



TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICES AMONG UZBEK SPEAKERS ON TELEGRAM: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study explores translanguaging practices among Uzbek multilingual users on Telegram. Using qualitative analysis of authentic digital conversations, the research examines how Uzbek, English, and Russian are combined within everyday communication. The findings show that translanguaging is a strategic practice: English is mainly used for academic and professional purposes, Uzbek for interpersonal and emotional interaction, and Russian for stylistic nuance. The study highlights how multilingual speakers use their full linguistic repertoire to express identity, maintain relationships, and communicate effectively. The research contributes to sociolinguistic studies of digital multilingualism in Central Asia and suggests implications for language education.

Keywords: translanguaging, multilingualism, Telegram, Uzbek speakers, digital communication

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital communication has significantly influenced language use in multilingual societies. Social media platforms, particularly Telegram, have become central spaces where individuals interact using diverse linguistic resources. In Uzbekistan, Telegram is one of the most widely used platforms, offering a valuable context for examining everyday multilingual practices.

Uzbekistan's sociolinguistic environment is characterized by the coexistence of several languages. Uzbek functions as the state language, Russian continues to serve as a lingua franca in many domains, and English is increasingly important in education and professional contexts. As a result, many Uzbek speakers regularly use multiple languages in their daily communication, especially in informal digital settings.

The concept of translanguaging provides a useful framework for understanding such practices. Rather than viewing languages as separate systems, translanguaging emphasizes the flexible and integrated use of all linguistic resources available to speakers. This perspective highlights how multilingual individuals construct meaning, express identity, and adapt to different communicative contexts.

Despite growing interest in translanguaging, there is limited research on digital multilingual practices in Central Asia. Most existing studies focus on formal educational settings or Western contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore how Uzbek speakers engage in translanguaging on Telegram and how this practice supports communication, social interaction, and identity construction.

Literature Review

Translanguaging has become a central concept in sociolinguistics for understanding multilingual communication. Initially developed in bilingual education, it has evolved into a

broader theoretical framework that views language practices as fluid and integrated rather than separated into distinct systems. According to García and Wei (2014), translanguaging refers to the process by which multilingual speakers utilize their full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning. This perspective challenges traditional views of code-switching by emphasizing the dynamic and holistic nature of language use.

Empirical research demonstrates that translanguaging is a natural and strategic feature of everyday communication. Ambele and Watson Todd (2021) found that multilingual speakers in urban contexts combine languages flexibly to enhance communicative effectiveness. Similarly, Mazzaferro (2018) argues that translanguaging is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a social practice through which speakers' express identity and negotiate power relations. These studies highlight that language mixing is purposeful and context dependent.

In educational contexts, translanguaging has been shown to support learning and cognitive development. Chen and Pushor (2023) emphasize the importance of incorporating learners' home languages to facilitate vocabulary acquisition and engagement. Likewise, Karabassova and San Isidro (2020) demonstrate that teachers often employ translanguaging as a practical strategy, even when institutional policies favor monolingual instruction. These findings suggest that recognizing multilingual practices can improve educational outcomes.

Research on digital communication further underscores the significance of translanguaging. Melo-Pfeifer and Araújo e Sá (2018) show that multilingual users in online environments employ translanguaging to collaborate and co-construct meaning. Digital platforms provide flexible spaces where language boundaries are less rigid, allowing speakers to adapt their linguistic choices to different social and communicative contexts.

Despite the growing body of research, most studies have focused on Western or institutional settings, with limited attention to Central Asia. There is a lack of empirical research on everyday digital communication among Uzbek speakers. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining translanguaging practices on Telegram, contributing to a better understanding of multilingual language use in the Uzbek context.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to investigate translanguaging practices in a naturally occurring digital communication context. The data comprise Telegram group messages exchanged among Uzbek friends over a period of informal interaction, including daily updates, emotional exchanges, professional guidance, and academic advice. The language practices observed in these interactions reflect a blending of Uzbek, English and Russian and transliterated phrases within conversational threads. The study aims to explore how these multilingual resources are strategically deployed in digital discourse to achieve communicative goals and perform identities.

The dataset consists of 4 screenshots of real-time Telegram conversations drawn from the researcher's personal account. These interactions took place between the researcher and a range of personal contacts—primarily friends, colleagues, and acquaintances—over the course of everyday, informal communication. The data were selected based on their relevance to translanguaging practices, specifically instances where more than one language was used fluidly within a single conversation thread or message sequence.

