AL-ATTAS' CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE AND HIS UTILIZATION OF
SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

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To my beloved husband,
Wan Mohamed Saniy b. Wan Hassan,
for his endless support and encouragement

To my beloved sons:
Naqib, Adib and Shakib
for their understanding and inspirations

To my beloved mother,
Hajjah Wan Safiah bt. Haji Wan Daud
for her continuous *du'ā'*

To my beloved father
al-Marḥūm Haji Ahmad bin Daud
for his *'ilm*

To my twelve siblings
especially Khairiyyah, Khalis, Afifah and Faiz
May Allah grants His *Riḍā* and *Tawfīq* to them

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

Recent developments in the modern Muslim thoughts have revealed the misusages and corruptions in various key-terms and important concepts of Islamic worldview. Basic vocabulary in the Quranic Arabic as well as the Islamic languages have been contaminated, causing confusion of Islamic worldview and its religious and ethical contents. Language (*bayān*) as the tool of the worldview of Islam consisting of a set of basic vocabulary is supposed to be correctly understood in order for its correct meanings (*ma'ānī*) to be preserved. Hence, this study sought to analyze both the concept of language in the worldview of Islam and the utilization of semantic analysis to attain to reality and truth (*ḥaqīqah*) according to the way of thinking of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. The analysis was conducted based on all his published works, recorded lectures and interviews in relation to linguistic trends in Islamic tradition and the contemporary Muslim world. Al-Attas has explained the phenomenon of "secularization of language and thought" from which stems the core problem of Muslims which is the "confusion and error in Islamic knowledge and its worldview" (1978). He argues compellingly that language is something divinely inborn in individuals, that language projects worldview and ontology, and that Arabic has a special position of being the language of final revelation as well as having scientific character. He has also employed the methodology of semantic analysis in his metaphysical and ethico-religious framework which can be explicated under eight semantic fields of *Wujūd*, *Māhiyyah* and *Dhāt*, *Ḥaqq* and *Ḥaqīqah*, *Shuhūd*, *Dīn*, *Insān* and *Bashar*, *'Adl* and *Sa'ādah*. This study considers that al-Attas' semantic analysis is a sound methodology in the modern Islamic discourse to solve the problem of confusion and errors in Islamic knowledge and its worldview and in its legal-ethical framework. This is because firstly, semantic analysis is historically one of the major methods which safeguard the correct meanings of the key-terms of the Islamic worldview from corruptions; and secondly, its procedures and processes are compatible with the interpretation of Islamic texts, from which the understanding of Islam is derived. In the light of al-Attas' conception of language and his utilization of semantic analysis, the study suggests this methodology as a better solution to contemporary scholars as well as preserving one of the prominent methodologies which was once used in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan dalam dunia Islam mutakhir telah menunjukkan penyalahgunaan perkataan serta penyelewengan makna dalam perkataan-perkataan dan konsep-konsep penting dalam pandangan alam Islam. Perbendaharaan kata asas Islam dalam bahasa Arab al-Quran dan bahasa-bahasa Islam seluruh dunia telah dirosakkan dan menyebabkan kekeliruan dalam pandangan alam Islam, agamanya dan kandungan etikanya. Bahasa (*bayān*), sebagai satu alat dalam pandangan alam Islam yang mempunyai satu senarai perbendaharaan kata asas sepatutnya difahami dengan betul supaya maknanya yang sebenar (*ma'ānī*) dapat dipelihara. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menganalisis konsep bahasa dalam pandangan alam Islam dan juga penggunaan analisis makna dalam memahami kebenaran (*ḥaqīqah*) berdasarkan pemikiran Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Analisis ini dibuat berdasarkan semua hasil penerbitan beliau, rakaman syarahan dan temubual berkaitan dengan aliran-aliran linguistik dalam tradisi Islam dan dunia Muslim kontemporari. Al-Attas telah menerangkan tentang "sekularisasi bahasa dan pemikiran" yang mana daripadanya timbul masalah "kekeliruan dan kesalahan dalam memahami Islam dan pandangan alamnya" (1978). Beliau telah mempertahankan pegangannya tentang bahasa sebagai satu pemberian Ilahi kepada insan, bahawa bahasa menayangkan pandangan alam dan ontologi dan bahawa bahasa Arab mempunyai kedudukan yang istimewa sebagai bahasa wahyu sekaligus mempunyai sifat saintifik. Beliau juga telah menggunakan metodologi analisis makna dalam rangka metafizik dan etika-agama beliau, yang mana boleh diperjelaskan dengan lebih tepat melalui lapan medan makna *Wujūd*, *Māhiyyah* dan *Dhāt*, *Ḥaqq* dan *Ḥaqīqah*, *Shuhūd*, *Dīn*, *Insān* dan *Bashar*, *'Adl* dan *Sa'ādah*. Kajian ini melihat analisis makna al-Attas sebagai suatu metodologi yang tepat dan patut digunakan dalam perbincangan ilmiah moden Islam bagi menyelesaikan masalah kekeliruan dan kesalahan dalam memahami Islam dan pandangan alamnya serta kerangka perundangan dan etika. Ini adalah kerana: pertama, analisis makna telah terbukti dalam sejarah sebagai salah satu metod ilmiah yang penting yang telah berjaya memelihara makna perbendaharaan kata Islam daripada diselewengkan; kedua, prosedur dan proses yang dilakukan adalah amat sesuai untuk penafsiran teks-teks Islam, yang mana daripadanya kefahaman sebenar tentang Islam boleh didapati. Dengan berpandukan pemahaman al-Attas tentang bahasa dan juga penggunaan analisis makna oleh beliau, kajian ini mencadangkan metodologi ini sebagai satu penyelesaian yang lebih baik kepada para ilmuwan zaman ini sekaligus memelihara kesinambungan satu metodologi penting yang pernah digunakan dalam tradisi keilmuan Islam.

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"'Abduh"	-	"The educational philosophy of al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh"
ABIM	-	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
ADP	-	Adab dan Peradaban: Karya Pengi'tirafan untuk Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas,
AN	-	The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16ᵗʰ Malay Translation of the 'Aqā'id al-Nasafī,
"Approaches,"	-	"Critical Study of Approaches to the Exegesis of the Qur'an,"
Arabic Lexicography	-	Arabic Lexicography: Its History and Its Place in the General History of Lexicography
CEII	-	The Concept of Education in Islam
The Classical Heritage	-	The Classical Heritage in Islam: Arabic Thought and Culture.
Commentary	-	Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī,
The Concept of Belief	-	The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām
The Concept of Knowledge	-	The Concept of Kowledge in Islam and Its Implications for Education in a Developing Country
The Concept and Reality	-	The Concept and Reality of Existence.
CR	-	Islam: "The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality"
CSNL	-	CASIS Saturday Night Lecture
DE	-	Degrees of Existence

EPP	-	The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas
Ethico-Religious	-	Ethico-Religious Concepts in Islam
Faham Agama	-	Islām: Faham Agama dan Asas Akhlak
"Foreign Vocabulary"	-	"Foreign Vocabulary in Classical Arabic and al-Jawālīqī's al-Muʿarrab"
Fuṣūṣ	-	Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam li Ibn ʿArabī
Futūḥāt	-	Futūḥāt Makkiyyah li Ibn ʿArabī
God and Man	-	God and Man in the Quran
Hans Wehr	-	Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic
"Hermeneutics FR"	-	"A Modernist Approach to the Quran: A Critical Study of the Hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman"
HFF	-	Historical Fact and Fiction
IBFIM	-	Institute of Banking and Finance Malaysia
ICK	-	Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge and the Role of the University in the Context of De-Westernization and Decolonization
ICLIF	-	The ICLIF Leadership Competency Model (LCM): An Islamic Alternative
ICM	-	Islam and the Challenge of Modernity: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium on Islām and the Challenge of Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Contexts in Kuala Lumpur, August 1-5, 1994
IE	-	The Intuition of Existence,
al-Iḥyāʾ	-	Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn
IM	-	Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition
IPS	-	Islam and the Philosophy of Science
IS	-	Islam and Secularism

Īsāghūjī	-	Īsāghūjī li ʿĀṣiruddīn al-Abhārī
ISKM	-	Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu
ISTAC	-	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
Kashshāf.	-	Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-ʿUlūm li Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Tahānawī
KLT	-	Knowledge, Language, Thought and the Civilization of Islam: Essays in Honor of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas
LA	-	Lisān al-ʿArab li Ibnu Manẓūr
Landmarks	-	Landmarks in Linguistic Thought III: The Arabic Linguistic Tradition
"Language"	-	Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A Study of "Waḍʿu al-Lughah" and Its Development"
Language and Magic	-	Language and Magic: Studies in the Magical Function of Speech
LPW al-Junayd	-	The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd Maʿārij Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs li al-Ghazālī
Ma'na Kebahagiaan	-	Ma'na Kebahagiaan dan Pengalamannya dalam Islam
"Medieval Muslim,"	-	"Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language,"
MEH	-	The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam
MHF	-	The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī
Modern Koran	-	Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1960),
"Modernity,"	-	"Modernity and Religious Worldviews – The Challenge of Classical Islamic Religious Thought for Contemporary Muslim Intellectuals,"
Modern Written Arabic	-	Modern Written Arabic: A Comprehensive Grammar
Mufradāt Alfāẓ	-	Mufradāt Alfāẓ li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm
"Muslim Modernism,"	-	"Muslim Modernism and the Text of the Past,"

Al-Muṣṭaṣfā.   -   Al-Muṣṭaṣfā min al-Uṣūl

al-Najāt   -   Kitāb al-Najāt fil Ḥikmat al-Manṭiqiyyah wa't-Ṭabī'iyyah wa'l Ilāhiyyah li IbnSīnā

NM   -   The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul

OJNM   -   On Justice and the Nature of Man: A Commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):58 and Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23);12-14

"One Voice,"   -   "Speaking with One Voice: the Politics of Language in the Modern Muslim World,"

"Pengajaran"   -   "Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Kelantan dan Terengganu: Satu Tinjauan"

"Philosophy"   -   "Toward an Islamic Concept of Philosophy,"

"Philosophy of Language," - "Philosophy of Language in the Medieval Arabic Tradition,"

Positive Aspects   -   Positive Aspects of Tasawwuf: Preliminary Thoughts on an Islamic Philosophy of Science

Preliminary Statement   -   Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

"Preserving,"   -   "Preserving the Semantic Structure of Islamic Key Terms and Concepts: Izutsu, al-Attas and Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī,"

Prolegomena   -   Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam

QE   -   On Quiddity and Essence

QM   -   al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ li Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb al-Fayrūzabādī

Rasā'il   -   Rasā'il al-Junayd

Rihlah   -   Rihlah Ilmiah: Dari Neomodernisme ke Islamisasi Ilmu Kontemporer

al-Risālah   -   al-Risālah li Abū 'Abdillah Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī,

