



**The Adhan as a Bilingual Soundscape:
Multimodal and Multilingual Dimensions of the Islamic Call to Prayer**

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Abstract

This study analyzes the Adhan, the Islamic call to prayer, as both a multimodal discourse and a bilingual soundscape. Multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2011) is employed in conjunction with a phenomenological reading of *maqāmāt* (melodic modes) to analyze performances from five sites: Al-Haram Al-Makki, Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Al-Azhar Mosque, and Hagia Sophia. These sites are examined across the interrelated modes of sound, space, and time. Despite the fact that the Adhan is articulated exclusively in Arabic, the majority of its listeners are non-Arabic speakers. Consequently, repeated ritual exposure fosters functional receptive liturgical bilingualism, thereby enhancing the recognition of formulaic expressions (e.g., *Allāhu akbar, ḥayya ‘ala ṣ-ṣalāh*). The findings indicate that melodic highlighting, particularly melisma at cadences, spatial amplification (such as minarets and loudspeaker networks), and temporal repetition, including five daily calls and Ramadan/Jumu‘ah intensifications, collectively embed Arabic within the diverse multilingual ecologies of the Global South. Local stylistic variation, such as the distinction between Makki and Madani contours or the practices observed in Cairo and Istanbul, do not alter the established text. However, it does influence the uptake of bilingualism, shaping how Arabic phrases are perceived, remembered, and transmitted. Brief civic performances in non-Arabic-dominant settings foreground symbolic bilingualism, whereas daily

ritual recitation sustains an authentic, lived repertoire. When evaluated in conjunction with visual linguistic-landscape studies, in which Arabic (or Jawi) is frequently symbolic in signage, the Adhan exemplifies the capacity of sonic ritual to perpetuate Arabic as a *lingua sacra*. This phenomenon intersects with local languages, identities, and power dynamics in Muslim-majority and minority contexts.

Keywords: Adhan, bilingual soundscape, multimodality, *maqāmāt*, liturgical bilingualism, symbolic bilingualism, Global South

Introduction

In the 21st century, communication is inherently multimodal, drawing on sound, image, space, and gesture rather than relying on a single linguistic code. The Islamic call to prayer, known as the Adhan, exemplifies this multimodality. It has the capacity to transform sonic environments, organize spatial practices, and punctuate time with ritual significance. While the majority of research in the domain of linguistic landscapes (LL) has centered on written texts in public spaces, this study contributes to the expansion of the field by emphasizing the Adhan as an auditory landscape. This auditory landscape, in turn, becomes interwoven with diverse multilingual ecologies, thereby underscoring the intricate relationship between language and its environment (Hurley & Elyas, 2024).

The Adhan is an example of both a bilingual and a multimodal form of worship. Although the Adhan is technically an Arabic call for prayer, it is recited every day by millions of non-Arabic speaking Muslims around the world. The repeated use of the Adhan leads to what is called liturgical bilingualism (Montague, 1958). Liturgical bilingualism is a type of bilingualism where people develop a very small number of formulaic expressions in another language (in this case, Arabic) through the repetition of those same expressions in a religious context. For many Muslims living in the Global South, including in countries like Indonesia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Türkiye, there are a few phrases of Arabic that they have learned and continue to repeat on a daily basis, such as *Allāhu akbar*,¹ *hayya ‘ala ṣ-ṣalāh*,² and *qad qāmat al-ṣalāh*.³ Despite never having had any other contact with Arabic, these individuals learn these phrases of Arabic because of their constant repetition during the Adhan. In addition to being a means of worship, the Adhan acts as a means of reinforcing bilingualism at an everyday level that maintains Arabic as a *lingua sacra* (Salverda, 2018) in otherwise multilingual societies.

The Adhan also surfaces in symbolic bilingual contexts. During the 2025 U.S. presidential inauguration, for instance, Akbar Sharief, the Shaykh of Masjid Muhammad (the Nation’s Mosque), performed the Adhan in Arabic, temporarily incorporating a sacred Arabic register into a predominantly English ceremonial space. A brief recording of the incident was rapidly disseminated via social media, eliciting sharply divergent responses. While certain individuals lauded the act as a manifestation of inclusivity and respect towards U.S. Muslims, others denounced it as “misplaced” or “incongruent with the circumstances.” The Adhan performance was defined by how it adhered to African-American Muslim traditions, deviating from the Middle Eastern-standardized performances that are most commonly distributed. Deviation was intentional as to emphasize the musical and cultural diversity of the Adhan. However, the controversy also highlighted the limitations of symbolic bilingualism, where Arabic is momentarily acknowledged but remains contested and detached from substantive recognition of linguistic or religious plurality. In contrast, across the Global South, the Adhan constitutes authentic, ritualized bilingualism. It is performed five times a day and incorporates Arabic phrases into the soundscape of multilingual communities. Variation due to local style (e.g., Cairo’s use of *maqāmāt*; Istanbul’s use of contours; or Jakarta’s use of amplification) is not an alteration of the canonical text, but rather an element in the formation of perception, memory, and the transmission of Arabic.

The Adhan is also an exemplary practice of an *emblematic* heritage performance (Bhatt & Li, 2024) and a recurring aural ritual that is responsible for the continued transfer of Arabic as a sacred language to future generations, especially from non-Arabic speaking populations. The

¹ God is greatest

² come to prayer

³ the prayer has begun

regularity, affective impact, and symbolic central nature of the Adhan, therefore, reinforce Arabic's position as a language of membership, reverence, and transnational Muslim identity. As such, it provides an example of what has been conceptualized as "ummatic discourse" (see Bhatt et al., 2025), which locates linguistic actions within the larger communicative economy and connotative lifeworld of the Muslim Ummah and thus can be argued to transcend nation-states, formal institutions and nationalistic language ideologies. The theoretical foundation of this research uses these two concepts: the Adhan as a site of heritage performance; and the Adhan as a discursive act of performance that serves as an index of a global affiliation with Islam. Together, they provide a framework to understand Arabic as a language, but more importantly, as a symbolic and spiritual anchor within diverse Muslim lifeworlds.

The present study is situated within the contrast between symbolic and ritual bilingualism. In this study, we examine the Adhan as both a multimodal discourse (understood as an ensemble of sound, space, and time) and as a bilingual soundscape that sustains Arabic across multilingual communities. Through an analysis of the Adhan's performance in five culturally and geographically distinct locations, this study explores the impact of variations in *maqāmāt* (melodic modes), spatial arrangements, and temporal rhythms in the reception of the Adhan. It also examines how these sonic practices contribute to broader understandings of bilingualism, identity, and power. In doing so, the study places particular emphasis on ritual soundscapes as a vital yet under-explored facet of linguistic landscape research in the Global South.