The selection criteria followed a purposive sampling strategy, focusing on conversations that demonstrate multilingual practices across Uzbek, Russian, and English. These languages

were most prevalent due to the participants' linguistic backgrounds and communicative preferences. Each data point (screenshot) includes spontaneous, naturally occurring messages without researcher intervention, thus preserving the ecological validity of the interaction.

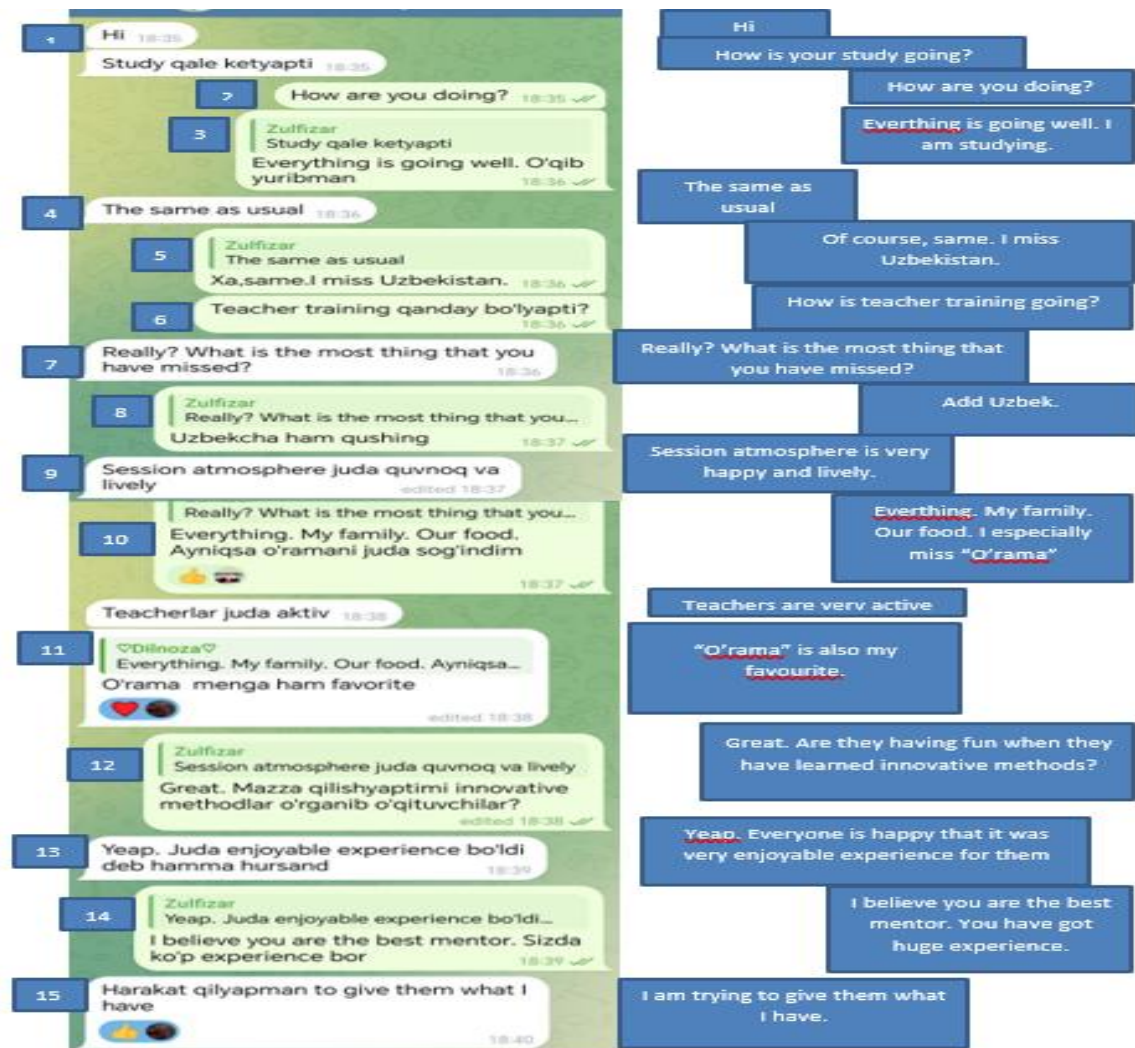
Given the personal nature of digital communication, ethical considerations were paramount. The research project was approved and received confirmation through a supervisor-signed project submission form. All participants whose conversations were included in the dataset were informed of the study's aims and participants were provided written consent form of their interactions for research purposes. An ethics agreement form was circulated, signed, and collected from each participant (Appendix B)

The study draws on the theoretical framework of translanguaging as conceptualized by García and Wei (2014), viewing language use as a dynamic, flexible, and integrated system. Discourse analysis was employed to examine how participants mobilize multilingual resources across turns, sentences, and lexical items. Attention was given to how languages co-occur within the same utterance or conversation, the pragmatic functions of language choice, and the broader social and identity-related meanings embedded in translanguaging.