SAN	-	Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyyah
SAS	-	Some Aspects of Sufism,
Semantics	-	Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning
"Al-Sīrāfī"	-	"Al-Sīrāfī's Theory of 'Lingua-logical' Grammar: An Analytical Study of the Grammatical Work of Al-Sīrāfī (Sharḥ Kitāb Sībawayh) within the Context of A Discussion on Language and Logic in Medieval Islam"
"Some Thoughts,"	-	"Some Thought on Modernity and Modern Muslim Thinking About Islam,"
Special Lecture	-	Special Lecture delivered at Institut Integriti Malaysia, 14th August 2016, Kuala Lumpur.
SNL	-	Saturday Night Lecture, ISTAC
Sufism	-	Sufism An Account of the Mystics of Islam,
Tanwīr al-Miqbās	-	Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās
Taʿrīfāt.	-	Kitāb al-Taʿrīfāt lil-Jurjānī
"Timelessness,"	-	"The Timelessness of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Nature of Islamic Civilization,"
Tinjauan Ringkas	-	Tinjauan Ringkas Peri Ilmu dan Pandangan Alam
"True Submission"	-	"An analysis of the concept of Islam as "true submission" on the basis of al-Attas' approach"

TRANSLITERATIONS

I. ALPHABETS

Arabic	Latin
ء	ʾ
ب	B
ت	T
ث	Th
ج	J
ح	Ḥ
خ	Kh
د	D
ذ	Dh
ر	R
ز	Z
س	S
ش	Sh
ص	Ṣ
ض	Ḍ
ط	Ṭ
ظ	Ẓ
ع	ʿ
غ	Gh
ف	F
ق	Q
ك	K
ل	L

م	M
ن	N
و	W
ه	H
ي	Y

II. SHORT VOWELS

Arabic	*Latin*
◌َ	A
◌ِ	I
◌ُ	U

III. LONG VOWELS

Arabic	*Latin*
ا/ى	Ā
ي	Ī
و	Ū

IV. DIFTHONGS

Arabic	*Latin*
و	Aw
ي	Ay
ي	Iyy/I
و	Uww/ū

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

The Quran and the *ḥadīth*, two most important sources of knowledge in Islam, emphasize on the significance of language and application of correct linguistic symbols (words) to arrive at correct meaning. There are many Qur'anic expositions on language, which records up to more than 300 verses[1], ranging from particular words and their derivatives; for example, *"al-asmā'"* (al-Baqarah, 2:31), *"fuṣṣilat"* (Fuṣṣilat, 41:3), *"bayān"* (al-Qiyāmah, 75:19), *"fiqh"* (Ṭāhā, 20:28), *"āyāt"* (Ālī 'Imrān, 3:7), *"syahīd"* (al-'Ādiyāt 100:7), *"al-kalim"* (al-Nisā', 4:46), *"ta'wīl"* (Yūnus, 10:39), *"ḥakaman"* (al-An'ām, 6:114), *"lisān"* (al-Syu'arā', 26:195); and *"Qur'ānan 'arabiyyan"* (al-Zumar, 39:28) along with its opposite *"a'jamiyyun"* (Fuṣṣilat 41:44); and other terms related to language.

In the Quran Allah says that He taught Adam the names of all things, *"al-asmā'a kullahā"* (Al-Baqarah, 2:31) and describes the Quran as a book whereof the

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[1]   We have searched through all Quranic verses, relying on *Qur'ān Karīm tafsīr wa bayān ma'a asbāb al-nuzūl li al-suyūṭī, ma'a fahāris kāmilah li al-mawāḍi' wa al-alfāẓ* (Dimasyq: Dār al-Rashīd). I have also compared my search with several others for instance http://sigir.uitm.edu.my accessed on 03/12/14. My final source on Quranic exposition goes to Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 425 A.H.), *Mufradāt Alfāẓ li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Dimasyq: Dār al-Qalam, 2009), hereafter cited as *Mufradāt Alfāẓ*. The verses in the brackets are only selective few for it is difficult to enlist every single verse herein. We rely Quranic translation mostly on Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran Original Arabic Text with English Translation and Selected Commentaries* Hotel Edition (Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media Sdn. Bhd., n.d.). The rest which are specifically related to al-Attas' conception of language and his utilization of semantic analysis are al-Attas'.

verses are explained in detail, *"kitābun fuṣṣilat āyātuhū qur'ānan 'arabiyyan"* (Fuṣṣilat, 41:3). In another place Allah mocked some of the Jews who displaced words from their (right) places, *"yuḥarrifūn al-kalima 'an mawāḍi'ihi"* (al-Nisā', 4:46) by saying *"sami'nā wa 'aṣaynā"* (we hear and we disobey) instead of *"sami'nā wa aṭa'nā"* (we hear and we obey) and *"'sma' ghayra musma'in"* (hear what is not heard) instead of *"'sma'"* (do hear), and *"rā'inā"* instead of *"'nẓurnā"* (do look at us). The word *asmā'* refers to the names of things given by Allah, *fuṣṣilat āyātuhū* is the character of Quran which is clear because being explained in detail; whereas displacing words of their original meaning (*taḥrīf*) is condemned by God.

The Prophetic ḥadīth also deals with correct usage of language and interpretation of meanings. There are *ḥadīth*s, for example, on *istiḥbāb bayān al-kalām* (on encouraging clarification of words): [2]

> Narrated from Anas r.a.: Prophet b.u.h. when he speaks, he repeats three times until he is certain that he is understood well and when he approaches to a group of people he gives *salām* to them three times; [3]

> Narrated from Ā'ishah r.a.: The speech of Prophet pbuh is a speech which is understandable (*faṣlan*) whoever listens to it. [4]

There are also *ḥadīth*s on *al-wa'ẓ wa al-iqtiṣād fīhi* (on advice and moderation on advice) [5] and *istiḥbāb al-tabshīr wa al-tahni'ah bi al-khayr* (on encouraging preach of good news and congratulating) [6]. There are also *ḥadīth*s on *al-ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) [7]; *al-taubah* (repentance) [8]; *al-taqwā* (steadfastness) [9], *al-yaqīn* and *al-tawakkul* (certainty and trust) [10]; and many others. These terms are carefully articulated by the Prophet bearing particular limitations in meanings and definitions; and are

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[2] *Imām Abī Zakariyyā Yaḥyā bin Sharaf al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī* (631-676 AH), *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* ed.

[3] *anna al-rasūl saw kāna izā takallama bikalimatin a'ādahā tsalātsan ḥattā tufhama 'anhu wa idhā atā 'alā qawmin fa sallama 'alayhim thalāthan*), *Riyāḍ*, ḥadīth no. 696/1, 323. The translations into English in and for footnotes 19-26 are ours.

[4] *kāna kalām al-Rasūl ṣallā'l-Lāhu 'alayhi wa sallama kalāman faṣlan yafhamuhu kullu man yasma'uhu. Faṣlan* here means clear and perceptible (*bayyinan ẓāhiran*). *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn,* ḥadīth no. 697/2, 324.

[5] Ibid, no. 699/1, 324.

[6] Ibid, no. 708/1, 709/2 and 710/3, 329-331.

[7] Ibid, no. 1/1, 2/2 and 3/3, 35-36.

[8] Ibid, no. 13/1, 14/2 and 16/4, 42-43.

[9] Ibid, no. 69/1 and 70/2, 74-75.

[10] Ibid, no. 74/1 and 75/2, 76-77.

interconnected in a larger semantic field. Different words are used differently for they carry different meanings. [11]

Thus, it is clear that the Quran and the *ḥadīth* have laid a foundation for the Muslims pertaining to the preservation of meaning which substantively influenced their approach to knowledge. In this study, we will concentrate on al Attas's semantic analysis in explicating his metaphysical framework; a practice of a major method in Islamic intellectual tradition which deals with the preservation of correct meaning. Knowledge of Islamic worldview will become clear once we understand the concept of "meaning".

1.2   Statement of the Problem

That there is confusion and errors in understanding knowledge of Islam and its worldview in Muslim world today is highly evident. Recent developments in modern Muslim thoughts reveal misusages and corruptions of various key-terms and important concepts in the Islamic worldview. Important Islamic terminologies in ethical and civilizational discourses tend to be limited, reduced or incorrectly translated, a tendency which has its root long before our modern times.

More than a thousand years ago, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 C.E.) detected the confusion and errors in the Muslim society involving language and which must be corrected by the revivification of religious

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[11] Refer also *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* vol. 1, *Kitāb al-Īmān ḥadīth* no. 10, 11, 33, 57, 58; *Kitāb al-'Ilm* no. 59 (when one is asked about something while he is busy talking he is permitted to first ignore the question; then after finishes his talk, answer the questioner), 67 (an absent reported man might comprehend the case more than a present listener might), 68 and 69 (choosing the suitable time in case of offering advice for fear that people might get bored), 104 and 105 (It is incumbent on those who are present to inform those who are absent), 106-109 (The sin of he, who attributes lies to the Messenger of Allah). These and many more in other books of *aḥādīth* concerns on the issue of language and communicating it to others. Note that in the ṣaḥīḥs, ''ilm' sometimes refers to 'ḥadīth' for in the latter one is to find the former.

sciences. [12] In the preface of his renown *Kitāb Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī mentioned the importance of writing the book in order to revive the religious sciences, to discover the exemplary lives of the previous scholars and to clarify what the prophets and virtuous fathers regarded as useful knowledge. [13] Al-Ghazālī also identified several terms in the Islamic sciences which have been replaced and misused, so as to connote other than those which the righteous fathers and the first century Muslims intended, namely: *fiqh*, *'ilm*, *tawḥīd*, *tadhkīr* and *ḥikmah*. [14] Another scholar who had emphasized on the importance of Arabic and right connotations of words was 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad Ibnu Khaldūn (d. 1406 C.E.). He classified sciences into *'ilm al-maqāṣid* and *'ilm al-ālāt* (an example is language), emphasizing on the importance of a student knowing the priority of the former to the latter and then to wisely and proportionately dividing time in seeking those sciences. [15] He also explained the pillars of Arabic language which are *ṣarf*, *naḥu*, *bayān* and *adab*. [16]

In modern Muslim world, similar phenomena have become widespread globally. Important Islamic key terms have been led to bear crooked meanings while the Muslim languages have contained vocabularies which are not Islamic in terms of their conceptions. The misusages of Islamic key terms are apparent not only in Islamic discourses and writings, but also in the dictionaries extant to the Muslims.

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[12] Refer Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* ed. Ṭāha 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sa'd, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Ṣafā, 2003), 1:38-44; on chapter "What Has Been Replaced of Scientific Terms" (*mā budila min alfāẓ al-'ulūm*) - the translation is ours. Hereafter cited as *al-Iḥyā'*.

