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Native or Liturgical Language in Prayers: A Field Research on This Debate

İbadette Ana Dil veya Din Dili Kullanımı Üzerine Bir Saha Araştırması

Video Link: https://youtu.be/df4dXEZtwJA

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Öz

Dil doğası gereği gelişen, değişen ve büyüyen, canlı ve dinamik bir fenomendir. İnsanların birbirleriyle iletişimini ve birbirlerini anlamalarını sağlayan önemli bir araçtır. Aynı zamanda, sosyal ve kültürel bir olgu olarak din açısından dilin önemi inkâr edilemez. Dolayısıyla dil ve ibadet üzerine daha çok sosyoloji ve edebi açıdan yapılmış çok sayıda çalışma mevcuttur. Bu çalışmaların bazıları ibadette hangi dilin daha uygun olduğunu tartışırken bazıları da çevirilerin anlatılmak istenen şeyi karşılayıp karşılamadığını tartışmaktadır. Ayrıca, kişinin dindarlığının göstergesi olarak günlük dil kullanımına dikkat çeken çalışmalar da mevcuttur.

Dil ile ilgili çeşitli çalışmalar mevcuttur; ancak, bu çalışmada dilin ibadetlerdeki kullanımı psikolojik açıdan değerlendirilecektir. Bu çalışmadaki amacımız, dilin duadaki işlevinin yanı sıra kişi için Tanrı ile iletişimdeki önemi ve anlamını keşfetmektir. Bu araştırma, anlamanın veya uygulamanın bireyin dinî deneyimleri ve eylemleri üzerinde etkili olup olmadığını keşfetmeye çalışır. Bu amaçla, rastlantısal ve kartopu örneklem ile belirlenmiş 12 ilahiyat fakültesi öğrencisini içeren yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile nitel bir araştırma uygulanmıştır. Derinlemesine mülakatlar uygulanarak elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, katılımcıların farklı derecelerde de olsa ibadet diline kutsallık atfettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar dinî kuralların gerektirdiği şekilde bir kutsallık atfederken bazıları dilin sosyal boyutunu veya fonetik özelliklerini ve dolayısıyla duygusal etkisini vurgulamıştır. Özellikle ezan konusunda ibadet dili kutsal olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Katılımcılar ezan okunuşunun geleneğe göre devam etmesi konusunda hemfikirlerdir. Bunda ezanın birleştirici özelliği en etkili faktördür. Namaz konusunda ise kullanılan dile ilişkin algıların benzer olduğu ve bunda gelenek ile kişisel alışkanlıkları takip etmenin öneminin etkili olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Bunun yanı sıra ibadet ve dua sırasında "anlama"ya önem verilmesine rağmen ezbere yapılan hareketlerin trans benzeri bir durum yaratması daha tercih edilen bir durum olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu durumda anlam, ibadet sırasında değil, daha çok ibadet dışında önemli hâle gelmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Psikolojisi, Dil, İbadet, İbadet Dili, Dinsel İletişim Dili

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Native or Liturgical Language in Prayers: A Field Research on This Debate

Abstract

Language is an alive and dynamic phenomenon that grows, changes and expands by its nature. It is a vital tool to communicate with other people and to understand them. The importance of language for religion as a social and cultural phenomenon cannot be denied either. There are many studies mainly in sociology and literature in terms of the importance of language for prayer. Some of these studies discuss which language is more appropriate for prayer, while others discuss whether the translations meet the intended meaning. Besides, some studies draw attention to the use of daily language as a demonstration of one's religiosity.

There are various studies about language; however, in this study, its usage in prayers will be evaluated from a psychological point of view. Our aim in this study is to discover the function of the language in prayers as well as its importance and meaning in communication with God for the person. This research attempts to explore whether understanding or practice is influential on the individual's religious experiences and actions. For this purpose, qualitative research was applied using a semi-structured interview technique, which included 12 theology faculty students determined by random and snowball sampling. The data obtained through in-depth interviews were analyzed using descriptive analysis method. As a result, it was determined that the participants attribute holiness to the liturgical language, albeit to varying degrees. While some participants attributed a sacredness as required by religious rules, others emphasized the social dimension or phonetic features of language and hence its emotional impact. Especially about adhan, the liturgical language has been conceptualized as sacred. Participants agreed that the adhan recitation should continue according to the tradition. The unifying feature of the adhan is the most effective factor in this. On the subject of salaah, we can say that the perceptions about the language used are similar and the importance of following traditions and personal habits are effective on this. In addition, despite the importance of "understanding" during worship and prayer, it is more preferable that rote movements without paying attention to meaning create a trance-like situation. In this case, meaning becomes important not during prayer, but rather during non-prayer times.

Keywords: Psychology of Religion, Language, Prayer, Language of Prayer, Liturgical Language

Introduction

A language is a communication tool through which feelings, thoughts and wishes are conveyed. Since language is a communicating tool among and between generations, it enables the transmission of the elements of culture and religion produced through this communication. Therefore, language plays an important role in religion too. "The religious person may pray in order to have a conversation with God, to strengthen and enjoy this relationship, to give spontaneous thanks, and have some degree of joyful religious experience" (Argyle, 2000, p. 96). The person makes a connection with God through the language in worship, loud or silent.

