

Accommodation, translanguaging, and (in)discreteness in the repertoire: A scalar-chronotopic approach

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Abstract

A shift from understanding languages as discrete towards understanding them as undifferentiated features in the repertoire has caused disagreements over the reality of linguistic boundaries. In this paper, I show how a middle-ground approach is achievable by applying the complex workings of a scalar-chronotopic lens to the discourse of bilingual/multidialectal Bahrainis. I argue that both perspectives on (in)discreteness become relevant in accounting for bi/multilingual subjectivities: at times, Arabic is idealized as a large-scale code against English, whereas at other times, the intrusiveness of English is backgrounded to show affiliation for one Arabic variety over another. I show accommodation in communication as a spatiotemporally layered process, where the internalized contextual factors within the repertoire may overlap with or take precedence over the immediate context. As such, this paper adds to the question of linguistic discreteness, with implications for our understanding of the repertoire and its utility in bi/multilingual practices and accommodation theory.

KEYWORDS

accommodation, Arabic, English, multilingualism, repertoire, translanguaging

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent efforts in applied linguistics have criticized approaching multilingualism as a collection of named languages that coexist as discrete entities in a multilingual repertoire. Instead, they call for understanding the repertoire as a unified sum of linguistic features that is unaffected by boundaries between named languages, as in English, Spanish, and so on. This view considers such named codes as social constructs without psychological representation in the repertoire and has been captured by new theoretical proposals, variously labeled *polylinguaging* (Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen et al., 2015), *metrolinguism* (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014), and most prominently, *translinguaging* (TL) (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; Li Wei, 2016; Otheguy et al., 2015). Bi/multilingual practices in a TL paradigm are thus understood as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 218). Although many scholars have welcomed the term as a positive advancement towards embracing bi/multilingual individuals, communities, and practices, others have rejected its proposal of linguistic indiscreteness (Auer, 2022; Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; MacSwan, 2017). This paper merges various conceptualizations of the repertoire as being socially, ideologically, and personally conditioned to argue for a spatiotemporal view of linguistic discreteness. Namely, I focus not on *whether languages are discrete* but on *when they become discrete* in the repertoires of social actors. Using a scalar-chronotopic approach, I argue that the indexical and ideological entanglements of different codes are embodied in the repertoire, making discreteness possible even in the so-called absence of contextual constraints. Under such a scalar-chronotopic view of the repertoire, “watchful adherence” to linguistic boundaries may be internally imagined and/or imposed, making it improbable that “everything is being accessed” (García et al., 2021, p. 214) within the repertoire across all time-space configurations.

My analysis pays attention to *accommodation* (Giles, 1973; Giles et al., 1973) as a theory that is central to the debate on bi/multilingual subjectivities, especially in multidialectal Arabic speakers, and that is also linked with the concept of the repertoire (see Chakrani, 2015; Hachimi, 2013, 2018; S’hiri, 2002). First developed by Giles in the early 1970s, accommodation theory refers to communicative and linguistic changes and adjustments that are meant to “create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction” (Giles & Ogay, 2007, p. 325) through *convergence* to or *divergence* from the style of the interlocutor. I pay attention to how bilingual (English and Arabic) and multidialectal (Arabic varieties) speakers in Bahrain view accommodation differently depending on their attitudes towards different codes in different interactions. Arabic provides an interesting vantage point into (in)discreteness as the label is applied to multiple linguistically similar varieties. However, these similarities among different Arabic varieties as well as English(es) can be blurred or accentuated to account for various forms of meaning-making and identity work. I show how large-scale ‘named languages’ (e.g., Arabic) may suffice at times, whereas at other times, they are dissected into smaller-scale codes for different (real and imagined) speech communities, for example, Lebanese Arabic, Saudi Arabic, and Sunni Arabic (literally referring to a Muslim sect). On this basis, I argue that because the repertoire is contextually restricted, be it due to external or embodied constraints, it thus becomes *contextually discrete*.

This study thus offers a rare examination of Muslim sect-affiliated Arabic dialect attitudes in an undertheorized context and in relation to English, as the role of identification and global languages is commonly eclipsed in understanding Arabic varieties (Albirini, 2016). It further informs our understanding of accommodation theory, as it may not always be directly linked with the role of the interlocutor as commonly understood in the literature (akin to Bell’s (1984) audience design model). Namely, I argue that embodied boundaries may manifest even under lax immediate contextual factors.

All in all, my goal is to provide an alternative perspective on the complexities and hybridities of bi/multilingual practices in times of great mobility that otherwise may be missed or dismissed if codes are understood to be rigidly discrete or entirely indiscrete.

In what follows, I present an overview of the sociolinguistic scene with regard to English and Arabic in Bahrain. I follow with theoretical discussions about the repertoire and some of the approaches to its understanding that complement my arguments. I present the theoretical tools I draw from and how they inform some of our discussions on accommodation theory and the repertoire. I then describe my methods of data collection, followed by my analysis of data. I conclude with my discussions and conclusions in line with the overall aims of the paper.

