

## Borrowing and Language Change in Contemporary Uzbek

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### Abstract

This study explores the multi-layered phenomena of lexical borrowing and subsequent language change within contemporary Uzbek sociolinguistic contexts. Driven by rapid globalization, digital acceleration, and socio-economic shifts between 2025 and 2026, the Uzbek language is undergoing substantial structural and lexical transformations. By analyzing a compiled mini-corpus of media text, online communication, and academic discourse, this paper examines how foreign elements—predominantly English IT, financial, and subcultural terms—are integrated into the native agglutinative framework. The findings indicate a significant shift from historical Russian-mediated borrowing toward direct anglicization. These loanwords undergo systematic phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptations, reshaping everyday communication norms among the younger generation.

**Keywords:** Lexical borrowing, Uzbek sociolinguistics, language change, adaptation models, morphological integration.

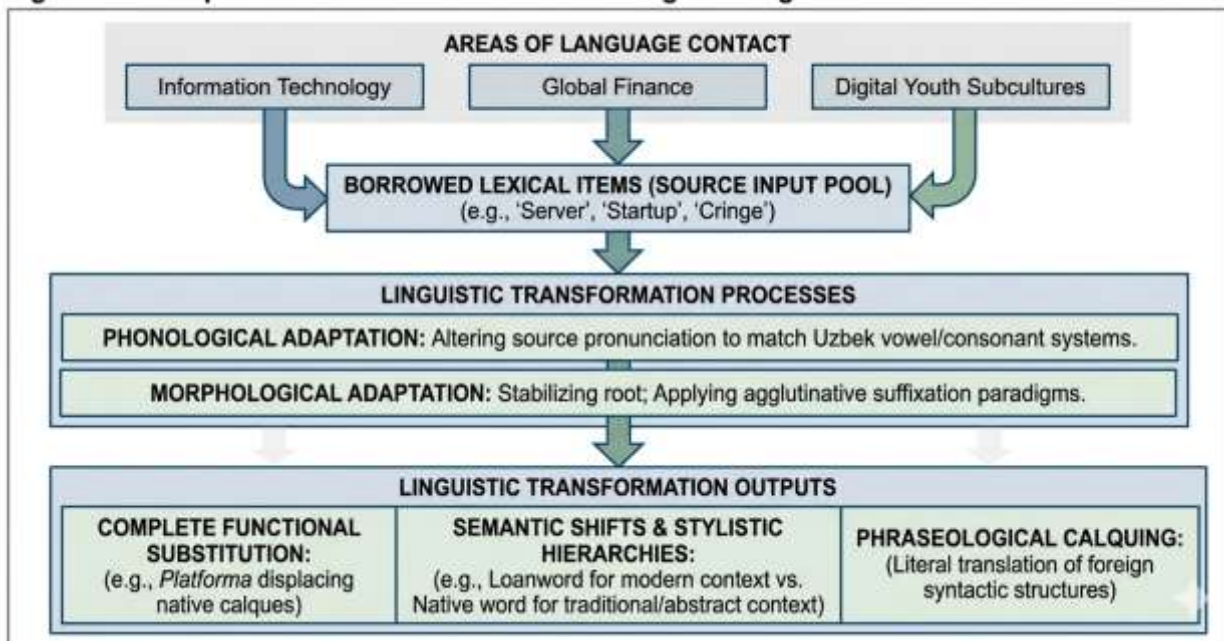
The contemporary sociolinguistic landscape of Uzbekistan offers a compelling paradigm for studying rapid language change driven by intensive cross-cultural contact, digital ubiquitousness, and socioeconomic modernization. As a prominent Turkic language characterized by an agglutinative morphological system, Uzbek has historically exhibited a high degree of structural flexibility and receptivity to external lexical influences. While historical strata of borrowing prominently feature Arabic and Persian layers due to deep-seated religious and literary traditions, followed by an extensive layer of Russian loanwords from the tsarist and Soviet administrative eras, the current epoch is marked by an unprecedented influx of direct internationalisms, primarily extracted from global English. This linguistic transition is not merely an isolated lexical expansion but rather an indicator of a profound structural shift in communicative practices, registers, and stylistic preferences within the speech community. As the nation deepens its integration into global economic frameworks, academic networks, and digital infrastructures between 2025 and 2026, the language reacts dynamically, accelerating structural adaptations that challenge traditional normative boundaries and generate hybrid linguistic varieties among native speakers.

Linguistic contact in the modern era is heavily accelerated by digital communication platforms, social media, and the globalization of specialized professional domains like information technology, finance, and youth subcultures. In examining these contemporary vectors, researchers observe that borrowing is no longer confined to luxury items or abstract concepts but serves as an immediate functional mechanism to bridge lexical gaps created by rapid technological advancements. Unlike the historical Russian-mediated borrowings, which were thoroughly filtered through the phonological and orthographic systems of the source administrative language before arriving in Uzbek, contemporary English borrowings penetrate the language directly via digital media, online education, and direct commercial channels. This direct contact bypasses conventional lexicographic gatekeeping, resulting in an immediate vernacularization of international terms. Consequently, the native speech community, particularly the urban youth and technical professionals, displays a high level of code-mixing and rapid morphological assimilation of these new tokens into daily discourse, thereby restructuring the internal lexical frequency distribution of the modern Uzbek lexicon.

