COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UZBEK–RUSSIAN BILINGUALISM IN TASHKENT, THE FERGANA VALLEY, AND KARAKALPAKSTAN: TYPOLOGY AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Xakimova Dildora Ikromovna
PhD, Associate Professor at Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Philology at Alfraganus University, Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article presents a comparative, regionally nuanced examination of Uzbek–Russian bilingualism across three sociohistorically distinct regions of Uzbekistan: Tashkent, the Fergana Valley, and Karakalpakstan. The study builds on sociolinguistic typologies of bilingualism and regional evidence from previous research to propose a model that links bilingual profiles to urbanization, institutional language regimes, educational and labor-market incentives, ethnolinguistic composition, and the interactional norms of everyday communication. The analysis indicates that Tashkent favors more stable and functionally diverse Uzbek–Russian bilingual repertoires, whereas the Fergana Valley predominantly displays Uzbek-dominant bilingualism, with Russian concentrated in particular institutional and mobility-related contexts. In Karakalpakstan, multilingual configurations and educational mediation influence Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in distinct manners, with Russian operating alongside Karakalpak and Uzbek in domain-specific contexts. The results are examined concerning language selection, code-switching, identity positioning, and the ramifications for educational and public communication policies.

Keywords: Uzbek–Russian bilingualism, regional variation, language domains, code-switching, language policy, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in Uzbekistan results from complex historical developments and current socio-economic changes. Uzbek is the official language of the country, but Russian is still used in many areas of communication and is still important in many social situations. This is because of the way languages were divided up during the Soviet Union and the way language, identity, and access to resources were renegotiated after independence. Research on Uzbekistan has consistently underscored that language use cannot be deduced solely from national policy; it is influenced by local ecologies where education, employment, migration, and social networks serve as significant mediators of bilingual practices. Examinations of language politics indicate that Russian may preserve both symbolic and functional significance, even amidst reinforced titular-language policies.

Even though more people in Uzbekistan are interested in bilingualism, there aren't enough descriptions of regionally differentiated models in many applied discussions. The cities of Tashkent, the Fergana Valley, and Karakalpakstan have very different patterns of urbanization, populations, and institutional infrastructures. These differences will probably lead to different

types of bilingualism, such as differences in language dominance, how languages are used for different purposes, and rules for switching between languages. This article fills this gap by comparing these three areas through a typological lens and by finding the main factors that shape Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in each of them.

The article utilizes a qualitative comparative synthesis based on sociolinguistic theory and secondary-source analysis. The material base encompasses (a) research on language policy and the post-Soviet sociolinguistic landscape of Uzbekistan, (b) studies elucidating Uzbek–Russian code-switching and interactional practices, and (c) region-specific educational and ethnolinguistic discussions pertinent to Karakalpak bilingual contexts.

From an analytical standpoint, bilingualism is regarded as a repertoire disseminated across various domains rather than a singular, uniform competence. Some typological categories used for interpretation are dominant bilingualism (where one language is preferred in most areas), balanced or near-balanced bilingualism (where functional distribution is more symmetrical), receptive bilingualism (where comprehension is greater than production in one language), and sequential bilingualism (where learning a second language is influenced by school, migration, or work). The comparative procedure connects each regional profile to a group of factors, such as institutional language regimes (especially in schools and government), the value of Russian in the job market, the number of Russian-language media and services, the diversity of languages and ethnicities, and the rules for how people interact (including code-switching). The discussion emphasizes explanatory coherence rather than quantitative generalization, due to the inconsistent empirical evidence across regions.

The comparative synthesis shows that Tashkent most consistently backs a wide range of Uzbek–Russian bilingual repertoires. Tashkent is the administrative and economic center of Uzbekistan. It has many institutions, higher education options, and job markets where Russian can still be useful. Studies based in Tashkent have also shown that code-switching is a complex process that serves practical purposes like taking a stance, aligning with the context, and indexing identity. In this context, bilingualism is frequently functionally stratified: Uzbek is essential to national identity and extensive public communication, whereas Russian may serve as a high-resource language in specific professional networks, multicultural interactions, and particular educational and media environments. These conditions favor near-balanced bilingualism in groups with prolonged Russian exposure and stable dominant-Uzbek bilingualism in those whose Russian access is chiefly institutional rather than domestic.

The analysis indicates a more significant inclination towards Uzbek-dominant bilingualism in the Fergana Valley, influenced by demographic density, local social networks, and a communicative context where Uzbek predominantly fulfills daily requirements. In this area, Russian proficiency is more likely to be sequential and limited to specific domains, growing through education, mobility patterns, or career goals rather than through everyday interactions with neighbors. From a typological standpoint, receptive bilingualism may be relatively more prevalent in environments where Russian is encountered through media, formal documentation, or sporadic interregional interactions, rather than being employed as a primary spoken language. This pattern aligns with extensive discourse regarding the interplay between post-independence language development and localized linguistic practices, as well as the varying incentives for Russian across different regions. Importantly, Uzbek dominance does not inhibit code-switching; instead, code-switching may become more pronounced and socially

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significant, manifesting in particular contexts where Russian signifies education, formality, or professional affiliation.

Karakalpakstan has a unique setup because Uzbek–Russian bilingualism is part of a larger multilingual environment that includes Karakalpak as a language that is important in the area. In these contexts, bilingualism is characterized as multi-layered; Russian functions not merely as a "second language" alongside Uzbek, but as a component within a repertoire shaped by education, administration, and intergroup communication. Pedagogical resources and dialogues regarding Russian-language education for Karakalpak bilingual students indicate that institutional mediation is a crucial avenue for enhancing Russian proficiency and highlight the necessity for sociocultural adaptation in educational materials. As a result, bilingual typologies in Karakalpakstan may encompass sequential bilingualism, wherein Russian is acquired through education and subsequently reinforced by employment or higher education, as well as receptive bilingualism, characterized by exposure that does not lead to frequent production. Simultaneously, historical and policy-focused analyses underscore that Russian can serve as a language of broader communication in multiethnic contexts, although the efficacy and scope of this function differ by locality and demographic group.

In all three regions, a few key factors seem to be the most important. Urbanization and institutional density enhance opportunities for prolonged Russian utilization, whereas localized social network closure promotes Uzbek-centric practices. Education serves as both a gatekeeping mechanism and a conduit for resources, influencing not only competence but also the perceived legitimacy of Russian in particular domains. Media and service infrastructures affect passive exposure and lexical borrowing, while migration and interregional mobility often make Russian more useful. Finally, interactional norms are important. When code-switching is common and useful in everyday life, bilingualism becomes more stable as a way of life rather than just a skill learned in school. The examined Tashkent discourse evidence highlights this assertion by illustrating how bilingual speakers employ alternation strategically, rather than arbitrarily, to navigate meaning and social relationships.

The comparative analysis indicates that Uzbek–Russian bilingualism in Uzbekistan is not a singular national phenomenon but rather a collection of regionally distinct models influenced by socio-institutional conditions and interactional norms. Tashkent tends to support more varied bilingual repertoires and regular code-switching. In the Fergana Valley, Uzbek-dominant bilingualism is more common, with Russian mostly used in mobility- and institution-linked areas. In Karakalpakstan, Uzbek–Russian bilingualism is reconfigured within broader multilingual repertoires and educational pathways. These findings suggest that language policy and educational planning must be attuned to regional ecologies, acknowledging that effective support for bilingual competence relies on contextual realities, local incentives, and culturally informed teaching and communication practices.

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