2 | ENGLISH AND THE ARABIC BINARY IN BAHRAIN

Bahrain is a small island country on the Persian Gulf (also known as the Arabian Gulf) of approximately 1.5 million people, half of whom are expatriates with various languages. Despite a diverse multilingual scene, Arabic and English are the two main languages used, where Arabic (specifically, Standard Arabic) is the official written language, and English occupies an important role as a *de facto* resource in various domains that is tied to status, modernity, and social mobility. This has led to dual modes of indexicality between English and Arabic, where Arabic, by contrast, is tied to ideas of tradition, authenticity, and locality (see Findlow, 2006). The strong presence of English has also led to feelings of anxiety about the status of Arabic on the island in particular and the Arab Gulf region in general (Ahmad, 2023; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Hillman & Ocampo Eibenschutz, 2018; Hopkyns, 2014; Hopkyns & Zoghbor, 2022). Suleiman and Abdelhay (2020) have argued that such feelings of anxiety can become part of the repertoire, particularly in Arabic speakers who are socialized into the diglossic and multidialectal reality of Arabic (see also Suleiman, 2014). Increased rates of stratification and varied levels of Arabic and English proficiencies are also expected under the Englishization of the region due to the “diglossic features of Arabic, as well as the linguistic distance between Arabic and English” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 62). In addition to anxieties regarding the loss of the Arabic language, varied levels of proficiency also lead to feelings of uncertainty regarding the authenticity of local and cosmopolitan identities in Bahraini speakers with lower proficiencies in Arabic and/or English (see Ahmad, 2023; Al-Alawi, 2023; Al-Saraj, 2014; Hillman, 2023; Hopkyns, 2014).

Under the forces of rapid modernization, Englishization, and linguistic variation, the sociolinguistic situation in Bahrain has become quite complex. With the privileged role of English as well as the large presence of expatriate workers, English-medium private schools are widely available alongside free Arabic-medium state schools (Abou-El-Kheir & MacLeod, 2017; Barnawi, 2017). Moreover, private schools are typically co-educational, whereas state schools are single-sex, making the distinctions not only linguistic and socioeconomic but inclusive of the socialization trajectory of the students. This has led to varied levels of bilingualism, and different types of bicultural (e.g., in terms of Westernization) experiences among young Bahrainis. Another outcome is the emergence of the ‘chicken nugget’ (CN) construct, which can be traced back to late 2010 and is used to poke fun at English-dominant, typically private school-educated youth for being perceived as linguistically and culturally distant (Al-Alawi, 2023).

In terms of Arabic, beyond the standard variety used in formal settings, there are two main colloquial varieties often labeled and perceived in terms of sectarian affiliation. That is, the Arab Sunni Muslim population and the Arab Shia Muslim (Baharna) population on the island speak two different varieties known locally as Bahraini (sometimes also colloquially known as Sunni Arabic) and Bahrani Arabic. Since the two varieties are close in spelling, I will be referring to the local variety

associated with the Arab Sunni Muslim community as BA1 and the variety spoken by the Arab Shia Muslim (or Baharna) community as BA2 throughout this paper. Generally, characteristics of contemporary Bahraini society are often described and perceived along the lines of ethno-sectarian difference, which extends to the perception of their respective dialects. The Arab Sunni Muslim community, which includes the ruling family of Al Khalifa, is often associated with occupying urban neighborhoods and influential employments, such as the military and police force. By contrast, the Arab Shia Muslim community is associated with occupying villages and having less representation in similar influential and decision-making lines of work (al-Khūrī, 1980; Lawson, 1989).¹ As a result, BA1 is considered to be the more locally prestigious variety, whereas BA2 is commonly associated with stigma and mockery (see Al-Qouz, 2009; Holes, 1983). Overall, identity tensions in terms of linguistic differences in Bahrain can exist along multiple lines: between English and Arabic when English is viewed as a foreign threat, leading to the ostracization of English-dominant Bahrainis (CNs), or between Arabic varieties as participants strongly align with one variety over another, as will become apparent in the excerpts to follow.

3 | CONTEXT AND THE REPERTOIRE

Originating from Gumperz, the repertoire is the sum of linguistic resources (languages, dialects, styles, etc.) that an individual or group has at their disposal to provide “the weapons of everyday communication” (Gumperz, 1964, p. 138). With later advancements that define language beyond its verbal capacities, the repertoire has become understood as inclusive of other paralinguistic forms of communication (gestures, dress, etc.)—retheorized as a “communicative” or “semiotic” repertoire (Kusters, 2021; Oostendorp, 2022; Rymes, 2014). The concept of the repertoire has been useful to sociolinguists, who have used it to argue that code-switching/TL is a strategic rather than unsystematic phenomenon (Auer, 2013; Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2011; Myers-Scotton, 1995). As the TL conception rejects the existence of languages as distinct entities beyond the social sphere, it thus views the repertoire as the sum of not *codes* but *features* in an undifferentiated manner (Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019; Wei, 2016). That is, a unitary repertoire is the only real representation of a bi/multilingual’s (internal) linguistic resources, whereas named languages exist only in external perceptions. TL is thus viewed as the seamless application of these features without adhering to the constructed conventions of discrete, named languages.

