# A Survey of the Regional Language Landscape of Uyghur Language Use—Take Urumqi Metro as an Example

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Uyghur is generally used in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, so the Uyghur language used in this topic refers to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Through the investigation of Metro Line 1, this paper analyzes from the perspectives of language code orientation, language harmony, consensus comparison, and questionnaires. It is found that Urumqi Metro Line 1 is mainly composed of Chinese (in this paper, when we talk about Chinese which means mandarin, the national language in China) and Uygur languages. Chinese occupies a dominant position in multi-language signage, Uygur language is relatively inferior, and English is relatively weak. And other national languages do not appear on all kinds of signs. Through the investigation and research on the language landscape of Line 1, this paper puts forward the urban language usage in Urumqi. Some suggestions contribute to the construction of beautiful Urumqi.

*Keywords:* language landscape, Urumqi City, subway

## Introduction

Urumqi is the capital city of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It is located in the center of the Eurasian continent. It has strategic significance and development value in many aspects such as politics, economy, culture, science, and education. Because Urumqi is located in a gathering place of ethnic minorities, among them, the Uyghurs are the largest ethnic group in Urumqi. Urumqi Metro is an urban rail transit system serving Urumqi City. The first line of Urumqi Metro Line 1 was put into trial operation on October 25, 2018. Urumqi Metro Line 1 starts from the International Airport Station and ends at "San Tun Bei" Station, with a total of 21 stations. Since then, the Urumqi Metro Line 1 has reached an average of 100,000 passengers per day (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.).

After the introduction the theory of language landscape into China, it has become an emerging field of sociolinguistic discipline. According to our investigation, scholars in the past have not paid enough attention to the area where Uyghur language is used, and there are relatively few on-the-spot investigations on relevant language policies. The first completed and opened subway public space language is used as the research object, the relevant theories of language landscape are analyzed, and the existing language phenomenon of Urumqi Line 1 subway is analyzed and some suggestions are put forward.

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## Investigation of the Language Landscape of Line 1

We have started from The Sports Center Station of Urumqi No. 1 subway station on February 6, 2022. 71 photos were collected from the exterior and interior of the carriage, and 73 valid signs were actually collected.

This paper investigates and analyzes the actual language landscape of Urumqi subway from the perspectives of code orientation, language harmony, consensus comparison, and identification characteristics. The basic information and language attitude of Urumqi residents are investigated, and the results of the questionnaire are discussed.

### Code Orientation

Code orientation refers to the different positions in the language sign due to the different importance and social value of language. Languages with greater social value and higher social status are called priority codes. The priority codes are located in more prominent positions and have larger fonts, while the lesser-ranked languages are in less obvious positions and have smaller fonts. This paper mainly analyzes the distribution and centering of language codes in the subway.

The distribution of language usage in a region can clearly reflect the advantages of the language. The advantage of a language in monolingualism or the advantage of a language in multilingualism reflects the advantage of the language.

Table 1

*Language Landscape Distribution of Metro Line 1*

| Type of language | Language occurrence | Quantity | Proportion (%) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Monolingual | Chinese (Mandarin) only | 12 | 17 |
| | Uyghur language only | 0 | 0 |
| | English only | 0 | 0 |
| Bilingual | Chinese and English | 4 | 6 |
| | Chinese and Uighur | 3 | 4 |
| | Uighur and English | 0 | 0 |
| Trilingual | Chinese, Uighur, and English | 50 | 72 |

After our investigation, we found that the signs and advertisements of Line 1 appear in three code forms: Chinese, Uighur, and English. On Urumqi Metro Line 1, there is rarely only one language, which is Chinese, and it only appears on advertising signs. The monolingual situation is rare, accounting for only 17% of the total number of surveys; in bilingual situations , the simultaneous occurrence of Chinese and English is slightly more than that of Chinese and Uighur, accounting for 4% and 3% of the total number of surveys respectively, and the occurrence of simultaneous occurrence of Uyghur and English is zero; prompt slogans, warning signs, and indicators accounted for the majority, and trilingual signs accounted for an absolute proportion, accounting for 72%. The largest proportion of trilingual signage is obviously in line with the core positioning of the subway in Urumqi. Compared with ground transportation such as buses, the subway itself is a relatively late means of transportation, in order to meet the requirements of internationalization, coupled with bilingualism in ethnic minority areas. In the implementation of the plan, it is not surprising that Chinese, Uyghur, and English are all spoken in Urumqi Metro Line 1.

