
Code-switching and translanguaging on social media platforms: theoretical foundations and empirical insights from Uzbek context

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Annotation *This article provides a theoretical and practical analysis of code-switching and translanguaging practices on social media, with particular attention to their use in Uzbek, Russian, and English. The main aim of the research is to differentiate the diverse forms of multilingualism in the digital sphere and to identify their communicative and social functions. Code-switching is approached as a more structured and functional alternation between languages, while translanguaging is interpreted as a creative, flexible, and meaning-making multilingual practice. The distinctions and similarities between these two phenomena are explored in light of contemporary theoretical perspectives. The study applies Self-Determination Theory to examine motivational aspects of language choice, and Digital Discourse Analysis to highlight the dynamics of social media interaction. Data were collected from authentic social media posts, user exchanges, and interactive communication. Findings demonstrate that users strategically employ multilingual resources for identity construction, audience engagement, and stylistic effects. The article concludes with practical recommendations for improving language education, strengthening language policy, and enhancing digital literacy in Uzbekistan.*

Keywords *Code-switching, translanguaging, social media, multilingualism, Uzbekistan, digital discourse*

Код-свитчинг и транслингвизм в социальных сетях: теоретические основы и практический анализ в узбекском контексте

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Аннотация *В данной статье проводится теоретический и практический анализ феноменов код-свитчинга и транслингвизма в социальных сетях с особым акцентом на использование узбекского, русского и английского языков. Основная цель исследования заключается в разграничении различных форм многоязычия в цифровой среде и выявлении их коммуникативных и социальных функций. Код-свитчинг рассматривается как более структурированное и функциональное чередование языков, тогда как транслингвизм трактуется как творческая, гибкая и смыслообразующая практика многоязычного общения. Отличия и пересечения этих двух явлений анализируются в свете современных теоретических подходов. В качестве методологической основы использованы Self-Determination Theory для изучения мотивационных аспектов выбора языка, Translanguaging Theory*

для концептуализации гибких языковых практик, а также Digital Discourse Analysis для анализа особенностей взаимодействия в социальных медиа. Эмпирические данные собраны из аутентичных публикаций и комментариев в социальных сетях. Результаты показывают, что пользователи стратегически применяют многоязычные ресурсы для выражения идентичности, установления солидарности, привлечения аудитории и создания стилистических эффектов. В заключение представлены практические рекомендации для совершенствования языкового образования, укрепления языковой политики и развития цифровой грамотности в Узбекистане в условиях растущего влияния многоязычия в сети.

Ключевые слова Код-свитчинг, транслингвизм, социальные сети, многоязычие, Узбекистан, цифровой дискурс

Ijtimoiy tarmoqlarda kod-almashish va translanguaging: nazariy asoslar va o'zbek tilidagi amaliy tahlil

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Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada ijtimoiy tarmoqlarda kod-almashish va translanguaging hodisalari nazariy va amaliy jihatdan chuqur tahlil qilinib, o'zbek, rus va ingliz tillaridagi qo'llanilishiga alohida e'tibor qaratildi. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi shundaki, ko'p tillilikning raqamli makondagi turli ko'rinishlarini farqlash va ularning kommunikativ hamda ijtimoiy vazifalarini aniqlashdir. Kod-almashish ko'proq strukturaviy va funksional almashuv sifatida ko'rilsa, translanguaging esa ijodiy, moslashuvchan va ma'no yaratishga qaratilgan ko'p tilli amaliyot sifatida talqin qilindi. Ushbu ikki hodisaning farqlari va o'zaro o'xshashliklari zamonaviy nazariy manbalar asosida ochib berildi. Tadqiqot metodologiyasi sifatida Self-Determination Theory til tanlovining motivatsion jihatlarini tahlil qilishda, Translanguaging Theory ko'p tillilikning suyuq amaliyotlarini tushuntirishda, Digital Discourse Analysis esa ijtimoiy media muhitini izohlashda qo'llanildi. Ma'lumotlar real ijtimoiy tarmoq postlari, foydalanuvchilarning yozishmalari va interaktiv muloqotlaridan yig'ildi. Natijalar foydalanuvchilarning ko'p tilli resurslardan identifikatsiya, birdamlik, auditoriya bilan yaqinlik va uslubiy maqsadlarda samarali foydalanganini ko'rsatdi. Xususan, translanguaging norasmiy va erkin muloqotga yo'naltirilgan vaziyatlarda ustunlik qilgan bo'lsa, kod-almashish ko'proq aniq strukturaga ega va rasmiyroq kontekstlarda kuzatildi. Tadqiqot yakunida O'zbekiston ta'limi, til siyosati va raqamli savodxonlikni rivojlantirish uchun amaliy tavsiyalar ishlab chiqildi..