More recent approaches to understanding the repertoire mark “a shift away from structure, system, and regularity toward approaches that acknowledge fluidity and creativity in linguistic practices” (Busch, 2012, p. 506). For example, Maryns and Blommaert (2001) referred to the repertoire as a continuum that is not free of indexical entanglements, influences, and consequences. This is due to the speakers’ engagement with different spaces of interaction, resulting in a “truncated” repertoire with various incomplete ‘bits’ of communication (Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Backus, 2013; see also Blommaert & Rampton, 2015). Although Gumperz’s initial proposal has linked repertoires with speech communities, Blommaert’s (2010) vision for a *sociolinguistics of mobility* conceives of the repertoire as the result of complex mobilities and interactions with various environments and practices. Similarly, Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2014) idea of a “spatial repertoire” refers to how particular resources are accessible in particular spaces or domains. Therefore, regardless of their view on the existence of distinct codes, the repertoire is proposed as being spatially differentiated. Moreover, Busch (2017) proposed a view of the repertoire as a “chronotopically layered structure” (p. 16), referring to how social actors do not only position themselves in relation to what is directly present in an interaction

but to what is absent as well. I align with such contextually grounded conceptions of the repertoire, further arguing that for a repertoire to be truly undifferentiated, context would have to be absent.

As an extension of the repertoire, accommodation, also known as communication accommodation theory or CAT, refers to the ways in which individuals adjust their language use to accommodate or adapt to their interlocutors. This may involve convergence, where speakers adjust their language use to be more similar to their interlocutor, or divergence, where they emphasize their differences from the interlocutor (Giles & Powesland, 1997). Accommodation can be linked to the concept of the repertoire in that it highlights the importance of considering the range of linguistic availabilities that individuals have at their disposal when communicating with others. Although the repertoire is conceived of as an internally held sum of linguistic resources, accommodation is the idea that drawing from these resources is constantly in dialog with and influenced by external factors (Dragojevic et al., 2016; Giles et al., 1991; Giles & Ogay, 2007). In this framework, the interlocutor is often foregrounded as influencing communicative adjustments. That is, people come into interactions with a certain orientation that is shaped by their own knowledge, memories, and the sociohistorical context before making communicative adjustments based on who else is present in the interaction. This paper argues that such adjustments may not always be made due to the internalization of various contextual constraints, overriding the immediate role of the interlocutor. As such, this aligns with Pennycook and Otsuji's (2014) proposal that the spatially organized deployment of linguistic resources is not only based on the effect of space on language choices but ends up influencing how various spaces are perceived and constructed. Following this conception, I further argue that certain codes become attached to certain timespaces, wherein the process of accommodation is influenced by the memories of being in and experiencing that timespace rather than orienting to the more immediate contextual factors such as the interlocutor.

4 | SCALES, CHRONOTOPES, AND ACCOMMODATION

The mobility of people (e.g., due to (im)migration) and resources (e.g., due to digital advancements) has led to heightened levels of hybridity and complexity in the sociolinguistic practices, identities, and discourses in globalized contexts (Blommaert, 2010; Jacquemet, 2005; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021; Koven, 2004). As such, sociolinguistic research recognizes the importance of context in understanding how ideologies and discourses emerge, spread, and evolve across different times, places, and in relation to various local and global factors. On this basis, recent scholarship has considered various contextual elements, going beyond the understanding of context simply as a 'space where language occurs' in tracing the relationship between context and sociolinguistic phenomena.

Born from these efforts, *chronotopes* and *scales* are two interrelated lenses that consider the role of time and space in shaping social interaction and communication. Bakhtin's (1981) initial conceptualization of the novelistic chronotope (or *timespace*) highlighted how time and space are fused in the literary novel. Since then, it has been retheorized to conceive of context as "a sketch of personhood in time and place" (Agha, 2007, p. 321) in Agha's adapted concept of the cultural chronotope, referring to dominant "materialized" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 247) timespaces that can be invoked in discursive events, for example, the "Soviet chronotope" (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) or the "post-socialist East German chronotope" (Davidson, 2007). The chronotope is thus a "mobile" context (Blommaert, 2017), which can also serve as a point of contextualization in meaning-making, for example, to contrast, orient to, and (re)construct various chronotopic images (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Goebel & Manns, 2020; Karimzad, 2016, 2021; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021; Lempert & Perrino, 2007; Sanei, 2022).

In my scalar-chronotopic approach, scales are the “scopes of communicability” that organize various chronotopes in terms of their scope (on a horizontal axis) and dominance (on a vertical axis) (Blommaert, 2015). Contextualization processes can thus be described as *scaling*, whereby social actors categorize, evaluate, foreground, and background chronotopes based on their perceived size, importance, and relevance (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016; Catedral, 2018, 2021; Flowers, 2021; Gal, 2016; Lempert & Carr, 2016; Paugh, 2019; Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). For example, the aforementioned CN label (see Section 2) is more readily communicable within Bahrain as a context that supports its communicability as referring to an English-dominant Bahraini persona but requires further contextualization across other timespaces.