Whether the individual uses her mother tongue or liturgical language for prayer varies depending on how they feel comfortable while communicating with God, and their perception and understanding of the sacred. Some people think that focusing on meaning may ruin the idea of the holy. Not knowing the meaning may intensify the feeling of sacred, people may focus more when it is a mysterious language. On the other hand, there is an opposite view that when the prayer is translated into English or any other language understood by the worshiper, the focus shifts from the act and form of the recitation, to the substance of the prayer (Reisenberger, 2010, p. 32). The purpose of this paper is to specify the function of the language in prayers and to discover the importance and meaning of the language used for the person. This study intends to point out whether understanding or concept is effective on the individual's religious experiences and deeds. Besides this, this article aims to give a different dimension to the discussion of the liturgical language in Turkey.

In Turkey, since the 1870s, the issue of Turkish prayer and Turkish call to prayer (adhan)[1] has been on the agenda and heated debates are made on it. In 1932, the call to prayer was recited Turkish and the prayer was performed in Turkish for 18 years because the usage of the Arabic language was banned. However, despite this ban, people continued to pray in Arabic. The adhan was forced to be recited in Arabic for another 18 years, but the community tried to find illegal ways of using Arabic. The studies on this issue are usually about how the language of worship should be according to basic fiqh[2] sources, what accurate translations are and political reasons behind the forced usage of Turkish for prayer. No study has been found on why people opposed to worshiping in Turkish and how they felt while worshiping in Turkish at that time. What is the reason behind opposition people put forward against worshiping in their mother tongue? Here, this study will try to explore which language individual uses in prayer as well as why and how this particular language is choosen for worship. This research

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[1] The call to prayer: "Allah is greater. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Hasten to the prayer (Salaah). Hasten to the salvation. Prayer is better than sleep. Allah is greater. There is no deity but Allah."

[2] Islamic jurisprudence.

focus on issues such as how a person feel when the adhan is recited in his/her mother tongue, what she/he thinks about performing the prayer in Turkish, and what she/he feels while listening to the Turkish Qur'an.

For these purposes, in this study, firstly, the definitions of prayer and prayer types were examined. Thus, what was meant by prayer was explored. Afterwards, a short literature review on the subject was included. Then, the method of our research was defined and the findings were explained. Finally, the results achieved were announced.

Prayer And Prayer Types

Prayer can be described as a way of communicating with God. It may be individual or communal and take place in private or in public. Prayer is defined in the dictionary as "a solemn request for help or thanksgiving to God or another deity." (https://.en.oxforddictionaries.com, Date of access: 07.03.2021). It can be conceptually defined as "a central act of religion that involves seeking and responding to the presence, interest, will, purposes, and aid of the Divine" (Cole, 2010, p. 700). Prayer is often seen as the most distinguishing and "characteristically religious" of all the religious activities (Loewenthal, 2000, p. 27). William James defines prayer as "every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine" and then he adds "prayer is religion in the act; that is, prayer is real religion" (James, 1982, p. 464). In most religions, the position of the body and hands is the expression of respect and submission. For example, in Islam, the salaah is in the form of a ritual and performed five times a day. During prayer, believer faces Mecca and perform rak'ahs, "the physical postures that accompany recitations from the Koran" (Fontana, 1993, p. 31).

Prayers are the most highlighted strategies in the literature of religious coping. In all theistic religions, prayer is at the centre because it offers direct communication with God (Fontana, 2003, p. 196). Furthermore, especially regular prayer provides opportunities that "the mind turns toward God at set times during the day, reminding the worshipper always of his or her responsibilities to God, and ensuring that direct contact is maintained between God and the soul" (Fontana, 2003, p. 196). So that, prayer produces feelings of trust for individual that there is a power outside which listens to him, watches over him and saves him from harm thus improves the quality of life for the believer (Fontana, 2003, p. 196). Psychologists sometimes consider it among types of "active cognitive coping" because it is a cry for help when human resources have failed (Argyle, 2000, p. 96).

Four types of prayer, one meditative and three verbal which are colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual, have been listed by Poloma and Pendleton (1989, p. 47-48). In the *colloquial type* of prayers, individuals talk to God in their own words or ask for guidance when they are making decisions (Argyle, 2000, p. 95). Talking to God as to another person in an ordinary language and treating him as a wise and helpful friend are the common elements here (Argyle, 2000, p. 95). In meditative prayers, meditation is

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performed in most tradition in order to feel the presence of God or to worship him and to have a communication with him. This type of prayer is less often used but it has the most powerful impact on the individual who prays (Argyle, 2000, p. 95). Even secular meditation can also produce powerful experiences. According to Deikman's meditation experiment, all meditational practices Zen, yoga and transcendental meditation are able to create "altered state of consciousness" and "deep states of relaxation" (Argyle, 2000, p. 95). *Petitionary type of prayer* is described as crying for help for oneself (Loewenthal, 2000, p. 29). It is a natural cry for help when the individual or a relative in a serious trouble, when their well-being is under threat or when the problems are beyond the individual's control (Argyle, 2000, p. 94). Concerning *ritual* type of prayer, it is usually performed in public by a religious leader, it is memorised or read from a book (Argyle, 2000, p. 95).