[13] *Al-Iḥyā'*, 16. The original text is "*ra'aitu al-ishtighāl bi taḥrīr hāzā al-kitāb muhimman, iḥyā'an 'ulūma'd-dīn, wa kashfan 'an manāhij al-a'immat al-mutaqaddimīn, wa īḍāḥan li mabāhī al-'ulūm al-nāfi'ah 'inda al-nabiyyīn wa's-salaf al-ṣāliḥīn*".

[14] Ibid., 38-44.

[15] Abdu al-Rahmān ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah ibn Khaldūn*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1993), 461. For an elaboration on this in Malay, refer to Salina Ahmad, "Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Kelantan dan Terengganu: Satu Tinjauan" (M.A. thesis), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 2011), 43-45; hereafter cited as "Pengajaran". Refer also idem., "Bahasa dan Peranannya dalam Pendidikan: Suatu Perbahasan Ringkas tentang Konsep Makna dan Hakikat," Seminar Penyelidikan Siswazah UNISZA 2013 (UNISZA Postgraduate Research Conference 2013), Persatuan Pengajian Siswazah and Pusat Pengajian Siswazah UNISZA, 7th-8th September 2013, 14-17; and "Language in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition," The 2nd International Conference on Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization (iCASIC 2015), WorldConferences.net and International Islamic University College Selangor, 9th-10th March 2015, 1-2, 5, 12-13.

[16] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah ibn Khaldūn*, 466. For a lengthy elaboration on priority of religious sciences to sciences of tools refer Salina Ahmad, "Pengajaran", 33-57.

Islamic terminologies in the media have not been serving the purpose of their true meanings. [17]

There are many examples which we can demonstrate here. The term *'ulamā'*, for instance, is used to refer to religious scholars specialized in *fiqh*, instead of its earliest Islamic usage which is supposed to be understood as a scholar who has a holistic approach to sciences, including *fuqahā'*. [18] If we look into modern dictionaries, an *'ālim* is translated as "knowing; cognizant, informed; learned, erudite"; where *'ilm* as "knowledge, learning, science (natural sciences) and information" and *'ilmī* as "scientific, learned (society)". [19] We can see here the reduction of meaning to sciences, originally natural sciences at the expense of religious or spiritual sciences. Similarly, the term *'ibādah* has been reduced to prescribed rituals such as prayer and fasting, whereas it should include, besides the prescribed rituals, any endeavour, whether physical, intellectual, imaginative or otherwise, that can promote better, or preserve human life. [20]

As for the term education, it is reduced to *tarbiyah* or *ta'līm* as oppose to the more inclusive *ta'dīb*, which connotes a greater scope including many key concepts

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[17] Salina Ahmad, "The Role of Language in the Process of Islamization: A Brief Analysis of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' Thought," Seminar Kebangsaan Isu Ketamadunan dan Cabaran Semasa (SIKCAS) 2013, Bahagian Falsafah dan Tamadun Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan Universiti Sains Malaysia, 27th November 2013, 5-9, 15-18.

[18] as reiterated by Alparslan Açıkgenç in his paper, "Toward an Islamic Concept of Philosophy," *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity* ed. Sh. Shifa al-Attas (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 7, 535-589; hereafter cited as "Philosophy" and *ICM* respectively.

[19] See *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* ed. J. M. Cowan, Third Edition (New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1976), 635-636. Hereafter cited as *Hans Wehr*.

[20] Hassan Abdel Razig el-Nagar, "Speaking with One Voice: the Politics of Language in the Modern Muslim World," *ICM*, 463-464; hereafter cited as "One Voice". *Hans Wehr*, 586. Cf. *Kamus Dewan* Fourth Edition Second print (Kuala Lumpur: DBP, 2007), first edition 1970, 556; and *Kamus Besar Utusan* Economic Edition (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2002), first edition 1995, 648. Compare this with the correct understanding of *'ibādah* and its relationship with the concept of *dīn*: to understand the concept of DYN and related significations as elucidated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, see "Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality," *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978; reprint Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works Sdn. Bhd., 1993) 51-96 (page references are to reprinted edition); hereafter cited as *IS*; and idem, same title, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam, An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 41-89, hereafter cited as *Prolegomena*. Please look also in *Ibnu Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab*, 9 vols., (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2003), DYN; hereafter cited as *LA*. Cf *Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb al-Fīrūzabādī* (d. 817H), *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* ed. Muḥammad Na'īm al-'Arqasūsī and Maktab Tahqiq al-Turath fi Muassasah al-Risalah (Beyrut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 3rd print 1993), first published by the same publisher; hereafter cited as *QM*.

signifying education.[21] On the other hand, the concept of justice is reduced to sociopolitical aspects and confused with equality as understood in the modern context. The concept of equality per se excludes the more fundamental and natural aspects of justice.[22] Contrary to Islam, the term *'adl* signifies a more justifiable concept of placing a thing to its proper place[23] as opposed to mere "straightness, straightforwardness; justice, impartiality; fairness, equitableness, probity, honesty, uprightness; equitable composition, just compromise"[24]. *Adab*, another key term connected to *'adl*, explains the connection between knowledge and practice to promote justice. *Adab* is the discipline of body, mind and soul; which assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's self, society and Community; the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials; and the recognition and acknowledgement of the fact that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically.[25] No true knowledge can be instilled without the precondition of *adab* in the one who seeks it, that is, reverence and humility as well as authority. *Adab* is not resignation to disorder, for it is injustice.[26]

Change of meaning can also be traced in the understanding of Islamic concepts of economy, military and creed. Profit, for example, is perceived from the utilitarian perspective and not as connoted by the term *rabḥ*, the Islamic gain which considers both the worldly and hereafter gains, and which is related to the concept of

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[21] al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), 1980; reprint Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999), 27-32 (page references are to reprinted edition), hereafter cited as *CEII*. Also Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998), 132-167, hereafter cited as *EPP*.

[22] al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man: A Commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):58 and Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23);12-14* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 1-10, 24-30, hereafter cited as *OJNM*.

[23] Al-Attas, *IS*, 111 and 114. In *IS*, al-Attas discussed about the progressive weakening of the Muslim caused by internal elements (confusion and error in knowledge in Islam and its worldview) which created the condition of loss of *adab*. The chief characteristic symptom of loss of *adab* is the process of levelling: levelling everyone, in the mind and attitude, to the same level of the leveller. This process is perpetrated through the encouragement of false leaders who wish to demolish legitimate authority and valid hierarchy. The destruction or undermining of legitimate authority and hierarchy in human order is injustice. (111). To cater the individual problem of knowledge implies the preconditioned knowledge about the intelligence, virtue, the spirit and ultimate destiny expounded from the Islamic tradition. (114).

[24] *Hans Wehr*, 596.

[25] al-Attas, *IS*, 105. Also Wan Daud, *EPP*, 71-76.

[26] Al-Attas, *IS*, 106-107. Also Wan Daud, *EPP*, 71-76.

happiness in Islam (*saʻādah*).[27] On the other hand, *jihād* is reduced to armed fighting, disregarding social, politico-economic and intellectual struggles.[28]

One of the worst examples of the corruption of the key terms in the Islamic worldview is related to its most central concept connoted in the word "Allah". The meaning of the word is broadened so as to include every other religions' deities whereas it is supposed to refer exclusively and uniquely to the one and only God of Islam. This Malaysian case, is a corruption of the meaning of the word "Allah" by generalizing it to other religion's conception of God, in this case, Christianity. It is made more absurd, by the parties involved, seeking the solution through legal proceedings.[29]

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[27] Al-Attas has excellently elaborated on the concept of happiness in his monograph, *The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993). It was first presented in a symposium on The State of Happiness in Kyoto, Japan; organized by International Institute for Advanced Studies from the 29th to 31st of March 1993. It has been included as the 2nd chapter in the *Prolegomena* to the Metaphysics of Islam (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), hereafter cited as *MEH*. It was then translated into Malay by Muhammad Zainiy Uthman under the title *Maʻna Kebahagiaan dan Pengalamannya dalam Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2002), hereafter cited as *Maʻna Kebahagiaan*. Happiness or *saʻādah* in Islam is very much related to profit, but not in the sense of worldly profit *per se* without consideration for the hereafter. It also has a very close relationship with the practice of religion (as connoted by the term *dīn*) where freedom (connoted by the term *ikhtiyār*) is manifested as freeing oneself from the control of ego (*hawā*) and abide to the natural conscience (as connoted by the term *fiṭrah*). Compare this understanding with the concept of development, progress and change as understood worldwide. A present development in the world indicates that there is a change in the criteria of judging happiness. There is a spread of consciousness that happiness should not be measured solely on material aspect of performance; rather a consideration must be made to look into the aspects of ethical, moral and just practices within the society. See Wan Daud, *Pembangunan di Malaysia: Ke Arah Satu Kefahaman Baru Yang Lebih Sempurna*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001), 18-25 and *Knowledge Culture and The Concept of 1Malaysia*, 2-3; Uthman, *Pemikiran dan Pembinaan Tamadun: Transformasi Modal Insan ke Arah Negara Maju* (Putrajaya: Akademi Kenegaraan BTN JPM, 2012), 18-21; and Amer al-Roubaie, "Al-Attas' Concept of Happiness", *Knowledge, Language, Thought and the Civilization of Islam: Essays in Honor of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud and Muhammad Zainiy Uthman eds., (Kuala Lumpur: UTM, 2010), 321-349.

[28] Wan Daud, "A Jihad against Corruption and for the Enhancement of Integrity among Muslim Countries", The Journal of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Kuala Lumpur: 2006, 111-123. Also Md. Asham Ahmad, "An Interview with Md. Asham Ahmad: On "*Erti Sebenar Jihad*", interviewed by '*Persepsi*', TV al-Hijrah, 27 January 2015. The scenario is globally widespread: the issue of extremist Muslim fighters involved with bombing, raiding and ravaging non-Muslim as well as Muslim communities has become a news focus. The emergence of sectarian group like the Taliban, al-Qaeda, ISIS and others, as well as their notorious activities have caused the fear to the public, notwithstanding the material and cultural damage they bring. These are the manifestation of the misunderstanding of religion and basic concepts in Islam. The Arab Spring on the other hand implies the loss of *adab* initially in the mind but surreptitiously spread to the physical dimension of a Muslim man. As we observe it, similar condition is displaying itself in our own land, Malaysia, manifested in the form of apparent corrupted administration in various fields and zealous street protest; both stem from the political interest of getting in power.

[29] Md. Asham Ahmad, *Antara Nama dan Hakikat: Kemelut Kalimah Allah*, (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 2010) and *Controversy over the Term "Allah" in Malaysia*, ed. Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad, (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 2013).