However, there are relatively few types of codes on Line 1, only three. In terms of language diversity, they are not rich codes in terms of language types.

**Language Harmony**

Language competition and language harmony are opposite but inseparable. Language competition means that there is a competitive relationship between strong and weak languages. Generally speaking, Chinese is more powerful because of its large population and strong language economy. In minority areas, there are different strong languages depending on the location. According to our rough survey, in areas with more Han nationality in northern Xinjiang, especially Urumqi, the capital city, Chinese generally maintains a dominant position, while the dominant language of ethnic minorities in prefectures and counties in southern Xinjiang is the main ethnic language in that area. On Urumqi Metro Line 1, once a single language appears, it is Chinese, indicating that Chinese is a strong language on Line 1.

The harmony of languages is crucial to the peaceful and stable development of a region. The principle of language equality is the premise of language equality in multilingual areas to maintain national unity. Long before the founding of New China, *The Common Program* adopted by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference has clearly stipulated the rights of ethnic minorities to use and develop their spoken and written languages. Since the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China, the Party and the State have always attached importance to the freedom of ethnic minorities to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. *The Constitution* clearly states that "all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages" and "the state promotes Putonghua that is commonly used throughout the country".



*Figure 1.* The picture shows the LED display at the "eighth floor" station of Metro Line 1.

## Metro Synchronic Comparison and Questionnaire

**Synchronous Comparison Between Urumqi's Ground Transportation and Subway**

Urumqi Public Transport was established as early as 1953, and has a history of nearly 69 years. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) also began to develop in 2011 and has been widely used in Urumqi City. There are many lines, up to nine. The Urumqi public transportation system was not only built earlier than the Urumqi subway, but the lines involved are far larger than the subway, and the passenger flow is also much larger than that of the subway. By comparing the current situation of language landscape of BRT, bus, and subway, we can have a clearer understanding of the current situation of language use in Metro Line 1, and better serve language policy.

On February 8, 2022, we collected 25 photos of the Urumqi bus station and the language landscape on the bus. According to the analysis of the language code, the statistics are as follows:

Table 2

*The Distribution of Bus Language Landscape*

| Type of language | Language occurrence | Quantity | Proportion (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Chinese only | 8 | 32 |
| Monolingual | Uyghur language only | 0 | 0 |
| | English only | 0 | 4 |
| | Chinese and English | 0 | 0 |
| Bilingual | Chinese and Uighur | 9 | 36 |
| | Uighur and English | 0 | 0 |
| Trilingual | Chinese, Uighur, and English | 7 | 28 |

It can be seen from the above table that compared with the subway, the priority language code of Urumqi buses is still Chinese, followed by Uyghur language, and finally English. The use of trilingualism languages—Chinese, Uighur, English—are appear more conspicuous areas such as the entrance, waiting area, door, etc. The proportion of trilingual use in buses is 28%, which is 44% smaller than that of the subway, which is greatly reduced. It can be concluded that the relevant language of buses, compared with the subway, lacks internationality and is more localized. The way of translation is more similar to the way of pinyin, such as "卡子湾" translated into "Ka Zi Wan" and some translations in the subway are more international, such as "体育中心站" translated into "The Sports Center Station".

Internationalization is where the subway is clearly different from the bus system. Under the call of the national strategy of "Belt and Road Initiative", Xinjiang has increasingly become a new window for economic, trade, and cultural exchanges along the Silk Road Economic Belt. As an emerging means of transportation, the subway is also the epitome of a city's progress. As the first line set up in Urumqi, Line 1 has a special significance, which represents the development level of Urumqi. Internationalization is the gradual expansion of the development scale of a city. An important symbol of the Line 1, the first station of Line 1 is connected to the International Airport Station, which shows that the language of Line 1 has a clear tendency towards internationalization.

Compared with the language of the subway, the language of the bus system tends to be "localized", and more Chinese and Uighur are used, the proportion of English is significantly lower, and the translation level is also kept at a low level. As mentioned above, the public transportation system in Urumqi is not only established early, but also involves a wide range of routes, so the public transportation system has the characteristics of strong locality and weak internationality.

