



*Xodayim buyrisa, guòle liǎng tiān dào nàlǐ
shàngbān* (“If God wills, after two days I’ll
be working there”)

**Communication needs and ideology in
Uyghur-Chinese code switching**

Giulia Cabras

*(Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales-
INALCO, France, and University of Kansas, USA)*

Urban areas in Xinjiang are currently experiencing important changes in demography and in their linguistic landscape, and consequently also in language habits. Uyghur, which was considered a lingua franca in the region, is giving way to Standard Chinese, which is more frequently present in the public sphere, particularly in domains such as the administration, media, and education. This is certainly due to intensive language contact, as well as to Standard Chinese-oriented language policies, which aim at spreading the national language as an instrument of social and economic development. As a result of this situation, Standard Chinese is more and more present in the Uyghur linguistic landscape and is becoming a dominant part of the communication between Uyghurs not only in the public sphere, but also within in-group conversations.

This paper discusses some of the social and cultural aspects related to contact between Chinese and Uyghur in discourse, that is, to a linguistic phenomenon known as code switching. This phenomenon is presented and ana-

lyzed from two different perspectives: the first sees languages as communication tools, and second, as ideological tools. The research focuses on select conversational functions and social aspects of Uyghur-Chinese code switching in interactions, as well as also on the ideological value of rejecting the use of this language behavior.¹

The study of code switching as a resource to study multilingual societies

The term “code switching,” according to Heller’s (1988:1) definition, is “the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode.” This definition, which is one of the most general, refers both to alternations of two languages or language varieties in discourse, and to the insertion of elements (e.g. nouns, adjectives, etc.) from one of the languages or language varieties present in the linguistic repertoire.²

From a sociolinguistic point of view, code switching can be employed in order to investigate not only the linguistic outcomes in the structure of the bilingual discourse, but also the different roles of the languages in communication. It can also demonstrate how they can reflect social and cultural changes in linguistic communities, an approach that is followed by scholars such as Gumperz (1982), Auer (1984), Heller (1988), Gardner-Chloros (1995), and others.

The study of the Uyghur community’s language habits is a valid means to understand the results of linguistic and cultural contacts, the implementation of governmental language policies, and various actors’ responses to these changes. Moreover, code switching has the distinctive trait of being spontaneous, as it is usually spoken in informal and in-group settings. This is particularly useful in politically sensitive contexts, such as Xinjiang, in which languages often have ideological meanings.

Methodology

The data here presented are taken from a dataset collected in Ürümqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, between March and July of 2013. The materials employed for this study consist of three different data sets: ethnographic observations about language habits and ethnic relations, field notes about conversations between Uyghurs, and a set of approximately four hours of audio recordings. The settings of these conversations were public areas of the city of Ürümqi, such as buses, university campuses, parks, and restaurants.

Gathering data about spontaneous conversations and language habits is necessary for the following two reasons. First, the language production of the speakers can be influenced by the ideological significance that Uyghur and Standard Chinese have in the community. Secondly, code switching is not a language habit that can be heard in television and radio programs, but exclusively in spontaneous informal speech.³

During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to repeatedly observe Uyghur-Chinese code switching in social interactions. I did not include in the data conversations in which I participated. I do not belong to the community and I am more proficient in Standard Chinese than in Uyghur; as such, my language ability could have been the *trigger* of the switch.

I examined the considerations made by native Uyghur speakers about code switching utterances, linguistic habits, and their attitudes towards the use of Standard Chinese in conversation. Because Uyghur is a minority language and Standard Chinese, together with the Northwest Mandarin variety,⁴ is the main language used in the public sphere, the Han Chinese community in Xinjiang speaks at most only a few words of Uyghur. For these reasons, this research does not involve data regarding Han Chinese informal speech, or their choices of linguistic habits.

This article only shows some of the linguistic tendencies of Uyghur spoken today; it does not cover all the

possible language behaviors present in the Uyghur community. For the data presented here I give a transcription in Uyghur Latin Script and *Pīnyīn* (transliterated Chinese Latin, in italics), followed by interlinear glosses, as well as metadata about the setting, and the speaker (approximate age and sex).