The examples cited above, reflect what al-Attas has observed as the core problem of Muslims which is the "confusion and error in Islamic knowledge and its worldview".[30] As a matter of fact, this reflection also corresponds with some other Muslim scholars. Fazlur Rahman, for example, observes that there is "a general failure to understand the underlying unity of the Qur'an, coupled with a practical insistence upon fixing on the words of various verses in isolation."[31] This is also a part of the larger problem identified by al-Attas.

To our observation, the basic religious, intellectual and cultural problems of contemporary Muslims can be reduced to theoretical and methodological aspects. These theoretical and methodological aspects of the problems as well as their solutions have, in our opinion, been compellingly identified and clarified by al-Attas. However, it is of import to expand his ideas by way of *sharḥ* or elaboration as has been practically employed in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

As for this study, it attempts to concentrate on the methodological aspect which is intrinsically related to the theoretical aspect in providing solutions to the problems faced by the Muslims.

In our context of Muslim discourse, methodological aspect will have full bearing on the issue of language. The Islamic worldview which is the fundamental element, directly or indirectly in any Islamic discourse, is projected by a set of basic vocabulary which needs to be correctly understood and preserved. Semantic analysis is basically a methodology which will serve the purpose of this projection of Islamic vocabulary in the discourse. Semantic analysis, as we take it, fits the need of a right methodology in our contemporary Islamic discourse because of two reasons: firstly, it has been proven in the Islamic intellectual history that semantic analysis has been the major method which safeguards the meanings of the key-terms of the Islamic worldview from corruptions; and secondly, its procedures and processes are compatible with the interpretation of sacred texts, from which the Islamic worldview

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[30] Al-Attas, *IS*, 105-109.
[31] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 2-3. Hereafter cited as *IM*.

is derived and disseminated. Fundamentally, the employment of semantic analysis in our contemporary Islamic discourse will help to find our course back to the tradition.

Recent developments in modern Muslim intellectual discourse also show that semantic analysis has not been properly employed, if at all. [32] Eventhough some scholars may have adopted this method in their works; their adoption is not based on what has been practiced by the traditional Muslim scholarshi [33] This situation is due to either the different epistemological grounds upon which their methodology is based, or due to the concept of 'meaning' embedded in their methodology which is not in line with the traditionally accepted concept of '*ma'nā*'. This point will be elaborated in the next chapter.

It is true, however, that subjects and disciplines of sciences in modern Muslim world have developed and expanded; and modern and post-modern worldviews have changed some of their meanings, schemes as well as methodologies. But as far as the Islamic discourse is concerned, the traditional method of semantic analysis can still be relevant, and needs to be rediscovered, refined and rearticulated. This method will help Muslims reclaim the lost meanings of the key-terms and concepts that project its worldview and its epistemological, socio-cultural and legal frameworks.

Semantic analysis as we take it, is not as contemporarily accepted in the Western intellectual discourse as having very technical aspect and very much related to semiotics, the study of signs and symbols. Semantic as we take it is a form of a very essential scientific method in understanding Islamic texts, especially the Quran.

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[32] Modern Muslim discourse as we understand it extends from the early phase of the 18th century up to this present day, considering the first touch of modernization in the Muslim world in the form of British colonization of Egypt in the 18th century. Beginning from this coalition, Muslims in particular have tried to understand the West and on the other hand preserved their tradition at the very best.

[33] For example, Modern Muslim interpreters of Quran prone to answer the modern questions through the perspective of science which give rise to an 'apologetic' character of interpretation. What has been reintroduced by Toshihiko Izutsu in the 1960s can be a stepping stone to an Islamic approach of interpretation, which later developed by al-Attas, though on somewhat different epistemological grounds. What al-Attas is putting his effort on is basically a major Islamic approach to science as already practiced by his predecessors in the classical Islamic tradition. Both Izutsu and al-Attas are using semantic analysis but their principles are apparently different from each other, for instance, Izutsu excludes Prophetic tradition and overstates Arabic literature whereas al-Attas upholds firmly the former. In private conversations with Prof. Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud in February 2012.

It is very much interconnected with the meanings embedded in the Islamic worldview as well as Islamic tradition. Though being so traditional in nature, it is not something to be rendered obsolete. Should it happen to be so, it is simply because the majority of the Muslim intellectuals fail to properly appreciate it let alone apply it in the interpretation of such texts.

1.3   Research Questions

To analyze the crucial problems of errors and confusion of knowledge in Islam and its worldview; and to explain al-Attas' semantic analysis and metaphysics as one of the remedies, the research questions of this study are abstracted as follows:

1. What are the conceptions of language in Islam?
2. Who are the prominent Muslim figures on language and meaning in the Islamic intellectual tradition?
3. What is al-Attas' conception of language?
4. What is al-Attas' position on Arabic?
5. How does al-Attas conceptualize meaning (*ma'na*) in his framework?
6. How does al-Attas apply semantic analysis in his works?
7. What are the key-terms and concepts in al-Attas' explication of the authentic worldview of Islam and its ethical and cultural frameworks and principles?

1.4   Objectives of Study

The preceding research questions are reflected into the following objectives as guides for detailed analyses purposed for this study:

1. To study the conception of language in Islamic tradition.
2. To examine the figures prominent on language and meaning in the Islamic intellectual tradition.
3. To explain al-Attas' conception of language.
4. To explain al-Attas' position of Arabic.
5. To explicate al-Attas' conceptualization of meaning (*ma'nā*) in his framework.
6. To examine al-Attas' method of semantic analysis in his work.
7. To analyze the utilization of key-terms and concepts in al-Attas' explication of the authentic worldview of Islam and its ethical and cultural frameworks and principles.

The problem statement, research questions and the resultant research objectives are the parameters that inform the aim, scope of literatures, methodology and conclusion of this study.

1.5   Delimitations of Study

This is a normative study on al-Attas' conception of language and his utilization of semantic analysis in the formulation of his metaphysical and religious-ethical frameworks. The aim of the study is to explicate al-Attas' theoretical and methodological approaches in the formulation of these frameworks.

This study is divided into two large parts of "conception" and "utilization". The part of "conception" focuses on the theoretical traits of al-Attas (chapter 2) and his formulation of the concept of language (chapters 3 and 4). The analysis in these three chapters explains what Islamic and modern intellectual traditions have to offer

with regard to language and meaning and how al-Attas arrives at his conception of language. As for the part of "utilization", the analysis focuses on the methodology of his semantic analysis and its applications in almost all of his works and lectures (chapters 5 and 6). The analysis on these chapters exposits how al-Attas formulated his methodology of semantic analysis beginning with definitions of key words and concepts and then explication of the interconnected terms on eight individual yet related semantic fields in the context of Islam. Collectively, both analyses shall inform us of the theoretical and methodological bases of his approach of his semantic analysis in the formulation of his metaphysical framework.

We decided the timeline of the Islamic intellectual tradition to range from the time of Prophet Muhammad pbuh up to our time. The materials we study vary from important books of *tafsīr* (exegesis), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudence), *manṭiq* (logic) and *naḥw* (grammar) up to Arabic lexicons, dictionaries and encyclopaedia. For the purpose of this study, we selectively analyze the most important figures in the Islamic tradition, traditional and modern, related to semantic analysis. We also study Western sources of philosophy of language especially in the aspect of theory of meaning.

The written works of al-Attas as well as his lectures are thoroughly analyzed. His magnum corpus of *Islam and Secularism*, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, *Commentary on Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq of Nūruddīn al-Rānīrī* and *Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* have specifically been studied apart from his other books, monographs and papers. His lectures of CASIS Saturday Night Lecture especially on language are dictated, analyzed and compared with other students' notes.

Semantic analysis as we mean is a major method of interpretation in the traditional Islamic intellectual tradition which analyzes meaning and is itself comprised of the concept of *maʿnā*, which is laid in the Quran, the *ḥadīth* and the Islamic intellectual tradition. Its English equivalent "*semantic*" is a term taken from the French term "*semantique*" which has been coined lately in the 1800s. It is not something to be confused with the semantic analysis in the modern linguistics and semiotics which carry a narrow and technical dimension of a textual study and epistemologically different from the former. It is also different from hermeneutics,

the biblical interpretation of text which seeks to bring in historical context into it. It is also not to be confused with "semantic analysis" which has been pioneered by scholars like R.A. Nicholson and Toshihiko Izutsu, which seeks to study Islamic texts by self-definition but differs a great deal in the sources of knowledge.

Semantic analysis in this study is the method of interpreting Islamic texts by defining important Islamic key terms and concepts in the vocabulary of Islam. It concerns about analyzing a term or a concept from the aspects of grammar, lexicology, usage and then its synonyms as well as antonyms before contextually defined. In the Islamic discourse, semantic analysis is actually the method of *tafsīr*, the understanding of Quran from the Quran and prophetic Ḥadīth. In other words, it is Quran interpreting itself. Al-Attas' semantic analysis[34] is the continuation of this traditional blueprint, albeit that it also defines new terms in the modern contexts. His methodology, though having some similarities with those methods of modern scholars in the Islamic discourse, is very unique in terms of epistemological sources through which the key terms and concepts are derived.

Al-Attas' semantic analysis is apparently applied in almost all of his works especially related to metaphysics, *ṣūfi*sm, ethics, education, history and socio-politics.[35] In this methodology, al-Attas systematically selects significant key-terms of Islam through a thorough analysis of the Quran and meticulous observation of the authorities of Islam under the dimensions of *ḥadīth*, *sunnah* and traditions. All this, al-Attas applies, together with his reliance on intuition, makes his method all more rigourous and insightful.

Semantic analysis however, is not al-Attas' only method employed in his works. Apart from this primary method of explication, there are other supporting

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[34] Al-Attas admits that he has employed methodological concepts and approach of 'modern semantic analysis. See al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969), 2, hereafter cited as *Preliminary Statement*; and *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī*, (Kuala Lumpur: UM Press, 1970), in the preface, x and introduction, xiv-xv; hereafter cited as *MHF*. In *MHF* he allocates Chapters IV and V on the meanings of important concepts in Ḥamzah's mystical system by introducing methodological concepts in a modern semantic analysis (111-175), while preparing an index of semantic vocabulary in his system in the Appendices. He also clearly uses the term 'semantic analysis' in his description of certain subjects of his treatment. See for example in his *Prolegomena*, 293.

[35] Wan Daud, *EPP*, 268-271, 285-290,

methods such as: reasoning, experiential induction and contextual analysis which are applied to a certain extent in his writings.

Another important point to address herewith is that Arabic as al-Attas promotes it in his methodology is in fact the "Quranic Arabic".[36] It is the highest form of Arabic which manifests itself in the exact physical linguistic forms of the Quran and corresponds to precise meaning (*ma'nā*) of Islam. Quranic Arabic is different from the standard Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) in the sense that the former is the latter's one of the most important references apart from other non-Quranic materials like pre-Islamic poetry and modern prosody and literature.

