

Sobirova Nigina

Webster University, Graduate Student

Abstract

This article examines how English-origin words — Anglicisms — are absorbed and restructured by the phonological, morphological, and semantic systems of modern Uzbek. Over the past three decades, Uzbek has moved through successive waves of contact influence, first with Russian as an intermediary and, since the 2000s, increasingly with English as a direct source of borrowing driven by digital technology, higher education reform, and global media consumption. Adopting the classical borrowing framework established by Haugen (1950) and Weinreich (1953) and situating it within more recent Central Asian corpus-based scholarship, the article indicates that Anglicisms entering Uzbek undergo systematic phonetic substitution to fit Uzbek's simpler CV-dominant syllable structure, morphological incorporation through native agglutinative affixes, and semantic narrowing or extension shaped by local sociocultural context. The main findings show that the degree of adaptation correlates with a word's frequency of use, its entry route (direct from English versus mediated through Russian), and the domain in which it circulates, with information-technology and youth-slang borrowings adapting fastest and technical or scientific terms retaining more source-language features. The principal conclusion is that Anglicism adaptation in Uzbek is best understood not as a single uniform process but as a continuum of integration stages, a pattern consistent with derivational and semantic-transformation research on lexical borrowing conducted elsewhere in the Uzbek scholarly tradition.

Introduction

In the past decade much research has focused on the accelerating presence of English lexical material inside languages that historically borrowed from other donor languages. For Uzbek, this shift has been especially visible: centuries of contact produced a lexicon layered with Arabic, Persian, and Russian elements, and the last twenty-five years have added a fast-growing English stratum tied to independence-era language policy, the expansion of English-medium higher education, and near-universal access to English-language digital platforms (

Bekmurodovna & Azizbek, 2026). Market reforms, technology adoption, and social-media culture have together made English the most productive current source of new vocabulary in Uzbek, a trend documented across recent studies of digital discourse, youth slang, and terminological modernization in the region.

It remains unclear, however, exactly how systematic this process is at the level of sound, form, and meaning. Some scholars treat the appearance of English words in Uzbek text as simple, unmediated importation; others argue that every borrowed item is reshaped, sometimes heavily, by the receiving language's own phonological and morphological rules before it becomes a stable part of the lexicon. A further complication specific to Uzbek is the frequent double mediation of Anglicisms through Russian, so that a word such as internet may reach ordinary Uzbek speakers already carrying Russian phonological and morphological features rather than English ones directly.

The purpose of this study was to synthesize existing empirical findings on Anglicism adaptation in Uzbek and to organize them within the established typology of lexical borrowing, in order to produce a coherent account of the phonological, morphological, and semantic mechanisms at work, and to identify the sociolinguistic variables — domain, register, and route of entry — that best predict how far a given Anglicism has moved along the continuum from foreignism to fully naturalized loanword.

Literature Review

Establishing a Territory: The Study of Lexical Borrowing

The theoretical starting point for any study of loanword adaptation remains the descriptive framework proposed by Haugen (1950) and elaborated by Weinreich (1953). Haugen distinguished loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts according to the degree of morphemic substitution involved, and observed a general borrowability hierarchy in which nouns are adopted more readily than verbs, and verbs more readily than adjectives or function words. Weinreich's complementary emphasis was on the constraints that a recipient language's own grammatical system places on incoming material: the more fully a morpheme is integrated into the native paradigm, the less likely it is to be transferred unchanged. These two positions together form what later typological work, including Haspelmath's (2009) cross-linguistic study of lexical borrowability and Görlach's (2002) dictionary-based classification of European

Anglicisms, has treated as the foundation for analyzing any contact-induced lexical change, including the Anglicization of non-European languages such as Uzbek.

Subsequent scholarship has refined this foundation in two directions relevant here. First, phonological approaches to loanword adaptation have asked whether the adjustments a borrowed word undergoes are governed by the perception of its sound shape or by the production constraints of the borrowing language; this question, discussed extensively in loanword-phonology research, is directly applicable to Uzbek, whose simpler consonant-vowel syllable structure forces systematic simplification of English consonant clusters. Second, semantic and sociocultural approaches — visible in recent comparative work on the morphological adaptation and semantic assimilation of Anglicisms in Russian and Korean — have shown that the meaning a borrowed word ultimately carries in the recipient language is shaped as much by local cultural association as by the source-language definition, a mechanism that generalizes well to Uzbek.

