



## **LANGUAGE CONTACT PHENOMENA IN STATE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA OF UZBEKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the manifestations of multilingualism and language contact in Uzbekistan's press and mass media. Uzbek society is characterized by a complex multilingual environment in which Uzbek, Russian, English, and other languages interact across various domains. The study analyzes how state and non-state media implement multilingual practices, including parallel multilingualism, asymmetric code-switching, and stylistically motivated code-mixing. Special attention is given to the functional differentiation of languages in journalistic texts, the stylistic contrast between official and independent media, and the role of abbreviations, quotations, and international terminology. The findings demonstrate that while official media maintain strict adherence to Uzbek as the primary language of communication, independent outlets employ more flexible linguistic strategies. Overall, multilingual practices in Uzbek media serve both communicative and stylistic functions, contributing to broader audience reach and enhanced textual expressiveness.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism; language contact; media linguistics; code-switching; Uzbek language; Russian language; English borrowings; journalistic style; asymmetric multilingualism; functional differentiation.

### **Introduction**

Uzbekistan represents a linguistically diverse society in which multiple languages coexist and interact within the same communicative spaces. This multilingual landscape manifests itself in everyday communication, educational settings, social media, and particularly in the press and mass media. As global information flows expand, the linguistic practices of media institutions increasingly reflect broader sociolinguistic dynamics.



Within the media sphere, Uzbek serves as the principal language of communication, yet Russian, English, and other languages continue to play significant complementary roles. These roles are shaped by the functional needs of audiences, the international orientation of certain content, and stylistic choices made by journalists. The widespread phenomena of code-switching, code-mixing, and parallel multilingualism make the Uzbek media landscape a rich site for sociolinguistic inquiry.

Given the rapid transformation of Uzbekistan's media environment in the digital era, a systematic examination of multilingual practices is both timely and necessary. This article aims to describe the forms, functions, and motivations underlying multilingual behaviour in the press and mass media of Uzbekistan.

### **Literature Review**

The study of multilingualism in mass media has been addressed in international scholarship through frameworks such as domain-based language use, functional differentiation, and media-specific code-switching patterns (Myers-Scotton 1993; Androutsopoulos 2007). Within the Central Asian context, linguistic research has highlighted the historical and contemporary roles of Russian as a lingua franca, as well as the increasing influence of English due to globalization.

Sharipova's comparative analysis of abbreviations in Uzbek and Russian media (2023) demonstrates that both languages employ acronyms for communicative efficiency but differ in their structural formation and lexical assimilation. This work provides an important foundation for understanding how international terminology enters the Uzbek media space.

Research on media bilingualism also emphasizes the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric multilingualism. Symmetric multilingualism involves parallel dissemination of identical content in two or more languages, while asymmetric multilingualism refers to the insertion of foreign-language elements into a dominant-language text for specific communicative functions (Gorter & Cenoz 2015).

Despite these contributions, multilingual practices in Uzbek media remain underexplored in contemporary linguistics. This article therefore fills an important gap by offering an integrated analysis of language contact across state and non-state media platforms in Uzbekistan.



## **Methodology and Methods**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology grounded in media linguistics and sociolinguistics. The following methods were used:

**Discourse Analysis:** Examination of linguistic features in journalistic texts from both state and independent media outlets, including newspapers, online platforms, and official press releases.

**Comparative Analysis:** Comparison of multilingual practices between Uzbek-, Russian-, and English-language content, as well as between state and non-state media.

**Functional Analysis:** Identification of communicative roles played by different languages within news reporting, commentary, interviews, and informal media genres.

**Contextual Interpretation:** Consideration of sociopolitical and cultural factors shaping language choice in the media system of Uzbekistan.

Data were drawn from widely circulated platforms such as *Xalq so'zi / Народное слово*, *UzA*, *Dunyo AA*, *Kun.uz*, *Daryo.uz*, and *Gazeta.uz*. Particular attention was given to cases of code-switching, abbreviation usage, quotations, and bilingual text layout.

## **The main part**

Uzbek society is characterized by a multilingual environment. Within this multilingual landscape, language contacts take on diverse forms across various domains. In the media sphere, both state and non-state mass media occasionally employ several languages simultaneously. In educational institutions, instances of mixed Uzbek–Russian speech may occur during classroom interaction. While adherence to the state language is required in official documentation, the use of Russian continues in informal administrative and service-related communication. On social media, meanwhile, young people freely alternate between Uzbek and Russian, and mixed speech that incorporates English words and abbreviations has



become widespread. For this reason, the study of language use according to domain and context has become a particularly relevant issue in contemporary linguistics. The press and mass media constitute one of the domains in which language contact is most clearly manifested. Within Uzbekistan's media system, the majority of state-founded newspapers and journals are published in Uzbek; however, Russian-language versions of certain publications also exist. For example, the government-owned newspaper *Xalq so'zi* is published simultaneously with its Russian-language counterpart *Народное слово*.

Similarly, national news agencies strive to disseminate information in multiple languages: agencies such as Uza and Dunyo AA release news reports in Uzbek, Russian, and English. This practice represents a form of **symmetric multilingualism** in the media sphere, whereby the same informational content is provided in parallel across several languages.