1.6   Significance of the Study

There has not been much academic work a researcher could find on the nature of language in the modern Islamic discourse, let alone on semantic analysis, carried out by the modern Muslim scholars. Existing literature shows a tendency towards proposing hermeneutics in the science of interpretation (*tafsīr*) like upheld by Fazlur Rahman (September 21, 1919 C.E. – July 26, 1988 C.E.)[37], Mohamed Arkoun (February 1, 1928 C.E. – September 14, 2010 C.E.)[38], Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (June 10, 1943 C.E. – June 5, 2010 C.E.)[39] and Hassan Hanafi (1935 C.E. -)[40]. Toshihiko

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[36]   al-Attas, *CEII*, 2-3; Wan Daud, *EPP*, 333-343.

[37]   Born among Pakistani *'ālim*s of Deoband, Fazlur Rahman Malik is a scholar of many disciplines of study especially theology, philosophy and language. He obtained his Ph.D from Oxford and later taught Persian, philosophy and Islamic studies in some renown universities in the UK and America. His ideas of new interpretation of Islam are mostly available in his books *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (1979), *Islam and Modernity* (1982) and *Major Themes of the Quran* (2009).

[38]   One of the most influential thinker from Algeria of Berber descent, contributed in the field of Islamic studies in contemporary intellectual Islamic reform. Most of his ideas can be found in most of his works in Arabic, French and English like *Tārīkhiyyāt al-Fikr al-'Arabī al-Islāmī* (1986), *Rethinking Islam: Common Question, Uncommon Answers* (1994) and *L'Islam: Approche Critique, le Livre du Mois, Club du Livre* (2002).

[39]   Was an Egyptian thinker, author, academician and one of the leading Muslim liberal theologians. He is famour for his project of a humanistic Quranic hermeneutics which challenges the mainstream view on the interpretation of Quran. He argued that the Quran is a cultural product that had to be read in the context of the language and culture of the seventh century Arabia. He

Izutsu[41] (May 4th, 1914 C.E. – January 7th 1993 C.E.) pioneered the employment of semantic analysis as a method in studying Islamic ethico-religious concepts. [42] Nevertheless, it is al-Attas who makes the method more applicable and more in tune with the traditional Muslim scholars'.

The science of interpretation (*tafsīr*) in the Islamic tradition works on the basis of understanding the Quran and the ḥadīth as a "*naṣṣ*" (text), a term which refers to not just a text, but the verses of the Quran and the saying of the Prophet pbuh, together with its authenticity as the words of God, transmitted both in verbal and written forms. It is the idea of clarity and obviousness, as oppose to ambiguity and vagueness (*al-mushkil*).[43] In his al-Risālah, Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 A.H./820 C.E.) uses the term to denote legal precepts (*naṣṣ al-ḥukm*) which indicates clarity.[44] The *naṣṣ*, according to al-Sharīf ʿAlī bin Muḥammad Al-Jurjānī al-Jurjānī (d. 816 A.H./1413 C.E.), does not convey except a single meaning, clear and does not require deeper interpretation (*taʾwīl*)[45] whereas to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 A.H./1209 C.E.), is a word or a speech (*kalimah aw kalām*) which meaning is self-contained.[46]

authored several works like *Rationalism in Exegesis: A Study of the Problem of Metaphor in the Writing of the Mutazilites (al-Ittijāh al-ʿAqlī fī al-Tafsīr: Dirāsah fī Qadīyat al-Majāz fī al-Qurʾân ʿinda al-Muʿtazilah)* (1982), *The Philosophy of Hermeneutics: A Study of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Hermeneutics of the Qurʾān (Falsafat al-Taʾwīl: Dirâsah fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān ʿinda Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī) (1983), The Systems of Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics (ʿIlm al-ʿAlāmāt)* (1986), *The Concept of the Text: A Study of the Qurʾanic Sciences (Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsah fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān)* (1991), *The Problematic of Reading and the Tools Of Interpretation (Ishkālīyāt al-Qirāʾah wa-Āliyāt al-Taʾwīl)* (1995) and *Critique of Religious Discourse (Naqd al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī)* (1998).

[40] An Egyptian scholar from an artistic family, he studied at Sorbonne and now is a Professor of Philosophy in the University of Cairo. Motivated in his youth by the revolutionary political activism of the Muslim Brotherhood and the disciple of Osman Amin, he is now active in publishing and dialogues involving reconstruction of classical Islamic tradition and philosophy.

[41] Toshihiko Izutsu was Professor Emeritus at Keio University in Japan and author of many books on Islam and other religions. He taught at the Institute of Cultural and Linguistic studies at Keio University in Tokyo, the Iranian institute of Philosophy in Tehran, and McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He was fluent in over 30 languages, including Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Greek.

[42] R.A. Nicholson is the first to come out with this method but not as systematic and organized as Izutsu. Refer al-Attas, "Islamic Worldview," Lecture delivered at Institut Integriti Malaysia, Special Lecture, 14th August 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

[43] Ibnu Manẓūr, *LA*, vol. 8 of 9, 575 and 575, col. 1. See also Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980), vol. 8, 2797.

[44] Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Risālah*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

[45] ʿAlī bin Muḥammad Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Taʿrīfāt*, (Singapore: al-Haramyn, n.d.), 241. Hereafter cited as *Taʿrīfāt*.

[46] Ahmad Bazli Shafie, "A Modernist Approach to the Quran: A Critical Study of the Hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman" (Ph.D thesis), ISTAC, 2005, 96. Hereafter cited as "Modernist Approach".

Here, in relation to the above explanation of the term *naṣṣ*, we see the importance of correctly understanding or interpretating a text. The application of the method of semantic analysis as does our subject, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, suits this need of clarity and obviousness of *tafsīr*. A word as it really is, as al-Attas indicates, is "a symbol, and to know it as it is is to know what it stands for, what it symbolizes, what it means".[47] A sign or symbol is "something that is apparent and is separable from something else not equally apparent, in such wise that when the former is perceived, the other, which cannot be perceived and which is of one predicament as the former, is known."[48] What al-Attas is putting his effort on, to us, is actually an approach which seeks to uncover the authorial message, that is Allah, by examining through the structure of the Islamic texts, that is the Quran and the *ḥadīth*. The examining of the structure involves the examining of the meaning of words and how the words explain each other. These explaining of each other's meaning explains the interconnected relationship of the words, which as al-Attas explains, are symbols which make the unapparent apparent.

In the interpretation of Islamic texts (*tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*), al-Attas stresses the significance of semantic analysis, that is the recognition of authority of each word in those texts, for they are revelation (*waḥy*) which differ from poets' vision, apostolic inspiration and intuition, and the authenticity of which must be accepted absolutely. It (*waḥy*) is:

> …the speech of God, concerning Himself, His creation, the relation between them, and the way to salvation communicated to His chosen Prophet and Messenger, not by sound or letter, yet comprising all that He has represented in words, then conveyed by the Prophet to mankind in a linguistic form new in nature yet comprehensible, without confusion with the Prophet's own subjectivity and cognitive imagination.[49]

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[47] Al-Attas, *Prolegomena*, 134.
[48] Ibid..
[49] Ibid., 6.

With respect to this understanding of the concept of *waḥy* and the concept of *naṣṣ* before, we believe that our modern Muslim scholarship should first benefit from the meaning of Quranic Arabic terms before indulging into socio-historical contexts. We do confess that applying socio-historical perspectives in understanding Islamic texts, that is the Quran and the Ḥadīth, has been of import and being the practice of the past traditional *mufassirūn* and also al-Attas himself. However, due to the problem of confusion of knowledge which has been acknowledged as widespread in our time in the phenomenal form of misusage of important Islamic key terms and concepts; it is of a strategic importance for a Muslim in any discourse to first, refer to authentic meanings of the Islamic key terms in the Islamic sources. Then, the understanding of the subject from a wider scope or for a more realistic application, can be properly be made. For example, a Muslim scholar should first allude to the basic and technical meanings of *rūh*, *nafs* and *'aql* in his discourse before he brings in the terms *psyche* and *anima* and the socio-historical contexts. Later on then he can proceed to the modern psychological debates on the soul and mind, with their psychological, sociological or anthropological settings. These are to be managed without losing the Islamic understanding of the concept *insān* and his faculties. In this way, the discourse on "soul" can be made in a just and right manner.

Having said that, we observe that the philosophy and methodology of al-Attas on language have not been researched properly. His concept of language and method of semantic analysis has not been understood properly, especially its intellectual and cultural backgrounds, purpose and utilization. Therefore, it is important to fill in this lacunae for it helps to rediscover a major traditional methodology once practiced in the long chain of Islamic tradition; and to reintroduce it into the present Islamic intellectual discourse. It is hoped that, by reapplying this methodology in the modern Muslim context; it will contribute significantly to prevent erroneous interpretations of Islamic texts and to reintroduce a far-reaching intellectual analysis on the key terms and concepts of the study of the authentic worldview of Islam and its ethical and cultural frameworks and principles.

We must make it very clear, that the role of historical method as well as other related methods are also useful in helping to further understand the context of the revelation. However, semantic analysis serves the purpose even better. Syed

Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' conception of language and his utilization of semantic analysis is deserved to be studied because it meets our modern and critical needs for understanding our sacred texts properly. Not only that his methodology is profoundly systematic, he is evidently one of the very few Muslim thinkers who has compellingly defended its importance, and consistently applied it in many of his works; which have, hitherto, not been systematically studied.

1.7   Method of Analysis

This study is a critical analysis of published works and unpublished materials by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas on the aspects of philosophy of language, linguistics, semantics and lexicography. It is also a comparison and contrast between the modern versus the Islamic concepts of philosophy of language in the light of al-Attas' works (as depicted in Figure 1.1). The study dives through the philosophical layers of language in Islamic system of thought while it captures and characterizes the peculiarities of the philosophy of language in the modern vis-à-vis the Islamic systems. The process, finally, leads to the enlisting of some key-words and concepts and their semantic fields. Islamic semantic analysis does not go further into the details of symbols as they are as does the modern one. Rather it shows the interconnection of these key words and concepts in the larger Islamic metaphysical and religious-ethical systems.

The study applies certain methods and techniques for analysis (as depicted in Figure 1.2). Firstly, al-Attas' conception of language and methodology of semantic analysis is examined and compared with the modern ones. Apart from the published sources, other sources like the recordings of al-Attas' lectures and results of interviews are also included. Secondly, al-Attas' positions on the subject are examined in relation to earlier Muslim authoritative sources. In this two particular techniques, authoritative Arabic sources like dictionaries, lexicons and *tafsīr* have

been of priority. We also try to combine all the informations gathered, summarize them and provide some explanations and comments wherever needed.