I view the repertoire and acts of accommodation through such a context-sensitive lens wherein sociolinguistic behavior is viewed beyond its narrow moment and place of occurrence. The following examples will illustrate how participants’ various codes are subject to various spatial, temporal, and ideological constraints based on contextual factors within and beyond the interaction. Speakers may conceive of converging with their interlocutor as an act emerging from direct communicative necessity (e.g., from/to less proximate codes) or as the result of the embodied shame of a particular (stigmatized) code. Much like the context-sensitive approaches to the repertoire detailed above, I propose that accommodation is a spatiotemporally layered process where the embodied memories of context in the repertoire may overlap with (or override) the immediate context. That is, although accommodation is viewed as initiating from a “sociohistorical context” before adjustments are made, a scalar-chronotopic approach can consider the sociohistorical context as intertwined with the adjustments rather than preceding them. As such, whereas the role of the interlocutor is prioritized in accommodation theory, the integration of a spatiotemporal view of the repertoire can provide richer analyses of accommodative acts and the invocation of (in)discrete codes within them.

5 | METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

The data in this study come from my larger ethnographic research in Bahrain, beginning in 2018. The dataset consists of approximately 60 hours of audio recordings of conversations and minimally structured interviews, along with my notes and observations of bilingual/multidialectal Bahrainis of different ages and backgrounds. The majority of data comes from younger Bahrainis in their early twenties to early thirties focusing on the variation in their proficiencies, metapragmatic practices, attitudes, and identities with regard to English and Arabic. The sessions typically start with a general question, only using follow-up questions when the conversation seemed to drift away from the main topics of interest or if something was particularly interesting to the group or myself as casually involved in the conversations. To analyze patterns of identifying with cross-dialectal Arabic accommodation, the examples below mainly come from participants who are proficient in Arabic and were selected to represent larger patterns found in the analyzed dataset. All participants who appear in the presented data, including myself, are state school youth (SSY) who grew up speaking BA2 as their native or home dialect. As speakers of a stigmatized Arabic variety, in addition to having attended Arabic-medium schools, SSY’s positionality with regard to various English and Arabic varieties is interesting for the analysis. The excerpts were transcribed, adapting the conventions of conversation analysis tradition (see the Appendix). Applying a scalar-chronotopic lens, the analysis was carried out to show how (in)discreteness is foregrounded or backgrounded in the participants’ metapragmatic reflections and discursive patterns. More details about the participants will be provided in the analysis with regard to their proficiency in and identification with Arabic and English, along with their pseudonyms and any other relevant information.

6 | SCALAR-CHRONOTOPIC (IN)DISCRETENESS IN ACCOMMODATION

The analyses below highlight the fractalities of invocations and deployments of (in)discrete codes (Irvine & Gal, 2009), depending on the level of identification with various codes across time-space configurations. Participants show varied attitudes towards converging Arabic dialects based on their scalar perspectives and attitudes towards different varieties. Convergence thus emerges as (il)legitimate depending on various (imagined) contextual factors, grouping or dissecting Arabic into variously scaled codes to account for complex identification patterns. In their discussions of CNs, participants tend to background Arabic dialectal diversity, adhering to the large-scale umbrella term “Arabic” against English as a foreign language. By contrast, participants comfortably utilize English as a unified, large-scale entity when discussing Arabic variation in cross-dialectal interactions. As such, some acts of accommodation may be embraced, normalized, or rejected based on the level of perceived (in)discreteness across different timespaces. The overall analysis shows how such experiences of (perceived) contextual constraints or affordances can become integrated into the repertoire, presenting an alternative approach to linguistic (in)discreteness by applying the complex workings of scalar-chronotopic tools. I conclude with two excerpts that also show how the degree of discrete integration into the repertoire can cause some codes to become fused with certain timespaces.

I start with the following example that comes from my earlier work addressing SSY’s identification practices with regard to the CN personhood (Al-Alawi, 2023). Sarah, as a state school graduate without any study abroad experience, believes that her state school education as well as her alleged ability to selectively avoid using English make her different from CNs. CNs, in contrast, were shown to be bratty and unnecessarily heavily reliant on English. The analysis of excerpts 1 and 2 illustrates how Sarah presents two incompatible perspectives on ‘being able to control one’s language use’ as the context of discussion shifts from alternating between English and Arabic to alternating between different Arabic varieties.

Excerpt 1 (I: Interviewer; S: Sarah).