Although official state media primarily rely on Uzbek, Russian-language content remains targeted at a broad audience - particularly Russian-speaking populations and neighboring countries. In non-state and independent media outlets, there is comparatively greater flexibility regarding language choice. For instance, online platforms such as *Kun.uz*, *Daryo.uz*, and *Gazeta.uz* publish news in separate Uzbek and Russian sections, and in some cases authors choose the language of publication based on the nature of the interview or material.

In press materials, code-switching most commonly appears in the form of quotations or the use of specialized terms. While state media largely adhere to official style norms and write primarily in Uzbek, reports concerning international events frequently include foreign terminology and the original names of international organizations. For example, abbreviations such as *EU*, *MI6*, or names like *Deutsche Welle* and *The New York Times* may be presented in their original linguistic form. In such cases, journalists resort to code-switching in order to preserve the accuracy of information and to convey well-known institutional names clearly to the audience. In a study conducted by M. Sharipova, the use of abbreviations and acronyms in Uzbek and Russian press materials was compared, revealing that both languages actively employ abbreviations for purposes of communicative economy. However, the study also shows certain differences in how these abbreviations are formed and adopted. For instance, in Russian, localized abbreviations for international organizations (e.g., *OOH* for the UN) are



widely used, whereas in Uzbek, original English abbreviations or their Uzbek explanatory equivalents tend to appear more frequently [1]. Such examples demonstrate the presence of **asymmetric code-switching** in media language - where the dominant language of the text remains Uzbek, yet elements from other languages are inserted when necessary.

There are also stylistic differences between the language of state and non-state media. State publications typically adhere strictly to the norms of the literary language and employ a formal, bookish style; in such texts, the interference of foreign languages is minimized. In contrast, non-state online media outlets sometimes use a simpler, more conversational style, emphasizing journalistic expressiveness in order to attract the audience. In these materials (especially blog posts and analytical articles), authors may employ code-switching for stylistic purposes. For example, an author may reinforce an argument or introduce irony by citing a well-known Russian expression and then providing an explanation. Alternatively, an English proverb or quotation may be presented verbatim, followed by commentary within the text. This strategy serves two functions: on the one hand, it targets a bilingual or multi-code audience - readers who understand Uzbek as well as Russian (or English); on the other hand, it enriches the text semantically and stylistically by adding expressive nuance.

In journalistic practice, the functional aspects of multilingualism manifest in the fact that each language performs a distinct role. Uzbek serves as the primary medium for conveying information, whereas Russian may be used to provide additional context or to cite expert opinions in their original form (particularly in the case of technical or legal terminology). English, in turn, typically appears in the coverage of international news and foreign sources - for instance, in references to the names of international conferences (COP26, G20) or global phenomena (Brexit, COVID-19), which are often presented in their English forms. These examples illustrate the asymmetrical nature of language contact in the media: the main text is produced in a dominant language (Uzbek), while elements from other languages are incorporated in a subordinate manner to fulfill specific communicative functions. At the same time, parallel multilingualism can also be observed in certain bilingual publications in the country (such as the newspaper *Ovozi Tojik*, published in both Tajik and Uzbek) or in multilingual television channels (for example, the Russian- and English-language channels of the National



Television and Radio Company of Uzbekistan). In such cases, identical content is delivered equally in two languages, representing a symmetrical type of language contact motivated primarily by the needs of audiences with different linguistic backgrounds.

In the field of journalism, it is possible to distinguish between formal and informal manifestations of code-switching and multilingualism. In formal informational genres - such as news reports and official announcements - code fidelity is strong: the text is conducted almost entirely in Uzbek, with only essential terms left untranslated. In more informal genres - including columns, interviews, and blogs - the communicative tone is more conversational, allowing the writer or speaker to incorporate words or expressions from other languages more freely. This stylistic feature in journalism is referred to as code-mixing and is typically employed to achieve stylistic expressiveness or to create proximity with the audience [1].

Language contact between Uzbek and Russian, English, and Tajik in the press and mass media largely follows the principle of functional differentiation - each language fulfills a specific communicative role. Code-switching occurs when needed; however, in official media this process is regulated (asymmetric), whereas in independent media it is comparatively more flexible (more symmetric). In both cases, the underlying aim is the same: to convey information to a broader audience and to enhance the expressiveness and communicative effectiveness of the text.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis reveals that multilingualism in Uzbekistan's media sphere is characterized by both **functional differentiation** and **context-dependent flexibility**. Uzbek remains the primary language of journalistic communication, particularly in state media, where linguistic norms and minimal foreign interference are emphasized. Russian and English, however, perform essential supplementary roles - Russian for contextual clarification and expert citation, English for international terminology and global news coverage.

Independent online media demonstrate notably greater linguistic freedom, employing code-switching and code-mixing for stylistic enrichment, audience engagement, and expressive nuance. This results in asymmetrical but dynamic multilingual practices shaped by genre, communicative intention, and target readership.



## **References**

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