caliph's function went beyond national boundaries, establishing the caliphate as a supranational organization with the goal of preserving harmony and unity within the Muslim world.

**English Perspective:** The caliph's worldwide function has frequently been interpreted in English with respect to of historical authority. Since the Ottoman Empire formally abolished the caliph's institution in 1924, the caliphate as a unit of politics has essentially vanished in contemporary times. Because of this, discussions of the caliphate in modern English tend to concentrate more on its place in history than on its actual, active presence in the world. Many English-speaking people view the caliph's worldwide power as primarily a historical idea rather than a vital, modern role, especially when considering Islamic history.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 1) **Authority:** While the political role appears to predominate in English, the caliph in Arabic possesses both political as well as religious power.
- 2) **Power:** In Arabic, power encompasses spiritual power, whereas in English, power is typically associated with political and military dominance.
- 3) **Infallibility:** While English interpretations hardly ever address infallibility, the Arabic context—particularly in Sunni Islam—accepts the caliph's fallibility.
- 4) **Global Role:** While the English tend to consider the caliph as a historical authority that is no longer actively involved in global Islamic politics, the Arabic tradition considers it as an embodiment of the Muslim world.

In conclusion, although if the caliph is acknowledged as the ruler in the Islamic world in both languages, Arabic's understanding of the term is more deeply rooted in its religious and historical value, whilst English tends to concentrate more on its historical and political connotations.

**Semantic Discrepancy:** The English term "caliph" might not adequately capture the theological dimensions of the caliph's function as a spiritual and religious leader, nor the position's profound historical significance. The Arabic word *khalīfa*, on the other hand, is more significant in Islamic belief as a successor chosen by God.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the above analysis and study, the researcher reaches the following:

1. The analysis of semantic differences and variations in theological terms between the two languages reveals and exposes major and important obstacles within translation, understanding and interpretation.
2. These disparities and discrepancies result from linguistic, theological in nature, and from cultural distinctions, which affect and influence how religious concepts are processes and understood in all languages.
3. Using frameworks and approaches from semantics, theories of translation, cognitive languages, and intertextuality are resulted in the obtaining of a better grasp of such phrases, words and expressions along with their consequences.
4. Many such as translators and academics have to evaluate and study the historical, cultural, and theological contexts of religious phrases in order for avoiding any confusion and erroneous interpretation results in cross-linguistic situations.

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