Additionally, Laird, Snyder, Rapoff and Green (Laird et al., 2004, p. 251-272) have demonstrated five types of prayer which are adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and reception (Whittington&Scher, 2010, p. 60). The type of *adoration* involves prayers, which are focused on the worship of God without asking any help or being in a need. *Confession* prayers include the acceptance of negative attitudes and a request for forgiveness. Prayers of *thanksgiving* are prayers which present appreciation to God especially for positive experiences. As to prayers of *supplication*, they are requests for God's involvement in special life events for either oneself or other people. Regarding prayers of *reception*, "one more passively awaits divine wisdom, understanding or guidance" (Laird et al., 2004, p. 252).

Besides these types, Whittington and Scher add one more type which is *obligatory* prayers, present a significant element of some religions such as "Orthodox Judaism and Islam whose followers are required to perform three and five times a day, respectively" (2010, p. 60).

Albayrak categorized prayer under extrinsic religiousness and intrinsic religiousness (2007). Accordingly, while demanding prayer, habitual prayer and coping prayer are extrinsic forms of prayer; the prayer of confession and forgiveness, prayer of gratitude, prayer of intercession, prayer of the ritual and worship to the creator, prayer of contemplation and spiritual development prayer are intrinsic forms of prayer (Albayrak, 2007, p. 191-199).

The obligatory prayer in Islam has special forms which have been designated in the light of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*[3]. In other words, the Qur'an only advises people to pray and Prophet Muhammed gave it its form and performed *salaah*[4] in certain ways. Muslims prayed throughout the

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[3] *Sunnah* includes the Prophet Muhammed'S words, deeds, habits and silent approvals.

[4] *Salaah* is the basis ritual in Islam which is performed five times a day. It requires some prescribed conditions and times.

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history in exactly the way the prophet did. When it is time for the *salaah*, *which* is measured according to movement of the sun; near dawn, just after noon, in the afternoon, just after sunset and around nightfall, it is called from the minarets of the mosques. Salaah is performed in these prescribed times either individually or collectively. The mandatory part of the prayer is "standing for a set time (qiyam), and reciting something from the Qur'an (qiraat); then the worshipper bows forward, with their back straight (rukuí), and then kneeling, puts their forehead to the floor (sujud), and then sits for a time (quud)" (Aydar, 2006, p. 2). Salaah cannot take place without recitation. Recitation means reading a section from the Qur'an, which is related to language. Besides this, Muslims are free to pray as they wish or whenever they want. These prayers could be in many forms as mentioned above.

This study covers the verbal prayers performed in Islam. Obligatory prayer such as salaah, personal prayers which could be colloquial, petitionary, thanksgiving, adoration, supplication, reception and/or confession are taken into consideration. Even if it is not a prayer or worship, adhan is also among the subject of this study. Reading Qur'an and its translation are also counted as a prayer by some participants. It can be assumed among meditation and/or spiritual development type of prayers.

Literature Review

In the literature, there are several studies on relationships of language and prayer mostly from sociological, linguistic or religious perspectives. Many of them emphasize what kind of language is appropriate in prayers, what accurate translations are, how prayer types differ in terms of linguistic features, how language and religion are efficient agents on creating an ethnonational identity or the relationship between the language used in daily life with religious life and religiosity (Odabaşı, 2014).

Concerning the accuracy of translations, it includes the difficulty of exact translation of a religious language to someone's native language. In Islam, the translation of the Qur'an has been argued over the years. Some argue that the Qur'an cannot be translated. Translation can never take the place of the Qur'an in Arabic (Pickthall, p. 1930) because "inspired language can never be completely satisfactorily translated into another language" (Fazlur Rahman, 1988, p. 24). Another issue on the translation of the Qur'an is whether it can be read in salaah or not (Okur, 1999; Okur, 2012; Aydar, 2007). Details of these issues will not be mentioned here since the main concern of this paper does not include this.

Regarding the studies on the effects of religion and language in terms of building national identities, in his study, Safran (2008) explores the varying relationships between language and religion. He states that both religion and language are related to each other and have equal importance among the markers of ethnonational identity (Safran, 2008, p. 171). "Religious identity is based on and perpetuated in, narratives expressed in a specific language" (Safran, 2008, p. 171).

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Another study about this issue is by Jaspal and Coyle from the social psychological point of view. In this work, twelve British born South Asian were interviewed and the role of language in the religious identity is examined among a group of second generation Asians in the east midlands of England. Participants were Muslim, Sikh or Hindu and between 18 and 24 years old. Four important themes were achieved: "the sanctification of language'', "the liturgical language as a symbol of the religious community", "ethnic pride versus religious identity" and "linguistic otherness and religious alienation" (Jaspal&Coyle, 2010, p. 22). Participants often mentioned about the "the perceived holiness of their liturgical language" which was generally referred to its use in the history (Jaspal&Coyle, 2010, p. 22). Consequently, this study shows that the participants are not fully competent in languages related to their religious and ethnic identity. They both emphasized the importance of religious identity and acknowledged that being inadequate in liturgical language may also prevent access to a strong religious identity.