Establishing a Niche: Gaps in Uzbek-Specific Research

Within Uzbek linguistics specifically, a growing body of applied research has begun to document these processes empirically. Comparative phonetic studies of English and Uzbek consonant clusters and syllable structure have shown that Uzbek phonotactics is markedly more restrictive than English, favoring simple alternating consonant-vowel sequences and therefore requiring vowel insertion or consonant simplification whenever English words with clusters — such as "strengths" or "sprint" — are borrowed. Corpus-based analysis of English loanwords circulating in contemporary Uzbek text has likewise found consistent patterns of phonological adaptation to Uzbek phonotactics alongside morphological assimilation, in which loanwords take native affixes, and semantic transfer, in which a borrowed item acquires connotations absent from the donor form. Parallel work on neologism formation in Uzbek, Russian, and English digital discourse has confirmed that Uzbek tends to combine borrowed English stems with native agglutinative morphology rather than importing English inflectional patterns wholesale, while studies of youth slang have observed that many English-origin words entering Uzbek arrive already filtered through a Russified form, so that Anglicisms are frequently "Uzbekified" indirectly via Russian phonology and Cyrillic orthography rather than adapted straight from English.

Comparable derivational and semantic mechanisms have also been documented in domain-specific Uzbek lexical research that, while not focused on Anglicisms as such, offers directly transferable methodology. Khujakulov's (2024a, 2025a) work on the

derivation of lexical units connected to folk medicine in English and Uzbek demonstrates how a source-language term is reshaped through native affixation as it enters the Uzbek terminological system, while Khujakulov's (2025b) analysis of semantic transformations in Arabic-origin medical lexemes shows a comparable pattern of meaning narrowing under local cultural pressure — the same narrowing this study finds operating on English-origin items. The comparative-historical and quantitative treatment of affix productivity in Xujakulov (2026a, 2026b) further supplies a model for measuring how productively native Uzbek derivational morphology attaches to borrowed roots, a model this study adapts to the Anglicism data. On the semantic side, Saydullayevna's (2026b, 2026d) research on connotative meaning and pragmatic equivalence in literary translation, together with Karimova's (2026a, 2026c) work on the connotative field of literary texts, provides a theoretical vocabulary for describing how a borrowed lexical item accrues connotations in the target language that were never present in the source — precisely the semantic-adaptation mechanism observed here in Anglicisms such as "lider" or "menejer," whose Uzbek connotations diverge from their English originals.

Occupying the Niche: Aims of the Present Study

Building on this literature, the present article synthesizes findings across phonological, morphological, and semantic levels of analysis to answer a single organizing question: what determines how far an individual Anglicism travels along the continuum from unadapted foreignism to fully naturalized Uzbek loanword. The study is organized to first outline the methodology used to gather and classify the source literature and illustrative data, then present the main patterns of adaptation identified across the reviewed studies, and finally discuss what these patterns imply for Uzbek lexicography, language planning, and future corpus-based research.

Methodology

The data used for this study were collected through a qualitative synthesis of published research on English-Uzbek language contact, supplemented by illustrative lexical examples drawn from Uzbek digital media, journalism, and everyday usage as reported in the reviewed sources. Studies were located through a targeted search of Uzbek and international journal databases using search terms including "Anglicism," "English loanwords," "borrowing," and "neologism" combined with "Uzbek." Priority was given to peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2026 that reported

corpus-based or comparative-linguistic evidence rather than purely prescriptive commentary.

Each identified Anglicism-related pattern was coded along three analytic dimensions consistent with the Haugen–Weinreich framework: (a) the phonological level, covering sound substitution, stress shift, and syllable-structure repair; (b) the morphological level, covering affixation, compounding, and loanblend formation; and (c) the semantic level, covering meaning narrowing, meaning extension, and connotative shift. Where Uzbek-specific studies did not directly address Anglicisms but reported comparable derivational or semantic processes for other borrowed strata — for example Arabic-origin or Persian-origin lexis — those findings were incorporated as a methodological analogue rather than as direct evidence about English borrowings, and are clearly marked as such throughout the discussion. This mixed strategy allowed the synthesis to draw on the wider Uzbek lexical-borrowing scholarship even where dedicated Anglicism research remains comparatively thin.

Results

The findings of this study clearly show that

Anglicism adaptation in Uzbek operates simultaneously and unevenly across the three analytic levels described above.

Phonological Adaptation

Across the reviewed corpus and comparative-phonetic studies, English consonant clusters are consistently simplified to conform to Uzbek's dominant consonant-vowel syllable pattern, most often through vowel epenthesis (for example, English "sport" surfacing in Uzbek as "sport" but pronounced with an inserted vowel before the initial cluster in casual speech, and "student" adapting stress placement toward the fixed final-syllable pattern typical of Uzbek). Vowel systems are likewise reduced: English diphthongs and vowel-length distinctions, which are phonemically significant in the source language, are regularly flattened to the smaller Uzbek vowel inventory. Stress in borrowed words tends to migrate toward the more predictable, typically final-syllable placement native to Uzbek rather than retaining the variable stress patterns of English.

Morphological Adaptation

Morphologically, borrowed English nouns and verbs are regularly incorporated into Uzbek's agglutinative suffixation system. Nouns take native case, plural, and possessive suffixes directly (as in "kompyuterlar" for "computers" or "menejerning" for "the manager's"), while verbal borrowings are typically nativized through a light-verb construction combining the borrowed noun stem with a native auxiliary such as "qilmoq" (to do), producing forms like "skanerlamoq" (to scan). This pattern mirrors the affix-productivity mechanisms documented for other borrowed lexical strata in Uzbek derivational research, where native suffixation systematically attaches to foreign roots regardless of the donor language, suggesting that Uzbek morphology applies a broadly consistent nativization strategy across its borrowed vocabulary rather than a strategy unique to Anglicisms.

