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Models Of Uzbek–Russian Bilingualism In Urban And Rural Communities Of Tashkent Region

Xakimova Dildora Ikromovna

Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages of Faculty of Philology at Alfraganus University, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes models of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in both urban and rural communities within the Tashkent Region, which encompasses industrial towns, peri-urban settlements, and agriculturally focused villages. Although national-level studies frequently characterize Uzbekistan as sociolinguistically homogeneous, this research contends that intra-regional disparities in access to education, media, and mobility generate unique patterns of bilingual language use. The empirical foundation comprises a sociolinguistic survey of two hundred adult residents and forty-five semi-structured interviews executed in one urban center and two rural districts. Descriptive statistics and cluster analysis were used to look at quantitative data, and thematic coding was used to look at qualitative data. The results show that there are three common patterns of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism. The first type, which is mostly found in the industrial town, is balanced pragmatic bilingualism. In this type, speakers use both languages in different situations and connect Russian with broader professional and informational networks and Uzbek with national identity and local solidarity. The second, which is common in cities and suburbs, is Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with functional Russian, where Russian is mostly used for technical and institutional communication. The third, which is common in rural villages, is Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with limited Russian. This means that people in these villages don't use Russian very often and feel very strongly about Uzbek. The research illustrates that these models are influenced by the convergence of location, generation, educational pathways, and linguistic ideologies. It concludes that language policy and educational planning in Uzbekistan must consider intra-regional variation to foster equitable and sustainable bilingualism and the development of multilingualism.

Keywords: Uzbek–Russian bilingualism; Tashkent Region; urban and rural communities; language attitudes; intergenerational transmission; language policy.

Introduction

In the last thirty years, Uzbekistan's language landscape has changed because of state language policy, a renewed interest in national identity, and new patterns of movement. Tashkent Region, which surrounds the capital and has both densely populated cities and rural areas, is a great place to look at how Uzbek–Russian bilingualism is spread, passed on, and judged. Urbanization, labor migration, educational aspirations, and media consumption intersect with historically entrenched language ideologies, resulting in regionally distinct patterns of language use.

Studies on bilingualism in Central Asia have frequently

concentrated on national-level policies and general characterizations of the interactions between titular languages and Russian. Such studies seldom examine internal regional variation as a focal point of investigation, often presuming a relatively uniform linguistic practice within state boundaries. However, daily observations indicate that urban industrial towns, peri-urban settlements, and agriculturally focused villages exhibit significant disparities in their demographic composition, access to educational resources, and exposure to Russian-language media, which subsequently influences local bilingual practices and language learning opportunities.

This article seeks to fill this void by examining models of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in both urban and rural communities within the Tashkent Region. The term "models" refers to recurring patterns of language acquisition trajectories, domains of use, proficiency profiles, and identity orientations that can be observed among groups of speakers. The emphasis is on community patterns rather than individual psycholinguistic processing, aiming to connect bilingual repertoires to social structures, generational dynamics, and institutional frameworks such as education and employment.

The topic is important because there are still public debates about language choice in education, government, and the job market. These debates affect people in different ways depending on whether they live in a city or a rural area. Digital media are also changing how people can get to Russian-language content. This can make up for the lack of local Russian-language institutions, but it can also make new digital divides. Furthermore, policy initiatives that encourage multilingualism, including the acquisition of English, interact with the existing Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in ways that may either facilitate additive multilingualism or expedite language shift. In this context, the Tashkent Region serves as a pertinent example for examining the manifestation of macro-level trends within local social ecologies.

The objective of the article is to delineate and analyze the primary models of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism found in specific urban and rural communities within the Tashkent Region, and to correlate these models with socio-demographic factors, linguistic ideologies, and communicative practices. To accomplish this objective, the study utilizes a sociolinguistic survey and semi-structured interviews conducted with inhabitants of one urban center and two rural districts. The analysis aims to elucidate both convergences and divergences in the structuring and valuation of bilingual repertoires by comparing patterns across these sites.

The empirical foundation of the article is derived from data gathered in 2024 from three sites in the Tashkent Region: a significant industrial city adjacent to the capital, a peri-urban community situated along a transportation corridor, and a rural village located in an agriculturally oriented district. These locations were chosen to illustrate a spectrum of urbanization and to reflect differences in access to Russian-language institutions and networks. At each site, adult residents aged eighteen to sixty-five were

invited to participate in a sociolinguistic survey and follow-up interviews. The goal of the sampling was to include people from different generations, levels of education, and types of jobs.