**Urumqi Metro Survey Questionnaire**

The research object of the Urumqi Metro Language Landscape Survey is the residents of Urumqi. The survey method adopts a snowball survey. Affected by the epidemic, this study adopts an online questionnaire to conduct the survey, and 67 questionnaires were returned, with 67 actual valid data. The basic information, such as gender, age, nationality, household registration place, and length of residence was investigated. The collected data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics 26 analysis software, and the survey results were as follows.

**Correlation Analysis Between Basic Information and Other Issues**

Correlations between data can be obtained by cross-listing. This paper conducts a correlation analysis on the issues related to basic information and language attitudes. Research shows that gender, age, ethnicity, place of residence, and other issues have no correlation with the add language attitude questions investigated.

We speculate there will be a correlation between the two question "How long have you lived in Urumqi?" and "Urumqi Metro currently has Chinese, Uyghur, and English. Do you agree that Urumqi Metro needs to add other languages?". We found that the significant $P < 0.01$, the difference was statistically significant, so we can conclude there was a strong correlation. The relationship between the two questions can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3

*Correlation Between ADD NEW Language Attitudes and Years of Residence*

| Attitude Years | Strongly disagree | Rather disagree | Neutral view | Relatively agree | Totally consent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Within 1 year | 2 100.0% | 0 0.0% | 2 20.0% | 1 7.1% | 1 2.6% |
| 2 years to 5 years | 0 0.0% | 1 50.0% | 1 10.0% | 3 21.4% | 1 2.6% |
| 5 to 10 years | 0 0.0% | 1 50.0% | 2 20.0% | 4 28.6% | 7 17.9% |
| 10 to 20 years | 0 0.0% | 0 0.0% | 3 30.0% | 2 14.3% | 4 10.3% |
| More than 20 years | 0 0.0% | 0 0.0% | 2 20.0% | 4 28.6% | 26 66.7% |

As can be seen from Table 3, residents who have lived in Urumqi for less than one year hold a relatively large proportion of negative attitudes towards the addition of language, and 33.3% of them choose "Strongly disagree" or "Neutral view". People who have lived for two to five years do not choose the option they strongly disagree with, and the proportion of agreeing to the addition of language increases. Residents who have resided for five to 10 years say they strongly agree to the addition of other languages, accounting for 44.4%. Among the residents who have lived for more than 20 years, the proportion of strongly agreeing to the addition of other languages is the largest, accounting for 81.3%. In addition, among the residents who have lived for more than 20 years, no one chooses "Strongly disagree" or "Rather disagree" to add languages and only one chooses "Neutral view". We can initially infer from the above data. The longer a person lives in Urumqi, the more languages he or she might want to see on language signs.

From the above data, the Urumqi City is a multi-ethnic gather; living longer in Urumqi than the residents who live less time may feel the charm of all nationalities in more harmony, and residents living in Urumqi shorter then there is no in-depth experience in particular, to add that more language types are not very strong demand. We conclude that residents who have lived for a long time may be hope to add languages of other nationalities and other countries in the subway and other public spaces to enrich the language landscape of Urumqi's public space.

**Language Attitude Survey**

Linguistic attitude refers to the attitudes that speakers of different languages or language variants hold towards other people's languages or their own languages. Language attitude can also reflect people's views on the people who speak the language (Zhang & Wu, 2019, p. 139).

In this survey, we found that the respondents had the largest proportion of "Very good" image perception, accounting for 72%, 19% respondents chose the "Better" option, and 9% respondents chose the "Neutral view" option, while no respondents chose "Poor" or "Very poor". On the premise of the group of images, we

continued to set the advantages and disadvantages of the group of images and asked further questions, as shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4

*A Survey of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Group Picture Perception*

| | | The number | The percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advantages | Humanized design | 57 | 31.7 |
| | Bright and meaningful | 59 | 32.8 |
| | Easy to use by speakers of other languages | 57 | 31.7 |
| | Others | 7 | 3.9 |
| Disadvantages | Wordy and a waste of time | 0 | 0 |
| | Not standard, unreasonable | 1 | 16.7 |
| | Others | 5 | 83.3 |

Survey results show that the majority of Urumqi residents hold a positive attitude towards the map group, while relatively few hold a negative attitude, and the choice of "Wordy and waste of time" is zero. Select "Non-standard and unreasonable" as one person; set others as five persons. The total number of positive types was 173, which was 29 times larger than the total number of negative types. This shows that local residents have a good attitude towards the language landscape on the subway. Among all of the options, "Easy to use by speakers of other languages" is our special setting option, setting this option is the language that we want respondents to pay attention to the subway, and indeed a large number of people choose this option, so that "easy to use people in other languages" is also a feature of Urumqi Metro Line 1.

