

CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UZBEK YOUTH IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: This article investigates the phenomenon of code-switching among Uzbek youth in digital communication. With the growing influence of social media, messaging platforms, and globalized communication, bilingual and multilingual practices have become increasingly common. The article examines linguistic, social, and cultural motivations behind code-switching, its structural patterns, and its impact on the Uzbek language and identity.

Keywords: code-switching, bilingualism, Uzbek youth, digital communication, sociolinguistics.

Introduction

Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, is a common linguistic phenomenon in multilingual societies. Among Uzbek youth, code-switching between Uzbek, Russian, and English has become widespread, particularly in digital spaces such as Telegram, Instagram, and YouTube. This phenomenon not only reflects linguistic creativity but also social identity, cultural belonging, and global exposure.

1. Theoretical Background

Sociolinguists such as John Gumperz and Myers-Scotton have emphasized that code-switching serves communicative, pragmatic, and symbolic functions. It is not merely a sign of linguistic deficiency but a resourceful tool for effective communication. In Uzbekistan, historical bilingualism with Russian and contemporary exposure to English have intensified code-switching practices among youth.

2. Structural Patterns of Code-Switching

Uzbek youth employ various structural strategies in code-switching:

- Intersentential switching: alternating between sentences (Bugun darsga bordim. Anyway, it was boring).
- Intrasentential switching: mixing languages within one sentence (U bugun meetingga qatnashdi).
- Tag switching: inserting discourse markers (Ha, okay, men boryapman).

These patterns demonstrate flexibility and adaptation to communicative needs.

3. Social and Cultural Motivations

Several motivations drive code-switching:

- a) Prestige and modernity: English is often associated with technology, education, and prestige.
- b) Efficiency: Borrowed terms are shorter or more precise (like “deadline,” “project”).
- c) Identity construction: Code-switching helps youth express belonging to a cosmopolitan, globalized identity.
- d) Humor and creativity: Mixing languages adds humor and expressiveness in online chats.

4. Impact on the Uzbek Language

While code-switching enriches discourse and reflects multilingual competence, it also raises concerns about the erosion of Uzbek lexical resources. Over-reliance on Russian and English elements may weaken the prestige of pure Uzbek expressions. At the same time, natural

integration of foreign elements into Uzbek demonstrates the language's adaptability and resilience.

5. Code-Switching in Digital Platforms

On Telegram and Instagram, Uzbek youth often caption posts in mixed Uzbek-English forms ("Bugun so tired edim, just wanted to chill"). YouTube bloggers use mixed speech to appeal to wider audiences and demonstrate modernity. This practice creates a hybrid digital discourse that reflects globalization and localization simultaneously.

6. Pedagogical and Policy Implications

Educational institutions face challenges in balancing multilingual competence with standard Uzbek literacy. While promoting English learning is important, policymakers should also emphasize the richness of Uzbek and encourage balanced bilingualism. Language awareness programs can help youth understand the sociolinguistic implications of code-switching.

Conclusion

Code-switching among Uzbek youth in digital communication is a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon. It reflects not only linguistic strategies but also social identity and cultural dynamics. While it poses challenges to language purity, it also reveals the adaptive capacity of Uzbek in a globalized context.

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