The quantitative part consisted of a survey given to 200 people, with about the same number of people from each of the three places. The questionnaire gathered data regarding language acquisition histories, self-evaluated proficiency in Uzbek and Russian, contexts of language use in familial, educational, professional, and media settings, language preferences for various interlocutors, and attitudes towards both languages. Additional items collected socio-demographic variables including age, gender, educational attainment, occupation, and migration history. Participants could fill out the questionnaire in either Uzbek or Russian, and they could choose which one they felt more comfortable with.

The qualitative aspect comprised forty-five semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey respondents who expressed a willingness to engage in an extended dialogue. Interviews examined the significance of bilingualism, the intergenerational transmission of languages, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of Russian and Uzbek in local contexts, and narratives regarding mobility and educational choice. With informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized.

The survey data were inputted into a statistical software program for exploratory and descriptive analysis. We used frequency distributions and cross-tabulations to look at the links between where people live, their age group, their level of education, and important signs of bilingualism, such as how well they think they speak Russian and how often they use it in different situations. Cluster analysis was utilized to discern groups of respondents exhibiting analogous bilingual profiles. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts was conducted utilizing a blend of deductive codes based on the research questions and inductive codes generated from the data. There was a lot of focus on how language hierarchy and authenticity are talked about, as well as on how people negotiate language in their daily lives at home and at work.

Voluntary participation in the study was required. People who took part in the study were told what the research was for, that their data would be kept private, and that they could leave at any time. Pseudonyms are employed in the

presentation of qualitative excerpts, and identifying details are altered as needed to safeguard confidentiality. The sample does not statistically represent the entire Tashkent Region; however, it offers a sufficiently diverse array of perspectives from which recurring patterns of Uzbek-Russian bilingualism can be deduced.

An examination of the survey and interview data uncovers various persistent models of Uzbek-Russian bilingualism that are inequitably distributed between the urban and rural communities examined. A notable model in the industrial town is characterized as balanced pragmatic bilingualism. People in this group say they are very good at both languages, switch between Uzbek and Russian often at work and school, and use different language strategies at home. For these individuals, Russian signifies access to specialized knowledge, interregional mobility, and professional advancement, while Uzbek serves as a marker of local solidarity and national identity.

A second type of bilingualism, called Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with functional Russian, is common in both the town and the peri-urban settlement. People in this group learned Uzbek as their first language at home and mostly learned Russian through school and the media. They think their Uzbek is as good as a native speaker's and their Russian is at least intermediate or upper-intermediate, with better receptive skills than productive skills. Russian is used when talking to officials, specialists, and non-Uzbek coworkers, and it is still the default language for some types of work and digital content. However, everyday family communication and local business are mostly done in Uzbek. Interview narratives show that people have mixed feelings about Russian. They see it as useful for social and economic reasons, but they worry that relying too much on it could make Uzbek people feel left out or show a lack of patriotism.

In the rural village, a third model appears that can be described as Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with minimal Russian. People in this group usually only have a little bit of schooling in Russian and say they don't feel very confident speaking it. They mostly use Russian to read technical labels, watch some TV shows, and deal with bureaucratic problems from time to time. Still, the survey responses show that even these speakers know that Russian is a prestigious and useful language, especially when it comes to getting a higher education and finding work outside of the village. In this model, parents want their children to be better at Russian than they are, but they don't

know how to make that happen in a place where most people speak Uzbek.

Cluster analysis indicates that these three models are not exclusively limited to specific locations; rather, they manifest with varying frequencies at each site. There are a lot of balanced pragmatic bilinguals in the industrial town, especially among younger professionals and people who went to college. The peri-urban settlement has a lot of Uzbek-dominant bilinguals who can speak some Russian, while the rural village has a lot of people who can't speak Russian very well. These patterns are not the same for different generations. Younger respondents, irrespective of their location, exhibit superior self-assessed Russian proficiency compared to older cohorts and indicate more frequent interaction with Russian-language digital media; however, this does not consistently result in assured face-to-face communication.

The data also show different patterns of language attitudes and how language is passed down from one generation to the next. Many families in the town say that they speak different languages at home. For example, parents speak to their children in Uzbek but accept Russian answers or switch to Russian when talking about school or digital technologies. In the country village, on the other hand, most family interactions are in Uzbek. Russian is only used for homework, TV shows, and smartphone apps. Uzbek is strongly linked to cultural authenticity and emotional closeness at all sites, while Russian is linked to modernity, science, and moving up in the world. People who live in cities are more likely to see Uzbek and Russian as complementary resources. People who live in rural areas are more likely to see them as zero-sum, worrying that strengthening Russian may weaken Uzbek.