**Display of Language Types and Language Landscape**

We chose Kazak, French, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Italian, and other languages as the options for further research on the residents surveyed. Kazak is selected because Kazak is the second largest ethnic minority in Xinjiang. In the multiple choice question "Language should be added in Urumqi Metro Line 1", the total of 67 valid data respondents were the number of people who chose this option, the response percentage was the ratio of the number of people who chose this language to the number of people who chose this option, and the percentage of cases was the ratio of the choice to the valid questionnaire.

Table 5

*Language Survey Should Be Added*

| | | The response | | Percentage of cases (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number of people | The percentage (%) | |
| Language | Kazakh | 40 | 33.30 | 59.70 |
| | French | 12 | 10.00 | 17.91 |
| | Korean | 18 | 15.00 | 26.87 |
| | Japanese | 23 | 19.20 | 34.33 |
| | Thai | 1 | 0.80 | 1.49 |
| | Italian | 3 | 2.50 | 4.48 |
| | Others | 23 | 19.20 | 34.33 |

From this Table 5, the number of people who think that the Kazakh language should be added accounted for the largest proportion, accounting for 33.3% of the respondents and 59.7% of the valid data. We talked about that Kazak is the second largest minority in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, with a total population of 1.462 million (the sixth census of 2010) (The Chinese Government Net, n.d.). It can be inferred that local

residents in Urumqi choose Kazak because of the large proportion of Kazak compatriots and the great influence of Kazak. Japan and South Korea are also likely to choose their languages as additional languages due to their neighboring countries. The proportion of people who choose other languages as the newly added languages is relatively small. We preliminarily infer that Urumqi residents still have a good attitude towards the newly added languages in the public space and actively welcome other languages to join the public transport space in Urumqi with an inclusive attitude.

## Discussion and Reasonable Planning of Language Landscape of Urumqi Metro Line 1

### Recommendations on Language Diversity

The subway is a public space with many tourists. More languages should appear in the subway, so that tourists can use different countries and different languages. In Urumqi, the languages that appear on Metro Line 1 are Chinese, Uyghur, and English, and no other international languages. As an important window to the west, Xinjiang should continue increase its unique international influence, and set up more languages in public spaces, especially in major public transportation places, such as airports, railway stations, subways, and bus stations.

### Suggestions on Translation

The identity of the public space is a space in the most eye-catching part; using different languages is identified; especially in public space for translation, the most basic principle is "faithfulness", "expressiveness", and "elegance"; the subway as a public space, its language also needs to adhere to the principle of translation. "Do Not Hold the Door" and "Do Not Touch", their meanings seem to be similar, but they are different. "Do Not Touch the Door When the Door Is Opening" would be too long as a slogan. We think it could be "Be Careful the Door Will Open" instead. However, specific change and how to change also need all aspects of coordination, to jointly build a beautiful Urumqi.

### The Addition of Private Signage

Subway, as a public space, is not only convenient for travel, but also needs to meet the personalized needs of passengers to some extent. There are only six private signs on Line 1, which are posters, accounting for 8% of the total number of the survey. It can be concluded that the private signage of Urumqi Metro Line 1 is too low. We believe that it is necessary to add some convenience stores for Line 1 and other subways to be built to meet the needs of passengers. It is necessary to add some advertising signs, which can enrich and beautify the more serious and boring environment in the subway station while increasing economic benefits.

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of language landscape in Chinese western minority areas, such as Urumqi even Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, as well as the language-related policies and plans, is still important issues worthy of academic attention. The promotion of national common language mandarin bilingual education and bilingual policy in minority areas has always been a topic of academic discussion. As the Belt and Road Initiative and Xinjiang's status as a window for the west to open to the world continue to improve, neighboring countries will pay more attention to the development of Xinjiang. Urumqi, as the capital city of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, is an important hub connecting China and the West and a window for the west to show to the world. How to better design relevant official logos and private store advertisements in public places has become a new problem and an urgent problem to be solved, which is also worthy of more scholars' research and support.

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