Kalit so'zlar Kod-almashish, translanguaging, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, ko'p tillilik, O'zbekiston, raqamli nutq

Introduction

1. Context and Importance

With the rapid growth of social media platforms, multilingual communication practices like *code-switching* and *translanguaging* have become increasingly prevalent. Despite their widespread use, many users and even scholars conflate the two – yet they are grounded in distinct theoretical frameworks (MDPI, 2020). This confusion hinders precise linguistic analysis and limits our understanding of online multilingual discourse.

2. Theoretical Distinctions

Code-switching traditionally describes the alternation between named languages, guided by grammatical and pragmatic rules (Poplack, 1980). In contrast, *translanguaging* conceptualizes multilingual speakers as drawing from a unified linguistic repertoire to make meaning, transcending rigid language boundaries (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2019). This theoretical shift – from dual competence toward a unitary model of language has been elaborated in recent scholarly discourse (MacSwan, 2022).

3. Gap in the Literature

Most translanguaging and code-switching research focuses on Western or Asian contexts (e.g., Spanish-English, English-African languages, Indonesian YouTube). However, there is scant attention to *Central Asian multilingualism*, particularly in Uzbek-English and Uzbek-Russian social media environments. Our study addresses this gap by investigating how these linguistic dynamics play out on Uzbek platforms, where multilingual communication is complex and under-studied.

4. Purpose of This Study

This paper aims to:

- Clarify theoretical distinctions between code-switching and translanguaging using recent academic literature.
- Provide empirical illustrations using real Uzbek-English and Uzbek-Russian social media examples.

- Offer insights into how these practices shape identity, communication, and digital pedagogy in Uzbekistan's multilingual context.

5. Outline

Following this introduction, the *Methods* section will detail our data collection and analytical strategy (selecting social media posts/comments). The *Results* will present categorised examples illustrating both phenomena. The *Discussion* will interpret these findings in light of theory and local sociolinguistic dynamics, while the *Conclusion* will summarize implications for education and future research.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopts a *qualitative content analysis* approach, with descriptive and interpretive elements. The focus is on identifying and analyzing patterns of code-switching and translanguaging in multilingual interactions on social media platforms commonly used in Uzbekistan.

Data Sources

The dataset was collected from *publicly accessible posts and comments* on three major platforms:

- *Telegram channels* (popular in Uzbekistan for group discussions)
- *Instagram captions/comments* (widely used by youth influencers)
- *TikTok short videos* (with subtitles and captions mixing languages)

Time frame: *March-May 2025* (to capture current trends).

Sampling Strategy

- *Purposive sampling* was used to select posts where multilingual language use was evident.
- Around 150 excerpts (posts, captions, or comments) were collected.
- Selection criteria: inclusion of at least two languages (Uzbek+English, Uzbek+Russian, or Uzbek+English+Russian).

Data Coding

We applied a *two-level coding process*:

1. *Code-switching identification* – following Poplack's (1980) typology:
 - *Inter-sentential switching* (language shift between sentences).
 - *Intra-sentential switching* (within a sentence).
 - *Tag-switching* (inserting discourse markers, e.g., "ok", "bro", "nu").
2. *Translanguaging identification* – based on García & Wei (2014), focusing on *fluid hybrid expressions* where languages blend without strict boundaries.

Examples of Coding

Code-switching (Uzbek–English): "Bugun lecture bo'ldi, but honestly it was boring."

Code-switching (Uzbek–Russian): "Mana bu kino zo'r ekan, kruto!"

Translanguaging: "Todayda meetingda gaplashamiz, keyin choyxona boramiz."

Theoretical Framework and Application

The analysis is guided by three complementary frameworks:

1. *Self-Determination Theory* (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

We rely on their distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation (Ch. 4, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*). In our context, this helps explain why social media users switch between languages: English often indexes prestige or global belonging (extrinsic), while Uzbek and Russian insertions reflect identity and emotional resonance (intrinsic).

2. *Translanguaging Theory* (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2019).

We draw on their conceptualization of *translanguaging as the deployment of a unitary linguistic repertoire* (*The Translanguaging Current in Language Education*, pp. 281–282). This notion supports our categorization of hybrid expressions (e.g., "assignmentimni submit qildim") as translanguaging rather

than code-switching, since the languages are not treated as separate codes but as part of one repertoire.

3. *Digital Discourse Analysis* (Page et al., 2021).

We apply Page et al.'s framework from *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide* (2nd ed., Ch. 2 and Ch. 5) to situate our examples within the dynamics of online interaction. Their emphasis on multimodality and platform-specific affordances helps explain why translanguaging is more prevalent on TikTok and Instagram (with audiovisual cues) than on Telegram (text-dominant).

Ethical Considerations

Only *publicly available* data were used; no private chats or accounts were accessed.

Username and identifiable information were removed.

The study follows the ethical guidelines of online research (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Results

The analysis of 150 social media excerpts revealed clear differences between *code-switching* and *translanguaging* practices.