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. I: yaʕnintūn māʕtchūfūn rūḥkum chicken nugget ? | “so you don’t consider yourselves chicken nuggets ?” |
| 2. S: lā lan:a luḡatilʕarabiy:a baʕad yaʕni (.) yaʕni agdar (.) yaʕni agdar astaḡni ʕamil:uḡa lingilēnziy:a layom kāmil uwadab:ur rūḥi bilʕarabi brūḥa (...) yaʕni mux:i agdar atarjima oh ilyom bas ʕarabi aw halmakān bas ʕarabi il:i ḥat:a bilḡalaṭ māyihṭāj agūl yes or no | “no because Arabic is also my language like (.) like I can (.) I can give up English for a whole day and get by with just Arabic ((...)) like I can translate my brain oh today I’m only using Arabic or I’m only using Arabic in this place so even by accident I don’t need to say yes or no ” |

Sarah mentions certain linguistic features in the lexical items “yes” and “no” to refer to English and her ability to adhere to the boundaries so as to not overstep into accidentally using it. In resisting English, Arabic dialectal heterogeneity is irrelevant, and the general term “Arabic” is sufficient in saying “Arabic is also my language” (line 2). Sarah is also aware of the contextual conditions that may restrict or allow for the use of Arabic, English, or both, stating, “today I’m only using Arabic or I’m only using Arabic in this place.” What becomes clear then is that maintaining the boundaries between English and Arabic is not only discursively useful for Sarah but also meaningful for her sense of self as an authentic Bahraini. Whether Sarah is successful or not in actually keeping the two languages separate is arguable, but it is clear that Sarah finds it personally meaningful to adhere to the large-scale boundary separating English from Arabic and is able to reference those borders with certain English words. In other parts of the interaction, Sarah also partakes in discursively alluding to, although not by

name, various Englishes (a pretend broken English, an excessively Westernized English reminiscent of Valspeak) while continuing to refer to the general term “Arabic” (cf. Al-Alawi, 2023). These references to various English types help her distinguish herself from CNs, who emerge as being different in their use of English both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the following excerpt, also featuring Sarah, we see how the threat of English is backgrounded as participants comfortably switch to English while discussing convergence to various Arabic varieties, and how a shift from a large-scale “Arabic” to variously labeled Arabics can be observed.

Excerpt 2 (I: Interviewer; S: Sarah; Y: Yasmeen).

1. I: šrāyikum fil:i yišwəjūn əlsānhum?↑	“What do you think of people who twist their tongue?↑ ((local expression meaning to code-switch but more commonly referring to a speaker of BA2 using the prestigious BA1))”
2. S: kilna nišwəj əlsān:a↓ (...)	“We all twist our tongues↓” (...)
3. S: baħrēni (.) yaʕni (.) niglib laħtatna (.) [baħrənayithach:on sin:i (.)	“Bahraini (.) like (.) we flip our dialect (.) [Baharna speaking Sunni (.)”
4. Y: ā::h [oh my god I fucking hate them =	“A::h [oh my god I fucking hate them = ”
5. S: = ani asaw:ey	“= I do it”
6. Y: ((calmer tone)) because I know you so I guess aṭaw:ufha lēš [because I know th- ((even calmer tone)) because I know they’re not	“((calmer tone)) because I know you so I guess I let it go [because I know th- ((even calmer tone)) because I know they’re not”
7. S: [i bas sādāt lādū-yaʕni yaʕni sādāt əṭšir lā šušūriy:an mül:i aqsidha (...)	“[yeah but sometimes unconscious- like like sometimes it happens unconsciously not like I mean to” (...)
8. S: bas sādāt tarayšir əbrūħa mül:infin tiqsidin bas tušrufin il:i (.) tub:ēn (.) to blend in (.) mādrī bas it comes naturally yaʕni maəalan aħħin libnāniy:a gāšdatsolif iy:āyi (.) šī ṭabšī in:i baḡlib šalēħa šašān (.) əšway əthis in:a ani afhamħa[witfhamni	“But sometimes it happens on its own not that you mean it but you know like (.) you want (.) to blend in (.) I don’t know but it comes naturally so like now a Lebanese ^{lem} is chatting with me (.) it’s natural that I’d switch so (.) she’d feel a bit that I understand her [and she understands me”
9. Y: [Okay↓ I ki:::nda do that bas fi nās il:i I’m talking about (.) ani šisma (.) in:ās il:i::: (.) if I feel like they (.) are deny:::ing (.) sort of what they are yaʕni yub:on əḡat:ūn =	“[Okay↓ I ki:::nda do that but there are people that I’m talking about (.) I’m like (.) people who::: (.) if I feel like they (.) are deny:::ing (.) sort of what they are like they want to hide = ”
10. S: = la la la	“= no no no”
11. Y: yub:on əragšūn ((begins voicing)) lā::: ma bathach:a baħrāni gid:ām (.) gid:ām dilēn māħib	“they want to misrepresent ((begins voicing)) no::: I’m not gonna speak Baħrāni in front of (.) in front of these I don’t like to”
12. S: la la =	“no no = ”
13. Y: ((loudly)) = if you’re doing it to make the other person comfortable I understand	“((loudly)) = if you’re doing it to make the other person comfortable I understand”
14. S: i::: =	“ye:::s = ”
15. Y: = bas if you’re doing it because you’re so uncomfortable with yourself	“= but if you’re doing it because you’re so uncomfortable with yourself”
16. S: la:: ənsaw:ħħa laʕan:a sādāt əṭšir əbrūħħa yaʕni ħat:a māħħis la rūħħa	“No:: we do it because sometimes it happens on its own like we don’t even notice that we’re doing it”