The sociolinguistic context in Ürümqi

According to a survey conducted in 2009 by the Statistical Bureau of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the population of Ürümqi consists of 2,410,000 inhabitants (Howell and Fan, 2013). The majority group is composed of the Han (1,750,000 inhabitants); the remaining population is composed mainly of Uyghurs (310,000 inhabitants), and other minorities (*ibid.*). The demography of the city is a result of the strong immigration of the Han Chinese (especially from *Guǎngdōng* and *Sīchūān* provinces) and of the quick economic development of the city, which has become a target for national and foreign investment (due to the effects of the Open Up The West Campaign).⁵

The Uyghur population is principally concentrated in the center of the city, in particular in the *Tiānshān* district, where the language of communication is Uyghur. In the other quarters of the city, inhabited by Han, Northwest Mandarin is spoken. Even though the Uyghur language and its related cultural life are very vivid in the city (it is easy to find newspapers, books in the Uyghur language, and Uyghur cultural events in music halls and theaters), Standard Chinese is more and more present in the administrative, educational, professional, and media fields.

The implementation of Standard Chinese oriented education and the importance accorded to the knowledge of Standard Chinese in ethnic minorities' employment are shaping the formation of a Uyghur bilingual community, in which Chinese is becoming the language used for communication in the public sphere. In Ürümqi, and generally in Xinjiang's urban areas, the majority of the Uyghur speech community learns Chinese by successive acquisition. As the language spoken in the family is generally Uyghur, Chinese is most often learned first at school.

Traditionally, Uyghurs could choose between two different types of education:

1. Chinese Han schools, in which Standard Chinese is the language of instruction, with an exception for subjects related to Uyghur;
2. Uyghur schools, in which Uyghur is the medium of the education, and Standard Chinese is introduced from the third grade.⁶

The education reform started in 2000 is bringing radical changes to the learning of Chinese. Uyghur schools are being merged with Chinese ones, and Standard Chinese instruction for Uyghur schools is required from the first grade on (Dwyer, 2005: 38-39). Moreover, the government has launched an experimental bilingual education program, in which Standard Chinese is the language of instruction and Uyghur is taught exclusively as a second language.⁷ Although the new education reform formally aims at being "bilingual," Chinese is becoming the language of education, and Uyghur, which no longer contributes to the development and transmission of knowledge, is doomed to occupy a subordinate position. Education in Standard Chinese is supported not only by the government, but also by Uyghur families. Given the importance of knowing Standard Chinese for the job market, Uyghur parents prefer to send their children to Chinese Han schools, and to teach them Uyghur in the family context.

While the majority of the Uyghur speech community can master the Chinese language to varying degrees, a small percentage, composed by Uyghur migrants from the countryside, hardly speaks the national language at all. This minority comes to Xinjiang urban areas for low-wage jobs and typically has received education exclusively in Uyghur. As said previously, the Han population in Ürümqi barely speaks Uyghur, limiting their knowledge of this minority language to a few words and sentences. According to Fishman's redefinition of diglossia,⁸ we can recognize in Ürümqi the situation of diglossia without bilingualism, in which speakers of the High Variety (HV) overrule speakers of the Low Variety (LV). This is in contrast to

the situation of diglossia with bilingualism, in which the whole community knows both HV and LV, which are functionally differentiated.⁹ Because of its status as the HV, Standard Chinese is more and more present in the linguistic environment and is becoming a dominant part of communication between Uyghurs not only in the public sphere, but also within in-group conversations.

It is important to specify that the situation of diglossia without bilingualism concerns the macro sociolinguistic level of the community. As linguistic landscapes are heterogeneous and complex, and communities are made of individuals, the concept of diglossia does not explain entirely the role that languages cover in a community (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 2006; Tabouret-Keller, 2006). Indeed, the status of Standard Chinese as the HV changes when we look at the micro sociolinguistic level: speakers have different views and opinions about the languages spoken, and this influences their language production. Standard Chinese can be considered HV from the perspective of its importance in the society, but it can also be seen as LV compared to Uyghur; the latter, as the mother tongue of the Uyghur community, can have HV status as an element that defines the Uyghur identity, and contributes to its survival.

