

LINGUISTIC HYBRIDIZATION IN UZBEK YOUTH SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE: THE ADAPTATION OF ENGLISH LEXICAL ELEMENTS

<https://doi.org/10.70728/phil.v05.i08.046>

Aslonova Gulhayo Umed qizi
gulhayo1307@icloud.com
Asia International University

Abstract: This article examines how English-origin lexical items are adapted in Uzbek youth social media discourse. Using a qualitative sample from Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok, it identifies borrowing, code-switching, and hybrid formations, with particular attention to Uzbek morphology, Russian mediation, and the social meanings of English-origin forms.

Keywords: linguistic hybridization; lexical borrowing; code-switching; social media discourse; youth speech; language contact; morphological adaptation

Introduction. Social media has changed the way young people use language. In Uzbek online communication, English words often appear inside otherwise Uzbek sentences: “mood yo‘q, chill qilaman” or “storiesga layk bosdim.” Such examples are common enough to deserve attention, not because they show that Uzbek language is being replaced, but because they show how speakers adapt new lexical material to an existing grammatical system.

This article analyze linguistic hybridization in Uzbek youth social media discourse, focusing on English-origin lexical elements used on Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok. The study asks three main questions: what types of English-origin forms occur in the data; how are they adapted to Uzbek phonology and morphology; and what social or communicative functions do they serve? A further question concerns the role of Russian as a mediating language, since some English-origin items reached Uzbek through Russian internet vocabulary.

The term hybridization is used here because the data form a continuum rather than a simple opposition between borrowing and code-switching. Some items are established loans, while others occur only once as English phrases. Between these poles are hybrid forms in which an English root combines with Uzbek grammar, as in post qilmoq, screenshot olmoq, or storisga. These forms show most clearly how two linguistic resources work together in everyday digital communication.

Methods. Language contact research provides a number of useful ways to describe this process. Weinreich emphasized that contact takes place through bilingual speakers and that contact effects are structured rather than random [13; 1]. Haugen later showed

that borrowed words may move from limited importation toward fuller integration into the receiving language [7; 212-214]. These ideas are useful for Uzbek social media because many new English-origin forms are neither completely foreign nor fully established loans.

Poplack's distinction between borrowing and code-switching is also important. Established borrowings tend to fit the recipient language's phonology and grammar, while code-switches retain more of the donor language's form [10; 583-585]. Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model adds that one language can provide the grammatical frame while another contributes content morphemes [9; 41-45]. This is especially relevant to forms such as *flex qilmoq*, where Uzbek language supplies the verb and grammatical marking while the English root carries the main lexical meaning.

Thomason and Kaufman's borrowing scale suggests that vocabulary is usually affected before core grammar when contact is mainly lexical and informal [12; 37-50]. This expectation fits the Uzbek data: English-origin nouns and roots are frequent, but Uzbek case marking, suffixation, word order, and verbal morphology remain the structural base.

The social side of borrowing is equally important. Crystal describes English as a global language whose spread is connected with economic, political, educational, and technological power [5; 9]. Kachru's Expanding Circle model helps explain the role of English in Uzbekistan, where English is widely learned for education, international communication, and participation in global digital culture [8; 3]. Bourdieu's idea of linguistic capital further suggests that English can have social meanings of education, modernity, and mobility [4; 55]. Research on online multilingualism also shows that social media encourages short, playful, and flexible language practices shaped by audience and platform conventions [1; 186-189; 2; 172; 11; 5].

Uzbek has a long history of lexical contact with Persian, Arabic, and Russian. Russian remains particularly relevant because some contemporary English-origin internet terms entered Uzbek through Russian-mediated forms. This means that the apparent path from English to Uzbek is not always direct [13; 35].

A useful way to understand these patterns is to view social media as a contact environment rather than simply a place where foreign words are inserted. Young users often move between Uzbek, Russian, and English within seconds. The platform encourages this movement because the interface, popular content, hashtags, memes, and comments are multilingual. As a consequence, the speaker does not necessarily experience each English-origin item as a conscious switch into another language. Some forms have become familiar pieces of an online repertoire.

This point is particularly important for the distinction between direct borrowing and mediation. A word may have an English origin but still reach Uzbek through a Russian-speaking digital environment. In such cases, the historical source and the

immediate source are different. The form *layk*, for example, can be traced to English like, but its pronunciation and spelling may reflect the Russian form *лайк*. The evidence available in a short social-media text does not always allow the route of a single token to be established with certainty, so the study treats Russian mediation as an apparent pathway rather than an absolute claim.

The study uses a qualitative, descriptive, corpus-informed approach. The working sample contains lexical material from about 60 publicly accessible Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok posts, captions, and comment threads. The material was collected manually over several months. Private messages and identifying information were not used.