Literature Review: The Adhan as a Bilingual Soundscape

Adhan scholarship has examined the practice in terms of the cultural-linguistic, performance-ritualistic aspects of the Adhan practice (Shahiditabar & Mozaheb, 2024), but it is still underexplored in terms of its semiotic, acoustic, and bilingual features. To establish the Adhan as an aspect of bilingual soundscape within the larger field of study of LL, this review will draw upon several related fields of study including liturgical bilingualism, multimodality and indexicality, soundscape studies, ethnomusicology of *maqāmāt*, ecolinguistics, and discussions of language policies and ideologies. The collective representation of these fields illustrates how the Adhan serves a dual purpose as both a sacred call and as a social mechanism for supporting Arabic throughout multilingual Global South contexts.

From a semiotic perspective, the Adhan can be regarded as a communicative act that functions as a signal, both indicating time and defining identity. In Peirce's (1934) triadic theory of signs, the acoustic form of the Adhan functions as the representamen that indexes prayer time, while the interpretant's (or the listener's) recognition of obligation shifts behavior from ordinary to sacred activity. This framing aligns with Hurley and Elyas's (2024) more-than-digital analysis of the Adhan, which demonstrates how its soundscapes territorialize, deterritorialize, and reterritorialize space and subjectivity. The indexical nature of the Adhan makes the Adhan more than just a religious identifier; rather, it creates an indexical sign which rearranges both time and space through a semiotic process. Additionally, the Adhan is an integral part of daily routines for communities which have Arabic as their primary or secondary language, demonstrating the Adhan's importance culturally and linguistically.

Adhan as a Soundscape

This semiotic framing serves as a foundation for multimodal theory, which offers a comprehensive explanation of how the Adhan orchestrates sound, time, and space as interdependent

resources (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2011). The call's essence transcends the confines of text or sound alone, finding amplification through minarets, interweaving within urban soundscapes, and punctuating daily rhythms. This shows how the social semiotic model uses the multimodal ensemble. The idea is also supported by Schafer (1977), who describes the Adhan as a "soundmark," a kind of sonic landmark that represents or identifies community identity and the daily rhythm of life in cities with large Muslim populations. Building from these ideas, other researchers have developed further: Truax (2001) considers sound as an acoustic means of communication, with this acoustic communication creating the conditions of social relationships, while Labelle (2010) demonstrates that sonic practices lead to the territorializing of urban space and mediates the experience of collectives. This comprehensive analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the Adhan, demonstrating its function not only as a ritual call but also as a communicative and spatial practice intricately woven into the fabric of soundscapes.

In terms of the visual and sonic landscapes of places of worship, these commonalities can be observed because each type of landscape provides different ways of using languages either visually or sonically. Research concerning worship areas in Accra has shown that the presence of indigenous languages such as Twi, Ga, and Hausa is evident in sermon language, song lyrics, and spontaneous conversations among worshippers during informal mosque interactions (Boamah-Boateng & Anderson, 2024). However, the same research also showed that indigenous languages were absent from signs that generally utilize English and Arabic. Studies examining Kuala Lumpur (Coluzzi & Kitade, 2015; Gu & Coluzzi, 2024), the Philippines (Esteron, 2021), and Indonesia (Yusuf & Putrie, 2022) show an additional commonality in the use of signage. In all of these cases, prestige languages, particularly English, dominate signage while sacred/local languages are relegated to symbolic or marginal roles in the visual landscape. Thus, the studies collectively provide evidence of the distinctions between the characteristics of the visual and sonic landscapes of worship areas. For example, signage can relegate sacred/local languages to a symbolic display, whereas ritual soundscapes have the ability to maintain a sacred code that would not otherwise be visible in the routine of daily life.

The musical dimension of the Adhan, in addition to its form and function, plays a pivotal role in its affective and mnemonic power. A review of the relevant ethnomusicological studies (see Farraj & Abu Shumays, 2019; Touma, 1971, 1996) reveals that melodic contours, cadences, and ornamentation shape listener response. In practice, melismatic emphasis is often reserved for lexically salient words, such as *Allāh*, *ṣalāh*, and *falāh*, while simpler syllabic patterns carry connective text. The musical emphasis on the Adhan helps create receptive competence for non-Arabic speaking listeners. As such, the Adhan's ability to be expressed musically while remaining unchanged in terms of the text itself illustrates how the Adhan can vary regionally (i.e., Egyptian melismatic style), and the use of balance cadence in al-Haramain (Makkah/Madinah) reinforces Arabic as a *lingua sacra* in diverse linguistic environments (Malette, 2021).

Adhan as Urban Ecologies

These auditory processes are inextricably linked to spatial and temporal dynamics. Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concepts of territorialization and deterritorialization offer a theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon of the Adhan's projection of Arabic into urban ecologies. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) developed the rhizome as a non-hierarchical model for the ways discourse, ideology, policy, and identity are connected to one another. Discourse, ideology, policy, and identity do not have a causal sequence with one leading to the next but instead operate in a networked manner through processes of territorialization and de-territorialization. Within this

framework, territorialization refers to processes that stabilize meaning, identity, or social order. These processes fix boundaries, normalize practices, and regulate discourse often through institutions such as education, policy, or ideology. Deterritorialization, by contrast, involves the disruption or loosening of these fixed structures. It allows meanings, practices, and identities to move, shift, and be reconfigured. In rhizomatic terms, it is through deterritorialization that new ways of connecting, interpreting, and experiencing subjectivities are created beyond those that were previously accepted. It is important to note that deterritorialization is often followed by reterritorialization (i.e., the creation of new structures, norms, or identities) but that no matter how permanent or rigid they may seem, they will always be temporary and/or partially fixed.

The Adhan is recited five times daily and demarcates spaces that are set aside as territorial areas within cities and towns. As such, it provides the listener with a way to identify their location and, more importantly, creates a sense of belonging. While the Adhan can provide a sense of belonging, its ability to do so can be limited due to the effects of concurrent calls for prayer or urban background noise. However, in a process known as reterritorialization, the Adhan can restore a sense of belonging to listeners who hear it. The Adhan, from the viewpoint of ecological linguistics (Haugen, 1972; Stibbe, 2015), can be seen as creating a sonic ecology which consists of the connections between language, space, and the physical environment to create meaning. In this context, Arabic continues to be represented by means of repeated sounds within communities using Turkish, Indonesian, Pakistani, and African languages because it is located in the spatial structure of the community. On the other hand, in the secular and commercial sphere of Saudi Arabia, Arabic is not the sole means of communication and is instead contested by English as the primary means of communication. The use of English represents modernity and globalization, whereas the use of Arabic represents identity and religion (Hazaea & Qassam, 2025). This competition between English and Arabic highlights the unique characteristics of the Adhan's ritual soundscape, where Arabic is the dominant form of communication during sacred time (and space) but does not compete with other forms of communication.