Interactional aspects

Code switching in conversation covers a large range of functions. This is related to the fact that using two or more languages in the discourse opens a variety of communicative possibilities (Gumperz, 1982: 48). According to the speakers involved and the running of the conversation, code switching has different functions, such as marking a citation or a reiteration, conveying expressivity, putting emphasis on one specific element of the conversation, manifesting convergence or divergence with respect to the speaker, defining a message that is considered personal or objective, etc. (Gumperz 1982; Auer 1984). These two last functions (convergence vs. divergence and personalization vs. objectivization) are related to the dichotomy between the *we-code* and the *they-code* (Gumperz, 1982). The former, the *we-code*, being associated to the minority language or the native language, is used in informal and familiar exchanges, and has the role of marking proximity or a personal opinion. On the contrary, the *they-code*, being the language of the majority, is employed in more formal, out-group contexts. This dichotomy, even if not fully applicable in the context of code switching between Uyghur and Chinese, is recognized in some examples presented here, in which Uyghur covers the role of the *we-code*.

A second trait shown in the article, which seems to be specific to the encounter between the two languages, concerns differences in the expression of feelings in Uyghur and Chinese.

Uyghur as the we-code

The following two examples show the role of Uyghur as the *we-code*. Here, the performance of the native language seems to have a special meaning in conveying sincerity and in communicating contents related to the Uyghur cultural context.

1)

1 A *nǐ xǐhuan tā dehuà* men dadanggha
 you like him if I dad-POSS2s-DAT say-NEG-PRS-1s
dimeymen / wǒ gěi nǐ bàba mánzhe
 say-NEG-PRS-1s I to your dad conceal.from-DUR
 “If you like him I won’t tell your dad, I won’t tell your dad.”

2 B *wǒ gěi nǐ mánzhe-he*
 I to you conceal.from-DUR-EMPH
 “I won’t tell you!”

3 A *shuí?*

who

“Who?”

(they whisper into their ears)

4 B *bù rènshí men kōrüp baqay / děng yīxià /*

NEG know I look-CNV try-ORTH1s wait a.moment

shì bù shì tā xǐhuan nǐ háishì nǐ xǐhuan tā?

COP NEG COP he like you or you like him

“I don’t know him, let me have a look, wait, does he like you or do you like him?”

(Setting: *Yán’ān lù*; speakers: two females, 15 years old, waiting for the bus and talking about a mutual friend)

In this extract it is possible to recognize two functions of code switching, the reiteration and the we-code, that take place at the same point in the sentence *men dadanggha dimeymen, wǒ gěi nǐ bàba mánzhe* “I won’t tell your dad, I won’t tell your dad”. Here, the utterance is performed in two languages, first in Uyghur and subsequently in Chinese. The reiteration in Chinese has the role of repeating, and therefore of putting emphasis on the message. Furthermore, the use of Uyghur for that particular message signals complicity and sincerity, marking the fact that the speaker is genuinely going to keep the secret. In this case, the native language expresses convergence with the participant.

2)

A [...] *xiànzài gōngzuò shì* [...] *xodayim buyrisa*

now work COP God-POSS-1s will-COND

guòle liǎng tiān dào nàlǐ shàngbān

pass-IMPF two day arrive there-LOC work

“Now the work is [...], if God wills, after two days

I’ll be working there.”

(Setting: Xinjiang Medical University, speaker: male, 25 years old, talking to a peer about his plans for the future)

As in the previous example, the insertion in Uyghur takes place in a particular point of the utterance. Here, the expression *xodayim buyrisa*, “If God wills,” reflects the use of Uyghur as the more appropriate code for talking about religion. It shows an intrinsic relationship between religious beliefs and languages, in our case between Islam and Uyghur.¹⁰ Uyghur is used as the more suitable language to perform a religious expression, even if a Muslim religious vocabulary exists in Chinese as well.¹¹

Cultural differences in expressing feelings

The we-code (i.e., the native language), in addition to its function of expressing proximity, is the one that is supposed to be employed to state intimate, subjective facts (Gumperz, 1982). In Uyghur-Chinese code switching, Chinese, and not Uyghur, can be used to state personal opinions, particularly negative feelings. This is shown in the following examples:

3)

1 A *eh yaxshimusiz, kōrünmeysizghu!*

EX hello see-PASS-NEG-PRS-2sf-CONF

Yaxshimu?

good-INTER

“Hello, it’s been a long time! How are you?”