Excerpt 2 takes place between me, Sarah, and Yasmeen. The three of us pursued a university degree in English at the same university in Bahrain and have maintained a friendship since. It is also worth mentioning that Yasmeen spent a year during her secondary school education living in the United States with a host family as part of an exchange program. She is indeed more comfortable with English and uses it more frequently in her casual communication than Sarah does, which is also evident in the excerpt. In different interactions with Yasmeen and Sarah, separately and together, they both align with the view of emphasizing their pride in their Arabic language and not being as influenced by English as CNs.

What is first striking here is that Sarah, who expressed an ability to keep her linguistic resources discrete in the previous excerpt, strongly aligns with the view that Arabic dialectal accommodation happens “unconsciously” (line 7) and “on its own” (lines 8 & 16), depending on the interlocutor. Yasmeen, on the other hand, while switching to English throughout the excerpt, thinks that speaking in any dialect other than one’s own is indicative of being ashamed of one’s identity. Sarah is challenged by Yasmeen when she describes her tendency to take on the Arabic variety of her interlocutor. However, based on her reaction in line 4, Yasmeen associates the term “twisting one’s tongue” with a lower scale, more specific indexical meaning: a speaker of the stigmatized BA2 masking their dialect by adopting the more prestigious BA1. In fact, she directly refers to this particular phenomenon in line 11 by voicing someone who engages in this behavior as saying, “no I’m not gonna speak Bahrūni in front of these [people].” As BA1 and BA2 are close in geographical proximity (scope) and mutually intelligible, Yasmeen sees this type of convergence as unnecessary and indicative of “denying sort of what they are” (line 9) and being “so uncomfortable with yourself” (line 15). Sarah keeps referring to other scenarios where the interlocutor does not speak a local Arabic dialect, suggesting these are situations where accommodative convergence becomes linguistically necessary—for example, to accommodate a Lebanese speaker of Arabic. Sarah, who we have seen state her ability to keep her English and Arabic codes separate in excerpt 1, claims dialectal accommodation is not something she can control. Yasmeen, on the other hand, who is comfortably using English throughout the excerpt, strongly opposes most cases of speaking a dialect other than one’s own. This demonstrates that there are different degrees of (in)discreteness to the codes (English and various Arabics) in question as they become meaningful to Sarah and Yasmeen’s identity positionings in different real and imagined scenarios. Different larger and smaller scale codes may shift to become the culprit in question in various bi/multilingual acts of accommodation and resistance. As such, well-intentioned attempts to celebrate bi/multilingualism by doing away with linguistic boundaries that serve as a guiding point for various bi/multilingual subjectivities may lead to “throwing away the baby with the bathwater” (Saraceni & Jacob, 2019, p. 8). Similarly, aligning strongly with boundedness may miss such multiscale manifestations of (in)discreteness as it may be interactionally emergent as scalar perspectives shift to meet different discursive goals and state different identity claims and positionings. These shifts in (in)discreteness do not only illuminate the materialization of such boundaries but also speakers’ awareness of them, as their awareness of their English use appears to be quite low here, as opposed to Sarah’s claim that she can “switch it off” in the previous excerpt. Conversely, although the “Arabic” label was satisfactory in the previous excerpt, it is dissected into variously named Arabics here to account for the presented identification processes.

Another interesting thing to note here is that Sarah later brings up the fact that linguistic subordination (i.e., some languages being viewed as deficient and/or inferior; Lippi-Green, 1997) is simply a fact of life, as shown in excerpt 3. The remaining two excerpts address how the contextual (in)discreteness in the repertoire can overlap with or override more immediate external factors, causing certain codes to become somewhat fused with certain timespaces (cf. Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014).

Excerpt 3 (S: Sarah).

S: bas baʕad ihna (**part**) fin:a in:ahna nistahi min lahjatna (.) fi- mādri lēš↓ mādri min il:ī našar in:al:ahjalbaħrānīy:a maʕnātha in:a wāhid (.) əšway rājjis lawraq yaʕni aw in:a mātigdar əthut:a ay makān bas hāy mawjūd mānigdar ninkur in:a mū kilmin yitqab:al il:ahjalbaħrānīy:a yaʕni maħad biyitqab:al maəalan in:a baħrāni biyithach:a fi
call center

“But also we there’s this (**part**) about us that we are ashamed of our dialect (.) there’s-I don’t know why↓ I don’t know who spread the word that the Bahrāni dialect means that it’s someone (.) a bit backwards like or that you can’t put them anywhere but this exists we can’t deny that not everyone accepts for example that a Bahrāni ((i.e., Bahrāni speaker)) would speak at a **call center**”

