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ANGLICISMS IN MODERN UZBEK DIGITAL DISCOURSE: WAYS OF ADAPTATION AND ASSIMILATION

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital communication has turned the Uzbek language into an active recipient of English lexical material. This paper examines the ways in which anglicisms are adapted and assimilated in modern Uzbek digital discourse, distinguishing three interrelated levels of accommodation: phonetic and graphic, morphological, and semantic. It is argued that borrowing in Uzbek is not a passive transfer of foreign words but an active process in which the borrowed stem is immediately incorporated into the agglutinative system of the recipient language and frequently acquires meanings absent in the donor language. Particular attention is paid to the mediating role of Russian, to the coexistence of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, and to the competition between anglicisms and their native equivalents.

Keywords: Anglicism, language contact, borrowing, lexical adaptation, assimilation, digital discourse, agglutinative morphology, Uzbek language, English language, hybrid derivation.



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Introduction

Language contact has long been recognised as one of the principal sources of lexical innovation, and the digital environment has intensified this process to a degree unknown in earlier periods. Haugen, in his classical study of linguistic borrowing, described the entry of a foreign element into a recipient system as a gradual movement from importation to substitution, in which the borrowed unit is progressively reshaped by the structures of the receiving language. Subsequent work in contact linguistics, particularly that of Thomason and Kaufman and of Winford, has demonstrated that the outcome of contact depends not only on the intensity of exposure but also on the typological organisation of the languages involved. The situation of modern Uzbek illustrates this principle clearly. Over the past two decades the language has been exposed to an uninterrupted flow of English vocabulary transmitted through social networks, messengers, video platforms and mobile applications, and this vocabulary has been accommodated in ways that reflect the specific structure of Uzbek rather than the structure of the donor language.

The first level of accommodation is phonetic and graphic. English units entering Uzbek are reshaped in accordance with the phonological inventory and the orthographic conventions of the recipient language: like appears as layk, story as storis, content as kontent, subscribe as sabskrayb, hype as xayp. Sounds absent from the Uzbek system are systematically replaced, the interdental fricatives being rendered as t or s and the labial-velar approximant as v, while consonant clusters uncharacteristic of native words are simplified or resolved by vowel insertion. A factor specific to the Uzbek situation is the parallel functioning of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, which produces two written forms of the same borrowed unit and turns the choice of graphic system into a sociolinguistic



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variable, complicating lexicographic fixation, since the same anglicism may be recorded in several competing written shapes.

The second and most revealing level is morphological. Once a borrowed stem has been graphically adapted, it is immediately supplied with native affixes and thereby fully incorporated into the grammatical system of Uzbek. Verbal derivation is especially productive: the denominal formant *-la* produces *layklamoq*, *kommentlamoq*, *postlamoq*, *xayplamoq*, and these verbs subsequently accept the entire range of tense, aspect and person markers, yielding forms such as *layklabman* or *kommentlagan*. Nominal borrowings are equally freely inflected, taking case and possessive affixes in *storisga*, *reelsdan*, *kontentimiz*, and they serve as bases for further derivation by means of native suffixes, as in *kontentchi* or *bloggerlik*. The agglutinative structure of the language accepts foreign roots without resistance, so that a single word may combine an English stem with a chain of Uzbek morphemes. This hybrid derivation is the clearest evidence that the borrowing is not merely used but grammatically owned by the recipient language.

The third level concerns semantics. Anglicisms rarely retain the full semantic volume of their etymons. More often they undergo narrowing, retaining only the meaning relevant to the digital sphere, as in the case of *storis*, which in Uzbek denotes exclusively the ephemeral publication format and not a narrative in general. In other cases the borrowed unit develops evaluative or stylistic nuances that the English source does not possess, and occasionally it acquires an entirely new derived meaning within the recipient system. A further semantic consequence of borrowing is the emergence of competition between the anglicism and its native or calqued equivalent. Pairs of this type are usually not synonymous in the strict sense: the borrowed member tends to be marked as informal, technical or prestigious, while the native member is perceived as neutral



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or official, so that the doublet is resolved through stylistic differentiation rather than through the elimination of one of the competitors.

These processes cannot be explained without reference to sociolinguistic factors. The most important of them is the mediating role of Russian, which for a long period served as the principal channel through which technical and scientific vocabulary reached Uzbek and which continues to influence the phonetic shape of many recent anglicisms. Alongside this, the prestige associated with English competence, the age and urban orientation of the most active users of digital media, and the professional jargon of the advertising and content industries all favour the retention of the borrowed form. As Androutsopoulos has argued, digital media do not by themselves cause language change but accelerate and render visible tendencies already present in the language system; the contemporary influx of anglicisms into Uzbek confirms this observation, since the mechanisms of adaptation employed are precisely those that the language has always used for foreign material.

Borrowing, however, is not the only response available to the recipient language. Alongside direct adoption, Uzbek regularly resorts to calquing, translating the internal form of the English unit by means of native morphemes, and to semantic derivation, in which an existing native word is assigned a new technological meaning. These strategies are actively supported by normative institutions, which recommend native designations in official and educational registers. The result is a systematic stylistic stratification: the calque or the native term prevails in official documents, textbooks and formal media, while the anglicism dominates in spontaneous everyday communication. The two forms are consequently not competitors for a single position in the lexicon but complementary members of a stylistic opposition, and attempts to eliminate the borrowed member by prescriptive means have generally failed precisely because the informal register



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requires a marked unit. This distribution demonstrates that the reaction of a language to foreign influence cannot be reduced to acceptance or rejection; it is a redistribution of functions among coexisting variants.

In conclusion, the assimilation of anglicisms in modern Uzbek digital discourse is a systematic process operating simultaneously at the phonetic-graphic, morphological and semantic levels, and its outcome is determined by the structure of the recipient language rather than by that of the donor. The agglutinative organisation of Uzbek allows a borrowed stem to be integrated immediately and completely, which explains the productivity of hybrid derivation and justifies describing the process as appropriation rather than as simple importation. Since much of this vocabulary has already moved beyond the digital sphere into everyday speech, it requires systematic lexicographic documentation, including the fixation of graphic variants and of the semantic shifts that distinguish the borrowed unit from its English source.

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