Thirdly, al-Attas' premises, deductions and conclusions are scrutinized in order to retrace his path of logic and understand them in their correct perspectives. This technique is important to know the originality of an idea and how it is consistently maintained and expanded. Fourthly, important key-words and concepts of an Attasian framework are identified and limitations of the subject is made in order to focus on more prioritized matters.
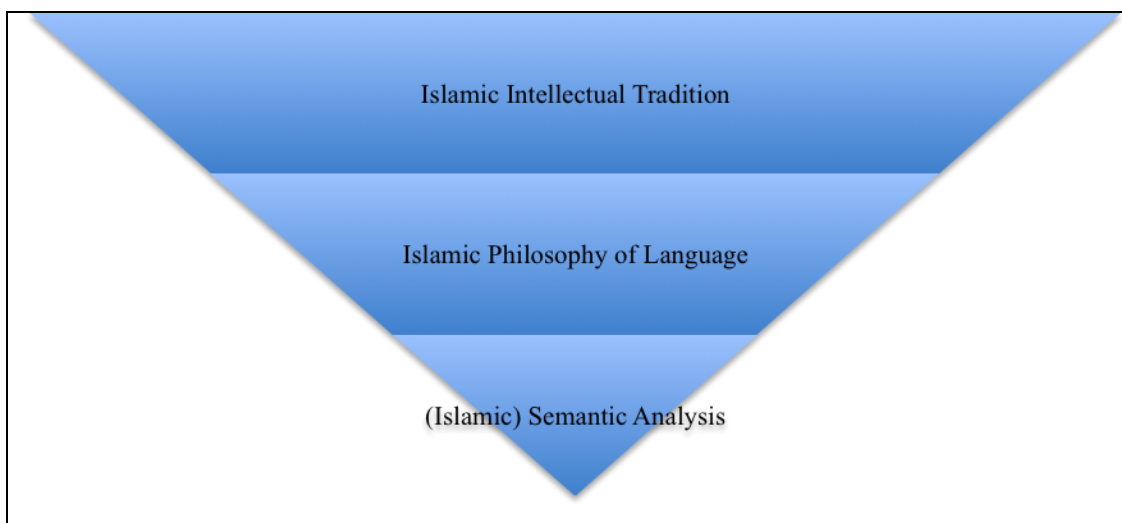
Figure 1.1   Approach of analysis from the fields of study
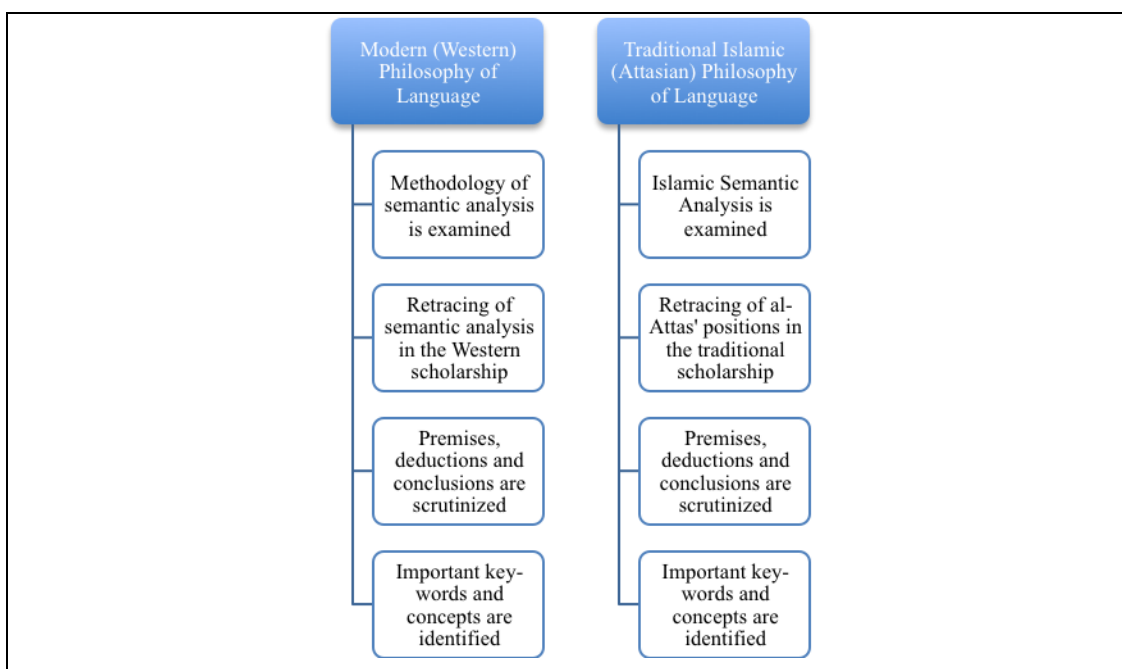
Figure 1.2 The Method Applied in the Process of Comparing and Contrasting between Modern and Islamic Semantic Analysis

In the whole process, the data gathered are sorted and placed in a proper systematic body of Attasian thought which fits the structure of a worldview.

1.8   Review of Literature

In order for the study to be organized and able to properly express the ideas and the information gathered, we have based the literary review on three categories: writings of modern scholars related to semantic analysis, works related to al-Attas' conception of language and researches on al-Attas' semantic analysis.

1.8.1   Writings of Modern Scholars Related to Semantic Analysis

Semantic analysis in the modern Islamic discourse has been discussed by some Muslim thinkers like Abduh, Fazlur Rahman and Iqbal and has been employed by some others, like Izutsu and al-Attas. From the list, Izutsu and al-Attas are renowned as writing profound works which systematically adopt the methodology.

Existing literature shows a tendency towards proposing hermeneutics in the science of interpretation (*tafsīr*) like upheld by Fazlur Rahman, Mohamed Arkoun, Nasr Abu Zayd and Hassan Hanafi. Rahman follows Emilio Betti, as opposed to Hans-Georg Gadamer, who insists on "one must first of all ascertain the meaning intended by the mind that authored the object of study".[50] In the case of the Quran, Rahman maintains that 'the objective situation is a *sine quo non* for understanding, particularly since the view of its absolute normativity for Muslims, it is literally God's response through Muhammad's mind to a historic situation",[51] and that the understanding of the Quran can be attained through the reading of the Quran as a whole.[52]

Mohamed Arkoun holds that the Quran is an "Official Closed Corpus" (*le fait coranique*), that is something "resulted from a set of decisions taken by 'authorities' recognized by the community", and that it is no longer permissible "to add or subtract a word, to modify a reading in the Corpus now declared authentic".[53] On the one hand, the Muslims are placed in a "hermeneutics position", that is the need to interpret the holy texts to derive law, prescriptions, and system of belief and non-belief; and on the other, "banalized" the Quran "by putting it within the reach of everyone, particularly after the invention of paper and then the printing press".[54]

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd goes to the extreme when he argues that once revealed to the Prophet (pbuh), the Quran entered human history and became a text like any

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[50] Shafie, "Hermeneutics FR", 65.
[51] Ibid, 65-66.
[52] Rahman, *IM*, 20 and 25.
[53] Mohamed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 33.
[54] Shafie, "Hermeneutics of FR", 117.

other texts. He does not deny the Divine origin of the Quran but maintains that the state of the original sacred text is "a metaphysical one about which we can know nothing except that which the physical text itself mentions and which always come to us via a historically changing humanity".[55]

Similarly, the question pertaining to the nature of the revelation, according to Hassan Hanafi, should be put "in brackets", in the sense that "it does not matter for the interpreter". He considers the Quran as any other texts, which is subjected to "interpretation as legal code, a literary work, a philosophical text, a historical document, etc. All texts are subject to the same rules of interpretation. The distinction between the holy and the profane is not related to general hermeneutics, but to religious practice".[56]

In a similar effort of interpreting but in a more specialized way, Toshihiko Izutsu employed a semantic approach in the study of the Quranic *weltanschauung* and the concept of belief (*īmān*) in Islamic theology as apparent in his important books like *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*; and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*.

In one of the works, he defined semantics as:

> …an analytic study of the key-words of a language with a view to arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *weltanschauung* or worldview of the people who use that language as a tool not only of speaking and thinking, but, more important still, of conceptualizing and interpreting the world that surrounds them. Semantics, thus understood, is a kind of *weltanschauunglehre*, a study of the nature and structure of the worldview of a nation at this or that significant period of its history, conducted by means of a methodological analysis of the major cultural concepts the nation has produced for itself and crystallized into the key-words of its language.[57]

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[55] Ibid.. For the Arabic text refer to Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Naqd al-Khiṭhāb al-Dīnī*, (Cairo: Sina li al-Nashr, 1992), 93-94.

[56] O cit., 118.

[57] Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious*, 4.

In his other work, God and Man in the Quran, Izutsu analyzes a number of Quranic key-words in order to grasp the Quranic worldview and its differences from pre-Quranic worldview.

Another work which sheds light on the traditional Muslim philosophy of language is George Bernard Weiss' dissertation entitled "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A Study of "*Waḍʿu al-Lughah*" and Its Development".[58] Although he does not specifically write on semantic analysis, his illumination of the philosophy and practice of the traditional Muslim scholars with regard to language is closely connected to our study.

In this work Weiss focuses on the role of language in orthodox (Sunni) Muslim thought. His general contention has been that language occupies the place of a given, upon which Islam depends its philosophy of language. Because the Book (Quran) is the sole expression of the Divine Will (other than the natural ones), it is imperative that the Book be understood; which leaves man with no other choice than to master the language in which the Book is written.[59] What the Orthodox were affirming, according to Weiss, in speaking of the establishment of language (w*aḍʿu al-lughah*), was the validity of the "language of the Arabs" as a point of reference in the interpretation of sacred texts. Weiss further demonstrates the task of "science of w*aḍ*'" in working out the idea of the establishment of language in full; which according to him is a proof of the most thorough-going statement of the constancy of language imaginable, which is truly an Islamic phenomenon.[60] Weiss has provided a ground for the importance of w*aḍʿu al-lughah* in the science of interpretation of Islamic texts. It will be another important task for future researchers to study this field as well as its proponent, ʿAḍd al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355 C.E.), the first to write about w*aḍʿu al-lughah* as a special subject.[61]

As we mentioned earlier, to understand how the science of interpretation (*tafsīr*) in the Islamic tradition works, it is appropriate to understand the meaning of

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[58] George Bernard Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A Study of "*Waḍʿu al-Lughah*" and Its Development" (Ph.D dissertation) Princeton University, 1966, hereafter cited as "Language".

[59] Ibid, 2-7.

[60] Ibid, 42-70.