Apart from these studies, as a different aspect, as it is mentioned in the introduction, the liturgical language in Turkey is an important issue that came up frequently. To summarize briefly the background of the problem, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish Republic was established under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923. Then, many reforms were adopted in social, educational and legal arenas in order to create a Westernized State. For example, Persian and Arabic words removed from the Ottoman Turkish and Arabic letters were replaced with Latin letters in the alphabet (Aydar, 2006, p. 3). Moreover, finally, these reforms were tried to apply to religion. In the name of purification, modernization of religion and religious rituals, Western-style religious programs were launched (Aydar&Gokkir, 2007, p. 121). As a result of this nationalization, "All Turks can understand their faith without having to resort to interpreters, as Protestants in the West relate to their religion in their national languages" (Aydar&Gokkir, 2007, p. 122). And then the call to prayers and mosque sermons were given in Turkish instead of Arabic (Aydar&Gokkir, 2007, p. 122). People's reaction was anger, violence and they were strongly disagreeing. Moreover, they did protest and they did revolt (Aydar, 2006, p. 9). People in the mosques continued to pray in Arabic. The government was aware of the situation and did not continue to insist on prayers recited in Turkish (Aydar, 2006, p. 9). Hence, the attempts to compel *salaah* to be recited in Turkish failed. On the other hand, recitation of *adhan*[5] in Turkish was forced 18 more years. When Democrat Party won the elections in 1950, this constraint ended and *adhan* once again was recited in Arabic (Aydar, 2006, p. 9). Aydar and Gokkır states that although the Turkification of prayer may seem like a facilitation for those who do not speak Arabic, this request has never come from Turks who are not sufficient in Arabic. On the

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[5] *Adhan*, in Islam, is the call to prayer (*salaah*) which is announced from the minarets of the mosques at the prescribed times of the day.

contrary, the reason behind this transformation seems to have arisen from the nationalist or Westernized policies of the state (2007, p. 133).

The roots of the idea of Turkish adhan date back to the debates on the nationalization of the religion and the Turkishization of the language of worship during the Tanzimat and Constitutional periods. While there was no serious progress in the process until the proclamation of the Republic, concrete steps were taken only during the revolutions initiated with the Republic (Dikici, 2006, p. 77-78).

When the practices performed in that period were examined, it was observed that the Turkish adhan was recited aloud by children and those who were mentally unstable, and its Arabic was recited by the imam in a soft voice. Thus, this means that recitation of adhan in Turkish would be considered as a sin, children and mentally unstable people would not be responsible for this sin, and imams were actually saved from the sin. Another way was that the Arabic adhan was recited by children or people who were mentally unstable. According to police records, when children and mentally ill people reciting the adhan in Arabic were caught no action could be taken as they did not have criminal license. Either way, the ban was broken (Dikici, 2006).

Method

Participants

Convenience sampling and snowball sampling strategies were used to determine the participants. Convenience sampling is a type of sample created with easily accessible participants (Berg&Lune, 2015, p. 70). Regarding snowball sampling, it is a technique in which the first participants were identified through the researcher's social networks (Lee, 1993). Twelve participants were recruited who were required to be aged more than 18. Of the 12 participants, 4 were males and 8 were females, with a mean age of 22.1 years. All of the participants are student and single.

In qualitative research, 6 participants are sufficient for the formation of basic themes. Guest et. al. (2006) conducted a study involving 60 women participants in two West-African countries and reported that although saturation occurred after the first 12 participants, the main themes occurred in the first 6 participants. In our study, it can be said that 12 participants are sufficient for the emergence of saturation.

Tablo 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

Participants	Gender	Age
K1	Female	23
K2	Female	23
K3	Female	24
K4	Female	22
K5	Male	20

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K6	Male	22
K7	Male	22
K8	Male	23
K9	Female	22
K10	Female	22
K11	Female	21
K12	Female	22

Interview Schedule

Open-ended and semi-structured interview technique was used as a data collection tool for the field research. The universe of the research is the students enrolled in Hitit University Faculty of Theology in the 2020-2021 academic year. The purpose of selecting the students of the Faculty of Theology is that they gained knowledge about the provision of the language of worship according to Islamic tradition in the course of Islamic law and they understand more or less the liturgical language which is the language reserved for religious purposes.

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of 11 open-ended questions. Interview questions started by asking participants' prayers through language. Then, it continued with questions about whether or not reading the translation is considered as an authentic prayer, whether or not worship performed in a language other than the liturgical language will be accepted by God and whether it is possible to perform prayers in Turkish. Then, the language they prefer while reading or listening to the Qur'an and its reasons were discussed. Finally, questions were asked about the language in which the adhan should be read and how they would feel if it was read in Turkish.

Interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. They were digitally recorded and transcribed. Approval for the ethical appropriateness of the questions asked during the interviews was obtained from the Hitit University Non-Interventional Ethics Committee.