The structural integration of these contemporary loanwords follows predictable yet highly dynamic phonological and morphological pathways determined by the typological nature of the

Uzbek language. Being an agglutinative language, Uzbek processes incoming loanwords by treating the borrowed root as a fixed semantic base to which native inflectional and derivational suffixes are sequentially appended. For instance, incoming English nouns are immediately subjected to Uzbek pluralization, case marking, and possessive paradigms without altering the internal structure of the borrowed root itself. This morphosyntactic resilience allows the language to absorb a vast volume of foreign terminology while strictly maintaining its core grammatical architecture. However, the sheer volume of these direct borrowings introduces subtle shifts in phonotactic constraints and orthographic representations, prompting ongoing debates among lexicographers and language planners regarding the standardization of spelling rules, pronunciation variants, and the preservation of native semantic equivalents in official and educational discourses.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Lexical Borrowing and Linguistic Transformation Mechanisms**



To systematically categorize and assess the distribution of these emerging lexical items across dominant socio-communicative domains, a semantic and structural classification is presented below. This classification reflects empirical data gathered from contemporary Uzbek digital media, financial documentation, and youth communication networks between 2025 and 2026, illustrating how various thematic domains exhibit differing rates and mechanisms of adaptation.

**Table 1: Distribution and Structural Adaptation of Contemporary Loanwords in Uzbek (2025–2026)**

Domain	Core Source Lexemes	Primary Adaptation Model	Grammatical Integration Type	Lexical/Semantic Outcome
<b>Information Technology</b>	<i>Browser, Cloud, Server, Platform, Online, Login</i>	Direct Phonological Importation	Noun Root + Native Case/Plural Suffixes ( <i>serverda, platformalar</i> )	Complete functional substitution of native calques
<b>Finance &amp; Economics</b>	<i>Traders, Startup, Investment, Blockchain, Crypto</i>	Hybrid Morphological Synthesis	Compound Verbs via Native Auxiliaries ( <i>investitsiya qilmoq</i> )	Semantic narrowing to specialized commercial discourse

<b>Youth Subcultures</b>	<i>Krinj</i> ( <i>Cringe</i> ), <i>Haip</i> ( <i>Hype</i> ), <i>Chill</i> , <i>Trand</i> ( <i>Trend</i> )	Phonetic Adaptation & Vernacularization	Adjectival/Verbal Conversion ( <i>krinj</i> <i>bo'lmoq</i> , <i>qilmoq</i> )	Reshaping of informal communication norms and registers
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The data compiled in Table 1 illustrates that information technology terms show the most rapid and uninhibited integration, frequently displacing institutionalized native calques like "kompyuterlashgan tarmoq" or "tizim" in favor of direct, universally understood expressions such as *platforma* or *server*. Morphologically, these nouns remain stable bases that accept local suffixes seamlessly, demonstrating that the syntactic requirements of Uzbek easily accommodate foreign additions. In the economic sector, the integration frequently relies on hybrid structures, notably the combination of a borrowed noun with a native light auxiliary verb like *qilmoq* (to do) or *bo'lmoq* (to be), which transforms abstract international concepts into operational Uzbek verbal phrases. Meanwhile, the youth subculture domain showcases a creative vernacularization where terms like *krinj* or *haip* undergo phonological modifications to align with local speech habits, ultimately operating as powerful markers of identity and modern social alignment among younger generations.

The semantic shifts associated with these modern borrowings reveal that loanwords do not merely coexist with the native lexicon but actively reshape existing semantic fields through processes of narrowing, broadening, and direct calquing. When an international term is adopted, it frequently causes a restriction in the meaning of the existing native equivalent, reintroducing the native word into a narrower, traditional context while the loanword assumes a broader, modern, or prestigious connotation. This dual-track lexical development creates localized semantic hierarchies where the choice between a native word, a historical Russian loan, and a modern English borrowing signals specific sociolinguistic variables, including the speaker's educational background, professional orientation, and generational affiliation. Furthermore, the extensive reliance on digital translation tools and automated translation models has accelerated the emergence of phraseological calques, wherein English syntactic structures are translated literally into Uzbek words, subtly altering the normative collocations and stylistic flow of contemporary journalistic and academic prose.

The institutional reaction to this rapid linguistic evolution remains complex, characterized by a persistent tension between purist language planning policies and the practical communicative needs of a globalizing society. Official state language committees and national academies consistently strive to develop native alternatives or utilize existing Turkic, Arabic, or Persian roots to stem the tide of unrestricted anglicization. However, the rapid deployment of new technologies and global socio-economic concepts often outpaces the bureaucratic speed of official linguistic standardization, causing artificial or archaic calques to fail to achieve widespread public adoption. The preference among younger speakers and professionals for direct borrowings over artificial neologisms underlines a pragmatic approach to language, where communicative efficiency and global alignment take precedence over purist ideals. This division between prescriptive state norms and descriptive vernacular usage highlights a critical phase of language change, where everyday social practice serves as the primary driver of lexical evolution.

Ultimately, the structural and lexical changes observed in contemporary Uzbek between 2025 and 2026 reinforce the view that borrowing is not a form of linguistic erosion, but an active adaptive strategy that keeps a language relevant within a globalized environment. The structural framework of Uzbek proves robust enough to swallow large volumes of foreign terminology without losing its distinctive agglutinative identity or grammatical core. As these loanwords move from informal youth slang and technical jargon into mainstream media, literature, and official public discourse, they alter the overall stylistic and semantic tapestry of the language. This ongoing transition marks a vital chapter in the history of Central Asian

sociolinguistics, indicating that contemporary Uzbek is successfully evolving from a post-Soviet language model into a highly dynamic, digitally integrated global tongue capable of expressing the complex realities of modern life.

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