Although Arabic has been identified by Alsaif and Starks (2018) as the predominant language of the Sacred Domain in the Grand Mosque of Makkah, there are many examples of multilingual resources such as signage, real time translations, and digital screens that provide accessibility for an audience from around the globe. In their later work, Alsaif and Starks (2021) reframed the mosque not as a series of domain/medium combinations but rather as a semiotic assemblage. The authors suggest that the mosque is an assemblage of sacred ritual, architectural design, technological mediation, and everyday practice which all intersect and overlap. This shift from a "domain/medium" approach to an "assemblage" approach is significant as it emphasizes the ongoing intertwining of the sacred language of the mosque with the mundane logistics, signage, and technological practices of the mosque. As Pennycook observes (2017) "understanding of semiotic assemblages gives us a way to address the complexity of things that come together in the vibrant, changeable exchanges of everyday urban life" (p. 278). And, in *Linguistics Landscape*, it is "important to move beyond the commonplace focus on multilingualism and multimodality to bring in the multisensorial nature of our worlds" (Pennycook, 2017, p.279), around us enhancing our self-being and self-existing.

Hence, this research supports the idea that the Adhan is more than just an audible ritual; it needs to be looked at as part of a larger system of signs in order for us to understand how the many ways we use our senses relate to one another. The Adhan is also, therefore, part of the same sets of sacred/banal assemblages that make up the contemporary religious soundscape of Makkah and, by extension, all other locations of the Global South.

Adhan as a Public Soundscape

These dynamics intersect with both the politics and ideology of language. The example of Türkiye's 1932-1950 period (see Aydar & Atalay, 2006) illustrates how political authority can alter the soundscape of the public space and how it can alter the meaning of those sounds. In contemporary civic spectacles, such as the 2025 U.S. presidential inauguration, Arabic has been incorporated into the auditory component of such events as a gesture of diversity, while remaining excluded from the formulation of substantive language policy. Such episodes exemplify the phenomenon of symbolic bilingualism, characterized by a momentary recognition that contrasts with the ritualized receptive bilingualism observed in the Global South. In this region, Arabic is embedded within the quotidian cycles of worship and identity.

Although existing literature has been able to define the Adhan's meaning (semiotics, multimodal, and soundscape); emotion (phenomenological studies and *maqāmāt*); those who create it, express it; and where they do so (politics and ideologies), there is a lack of research on how the Adhan facilitates bilingualism in day-to-day life. Therefore, this study attempts to fill that gap by conceptualizing the Adhan as a bilingual soundscape which is a routine practice that enables Arabic comprehension and identification in multilingual communities via repeated, prosodic, spatially enhanced, and temporalized exposures to Arabic independent of formal instruction.

Methodology

This study employs Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as theorized by Kress and van Leeuwen (2011) to examine the Adhan across five sites. The following mosques are of particular significance: Al-Haram Al-Makki, Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Al-Azhar Mosque, and Hagia Sophia Mosque. The analysis addresses three interconnected domains of sound, space, and time, which collectively constitute the Adhan as a multimodal text and a bilingual soundscape. The methodology is built around the belief that all calls will be made in Arabic but that many people who do not speak Arabic will be able to understand them. This study seeks to examine the possibility for receptive bilingualism in the diverse linguistic environments of the Global South due to repeated listening to the same sounds.

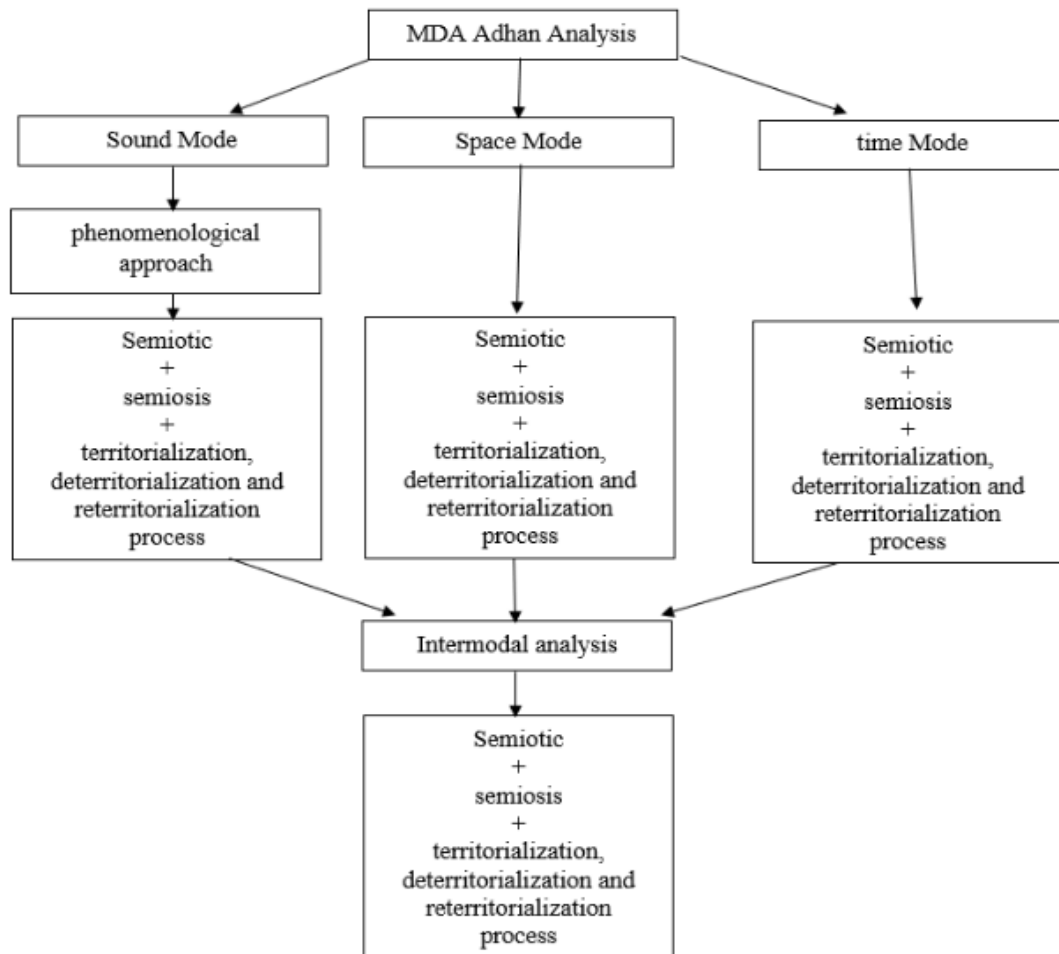
This study incorporates three analytical frameworks: phenomenological listening (Dura, 2006), social semiotics (van Leeuwen, 2005), and soundscape theory (Garson, 2018; Thompson, 2018). For this study, listening sessions took place in real-time settings using both in-situ and mediated recordings (Ford, 2022) to determine how melody and rhythm, specifically through *maqāmāt*, influence affect and direct attention to important Arabic lexemes like *Allāh*, *ṣalāh*, and *ḥaḍḥ*. Both the melodic and rhythmic features of the call to prayer not only increase the spiritual effect associated with the recitation of prayer, but they can assist non-Arabic speakers to recognize key Arabic words. Spatially, the study focused on the ways that mosque architecture, minaret placement, amplification systems use, and crowd flow create Arabic spaces within multilingual cities such as Istanbul (Turkish dominant), Jerusalem (Hebrew and English), and Cairo (colloquial Egyptian Arabic). Temporal analysis encompassed the cyclical rhythm of the five daily calls as well as intensifications during Ramadan and Jumu'ah prayer. This analysis sought to reveal how ritual repetition may engrain Arabic formulae across time, thereby building familiarity through patterned exposure.