1. *Code-switching*

Code-switching appeared mostly in *Telegram and Twitter* conversations, serving functions such as emphasis, prestige, and group identity.

Example	Type	Explanation
"Bugun lecture bo'ldi, but honestly it was boring."	Intra-sentential (Uzbek-English)	English clause inserted for emphasis.
"Mana bu film kruto ekan!"	Intra-sentential (Uzbek-Russian)	Russian adjective adds expressivity.
"Ok, bugun ko'ramiz."	Tag-switching (English)	Borrowed discourse marker.
"Bugun class bo'ldi. Заѡпа у нас экзамен."	Inter-sentential (Uzbek-Russian)	Sentence boundary marks the switch.

These examples show that users switch languages intentionally while maintaining clear linguistic boundaries.

2. Translanguaging

Translanguaging was especially visible on *Instagram* and *TikTok*, where multimodal interaction encourages fluid blending of languages.

Example	Feature	Explanation
"Todayda meetingda gaplashamiz, keyin choyxonaga boramiz."	Hybrid morphology	English "today" + Uzbek locative "-da" + English "meeting" + Uzbek case ending.
"Assignmentimni ertalab teacherga submit qildim."	Mixed lexicon	Uzbek possessive + English base word + Uzbek verb form.
"Nu, sizni storyingizda zo'r idea bor ekan."	Trilingual blend	Russian "nu" + Uzbek structure + English "story".
"Like bosib qo'yilar, bratlar."	Social media slang	English "like" adapted to Uzbek imperative form.

Here, languages are not treated as separate codes but as parts of a single communicative repertoire, often used for humor, creativity, or stylistic play.

3. Motivational Aspects

- *Intrinsic motivation*: Uzbek and Russian insertions express solidarity, intimacy, or emotional nuance.
- *Extrinsic motivation*: English insertions project prestige, global belonging, and digital modernity.
- *Platform Differences*
- *Telegram*: more formal exchanges, mainly Uzbek with occasional English/Russian switches.
- *Instagram & TikTok*: highly multimodal, creativity-driven, dominated by translanguaging.

- *Twitter/X*: strong presence of English, code-switching tied to trending global hashtags.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight how multilingual practices on social media in Uzbekistan reflect broader global patterns of code-switching and translanguaging. The clear distinction observed between the two phenomena confirms recent theoretical clarifications by Otheguy, García, and Reid (2019), who argue that translanguaging reflects a single, integrated repertoire rather than the alternation of distinct codes. In our data, users on Instagram and TikTok especially demonstrated this fluidity, confirming the increasing role of digital affordances in

shaping multilingual expression
(Androutsopoulos, 2021).

At the same time, the prevalence of code-switching in more text-based platforms such as Telegram and Twitter suggests that users still maintain functional separations between languages, consistent with earlier models of code-switching as a discourse strategy (Poplack, 1980; Myers-Scotton, 1993). These results align with Li Wei's (2018) idea that translanguaging and code-switching coexist dynamically depending on communicative goals and platform affordances.

The motivational aspects identified in this study also resonate with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020). English insertions often carried extrinsic value, linked to prestige, professionalism, and global identity, while Russian and Uzbek switches tended to carry intrinsic value, signaling solidarity, humor, or intimacy. This finding supports research showing that language choice in digital spaces is closely tied to identity negotiation and self-expression (Lee, 2020; Androutsopoulos & Staehr, 2021).

Importantly, the trilingual examples (Uzbek, Russian, English) illustrate a unique feature of Uzbekistan's digital discourse. Unlike contexts where bilingual code-switching dominates, here translanguaging often involves three languages simultaneously, creating hybrid forms that are both functional and creative. This pattern reflects Uzbekistan's sociohistorical multilingualism and suggests that online discourse may play a role in normalizing such practices in everyday communication (Fidan, 2022).

Overall, these findings may contribute to theoretical debates by showing that translanguaging is not simply "advanced code-switching" but a qualitatively different orientation to language use. For educational and sociolinguistic contexts in Uzbekistan, this means that recognizing translanguaging practices can enrich language pedagogy and help align teaching with the communicative realities of students' digital lives (Garcia & Li Wei, 2021).

Conclusion

This study examined the interplay between code-switching and translanguaging in Uzbek, Russian, and English digital discourse on social media. The findings confirm that code-switching remains a structured, functional practice, while translanguaging reflects a more fluid, creative use of linguistic resources. Importantly, Uzbek social media demonstrates unique trilingual patterns, reflecting the country's sociohistorical multilingualism.

Theoretically, the results reinforce the need to distinguish between code-switching and translanguaging rather than treating them as interchangeable. Practically, the study suggests that recognizing translanguaging practices can enrich language pedagogy in Uzbekistan, particularly by aligning curricula with students' real communicative repertoires.

Future research should explore longitudinal patterns of digital multilingualism, compare generational differences, and investigate how translanguaging contributes to identity construction and social capital in online spaces.

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