Semantic Adaptation

Semantically, borrowed items show both narrowing and connotative shift once embedded in Uzbek usage. Business and technology vocabulary such as "lider" (leader) or "brend" (brand) frequently narrows to a single prestige-marked sense in Uzbek even where the English source term carries a wider range of meanings, while youth-slang borrowings such as "kringe" (cringe) or "fleks qilmoq" (to flex) acquire locally specific pragmatic connotations tied to Uzbek social-media culture that were not part of the original English usage. This pattern of connotative accretion parallels the mechanisms described in Uzbek translation-pragmatics research on connotative meaning in literary texts, even though that research was developed independently of Anglicism studies, indicating a shared, language-general process by which any borrowed or translated lexical item gains meaning through its new discourse environment rather than retaining a fixed, portable sense.

Route of Entry and Domain Effects

A further consistent finding is that Anglicisms borrowed directly from English, mainly through digital and youth media, adapt phonologically and morphologically faster and more thoroughly than those mediated through Russian, which often retain Russian-derived phonological shaping and Cyrillic-oriented spelling conventions even in Latin-script Uzbek text. Technical and scientific terminology, by contrast, tends to resist full nativization and is more likely to remain close to its English or international form, reflecting a register-based split between everyday conversational Anglicisms, which integrate quickly, and specialist terminology, which is often deliberately kept recognizable for cross-referencing with international scientific literature.

Discussion

Reviewing the Findings

Read together, these results confirm that Uzbek treats incoming Anglicisms according to the same general borrowability and integration principles that Haugen (1950) and Weinreich (1953) identified in unrelated language pairs, while adding language-specific detail about how those principles play out in an agglutinative Turkic system with a recent history of Russian-mediated contact. The outcome is a layered lexicon in which the depth of adaptation is not random but tracks measurable variables: frequency of use, domain, register, and route of transmission.

Evaluation and Explanations

One explanation for the faster adaptation of high-frequency, informal Anglicisms is that repeated use in everyday speech exposes a borrowed word to native morphological and phonological pressure far more often than a specialist term encountered mainly in written, formal registers. This is consistent with usage-based accounts of borrowing more broadly and with the frequency-sensitive assimilation patterns reported for other borrowed strata in the Uzbek lexicon, including folk-medicine and Arabic-origin vocabulary, where more communicatively central terms show correspondingly higher rates of full derivational integration than peripheral or purely technical ones.

The Russian-mediation effect observed here also has a plausible historical explanation: because Russian served for decades as the primary channel through which international vocabulary entered Uzbek, many speakers' phonological and orthographic habits for handling "foreign-sounding" words were formed around Russian norms before direct English contact became widespread, and those habits appear to persist even now that English is often the ultimate source.

Limitations

This study was limited by...

its reliance on a synthesis of previously published research rather than on a newly collected, statistically representative corpus of Uzbek Anglicisms; consequently, the frequency claims made above should be read as patterns reported across the reviewed literature rather than as findings independently verified against a single unified dataset. A further limitation is that several of the derivational and semantic parallels drawn from

Uzbek lexical-borrowing scholarship outside the Anglicism literature — particularly the folk-medicine derivation and literary-translation connotation studies — concern different borrowed strata and were used analogically rather than as direct evidence about English loanwords; readers should treat these connections as methodologically suggestive rather than empirically conclusive. Future research combining a purpose-built corpus of digital and print Uzbek text with controlled phonological and morphological coding would allow these patterns to be tested more rigorously.

Conclusion

Anglicisms entering modern Uzbek are neither borrowed wholesale nor resisted outright; they are progressively reshaped by Uzbek phonology, folded into its agglutinative morphology through productive native affixation, and reassigned meanings shaped by local sociocultural context, in a manner consistent with the classical Haugen–Weinreich model of lexical borrowing and with the broader derivational and semantic mechanisms documented across Uzbek lexical-borrowing research more generally. The degree of adaptation a given Anglicism reaches depends predictably on how frequently it is used, whether it entered directly from English or through Russian mediation, and whether it belongs to an everyday conversational register or a specialist technical one. For Uzbek language planning and lexicography, this suggests that policy aimed at regulating borrowed vocabulary would benefit from distinguishing these registers explicitly rather than treating all Anglicisms as a single undifferentiated category, and that future corpus-based research specifically targeting English-origin items — rather than treating them as a subset of "foreign vocabulary" in general — would substantially sharpen the empirical picture sketched here.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the faculty of Webster University for guidance in the development of this article and to the scholars whose published research on lexical borrowing and Uzbek linguistics made this synthesis possible.

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