Rather than treating sound, space, and time as independent elements, this analytical perspective emphasizes the continuous interweaving of the three (see Figure 1). It is through this

interweaving that the concept of meaning emerging from melodic forms highlight and inscribe lexical items, spatial arrangements embed Arabic in the everyday multilingualism of people, and the repeated performance of sounds at particular times reinforces the recognition of these sounds over the course of generations. The analytical perspectives of indexicality (Peirce, 1934), territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) are employed to track how these multimodal processes position Arabic within changing sonic landscapes and thus provide the means for it to be renewed with new meanings in different contexts.

Figure 1

Visual Representation of the Theoretical Framework Created by the Authors



The data were collected through a combination of physical soundwalks and digital walkthroughs. Soundwalks, following Schafer’s (1977) guidelines/methodology were carried out at Al-Haram Al-Makki and Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, with observations recorded from courtyards and main entrances. Digital walkthroughs, drawing on virtual ethnography (Pink et al., 2016), were used to examine livestreams and recordings from Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Al-Azhar Mosque, and Hagia Sophia. These mediated encounters enabled the study to capture how the Adhan circulates across

digital platforms and reaches audiences far beyond Arabic-dominant contexts. Supplementary materials from official websites and news coverage provided additional contextual detail.

The methodologies of soundwalk and digital walkthroughs have been used in this research to examine the Adhan in ways that are in line with current trends in Adhan research. As noted by Hurley and Elyas (2024), when embodied listening and mediation are used together in an examination of the Adhan, many, varied meanings can be uncovered. Consequently, this study validates the methodologies of in-situ recordings and livestreaming performances to explore the multimodal and multilingual processes involved in calling the Adhan.

The inclusion of both embodied and mediated experiences of the Adhan allowed this study to document all three dimensions of the Adhan—sonic, spatial, and temporal—while documenting how Arabic is utilized as a bilingual resource across diverse linguistic environments. This study examined the operational dynamics of the Adhan as a form of multimodal discourse through the combination of multimodal discourse analysis with soundscape-based ethnography and sought to theorize the Adhan as a bilingual soundscape that functions to support Arabic within larger multilingual ecosystems in the Global South.

Findings

The Sound Mode

The analysis shows that melodic, spatial, and cultural variations are all present in the Adhan, but these variations come together to support the continued use of Arabic as a ritualized bilingual repertoire. Melismatic passages are sections of extended vocal flourishes that occur frequently toward the end of verses, and they most commonly occur on the syllable *-lā*. Melismatic passages consistently contain Arabic words, such as *Allāh*, *ṣalāh* (prayer), and *falāh* (success). While melismatic passages have an impact upon the listener, their primary purpose is semiotic and that purpose is to indicate when the speaker has moved into the realm of the sacred. As a bilingual repertoire, the Adhan provides its speakers with the opportunity to create formulae from Arabic and to embed those formulae in the memories of their listeners, thereby creating the ability for listeners to recognize Arabic vocabulary through repeated exposure to it. Hurley and Elyas (2024) referred to this process as a “doctrine of signs,” in that the Adhan serves as a portal that territorializes space and time and supports the comprehension of Arabic in non-Arabic speaking environments.

In al-Haramain, melodic style differences are particularly salient, not only in overall melodic contour but also in prosodic features such as relative key, points of prominence, and phrase-final termination (Ladd, 2008). Figure 2 foregrounds a low, stable key and abrupt falling terminations. According to the insights of senior *mu’adhdhin* Ali Mulla, the Makki style is characterized by a reduced range of tonal variations, which results in a recitation that is perceived as harsher and more robust, by a relatively low and stable key, and by abrupt falling termination at the ends of phrases which gives the impression of firmness. Conversely, the Madani style is marked by an incorporation of a greater number of melismatic embellishments (Figure 3). A close examination of the verses reveals that melismatic passages, which are indicated here in red, tend to occur at the ends of lines and serve to accentuate the central lexemes. Melismatic embellishments create a more expressive prosodic landscape. The high-key initiation and smooth phrase terminations create an affective arc that contrasts with the abrupt Makki style. In Figure 3, prominence is concentrated on the red-marked lexemes through lengthening and tonal flourishes, while termination is typically more gradual (a tapered descent or sustained cadence; see Wightman et al., 1992), producing a less “cut-off” phrase ending than in Figure 2. In Madinah, these elongated

flourishes serve to create an affective climax, drawing listeners' attention to the sacred words. In Makkah, the more austere delivery serves to reinforce clarity and directness. However, both styles contribute to the uptake of Arabic formulae by non-Arabic-speaking audiences through the repeated foregrounding and memorization of these formulae.

Figure 2

Maqam Analysis of Al-Haram Al-Makki Created by Authors

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)	Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)
Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)	Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)
Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	
La ilaha illa Allah. (pause)	

Figure 3

Maqam Analysis of Al-Haram Al-Nabawi Created by the Authors

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)	Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)
Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)	Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)
Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	
La ilaha illa Allah. (pause)	

At Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Adhan exhibits analogous melodic patterns, with melisma exhibiting clustering on *Allāh*, *ṣalāh*, and *falāh*. According to a young *mu'adhdhin*, the style of his family's hijab derives from the Hijaz, a region from which his ancestor migrated to Jerusalem approximately five centuries ago (Qudsinfo, 2025). As shown in Figure 4, these clusters are also prosodically marked through shifts in relative pitch and stress, emphasizing key religious terms. Termination patterns often include soft falls, contributing to a more lyrical and resonant delivery that blends with the broader soundscape of Jerusalem. The link provided illustrates the transregional continuity of melodic and linguistic practices. Concurrently, the Adhan permeates Hebrew and English soundscapes, integrating Arabic into a distinct multilingual ecology.