2 B hazir men *shèhuì bǎozhàngda* ishleymen,
 now I insurance.company-LOC work-PRS-1s
 hazir ish bek aldirash
 thing very busy
jiùshì shòubùliǎo özingizchu ?
 just stand-NEG-RES self-2sf-ECHO

“I work in an insurance company, I’m very busy now, I just can’t stand it, what about you?”

(Setting: Uyghur restaurant in *Èrdào qiáo*; speakers: two females of 45 years of age talking about their daily lives.)

Here, the switch could be related to cultural differences in expressing feelings and personal opinions. While in Chinese *jiùshì shòu bùliǎo*, “I just can’t stand it,” is a common expression in everyday conversations, in Uyghur discourse it would be impolite to state these types of feelings. Concerning questions of education and etiquette, not sharing these kinds of sentiments is the more appropriate social behavior. Moreover, the expression does not really have an equivalent in Standard Uyghur: a similar expression to use in this context could be the verb *chidep turalmaymaq*, i.e., “not being able to stand something,” but it does not have the same semantic nuance and expressive power.

4)

ma’ash töwen, xizmet yoq,
 wages low job EXIST.NEG
shēnghuó máfan dehěn
 life troublesome a.lot
 “Wages are low, there are no jobs, life has a lot of troubles.”

(Setting: park in *Èrdào qiáo*; speaker male, 30 years old, talking to a peer about the current economic situation in Xinjiang)

Here, the speaker switches from Chinese to Uyghur when he expresses a negative feeling, which is related to the economic situation in Xinjiang: *shēnghuó máfan dehěn*, or “life has a lot of troubles.”¹² First, the alternation between the languages indicates a distinction between an objective fact and a personal opinion. Secondly, as in 3), Chinese seems to be more direct and straightforward. As for the expression *shòu bùliǎo*, “can’t stand,” *máfan* “troublesome” is another term that is common and frequent in Chinese conversations, and more expressive compared to the Uyghur equivalent.¹³ This shows also how Chinese is becoming the language in which to talk about new modern life’s problems: namely the stress and pressure related to economic and social changes in Xinjiang.

Use of Chinese vocabulary in Uyghur discourse

The presence of Chinese in Uyghur informal speech does not only concern the alternation between Uyghur and Chinese but also the insertion of Chinese elements in Uyghur discourse, which belong to different parts of speech (they include both lexical and grammatical elements). I show here below a list of lexical elements that are often employed in Uyghur discourse.¹⁴

Table 1.
Chinese elements employed in Uyghur informal speech

Standard Uyghur	Chinese elements in Uyghur informal speech	English
<i>tort</i>	<i>dàngāo</i>	cake
<i>yangyu qelemchisi</i>	<i>shǔtiáo</i>	fries
<i>aspirant</i>	<i>yánjiūshēng</i>	graduate student
<i>kompyuter</i>	<i>diànnǎo</i>	computer
<i>wirus</i>	<i>bìngdú</i>	virus
<i>kimlik</i>	<i>shēnfènzhèng</i>	ID
<i>alahide saqchi</i>	<i>tèjǐng</i>	SWAT
<i>okush mukapat puli</i>	<i>jiǎngxuéjīn</i>	scholarship
<i>Pédagogika uniwersitéti</i>	<i>Shīdà</i>	Normal University
<i>toluq kurs</i>	<i>běnkē</i>	graduate program
<i>Köchme téligraf idarisi</i>	<i>Yídòng gōngsī</i>	China Mobile
-- ¹⁵	<i>xiāosǎ</i>	elegant
--	<i>xìnggǎn</i>	sexy
--	<i>kù</i>	cool

As shown in Table 1, Chinese lexical insertions are related to different lexical fields, such as education, administration, technology, food, and names of institutions.