Each item was examined according to two criteria: degree of linguistic integration and likely pathway of entry. Integration was evaluated through phonological adaptation, Uzbek suffixation, light-verb constructions, and repeated use. Items that appeared once in an English form without Uzbek grammatical marking were treated as clearer cases of code-switching. Because the sample is small and purposive, the findings describe tendencies within the dataset rather than the frequency of these forms among all Uzbek-speaking young people.

The limitations should therefore be kept in mind. The sample is not random and does not represent all regions, age groups, or social-media users in Uzbekistan. The study is intended to identify patterns and illustrate mechanisms of adaptation, not to make population-level frequency claims.

Results. The analysis points to four main findings. First, English-origin vocabulary is integrated into Uzbek through both direct and Russian-mediated pathways. Second, Uzbek morphology plays a main role in adaptation, especially through light-verb constructions and suffixation. Third, the majority of the analyzed forms are closer to borrowing than to fully independent English code-switches because they follow Uzbek grammatical patterns. Fourth, the social meaning of these forms goes beyond lexical necessity: they can express modernity, group identity, platform familiarity, and playfulness.

The main categories observed in the working sample are summarized below. They are qualitative categories rather than population-level frequency counts.

The data show that English words are rarely transferred without any adjustment. Some forms appear to reflect Russian mediation. Examples include *layk*, *post*, and *skin*, which correspond to forms that are also common in Russian internet discourse. Their spelling is not always stable, especially in Latin-script Uzbek, where users may switch between forms such as *layk* and *лайк*. This variation suggests that some items are still moving toward greater conventionalization.

Other forms appear to enter more directly from English and retain more of their original shape. Words such as *stories*, *trend*, *vibe*, *cringe*, and *stream* are used with

relatively little phonological change. They may, however, receive Uzbek endings, as in *storiesga* or *trendda*. The difference between the two groups should not be treated as absolute, since social-media users are exposed to English and Russian simultaneously.

Social-media writing is also less standardized than formal Uzbek. Users may type in Latin or Cyrillic, shorten words, or reproduce spellings they have encountered online. Consequently, variation such as *layk*/лайк does not necessarily mean that speakers have two separate lexical items. It may reflect keyboard choice, audience, previous exposure, or the absence of an established spelling. For a language-contact study, this instability is useful evidence because it shows which forms are still relatively new.

Discussion. The strongest evidence of hybridization is found in morphology. Uzbek's agglutinative structure allows speakers to attach native grammatical material to foreign lexical roots without difficulty. The most productive pattern in the sample is the use of Uzbek light verbs, especially *qilmoq* and *olmoq*. Examples include *flex qilmoq*, *chill qilmoq*, *post qilmoq*, *PR qilmoq*, and *screenshot olmoq*. Once the borrowed root is combined with an Uzbek light verb, the whole predicate can be marked for tense, person, mood, or negation: *flex qilyapman*, *flex qilmadim*, *flex qilsam*. The English root remains unchanged, while the Uzbek verb carries the grammatical information. This pattern closely matches Myers-Scotton's description of a matrix language providing the grammatical frame [9; 41-43].

A second pattern is direct Uzbek suffixation. English-origin nouns can take case, possessive, and plural markers: *storiesga*, *trenddan*, *followerlari*. In these examples, the borrowed root behaves like an Uzbek noun stem. The result is not simply an English word inserted into an Uzbek sentence; it is a mixed form that follows Uzbek grammatical rules.

There are also creative formations such as *cringeroq*, where an English adjective-like root takes an Uzbek comparative suffix. Such examples are less common, but they are important because they show that speakers are not only repeating fixed expressions. They are creating new forms by applying familiar Uzbek word-formation patterns to foreign material. This supports Haugen's view that borrowing can move toward deeper integration [7; 214-220].

The light-verb construction is especially productive because it separates lexical meaning from grammatical marking. Uzbek speakers can use an English root for a new action while leaving tense, aspect, person, mood, and negation to the Uzbek verb. A newly popular English verb therefore does not need to be fully borrowed as an independent Uzbek verb before speakers can use it. The root can immediately be combined with *qilmoq* or *olmoq* and placed into ordinary Uzbek sentences.

This mechanism also helps explain why hybrid forms can spread quickly. If speakers already know the pattern root + *qilmoq*, they do not have to learn a new

grammatical rule for every new digital term. The same productive pattern can be extended to new vocabulary. In this case, hybridization is not random mixing; it is guided by the grammar of the receiving language.

Pragmatic functions. The use of English-origin forms is not explained by lexical need alone. Four functions are especially visible in the sample.