Although Sarah does not refer to (or seem to recognize) the social inequalities that are linked to linguistic subordination, she sparks a discussion about how it may result in certain codes not being ‘acceptable’ in certain contexts. This showcases how certain codes end up fused to (experiences of) certain timespaces, regardless of *who is present* or, in the case of a call center, *who is on the other side of the line*. That is, the act of convergence is not an emergent adjustment but a historicized one consolidated into the repertoire. Following these remarks, a discussion was sparked about two American movie productions that feature black American characters using ‘white English’ to pose as white on the phone. The movies discussed were the 2018 comedy *Sorry to Bother You* about a black telemarketer who uses a white voice to succeed at his job and *BlacKkKlansman*, featuring a black detective who uses a white voice to pose as white on the phone with members of the Ku Klux Klan. Participants then draw meaningful chronotopic connections between these two acts of boundary-crossing, converging from African American English to White English and from BA2 to BA1. Such identification of these codes as both named and discrete allows for the participants and the movie plots to make sense of different forms of identity work and lived experiences. This discussion has eased the tension in the conversation as Yasmeeen was able to meaningfully reimagine this act of “twisting one’s tongue” within the frames of major (higher scale) movie productions about strategic resistance and survival, rather than shame and cowardice. Although TL proposes that it is most natural for speakers to transcend boundaries, it may lose sight of instances where transcending those boundaries is rejected, and adhering to a discrete code may be viewed as an act of resistance, which in and of itself is a form of meaning-making. At the same time, thinking of the repertoire as consisting of neatly divided compartments where languages fit may lose sight of acts of resistance that constantly erase, (re)create, blur, and (re-)imagine new boundaries to create new pathways for meaning-making.

Below, I conclude with another example of how participants’ identification processes show codes to be attached to certain timespaces. As the (in)discreteness and relevance of codes are a matter of scalar perspective, the malleability of such constructs is dependent on various externally (within the immediate timespace) and internally (within the repertoire) prescribed contextual factors. The following example comes from an encounter between me and Jumana, where some details from a third participant’s backchanneling and laughter were omitted for clarity. Jumana owns a business designing and selling women’s garments, mainly *abayas* (a loose over-garment worn by women in the Arab Gulf region). Her business inquiries are handled through the messaging application WhatsApp, and her clientele, according to her, consists mostly of Saudi women located in the neighboring country of Saudi Arabia. Excerpt 4 takes place when Jumana is speaking about her experience with speakers of various Gulf Arabics during her business interactions, during which I ask her which variety she uses in such interactions.

Excerpt 4 (I: Interviewer; J: Jumana).

1. I: infn (.) wiy:al (.) customer āt tithach:ēn bāhrāni?↑	“Do you (.) with the (.) customers ^{fem} speak Bahrāni?↑”
2. J: ani athach:a suṣūdi azyad šī aḥis recently ↓	“I speak Saudi mostly I feel recently ↓”
3. I: wiy:a bas:is:uṣūdiy:āt lo wiy:a kilhum?	“with Saudis ^{fem} only or with all of them?”
4. J: (.) yaḥni maʿalan ḥat:albāhrēniy:āt aktib lēhum bilkāf mā aktib lēhum lā biljīm wala biš:īn	“(.) like for example even Bahrainis ^{fem} I message them using <i>kāf</i> ((2sg.fem, Saudi Arabic)) I don’t use <i>jīm</i> ((2sg.fem, BA1)) or <i>šin</i> ((2sg.fem, BA2)) when I message them”
5. I: ‘(hahaha)’	“(hahaha)”
6. J: ṣabātik ṣabātik	“ṣabātik ṣabātik ((literally ‘your garment, your garment,’ quoting herself))”

In the above, Jumana states that she uses Saudi Arabic (SA) even when addressing her local Bahraini customers. She specifies three suffix pronoun variants by referring to the letters that they are represented by orthographically (*kāf* ك, *jīm* ج, and *šin* ش, respectively, from SA, BA1, and BA2). For example, *bēt*, meaning house in Arabic, would be *bētik*, *betich*, and *bētis*² for “your^{2sg.fem} house” in SA, BA1, and BA2, respectively. She then recalls how she would say “your^{2sg.fem} abaya” employing the SA variant when addressing customers on WhatsApp regardless of their (perceived) background. Jumana states (not shown in the excerpt) that the majority of her clients are Saudi, and her prices can be too high for local Bahraini customers. Thus, it can be said that she enters into her WhatsApp interactions with customers with an initial sociohistorically shaped orientation, imagining the interlocutor to likely be a speaker of SA. Upon gaining more information about the interlocutor on the other side of the conversation being “even Bahrainis” (line 4), she does not perceive a need to make further adjustments. As such, adhering to the boundaries of various Arabics in cross-dialectal accommodation appears as a contextually sensitive process that does not reflect a fully and freely accessible repertoire. Instead, speakers may act based on which codes they imagine to be uniquely discrete (note Jumana’s mention of specific morphosyntactic features that separate SA from BA 1 and 2), even when there is no immediate external social pressure to adhere to these boundaries. Although the repertoire is an *internal* set of sociolinguistic resources, memories, and information, it is not only *external* factors that play a role in how it is utilized. Accommodation is thus influenced by the embodied set of indexical and semiotic memories, judgments, and identifications associated with various linguistic resources, which cannot be abstracted from the repertoire in many instances of discourse.