Different factors are responsible for this phenomenon, which is very common in bilingual societies in which languages are in a diglossic relation. Looking at these data from the perspective of speaker's communication needs, the use of Chinese insertions can be particularly related to three factors: the referential power of Chinese words, its concision in discursive practices, and cultural contact.

Referential power of Chinese words

Chinese is the official language of the Chinese system, which means that nouns of institutions or terms related to the political, administrative, and educational systems are initially created in Chinese; a corresponding term is translated into the Uyghur language afterwards by language planning institutions.¹⁶ As such, terms such as *Yídòng gōngsī* "China Mobile," or *tèjǐng* "SWAT," constitute unique referents, and are more specific compared to their Uyghur translation.

5.2 Concision in discourse

Chinese is an isolating language, while Uyghur is an agglutinative one. In Uyghur bilingual discourse, this typological characteristic means that Chinese is more concise, and therefore practical. This is a characteristic that is stressed in particular by native speakers and that is also cited in two works written by Uyghur linguists on code switching (Ablimit, 2009; Mijit, 2012).

The concision is evident when looking at the number of syllables that compose the Chinese words and their Uyghur equivalents.

- *jiǎngxuéjīn* "scholarship" (3 syllables) vs. *okush mukapat puli* (7 syllables);
- *Shīdà* "Normal University" (2 syllables) vs. *Pédagogika uniwersitéti* (11 syllables);
- *tíngjī* "phone's credit has run out" (2 syllables) vs. *toxtap qilish* (4 syllables) or *téléfonning puli tü-gep ketti* (10 syllables).

The above examples show how Uyghur terms are longer as compared to the Chinese ones in terms of the

number of syllables. Two emblematic examples are *Shìdà* and *tíngjī*. The former is the abbreviation of *Shìfān dàxué*, “Normal University.” Chinese indeed has a productive abbreviation strategy, which allows for the contraction of a word in which the most representative morphemes are retained. On the contrary, Uyghur does not have this abbreviation strategy.

The latter word, *tíngjī*, which means not having credit in the cellphone and consequently not being able to receive calls, is a common term in Chinese. Uyghur has two equivalents: *toxtap qilish*, which means “to stop,” as well as the much longer *téléfonning puli tügep ketti*, which literally means “the phone’s credit has run out.” The latter phrase is the semantic reproduction of the Chinese verb, but it lacks the same concision.

Cultural contact

The overwhelming presence of Chinese in the public sphere makes possible both intense language contact and the exchange of new meanings. Chinese brings new terms into Uyghur informal speech, playing the role of the HV. These terms come to the Uyghur language through two strategies: as a semantic calque of the Chinese word, or as a phonetic loanword.

The first strategy, the semantic calque, is evident in the term *yangyu qelemchisi* “French fries”, which is a word-to-word reproduction of the Chinese *shǔtiáo* (the word is composed by the term *shǔ* 薯 “potatoes,” and by the classifier for long and thin things, *tiáo* 条): *yangyu* is a Chinese loanword for “potatoes,” and *qelem* is the Arabic loanword for “pen.”

The second strategy, the phonetic loanword, explains the use of the term *xìnggǎn*, “sexy.” The term, even if not lexicalized, is commonly employed in informal Uyghur. Its use responds to a semantic gap: the lack in Uyghur culture of a word that can express this concept. The Uyghur term to use in this context would be *tennaz*, which means “charming,” and according to the Uyghur culture, refers to an elegant and well-dressed (mostly covered) woman, usually in the context of a celebration (personal communication with Zohra Ablimit, 2013). The term *xìnggǎn*, on the contrary, is used to stress the trendy and sexually attractive side of beauty, as it comes from Western and Chinese-westernized culture.

These different examples show how Standard Chinese is becoming a bridge between the Western world, with its new products and tendencies, and the Xinjiang region. This is another element that shows the development of Standard Chinese as HV in the public sphere.

Avoiding code switching: desinicized Uyghur

Previous works have shown how speaking a desinicized Uyghur, one purified of Standard Chinese elements, is present in Uyghur ethnic discourse, both in the Xinjiang media (Thompson, 2013), and in the diaspora communities (Dwyer, 2013). Being a fundamental element in the definition of Uyghur identity, the presence of Chinese elements in the Uyghur language can constitute a threat to the cultural and ethnic integrity of the community. This concern is also present for the Uyghur spoken in informal, in-group conversations, where the mixing of Uyghur and Chinese is widespread.