Analytic Approach

This study is a qualitative research designed as a case study. In qualitative research, summarizing, coding and dividing data into themes is an important step before starting data analysis. Huge volumes of unprocessed raw data should be summarized and transformed in order to be easier to access, understand, and to derive different themes and patterns (Berg and Lune, 2015, p. 74). Researchers can do this manually or use word processing programs and/or computer-based data analysis software (Berg and Lune, 2015, p. 75; Creswell, 2017, p. 195). In this study, this was done manually. The steps we followed for the analysis of the data in this study are as follows: Preparing and organizing the interviews for data analysis, reading

and analyzing all of the data, creating categories, coding the data and identifying themes, interpreting the results and findings.

In our study, the data obtained from in-depth interviews were analyzed using descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis is to present the obtained data in a descriptive way, keeping as true to the original as possible and making direct quotations from what the participants said during the interview (Wolcott, 1994, p.10). It is essential to describe the opinions of the participants on the relevant theme with direct quotations on that theme, in a way to increase the internal validity of the research. For this purpose, in this study, the participants' own thoughts and experiences were included with direct quotations through descriptive analysis. Then, these data were analyzed systematically; themes, prejudices and meanings were determined and interpreted on the basis of the information presented in the theoretical part.

Findings

This part reports some of the most important findings and themes which clarify participants' experiences of language in the context of religious practice. The themes revealed in the data are as follows: Tradition, Sanctifying the Liturgical Language, Willingness to Understand and be Understood versus Sanctification, The Phonetic Effect of Arabic and Unifying Feature.

Tradition Theme

The first theme we derive from the data is "tradition". This theme has been addressed in two ways as religious tradition and personal tradition (habits). Participants generally emphasized the importance of adhering to tradition in terms of both adhan and salaah. Regarding this, some of the participants stated that:

> "*Adhan must be in Arabic. I think reciting it in Turkish would be like making fun of it. We must keep alive the time of the Prophet.*" K6

> "*Salaah should be performed in Arabic, as it is a tradition*" K2

The sunnah of the Prophet, his words, deeds and approvals, is the second main source in Islam after the Qur'an in terms of religious and moral law. Sunnah is important for Muslims because it explains some practices and rituals that are not explicit in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an orders salaah but does not describe how to perform it. Muslims learned it from the Prophet and have practiced it for centuries without changing its shape. Thus, it is significant for Muslims to follow the Prophet on some basic issues. This is also revealed in this theme. Most of the participants said that, because it is the sunnah, the prayer must be in Arabic for it to be acceptable. All of the participants are aware of the Islamic law rules on the subject. The founder of one of the four Sunni law schools, Abu Hanifa (d. 769), states that a non-Arab may recite the Qur'an in her own language (Fazlur Rahman,

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1988). Participants agreed that a person who did not know Arabic could pray in her/his own language until she/he learns Arabic and memorizes the necessary chapters in salaah, but she/he must learn the language. For instance, one of them said that:

> *"Salaah should not be performed in Turkish. I try to read the surahs in Arabic as it was sent down by Allah or I try to do it as our Prophet did. That's why I perform salaah in Arabic. If the person does not know Arabic, she/he can make it in her own language, but she/he should try to learn."* K11

Habit related answers are categorized as personal customs in this theme. Habit is defined as "a thing that you do often and almost without thinking, especially something that is hard to stop doing" (www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, Date of access: 06.03.2021). Habits are safe zones where people feel secure and comfortable. The regularity and discipline provided by habits are also a factor that ensures continuity in religious habits. T. Hywel Hughes states that the physiological basis of habit is that "every action ploughs — or (…) 'channels' its way through the brain substance leaving faint traces, together with a tendency or a disposition to follow the same channel whenever the action is done again. As a result of this continual traffic in these tracts they become established and set" (Hughes, 1942, p. 59). The more often the activities are done, the easier it becomes. As our habit of doing certain things in certain ways increases, we require less attention so that we are free to do other things at the same time as our habitual actions continue (Hughes, 1942, p. 60). This situation provides great comfort and convenience to people so that it is difficult to give up. Religious habits are among the most difficult to change as religion is fostered by the habitual practices of the person or group. Participants said that:

> *"There is a magical voice in adhan. When a person feels bad, she/he can smile when she/he hears the call to prayer. It can give comfort. This would not happen if it was in Turkish. Perhaps it is about getting used to hearing it in Arabic for years."* K4

> *"If I perform salaah in Turkish, I don't feel like worshiping a lot because we are used to perform it in Arabic. It does not settle."* K12

This shows that tradition and habits are safe areas for the individual. Hence, people find it difficult to accept and implement changes they are not used to in their religious practice.

Sanctifying the Liturgical Language Theme

Participants' accounts appeared to reveal the importance of Arabic as a liturgical language. Most of the participants stated that especially prayer and adhan should be in Arabic. Besides this, according to them, as long as it is in Arabic, it feels like worshiping, otherwise it is no different from reading a newspaper or a normal book. For example, K10 states that when she read

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her prayers in Arabic, she felt more like worshiping and tried to learn how to pray in Arabic.