The models of Uzbek-Russian bilingualism delineated in this study illustrate the interaction among historical legacies, current language policies, and socio-economic conditions in the Tashkent Region. Balanced pragmatic bilingualism in the industrial town can be seen as a type of additive bilingualism that is unique to that area. In this type of bilingualism, learning a second language doesn't mean losing much of the first language and is linked to more opportunities. People who live in cities use both Uzbek and Russian as complementary tools. They use Uzbek to connect with their national identity and personal relationships, and they use Russian to connect with larger professional and informational networks. The continued existence of Russian-language institutions, frequent

contact between different ethnic groups, and a job market that values Russian skills all help these functions work together.

The model of Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with functional Russian, encompassing both urban and peri-urban contexts, demonstrates how bilingual repertoires can be predominantly influenced by education and mediated exposure. For numerous respondents, Russian serves not as a primary language of socialization but as a specialized tool for specific tasks, such as navigating bureaucratic systems or engaging with technical literature. This functional specialization aligns with diglossic frameworks, although the distribution of domains does not correspond precisely to classical high and low varieties. The ambivalence exhibited by speakers in this group illustrates the enduring symbolic significance of Russian, juxtaposed with the increasing ideological prominence of Uzbek.

The rural model of Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with limited Russian highlights the importance of spatial and infrastructural elements in influencing access to second-language acquisition. Limited access to Russian-speaking networks, a scarcity of Russian-language educational resources, and constrained employment opportunities requiring advanced Russian proficiency diminish the immediate practical benefits of bilingualism for numerous rural inhabitants. Recognition of Russian as a means of mobility engenders aspirations that may exceed local capabilities, fostering feelings of linguistic insecurity, especially among youth seeking higher education in Tashkent.

The study's intergenerational patterns show how change happens slowly but unevenly. Younger speakers in all areas are more interested in Russian-language digital media, which can help make up for the fact that formal Russian-language schooling is becoming less common in some areas. However, merely being exposed to digital media does not ensure balanced bilingualism when there are few chances for interactive practice. Families living in cities often have to deal with complicated language policies that try to balance their loyalty to Uzbek with the need to learn Russian. In rural areas, on the other hand, family language policy tends to favor Uzbek, and trying to promote Russian has to deal with the idea that raising a child in only Uzbek is the best way to keep their culture and morals intact.

The study indicates that models of Uzbek-Russian

bilingualism in the Tashkent Region cannot be simplified to a mere urban–rural dichotomy. They emerge from the convergence of location, generational influences, educational pathways, and linguistic ideologies. Understanding this complexity can help us get past arguments that see Russian as either a threat to the state language or an essential tool for modernization. In practice, many residents experience bilingualism as a series of situated negotiations through which they attempt to reconcile attachments to local culture with aspirations for social mobility, and these negotiations assume distinct forms in different localities.

The article has analyzed models of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in urban and rural communities of the Tashkent Region using a combination of survey data and qualitative interviews. Three recurring models were identified: balanced pragmatic bilingualism concentrated in the industrial town; Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with functional Russian, prevalent in both urban and peri-urban settings; and Uzbek-dominant bilingualism with limited Russian, characteristic of the rural village under study. These models differ in their acquisition trajectories, domains of use, proficiency profiles, and language ideologies; however, they all acknowledge Uzbek and Russian as important parts of the regional linguistic repertoire.

The results show how important it is to look at differences within regions when studying bilingualism in Uzbekistan. Cities with a lot of institutions and media support more balanced bilingual repertoires and make people think of Uzbek and Russian as complementary resources. On the other hand, rural areas with few Russian-speaking networks tend to have more uneven bilingualism and a clearer choice between keeping Uzbek and learning Russian. Generational dynamics and digital media create more ways for people to learn a language, but they also make existing inequalities worse.

The results indicate that a singular, uniform approach to language policy and educational planning is improbable to satisfy the requirements of the diverse communities in the Tashkent Region. Programs that aim to promote Uzbek–Russian bilingualism and multilingualism in general should consider how people in the area use language, what they want to do, and what they can do. In rural areas, this might mean putting money into teacher training, multimedia resources, and exchange programs that give people more chances to practice Russian in a meaningful

way without taking away from the importance of Uzbek. In urban environments, policies may emphasize the acknowledgment and appreciation of hybrid bilingual practices, such as code-switching, as valid expressions of communicative competence.

Future research may augment the current study by integrating longitudinal designs that monitor alterations in bilingual repertoires over time, investigating the influence of additional minority languages in the Tashkent Region, and contrasting findings with those from other regions of Uzbekistan. Such research would enhance the comprehension of bilingualism's evolution in environments characterized by swift social change, fluctuating language policies, and novel mobility patterns. The models delineated herein establish a preliminary framework for comparative analyses and underscore the necessity of anchoring discussions of bilingualism in the lived experiences of speakers from diverse social and spatial contexts.

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