The increase of desinicized Uyghur in informal speech

Avoiding Chinese in everyday informal speech is a common topic in Uyghur language discourse. Chinese, despite being so common in everyday communication, is not socially accepted by part of the community. For example, young *mínkǎohàn* Uyghur adolescents, who make use of a large amount of Chinese words in their speech, are often called *buzuwan*, “broken voices,” or *senkouhan*, “animal *han*.” The topic of code switching is present in different genres of communication, such as academic publications and new means of communication.

With regard to academic publications, in his article “Tilimiz mukemellikini qoghayli” (“Let’s protect the perfection of our language”), Abdurehim (2006: 36) criticizes the tendency to create new words by using phonetic reproductions of Chinese words. The linguist refers in particular to the language used by young people, who employ the terms *dennao* (computer) instead of *kompyutér*, *chaoshi* (supermarket) instead of *talla bazar*, *fakuan* (impose a penalty) instead of *jerimane qoyush*, etc. (ibid.).¹⁷ In addition, the linguist also criticizes the habit of enumerating numbers in Chinese, which is considered to be one of the *nachar adetler*, i.e., “bad habits” (ibid: 37).

Concerning new communication means, a representative example is the creation of a broadcast messaging group called *Tilshunas* in the instant messaging application WeChat. This group gathers Uyghur linguists and intellectuals from Xinjiang and the diaspora to talk about and create neologisms, in order to avoid the use of Chinese words in Uyghur discourse.

Code switching between Uyghur and Chinese has become so common in ethnic discourse that it was the theme of a *étot* (Uyghur sketch comedy) called “Chüshenmidim”, (“I didn’t understand”), written by the famous comedian Abdukérim Abliz (2012). Even if the show is a comedy that revolves around misunderstandings between an adult man and a *mínkǎohàn* girl, the author manages to express a general opinion about the use of Uyghur and Chinese. As the main character in the comedy says:

Til öginish yaxshi ish, til dégen bayliq, ma xenzu tili bizning dölet tilimiz, uyghur tili bizning ana tilimiz, her ikkisini puxta rawan yaxshi dése, xizmitimizge turmushimizgha, ishlepchiqirishimizgha, élip sétishimizgha öz ara mundaq soda alaqlimizghe paydiliq. Sizge oxshash zahuitangdek ya sözlise héchkim chüshenmise buning néme paydisi?

(Studying languages is a good thing, languages are a resource, Chinese is our national language, Uyghur is our mother tongue; speaking the two languages fluently is useful for our jobs, for our life, for our production, to do business with each other. Your language is like a *záhuì tāng*,¹⁸ if no one can understand, what’s the use?)

Moreover, the main character reprimands others for their common use of Chinese terms for naming vegetables and the regions of Ürümqi, for using words such as *qíézi* (eggplant) for *pedigen*, *báicài* (cabbage) for *yéswilek*, *yanyu* (potatoes) for *berenge*, *Nán mén* (an Ürümqi neighborhood, literally “southern gate”) for *Aq qowuq* (white gate), and so on.¹⁹

The code switching present in the comedy, albeit exaggerated, is a similar reproduction of the sort of language behavior that is common in informal speech among the Uyghur bilingual community. It shows also a common opinion toward the use of languages in Xinjiang. Even if the Chinese language is accepted as the language that the Uyghur community has to know in order to live in the Chinese system, the Uyghur language also needs to be protected from the overwhelming Chinese influence, as evidenced in everyday informal speech.

The role of neologisms

In addition to efforts to avoid Chinese words in favor of Standard Uyghur ones (those that are not Chinese loanwords), the creation of neologisms, led especially by the intellectual elites, is a vivid operation that gives birth to familiar and ordinary terms that are usually employed in Standard Chinese, such as:

- QQ, instant messaging software → *chch gurup* (literally “chch group”)
- *Wēixìn* “Wechat” → *ün didar* (literally “voice meeting”);
- *jiàngyóu* “soy sauce” → *temsü* (literally “tasty juice”);
- *chōngdiàn bǎo* “battery recharge” → *tokdan* (literally “electric grain”);
- *wēibó*, a Chinese micro blogging website → *mikroblog* (literally “micro blog”);

- *wǎngbā* “web café” → *torxana* (literally “web room”);
- *bòfàng qì* “MP3 player” → *MP3 musika qoyghuch* (literally “music container”);
- *yìngpán* “hard disk” → *barmaq diska* (literally “finger disk”).

