

Echoes of a Purist Language Reform: Multifaceted Attitudes Towards Arabic and Persian Loanwords in Turkish

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This research aimed to explore the attitudes of Turkish speakers towards Arabic and Persian loanwords in Turkish, in contrast to their *pure* Turkish counterparts proposed through the purist language reform initiatives in the early 20th century. Following the formation of the Republican Regime, a series of language policies led to the transition from the Arabic script to the Latin script, and a purist campaign was initiated to replace loanwords, particularly those from Arabic and Persian, with newly derived *pure* Turkish words or ancient Turkic words that had fallen out of use. Over time, the proportion of these loanwords in Turkish has steadily decreased, yet a substantial portion of the vocabulary remains composed of them. In this study, it was hypothesized that the preference for Arabic and Persian loanwords over pure Turkish equivalents reflects varying identity implications, and it was aimed to outline Turkish speakers' attitudes towards these loanwords. Drawing on the social constructionist approach¹ and Michael Billig's (1987)² idea that attitudes are effectively understood in the context of arguments, semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather qualitative data. 20 urban participants were evenly divided into four groups based on gender (male/female) and age (18-29/30-45). The insights gained from the qualitative step were then used to create of a 20-item Likert scale questionnaire with the same variables, and 203 responses were collected in total. The qualitative results uncovered a diverse range of discourses about individuals who either regularly use or refrain from using the loanwords. It was revealed that these loanwords today carry significant social meanings that are associated with different personality traits, and that their usage can inform attitude holders about one's education level, intellectual capacity, or political affiliations. The quantitative findings identified associations of specific usages of the loanwords, such as in literature or informal speech, with varying attitudes. As a result, this research demonstrates how a lexical source, once suppressed by a purist language reform, continues to generate multifaceted attitudes long after the reform's introduction.

¹ Hyrkestedt, I., & Kalaja, P. (1998). Attitudes toward English and its functions in Finland: A discourse-analytic study. *World Englishes*, 17(1), 345-357. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-971X.00108>

² Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking. A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.