Findings and Discussion

The collected Telegram conversations among Uzbek speakers provide rich evidence of translanguaging practices, reflecting dynamic language use across Uzbek, English, and Russian. Jones and Themistocleous (2022) highlighted that "The most important thing about this approach is that emphasises the transformative nature of hybridity- the fact that, by mixing resources from different social context together, translanguagers are able to create new social spaces and new opportunities for making meaning and enecting social identities" (p.113).

Figure 1. Translanguaging for Interpersonal Communication



Telegram interaction in Figure 1 can be a rich example of translanguaging practices among Uzbek speakers in a digital context. Participants fluidly alternate between Uzbek, English in the same conversation. For instance, messages in line 1 and line 15 reveal how users blend Uzbek grammar with English vocabulary to express thoughts efficiently and naturally. This flexible use of language reflects users' multilingual repertoires and communicative comfort in hybrid digital spaces. The conversation also shows how translanguaging supports emotional expression and social bonding. Phrases in line 5 and line 10 evoke nostalgia and shared cultural values. The use of translanguaging in discussing teacher training and mentoring in line 13 demonstrates its role in professional discourse. This data allows translanguaging as a strategic, identity-affirming, and socially embedded practice. It emphasizes Telegram as a site where multilingual users negotiate meaning, reinforce community ties, and construct hybrid linguistic identities in everyday interaction.





Figure 2. Translanguaging in Academic and Professional Contexts

Figure 2 illustrates the role of translanguaging in academic and professional communication. In this interaction, English is used for technical and domain-specific terms such as “*application*,” “*vacancies*,” and “*requirements*.” Uzbek, on the other hand, is used to provide explanations, guidance, and emotional support.

This division of linguistic functions reflects a pragmatic approach to communication, where English is associated with global and institutional knowledge, while Uzbek remains the language of interpersonal connection. The combination of these languages enables participants to communicate effectively while maintaining clarity and social rapport.

Such patterns are consistent with previous research showing that multilingual speakers assign different communicative roles to different languages (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021).