As one observes looking at the above examples, the neologisms are created through using the language elements of Turkic, but also Persian, Russian, and other European languages. For example:

- The originally Persian derivational suffix *-xana* (which attaches to nouns and denotes places associated with the thing indicated by the base word);
- Greek and Latin roots (which likely entered the Uyghur language through the mediation of Russian or English), as in the words *musika*, *diska*, and *mikro*;
- English roots as *blog*, (abbreviation of the term web log, in the term *mikroblog*).

Moreover, the push for purism can also involve the change of the semantic field of a word, as for the Uyghur term *zelle*. In Uyghur culture, this term indicates the portion of food that is left over after a meal and given to the host. Currently, it can also be employed to designate restaurant take away food, covering the same meaning as the verb *dǎbāo* “to take away.”

Examining neologisms shows how the purism that characterizes the Uyghur language aims at avoiding the only language that constitutes a threat to Uyghur identity, and nonetheless borrows from other languages (even if they could be considered colonizer languages as well, such as Russian or English).

Summary

In this article, I have shown the process of linguistic change that Uyghur is experiencing today in accordance with two perspectives.

In the first, which focuses on languages as communication tools, I highlighted the convenience of using two codes in conversation. First, the Uyghur language can be employed as a we-code, and express proximity and contents related to the Uyghur cultural and religious background. By contrast, Chinese, because of its straightforwardness and also due to cultural differences in the employment of the two languages, plays a role in the expression of negative feelings. Secondly, looking at the Chinese vocabulary employed in Uyghur informal discourse, I showed how Chinese is advantageous for its concision and its referential power. Moreover, being the HV in the public sphere, Standard Chinese is also becoming the intermediary between Xinjiang and western tendencies or products, bringing with it new cultural loanwords.

In the second, which focuses on ideological aspects, I showed how a behavior that can be convenient from the point of view of the communication is seen as a symbol of Chinese linguistic and cultural assimilation. This brings us to the avoidance of code switching, and to the creation of neologisms in order to avoid the use of Chinese in the Uyghur speech. The latter involves a purism that is not against borrowing from other foreign languages, such as Russian or English, but that only rejects Chinese elements.

Glossing and transcription conventions

2sf	second person formal	EXIST.NEG	negative existential
2s	second person informal	IMPF	imperfective
1s	first person singular	INT	interrogative
CNV	converb	LOC	locative
COND	conditional	NEG	negative
CONF	confirmative	ORTH	orthative
COP	copula	PASS	passive
DAT	dative	POSS	possessive
DUR	durative	PRS	present
ECHO	echo question	RES	resultative
EMPH	emphatic particle	[...]	unintelligible
EX	exclamation	/	short pause

To conclude, the transformation of the linguistic landscape in Xinjiang, especially in its urban areas, is considerably changing the way that the Uyghur language is spoken. Uyghur-Chinese code switching and desinicized spoken Uyghur constitute two different responses to the results of intense language contact, communicative convenience, and the need to protect a language that is fundamental to the definition of Uyghur identity. Their coexistence and the active response of actors to the linguistic changes show an animated linguistic vitality and the importance of Uyghur in the definition of Uyghur ethnic identity.

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² The literature has been divided between what is considered alternation between two languages or varieties (also called intersentential code switching) and insertion from a second language (also called intrasentential code-switching or code mixing). The former is considered to play a role in discourse, while the latter is often considered as "borrowing" (see, for example, Gumperz, 1982; Auer, 1984, 1999). In this research, I do not make a distinction between alternation and insertion, as these forms are both present in the oral production of Uyghur bilingual speakers and both play a role in discourse.