Figure 4

Maqam Analysis of *Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa* Created by the Authors

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)	Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)
Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)	Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-s-Salah (pause)
Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)	Hayya 'ala-l-Falah (pause)
Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	
La ilaha illa Allah. (pause)	

At Al-Azhar Mosque, performances are frequently characterized by extended melismatic passages comprising multiple notes, which at times obscures the distinction between ritual recitation and musicality. Figure 5 reflects this density, with multiple instances of lexical emphasis and melisma concentrated at phrase ends, particularly around “*Allah*” and “*salah*.” The prosodic structure here includes rising tones and cascading descents, creating an ornamental delivery that differs markedly from the more restrained Haramain styles. As Ali Mulla (2019) has observed, this style risks devolving into a more ornamental register than that observed in Makkah or Madinah. Nevertheless, the recurrent utilization of melisma in sacred texts serves to accentuate their significance, thereby ensuring their enduring imprint on the listener's memory. Within the context of colloquial Egyptian Arabic, this heightened ornamentation serves to illustrate how local aesthetic sensibilities influence the sonic delivery of Arabic while maintaining textual constancy.

At Hagia Sophia Mosque, interviews with an Adhan trainer from the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Türkiye highlighted the expectation that *mu'adhdhins* possess a strong and beautiful voice (Koca, 2019). As represented in Figure 6, tonal variety is deliberately structured across the phrases, with prosodic peaks falling on central theological terms. Termination strategies

are more prolonged, with modulating descent used to emphasize closure. This reflects the institutionalized use of different *maqāmāt* across prayers, where musical scales subtly shape the delivery. In this tradition, stylistic diversity is institutionalized; different *maqāmāt* are associated with different daily prayers, with Rast used for *Zuhr*, *Segāh* for *Maghrib*, and *Hijāz* for ‘*Ishā*.’ This deliberate variation ensures both ritual continuity and aesthetic freshness, embedding Arabic phrases into a predominantly Turkish-speaking milieu.

Figure 5
Maqam Analysis of *Al-Azhar Mosque Created by the Authors*

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)	Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)
Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)	Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)
Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah (pause)	Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah (pause)
Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah (pause)	Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah (pause)
Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	
La ilaha illa Allah. (pause)	

Figure 6
Maqam Analysis of *Hagia Sophia Mosque Created by the Authors*

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)	Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (pause)
Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)	Ashadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (pause)
Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah (pause)	Hayya ‘ala-s-Salah (pause)
Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah (pause)	Hayya ‘ala-l-Falah (pause)
Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (pause)	
La ilaha illa Allah. (pause)	

The melodic and rhythmic aspects of the Adhan, as identified by Hurley and Elyas (2024) in their ethnographic study, create an embodied and affective experience for listeners. In addition, their research supports this study’s finding that melismatic ornamentations serve to engrave

important Arabic words and phrases such as *Allāh* and *ṣalāh* into the memories of non-Arabic speakers through the mechanism of affective resonance and repeated ritual performances.

Maqām analysis across all sites show that while the Arabic text of the Adhan remains constant, the melodic rendition of the Adhan varies based on the local culture, aesthetics, and languages used in each community. Therefore, when melismatic passages are intentionally incorporated into the sacred lexemes of the Adhan, those sacred lexemes become etched into the listener's consciousness, allowing them to develop receptive bilingual competency in environments where Arabic is not the primary language of use. Together, these studies demonstrate that the Adhan serves as much more than merely a decoration of sacred texts using music. Rather, it establishes the parameters of space and time that define and divide sacred areas from secular ones and provides an opportunity to integrate Arabic into multilingual environments and develop a common repertoire of sacred music that links Arabic as a sacred language to the everyday language use of Muslim populations in the Global South.

The Space Mode

The spatial mode under scrutiny illuminates the manner in which mosques, courtyards, and amplification systems give rise to sacred environments that serve to both organize worship and project Arabic into multilingual soundscapes. In this sense, spatial arrangements are not only architectural and symbolic but also linguistic. They territorialize religious identity while embedding Arabic into environments where other languages (e.g., Turkish, Persian, Hebrew, English, or local vernaculars) are dominant. Accordingly, space emerges as a pivotal dimension of the Adhan's function as a bilingual soundscape.

Al-Haram Al-Makki, centered on the Ka'aba, is the largest and most sacred mosque in Islam. In accordance with the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites (RCMC_KSA, 2023), the larger sacred precinct covers almost 559 square kilometers whereas the mosque itself covers around 380 square meters. The building has thirteen minarets, and each contains about eight thousand loudspeakers which transmit the Adhan into what is estimated to be 650,000 square meters of auditory space (The General Authority for the Care of the Two Holy Mosques, 2025). As a result of this configuration, the listener can hear Arabic from every direction. Therefore, the listeners are guided towards the Qibla and are surrounded by a sacred space characterized by territoriality. It should be noted that this auditory experience occurs in a multilingual pilgrimage environment where millions of pilgrims (including those who speak Urdu, Malay, Turkish, English, etc.) listen to, repeat, and absorb Arabic formulae regardless of their first language. Therefore, the spatial organization of the mosque reinforces Arabic as a common repertoire and promotes its function as a facilitator of bilingual development.

Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah, covers an area of 135,000 square meters and is characterized by ten minarets (Ministry of Finance, 2017). The spatial organization of the site functions as a manifestation of the Prophet's daily practices and as a site of worship, thereby creating an atmosphere of devotion for visitors. The pilgrims have many ways to express themselves through their activities such as walking, praying, and communicating in many different languages. Although the pilgrims speak many different languages, the Arabic of the Adhan is the one common spiritual experience and provides the same foundation of spirituality for each individual pilgrim's spiritual experiences. Just as in Makkah, the physical layout here provides a bodily bilingual experience of ritual practice. The Arabic phrases used by the pilgrims during these ritualistic acts are part of both the physical rhythm of the community and the auditory rhythm of the community as it worships.

Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, with its four minarets and 144,000 m² compound (Qudsinfo.com), is the third most holy place in Islam and was the site of the Prophet's nocturnal ascension (*isrā' wa-l-mi'rāj*). By incorporating Arabic into the auditory environment of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, which is largely composed of Hebrew and English, Arabic asserts a territorialized presence amid the contentious politics of the city. Moreover, the Adhan provides an opportunity for non-Arabic speaking worshippers to hear and retain Arabic formulae on a daily basis.

Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, tied historically to its university, is known for being a stronghold of Islamic scholarship. The four minarets and 12,000 m² area of Al-Azhar Mosque (Al-Youm Al-Sabea, 2024) provide a platform for the transmission of the Adhan in classical Arabic in an urban environment in where Egyptian Arabic is predominant. This produces a hybrid bilingual ecology in which Arabic functions as both a sacred liturgical code and a cultural register. Consequently, receptive competence is reinforced as well as vernacular usage.

The Hagia Sophia Mosque in Istanbul, which was originally a Byzantine church converted by Sultan Mehmed II, reopened in 2020 for Muslim prayer after being closed for 85 years (AlJazeera, 2025). The minarets of Hagia Sophia, a prominent landmark in Istanbul, have a history of resonating with the Adhan, the Islamic call to prayer, over the city's predominantly Turkish-speaking populace. As Hurley and Elyas (2024) contend in their "more-than-digital" framework, such spatial projection territorializes sacred sound in ways that extend beyond architectural boundaries. In this context, Arabic functions as a *lingua sacra* (see Mallette, 2021; Salverda, 2018) layered onto a national Turkish soundscape. This layering embodies both religious continuity and cultural hybridity.

The territorialization of the Adhan's spatial mode at all sites demonstrates how Arabic is embedded into everyday life in multilingual societies on a non-sacred level with the use of amplification technologies and sacred architecture design. Each recitation momentarily deterritorializes the primary local language spoken (Turkish, Hebrew, or colloquial Arabic) and reinforces Arabic as the central element of the multilingual community within the space of public spaces. Thus, the Adhan transforms each architectural environment into a bilingual soundscape in which Arabic is consistently used to provide an identity and/or to understand the multilingual community. The spatial territorialization of the Adhan is also politically and spiritually charged. As Hurley and Elyas (2024) demonstrated, the technological and regulatory mechanisms that construct the urban soundscape are constructed from the voices that have control over those mechanisms. This research therefore serves as a basis for evidence that the Adhan has both a sacred function and a contested function in multilingual urban ecosystems. In addition, Hurley's and Elyas's (2024) findings expand upon the findings of this research by showing that Arabic not only territorializes mosques and interior courtyards but also the larger urban ecosystem where competing linguistic and political claims exist.

The Time Mode

The time mode underscores the way the Adhan structures quotidian life by demarcating the transition from mundane activities to sacred ritual. The Adhan, in its most fundamental sense, functions as a temporal signal, designating specific moments for worship and guiding listeners' orientation from worldly pursuits to prayer. In the context of Peircean semiotics, these recurring Arabic prompts function as indexical signs that territorialize time, thereby transforming quotidian hours into sacred intervals that are recognizable across diverse contexts.

In terms of people experiencing the live experience of Al-Haram Al-Makki, Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Al-Azhar Mosque, and Hagia Sophia, the Adhan generates an audible

confirmation of sacred time by synchronizing with the movements of the people around it. While some of the people listening to the Adhan stop what they were doing and pray, while others listen and continue on their way talking to someone else walking in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, everyone recognizes the Arabic words *Allāhu akbar* and *ḥayya ‘ala ṣ-ṣalāh* as temporal references. To the listeners who do not speak Arabic, the Adhan formulas become consistent auditory reference points that are consistently repeated throughout the day and, therefore, allow for the inclusion of a small but resilient Arabic vocabulary into the multilingual soundscape of the Global South and beyond.

Temporal territorialization is not confined to the three most sacred mosques. In settings such as Al-Azhar or Hagia Sophia, where the intensity of local sacredness is reduced, the Adhan nevertheless functions to delineate the daily rhythms and demarcate the transition into prayer. Despite the fact that not all participants are present for the entirety of the ritual, the cyclical call indexes sacred time for all within hearing range. During Ramadan, Eid, or Jumu’ah (Friday prayers), this temporal effect intensifies, as overlapping calls and heightened participation multiply the moments when Arabic becomes the dominant audible code in public space.

The data indicates that one of the most important factors contributing to Arabic being used as both a liturgical language and as a linguistic unit over time is the repetition of the Adhan throughout the day. In addition, the repeated territorialization of everyday routines through the Adhan also continue to support the use of Arabic phrases that have been identified as recognizable by speakers of numerous languages in multilingual settings in the Global South and internationally.

Intermodal Analysis

The Adhan is more than just a call of prayer. It is a highly layered multimodal discourse where sound, space and time interact to represent the values of religion, society, and culture. The three modes have unique contributions to the Arabic language: *Maqam* and intonation contribute to how you feel and highlight important Arabic words (sound), Architecture and amplification project the Arabic Language into public and virtual environments (space), and Cyclical repetition create a continuous reminder of Arabic expressions all through the day (time). The effectiveness of communication for the Adhan comes from the interaction of these semiotic resources, which together form an entire, but is a total greater than the sum of the parts. If any one of the above modes were to be absent or weakened, the power of the Adhan as a ritual and as a linguistic event would be weakened.

From a bilingual viewpoint, the intramodality of the Adhan demonstrates how Arabic can be maintained as an intelligible language among multiple multilingual populations through melodic ornamentation and spatial projection employed during the Adhan and through the temporal repetition of the Adhan, creating an opportunity for the development of a ritualized bilingual repertoire.

Using Peirce’s terminology, the Adhan represents an ongoing semiotic process. Using Deleuze’s terminology, the Adhan may also represent an act of territorialization, which is characterized by the marking of both sacred space and time with Arabic, while simultaneously deterritorializing (or decentering) the dominant local languages and then reterritorializing them around what Salverda (2018) refers to as the *lingua sacra*.

As Hurley and Elyas (2024) contend, echoing ideas about the “postdigital” in the work of Bhatt and Gurlay (2024), phenomena such as the Adhan are “more-than-digital,” with meaning emerging from the interplay of multiple resources across modalities. The present analysis extends this claim by showing that the Adhan is also multimodal in its *translanguaging soundscapes* (Wei,

2022) where the Adhan is curated as “semiotic assemblages” (Pennycook, 2017) for the listeners locally and internationally. Its multimodal enactment guarantees that Arabic, though not the primary spoken language of most listeners, remains audible, recognizable, and meaningful to “[link] people with each other, external resources and cultural traditions” (Cowley, 2012, p. 2). In this way, the Adhan not only territorializes sacred soundscapes but also cultivates Arabic as a shared bilingual resource in the multilingual environments of the Global South and beyond.