> "It feels like its Arabic is closer to acceptance. It's a very different belief, but… I usually try to say my prayers in Arabic. " K10

> "Adhan must be in Arabic, of course, Arabic sounds more ethereal to me." K11

> "I don't see reading the translation of the Qur'an as a worship, it's more like reading a book." K9

In Jaspal and Coyle's work, participants sanctify liturgical language because the Prophet spoke Arabic. On the contrary, the participants in our study perceive holiness in the Arabic language because the Qur'an is Arabic. There is a difference in the approach of the participants of the two studies. While our participants sanctified Arabic, they prioritized it as the language of their holy book rather than as the mother tongue of the Prophet. They may have thought that even if Muhammad was the last Prophet and guide, he was mainly the mediator. As Fazlur Rahman states "The Qur'an is not really a single 'book' because nobody ever 'wrote' it: it is an assembly of all the passages revealed or communicated to Muhammad by the Agency of Revelation, which the Qur'an calls Gabriel and 'The Trusted Spirit' or 'The Holy Spirit'" (1988, 24). Mahoney and Pargament express that "perceptions of divine character and significance can develop by investing objects with qualities, that are associated with the divine" (Pargament&Mahoney, 2005, 185). In this case the Qur'an and hence the Arabic are associated with the divine because it is heavenly as well as earthly.

> "Since the Qur'an is in Arabic, prayers should also be performed in Arabic. When I performe it in Arabic, I feel like I worship more." K1

> "I am more impressed when I listen to the Qur'an in Arabic because it has a beautiful expression that man cannot create by himself." K2

> "Prayer is not performed in Turkish. The Prophet of Allah could tell people to worship in their own language but we have a text (the Qur'an). I think qiraat is one of the indispensable features of worship, both for protection of the Qur'an and for the positive energy it adds to people, to ensure inner peace." K7

Choosing to listen to the Qur'an in Arabic, K11 emphasized her feelings and the emotional impact of the Qur'an showing the sanctification;

> "That voice gives me peace. Every moment, even when walking around, before sleeping I listen to it. When I am distressed, I immediately open a surah of Inshirah and listen. (...) Maybe if someone reads them to me in Turkish, it wouldn't be so enlightening. I don't know why I guess it's an ethereal thing. I cannot explain this but it is very peaceful to listen. It is especially nice to listen to the Qur'an from a voice I love."

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The Qur'an is sacred for Muslims because it was sent from Allah and has been passed on unchanged until today. Therefore, most of the participants emphasized indirectly this feature of the Qur'an and stated that they found it important to continue the salaah in Arabic for the continuation of this protection.

Willingness to Understand and be Understood versus Sanctification Theme

Importance of understanding the meaning of the Qur'an read or recited during religious acts can be viewed/analysed in several categories. Firstly, for some participants reading or reciting the Qur'an and some prayers in Turkish are an act of worship, because they attribute a great value to understanding. Second group of participants do not consider Turkish religious practices as worship, and they divide into two group as well: some think a practice has to be done in Arabic to be considered as a worship, and for some reading Qur'an in Turkish is a personal matter, not required by God but personally seem beneficial because it helps in their spiritual development. And lastly, for some participants understanding has a negative aspect because it ruins the sacredness and magical side of prayer.

Although Arabic is considered sacred, it seems that the participants use translation and interpretation at points they do not understand. Some of the participants listened Qur'an in Arabic and followed its Turkish subtitles simultaneously, and others stated that they felt the need to read its meaning after reading the Qur'an in Arabic.

> "There is someone that I listen to. I open his videos on Youtube. While he is reading the Qur'an, its translation also appears. I like this very much. I do this whenever I get the opportunity." K11

> "I can understand while reading the Qur'an in Arabic. However, if I don't understand I look at the interpretation, not the translation." K9

Participants generally stated that they made their personal prayers in their own language and with sincere expressions. Most of the participants expressed satisfaction that they could express themselves fully when they made their personal prayers in their native language. Participants used the phrase;

> "… because I want to be sure what I say."

Besides this, all participants agreed that it is important to understand what you are reciting while performing the worships. Some of them stated that:

> "It is important to understand when conducting prayers. God wants you to understand what He says. God wants you to comprehend the meaning and the essence." K8

> "Although I understand Arabic, sometimes my mind is preoccupied with other things. I'm just saying but I never feel anything sincere. This makes me

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uneasy. When I make it with understanding and concentration, I feel very peaceful." K9

Although they emphasized the importance of understanding while worshiping, some participants argued that there should be certain conditions for a worship to be considered worship and for it to be accepted by God. Since the subject of this theme is understanding, if we consider reading Turkish translation of the Qur'an, the participants expressed two different opinions: Those who say that reading the Qur'an in Turkish is a worship and those who say it is not worship.