³ The PRC's laws on language planning, such as the *Law on the commonly used language and script in the People's Republic of China*, and the *Revision of regulations on spoken and written languages of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*, mandated the use of the standard language in the public sphere, both for Chi-

nese and for the other minority languages (see Cabras, 2013). Additionally, since code switching is often not socially accepted, the employment of the formal language could also be a politically correct practice undertaken by broadcast companies.

⁴ In this article I use the terms Standard Chinese, Northwest Mandarin, and Chinese. With the first term, Standard Chinese, I refer to the official standard variety (also known as Mandarin, or *pǔtōnghuà* “the common language”); with the second one, I refer to the variety spoken in Northwestern China, which differs considerably from Standard Chinese (in phonology, morpho-syntax, lexicon, and socio-linguistic status). They both influence the Uyghur language and language practices in Xinjiang (and they are influenced by Uyghur language as well). The third term, Chinese, is used as a general term to indicate the presence of the two varieties, Standard Chinese and Northwest Mandarin, in the Uyghur community’s linguistic repertoire.

⁵ The Open Up the West (*xībù dà kāifā*) campaign is an economic program begun in 2000 for the development of Northwest regions. In Xinjiang, it concerns economic and social incentives in order to increase immigration and balance ethnic groups and Han demography, as well as structural investments in infrastructure, industry, and environment.

⁶ Uyghurs frequenting these types of schools are called respectively *mínkǎohàn* (literally minorities taking the final examination in Chinese) and *mínkǎomín* (literally minorities taking the final examination in the minority language). *Mínkǎohàn* students become near-native Chinese speakers.

⁷ The organization and curricula of the bilingual education programs vary from area to area in Xinjiang. The information presented here concerns the general tendencies of the new education reforms.

⁸ Fishman (1967) re-elaborates the concept of diglossia originally introduced by Ferguson. He focuses on diglossic situations in which the languages spoken are genetically unrelated and stresses the importance of bilingualism in defining the relationship between High and Low Varieties.

⁹ As pointed out by Dwyer (2005: 13-14), the diglossic situation in the People’s Republic of China is more complex. Being the national language, Standard Chinese in Xinjiang is at the top of a pyramidal hierarchy, which means its status is more than that of a High Variety. It is followed by regional *linguae francae* such as Uyghur, then by recognized regional varieties such as Kazakh, then by local subvarieties, and finally by unrecognized varieties (*ibid.*).

¹⁰ For the relationship between religion and language use, see Ferguson, 1982.

¹¹ In particular I refer here to the fact that Chinese can be the language in which to talk about Islam. It is in-

deed the language of the Chinese speaking Muslim community, the Hui.

¹² This extract is emblematic of the tense situation that characterized Xinjiang in these days: incentive immigration policies for Han people, the quick economic growth of urban areas, price increases of products, and the request to master Standard Chinese more than in the past means that the Uyghur community (but in some cases also the native Han) is discriminated against.

¹³ The term can be translated with expressions such as *awarchiliq* “trouble, nuisance,” or *chataq térip bermeq* “to create problems.”

¹⁴ Further data and analyses about the use of Chinese insertions in Uyghur discourse are provided in Cabras, 2014.

¹⁵ The word is employed in oral speech but its translation is not attested. The dictionary used for this research is Yulghun (2014), which is the most up-to-date.

¹⁶ Concerning the specificity of the HV lexicon in bilingual settings, see Matras (2009:107).

¹⁷ Note that the linguist transcribes the Chinese terms without marking the tones and as phonologically adapted to the Uyghur system, which is a possible linguistic realization of the Chinese words employed in Uyghur speech.

¹⁸ *Záhuì tāng* 杂烩汤 is a kind of Chinese soup composed of different ingredients, fish or meat, and vegetables. The expression is employed by the author to highlight the linguistic disorder that characterizes the speech of the *mínkǎohàn* girl.

¹⁹ Terms such as *yéswilek*, i.e., “cabbage,” and *Aq qowuq*, i.e., “white gate,” are in fact rarely used in Uyghur speech. Moreover, the author cites terms such as *qiézi* (*cheyze* in Uyghur) and *yangyu*, which belong now to the Standard Uyghur lexicon as Chinese loanwords.

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