Discussion

The Adhan was performed differently at each of the five locations based on the different *maqāmāt*, building configurations, and time-based practices present within local cultures. Hurley and Elyas (2024), in their study of Jeddah and Dubai, found that the soundscape of the Adhan is influenced by technology, history, and culture. The Adhan’s variations in pitch, tone, and recitation style show how flexible it is as an intermodal practice. Although there were variations in the ways that the Adhan was practiced, the Arabic text remained constant. The fact that Arabic phrases like *Allāhu akbar* and *ḥayya ‘ala ṣ-salāh* are universally recognizable helps keep Arabic in multilingual environments. Therefore, local variations demonstrate the Adhan’s ability to function as both a culturally-specific soundscape and a tool for establishing a common bilingual competence among Muslims.

Both the prosody and melody of the Adhan contribute to the process of meaning-making. Through the application of emphasis to particular lexemes (such as *Allāh*, *ṣalāh*, and *falāḥ*) and the application of melodic ornamentation (*maqāmāt*), the theological significance of such terms is emphasized. Thus, the terms are more likely to be remembered. For those who do not speak Arabic but are members of Muslim communities within Türkiye, India, Malaysia, etc., the Adhan contributes to the development of liturgical bilingualism (defined as a functional, receptive, ritualistic Arabic repertoire developed primarily through repetition, rather than formal instruction). The structural components of the Adhan (repetition, pausing, and rhythmic cadence) serve as auditory scaffolding for the recognition of the Adhan across languages. Kress and van Leewen (2011) observe that rhythm and phrasing represent two fundamental modes of multimodal communication. In this context, the rhythmic and phrasal structure of the Adhan facilitates its intelligibility regardless of the extent of the individual’s Arabic proficiency.

The unique way that Arabic is emphasized through sound in the Adhan is quite dissimilar to the way that Arabic inscriptions have been utilized in Indonesian mosques as an example. Inscriptions are typically viewed as symbols and are utilized primarily to provide a means to communicate on a day-to-day basis (Yusuf & Putrie, 2022). As such, the use of inscriptions and the use of sound create two different forms of bilingualism in terms of outcome; while inscriptions seem to freeze Arabic as a representation of cultural heritage, the Adhan provides aural encoding of Arabic in memory as a practical liturgical repertoire.

In addition, the temporal and spatial placement of the Adhan further supports its bilingual and multimodal characteristics. The five daily calls, with their repetitive nature, allow for Arabic phrases to be communicated to individuals at a regular, predictable frequency, thereby providing Arabic as a form of territory that can be experienced as part of the rhythm of everyday life. When overlapping calls and heightened participation multiply moments of Arabic audibility, this phenomenon is further exacerbated during Ramadan, Friday prayers, and Eid. The spatial dissemination of the Adhan, facilitated by minarets, courtyards, and amplification systems, transcends geographical boundaries, momentarily disrupting the territorial dominance of local

languages such as Turkish, Hebrew, and colloquial Egyptian Arabic. These languages are reterritorialized within the context of Arabic as a sacrosanct language. These spatial and temporal dynamics demonstrate the Adhan's capacity to integrate Arabic into the quotidian rhythms of life, irrespective of the local linguistic environment. When considered as a whole, these findings are consistent with the research of Alsaif and Starks (2018, 2021), who demonstrate how sacred and mundane semiotic practices collectively define the soundscape of the Grand Mosque. While the extant studies emphasize the manner in which Arabic interacts with multilingual signage and translation technologies in Makkah, the present study demonstrates that the Adhan itself functions as a bilingual soundscape across multiple contexts. A close examination of these two bodies of work reveals that Arabic persists as a *lingua sacra* not in isolation, but rather through its entanglement with spatial, temporal, and multilingual practices that continually territorialize its presence. In this sense, Arabic's role in the Adhan mirrors the function of English in Accra's religious signage (Boamah-Boateng & Anderson, 2024) as both serve as neutralizing codes that transcend local linguistic divisions, though one is secular-prestigious and the other sacred-liturgical.

In addition to those formal ritual contexts, the Adhan demonstrates the ambivalence of bilingual recognition through its symbolic performances. One example of the nature of this phenomenon occurred in the 2025 U.S. Presidential Inauguration when Arabic was temporarily included within an otherwise mostly English ceremonial context. The Adhan's presence in the ceremony signified the inclusion of Muslim communities. The administration's subsequent statement that English would be the only official language of the United States demonstrated that the symbolic bilingualism present at the inauguration had limitations. The administration's formal recognition of Arabic was largely symbolic and lacked actual policy changes that would have supported the development of linguistic diversity in the U.S. Additionally, the analysis of Hurley and Elyas (2024) of Adhan performances in minority and disputed contexts demonstrate how Adhan can serve as a symbolic marker of recognition in those environments; however, the Adhan is not subject to the continuous, recurring repetition that defines the existence of real liturgical bilingualism. Similarly, the display of Arabic on mosque signs represents another form of symbolic bilingualism. Both in Ghana and in Indonesia, Arabic is often displayed for symbolic purposes even though worshippers are not routinely engaging with it (Boamah-Boateng & Anderson, 2024; Yusuf & Putrie, 2022). In contrast, the Adhan provides a method for maintaining the authenticity of bilingualism through its daily recitations, where sacred formulas are recognized and remembered over time.

There are many examples where the nature of both sacred and secular areas can be compared. Arabic, in terms of commerce in Saudi Arabia, will compete with English for supremacy; whereas, English represents modernity and prestige, Arabic will serve as a symbol of tradition and religion (Hazaea & Qassam, 2025). However, in the case of the Adhan, as part of the liturgical repertoires of multilingual communities, Arabic becomes the dominant language. This difference illustrates how religion protects sacred language from the pressures of global English and therefore enables Arabic to continue being a common liturgical resource.

The symbolic and authentic elements of the Adhan have implications for some of the Southeast Asia cases of bilingualism. For example, in Kuala Lumpur, Jawi is sometimes used as a symbolic representation of one's heritage or as an indicator of adherence to signage regulations; however, Jawi is not used adequately for communication (Gu & Coluzzi, 2024). Similarly, the use of Pangasinan is acknowledged on the visual displays of churches in the Philippines, yet is visually secondary to English (Esteron, 2021). Sacred languages in worship spaces in Malaysia are also present as symbolic representations (Coluzzi & Kitade, 2015). These studies collectively show the

differences between the visual and auditory dimensions of bilingualism. Although inscriptions are typically used to represent sacred or local codes in a tokenistic manner, the repeated performance of the Adhan continues to inscribe Arabic as aural and functional repertoires. A similar dynamic exists in the religious setting of Accra (Boamah-Boateng & Anderson, 2024).