First, English can signal modernity and connection with global youth culture. Words such as *trend* and *vibe* often occur in captions about appearance, travel, entertainment, or sometimes personal achievements. In these contexts, the English items add a stylistic meaning beyond its basic reference. This fits Bourdieu's idea that linguistic choices can function as social capital [4; 55].

Second, hybrid forms can mark in-group identity. Expressions such as *cringe*, *no cap*, and *rofl*-type forms are especially common in informal peer communication. Their use can help speakers sound younger, more digitally connected, or familiar with online culture. This supports the idea of networked multilingualism, in which language choice is partly shaped by the intended audience [1; 189].

Third, some borrowings are simply convenient because the platform itself uses English labels. *Story*, *stream*, *filter*, *follow*, and *reels* are visible in the interfaces of globally used platforms. Using the same terms in Uzbek sentences can therefore be more economical than replacing them with longer explanations [2; 172; 6; 3].

Finally, hybridization can be playful. Forms such as *cringeroq* or exaggerated English-Uzbek combinations allow users to experiment with language and create humorous or expressive effects. Social media provides a setting where such experimentation is easy to share and quickly understood by peers [11; 5-6].

Borrowing and code-switching. Most of the forms discussed above are closer to borrowing than to unintegrated code-switching because they show Uzbek phonological or morphological adaptation. At the same time, the sample contains a smaller group of unintegrated English phrases such as "so cute!" or "literally me," especially in hashtags, captions, and short reactions. These forms retain their English grammatical structure and do not receive Uzbek morphology.

The coexistence of both patterns in the same post is important. A speaker may write *flex qilyapman* and then add an English hashtag in the next line. This means that borrowing and code-switching are not competing choices but resources that can be used for different purposes within the same interaction [10; 583-585].

The findings can also be related to the broader history of Uzbek lexical change. Uzbek has never been isolated from other languages. Persian and Arabic contributed great layers of vocabulary, and Russian introduced many terms connected with administration, education, technology, and everyday life. English is now especially visible in technology, entertainment, business, fashion, and social media. The current

process therefore continues an established pattern of lexical expansion, although the speed of change is increased by digital communication.

At the same time, the social meanings of English are different from those associated with earlier contact languages. English is strongly connected with global education, employment, technology, popular culture, and international mobility. Its use can therefore index aspirations as well as immediate communicative needs. This helps explain why an English word may be selected even when an Uzbek equivalent exists. The choice is not always about what the word means; it can also be about how the speaker wants the message to sound.

Conclusion

English-origin vocabulary is becoming a visible part of Uzbek youth social media discourse, but the process is better understood as adaptation than simple language mixing. Young users reshape English lexical material through Uzbek morphology, especially light-verb constructions and case or possessive suffixation. Some items also show signs of Russian mediation, reflecting the multilingual history of Uzbek speakers.

The study suggests that linguistic hybridization in Uzbek social media is driven by a number of factors at once: global English prestige, youth identity, platform vocabulary, communicative economy, and linguistic creativity. The findings should not be taken as evidence that English is replacing Uzbek. Instead, they show how Uzbek speakers use the resources available to them and fit new lexical material into the grammatical system they already know.

The study is limited by its small, purposive sample. A larger corpus would make it possible to measure frequency more precisely and compare users by region, age, and platform. Longitudinal research could also show which hybrid forms become established vocabulary and which disappear with changing online trends. Nevertheless, the present analysis demonstrates that Uzbek youth social media offers a valuable setting for observing language contact while it is still taking place.

Table 1.

Main types of English-origin lexical material

Category	Description	Examples
Light-verb hybrids	English/Russian-mediated root + Uzbek light verb; fully inflectable	flex qilmoq; chill qilmoq; screenshot olmoq; PR qilmoq
Directly suffixed nouns	Borrowed noun root + Uzbek case, possessive, or plural suffix	storiesga; trenddan; followerlari
Russian-mediated loans	Established forms whose pronunciation or spelling reflects Russian mediation	layk; post; skrin

Creative hybrid formations	English-origin root combined with Uzbek derivational morphology	cringeroq
Unintegrated code-switches	Single-use English phrases without Uzbek morphological marking	“so cute!”, “literally me”; English hashtags

References

1. Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 185-205.
2. Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Blommaert, J. (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
5. Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Danet, B., & Herring, S. C. (2007). *The Multilingual Internet: Language, Culture, and Communication Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
7. Haugen, E. (1950). The analysis of linguistic borrowing. *Language*, 26(2), 210-231.
8. Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures* (2nd ed.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
9. Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
10. Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en español: Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18(7-8), 581-618.
11. Seargeant, P., & Tagg, C. (Eds.). (2014). *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
12. Thomason, S. G., & Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
13. Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.