7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

New approaches to the repertoire as unitary propose that the notion of ‘a language’ “has kept us from fully grasping the implications of translanguaging for our understanding of bilinguals” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 282). In this paper, I have proposed that achieving an “understanding of bilinguals” may require a different neither/nor approach that does not attempt to (dis)prove boundedness but to capture its adaptability. Applying a contextually grounded scalar-chronotopic approach to data from bilingual and multidialectal Bahrainis, I have argued that it is in the scaling process that boundaries become accessible to variable degrees, occupying a spectrum of discreteness tied to various identity functions: bi/multilinguals adapt to different contexts by combining or dissecting codes into larger and smaller scale codes as they use or reference them. As such, complex identification acts with

such scaled codes account for various accommodative processes in line with external and embodied contextual factors within and beyond the timespace of occurrence. I have proposed that accommodation can be better understood as the outcome of overlapping externally imposed and imagined factors with internal(ized) ones within the repertoire. Even in the absence of the imposition of linguistic borders, such embodied knowledge can cause them to be imagined, recreated, and adhered to. Rejecting discreteness altogether may then obscure different sociolinguistic phenomena (e.g., accommodation, crossing (Rampton, 1995), and appropriation) and hinder our ability to recognize, critique, and in turn address and alleviate them. As such, a spatiotemporal view of codes can capture instances where named codes are not indexical of a nation-state, or a rigid speech community, but of self-affirming values of belonging, solidarity, resistance, and survival (cf. Karimzad, 2021). At the same time, not questioning boundaries may lose sight of the dynamicity of users' discursive behavior as they foreground or background; merge or segregate different codes for different discursive aims. This approach, however, is not intended for every linguistic research objective, as it is not my aim to prove or disprove the existence of named languages as ontological entities, that is, whether we prioritize form, meaning, or context can vary based on our research objectives. So, if the intent is to focus on bi/multilinguals' hybridities, subjectivities, and discourses, then such a contextually holistic approach would be useful.

Furthermore, although scalar and chronotopic approaches were proposed to move away from understanding context as simply a container of language (a certain time and place for a certain code) by incorporating the effect of personhood, I argue that the role of the interlocutor may be backgrounded in instances where some codes end up fused to certain timespaces. That is, the sociohistorical knowledge of a particular timespace as (un)suitable for a particular code may result in somewhat predictable accommodation patterns—as perceived by the participants—that are not as directly affected by interlocutory shifts (e.g., call center registers). This further illustrates how what is external in terms of indexical knowledge (such as memories of prestige and subordination as well as monolingual ideologies) can end up as embodied (internalized) and cannot be abstracted from the repertoire (cf. Busch, 2017; Gafaranga, 2007; Karimzad & Catedral, 2018; Oostendorp, 2022; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014). Grasping linguistic choices such as accommodative acts cannot then be achieved if we were to only examine external factors of the *here and now* without attending to the embodied memories of the *then and there*. As such, scalar-chronotopic understandings offer us the tools to examine various clues found in the participation framework and the sociohistorical experience, the internal(ized) and the external; the visible and the invisible; the present and the absent. Such complex understandings of key bi/multilingual practices can alleviate much of the tension surrounding the question of linguistic discreteness as well as elevate our understanding of the bi/multilingual subjectivities we all collectively aim to understand as sociolinguists, educators, and applied linguists.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work has greatly benefitted from discussions with Rakesh Bhatt and Farzad Karimzad. I am also always grateful to my participants, whose discourse is the life of my research. All remaining errors are mine.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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ENDNOTES

¹In modern-day Bahrain, the distinctions between urban/rural, city/village, and conservative/modern are not easily categorized and do not conform to standardized definitions. These classifications are rooted in traditional and historical concepts of 'little communities' that maintain their distinctiveness despite their close proximity or ease of accessibility to one another through modern transportation methods (see al-Khūrī, 1980).

²The *ch* (or /tʃ/) sound is commonly found in some Gulf colloquial Arabics, yet it is not represented in Standard Arabic and does not have a corresponding letter in the Arabic script. People use different letters of approximant sounds to represent it orthographically, such as /dʒ/, which is what Jumana refers to when saying *jīm dʒīm*.

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How to cite this article: Al-Alawi, W. (2024). Accommodation, translanguaging, and (in)discreteness in the repertoire: A scalar-chronotopic approach. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 28, 24–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12670>

Appendix

Transcription conventions

Regular font	Arabic
Bold	English
((...))	Intervening material has been omitted
(.)	Brief pause
(hahaha)	Laughter
(())	Transcriber comment
()	Guess at unclear word
[Speaker overlap
=	Contiguous utterances
,	Utterance signaling more to come
?	Utterance signaling a question
↑	Rising intonation
↓	Falling intonation
:	Vowel lengthening/emphasis on consonant