[61] Ibid, 140-149.

the word "text" as connoted by the term "*naṣṣ*" in Arabic[62] and also revelation (*waḥy*) which differ from poets' vision, apostolic inspiration and intuition, and which must be accepted absolutely.[63] With respect to this understanding of the concepts of *waḥy* and *naṣṣ*, it is certain that modern Muslim scholarship can benefit from the right understanding of Quranic Arabic terms more than relying merely on socio-historical contexts (as we have already discussed in 1.6). Applying socio-historical perspectives in understanding Islamic texts, that is the Quran and the Ḥadīth, must be preceded with referring to authentic meanings of the Islamic key terms in the Islamic sources. Then, the proper understanding of the subject can be realized. The basic and technical meanings of Islamic key-terms and concepts must be attained to before the issues with regard to their socio-historic angles be discussed. In this way, Muslim scholars can execute an Islamic discourse in a just and rightful manner.

1.8.2   Works related to al-Attas' Conception of Language

There are many important works written by the disciples of al-Attas as well as his counterparts on and related to his conception of language. This sub-section will bring forth some of them, considering the worth that they bear, without excluding the importance of the other works. The selected few are: *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity*,[64] Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud's "*Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al- Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization*"; and Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud and Muhammad Zainiy Uthman's edited work, *Knowledge, Language, Thought and the Civilization of Islam: Essays in Honor of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*.

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[62]   Shafie, "Hermeneutics FR", 117.

[63]   Al-Attas, *Prolegomena*, 6.

[64]   Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium on Islām and the Challenge of Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Contexts in Kuala Lumpur, August 1-5, 1994, edited by Sharifah Shifā' al-Attas, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996). Hereafter cited as *ICM*.

The first work consists of important contributions on Muslim responses to modernity, revolving around the worldview of Islam defined by al-Attas,[65] as well as a formulation of clear concepts to meet the challenge of modernity, the two most important being a definition of the philosophy of education and the philosophy of science.[66] Mehmet Aydın's "An Islamic Evaluation of the Modern Concept of Rationality" calls for the "destructive" and "reductionistic" nature of the modern concept of rationality which gives birth to an "objectivication of experience" which "completely fulfils the meaning of knowledge".[67] The concept of rationality is discussed thoroughly from the Western perspectives especially of Immanuel Kant. Muslims have been in unanimous agreement on how to fit this Western concept of rationality into a Muslim worldview. These differences ought to be explained through proper Islamic terminologies like *'aql* and *'ilm*.[68]

Hassan el-Nagar's "Speaking with One Voice: The Politics of Language in the Modern Muslim World" makes it clear to us that it is only when the fundamental elements of the Islamic worldview are acknowledged and practiced by all Muslims will they be able to "speak with one voice".[69] He also argues that there is a strong relationship between language and culture, and also religion, since language is a carrier of values. The interrelationship of language and worldview is evident as the worldview of Islam is reflected in its language, namely, Arabic.[70] He agrees with al-Attas' ideas on the role of the Arabic language as projecting the worldview of Islam and its vision of truth and reality. He also acknowledges that the secularization of Islamic worldview and the secularization of language go hand in hand. Secularization is, thus, the basic problem of modernity and arose due largely to a split between the study of the Quran and the study of the Arabic language.[71]

The opposite of Islamic vocabulary is "secular vocabulary" which is the language and vehicle of modernity. Malik Badri's "The Aids Dilemma: A Progeny of Modernity" can be regarded as a warning to Muslims especially their scientists

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[65] *ICM*, 25-71.
[66] Ibid, in the introduction, 3-4. Refer also 25-31, 36-39, 41-49 and 68-71 on the issues of worldview, revealed religion, *adab* and knowledge; as well as change, progress and development.
[67] Ibid, in the introduction, 11.
[68] Ibid, 74-75, 75-79 and 87-89.
[69] Ibid, in the introduction, 16.
[70] Ibid, 450-454.
[71] Ibid, 455-459, 466-467.

and scholars of the power of words and how they are able to change one's moral and ethical attitudes. [72] He speaks of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and its virus, HIV[73] which he regards as the retribution of the two evils of modernity, namely sexual revolution and the modernist attitude toward drugs and alcohol.[74] He has rightly called for the use of Islamic terminology in discussing homosexuality and adultery. The usages of "sex" instead of "*zinā*" and "homosexuality" instead of "*liwāṭ*" are due to the introduction of secularization, and where language is concerned, to cause a "desensitization of terminology" to enforce its precepts. The need for the Muslims to make their own definitions or "lexicon of technical terms" is therefore necessary. [75] Thus, the importance of having an Islamic philosophy of language is evident, and indeed a "primary task for contemporary Muslims" as Marcia K. Hermansen alludes to in her "Modernity and Religious Worldviews – The Challenge of Classical Islamic Religious Thought for Contemporary Muslim Intellectuals". [76]

The second book, *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, is by and large, an exposition of both the philosophical ideas and the praxis of al-Attas, the person and the institution by a close disciple. It is a systematic and thoughtful work, full of psychological insights, and contributing significantly towards understanding of al-Attas and ISTAC.[77] Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud applies a method that combines both a learned textual analysis of al-Attas' writings and modern literature in philosophy of education, and a close interpretations with "the inner world" of al-Attas. He stated that "... the method that is used to gather information and ideas about al-Attas is not only based on written documents, but includes also spoken words and observed actions". Most importantly, this exposition is undertaken within an enlightened pattern of master/disciple relationshi [78] The author puts forward al-Attas as the original conceptualizer of the notion Islamization

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[72] Ibid, 16-17.

[73] Ibid, 123-140.

[74] Ibid, 141-199.

[75] Ibid, 199-210.

[76] Ibid, 18.

[77] International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, situated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was founded by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in 1998.

[78] Ibrahim M. Zein, Book Review: *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al- Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization by Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud*, Intellectual Discourse Vol.7, No 2, 1999, 243-247. He was formerly a lecturer in the Department of Usuluddin in the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

of present-day knowledge (IPDK) and education, and that he has consistently applied it in higher learning institutions, particularly at ISTAC. [79]

This writing, the most comprehensive so far on al-Attas' thought, emphasizes that a proper understanding of al-Attas necessitates an understanding of the epistemological framework, the metaphysics and the worldview of Islam which have been worked out by Muslim jurists, theologians and Ṣūfīs throughout the history of Islamic civilization. This rich tradition of Islam is being developed, in modern times, by scholars like al-Attas and others. The author has articulated the relevancy of the worldview to education. Undeniably, the significance of the metaphysical worldview to the philosophy of education is highly visible in the writings of al-Attas. Al-Attas has dealt with issues like permanence and change, the attributes of God and His essence, and justice and equality. He has also discussed the way this worldview fundamentally affected the understanding of ourselves, the universe, and divinity. [80]

The most sophisticated concept in al-Attas' framework, according to Wan Mohd. Nor, is the theory of *ta'dīb*. He pointed out that this concept of *ta'dīb* is "a master idea" in al-Attas' intellectual enterprise. Then he linked this to the Islamization of contemporary knowledge and the different levels of knowledge according to the schemata of al-Attas. Al-Attas defines knowledge as "the recognition and acknowledgement progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence". He reflects on this definition of knowledge and tried to argue for the importance of the keyword "recognition" as an essential term in the definition of knowledge: the process of arrival (*ḥuṣūl*) of the meaning (*ma'nā*) in the human soul. Thus, key terms like *ḥuṣūl*, *wuṣūl*, *ma'nā* and *ṣūrah* played essential role in al-Attas' endeavour to define knowledge and to relate that process to the educational programme. At the heart of the process of education which is being perceived by al-Attas as *ta'dīb* and not *ta'līm* will be the role model of the Prophet. [81]

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[79]   Ibid, 246-247.
[80]   Ibid, 244-245.
[81]   Ibid, 245-246.

To some other, this book is an exposition of the root cause of Muslim "confusion and error in knowledge" which sets the stage for all socio-political, cultural and educational ills; and in turn affects the individual who lose Islamic *adab*.[82] Wan Mohd. Nor has fully elaborated al-Attas' seminal contributions to the religious thoughts and modern Muslim education. Following the tradition of the higher Sufis, al-Attas delineates the Islamic metaphysics and worldview of Islam. This book dwells at al-Attas' in-depth critique of the modern West and its conception of reality that is "…antithetical to Islam, namely the dualistic view of reality, the secular ideology, the humanistic philosophy and the tragic conception of life".[83]

Al-Attas' perspective on the role of language in the process of Islamization and de-Islamization has rediscovered the original definitions of the key terms of Muslim discourse and strengthened the resistance to their semantic erosion. In the light of his mentor, Wan Mohd. Nor has shown that knowledge is an attribute of man. Once modern secular knowledge is redefined through the authentic Islamic worldview, the Muslim education can be "divinely enlightened".[84]

To us, this work attests to two facts: that there is a particular chain of knowledge in the Islamic tradition as will be seen in chapter 2; and that al-Attas proves undoubtedly that the traditional method of semantic analysis as we take it conforms to the perception of reality and truth in the worldview of Islam. Again this statement need proper investigation to link the method with the concepts of *ḥaqīqah* and *ḥaqq* as will be illuminated in the incoming chapters.

The third book, the *festschrift*, in honour of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, is a collected works extensive and inclusive of wide range of subjects from different points of views. All in all, they are written within the interconnected language-knowledge-thought framework. There are important articles like "Re-Islamising the World" by Ali Alawi; "Shifts of Language and Turns in Worldview" by Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi and "The Negotiation of Modernity Through Tradition in Contemporary Muslim Intellectual Discourse" by M. Afifi al-Akiti and H. A.

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[82] https://attahawi.com/2009/10/20/the-educational-philosophy-and-practice-of-syed-muhammad-naquib-al-attas-book-review-by-maryam-jameelah/ as accessed in 06/09/2016.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

Hellyer which elaborate on the role of language in the worldview of human being and the practical modus operandi of it in the Muslim world.

There are also studies not directly related to our discussion in the methodical manner but conducted in an Attasian frame of thought with regard to language. Examples are Mohd. Zaidi Ismail's "The sources of knowledge in al-Ghazali: a psychological framework of epistemology"[85], Zainal Abidin Baqir's "The problem of definition in Islamic logic"[86] and Md. Asham Ahmad's "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī on human action: An exposition and analysis of its constituents".[87] These studies discuss on the Islamic logic developed by the Muslim philosophers and theologians especially al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. This system of logic is considered as a branch of philosophy constituting definition as its fundamental element. Theories of definition provide an understanding on the issues of language, translation, and defining and naming. Philosophers' view regarding levels of reality and problem of reason–revelation are also of much importance. How a great *mutakallim* discusses issues on human action provides beneficial insights into the methodological aspect of a traditional Muslim scholar.