The studies show the Adhan is a discourse on time, space, and sound and a bilingual practice of Arabic as a *lingua sacra* for speakers of multiple languages and that it exists in an “ummatic discourse”—one that goes beyond the confines of nation-state or language (Bhatt et al., 2025). Although the way the Adhan is performed varies depending on city and culture, the Arabic text of the Adhan remains stable and provides a global shared repertoire that unites Muslims worldwide. The use of melodic emphasis, spatial projection, and temporal repetition have also been found to enhance Arabic understanding and identity of the community and place the sacred language at the center of community life. This makes the Adhan a “multimodal discourse” according to Hurley & Elyas (2024), and this research takes the term further by showing how the Adhan is a bilingual soundscape that continually territorializes Arabic in the Global South and beyond. Additionally, the Adhan presents the contested and symbolic use of Arabic, as evidenced by its appearance in Indonesian mosque signage and Saudi commercial branding. Furthermore, the Adhan shows the function of sacred ritual in maintaining Arabic as a lived repertoire to support comprehension and identity formation through the medium of auditory experience. Alongside those of Hurley and Elyas (2024), this study suggests that the Adhan should also be thought of as an affective soundscape. The features of Arabic as a spoken language (i.e., its prosodic contours, spatial amplification, and temporal rhythms) have been shown to elicit embodied experiences that support the retention of Arabic comprehension and identity across multilingual contexts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the Adhan through a multimodal discourse analysis of sound, space, and time at five different sites: Al-Haram Al-Makki, Al-Haram Al-Nabawi, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Al-Azhar Mosque and Hagia Sophia Mosque. The data analysis revealed that the Adhan is more than just a religious ritual, it is a communicative event shaped by the local history, technology, and social cultural context of each location. One of the significant contributions of this study is the identification of the Adhan as a bilingual soundscape. While there is variation in terms of melodic, spatial, and temporal components across the five locations, the Arabic text is constant. The constancy of the Arabic text allows Muslims to find commonality and recognition in phrases like *Allāhu akbar* and *ḥayya ʿala ṣ-salāh* regardless of whether they speak the same first language. Through the repeated use of ritual repetition, prosodic emphasis, and spatial amplification, the Adhan becomes a catalyst for the maintenance of Arabic as a *lingua sacra*, and for the promotion of functional receptive liturgical bilingualism across multilingual communities in the Global South and beyond.

Methodologically, the study integrated multimodal discourse analysis and elements of ecolinguistics to locate the Adhan as a semiotic event that territorializes soundscapes; deterritorializes and reterritorializes meaning across digital platforms, and unifies melody, language, and ritual practice. This method also enabled researchers to examine how the religion’s traditional practices and beliefs are changed and/or mediated in modern settings while still having an influence on the participants’ spiritual/linguistic environments.

This study has the potential to contribute to several areas of research including bilingualism, sociolinguistic theory, and education. The findings show that since participants were consistently exposed to Arabic within the ritual context, where Arabic is typically not spoken, the Adhan and other sacred rituals may also serve as an opportunity for daily bilingualism to develop. In addition, the findings provide support for "liturgical bilingualism" (an area of research that is currently underdeveloped) in which proficiency in two languages is developed through participation in multimodal rituals rather than school-based instruction. Moreover, the study adds to the body of knowledge within sociolinguistic theory by representing the Adhan as a bilingual soundscape, a concept that defines how individuals perceive their physical space, temporarily removes the dominant local language(s), and establishes Arabic as a common repertoire. Finally, the study identifies the repetition of content, the rhythm and pitch of the Adhan, and its use of spatial components as potential models for educators to apply when developing strategies to encourage receptive bilingualism through the use of multimodal discourse in the classroom.

As such, this study, along with research on worship signage in Kuala Lumpur (Coluzzi & Kitade, 2015; Gu & Coluzzi, 2024), Indonesia (Yusuf & Putrie, 2022), and the Philippines (Esteron, 2021) highlights the dual function of religion in creating multilingual ecologies of the Global South. While visual display systems often do not include vernacular languages—and when they do, they are typically reduced to symbols for the Arabic language—the Adhan is an important means by which Arabic is sustained as a ritual repertoire through repeated audible use. Religion appears therefore to be one location where vernaculars can be marginalized in signage while at the same time functioning as a sacred, bilingual reinforcement mechanism; thus, it reinforces that sacred and vernacular codes operate differently across different modalities. Research on commercial landscapes in Saudi Arabia has illustrated how Arabic is mediated with English in secular spaces, where English indexes both modernity and prestige. The religious ritual of the Adhan, however, maintains the dominance of Arabic in the sacred time and space of the Adhan, shields it from outside influence, and continues to serve as a shared liturgical resource.

Thus, it is shown that there are differences between symbolic and authentic bilingualisms. The symbolic bilingualism is demonstrated by the individual's ritual actions in a non-native environment (i.e., performing the Adhan at the 2025 U.S. presidential inauguration). Although it provides the demonstration of inclusion, it does not provide structural support for continued use of Arabic. The authentic bilingualism is demonstrated by the individual's continuous use of Arabic as part of their ritual practices to promote and maintain continued support for Arabic as an authentic bilingual repertoire. Together, the findings from this research serve to guide future studies on multilingualism in the Global South. While visual representations may frequently represent and compete for prestige, ritual representations of sounds will continue to be the catalysts of promoting and maintaining sacred repertoires and therefore establish functionally bilingual communities.

It is important to note the limitations of the current study as well. The opportunity to complete embodied research with live soundwalks in Makkah and Madinah was an enormous advantage; however, the use of digital walkthroughs for Jerusalem, Cairo, and Istanbul eliminated the researcher's ability to fully realize the experiential aspects of the senses involved in participating in the Adhan. The researcher made the decision to incorporate a mixed-methods approach to this study based upon the constraints of access and funding to the field sites. However, the representation of how many Muslims today experience the Adhan both in person and through the internet reflects the lived experiences of contemporary Islamic soundscapes.

Finally, this study situates the Adhan, a sonic and semiotic event that instills Arabic comprehension and identity into multilingual environments while encouraging spiritual devotion, as

a multimodal and bilingual practice. In addition, this study makes a broader contribution to discussions in linguistic landscape studies about how sacred language can be utilized as a resource for bilingual development, symbolic identity, and intercultural connection. Through identifying the Adhan as a bilingual soundscape, this study has identified areas for further investigation into the relationship of ritual, bilingualism, and multimodality within the Global South.

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