There were some participants who thought that reading the Turkish translation of the Qur'an was a worship because they understood and thought about what they read. They see it as a chance to correct their behaviour and apply the Qur'an to their lives. It can be thought of as a *meditation type* or *spiritual development type* of prayers. On the other hand, some of the participants approached the topic from a different angle. Participants who did not consider reading the Turkish translation of the Qur'an as a worship have different reasons. While some of them did not see it as a worship because they attribute holiness to Arabic, another group saw it as a helpful step in their spiritual development. The two groups are as follows;

Those who attribute holiness to Arabic: These participants stated that their practices in Turkish were not considered as worship, and an act could be considered worship as long as it was in Arabic. They assumed that reading the Qur'an in Turkish is no different from reading a book. Those who were fluent in Arabic stated that they preferred to look at the commentary (deeper Arabic explanation) for places that they did not understand.

Spiritual development: There were those who saw reading the Turkish translation of the Qur'an not as a worship but as a step in questioning their existence or as a way of internalizing the Qur'an. This group stated that they liked reading translation more because translation adds meaning to worship and themselves. At this point, reading the translation appeared to be practiced by the participants as part of spiritual development not as a worship. Thus, they did not expect any reward from God in return for this act.

And lastly, from different point of view, for some, understanding the meaning is not a worship and additionally may have some negative sides. K4 expressed the loss of the spiritual trance-like state both when reading and listening to the translation of a religious texts because logic and thinking are involved. She said that "I think translation destroys emotions." Understanding the language may ruin the idea of the holy and the magical side of it.

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The Phonetic Effect of Arabic Theme

The phonetic feature of Arabic emerges as a characteristic that is frequently repeated by the participants. Here, participants also mean maqam as much as phonetic.

> *"Adhan has a magical voice. I can smile when I hear the call to prayer when I feel bad. It can give me relief. This will not happen if it is Turkish... I listened to the Turkish version but it did not attract me. Arabic is more pleasant. It is about the structure of the language."* K4

> *"The Arabic version appeals to the ear. It sounds nice, it appeals better."* K5

> *"When I listen to the Qur'an, I am more influenced by its Arabic language. Arabic is a great language, its rhetoric impresses me very much. Although [when I listen to translation of the Qur'an] I understand Turkish [but] I can't get into its soul that much."* K10

> *"Listening to the Qur'an in Turkish… We'll get bored."* K6

In Jaspal and Coyle's study in which a participant, Yush, points out the day of Ashura which is the day of mourning for the martyrdom of Hussein Ibn Ali who is the grandson of the Prophet Muhammed (Jaspal&Coyle, 2010, p. 24). Yush states that at their mosque the Ashura sermons are in Urdu which is their heritage language. He highlights the phonology of the language "the sounds, the sweetness of Urdu" and "the words" which "touch" the listener. Besides this, habits and customs may play an important role in Yush's case. Yush only heard this religious passage in Urdu so that he cannot think of listening to it in another language (Jaspal&Coyle, 2010, p. 24). In our participants' case this could be the same because listening to the Qur'an in Turkish is not a widespread practice in Turkey. The passages recited from the Qur'an on special occasions (wedding, circumcision, funeral, religious ceremony, etc.) are usually in Arabic. Otherwise it is a matter of one's own will. Thus, the phonetics of Arabic is a tradition familiar to participants. Maqam also highlights this feature.

Two participants (K4 and K8) stated that they tried to perform the prayers in Turkish but they returned to Arabic because they could not get the same taste. K8 expressed that when he performed prayers in Turkish, he slowed down because he thought (about its meaning), but when he prayed in Arabic, the prayer was flowing and more relaxing with the phonetic feature and poetry of Arabic. He said that because he understood it when he performed it in Turkish, his belonging to religion was strengthened and he felt like he had worshiped. He compared prayer in Arabic to doing sports. It could be said that he feels comfortable in the flow with his rote movements without paying too much attention to language and understanding. Not focusing on the meaning intensifies the sacred. The participant focus on the act more when it is a language they do not understand. As K8 also feels, "focus shifts from the act and form of the recitation, to the substance of the

prayer" (Reisenberger, 2010, p. 32) when it is in Turkish. Since he understands the language, starts to think about what he says during prayer. The same participant gave a similar answer to the question about listening to the Qur'an in Turkish:

> *"If I listen to the Qur'an in Turkish, it means something to me because I will think rather than feel. There is a counterpart to what I listen to in my brain. So my mind will work."* K8

There may seem to be a contradiction at this point, but when the participant understands his words, he states that the action gains value. As we mentioned in the theme of tradition, it may be possible for his to return to Arabic worship because it is against the habits and due to the trust and awe of the usual.

K4 is more focused on the phonetic effect of Arabic on this matter:

> *"I prayed in Turkish for 4-5 months. But I definitely didn't taste the same. I don't know what the reason is. I don't know if it stems from that magical sound of Arabic. I could not hear that pleasure and returned to Arabic. Arabic has a treacly tone. Even if the Surah Fatiha, the Turkish version did not taste the same to me."*

Unifying Feature of Liturgical Language Theme

Contrary to what participants in Jaspal and Coyle's study said (2010, s. 24-25), Turkish Muslims do not learn Arabic to communicate with Muslims of other nationalities. The purpose of their Arabic education is to be able to read the Qur'an and to memorize the chapters required for prayers and salaah, even if they do not understand it. Theology students participating in our study can communicate with an Arab in Arabic, but the number of those whose Arabic is advanced is very low. The number of people who stated that they understood what they read during worship is also low. According to the data obtained, the theme of unity is in terms of adhan and the Qur'an. Namely, they want to emphasize that the adhan, prayer and suras read in prayers and salaah are the same wherever they go in the world.