Figure 3: Multilingual Integration and Communicative Efficiency

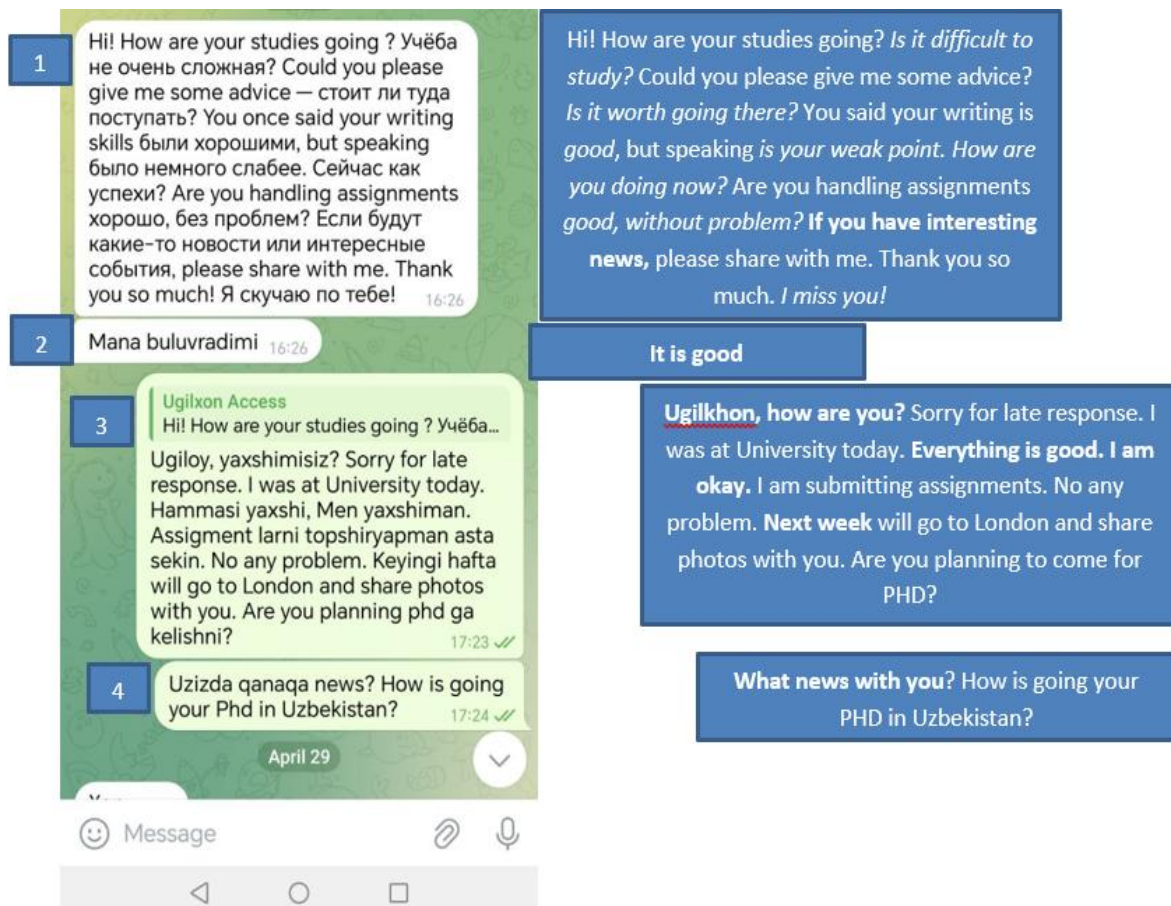


Figure 3 shows rich translanguaging across English, Russian and Uzbek. In line 1 participant uses English for structure and formality, Russian for emotional depth, and Uzbek for warmth and connection to the local culture. Uzbek in line 2 shows that the speaker is switching between different ideas within the same sentence. Instead of confusion, the mix of different languages shows that people have a shared understanding of language, which allows them to easily switch between languages depending on the topic, the tone, and how close they are to each other.

English is used to structure information and introduce formal elements, Russian adds stylistic nuance or emotional emphasis, and Uzbek maintains cultural grounding and interpersonal warmth. The blending of these languages within single messages highlights the efficiency of translanguaging in digital communication.

Figure 4. “Translanguaging as a Resource for Emotional Nuance and Informational Exchange in Multilingual Digital Interaction”





The figure 4 illustrates how people combine Uzbek, Russian and English within and across messages. Not only does participant blend languages for ease of communication but it is also used to express emotional nuance and familiarity in the line 2. In line 7 Russian is used to express closeness or formality and code-switching is implemented for informative and situational purposes, such as updating on activities and emphasizing personal reflections. This multimodal language use shows the speaker's linguistic repertoire and agency in navigating multilingual interaction, particularly in informal, digital peer exchange.

Across all four figures, translanguaging emerges as a strategic and meaningful communicative practice. Language choice is influenced by context, purpose, and social relationships rather than fixed linguistic boundaries. Uzbek plays a central role in emotional and cultural expression, English is associated with academic and professional domains, and Russian contributes additional stylistic functions.

These findings highlight the importance of viewing multilingualism as a dynamic and integrated system. The Telegram platform, as an informal digital space, further encourages flexible language use, allowing speakers to adapt their communication to different situations.

Conclusion

This study examined translanguaging practices among Uzbek multilingual speakers on Telegram, focusing on how users combine Uzbek, English, and Russian in digital communication. The analysis of selected interactions demonstrated that translanguaging is a systematic and purposeful practice rather than random language mixing. Speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoire to achieve communicative goals, express emotions, and maintain social relationships.

The findings show a clear functional distribution of languages. English is primarily associated with academic and professional communication, Uzbek serves as the main language

for interpersonal interaction and emotional expression, and Russian contributes stylistic nuance and contextual emphasis. This pattern highlights the strategic nature of language choice in multilingual contexts.

In addition, translanguaging plays a significant role in identity construction. By combining languages, speakers position themselves as both locally grounded and globally connected. Uzbek reflects cultural identity and group belonging, while English signals educational and professional orientation. The integration of multiple languages allows speakers to navigate complex social and communicative contexts effectively.

The study also demonstrates that translanguaging enhances communicative efficiency, particularly in digital environments. Telegram, as an informal and flexible platform, encourages users to experiment with language and adapt their linguistic choices to different situations. This results in more dynamic and context-sensitive communication.

Overall, this research contributes to sociolinguistic studies of multilingualism in Central Asia, a region that remains underrepresented in current literature. It also has practical implications for language education, suggesting that translanguaging should be recognized as a valuable resource in teaching and learning. Rather than viewing multilingual practices as a deviation from norms, educators should incorporate learners' full linguistic repertoire to support more effective and inclusive communication.

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