Researches related to al-Attas' framework are not confined to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. They expand across the various races and beliefs as apparent in the works of his disciples in the institutes attributed to him, like the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and International Islamic University of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. They expand as well to the other sides of the world like the studies conducted by Jane I. Smith in Harvard, "An Historical and Semantic Study of the Term Islam as Seen in A Sequence of Quranic Commentaries",[88] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad in Hartford, "The Conception of the Term Dīn in the

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[85] Mohd. Zaidi Ismail, "The sources of knowledge in al-Ghazali: a psychological framework of epistemology", (MA thesis, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 1995).

[86] Zainal Abidin Baqir, "The problem of definition in Islamic logic" (MA thesis, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 1994).

[87] Md. Asham Ahmad, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī on human action: An exposition and analysis of its constituents" (MA thesis, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 2002).

[88] Jane I. Smith "An Historical and Semantic Study of the Term Islam as Seen in A Sequence of Quranic Commentaries" (Ph.D. dissert., Harvard University, 1975). Published in 1975 by Scholar Press, Montana.

Quran",[89] Yasin Mohamed in London, *Fitra the Islamic Concept of Human Nature*,[90] Khosrow Bagheri Noaparast in Tehran, "Al-Attas revisited on the Islamic Understanding of Education",[91] and Mona Abaza in Cairo, *Debates on Islam and Knowledge in Malaysia and Egypt: Shifting Worlds*.[92] These developments, though not always at par with al-Attas' views, have shown how his ideas with regard to language and islamization have gained global reactions.

1.8.3   Works and Researches on al-Attas' Semantic Analysis

As far as studies on al-Attas' concepts and approach of semantic analysis[93] are concerned, there is a huge vacuum in the literature. From what we have investigated, the research conducted on or related to al-Attas are rather on his philosophy but not on methodology. For example, we have Khayr Rijal's "*Kritikan Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas Terhadap Falsafah Bahasa Barat Moden dan Pasca-Moden*" (Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas' Criticism on the Western Philosophy of Language: Modern and Post-Modern) [94] and Siti Nor Aisyah Ngadiran's "*Konsep Sejarah Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: Kajian Terhadap Karya-karya Terpilih*" (The Concept of History According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: A Study on Selected Works)[95] which deals with al-Attas' philosophy of language vis-à-vis the modern and post-modern philosophy of language. Other researches are conducted by applying al-Attas' semantic analysis on various key-terms within his framework of thought like Fatimah Abdullah's "An

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[89]   Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Conception of the Term Dīn in the Quran", *The Muslim World* , 64, 1974.

[90]   Yasin Mohamed, *Fitra the Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta Ha Publishers Ltd, 1996).

[91]   Khosrow Bagheri Noaparast, "Al-Attas revisited on the Islamic Understanding of Education", Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies Spring 2012 Vol. V No. 2, 149-172.

[92]   Mona Abaza, *Debates on Islam and Knowledge in Malaysia and Egypt: Shifting Worlds*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

[93]   Refer fn. 49 13.

[94]   Khayr Rijal, "Kritikan Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas Terhadap Falsafah Bahasa Barat Moden dan Pasca-Moden" (M.Phil. thesis, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 2015).

[95]   Siti Nor Aisyah Ngadiran, "*Konsep Sejarah Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: Kajian Terhadap Karya-karya Terpilih*" (M.A. dissert., Universiti Malaya, 2012).

analysis of the concept of Islam as "true submission" on the basis of al-Attas' approach" [96] and Eliza Alias's "Rānīrī's Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm: An annotated transliteration of the text together with a preliminary analysis on the language and its significance to the history of the Islamisation of the Malay world (part 1 and part 2)",[97] and Muhammad Syukri Rosli's "*Islamisasi Bahasa Melayu dan Pengaruh Tradisi Keilmuan Islam dalam Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa Raja Ali Haji (1808-1873)*" (The Islamization of Malay Language and the Influence of Islamic Intellectual Tradition in *Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa* Raja Ali Haji (1808-1873).[98]

Abdullah analyzes the concept of *dīn* which is based on the notion of submission emanating from the sense of indebtedness as expounded by al-Attas, originating from the Covenant sealed between the human souls and God. Alias, on the other hand, highlights the semantic change which had occurred in the Malay world by choosing a book on fiqh, *Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm*, by al-Rānīrī as the groundwork. The standardization and intensification of islamization that occurred through writings had forced the Malay language to accept word adoptions and changes; and to develop it into the language of rationality and scientific thinking. Al-Attas' semantic analysis in a Malay context is an excellent example of the function of a language in a worldview. His observation of Islamic languages also conforms to what has evolved in the Malay world. Both studies are significant in understanding al-Attas argumentation on semantic change and how he elaborates key terms such as *islām* and *dīn* which fall under one semantic field. Rosli's analysis of this particular book of Raja Ali Haji brings forth abundance of important key-terms and concepts in the Malay tradition as a result of the process of islamization.

These studies have shed light on the method of semantic analysis as employed by al-Attas. However, their studies focus more on the conceptual aspect of

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[96] Fatimah Abdullah, "An analysis of the concept of Islam as "true submission" on the basis of al-Attas' approach" (PhD dissert., International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 1998). Hereafter cited as "True Submission".

[97] Eliza Alias, "Rānīrī's Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm: An annotated transliteration of the text together with a preliminary analysis on the language and its significance to the history of the Islamisation of the Malay world" (PhD dissert., International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 2007).

[98] Muhammad Syukri b. Rosli, "Islamisasi Bahasa Melayu dan Pengaruh Tradisi Keilmuan Islam dalam Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa Raja Ali Haji (1808-1873)" (M.Phil. thesis, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 2016).

some important terms in the Islamic worldview and some aspects of linguistic analysis in a historical setting. It is, thus, apparent that al-Attas' conception of semantic analysis has not been discussed in a thorough methodical manner.

Ahmad Bazli Shafie's "A modernist approach to the Quran: a critical study of the hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman" is a study which relates directly to the heart of hermeneutical interpretation of Quran in the modern age. It elucidates how Rahman asserts his idea of historical relativistic in the interpretation of Quran by asserting that "al-Quran is literally God's response through Muhammad's mind to a historic situation." and that "the Quran is entirely the words of God and, in ordinary sense, also entirely the words of Muhammad.". Rahman's view has laid a foundation in the modern interpretation of Quran. His recommendation of hermeneutics and perception towards Prophetic tradition are two major ideas which need to be investigated further in order to grasp the whole idea of Modernist and neo-Modernist approach. [99] Another work of Shafie is his study on Muhammad Abduh's educational framework, which elucidates on how a modernist Muslim attempt at restructuring an old institution's educational philosophy involving the modernizing of Arabic language.[100]

Apart from the above mentioned researches, some scholars did write on semantic analysis with a close scrutiny. Syamsuddin Arif, for example, compares the the semantic structure and fixity of a number of key terms and concepts of the Quran by al-Attas and Izutsu with that of al-Rāghib al-Isfahāni. [101] The major concern of the writer is that the contemporary semantic analysis of Quranic vocabulary has its precedent in the eleventh century. Arif argues that: Izutsu's pioneering studies have had a wide influence on contemporary Islamic studies, especially in the field of Quranic and Arabic studies. While others were also influential, notably Noldeke, Jeffery and Wansbrough; Izutsu made semantic analysis the dominant methodology

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[99] Ahmad Bazli Shafie, "A modernist approach to the Quran: a critical study of the hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman (Ph.D dissert., International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 2005). Hereafter cited as "Hermeneutics FR".

[100] Ahmad Bazli Shafie, "The educational philosophy of al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh", (MA thesis, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia, 1998). Hereafter cited as "'Abduh".

[101] Syamsuddin Arif, "Preserving the Semantic Structure of Islamic Key Terms and Concepts: Izutsu, al-Attas and Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī," *Islam and Science* 5 Winter 2007 No 2: 107-116; hereafter cited as "Preserving,".

in the field. Subsequent works such as Fazlur Rahman's *Major Themes of the Quran*, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's *Mafhum al-Nass* and Daniel A. Madigan's *The Quran's Self-Image* all owe something to Izutsu's writings.[102] Al-Attas concurs with Izutsu that the Quranic usage of a number of Arabic words in a new conceptual scheme was indeed a revolution in the history of the religious and moral thought of the Arabs. It is such revolution and replacement of the Jahiliyyah worldview with the Islamic *weltanschauung* that al-Attas calls and comes up with the idea of "Islamization".[103]

In relation to Arif's article, we are of the opinion that the notion "semantic analysis" must be defined and differentiated between what has been understood in the Islamic tradition as opposed to that of the modern. By doing so, then the common ground of comparison between the three figures of Islamic discourse could best be set. Otherwise, the effort of comparing and contrasting scholars of different categories and groups would be an arbitrary task. For example, take Izutsu and al-Attas, who both employ semantic analysis, but they differ from each other in certain epistemological tools and sources of knowledge. Izutsu included pre-Islamic poetry along with the Quranic verses in his interpretation of Islamic texts, whereas al-Attas would include relevant sources of interpretation from the Islamic mainstream such as the *ḥadīth*s. Another point is that to include al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1033 C.E.) in the group, would incite the question of "why him?"; as the precursor of semantic analysis and ignore other earlier figures like 'Abdullah Ibnu 'Abbās (d. 687 C.E.) who was the first to effect the method of determining authentic and authoritative meanings, initiated in the process of interpretation of the Quran; or Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 791 C.E.) the grammarian who wrote Book of the Letter 'Ayn' (*Kitāb al-'Ayn*). Al-Iṣfahānī may have been renowned for his *Mufradāt*[104] but there are also other important dictionaries like *Ta'rīfat* by al-Jurjānī (d. 816 A.H.) and the encyclopaedic *Kashshāf* by al-Tahānāwī (fl. circa 12th C.E.) which override it in terms of dictionaries of technical term proper. Al-Iṣfahānī and al-Attas are traditional in their semantic analysis approach, while Izutsu is basically modern; but al-Iṣfahānī is known more for his descriptive manner than for metaphysical and theological

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[102] Ibid, 107-110.
[103] Ibid, 110-113.
[104] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ li-l'Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Damsyik: Dar al-Qalam, 2009).

ideas, whereas the other two are renowned for their philosophical and metaphysical thought apart from their Arabic expertise.

Nevertheless, this work of Arif can be considered as one of useful efforts in an Islamic philosophy of language, especially on semantic analysis. Since few such works are available, thus, his work provides us with very useful information and interpretation.

In conclusion, to the best of our knowledge there has not yet adequate work on al-Attas' concept of language and his methodology of semantic analysis. His method of semantic analysis has not been understood properly, especially its intellectual and cultural backgrounds, purpose and utilization. Having said that, we wish to claim, that this research is probably the first of its kind, which attempts to investigate on the methodological aspect of semantic analysis in the contemporary Islamic discourse. This study tries to fill in the vacancy of such area to remedy the problem of corrupted understanding and interpretation of Islam in the Islamic discourse.

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