> *"Adhan must be definitely in Arabic. (...) Reading in Turkish... If there is only one religion... Like the national anthem... It is not translated into languages (…) I think it is something that should remain symbolically. (...) It should be more symbolic, unique. It should not be Turkish."* K12

> *"Prayer cannot be performed in Turkish. If there is only one religion, I think it must be one language."* K12

One of our participants, K3, said that the Turkish call to prayer means nationalism. She stated that if the adhan is read in Turkish, she would be upset as a Circassian originally.

"I would be sad if it was Turkish. It would sound like nationalism. I am Circassian, reciting the adhan in Turkish would sound like nationalism to me" K3

In a multinational country like Turkey, she drew attention to how sensitive the subject is. Aydar and Gokkir, as mentioned above, argued that the reason behind the application of adhan and salaah in Turkish was due to the nationalist or westernized policies of the state (2007, p. 133).

One participant emphasized the call to prayer as a symbol and a sign of a Muslim existence and identity around in the world. He said that:

"I am against the adhan being Turkish. It has no logic. Turning the Qur'an into Turkish is aimed at understanding what it says. It is aimed at revealing the meaning, but adhan does not need meaning because adhan is a password. Wherever you say "Allahuakbar[6]" [when the adhan is recited], everyone knows that the time for prayer has come. It can be translated but it has no logic/meaning." K8

As J. B. Pratt states that religious activities help the individual and society by keeping religious beliefs alive and vivid by stimulating religious feelings, and by fixing interest in religion in general in a way that makes it real and vital to the worshiper. In addition to personal and individual values, they have a social value in creating a sense of solidarity by bringing the group together in a deep emotional experience (Pratt, 1920, p. 271).

Results

In this research, the use of language in prayers is examined from the perspective of psychology. Our aim was to explore the language preference at prayers and the reasons behind it because language of worship and/or adhan is a controversial issue that came up from time to time in Turkey. In the 1980s, attempts for Turkish adhan and worship were unsuccessful. Any study could not be found on the reasons for the reactions of people who opposed the Turkish adhan and prayer practice in the 1980s. This study aims to bring a new perspective to the ongoing discussions on this subject. Which language is preferred for worship and why? What are individuals' thoughts about praying in Turkish? To what extent do they attach importance to understanding when they are praying or reading a religious text? Why do they choose certain languages in their personal prayers? This study searches for answers to these questions.

This study demonstrates the value of a qualitative approach to relationships of religious experience and language as it provides interpretation of participants' cognitions and attitudes towards the liturgical language. The study emphasizes some of the perceived functions of liturgical language in a psychological context. One of the common points in the participants'

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[6] Allah is the greatest.

statements was the importance they attach to the liturgical language, albeit to varying degrees. For instance, while some participants attribute sacredness to the liturgical language as required by religious rules, some emphasized the social dimension or the phonetic and therefore emotional effect of the language. Pargament and Mahoney say that individuals may "go to great lengths to preserve and protect whatever they perceive to be sacred" (Pargament&Mahoney, 2005, p. 179). In fact, especially in the case of adhan, the majority of participants conceptualized their liturgical language as sacred. As a consequence of this, they insisted that the recitation of adhan should continue according to tradition. In addition to this, the unifying feature of the call to prayer is also effective. Wherever in the world, the call to prayer is in Arabic. All Muslims, regardless of language, nationality, race or colour, know this and gather according to this call. This is a situation in which the individual feels safe, strong and belonging to an institution.

It appears that the perceptions about the language used in prayer are similar and one of the most important reasons underlying this is the emphasis on learning religion. We can say that the necessity of transferring religious rules and religious texts directly without changing them does not leave any room for relaxation in Islamic religious teaching. The importance attached to liturgical language is clear, even in a phonetic context pointed out by participants who are flexible about salaah. As in the case of those who try to perform salaahs in their mother tongue, they turn to the language of religion because they cannot emotionally feel the same. At this point, we can say that the importance of following tradition and personal habits are effective.

As stated by Reisenberger, the participants also expressed that the focus shifted from movement to the essence of worship in mother tongue. This may appear to be preferable, but participants who worship in Turkish reported that they did not feel like they were worshiping. Recitation and movements made by rote without paying attention to their meaning create a trance-like situation, which seems to be more preferred. However, the participants' emphasis on the importance of understanding in worship or sermons seems to be a contradiction in itself. It is possible to conclude that the act of understanding is done not during prayer, but after it or in an unspecified period of time. In addition to this, the participants who tried to apply religion to their lives, give importance to contemplation and spiritual development, and critically evaluate the teachings attaching great importance to understanding the language of religion. Therefore, they regarded reading the translation of the Qur'an as a worship.

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